

# **The Path to a Culturally Relevant National Security Strategy**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

THE PATH TO A CULTURALLY RELEVANT NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY by Lieutenant Colonel John Frappier, Canadian Forces, 42 pages.

This monograph will argue that understanding and addressing the nature of the threat's identity is paramount to the United States' ability to win the GWOT. In an attempt to remain ahead of its enemies in the prosecution of the GWOT, the United States has proceeded with an extensive review of its National Security Strategy and an historic transformation of its Government, thereby improving its ability to protect the US' interests both at home and abroad and increasing its capacity for coordinated action. The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism contains an analysis of the threat and lays out a strategy for winning the war on terror. It qualifies the threat as one fuelled by an ideology of oppression, violence, and hate with an ultimate goal of establishing a single, pan-Islamic, totalitarian regime. The GWOT is therefore characterized as a war against the radical Islamist ideology. This assumes that the threat's ideology is a militant one existing on the fringes of the true nature of Islam. Furthermore, the strategy disregards the role that Islam has in shaping and informing the threat. This theory ignores the central function that religion has in determining identity and the strength it has in protecting identity.

The limited understanding of the nature of the threat hampers the current US National Security Strategy's ability to address some of the root causes of the war. The question is therefore "how identity theory can inform the creation of a National Security Strategy?" A constructivist approach in which people's understanding of their interests depends on the ideas they hold highlights the applicability of group identity to International Relations. This approach contends that international relations need not be conflictual, but rather that relations depend on the nature of the interaction among states but more importantly in the context of this paper, among non-state actors.

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## INTRODUCTION

The terrible events of September 11, 2001 shocked the world and pushed the President of the United States to declare war on terror. This Global War on Terror (GWOT) has now been raging for over six years. During this time, the United States and its coalition partners have liberated both Afghanistan and Iraq from their totalitarian leadership and are installing democratic governments in their place. Although the initial successes of the War, the defeat and collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the rapid disintegration of Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq gave the United States and its coalition partners a genuine sense of hope that total victory might come quickly, the resurgence of sectarian violence in both these countries now tempers much of that hope. Coalition troops have yet to lose a tactical engagement however strategic victory remains elusive. The new fledgling democracies in both Afghanistan and Iraq remain very fragile. Al Qaeda continues to use terrorist propaganda to recruit new members and has not altered its anti-Western rhetoric. The slow and difficult development of democratic institutions in the Middle East and the increase of violence have led the US Government to recognize that the GWOT will be a 'long war' and that the 'West' will have to continue to adapt its strategies to meet the enemy's innovations.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to remain ahead of its enemies in the prosecution of the GWOT, the United States has proceeded with an extensive review of its National Security Strategy and an historic transformation of its Government, thereby improving its ability to protect the US' interests both at home and abroad and increasing its capacity for coordinated action.<sup>2</sup> A national security strategy is a document prepared by a state's executive branch of government, which outlines the major national security concerns of the state and how the state plans to deal with them. A

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<sup>1</sup> The term West is highlighted here to indicate that it is used to denote the modern culture of western Europe, Australia and North America.

security strategy highlights the nature of new security challenges and how the government is responding to them. Throughout, it draws on the wide range of knowledge and activity across departments, agencies and forces that contribute the state's national security objective of protecting itself and its interests, enabling its people to go about their daily lives freely and with confidence, in a secure and stable world.

One of the most famous instigators of US Security Strategy was George Kennan's renowned article *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, which he published under the pseudonym 'X' in the July 1947 *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>3</sup> This seminal document helped focus the US strategic policy discussions on the core issue of the time – the Soviet Communist Ideology. These discussions set the stage for the Truman Doctrine and ultimately set the foundation for the US Cold War Strategy of containment. This type of strategic debate is long overdue and must be rekindled in light of the new security threats that face the US. However, given the religious nature of some of the strategic security issues, this discussion has yet to be initiated.

A subset of the current US National Security Strategy is the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism. This document contains an analysis of the threat and lays out a strategy for winning the war on terror.<sup>4</sup> Its second edition, published in September 2006, qualifies this threat as one fuelled by an ideology of oppression, violence, and hate with an ultimate goal of establishing “a single, pan-Islamic, totalitarian regime.”<sup>5</sup> The GWOT is therefore characterized as a war against the radical Islamist ideology. This theory builds on the March 2006 National

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<sup>2</sup> United States. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: White House, 2006), 4.

