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Introduction

Despite fierce scholarly debate regarding the validity of doing so, it remains an almost ubiquitous practice to refer to states as being analogous to individual human beings. Underpinning such a practice are the assumptions that such entities exist and, more pressingly, that they possess identities that are at least somewhat settled, for it is the presumed existence of identity that makes such statements both possible and logical. If identity has long been of implicit importance within the discourse of international politics, it has more recently become of explicit interest to scholars of the foreign and security policies of states because, it has been argued, the identity of a state will influence how it behaves within the international system.

It is in this context that much has been written regarding the identity of the United States. On the one hand, this interest in American identity represents a logical product of the fact that understanding the foreign and security policy of the US is of particular importance due to that country’s unrivalled power within the contemporary international system. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the identity of the US has long been a subject of

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5 See, for example, Peter J. Katzenstein (ed), The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), and Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall (eds), Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
interest for scholars and observers because of the presumed uniqueness of the subject.\(^7\)

There is something intangible and yet intriguing about the identity of America. Perhaps this is because, as David Campbell has argued, “if all states are ‘imagined communities’…then America is the imagined community par excellence. For there has never been a country called ‘America’, nor a people known as ‘Americans’ from whom a national identity is drawn”.\(^8\) Whatever the reason, questions regarding the identity of the United States and how it might influence US security policy are of great contemporary importance.

To say that the desire to understand the identity of the United States may be great is not to suggest that gaining such understanding shall be easy. After all, identities are likely to be multiple and contested rather than single and settled.\(^9\) Furthermore, identities must continuously be reproduced through political practices.\(^10\) This latter point only increases the importance of examining the relationship between security policy and identity, for if the identity of a state such as the US is produced, it is security policy practices that are one of the key sites at which such production takes place.\(^11\)

It is the relationship between US identity and US security policy that this chapter seeks to examine. More precisely, this chapter constructs an account of this relationship that highlights the importance of two features of US identity and the implications that these hold with regard to security policy. On the one hand, it traces connections between representations of the US as an exceptional sovereign state and security policies directed at the maintenance of US political autonomy, the promotion of US military supremacy and the defeat of existential threats to America’s territory and population. On the other hand, this chapter traces connections between representations of the United States as a member of a community of states bound together by common values concerning freedom.

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\(^8\) Campbell, *Writing Security*, at p. 91.


and democracy and a security policy directed towards the constructive integration of an international society shaped by the values of the American Creed. Importantly, neither of these representations of US identity – and therefore neither of these security policies – is understood to be independent of the other. Instead, it is because of the interrelated nature of these representations within the discourse of US security policy makers that US security policy, and thus the fate of America itself, are so complex.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. Firstly, this chapter elucidates the conceptual relationship between identity and security policy. Key to this section is the argument that the concepts of “identity” and “security” are each constructed and contested, but also that the two are interrelated. Secondly, two representations of US identity that are evident within the discourse of security policy are identified and examined. The first of these emphasises the significance of the sovereign status of the US, while the second emphasises the importance of the universal character of the values of the American Creed. Thirdly, this chapter articulates the manner in which these elements of US identity shape particular understandings of the nature of the global security environment. The final section of this chapter demonstrates how these divergent representations of identity and security have led to the emergence of two trends in US security policy; one which emphasises the importance of US military dominance and one which emphasises the importance of the institutionalisation of international society. Throughout this chapter, examples are drawn from the rhetoric and practices of the Clinton and Bush administrations in order to highlight particular aspects of the argument.

**Identity and Security**

During the past quarter century, relatively settled understandings of the concepts of security and identity have become increasingly challenged. The field of Security Studies has witnessed a great deal of debate regarding the question of what the term ‘security’ means. As a result of such debate, there has been a general shift within the field away from an understanding of security as referring to the protection of the state through the exercise of military force and towards the realisation that security is, in the much quoted
words of W. B. Gallie, an essentially contested concept. During this period the broader field of international relations (IR) has witnessed a similar problematisation of the concept of identity. The reasons behind this “turn” towards the analysis of identity are many, relating to both the perceived importance of identity in the post-Cold War era and the seeming absence within traditional IR theories of serious attempts to theorise identity. Whatever the reasons behind the debate, the result has been an acceptance that the meaning of identity is not given, but constituted and, importantly, contested.

