

**THE EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY BY THE NEO-LIBERAL POST-MODERN
STATE: EXTENDING THE NATIONAL SECURITY SPACE THROUGH THE
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE DOMESTIC LIBERAL SUBJECT**

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The premise of this paper is that external security threats are domestically produced through the dialectic process of contestation and legitimization of the domestic political order. In this regard, this paper challenges the prevailing ontology of the nation state in security studies. That ontology sees the nation state as a self-contained entity whose external security environment is constituted by, often objective, external threats unrelated to domestic practices of legitimization. Following the conceptualization of the domestically produced external security threats, this proposal advances two arguments: first, national borders have been consistently permeable to the interaction between legitimization crisis at home and their exportation in the form of new security threats from abroad. Second, while globalization appears to have exposed the nation state to international threats more than ever before, in reality the globalization-enabled threats to nation states today differ only qualitatively from previous domestic productions of external threats.

The qualitative difference in the construction of external security threats under globalization, compared to previous historical-economic junctures, rests with the current nature of the nation state, namely its neoliberal character. As such, the neoliberal nation state attempts to manage and control issues, sites, and behaviors of the ‘international’ that traditionally fell outside its area of territorially bounded sovereign control.¹ This research argues that due to internal processes of contestation and legitimization specific to neoliberalism, the once territorially bound sovereign nation-state has recently started re-inscribing its sovereign authority through the extension of its security space beyond

¹ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 2nd edition) and *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

national borders and onto non-state actors. This is done through the attempted criminalization of a multitude of transnational behaviors and transnational actors. As a result, the new security threats to states will not resemble the traditional type of interstate threats. Rather, these new threats will comprise a combination of non-state actors as well as state actors deemed to fall short of the newly sanctioned attributes of a nation state.

In order to explore the new logic and dimensions through which the neoliberal nation state constructs threats from abroad I focus on one state, in this case the United States. Not only has the United States been one of the most dominant states on the world stage since World War II, but its unique power in the post Cold War era has tempted it to try and redraw the boundaries of acceptable behavior at the international level with the creation, and use, of the vocabulary of threats to national security. In this regard, the United States provides an excellent starting point for tracing how and why states have started erecting languages of security threats in recent years.

With the United States as the focus of analysis, I argue that the changing meaning and practice of liberalism in the United States from the 1980s to the present has affected the constitution of the American liberal subject, namely the American citizen, and, as such, it has shaped both the home grown national identity of the country as well as the country's foreign policy abroad. More specifically, I suggest that the interplay between religious beliefs, public morality, and economic interests within the borders of the U.S., constitutes the American liberal subject and, by extension, the country's national identity. Ultimately, it is threats to this national identity from within its national borders that guide the country's portrayal of certain international behaviors as deviant and particular international actors as threats to its security. This theorization about the production of the

foreign enemy abroad by the domestic order implies that, at least in the case of the United States, it has been the domestic narratives and social pressures for moral renewal and further integration in the global economy since the 1990s, as these were made to cohere through the dissemination and practice of religious beliefs among Americans, that have created the new security threats abroad.

The “Rogue States” as the New Threats to Nation States

Despite the horrific incident of the September 11 terrorists attacks against the United States, the country chose to pursue a “rogue state” as the enemy abroad responsible for these acts of terrorism despite the tangential evidence linking the assumed perpetrator to the crime. What is even more interesting is the fact that “rogue states” have constituted a national security threat to the United States starting with the Clinton administration.² The puzzle that arises from such a constellation of events, and reactions to them, is why the United States, as the preeminent neoliberal nation state of the time, insists on deploying a pre-September 11 conceptualization of threat, a pre-September 11 tactic of eliminating such a threat, namely that of regime change, and the traditional method available to states, that of launching a conventional war, in order to secure the nation from another type of threat, that of transnational terrorism? In other words, what is it about the conceptualization of a “rogue state” as the new security threat in the post-

² Maria Fanis, “Old Elements in the New Security Policy,” in *Iraq and Beyond: The New U.S. National Security Strategy*, Cornell University, Peace Studies Program, Occasional Papers, (January, 2003); Jacques E. Hymans, “Roots of the Washington Threat Consensus, in *Striking First: The Preventive War Doctrine and the Reshaping of U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Betty Clad and Chris J. Dolan (NY: Palgrave, 2004); Elizabeth N. Saunders, “Setting Boundaries: Can International Society Exclude “Rogue States”?” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (March 2006).

Cold War era that has made it adhere so firmly to the nation's security 'imaginary'³ contrary to evidence that a new security environment has arisen? I argue that it is the constitution of the American liberal subject since the 1980s that has made possible the depiction of "rogue states" as the preeminent threats to nations' national security. In particular, as this American liberal subject is historically contingent, and thus varied in signification, we need to examine its subject position leading up to the 1990s in order to understand why the "rogue" identifiers have acquired such permanency in the country's apprehension of an external threat.⁴

For this paper here I argue that, ultimately, it is the content of the United States' national identity, itself a distillation of the domestic moral codes and economic prerogatives, that can best explain why the country has defined enemies abroad in the way that it has. Far from treating conceptualizations of threat as divorced from the domestic political terrain, I suggest that the domestic scene produces the foreign enemy abroad. Specifically, I find religion to be the intermediary between economic interests and national codes of morality, the two most important elements in the construction of a country's self image and, consequently, its foreign enemies. It is this national self image that determines what elements and behaviors abroad appear threatening to the nation state.

