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Henry Gilchrist

United States Air Force Academy, Henry.gilchrist@edu.edu

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No Method to Madness: The Failures of Madman Diplomacy in All Its Forms

Henry Gilchrist

USAFA (Class of '21)

Madman diplomacy fails to work as advertised. Internal contradictions of the strategy in its ideal form reduce the chances it will succeed in future crises.

Introduction

Effective deterrence requires an actor to pair powerful capabilities with a believable will to use them. The world of United States' dominance has relegated the question of will to the periphery. However, the U.S. is emerging from its hegemony with enough self-awareness to acknowledge the painful consequences of this relegation. Democratic restraint has historically played an important role in nuclear deterrence for obvious reasons, and the issue of will deficit is not new. The deterrent demand for credible will has encouraged some policymakers to consolidate their executive power toward the strategy of "madman diplomacy" as a possible solution. Intentionally or not, the Trump administration's international style resembles a return to this strategy as a response to the current U.S. crisis of will. Evidence of madman diplomacy's modern popularity is present on both sides of recent U.S.-North Korea standoffs as well as Russian threats of low-yield escalation. This paper will explore madman diplomacy from a theoretical standpoint to argue why all forms of this strategy are too dangerous to employ.

The allure of madman diplomacy claims to artificially inflate deterrent capacity, but the strategy is a false promise that will only yield ineffective or counterproductive results. The theory behind madman diplomacy relies on inherent contradictions that are irreconcilable with a credible madman persona. As a result, the demands of pursuing the strategy will force the madman diplomat to sustain a contradictory persona that will inevitably either collapse the strategy or negate its potential advantages. The logical contradiction that awaits any madman practitioner will force one of four outcomes based on the two variables of practitioner response and adversarial perception. To prove that each outcome invariably leads to weaker or failed deterrence, this paper will define the goals and process of madman diplomacy, analyze the theory's inherent contradiction, examine the failure of all four outcomes, and warn of the dangerous implications for any application of madman theory.

Definition

At its heart, madman diplomacy is an attempt to make escalation threats more credible by appearing irrational. The strategy specifically refers to irrationality where the madman diplomat cannot be deterred by appeals to reason, making their threats more credible because the adversary believes them crazy enough to follow through. This irrationality or volatility is meant to provoke fear of the madman diplomat and prompt adversaries to be more cautious. The concept of intimidation through irrationality surfaces throughout historical realism, as even Machiavelli recommended that it could sometimes be “a very wise thing to simulate madness.”[1] Realism’s resurgence during the Cold War prompted theorist Herman Kahn to hypothesize that an adversary might back down if their opponent “looks a little crazy.”[2] While Kahn’s proposal was actually intended as a warning about Soviet leader Khrushchev, the strategy was also popular among select U.S. politicians. Nixon incorporated elements of madman diplomacy to attempt a more advantageous settlement to the Vietnam war based on his belief that Eisenhower had accomplished a similar feat in Korea.

Madman diplomacy occurs in the context of Robert Jervis’s observations that nuclear capabilities simplify the security dilemma into a game of chicken by raising the cost of war far above the potential gain from victory. Even standoffs between nuclear states over non-nuclear issues occur in this context, as each side is aware that they must achieve resolution before the issue escalates to a scenario of mutually assured destruction. Because an adversary is aware of this dilemma, madman diplomacy hopes to force a concession by feigning ignorance or willingness for these consequences. If the adversary concludes they are the only one capable of averting nuclear destruction, they will concede victory to the madman diplomat.

In order to define the relationship between deterrence and madman diplomacy, it is important to examine the broader concept of deterrence as a psychological process. Deterrence occurs when an actor decides not to pursue a course of action that would have been harmful to their adversary. While deterrence strategists seek to influence their adversary toward this decision, deterrence is ultimately a process that occurs solely in the mind of the deterred actor. Therefore, madman diplomacy can be treated as an independent variable that a madman diplomat employs as an attempt to produce the dependent variable of deterrence. Madman diplomacy is often defined and categorized by the madman’s adversary, and is still treated as a variable if an actor uses it unintentionally to produce deterrence. The relationship between madman diplomacy and deterrence exists in a scenario if an adversary backs down or deescalates a confrontation due to their fear of the madman diplomat’s irrational response. While madman diplomacy can sporadically produce deterrence, this paper proves that the relationship between the two variables is inconsistent and unsustainable.