<sup>3</sup> George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 65, Issue 4 (Spring, 1987): 852-68.

<sup>4</sup> It is understood that the term threat in itself carries certain meaning and “baggage” just as the use of the word enemy would but the term threat will be used throughout this paper because it the word that the National Security Strategy uses to define the “other” in its context.

<sup>5</sup> National Security Council, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Council, 2006), 5.

Security Strategy that states: “the War on Terror is a battle of ideas, it is not a battle of religions.”<sup>6</sup> However, these statements assume that the threat’s ideology is a completely militant one existing on the fringes of the true nature of Islam. Furthermore, they disregard the role that Islam has in shaping and informing the threat or that Islam even plays a role at all. This ignores the central function that religion has in determining identity salience and in motivating behavior.<sup>7</sup>

The limited understanding of the nature of the threat hampers the current US National Security Strategy’s ability to address some of the root causes of the war. In a recent *Military Review* article, *Fighting Identity: Why We Are Losing Our Wars*, Michael Vlahos makes a compelling argument for the need of an understanding and recognition that identity, especially non-state actors’ identities, is central to the very survival of the nation. This means “throwing off our narcissism and certainty of entitlement.”<sup>8</sup> This begs the question “how can identity theory inform creating National Security Strategy?” An ideational approach to International Relations (IR) is required. This approach is called the constructivist approach in which, “people’s understanding of their interests depends on the ideas they hold.”<sup>9</sup> This transition from material interests to ideational interests is required to create national security policies that take into account all the factors that influence the international stage and thus better secure states from insecurity.

Three broad international relations approaches can establish the foundation of a national security strategy – realism, liberalism and constructivism. A realist approach strives to maximize a nation’s power relative to others with disregard to other nations’ government and culture as one

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<sup>6</sup> United States. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> This is not a predestination argument. This paper does not purport that religion is the only identity creator; it argues that religion is a very powerful factor in creating identity salience. One that should not be ignored.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Vlahos, "Fighting Identity: Why we are Losing our Wars," *Military Review* 87, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2007): 2.

<sup>9</sup> Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (Nov/Dec 2004): 60.



nation will behave in the same fashion as others. In the traditional realist view, the only actors are states. This limits the usefulness of a realist approach when dealing with the non-state actors in the international system. On the other hand, a liberal approach relies on the strength of rule of law to temper the international system. Finally, a constructivist approach, derived from sociological theories of human interaction, contends that international relations need not be conflictual but rather that relations depend on the nature of the interaction among states and more importantly in the context of this paper, among non-state actors. Constructivism complements the two other approaches as it illuminates how the shifting norms of identity and morality define certain changes in states' policies and how it interacts with the international community. This monograph will argue that understanding and addressing the nature of the threat's identity is paramount to the United States' ability to win the GWOT. It is an attempt to recast national security in terms of identity and ideational interests rather than in terms of material interests.

There are three parts to this monograph's structure. The first chapter outlines the general tenets of identity theory and highlights the central importance of group beliefs and the role that religion can play in defining one's identity. The second chapter defines the constructivist approach to International Relations and highlights the importance that identity plays in this approach. The third chapter will examine the threat's identity from two different perspectives – the US National Security Strategy's perspective and the Threat's own perspective.

## IDENTITY DEFINED

The use of the word 'identity' conjures up various meanings for different people. On one hand, the term might be used when referring to one's culture or, conversely, it may be used to refer to something much narrower in scope – such as a person's name or family. This pervasive and varied employment of the term does not limit itself to the common everyday use but also applies to its usage in sociology and social psychology where discrepancy in meaning remains significant; therefore, how one defines oneself is often referred to as one's identity. It is how people see themselves fundamentally. This identity is not immutable and is affected by a multitude of factors including personal and societal inputs. The particular identity, or components of one's identity, chosen at any one time will depend on the environment and the context in which one resides.

This chapter focuses on setting the theoretical basis for defining identity. It does so by examining the historical development of identity theory from both sociological and psychological perspectives. It reviews the theories of symbolic interaction, role-identity, identity theory, and social identity theory to provide the basis for defining an identity. It defines the role that group beliefs and religion have in defining one's identity salience. It is by no means an exhaustive study of all the various social and psychological theories regarding identity development. It does not attempt to determine what approach or theory is more complete or relevant for defining identities. It seeks simply to lay a basic theoretical foundation so that the theory of identity, particularly religious identity, can be used in developing conflict termination strategies.