The theoretical framework of this paper suggests that the secular morality in the United States is the ultimate arbiter between a legitimate national identity and the discredited available others. Similarly, this secular morality also privileges a certain

³ Jutta Weldes, *Constructing the National Interest: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁴ For a comparative analysis of different responses to terrorism by the U.S. Japan and Germany see Peter Katzenstein, "Same War-Different Views: Germany, Japan, and Counterterrorism," *International Organization*, 57, (Fall 2003).

definition of the virtuous and free liberal citizen over available other definitions. I argue, therefore, that it is the dialectic between public morality and republicanism that is at the center of the contested American national discourses, as well as the contested definitions of the liberal subject, and that it is this interplay between public morality and republicanism that ultimately determines which discourse becomes legitimate at home, and, by extension, who becomes an enemy abroad.

This theory locates political power in the elusive arenas of discourses and national identity. It also rediscovers the hidden agency that ordinary Americans have in shaping their country's national self-image and, by extension, the country's foreign policy choices. The premise of this project is that the religious beliefs, sense of morality, and cultural practices of everyday Americans gives them enough agency to influence their country's final national consensus over its national identity and over the constitution of the virtuous and free American citizen. It is the fact that this national identity is the distillation of an entire moral code of popular beliefs that typify a people as they respond to changing economic structures, which gives the public its synergetic ability in contesting some national truths, and sanctioning others.

More specifically, the theory stipulates that different societal groups from 1980s to the present have tried, through their diverging discourses, to redefine the traditionally evocative national themes of democratic participation, civic responsibility, and republican ethos as a way of dealing with the major economic upheavals. The flight of business to the south around the 1980s followed by the move towards globalization after that, are the recent paradigmatic examples of such economic upheavals. I expect to find that the groups participating in these discursive formations were in reality repositioning

themselves in the country's civic experiment with democracy, freedom, and equality; the traditional themes through which most groups in the U.S. have come to belong to the country. But as these groups were, out of necessity, morphing into new entities through their discursive formations, so did the national identity of the U.S., itself the consensual byproduct of these diverging discourses. And as the national identity reconstitutes the nation's security lenses, these societal contestations, I propose, have had a noticeable effect on why the U.S. has consistently seen "rogue states" as the real threat from abroad.

I will recover the formation of national identity with in-depth contextualized historiographical work. In particular, I will look at the 'public sphere' where mass culture is articulated. This public sphere comprises traditional churches, places of worship, political lectures and meetings, the work place, suburban megachurches, and grassroots organizations. In order to explore the effect of religious practices on people's subjectivity I will read material on church gatherings, popular commentaries, ritual manuals, testimonials, and autobiographical material. By combining the literatures on labor studies, intellectual history, religious movements, grassroots organizations, with the traditional literatures on analysis foreign policy, I will unearth the manner in which the security environment of the United States has been shaped by concerns over moral codes, economic dislocation, and one's place in the national project of nationhood.

Application of the Theory of National Identity Construction to the war against the "Rogue State" of Iraq

The theoretical framework I suggest here provides a road map for unpacking the 'emergency discourse' associated with the war in Iraq. It does so by probing us to look at

the country's contentious debates about the liberal ethos, at how the recent economic effects of globalization and neoliberal economic restructuring affected American labor, and at how these have been mediated through the prism of Evangelical Christianity, in order to decipher why this particular national consensus over the 'state of emergency' and the 'war against terrorism' via the proxy of a "rogue state" have emerged.

To trace the constitution of the new liberal subject currently requires that we analyze recent re-codifications of civil rights, for example the new federal law about Enemy Combatants and the U.S. Patriot act. These laws act as a new emerging discourse about justice which has the potential to redefine the future meaning and practice of liberalism in this country, and consequently the definition of the American liberal subject. This new discourse about justice, which is still contested in the courts, is redefining the existing working definition of equality as opportunity, and as equality in front of the law, (equality being one of the preeminent concepts around which liberalism has been perceived and practiced in the U.S.). Following this redefinition of equality in the courts and in Congress one can detect how equality is starting to be measured by one's ability, and willingness, to uphold revered American values, especially those that seem to be under attack by outside elements. In redefining, then, key concepts of American liberalism, this new discourse about justice is starting to map out the new American liberal subject at the beginning of the 21st century. In my research on this particular issue so far I have found that this new liberal American citizen is being defined, and delimited, not so much by the earlier, and more assimilative, norms of multiculturalism. Rather, I am finding that this new liberal, or transnational American subject is that person who can most successfully sever his links with, and sheds from his identity, any residual ethnic,

cultural, and religious attachments. In essence, then, this neoliberal American subject will be virtuous because of his ability to abide by the established secular laws despite any dual loyalties and prior emotional attachments. He will be virtuous because of being willing to sacrifice latent attachments to foreign places and cultures for the common good of his new society, this common good being ‘our common security.’ And he will be free because, by practicing this new liberal citizen identity, he will have become un-emotional and more rational, both of these attributes signifying the near-apogee of the secular liberal subject. I am suggesting, therefore, that this reconstitution of the American liberal subject is simultaneously constituting the threat abroad probably along the lines of actors who appear to be irrational, emotional, unaccountable, and unlawful, all attributes of the “rogue state” in the post-Cold war era.