However, while settled understandings of these concepts have been challenged, a growing awareness of the relationships between identity and security has also emerged. On the one hand, the concept of identity makes the notion of security possible and shapes how “security” is understood. Within the field of security studies, this issue is addressed in terms of the need to define the referent object of the discipline before definitions of the central concept of security can be developed. The importance of this point is evident in terms of the broadening of the field of security studies beyond its traditional focus on the state. In this context it has been recognised that the identity or nature of what it is that is being secured will have a significant impact on how it is going to be secured. On the other hand, it has been argued that understandings of security and security-related practices are central to the production of identity. Thus, security policy has been understood by some as a set of processes that serve to constitute and secure the

19 Buzan, People, States and Fear, at p. 26.
identity of particular actors. Security policy may be particularly important in this regard due to the inherent relationship between identity and difference and to the frequency with which articulations of identity/difference tend to be situated within discourses of danger and insecurity. Within such discourses a foreign and dangerous “other” is held to threaten the security and identity of the “self”. Though there is plenty of room for debate as to whether this understanding of identity – as requiring insecurity – is exhaustive, it is clear that security policy represents a key site at which the constitution of identity takes place. Again, therefore, identity and security are intimately connected.

This understanding of the contested and interrelated nature of the concepts of security and identity presents us with (at least) two challenges. Firstly, the assumption that security and identity are essentially contestable concepts raises questions regarding our capacity to develop final and fixed definitions of either term. Secondly, the assumption that identity can shape understandings of security and that security practices can shape understandings of identity implies that neither of these concepts can be understood as existing prior to the other. This challenges traditional notions of causality. Importantly, both of these challenges directly limit our capacity to deploy traditional (positivist) methods of analysis regarding the relationship between identity and security. Fixed definitions form a central feature of such a methodology because the precise definition of variables must precede analysis of the relationships between them. In addition, the notion of causality is a central feature of a traditional scientific method that aims to explain how social reality operates. Acknowledging that identity and security are discursively constructed (and therefore contestable) concepts and that the meanings of

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these concepts are often interrelated precludes the possibility of applying such methods of analysis.

While these two challenges are worthy of note, neither should be conceived as being fatal to the analysis of the relationship between identity and security policy. As has been noted above, the recognition that certain concepts, including those of identity and security, are essentially contestable ought to discourage us from seeking prior definitions that can subsequently be applied to an analysis of US policy. However, to acknowledge that final and fixed meanings are impossible to arrive at is not to suggest that we are left merely with the possibility of deconstructing particular understandings of such terms so as to demonstrate the fundamentally contingent nature of all such definitions. Efforts to fix the meaning of terms, including “identity” and “security”, are as much a feature of politics as is the inherently contestable nature of all concepts.26 Furthermore, some efforts at the securing of meaning are more powerful than others, resulting in the emergence of dominant understandings of such concepts in a given context.27 As a result, analyses of the meaning of such concepts must focus on examining the political processes through which certain meanings of these concepts are continuously (re)produced within a particular political context. These meanings are neither natural nor inevitable, but they are likely to be prominent features of the political terrain in which policy-makers must operate. One of the functions of analysis should therefore be to “look and see” how such concepts are represented within the context of US security policy discourse.28

A similar analytic position must be adopted with regard to the relationships between such concepts. Rather than labelling one concept as “cause” and the other as “effect”, we would do well to consider them as two (among many) nodes within a discursive field. Again, this relationship exists because the concept of security requires an identity that is to be secured and because representations of security serve to reconstitute particular

identities. This understanding of the relationship between identity and security has implications with regard to the political practices of security policy makers. If particular understandings of the identity of a state are prominent features within the political discourse of that state, and if to deploy a particular understanding of security is, implicitly, to deploy a particular understanding of identity, then policy makers face constraints in terms of the types of security policy they can articulate. Thus, as well as examining how the concepts of identity and security are represented within US security policy discourse, we should also examine how these representations implicitly and explicitly relate to one another.

**The Identity of the United States**

Analyses of US identity as it relates to foreign and security policy are numerous and diverse. From George F. Kennan’s (1985) concerns regarding American “legalism” and “moralism” to William Appleman Williams’ (1972) condemnation of American imperialism, and from Arthur Schlesinger’s (1986) emphasis on the notions of experiment and destiny in US foreign relations to Walter Russell Mead’s (2002) identification of four schools of thought regarding US foreign policy, scholars have repeatedly sought to link trends in US foreign and security policy to particular understandings of America’s identity. Even a brief study of this literature demonstrates that attempting to analyse the nature of the identity of the United States represents a mammoth task. As in the case of the mammoth, however, two points stand out; two representations of US identity are particularly prominent within the literature regarding US identity and security policy and within the discourse of security policy-makers themselves. On the one hand, considerable emphasis is placed on the principles of the “American Creed” as a set of values that define what it means to be American. Secondly,

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30 Weldes, ‘Cultural Production’, at p. 41.
representations of US identity also place what is often implicit emphasis upon the United States’ status as a sovereign, territorially bounded nation-state. Each of these representations of US identity has important implications regarding understandings of security and, therefore, regarding the articulation and application of US security policy.