Bernd Simon writes that "identity results from interaction in the social world and in turn guides interaction in the social world."<sup>10</sup> It is the understanding of these 'self-definition' and 'self-interpretation' roles of identity that can lead to an ability to develop a consensual

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<sup>10</sup> Bernd Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 2.

appreciation of circumstances and possibly a common truth. This is the defining concept of this paper. Therefore, for the purpose of this monograph, the definition of the term 'identity' is borrowed from the Stryker and Burke article "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," which states that identity is used "to refer to common identification with a collectivity or social category ... thus creating a common culture among participants."<sup>11</sup>

Why does identity matter? It is the contention of this monograph that without a comprehensive study and understanding of the authentic identity of the threat, one cannot develop appropriate responses. John C. Turner, in his forward to Simon's book *Identity in Modern Society*, enumerates a series of ideas about the self which highlight why identity is important, his point most salient to this paper is:

The same self-process which enables humans to act as other than purely individual personalities is at the root of social influence processes which make possible the psychological reality of values. Human cognition is not purely individual, neutral, asocial, but takes place within a social field in which individuals always, implicitly or explicitly, test the validity of their beliefs against the use of others with whom they share a relevant social identity. The judgment of this collective self generates norms, rules, values and standards (of truth, correctness, virtue) whose validity is felt to be independent of the judgment of any individual perceiver. The collective self is therefore the basis of morality and perceived truth.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, identity is not only how one defines oneself introspectively but also how one identifies with his or her social surroundings. There are two major approaches for defining and studying identity – the sociological and the psychological. Both these categories connect the individual to the social world through the notion of the self composed of various identities. Taken together, the two theories advance our understanding of the self and its relationship to the various identities that individuals claim as their own.

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<sup>11</sup> Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 4, (Dec. 2000): 284.

<sup>12</sup> Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective*, xiv.

## Symbolic Interaction

Man exists in two distinct but connected realms; the physical world where he is limited by the implications of physical laws and the world of ideas where limits are boundless and dreams prevail.<sup>13</sup> It is the process of symbolic interaction, “how social acts generate social objects,”<sup>14</sup> which links the physical world to the dream world. McCall and Simmons describe this important process as possessing six basic principles. This process and its principles are at the core of individual identity and key to understanding the follow-on theories.

The first principle is that man is a planner. Every action taken by man is formulated in some sort of plan of action. It is man’s ability to think about things and formulate plans that sets him apart from the rest of the animal world. Things, therefore, take on meaning in relation to plans, which is the second principle. Conditional to their particular role in the plan, each ‘thing’ can take on different meaning. To use McCall and Simmons’ own example: a beer bottle can mean various things depending on the specific plan – used for a cool drink or for barroom violence. The third principle of symbolic interaction is that “the execution of a plan is contingent upon the meaning *for that plan* of every ‘thing’.”<sup>15</sup> If a ‘thing’ turns out to have an unexpected meaning then the envisioned plan must be altered or suspended. Consequently, the fourth principle is the fact that man must identify everything in his environment and is continuously searching for the meaning of things. McCall and Simmons state that “until we have made out the identity and meaning of a thing *vis-à-vis* our plans, we have no bearings; we cannot proceed.”<sup>16</sup> If the plan requires interaction with others then the fifth principle applies: The meaning of the ‘thing’ must be consensual. If the meaning is not clearly shared between all participants in the

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<sup>13</sup> George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, *Identities and Interactions : An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*, Rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978), 38-39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 59. Emphasis from original text.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

plan, then it must be developed in some type of social discourse. Although the true meaning will never be exactly the same for all participants, it will be sufficiently close to allow for some type of coherent action. Finally, the sixth principle is that of personal identification. The most important issue to resolve for every plan of action is the consensual definition of the self for each of the individuals concerned. Self is therefore a social object.<sup>17</sup> Simon summarized these principles:

...social interactionists emphasize that human action is often, if not always, social interaction. That is, people act with reference to other individuals who are also actors. The different actors thus take each other into account. In order to be able to do this, people need to understand each other and the meanings of their respective acts. An act is meaningful when it includes a gesture which is indicative of other parts of the act yet to occur in the sequence of social interactions. When the gesture is understood in the same way by the people involved in the interaction, the gesture has become a significant symbol.<sup>18</sup>

Identity theory has evolved from these basic tenets of symbolic interaction through the role-identity model.