A THEORY OF NATIONAL INTEREST AND NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

This work provides a theory of national identity formation. More importantly, it also provides a theory about the creation of state interests. Regarding national identity formation, this work differs from other such undertakings in the literature of International Relations in that it looks at the “bottom up” construction of national identities, as opposed to the systemic level theories that capture the same phenomenon.⁵ It investigates how societal groups within nation states re-constitute themselves and the nation through their daily lives. Such an account differs also from other domestic-level constructivist theories which focus exclusively on how political elites internalize and then externalize

⁵ Alex Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

the national collective identity through their images and actions.⁶ Both these bodies of work take the existence of particular national collective identities as given and then link these pre-given identities to foreign policy behavior. My work operates at both sides of the continuum of, first, identity creation and, secondly, foreign policy behavior as a result of this identity construction. The theory offered in my work first explains how national identities are being created, and, secondly, explains how the accepted national identity limits the foreign policy choices available to countries. In the first phase of identity construction, my theory of national identity formation is able to explain why a certain identity, from the available many, is able to become the accepted, the national one.⁷ In the second phase of foreign policy making, the theory is able to show how the dominant national identity infuses with meaning the country's national interest so that certain foreign policy choices become unimaginable whereas others become possible and, thus, actionable. One of the perennial puzzles in the constructivist literature of International Relations, which links identities to interests and those to foreign policy, is how and why certain national identities, and not others, come about. In my work, following Gramsci's lead in his Prison Notebooks⁸ where he talks about morality, I argue that the identity, from among the many, that best captures the secular morality of the people is the one that emerges as the national collective identity of a country; this is the one that becomes hegemonic, to use Gramsci's phrase, its legitimacy resting on its ethical prescriptions and

⁶ Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁷ Mlada Bukovansky and Ted Hopf very successfully capture the creation of national collective identities. Still, they do not offer an account of why a particular national identity becomes adopted and not another from the available others. Mlada Bukovansky, "American Identity and Neutral Rights, from Independence to the War of 1812," *International Organization* 51, No.2 (Spring 1997):209-243; Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York, 1971), hereafter as *SPN*.

codes. It is then, I argue, the “ethical fit” between a national identity and the secular morality⁹ of the majority of the people in a given country that propels an identity to national prominence and acceptance, while simultaneously delegitimizing the available others. Another perennial question in the literature of International Relations is how state’s form their interests. The work here offers a theory about the creation of state interest. It proposes that state interests are endogenously created through societal contestation over acceptable moral codes at the state level. This is, then, also an inductive theory of state interest creation that is theoretically informed and empirically validated.

In this work I link social contestation, and eventual social order, at the domestic level with foreign policy making and behavior at the international level. In particular, I use my reading of Gramsci to theorize about how political contestation within countries among different societal groups gives rise to a roughly consensual view about what it means to be a citizen of a particular nation state. I then link this consensual view about the meaning of citizenship in a particular country to the foreign policy choices that that country makes. The meaning of citizenship, what it means for example to be a good American or a good Briton, is one way of capturing the national identity of a nation state, its own self-perception, its own understanding of how it differs from other countries. As such, this is a work about the formation of national identities, and identities imply interest, specifically national interest. I argue, then, that it is the particular national identity of a country that gives content to its national interest, which in turn provides the security lenses through which countries view other nations and the surrounding security environment.

⁹ On the centrality of morality in the struggle of the weak for political emancipation, albeit with deleterious unemancipatory results, see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), ch. 3.

In essence, I am looking at how discourses constitute subjects, as subjects in groups, within the national space of a country. Laclau and Mouffe have argued clearly for such social production of the subject when stating that “it is the discourse that constitutes the subject position of the social agent, and ... not the social agent who is the origin of the discourse.”¹⁰ Groups may interpret their daily realities with the use of ideas, belief systems, and histories. Their interaction with other groups within a nation’s space creates an intersubjective social reality at the domestic level.¹¹ Another name for this intersubjective reality within the national terrain is national ideology, the equivalent to Gramsci’s hegemonic ideology. Other social scientists have captured this intersubjective social reality, for example Durkheim with his focus on collective conscience, Bourdieu when looking at the habitus, or Foucault with the discursive formations, to name some of the most recent social thinkers. To a certain degree, these thinkers look at how the intersubjective social reality they are unearthing produces predictable and acceptable social behaviors which sustain social orders. I look primarily, and first, at the disruptions of these intersubjective social realities and, secondly, at the ensuing corrective social actions and discourses that the affected social groups produce in order to rescue the imagined social order from destruction and/or rescue themselves from further imagined social marginalization.

In this analysis the national interest is not a static but a variable concept. Its definition reflects a country’s national ideology – a distillation of an entire moral code

¹⁰ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *New Left Review*, #166, 1987, p.82. See also, . Ernesto Laclau, ed. *The Making of Political Identities*, (New York: Verso, 1994), especially Anna Marie Smith, “Rastafari as Resistance and the Ambiguities of Essentialism in the “New Social Movements.”

¹¹ For an excellent account of how peoples’ narratives constitute societies see Rogers M. Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Leadership*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

and system of popular beliefs that typify a people as they respond to the changing interests, economic and otherwise, of elites. Prominent socioeconomic groups and sectors want to readjust their country's orientation so as to best serve their narrow material interests. In their effort to persuade the rest of the society they seek to shape popular beliefs and moral codes according to their own interests and vision. Such efforts are not uncontested. The religious beliefs, sense of morality, and cultural practices of the common people give them enough influence to also shape the final national consensus over ideology and national interest. It is this final consensus over secular morality that informs the content of a nation's national interest. In brief, the recovery of the American national identity will show how material interests, moral codes, and social practices interact to produce the nation's identity and national interest.