Perhaps the most prominent aspect of US identity is related to the political principles upon which America was founded. As described by William Tyler Page, this “American Creed” includes such principles as freedom, equality, justice, and humanity. Within the US, these principles were articulated within such documents as the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and institutionalized through the mechanisms of democratic liberalism, republicanism, and the rule of law. The suggestion has been frequently made that, to a significant extent, it is these principles and institutions that define what “America” is.35 Thus, for example, if we examine the National Security Strategies produced by both Democrat and Republican administrations in recent decades, we see references to such principles as being foundational to the identity of the US.36 State of the Union speeches are also littered with references to the values of America, as are other more mundane statements made by Presidents, security policy makers and members of Congress. Similarly, a brief survey of literature that addresses the general topic of US security policy reveals the frequency with which such principles are referred to as the bedrocks of US identity, thus demonstrating the taken-for-granted status of these fundamental principles.37

What is most important about such representations of US identity is not merely their prevalence but also their character, the key point here being that the principles of the

37 See, for example, Robert Kagan, Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order. (London: Atlantic Books, 2003); Mead, Power, Terror, and; Nye, Paradox of Power.
American Creed are routinely described in *universal* rather than national terms.\(^{38}\) This universalism is particularly evident within the language employed within the Declaration of Independence; “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. Furthermore, within the rhetoric of policy makers, the values that are said to underpin America are not only described as being essential to the promotion of the well being of American citizens, but as being necessary to the well being of all people. Thus, the Clinton administration suggested that the “universal values of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law” were central to the US and to all peoples.\(^{39}\) President Bush recently echoed this point stating that “freedom is timeless. It does not belong to one government or one generation. Freedom is the dream and the right of every person, in every nation, in every age”.\(^{40}\) Again, the key point here is that the identity of the US is represented as being defined by values that are universal in character.

Representations of US identity are characterised by a second prominent feature, however, that which evokes America’s status as a territorially-bounded, nation-state. The implications of this feature of representations of US identity are often referred to, though rarely considered in great detail. Scholars ranging from Hans Morgenthau\(^ {41}\) to Joseph Nye\(^ {42}\) have asserted that the United States ought to adopt a security policy grounded in its interests as a normal nation-state, yet such scholars have rarely engaged the questions of what a ‘normal’ nation-state is and how it may come to have existed. That this aspect of


US identity is rarely considered both results from, and gives some indication of, the taken-for-granted status of sovereignty within IR literature. The multitude of practices that constitute the United States as a territorially-bounded nation-state, while often assumed to be a natural part of the modern political environment, are central features of the discourse of US security policy. Proclamations regarding US independence as well as early efforts at expanding, mapping and securing the borders of the US were all shaped by European traditions and understandings of the nature of political community. The result has been a strong sense of American nationalism, which despite its difference to the ethnic nationalism of some early European states, remains rooted in the notion that people live in distinct communities that are politically and geographically distinct.

Today, American administrations routinely invoke nationalist representations of US identity by proclamation that the protection of American territory and the American population remains the primary responsibility of the government in Washington.

The central feature of this understanding of political community in general and US identity in particular, is the concept of sovereignty. Importantly, as Stephen Krasner has noted, this concept is complex and can incorporate multiple elements. The element of sovereignty that is of greatest importance in this context is that which Krasner defines as “Westphalian sovereignty”. The Westphalian conception of sovereignty is centred on the geographic limits of political authority and responsibility. This conception of sovereignty inscribes limits not only with regard to the authority and responsibility of the US government, however. According to Krasner, Westphalian sovereignty also requires “the absence of authoritative external influences” within the territorial borders of a state.

Representations of the US as a sovereign state therefore evoke a strict distinction between

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the United States and the world beyond it. The identity of the US is characterised in terms of a territory and a population, both of which are particular rather than universal.

Thus, two quite different representations of US identity – one which is characterised by universalism and one which is characterised by particularism – are evident within the discourse of US security policy. Importantly, however, these representations are rarely deployed independently of one another. Indeed, one of the defining features of US security policy discourse is the manner in which various policy makers have sought to integrate these distinctive understandings of US identity within their rhetorical practices. For example, the Clinton administration’s frequent reference to the United States as the ‘indispensable nation’ implies that the US represents both a distinct nation-state and an (indispensable) element of something much larger, a political community of universal extent.\(^49\) The Bush administration too has deployed understandings US identity that draw upon each of the representations discussed above. Thus, after characterising freedom as the birthright of every person in every civilisation, the Bush administration identified the United States as the leader of the ‘great mission’ to conquer freedom’s adversaries.\(^50\) On the one hand, such representations distinguish the US from other states by granting it a leadership role. As such, there is a strong sense of exceptionalism in such representations of US identity.\(^51\) On the other hand, the deployment of such rhetoric also serves to situate the United States within a broader community of peoples who are bound together by their shared desire for freedom. This latter representation lies at odds with the idea of American exceptionalism as it constitutes the US as part of a community and, at least implicitly therefore, as being bound by the norms and rules of that community.