General Critique

The central issue with madman diplomacy is its reliance on contradictory relationships to risk and trust. While elements of madman diplomacy can occasionally produce individual successes, the strategy is unsustainable and ultimately relies on concepts that negate its potential advantages. The demands of credibly conducting madman diplomacy will either force the strategy to implode or lead to a weaker deterrent than otherwise possible.

The madman diplomat's relationship with risk condemns the strategy in two ways: it prevents the madman diplomat from controlling the outcome, and it requires unsustainable amounts of risk to maintain credibility. In order to be seen as irrational, a madman diplomat's escalations or other policies must exceed the rational tolerance for risk. Not only does excessive risk force this strategy to absorb or at least embrace more failures, it relies on failure for credibility through "costly signals." An actor uses a costly signal to indicate their resolve through a willingness to lose control over the escalation process.[3] Nixon's nuclear alert of 1969 exemplifies this principle with his unprovoked launch of several bombers toward Russia carrying live nuclear warheads. While Nixon ended the exercise before the bombers reached their Russian targets, he assumed enormous risk of failure as several factors outside of his control could have plunged the world into nuclear war. For example, if he was unable to recall the bombers in time the pilots—unaware that this was an exercise—would have started a war. Russian officials were focused on extreme tensions with China at the time, and outposts could easily have panicked and shot down the approaching bombers. The whole operation would have been catastrophic if one of countless junior officers on either side had failed in a small aspect of this incredibly delicate operation. However, this risk is exactly what madman diplomacy relies upon to develop credibility. Because Nixon appeared unperturbed by placing the risk of nuclear war out of his control, his costly signal indicated an irrational resolve for nuclear war that he hoped would intimidate his enemy. The willingness to embrace failure is central to the image of a madman diplomat whether they intentionally create this persona or not.

By relinquishing control of a nuclear standoff, madman diplomacy's embrace of failure dooms the strategy on its own, as risking nuclear war requires only one failure to undo any of the strategy's potential successes. However, the strategy contains further failures as it requires increasing levels of risk and chance of failure that undermine its strength. Madman diplomacy's cavalier treatment of dramatic consequences constantly alienates risk-averse supporters, advisors, and administrators. Few individuals are willing to trust a leader that openly rejects rationality and casually threatens to drag them into a nuclear conflict.[4] It is impossible to implement any strategy without the support of junior or mid-level officials, especially when frequently ordering them to risk their own destruction in a

nuclear war.[5] A madman diplomat must overcome this resistance, but attempts to do so risk turmoil and deposition. This reluctance was evident in Nixon's 1969 alert, as Strategic Air Command and the Secretary of Defense both resisted Nixon's apparent embrace of oblivion and executed less drastic orders.[6] Madman diplomacy surrenders international leadership and weakens its alliances because the strategy casually threatens to embrace enormous costs for irrational reasons. Alliances are one of the most powerful tools for deterrence as they augment resources and allow power projection, and no strategy has enough comparative advantage to justify jeopardizing the deterrent advantage of organizations such as NATO.

Madman diplomacy contains a further contradiction regarding trust, as it attempts to produce deterrence based on an untrustworthy persona. Madman diplomacy tries to use an irrational and untrustworthy image to force an adversary to concede in a standoff by claiming they are willing to escalate and embrace irrational costs such as nuclear war. However, deterrence relies on the same principles the madman diplomat undermines. An adversary's concession is predicated on the assumption that their concession will restrain the madman diplomat from further escalation. All negotiations and agreements rely on rational self interest; an agreement only succeeds if both sides trust that abiding by the terms is more beneficial than deviating. However, the madman diplomat seeks to force such an agreement by convincing their adversary they are prone to act irrationally and are willing to accept the cost of nuclear destruction even if it is irrational to do so. By indicating a lack of rational restraint, the madman diplomat prevents their adversary from trusting any agreement between them. Even if the agreement is in the best interest of the madman diplomat, they forced the concession by claiming to ignore rational self-preservation. Paradoxically, a more effective madman persona means an adversary is even less likely to trust that a concession will restrain their interlocutor's "mad" behavior.