My theoretical framework locates political power not only among the traditional units of analysis, like individuals, socioeconomic and interest groups, but also in the elusive arenas of discourses and ideology. When socioeconomic groups formulate their preferred political agendas with the purpose of co-opting secular mass culture, their political ideologies borrow from popular beliefs and codes of public morality as much as they try to redefine them. But ultimately, the power of persuasion rests with these ideologies. It is these ideologies, in the form of discourses that vie with each other for mass support and legitimacy. The ideology that best captures popular beliefs and is the most evocative of public moral codes is the one that will prevail nationally. An ideology becomes national because it is able to popularize its code of morality. Thus, contrary to previous studies on ideas, including the democratic peace theory, my explanation succeeds in demonstrating the independent effect of ideas on foreign policy. It does so by

showing how the different discourses/ideologies maneuvering for national acceptance prescribe very different foreign policies, and that by choosing one over its rivals a nation is also, unknowingly, choosing between war and peace.

The theoretical explanation offered here specifies the location of this process of national identity formation. I show the ‘public sphere’ where mass culture is articulated and to which dominant elites try to gain access in order to shape public morality and beliefs. I explicitly locate this public sphere in my empirical chapters as comprising churches, places of worship, the work place, the welfare sites, and grassroots meetings. The sites that constitute the contentious public sphere vary from one historical case to another. In all cases, though, I choose the most appropriate social site where mass culture and elite economic interests intersect through their respective discourses, and from where ultimately emerges a unifying national identity.

“In the National Interest of the country”

Perhaps one of the most revisited and scrutinized topics in the literature of International Relations is what causes war and peace between states. Such a question entails looking at how threat perceptions and conceptions of national interest influence countries’ foreign policy choices.¹²

The main argument I am advancing in this book is that foreign policy making is inextricably linked to the image that a country has about itself. I argue that the key to understanding how countries view their external security environment lies with an understanding of how countries view themselves, that is, it lies with an understanding of

¹² In this project I am not taking into consideration systemic theories on war and peace. Rather, I choose to open up the ‘black box’ of nation-states and look inside.

how countries develop their national identities. More specifically, I look at how public moral values inform the self-image of a country and the definition of its national interest.

In my theory I argue that, to a large extent, countries' identities are the cumulative effect of the interplay between secular morality, economic interests, and religious beliefs at the domestic level. Specifically, I argue that religious beliefs help reconstruct public morality and ethical codes and, by doing so, define and redefine a country's national identity. As a result, decisions whether or not to wage war are not simply the domain of politicians and interested elites, nor does war result mainly from the imperatives of the international system. The perception of external threat to a country's security, the necessity of going to war, or the need to use diplomatic means for resolving a diplomatic dispute, are tied to how countries see themselves. In my work, I have found that often religion is the intermediary between economic interests and national codes of morality, the two most important elements in the construction of a country's self image. It is this national self image that determines what is in the national interest of a country. And it is the definition of a state's national interest that guides countries when choosing between pacific and aggressive means for resolving diplomatic disputes.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IR LITERATURE

The foreign policy explanation in this work criticizes three mainstream theories of international relations, the democratic peace theory,¹³ theories on the domestic sources of

¹³ Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No.3 (Summer 1983), pp. 205-235; Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (December 1986), pp. 1151-1169; Bruce Russett, "Democracy and Peace." In Bruce Russett, et al. (eds.) *Choices in World Politics* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1989); Zeev Maoz and Nasrin Abdolali, "Regime Type and International Conflict, 1816-1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 33, pp. 3-35 (1989); Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett,

foreign policy,¹⁴ and constructivism.¹⁵ In a world of anarchy all states are fundamentally the same, and they are all guided by the same type of national interest – or so the major theories of international relations, such as neorealism, argue. In the last ten years, though, it has become accepted that states differ in type. Scholars have identified something close to an “empirical law” in the finding that democracies have rarely fought wars against one another, and many policymakers seem persuaded. The literature on the “democratic peace” has made an important contribution to our understanding of international relations by suggesting that the causes of war and peace depend on more than the systemic attributes of international anarchy. But the search for a satisfactory explanation of why democracies do not fight one another, despite promising leads, seems likely to result in a theoretical dead end. A second school of thought that acknowledges differences in states’ national interests is associated mainly with the work of Jack Snyder. It focuses on elite manipulation of national myths and symbols in the pursuit of parochial interests by various coalitions. It fails to explain though how ordinary people are persuaded by these national myths, and thus cannot explain how these redefinitions of national interests get accepted by countries. A third school – constructivism – also acknowledges divergent national interests and links them to countries’ “identities.” But constructivists have only

“Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (September 1993), pp. 624-638; William Dixon, “Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of Conflict,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (March 1994), pp. 14-32. John M. Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1994), pp. 87-125; John M. Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹⁴ The best example of such work is Jack Snyder’s work on the domestic causes of overexpansion; see Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambitions*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Martha Finnemore, *National Interests*, Audie Klotz, “Norms Reconstituting Interests: Global Racial Equality and U.S. Sanctions Against South Africa”, *International Organization* 49, No.3 (Summer 1995); Richard Price, “Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines,” *International Organization* 52, No. 3 (Summer 1998); Nina Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo: The U.S. and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use,” *International Organization* 53, No. 3 (Summer 1999), to name some representative pieces of work.

just begun to explore the sources of state identity. Their tendency to position themselves in opposition to the material-based explanations highlighted by realism has made constructivists underestimate the role that material interests, particularly economic ones, play in the forging of national ideologies and national interests. The explanation offered in this book provides an explanation of how interests are formed and national identities created. It does so by, first, moving beyond the epiphenomenal causality of the democratic peace theory, secondly, by showing how ordinary citizens contribute to their countries' redefined national priorities, and, thirdly, by complementing the non-material ontology of current theories on identity and foreign policy making.