Therefore, the presence within US security policy discourse of representations regarding the universality of American values and the particularism of US sovereignty result in the emergence of complex and potentially contradictory understandings of the identity of the United States. Indeed, it is the tension between these distinctive understandings of US identity that represents one of the defining features of this discourse.

The United States and the International Security Environment

Understandings of the identity of that which is to be secured have important implications regarding how security can itself be understood.\textsuperscript{52} Within the context of US security policy representations regarding the identity of the United States are important not only because they constitute that which is to be secured but also because they constitute the very environment within which the United States is situated.\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore, as we shall see, the different representations of US identity discussed above are consistent with quite different understandings of the security environment within which the US must operate. As has been noted, however, US identity is characterised by a tension between universalism and particularism. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, representations regarding the security of the United States also tend to be characterised by the tension that results from the prominence of these two different understandings of US identity within the discourse of US security policy. However, before examining this tension in greater detail, it is worth beginning with a brief discussion of the implications that each of the alternative representations of US identity have regarding the conceptualisation of security.

At the centre of this issue are questions regarding the boundaries that demarcate the US from the environment in which it is situated. When considering this point it is perhaps easier to start with the understanding of US identity as being defined primarily in terms of sovereignty. Such representations of political identity constitute the United States as a political entity defined by territorial borders, but they also implicitly constitute the global political system in a particular manner. As has been argued by scholars such as Richard Ashley, when understood in this way, the principle of sovereignty generates an understanding of the political realm that exists between states as being qualitatively different from that which exists within states.\textsuperscript{54} More precisely, this vision of political community is intimately connected to understandings of the international system as being

\textsuperscript{52} Buzan, \textit{People, States and Fear}, at p. 26.
\textsuperscript{53} Weldes, ‘Cultural Production’, at p. 44.
anarchical in character, a position that has been advocated most strongly by Realist and Neorealist scholars.\textsuperscript{55} As Buzan, Jones and Little suggest, “anarchy and autonomy are opposite sides of the same coin”.\textsuperscript{56} In this sense the existence of sovereignty – and the rational ordering of domestic politics that it makes possible – is linked directly to the existence of international anarchy, which is presumed to preclude the possibility of either an overarching international authority or the rational ordering of international politics. Thus, representations of the United States as a sovereign political entity implicitly constitute the global security environment as a realm of insecurity and anarchy. As scholars such as Mearsheimer have argued, an insecure and anarchic system is likely to encourage states to seek survival through the maximisation of military power.\textsuperscript{57}

Alternatively, if we take the first vision of US identity – the idea that certain American values (freedom, democracy, equality) are inherently universal – we are left with a quite different understanding of the nature of the boundaries of the United States and of the nature of the security environment in which the US operates. The representation of the United States as the embodiment of a set of universal principles challenges the notion that there is a qualitative difference between the political space inside the territorial borders of the US and that which exists outside those borders. In order to appreciate the significance of this point, it is worth re-examining the premises upon which the Realist distinction between the domestic and the international are based. This distinction is advanced by Realist scholars on the grounds that there are no universally valid norms or values.\textsuperscript{58} Sovereignty is therefore understood as legitimising the existence of separate and autonomous communities of people, each of which may be based upon a different value system. As a result, the international system is seen as anarchic due partly to the principle of sovereignty and partly to the varied and incompatible political and social values of the nation-states that sovereignty serves to constitute. To suggest that all people share certain values is to challenge both the relevance of territorial borders and the

\textsuperscript{55} Kenneth N. Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}. (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
representation of international politics as taking place within an anarchic realm. On the one hand, territorial borders must be seen as somewhat arbitrary once the notion that people on either side of them are fundamentally alike in their love of liberty. On the other hand, the existence of universal values provides a vital foundation upon which the peaceful and rational ordering of international politics might be built. Thus, representations of US identity that emphasise the importance of universal values serve to constitute the international system as a realm that, rather than being characterised by anarchy and violence, is instead qualitatively similar to the domestic political realm.