The madman diplomat's disability for conflict resolution is especially relevant for disarmament negotiations. Disarmament agreements center on trust and communication, as they usually require a disproportionately weaker adversary to dismantle their capabilities even further. If the more powerful actor invokes madman diplomacy to demand a better settlement, it is even less likely that the weaker adversary will trust the madman enough to accept the increased vulnerability of disarmament. Rather, the exchange is more likely to prompt the weaker adversary to act irrationally out of desperation.[7] Therefore, madman diplomats face an unresolvable contradiction: they are either credible enough madmen that no adversary will risk vulnerability by trusting the restraints of a concession, or their irrationality is not credible enough to intimidate an adversary into conceding at all.

Supplemental, unpublished data analysis alongside this piece revealed that madman

diplomacy failed when it was applied throughout history. Threats issued by madman diplomats were less likely to succeed and more likely to damage the madman diplomat's standing in a confrontation. While conventional threats are not a very powerful tool to change the status quo without escalation, they demonstrated mediocre effectiveness. On the other hand, madman diplomacy has no record of improving an actor's position and actually harmed the actor's interests in 73.33% of cases. This evidence reveals the survey-level fact of madman diplomacy's historical failure. The remainder of this paper explains that phenomenon as the unavoidable fallout of the previously outlined contradictions within madman theory.

Madman Outcomes in a 2 X 2 Table

The general critique implies four possible outcomes for the application of madman diplomacy based on the madman diplomat's response and their adversary's perception of resilience. This produces a 2x2 table of outcomes based on the two variables, and the strategy fails in each instance. Like Jervis's (1978) table for the outcomes of security dilemma cooperation, the actor's actions dictate the two columns and their adversary's perception dictates the two rows.[8]

		<u>Madman Response</u>	
		<i>Embrace</i>	<i>Hide</i>
Perceived Resilience	<i>High</i>	Immune Madman	Jekyll and Hyde
	<i>Low</i>	Desperate Madman	Gambler

The four categories encompass the possible outcomes of madman diplomacy and the nature of their determination makes them mutually exclusive. This paper will examine the role of each variable before condemning individual failure of all four outcomes.

Madman Response: Hide or Embrace

Madman diplomacy's contradiction and the strategy's inevitable failure force the madman diplomat to choose to either embrace the irrationality of their path or attempt to mitigate the potential harms. Even if the madman diplomat is unaware of the strategy or its contradiction, they will react toward the same two options as they encounter the harms of their approach. Confronting weaker alliances and unable to form lasting agreements, the madman diplomat will either continue in their irrational persona or proceed cautiously while still attempting to harness aspects of the strategy's allure. These two options are defined as "embracing" or "hiding." All

invocations of madman diplomacy select one of the two responses even if the process occurs subconsciously. Individuals that are actually irrational or unaware of the dangers they face will pursue the embrace response simply through the nature of their situations. It is also possible for an unaware madman diplomat to choose the hide response as a natural reaction to the strategy's dangers. Ultimately, every form of madman diplomacy can be categorized based on whether the madman diplomat tries to mitigate the strategy's harms or not.

Should the madman diplomat embrace the flaws in their strategy and continue to rely on irrationality for deterrence, they will be unable to resolve the theory's contradictions and their persona will either collapse or continue to undermine their deterrent capacity. Madman diplomats that embrace the strategy believe their adversaries will always concede at the threshold of rational restraint, and they trust that continuing to be irrational will eventually make the strategy successful. The embrace response often disregards potential dangers by assuming that the adversary will be even more deterred by these risks, and therefore the risks will never manifest. This response reassures the madman diplomat that greater impending danger only increases the likelihood of adversary concession as long as the madman maintains their reckless advance. The desperate madman embraces the risks of madman diplomacy because they believe they have no better option. In contrast, the immune madman believes their disproportionate advantage makes them an exception to the theory's risks, as it will force their adversary to concede long before the failures arrive. Both options under the embrace response do not solve the theory's fundamental problem, as these madman diplomats either ignore or dismiss the inevitable failures.