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

We cannot start to understand these different interpretations of the current security environment by the U.S. unless we locate the constitutive elements of their national identities. For example, recent analyses, especially of American foreign policy towards Iraq, emphasize America's newly discovered zeal for empire building as the root cause of the war against Iraq. On the other hand, we see how a large segment of the American public does not see American foreign policy as imperialistic but, rather, as inevitable response to external necessities. In this paper I argue that it is how the U.S. has been identifying itself over the years that can best explain American foreign policy choices. This explanation of foreign policy making also helps explain not only the recent war against Iraq, but also its execution without UN authorization.

In my research so far, I have been able to recover what I believe are the two most important elements of American national identity around which the country has been

building its national consensus since its inception, and which, by extension, have been guiding its foreign policy choices. I did this by tracing the creation and redefinition of the country's national identity from the 1780s to the mid-1840s, the subject matter of the previous two chapters. What I found was that the dialectic between public morality and republicanism has been at the center of American national discourses over the years, and it is this interplay of public morality and republicanism that defines and redefines the country's national identity, and national interest, over and over again. As is the case in 1812 and 1846, where we cannot explain why the U.S. saw Britain as a threat in 1812 but not in 1846 without examining the moral codes of the American people at the time, we similarly cannot explain why the U.S. has been gravitating towards a unilateral foreign policy in the last few years, evidenced by the climactic war against Iraq outside the UN, without examining the new moral codes of the Americans in the post-cold war era.

I argue that it is how America conceptualizes liberalism currently, itself a cumulative result of how the country has come to frame liberalism through its 200 plus years of national experiences, that has made the option of a multinational institutional approach towards Iraq unthinkable, and the war possible. Even before the creation of the independent United States, the rebellious states closely identified with the ideals of republicanism. Liberalism has been the sine qua non national signifier for the American people. More importantly, the argument here is that what gives specific meaning to these generic and general liberal ideals, what confines the meaning of liberalism to particular historical circumstances, so that this meaning resonates with people's practices and moral codes, is liberalism's evolving secular morality. The old belief in the exceptional moral character of the republican citizen, itself a byproduct of the Puritanical religious beliefs,

at the beginning of the 19th century, embellished later with the belief in the missionary role of the morally superior people of the Anglo-Saxon race can be traced in today's beliefs shared by most Americans. Their conviction that the U.S. had a moral duty to rid the Iraqi people of an oppressive regime, as well as their assertion that the U.S. is exceptionally positioned to export democracy abroad, made the unilateral pursuit of the war possible. It is the international community that is lacking in moral resolve to do the right thing and not a U.S. that is driven by expansionist desires. Contrary to the arguments that see the U.S. asserting American domination abroad, the majority of the American people are sure that the U.S. is simply pursuing a moral agenda abroad.

Recently, the United States and Great Britain distinguished themselves from the rest of the world in their firm commitment to fight a war against Iraq. Both countries saw the use of force without a United Nations' authorization as legitimate international action. Regarding the U.S. foreign policy, the American administration repeatedly made a case about the security implications of replacing autocracies abroad with democracies while Britain emphasized the imperative moral purpose of supporting human rights. Ironically, respect for human rights and belief in the primacy of democratic institutions are also the pillars upon which the Western European democracies stand. But the European democracies choose to externalize liberal values and promote democratic institutions abroad differently from Britain and the U.S., as the recent experience over Iraq has aptly demonstrated.¹⁶ They do so by strengthening and expanding the web of existing international laws, transnational negotiations, and the role of the United Nations, all aspects of liberalism in practice. In the next section I offer a solely provide a schematic

¹⁶ Kagan Robert, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

outline of how American policymakers came to view the security environment following the end of the Cold War. The application of my theory about the creation of national identity, and the resulting national interest, will be part of the next phase of this research agenda.

I. A COMMON THREAD IN AMERICA'S POWER PROJECTION ABROAD

Most of the arguments in support of the recent American foreign policy under the Bush administration, as well as of course the Bush administration itself, portray the adoption of this new national security strategy as the result of the new threat of terrorism. In contrast, I suggest that the new national security strategy is more a result of the unparalleled military strength and economic influence that the country possesses and how it chooses to use them. More specifically, I argue, first, that how the country has chosen to project its unparalleled force abroad is a reflection of the idea that the nation has about itself; the country's foreign policy choices, in other words, are guided by country's national self-image. Secondly, I argue that how the country has recently chosen to use its military strength and harness its economic prowess is a continuation of, rather than a departure from, American foreign policy objectives as they were set at the end of the Cold war.¹⁷

In essence, I am arguing that President Bush's seemingly new national security strategy really encapsulates the consensual view over America's proper role abroad as that started evolving with the end of the Cold war. Elements of this post-cold war national consensus over the country's foreign policy can be seen not only in President

¹⁷ Most of the arguments that follow in this section appear in Maria Fanis, "Old Elements in the New Security Policy," *Iraq and Beyond: The New U.S. National Security Strategy*, Occasional Papers, Peace Studies Program, Cornell University, January 2003.

Bush's recently announced national security policy, but it can also be detected in the foreign policies of his two predecessors. In this regard, I argue that the events of September 11 acted more as a catalyst to a well formed foreign policy agenda, than as a formative experience in the nation's life.