It is clear, therefore, that the two representations of US identity discussed above are consistent with quite distinctive understandings of the international security environment. The representation of the US as a sovereign state is consistent with what we might term a Realist conception of the nature of the international security environment. Alternatively, the representation of the US in terms of universal values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law is consistent with a vision of an international security environment which is far more amenable to the rational ordering of politics, perhaps even in a manner which is analogous to the domestic sphere of the US itself. However, the discourse of US security policy is characterised not merely by the existence of these two representations of US identity, but, more precisely, by a tension between them. US Presidents rarely represent the United States in terms of either sovereignty or universal values; instead they often seek to integrate these two understandings of identity. Such practices add to the complexity of discourse regarding US identity – consider, for example, the ambiguity of concepts such as the ‘indispensable nation’ – but they also lead to greater complexity in terms of the representation of the security environment in which the US exists. Within the discourse of US security policy, two articulations of the identity of the US and the security environment in which it exists are particularly prominent. Each of these integrates elements of the sovereign and universal representations of US identity and elements of the more abstract conceptions of the international security environment discussed above.

On the one hand, there are representations of the United States as a sovereign state made exceptional by its embodiment of universal values.\textsuperscript{61} Such representations place some emphasis on the sovereign boundaries of the United States and thus serve to reconstitute the qualitative distinction between the domestic and international political realms. This representation of the US is consistent, therefore, with an understanding of the international security environment as being anarchic and dangerous. However, the representation of the United States as the champion of values that are held to be of universal significance serves to exacerbate the distinction between the United States and that which lies beyond it. Given the need to represent identity in relation to difference, such representations of American exceptionalism tend to be linked to the identification of existential sources of danger that exist in the anarchic international realm. Thus, as Campbell argues, there is a certain similarity to the manner in which past and present administrations have represented the sources of danger to the United States.\textsuperscript{62}

Representations regarding the existential threat posed by Communism provide a particularly pertinent example of the character of this discourse. Communism and the Soviet Union were represented as being fundamentally and inherently opposed to the very values of the United States and, therefore, committed to the destruction of America itself and the American way of life.\textsuperscript{63} More recently, the Bush administration has adopted a similar formula with regard to the representation of the threat posed by terrorism and “rogue” states. Thus, the terrorists who attacked the United States on September 11 2001 were labelled as “evil-doers” who could not “stand freedom” and who hated “what America stands for”.\textsuperscript{64} Later, this category of actors who opposed the US was expanded to incorporate all those who directly or indirectly supported terrorists, including most prominently Iraq, Iran and North Korea, the members of the “axis of

\textsuperscript{61} McEvoy-Levy, \textit{American Exceptionalism}, at p. 27.
\textsuperscript{62} Campbell, \textit{Writing Security}, at pp. 135.
\textsuperscript{63} Campbell, \textit{Writing Security}, at pp. 170.
Indeed, Bush even went so far as to explicitly liken the threat faced by America in the twenty-first century to that it had faced throughout much of the twentieth; “Our struggle is similar to the Cold War. Now, as then, our enemies are totalitarians, holding a creed of power with no place for human dignity. Now, as then, they seek to impose a joyless conformity, to control every life and all of life”. Bush continued with this theme in his most recent State of the Union address, where he stated that the war on Terror constituted “a decisive ideological struggle” in which “the security of our nation is in the balance”. Importantly, this tendency to represent threats to the United States in such terms is not merely a characteristic of the Bush administration; President Clinton deployed a similar style of rhetoric regarding the dangers faced by the US. In 1998, for example, he argued that America “must combat an unholy axis of new threats from terrorists, international criminals and drug traffickers”. What is common to all of these representations that they are characterised in existential terms; the United States is threatened by entities that are inherently opposed to the US and its values. Such representations therefore serve to constitute America as an exceptional nation, the security of which is of paramount importance not only to the people of the United States, but also to all those in the world who (inherently) value freedom.

On the other hand, representations of US identity that emphasise the universal validity of American values tend to situate the sovereignty of the United States within the context of an international system which is amenable to the ordering of politics through the application of the rule of law. In other words, such representations imply that common values associated with liberty and the rule of law provide a foundation upon which international politics could be ordered through the construction of common rules and the

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institutions needed to apply and adjudicate them.\textsuperscript{69} In this context, the sovereignty of the United States is represented as an instance of the application of a legal principle that is universally applicable but which by no means repudiates the possibility that other universal rules and norms could be constructed. Such representations of US identity are consistent with a quite different understanding of the international security environment than that discussed above. In this context, insecurity does not result from the existence of existential threats that are fundamentally opposed to the existence of the United States; instead, it results from the absence of the rules and institutions needed to manage international politics in a peaceful and ordered manner.\textsuperscript{70}

Classic examples of this element of US security discourse include President Woodrow Wilson’s ‘Peace without Victory’ address to the Senate in 1917 and the rhetoric deployed by Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman in support of the emergent United Nations.\textsuperscript{71} In each of these cases insecurity was cast in terms of the absence of the mechanisms needed to order international politics in a rational and peaceful way. Such characterisations of the nature of the international security environment continue to be deployed by policy makers in more recent times. This very vision was explicitly articulated by the Clinton administration in its 1997 National Security Strategy Report (NSSR), which suggested that:

> [America’s] responsibility is to build the world of tomorrow by embarking on a period of construction – one based not only on current realities but also upon enduring American values and interests – of international frameworks, institutions and understandings to guide America and the world far into the next century.\textsuperscript{72}

Speaking at the University of South Carolina, Madeleine Albright acknowledged this point, saying that “the United States can never turn its back on the international system or


\textsuperscript{70} Ruggie, \textit{Winning the Peace}, at p. 2.