The alternative to embracing the destructive irrationality of madman diplomacy is the "hide" response that seeks to mitigate the strategy's harms while still harnessing some form of advantage. This strategy attempts to avoid the theory's failures by carefully guiding international perceptions to reassure allies separately from irrationally deterring enemies. This approach can be uniquely attractive to world leaders whose arrogance or sense of exceptionalism leads them to believe they can avoid the failure of others by carefully controlling the strategy's application. A common way to attempt this response is for the madman diplomat to alienate themselves from the irrational persona they threaten. This type of madman diplomat claims to be currently capable of rational negotiation and agreement, but threatens an inevitable proclivity for irrationality if the adversary refuses their demands. An example of this approach is when Nixon tried to escape the trust dilemma of invoking madman diplomacy while achieving durable success in Vietnam by claiming he would be pushed to irrationality if the agreement did not hold. While this response can delay or mitigate the harms of madman diplomacy, it is still not viable because it cannot escape the strategy's contradictions. The same aspects of irrationality that could produce deterrence condemn madman diplomacy to

inevitable collapse; the strategy is still only as effective as it is foredoomed. The two outcomes of the hide response are dictated by adversary perception, and their unique failures will be analyzed individually.

Adversary Perception: Resilient or Vulnerable

Adversary perception of the madman diplomat's resilience plays a central role in the outcome of their effort and is outside the madman diplomat's control. Perceived resilience dictates why the adversary believes the madman diplomat is irrational and informs the adversary's contribution to the final policy outcome. From an adversary's point of view, irrational escalation threats only make sense in context: the madman diplomat has either superior or inferior resilience to the nuclear exchange they threaten. Superior resilience would explain reckless treatment of nuclear consequences because a powerful madman diplomat must assume that the less resilient adversary will concede first. Inferior resilience indicates that the madman diplomat is acting irrationally out of desperation and lends a different form of credibility to their escalation threats. While it is possible for a madman diplomat to exist without an enormous disparity in nuclear resilience, perfect parity does not exist. As a result, an adversary will assume the madman diplomat's situation is dramatically different as the only explanation for their irrational behavior. The comparative strength of the madman diplomat is a powerful factor to determine the outcome of their strategy but is even more important through the lens of adversary perception in order to account for factors outside the madman diplomat's control.

Combining the two variables of madman response and adversary perception produces the four negative outcomes noted in the earlier table: immune madman, desperate madman, Jekyll and Hyde, and gambler. Each category has unique aspects of failure as well as their common inability to resolve the fundamental contradictions of madman diplomacy. Each theoretical result contains multiple historical examples of failure and informs modern attempts to confront madman diplomats.

Immune Madman

The Immune Madman is aware of the consequences they risk but disdains them. This can come from a firm conviction that the Immune Madman will win or survive any conflict. Often the presence of such conviction can be enough to convince an adversary of its validity, or at least generate sufficient uncertainty for effective intimidation. Kennedy's hardline stance during the Cuban missile crisis could be considered an example of this strategy along with Eisenhower's willingness to use nuclear weapons against Chinese/North Korean forces in the Korean War.[9] Both presidents based their threats on contemporary U.S. nuclear superiority and ultimately caused the adversary to back down or reach a settlement. However, the best illustration of this mentality is Mao Zedong's declaration that he was not

worried about a 1:1 nuclear exchange with the U.S. because “we have 600 million people, and if we lose 300 million of them, what of it?”[10] Mao’s comment shocked the other Communist members of the strategy conference, specifically the leaders of communist Czechoslovakia (Novotny) and Poland (Gomulka), that later expressed private concerns to Khrushchev. The two leaders expressed widespread fear among allied communist powers that could not survive such an exchange like China, and they urged Khrushchev to prevent China from leading the alliance in this direction.[11] China’s reckless willingness to escalate proved to be a significant factor that condemned the already eroding relationship between China and the Soviet bloc—a relationship that has not yet recovered.