A brief overview of the evolution of this national consensus over foreign policy can be traced back by looking at political leaders' beliefs, and how these informed their vision about American foreign policy, and at the concrete steps they took to implement this vision. What one notices then is the common thread that unites, rather than differentiates, the fundamental beliefs about foreign policy goals that guided democratic and republican Presidents alike. One also sees a distinct similarity in the manner with which these administrations attempted to translate their beliefs into foreign policy. The first element that permeates America's post-Cold war behavior abroad is the belief in the exceptional character of the American nation. The country's unique political and economic makeup, best defined as democratic capitalism,¹⁸ has, since the inception of the republic, rendered the home front immune to class, religious, and ethnic cleavages, has promised equal opportunity to all, and has recently created the unprecedented affluence of the 1990. Abroad, democratic capitalism seems to have succeeded in crippling the former Soviet Union and its alternative politico-economic experiment, has reinstated Kuwait's national sovereignty, and has restored respect for human rights in areas like Bosnia and Kosovo. All these tangible successes, both at home and abroad, could not but point to the leadership role with which the U.S. has been entrusted by history by virtue of

¹⁸ Eugene R. Wittkopf, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., James M. Scott, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*, (Thomson, 2001), p. 213.

its unique ability to succeed where, all, other countries have failed, both domestically and at the international level.

Such belief in the centrality, and righteousness, of American role abroad was echoed by Bill Clinton when he argued that “the country is on the right side of history.” On the “wrong side of history,” was Bill Clinton finding China at the time. Thus, prior to his trip to China in 1998 he said that he intended to offer the Chinese “a new a different historical reality.”¹⁹ And the same theme was continued with George W. Bush when the then governor said in 1999 that “we firmly believe that our nation is on the right side of history.”²⁰ This belief in the country’s right choice is now explicitly included in this new security document where it is stated that there is ‘a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.’

Another constituent element of this consensual view over American role abroad is the promise of an open international trading system. In order to achieve this end the Bush administration wants to expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy. According to the national security document, the US will “provide resources to aid countries that have met the challenge of national reform.” In particular, the US calls for ‘pro-growth’ legal and regulatory policies, “tax policies – particularly lower marginal tax rates- that improve incentives for work and investment” and free trade, which “fosters the diffusion of technologies and ideas.”

This is not so different from Bill Clinton’s pledges in 1993 to “expand and strengthen the world’s community of market-based economies” and his demands that

¹⁹ Andrew J. Bacevich, *Different Drummers, Same Drum*, in Annual Editions on American Foreign Policy, (McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 20020, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 20.

Japan opens more of its markets of American exports.²¹ The liberalization of world trade was guaranteed with the signing of the Uruguay Round of GATT in 1994, and the creation of a new World Trade Organization was seen by Clinton as means for the “economic renewal” of the U.S. and the world.²²

If the beliefs of the post-Cold war Presidents seem to be quite similar, so were the means they used to secure their preferred foreign policies abroad. Even before September 11, George W. Bush was arguing that the defensive barrier around the United States was rapidly eroding and that to do nothing would be perilous to the country. President Bush had argued at the time that the country was threatened by “all the unconventional and invisible threats of new technologies and old hatreds.”²³ The end of the Cold War saw not the dissolution of what could have been called a ‘cold-war relic’ NATO, but the expansion of its mission. Instead of dissolving, following the dissolution of the reason for its existence, NATO’s redefined itself and its mission. Ethnic conflict in the post-Cold war Balkans was seen as a threat to the security of NATO members. This transformation took shape in the 1990s when the Pentagon announced its ‘strategy of engagement,’ in out of area operations. The elder Bush first proposed the program of NATO enlargement. Clinton converted that idea into reality. With the alliance’s enlargement, its mission to help spread democratic institutions took central stage in how NATO saw itself and was seen by others. In essence, it saw itself, and was seen by others, as useful and necessary.

The closest parallel to America’s ‘new’ thinking of a borderless defense perimeter is where the nation had drawn its defense borders during the Cold War period. Back then,

²¹ *New York Times*, September 28, 1993.

²² Thomas Patterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895*, Vol. 2, p. 381.

²³ Andrew J. Bacevich, p. 22.

as now, the American Presidents from Truman to Reagan had vowed to resist communism wherever it existed, no matter how far that was from the homeland. Equally evocative of President Bush's foreign policy triad of economic goals, military means, and international diplomacy was the country's foreign policy during the Cold War, which was similarly operating in all three spheres. But what seems to show most clearly the similarity between the content of American foreign policy in the Cold War era and at present is the justification behind the militarization of the country's foreign policy in both eras. The pre-eminent document that signified the militarization of American foreign policy after World War II was NSC-68 in 1950. Back then, as now, an international crisis was presented as the reason for a massive military build-up during peacetime. In June of 1950, it was the outbreak of the Korean war that made NSC-68 the blue-print for American foreign policy for the next 40 years. In 2002, it is the terrorist attacks against the homeland on September 11 that have justified the militarization of our foreign policy.

But, is it really the case that national disasters redefine nations? In the case of the adoption of NSC-68, the Korean war was just the catalyst that helped put into practice the national consensus over America's foreign policy that had been building since 1944. In the post Cold War era, if one were to look at the foreign policy continuity between the Clinton and Bush administrations, one can see the emergence of this national consensus over foreign policy before the terrorist attacks on September 2001. The tragic events of September 11, therefore, seem to have done more to solidify in the nation's mind a vision about its foreign policy mission that had been taking shape since the end of the Cold war, than help the nation redefine itself.