\textsuperscript{71} Ruggie, \textit{Winning the Peace}, at p. 2 and at pp. 28-9.

the rules; because without us, they don’t exist, and with us, we are the organising principle. If we stick by the rules and carry out the rules, the others can see that that is the way to go”.73 Though it is perhaps less known for deploying such rhetoric, the Bush administration has articulated similar understandings of the nature of the security environment. Thus, for example, the 2002 NSSR stated that:

Today, the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where the great powers compete in peace instead of continually preparing for war.74

The most recent NSSR expands upon this point by contending that the security of the US “rests on strong alliances, friendships, and international institutions, which enable us to promote freedom, prosperity, and peace in common purpose with others”75 These statements implicitly acknowledge that the absence of a strong international community and the values, rules and institutions that underpin it represent a key source of insecurity for the United States.

Although the understandings of the global security environment discussed above do not represent the only such representations evident within the discourse of US security policy,76 they are certainly prominent features within this discourse. Importantly, these understandings of the security environment are consistent with the two distinctive representations of the identity of the United States discussed in the previous section. To represent the US as an exceptional nation-state is to constitute the global security environment as an anarchic realm. Furthermore, such articulations of US identity are particularly likely to be associated with the identification of existential threats to the existence of the US and its ideals. Alternatively, to represent the US as an element of a potentially universal community of peoples grounded in the universal values of the

76 Campbell, Writing Security, at p. 135.
American Creed is to constitute the global security environment as a political realm capable of being ordered in a manner analogous to the domestic realm of the US itself.\textsuperscript{77} Within such an environment, insecurity emerges as a result of the failure to achieve this political ordering rather than from some fundamental source of evil. Importantly, like the relationship between the conceptions of US identity discussed above, the relationship between these representations of the security environment is one of tension rather than mere distinction. The rhetoric of policy makers often seems to incorporate elements of each of these understandings of the security environment. As the final section seeks to demonstrate, the resulting complexity holds significant implications with regard to the articulation of US security policy.

The Complexity of US Security Policy

American security policy is often characterised by, at the very least, complexity and, at times, incoherence.\textsuperscript{78} Importantly, and as this chapter argues, this complexity is not merely the result of the sheer scope of US security policy and the number and diversity of the actors involved in its construction. Complexity also arises due to the existence of divergent representations of both US identity and the global security environment that are prominent features of the discourse of US security policy. These representations may be divergent, yet each remains powerful. In particular, understandings of the identity of the United States serve important functions within American politics and, as Michael Hunt has argued, cannot be ignored by policy makers.\textsuperscript{79} Understandings of identity are necessary (even if implicit) prerequisites of any security policy and different understandings of identity result in different understandings of how security might best be achieved. The result of the divergent articulations of US identity and security discussed above has been the emergence of two distinctive themes within US security policy, each of which is highlighted below.

\textsuperscript{78} Mead, \textit{Power, Terror}, at p. 14.
The first such theme in US security policy is linked to the representation of America as an exceptional nation-state and of the international security environment as an anarchic and dangerous realm within which the US faces existential threats to its existence. The form of security policy that is logically consistent with this understanding of the international security environment is in many ways similar to that advocated by Realists scholars. In an anarchic realm, there is no overarching authority that can enforce international laws and norms (and no possibility that such an institution could emerge). As a result, sovereign states have no recourse other than to protect themselves. Furthermore, a state’s capacity to protect itself must ultimately be dependent upon its power relative to other actors in the international system. While multiple sources of power may exist, the primary instrument of security policy must always remain military force. As such, Realists advocate the dispassionate maximisation of power, and military power in particular. However, while these Realist principles may be somewhat consistent with US security policy, they are not entirely so. Realist theory is built upon a Westphalian conception of sovereignty, but representations of US identity link the Westphalian notion of sovereignty with a sense of exceptionalism grounded in the universal significance of the principles of the American Creed. This exceptionalism holds two implications regarding security policy.