The Immune Madman’s embrace strategy under conditions of high perceived resilience is the most extreme form of madman diplomacy and has several unique problems in addition to madman diplomacy’s general faults. Even if an actor is correct in their assumption that they will survive a nuclear exchange better than their opponent, nuclear war is not a winnable scenario. Surviving a nuclear war would have rendered Mao’s China in far worse a situation than conceding whatever conflict prompted the exchange. As a result, the Immune Madman still assumes a nuclear exchange will never happen and relies on their opponent’s concession. This gamble accepts an enormous amount of risk on the assumption that an adversary will concede in every confrontation. Forcing this standoff so frequently promises eventual failure due to either miscommunication, human error, unpredictable events, or merely an adversary’s refusal to concede. Furthermore, if the disparity in capabilities or survivability is enough for immunity to truly exist, the immune madman will likely provoke the adversary into a desperate madman scenario that further increases the risk of failure.[12] While this argument does not preclude the possibility of occasionally invoking madman immunity during a standoff, each invocation makes the strategy less likely to succeed. It is standard practice for world powers to make demands based on their comparative capabilities, but it is nevertheless incredibly dangerous for the most powerful world leaders to hold the world, including allied states, hostage at every standoff.

Desperate Madman

The Desperate Madman feels backed into a corner by circumstances or an adversary they cannot defeat. They therefore see escalation as their only form of defense and attempt to deter the adversary by convincing them that even military victory would be too costly to pursue. The Desperate Madman attempts to compensate for lack of capabilities by using irrationality to inflate the will component of their deterrence. Even if the Desperate Madman is aware of the danger in their strategy, they embrace irrationality because they believe it is their only option to avoid crushing defeat or regime change. This path can be especially tempting for weaker states that desire a way to increase their deterrence despite their

disadvantage. The most recent example of this strategy is the North Korean attempt to use nuclear belligerence as insurance to counteract their isolation and disproportionate vulnerability.

The Desperate Madman is unable to escape the overall flaws of madman diplomacy and faces additional unique dangers. Threatening to wage an irrational war will only further isolate the Desperate Madman and thereby increase the power disparity they could have compensated through alliances. This outcome is especially precarious because it links the nation's survival to the credibility of the madman persona. While the Immune Madman only risks losing confrontations over individual conflicts, the Desperate Madman can only survive as long as their adversary is sufficiently wary of their irrational response. Rather than thwart their adversary indefinitely, the Desperate Madman cements their reputation as a permanent threat to international stability and only ensures that their adversaries search for different ways to undermine their regime.

Finally, the Desperate Madman does not escape the danger they will intimidate their supporters as much as adversaries. As the situation becomes increasingly dire, equally threatened supporters or government officials may lose trust in their Desperate Madman. The madman is more likely to be deposed by an uprising or internal opposition that would rather compromise with the enemy than risk destruction. While madman diplomacy can be the understandable result of desperation, it either lacks the credibility for results against the adversary or exceeds supporters' desire to gamble with their own destruction.

Jekyll and Hyde

The Jekyll and Hyde outcome is the safest option as a strategy of moderation, but it still fails to increase deterrence for weakening the madman persona and only somewhat mitigating the strategy's harms. Jekyll and Hyde centers on the madman diplomat's claim, under high perceived resilience, to be in a present state of rationality while threatening to become irrational if their demands are not met. This threat of irrationality is strongest when it seems the inevitable result of an adversary refusing to concede. The best example of this outcome is Nixon's invocation of madman diplomacy when he claimed to be capable of rational settlement in Vietnam but threatened he would be forced to pursue nuclear escalation against the small country if the agreement failed. Nixon deliberately crafted an unstable persona by maximizing secrecy and attempting to micromanage his international image.[13] Nixon hoped that events like the 1969 nuclear alert would communicate he was sufficiently concerned about losing the next election that he was unstable enough to resort to irrational escalation if his adversaries pushed him too far.[14] Nixon used such a claim to explain his unpredictable nuclear alerts and escalation threats, telling his chief of staff, "I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point

where I might do anything to stop the war.”[15] In this way, Nixon hoped to force them to meet his current demands by making them fear he would devolve into irrationality if they refused.