II. THE OFFICIAL THREAT PERCEPTION: REPUBLICANISM, OR ABSENCE OF, AS THE REFERENCE POINT FOR DISCERNING THREATS

For the purpose of this paper my analysis of threat perception will focus primarily on the language and rationale presented in the September 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.²⁴

In the September 2002 *National Security Strategy* document, the Bush administration identified “rogue states” as a new, and potent, threat to the national security of the U.S. Specifically, the document identified the threats to American security as emanating from: 1) Rogue states and terrorists and 2) from the intentions of these rogue states/terrorists to obtain weapons of mass destruction and from the greater likelihood that they will use WMD against the U.S. It is also stipulated in the document that: 3) Even though “none of these contemporary threats rivals the sheer destructive power that was arrayed against us by the Soviet Union,” the “nature and motivations of these new adversaries, ... make today’s security environment more complex and dangerous.”²⁵ And if these countries’/groups’ “sheer destructive power” is not what makes “today’s security environment more complex and dangerous” compared to that of the Cold war era, it is the fact that the leaders of rogue states are more willing to take risks, gamble with the lives of their people, and the wealth of their nations that makes them irrational and, thus, undeterrable. The U.S. cannot hold them hostage on any account. As the *National Security Strategy Document* says: because of these characteristics, “deterrence [cannot] be an effective defense.” “Deterrence based only upon the threat of retaliation is less

²⁴ George W. Bush, The White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” September 2002.

²⁵ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p. 13.

likely to work against [the] leaders of [these] rogue states.”²⁶ Deterrence worked during the Cold War because the Soviet Union was “generally [a] status quo, risk-averse adversary.”²⁷

One interesting, and important question, is whether this threat perception, as it was defined and articulated by the Bush administration, was primarily the effect of the 9/11 attacks or whether it was a new understanding and articulation of the post-cold war security environment that was taking shape before the 9/11 attacks.²⁸

Anthony Lake, the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs, had used the term “backlash states” to describe the emerging new threat to American security in the post-Cold war era, a threat conception which was similar to the threat perception advanced by the Bush administration. Lake argued that Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Libya, are “recalcitrant and outlaw states that not only choose to remain outside the [democratic] family but assault its basic values.”²⁹ He said that “[f]or now they lack the resources of a superpower, which would enable them to seriously threaten the democratic order being created around them. Nevertheless, their behavior is often aggressive and defiant. The ties between them are growing as they seek to thwart or quarantine themselves from a global trend to which they seem incapable of adapting.” He argued that these countries shared some common characteristics, which were: they are ruled by cliques that control power through coercion; they all have regimes that suppress basic human rights; they promote radical ideologies; their leaders have share a common

²⁶ *National Security Strategy*, p. 15.

²⁷ *National Security Strategy*, p. 15.

²⁸ For a similar argument but offering a different explanation see Jacques E. C. Hymans, “The Roots of the Washington Threat Consensus,” in Betty Glad and Chris J. Dolan, eds., *Striking First: The Preventive War Doctrine and the Reshaping of U.S. Foreign Policy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 33-46.

²⁹ Anthony Lake, “Confronting Backlash States,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March/April 1994), p. 45.

antipathy towards popular participation; they do not function effectively in alliances; and, most importantly, they share a siege mentality. As a result, Lake wrote, these countries “are embarked on ambitious and costly military programs- especially in weapons of mass destruction and missile delivery systems- in a misguided quest for a great equalizer to protect their regimes or advance their purposes abroad.”³⁰

So, the identification of “rogue states” as a security threat to the United States is not a novel threat perception following the September 11 attacks on American soil. But, what unites the foreign policy analyses of the American administrations, at least since the Clinton administrations, is not only their consensus that ‘rogue’ or ‘backlash’ states pose a grave security threat to the United States. It is also their understanding of *why* these particular countries pose a security threat.

These “rogue states” were the antithesis of liberalism; they were ruled by a corrupt oligarchy through coercion, were suppressing the human rights of their citizens, and some of them were promoting radical identities. In addition, all of them were suspected of wanting to acquire weapons of mass destruction.³¹ While the first three characteristics of ‘rogue’ nations pertain to how these countries defy liberalism within their own borders, the fourth one was interpreted by the Bush administration as a violation of international law and as a challenge to the legitimate international order. The logic behind the rogue-state security threat is that the act of subjecting people to brutality and oppression within the confines of a sovereign nation can have two implications for the outside world. Oppressive regimes are more likely to externalize the same aggressive behavior abroad, the same way democracies are known to externalize abroad the

³⁰ Anthony Lake, “Confronting Backlash States,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March/April 1994), p. 45.

³¹ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 14.

domestically produced pacific behavior. Also, these oppressive practices at home induce these countries' self-isolation from the rest of the international system, which in turn breeds and perpetuates a "siege mentality" as they feel increasingly unable to adapt the new "global trend" of democratization.³² It is, in other words, the inherently aggressive nature of these regimes, coupled with their desperation, which makes them such a lethal threat if they are allowed to develop weapons of mass destruction. As it was stated in the National Security Strategy document, these rogue nations and terrorists do not have the "destructive power that was arrayed against us by the Soviet Union. However, the nature and motivations of these new adversaries, their determination to obtain destructive powers, . . . , and the greater likelihood that they will use WMD against us make today's security environment more complex and dangerous."³³ So, it is the expectation that rogue nations cannot but behave in an evil, aggressive, and irrational manner that makes their possession of WMD so lethal. It follows from this that it is nearly inconsequential whether they actually possess these weapons. The mere suspicion of possessing such weapons is enough to turn them into security threats because it is their nature, so inherently brutal and aggressive, and their isolation, that makes them untrustworthy.

President Clinton had offered a similar assessment about the threat to the United States from nondemocratic countries in his State of the Union address in January 1994. He stated that "democracies do not attack each other," and therefore "... the best strategy to insure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere." He said that democratization was the "third pillar" of his foreign policy

³² Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," p. 45.

³³ *The National Security Strategy*, p. 13.

agenda.³⁴ What is evident from this common reference to the character of nondemocracies as a sufficient basis from which to gauge their future foreign policy behavior, is that it says more about what the U.S. believes about itself, than about what might be the foreign policy options available to a dictator. America's post-Cold war behavior abroad is grounded in the belief about the exceptional character of the American nation.