On the one hand, the representation of American exceptionalism is often strongly connected to the representation of the United States as facing an existential threat. Thus, for example, President Bush has described America’s enemies as being “gripped by an implacable hatred of the United States of America. They hate our friends, they hate our values, they hate democracy and freedom and individual liberty”. Similarly, the Clinton administration referred to the existence of a “struggle between two broad visions

80 Mearsheimer, ‘False Promise’.
81 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, at p. 128.
82 Waltz, Theory of International Politics, at p. 96.
83 Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, at pp. 135-6.
85 Mead, Special Providence, at p. 35.
of the future”, one which supported the “move toward economic openness [and] political pluralism” and “a competing vision…of continued self-isolation and violent opposition to liberalising forces”. Such rhetoric, especially when linked to the administration’s suggestion that people and states were either with America or against it, served to divide the world into those who love freedom and those who are inherently and fanatically opposed to it. One of the consequences of representing US security in this way is to grant absolute importance to the maintenance of US military primacy and to the use of military force. When faced with such existential threats, non-military tools of security policy such as diplomacy and the implementation of international law are clearly going to be ineffective. The Clinton administration adopted such a position in its dealings with Iraq in 1998, where the suggestion was repeatedly made that force was the only thing that the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein could understand.

More recently the Bush administration has made this understanding of the role of military force central to US security policy through calling repeatedly for the development and maintenance of a “military without peer”. Indeed, this understanding of the absolute importance of military force has been extended through the Bush administration’s explicit articulation of a policy of pre-emption. That this understanding of the relevance and function of military force is inconsistent with Realist theory is evidenced in part by the fact that the practices of the Bush administration, particularly its actions with regard to Iraq, have drawn criticism from Realist scholars.

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90 Interestingly, support for the pre-emptive use of force is not something that represents a unique feature of the Bush administration’s rhetoric. Indeed, the Clinton administration implicitly endorsed this view in the lead up to its use of force against Iraq in 1998. See, for example, Madeleine Albright, ‘Press Remarks on Military Attack on Iraq’, Washington, D.C., December 17, (1998), available from [http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/1998/981217.html].

On the other hand, the implications of American exceptionalism with regard to US security policy also differ from Realist expectations in terms of the emphasis placed on the universal validity of the principles of the American Creed. One of the features of US security policy has been the assumption that these principles are of absolute relevance within the domestic political systems of all states (Bennett 2000). The project of exporting these principles – and especially the institutions of democracy and free-market capitalism that support them – has been intimately linked to the promotion of global peace and American security (see, for example, Fukuyama 1992). In recent times, this has been evident in the Clinton administration’s adoption of a grand strategy of “democratic enlargement” (Ruggie 1996: 2), and, perhaps more controversially, in the Bush administration’s advocacy of regime change in Afghanistan and now Iraq (see Kaplan and Kristol 2003; Williams 2005). This element of US security policy is grounded in the assumption that the domestic political system of a state is important in determining its foreign policy, a point that is fundamentally inconsistent with Realist theory. Taken together, therefore, representations of American exceptionalism are consistent with the pursuit of a security policy that is characterised by three features: a general disdain for international institutions and laws, the pursuit of absolute military preponderance and the active exportation of American principles and, most notably, democracy.

A second and quite different theme is also evident in US security policy, however. This theme corresponds to the representation of US identity in terms of the location of the United States within a community of peoples bound by American values. As has been noted above, this understanding of US identity serves to constitute the international security environment as being amenable to the peaceful ordering of politics in a manner that is analogous to the domestic political system of the US itself. In this sense, insecurity represents a product of the absence of effective rules and institutions that might

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92 Bennett, ‘Morality, Character, and American Foreign Policy’.
94 Ruggie, Winning the Peace, at p. 2.
otherwise provide a foundation for international security as well as for the security of the US itself. Consequently, the pursuit of security necessitates the active construction of such rules and institutions along lines that are consistent with the values and principles of the American Creed. Before considering the efforts of US security policy makers to construct such an international order, it is worth clarifying the quite different understanding of the nature of the international political realm that underpins these efforts.

Whereas the representation of the US as an exceptional nation-state implicitly constitutes the international security environment in terms that are somewhat consistent with Realist scholarship, this alternative understanding of the international realm is more consistent with that articulated by scholars of the so-called “English School”. Thus, while references to American exceptionalism are consistent with the concept of an anarchic international system, the representation of the US as an element of a broader community of peoples and states is consistent with the notion of an international society. An international society differs from an international system in minor though important ways. An international system emerges when two or more states have enough impact on one another so as to cause them to behave, at least in some sense, as parts of a whole, whereas an international society exists when two or more states, recognising certain common values, conceive of themselves as forming part of a society to the extent that they recognise themselves as being bound by certain rules. A key point here is that, while the anarchic nature of the international system is taken by Realists to be a timeless feature of international politics, English School theorists have acknowledged the potential for change, which can involve the emergence, strengthening and decline of particular international societies. What is important here is not merely whether policy-makers acknowledge the existence of an international society bound by effective rules and institutions but whether policy-makers acknowledge the possibility that such a society