Even if the Jekyll and Hyde persona achieves its requirements for unrealistically precise diplomacy and an impossible level of international self-awareness, the strategy can only hope to slightly mitigate the harms of madman diplomacy. The Jekyll and Hyde madman cannot escape the strategy’s fundamental flaw of off-putting allies and supporters equally to deterring adversaries. The strategy is only as effective as it is flawed. Madman diplomacy requires a threshold of credibility to be effective, so the Jekyll and Hyde madman can only produce deterrence if they communicate sufficient irrationality or instability. If the Jekyll and Hyde madman does not consistently threaten they are at the precipice of irrationality, then they lose credibility for deterrence. However, every instance of threatened irrationality contributes to the problems outlined earlier in the paper of jeopardizing alliances and undermining any lasting deterrence outcome. By relying on a leader’s complex personality for enforceable deterrence, the strategy also faces inevitable expiration, as it cannot outlive that leader’s administration. Nixon’s attempt at madman diplomacy demonstrated this fact, as the North Vietnamese simply waited until he left office to invade South Vietnam.[16] Therefore, the Jekyll and Hyde outcome is constantly a race against time where the strategy can only postpone failure until the madman is deposed or allies abandon Mr. Hyde.

In short, the Jekyll and Hyde madman only gains a higher level of control over how badly the strategy fails. In this outcome, the madman diplomat can choose to be a less credible madman that produces a weak and limited deterrent but preserves alliances and allows for legitimate concessions, or they can be as credible—and flawed—as other outcomes in this paper. While hiding irrationality under conditions of high resilience presents the safest option for madman diplomacy, it still ends in failure.

The Gambler

The Gambler outcome of madman diplomacy involves pursuit of high risk for the potential of high reward by refusing compromise from a weak position of perceived low resilience. In a similar way as Jekyll and Hyde, the Gambler alienates their normal self from the irrational persona they threaten. However, unable to escape the condition of perceived weakness, the Gambler threatens irrationality by claiming their situation is desperate enough that they cannot compromise on certain issues and would become irrational if forced to do so. By claiming irrational escalation is only marginally worse than crossing one of these “red lines” in an otherwise rational negotiation, the Gambler threatens enormous cost to an adversary that does not meet their requirements. Despite glaring vulnerability to a

nuclear exchange or large conflict, the Gambler hopes to deter an adversary by making their own defeat—the Gambler’s loss in all-out conflict—messy and far costlier than the adversary can tolerate. While the Desperate Madman invokes constant irrationality to make demands, the Gambler claims to be capable of rational negotiation as long as their “red lines” are not crossed.

The Gambler faces the same failures of the Jekyll and Hyde outcome and more, as the Gambler is equally unable to resolve the contradiction between credible irrationality and durable deterrence. The most significant difference between the two outcomes is that the adversary’s perception of the Gambler’s weak position makes the adversary less likely to accept Gambler’s threats. The Gambler’s commitment to future escalation is less intimidating than a more powerful madman diplomat’s and can actually increase an adversary’s incentive to invade, executing regime change before the Gambler has a chance to go irrational. The Gambler’s weaker position makes them vulnerable to invasion and their irrational threats only encourage the adversary to attack before their advantage shrinks. Furthermore, Gambler’s deterrence is even less sustainable than the Jekyll and Hyde outcome. While a Jekyll and Hyde madman is powerful enough to invoke the strategy for limited issues, the Gambler relies on madman diplomacy’s weak deterrent for survival. As a result, the Gambler must perfectly maintain credible irrationality and their entire deterrence posture will only survive as long as the persona succeeds. This is even riskier than relying on conventional deterrent strategies: claims of irrational escalation advertise the Gambler as a constant threat to more powerful adversaries and global stability. Therefore, the Gambler will be isolated in their weakened state, encouraging the international community to facilitate their destruction.