Looking at American self-perception through these liberal lenses then can explain why the majority of the American citizens believe that the deliberative practices and institutions of their country inculcate in them the principles of decent and benevolent behavior towards others, both at home and abroad. It is, then, consequential that most Americans believe that the U.S. has been, and still is, an exceptional democracy. In addition, almost everybody knows that the U.S. has more material capabilities than anybody else to embark on state-building or democratization abroad. These public beliefs about America's nature, capability, and predisposition can easily see justice and mission in a foreign policy that intends to rid the world of security threats, in this case the rogue nations, while at the same time brings democratic institutions and values to their people. In the words of Anthony Lake; "[a]s the sole superpower, the United States has a special responsibility for developing a strategy to neutralize, contain, and, through selective pressure, perhaps eventually transform these backlash states into constructive members of the international community."³⁵

³⁴ Excerpts from President Clinton's State of the Union Address, *The New York Times*, 26, January 1994, p. A17.

³⁵ Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," p. 45.

III. PUBLIC MORALITY IN THE POST-COLD WAR

If the self-identification as an exceptional democracy is providing the conceptual lenses with which the American administrations have identified potential threats since the end of the cold war, we need to turn to the country's public morality in order to understand the turn towards unilateralism in American foreign policy during that same period, of which the war against Iraq without UN authorization is just one example. What we see is that while the similarity in threat perception since 1989 is a by-product of the image that the nation has about itself, we need to turn to the country's overall public morality in order to trace the gradual move from multilateralism to a more curtailed multilateralism.

The rise of the Christian Right in American politics the 1980s and 1990s brought to the fore the importance of traditional social values for a large number of Americans. Supported by conservative evangelical Christians, the Christian Right also found fertile soil in locales that were not expected to be influenced by traditional social values. These were the quite prosperous suburbs of the South, Southwest, and the Midwest. What united evangelical Christians, prosperous suburban middle-class professionals, low-income, and working class people behind the Christian Right was their perceived threat to the traditional American values of private property, minimum government regulation, individualism, hard work, self-sufficiency, family values, and traditional gender roles.³⁶ Behind this attack they saw the workings of secular humanists and moral relativists who

³⁶ Chip Berlet, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000), pp. 228-230.

were spreading the ideas of liberal godlessness, state intrusion in the market place, and global collectivism.³⁷

Their belief, and fear, was that a liberal elite had been successful in sidetracking America, first, with the New Deal's statism and, later, with the social and cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s. These liberal reforms were seen as an attack on the regular working Americans and their "producerist"³⁸ ethos. The traditional ethos of producerism, best exemplified by the productive groups of "businessmen, manufacturers, hard-hats, blue-collar workers, and farmers," was under attack by the "powerful class of non-producers comprised of a liberal verbalist elite (the dominant media, the major foundations and research institutions, the educational establishments, the federal and state bureaucracies) and a semipermanent welfare constituency."³⁹ This anti-elitist sentiment and feeling of encirclement by excessive liberalization of social norms and an overregulating state were further compounded by the apocalyptic beliefs and language of the evangelicals. Evangelicals see the End Times as the moment where "hard-working righteous Christians" will be betrayed by "trusted political and religious leaders" who are conspiring with the Antichrist under the false promises of "public peace and unity of all nations under one world government."⁴⁰ Fundamentalists have always warned against what they perceived to be a moral decline within the U.S.⁴¹ If godless communism was their target during the cold war, the threat from the secular humanists took center stage in the post- cold war reality. They believe that the collectivism promoted by liberals and

³⁷ Chip Berlet, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism*, p. 209.

³⁸ Chip Berlet, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism*, p. 222.

³⁹ Rusher William, *The Making of a New Majority Party*, (Ottawa, IL: Greenhill Publications, 1975), p. 14; Omi Michael, and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 127.

⁴⁰ Chip Berlet, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism*, p. 206.

⁴¹ George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 109.

secular humanists at home, as well as abroad with the help of like-minded elites, is the new threat replacing the old communist menace. This new threat had domestic and international sources since the liberal-humanist elites operated both at home and abroad. At home it is political correctness that went against traditional social values. At the international system it is the collectivist New World Order that liberal elites aspire to establish. The concept of the New Order was equated in the minds of evangelicals and the right with tyrannical globalism, and with transnational liberal elites collectivizing global governance. The response to this New World Order was “militant anti-collectivism” aimed against the collectivization of global governance and the United Nations.⁴² In this light, one can understand how the pursuit of the Iraqi war without UN authorization is congruent with the prevailing moral codes in America today. It is then not a puzzle why the majority of Americans felt it was a legitimate foreign policy choice. As we will see in the chapters that follow, this is not the first time that American foreign policy is in harmony with people’s public morality.

A VERY TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

The main argument in this paper is that American foreign policy in the post-cold war era really encapsulates the consensual view over America’s proper role abroad since the end of the Cold war. If one were to look at the foreign policy continuity between the Clinton and Bush administrations, one can see the emergence of this national consensus over foreign policy before the terrorist attacks on September 2001. The tragic events of September 11, therefore, seem to have done more to solidify in the nation’s mind a vision about its foreign policy mission that had been taking shape since the end of the Cold war,

⁴² Chip Berlet, and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism*, p. 242.

than help the nation redefine itself. This post-cold war national consensus over the country's foreign policy is reflected not only in President Bush's recently announced national security policy, but is also evident in the foreign policies of his predecessor. In this regard, the events of September 11 acted more as a catalyst to a well formed foreign policy agenda, than as a formative experience in the nation's life.