98 Bull, Anarchical Society, at p. 13.
might exist.\textsuperscript{100} Within the context of the discourse of US security policy, we can identify clear evidence of the acceptance of this potential. This position was strongly and repeatedly advanced by members of the Clinton administration, who referred to the existence of a “community of democratic nations” and the importance of furthering the “constructive integration” of that community.\textsuperscript{101} Similarly, the Bush administration’s suggestion that “the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where the great powers compete in peace”,\textsuperscript{102} and its repeated references to an international community of civilised states imply at least the potential, if not necessarily the existence of an international society.

Not only is the recognition of the possibility of constructing an international society a persistent feature of US security policy discourse, so too is the articulation by policy-makers of the type of international society that is sought, namely, one based upon the principles of the American Creed. The historical persistence of this approach to security policy within the US has been noted by many scholars.\textsuperscript{103} Ikenberry, in particular, has referred to this project as an effort to construct a liberal world order “built around multilateralism, alliance partnership, strategic restraint, and institutional and rule-based relationships”.\textsuperscript{104} Members of the Clinton administration explicitly supported such a vision of security by stating that “if Americans are to be secure in such a world, we must seize the opportunity that history has presented to bring nations closer together around basic principles of democracy, free markets, respect for law and a commitment to peace”.\textsuperscript{105} While references to the desirability of promoting strong international institutions and rules have been less frequently deployed by the Bush administration,


\textsuperscript{102} The White House, National Security Strategy, (2002), at p. iii.


\textsuperscript{104} Ikenberry, ‘Liberalism and Empire’, at p. 610.

there is some evidence within the rhetoric of its members of the continued relevance of this element of US security discourse. For example, Bush stated in 2002 that the members of the international community, and especially the United States, had “dedicated [themselves] to standards of human dignity shared by all, and to a system of security defended by all”. More recently, Bush has explicitly stated that the aim of the United States “is to build and preserve a community of free and independent nations”.

As such, the Bush administration’s rhetoric has served to reconstitute understandings of the United States as existing within a community of peoples bound by shared values. For both administrations, therefore, security policy was directed to the constructive integration of an international society of states grounded in the values of the American Creed.

Conclusion

Clearly, these two themes in the discourse of US security policy are inconsistent with one another. Furthermore, the complexity of US security policy mirrors this inconsistency. The institutionalisation of international society that is consonant with one conception of US identity clashes with the disregard for such international institutions and laws that is consistent with the other. The pursuit of military pre-eminence and the unconstrained use of force against existential threats is inconsistent with the construction of international rules and norms that might regulate international society and therefore require restraint on the part of the members of that society. Yet despite the inconsistency between these different elements of the discourse of US security policy, they remain grounded in representations of US identity that have been persistently deployed by US policy makers, including the representatives of administrations as different as those of Presidents Clinton and Bush.

These representations of US identity are neither “true” nor inevitable; but they are powerful and, as has been demonstrated, they hold important implications for US security policy. The institutionalisation of international society will not inevitably prove to be a feature of US security policy, but it is a goal that remains consistent with an understanding of US identity that has continued to be advanced by policy-makers, even those associated with the Bush administration. Each time the United States is referred to as existing within a society of states that is bound together by the common values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law, space is opened for the advancement of policies that promote the institutionalisation and strengthening of that international society. Alternatively, it is not inevitable that American policy makers will seek to promote the unconstrained military supremacy of the United States, but each time the US is represented as a unique state characterised by its possession of universally relevant values, the logic underpinning such policies will be strengthened.

To argue that either these representations of identity or these elements of US security policy discourse will necessarily shape the practices of policy makers in the future would be to ignore the constructed and, therefore, contestable nature of all conceptions of identity and security. The political practices of policy makers, and of a myriad of other actors both inside and outside the US, will determine how the identity of the US is understood in the future. In saying this, however, it is important to recognise two things. Firstly, the representation of identity – be it explicit or implicit – is a necessary pre-requisite of any conceptualisation or articulation of either the concept of security or of security policy itself. Secondly, future political actors will have to, at the very least, engage with the understandings of US identity and security policy that are prominent today. Whether they can effectively challenge and even replace these understandings remains an empirical question; and not one that can be answered here. What is interesting to note, however, is that despite the controversy surrounding the practices of the Bush administration, neither the presidency of George W. Bush nor the momentous events that have occurred during his time in office have radically altered the manner in which the identity of the United States is represented.