Notable examples of the Gambler outcome include the destruction of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and Gadhafi’s Libya. Gadhafi exercised irrational escalation with his threat to raze his own city of Benghazi if NATO intervened against him during the Arab Spring uprising.[17] This only validated the need for intervention and accelerated the approval of NATO Operation Unified Protector that aided the Libyan rebels in deposing Gadhafi. Similarly, Saddam Hussein’s willingness to accept war rather than allow nuclear investigators into Iraq only incentivized the U.S. to invade before his nuclear program grew. The Gambler strategy of delaying irrationality for some future red line is clearly dangerous because of Gambler’s disadvantaged opening position; pursuing madman diplomacy from there only accelerates Gambler’s demise.

Policy Implications

The flaws of madman diplomacy warn against employing the strategy and enable policymakers to defeat potential madman diplomats. The strategy’s failures and contradictions demonstrate that pursuing deterrence through madman

diplomacy is a false promise. Pursuing the strategy is especially dangerous for the U.S. hegemon. The impossibility of maintaining leadership in powerful alliances as a madman country would rapidly erode U.S. extended deterrence. Threatening irrational escalations would spread international and domestic discord that is especially poisonous for a leading democracy. Furthermore, madman diplomacy is incompatible with U.S. objectives. Because madman diplomacy undermines the credibility of its practitioners, it would be counterproductive for the U.S. to pursue the strategy in order to achieve disarmament agreements or negotiate to preserve the current balance of power. Rather, madman diplomacy accelerates the security dilemma; it would only destabilize the U.S. position.

Meanwhile, there are two primary examples of modern U.S. adversaries incorporating madman diplomacy toward their deterrence objectives, and the strategy's flaws can guide a more informed U.S. response. The Kim Jong Un regime was included earlier as an example of a madman diplomat, and Russian President Putin demonstrates many qualities of the Gambler strategy. Specifically, Putin's threats to use low-yield nuclear weapons if a Russian invasion of the Baltics failed conventionally resembles a Gambler's threats that they might be pushed to the point of desperate irrationality if certain objectives fail. The threat also resembles the Gambler persona because it tries to augment Russian deterrence by using future desperation to make a more credible claim about Putin's will to resist coercion or remain firm in his demands, today.

The flaws in madman diplomacy help clarify more effective U.S. responses to adversaries that invoke the strategy. While different approaches will obviously be more effective based on unique circumstances, the consistent weaknesses of madman diplomacy offer several options to counter the gambit. Because madman diplomacy naturally concerns the madman's allies, adversaries should respond by trying to isolate madman diplomats from the international community. Labeling North Korea as a rogue nation has proven to be an effective way to undermine the threat the nation poses to its enemies. Continuing this response would seek to increase Chinese concerns about the potential for North Korea to escalate irrationally. If Chinese leaders worry that North Korea will drag them into irrational and costly commitments, desperate threats from North Korea will pose an even weaker concern to the international community. Madman diplomacy also creates an opportunity for adversaries to sow discord among the madman's supporters and important officials. A madman's adversary can certainly weaken a regime and potentially precipitate a deposition if they can augment internal fear that the madman will drag the nation into an irrational conflict that is unnecessary and costly. Finally, it is important for a madman diplomat's adversaries to be patient. It is difficult for the threat of madman diplomacy to continue in successive administrations because it bases a nation's deterrence posture on the personality of their current leader. Furthermore, madman diplomacy can only be successful while

reactionary adversaries panic. Conventional deterrence will prevail against a madman diplomat if their adversaries have the patience and discipline for long-term strategy.

Conclusion

Reason has a purpose, and norms do not exist by chance. Rationality is a precious commonality for humanity across history, cultures, languages, and forms of government. Systems of communication must succeed because failure of deterrence is unimaginable, and rationality and predictability succeed when communication cannot. The ability to understand and predict based on an adversary's rationality is a fundamental security that guards against nuclear accident and prevents the need for war amidst even the most egregious tensions. Rationality preserves the possibility of building and sustaining resolution without nuclear detonations. Whenever the possibility of nuclear war approaches, rationality acts as humanity's parachute—policymakers should not try to unravel it.

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[11]Khrushchev, 436.

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