## **Role-Identity**

As was described in the previous section, the identification of actors and gestures is vital to social interaction. Identification, therefore, becomes a type of categorization of things into sets of different groupings for related items. In the case of an individual this action of categorization creates two identity categories: a personal identity and a social identity.<sup>19</sup> Without categorization, or being classed in a particular category, an individual actor's category would not be recognized from one instance to the next, which would inhibit ones ability to choose how to act or react in relation to a specific plan of action. McCall and Simmons point out that "in the case of

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<sup>17</sup> McCall and Simmons, *Identities and Interactions : An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*, 58-60.

<sup>18</sup> Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> McCall and Simmons, *Identities and Interactions : An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*, 62-65.

identifying persons, these systematically related categories are referred to as *social positions*.”<sup>20</sup>

This unique categorization, defining people in terms of their social positions, allows for two crucial things to occur. First, it creates an understanding of how to react in relation to a certain person based on their social position and second, it sets the broad limits on the expectations for the particular social category. These limits help determine the actions one takes as these actions would tend to be in line with the broad social expectations. From these general principles comes the theory of role-identity defined by McCall and Simmons as “the character and role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore the emphasis of role theory is on the effect of social structure and the related importance of the group as the immediate structural context. Social interaction, whether on a large or small scale, must be examined in the wider context of the social system in which it takes place. The roles and expectations understood by the actors in a system are learnt by socialization and are rooted in the values and norms of the society with which they are linked.<sup>22</sup> It is this approach to identity which led to the developments of identity theory and social identity theory, which focus on the role of the group in defining ones identity.

## **Identity Theory**

Sociologists, most notably Sheldon Stryker, have developed an identity theory that integrates and better defines both ‘symbolic interaction’ and ‘role-identity’ models. In his theory, Stryker sought to answer a definitive question: “Given situations in which there exist behavioral options aligned with two (or more) sets of role expectations attached to two (or more) positions in

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<sup>20</sup> McCall and Simmons, *Identities and Interactions : An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*, 64.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective*, 22-23.

networks of social relationships, why do persons choose one particular course of action?”<sup>23</sup>

Simon posits a possible answer to this question by offering that “identity theory proposes that people have multiple identities which result from participation in multiple sets of structured role relationships.”<sup>24</sup>

The foundational concepts of the theory are internalized role expectation and identity salience and commitment. Stryker asserts that “social roles are expectations attached to positions occupied in networks of relationships; identities are internalized role expectations;”<sup>25</sup> and therefore “role choices are a function of identities so conceptualized, and that identities within self are organized in a salience hierarchy reflecting the importance of hierarchy as an organizational principle in society.”<sup>26</sup>

Identity theory goes on to define identity salience “as the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation.”<sup>27</sup>

Simon further develops the concept of identity salience and its links to behavior with the following statement: “the more salient an identity, the more sensitive a person should be to opportunities for behaviour (sic) that could confirm the identity and the stronger her motivation actually to perform such behaviour (sic).”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, one can deduce that determining a subject’s most salient identity can help predict their behavior. In their article *Commitment, Identity Salience, and Role Behavior: A Theory and Research Example*, Stryker and Serpe support this last claim. For example, their research demonstrates that the salience of religious

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<sup>23</sup> Stryker and Burke, *The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory*, 285.

<sup>24</sup> Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Stryker and Burke, *The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory*, 286.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective*, 24.

identities predicts time spent in religious activities, and the salience of religious identities is predicted by commitment to role relationships based on religion.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, identity theory is principally a micro-sociological theory that tries to account for individuals' role-related behaviors.<sup>30</sup> It proposes that the definition of self reflects the social structure because the self is but a collection of identities predetermined by the individual's numerous role positions within society. The function of society, through these role positions, is to provide the person with a sense of self-meaning, which in turn influences social behavior through the role-related components of self. Accordingly, self-referent role identities abate the influences of society on behavior. In addition to this, identity theory relies on a hierarchical view of identities when explaining the salience of any one identity to a set of social relationships that depend on the relevant social roles. Therefore, from Identity Theory one can draw a list of the following principles. Identities are always relational as they reflect the individual's position as it differs from the societal position of others. Identities are socially constructed. They are created from social interaction and from a common understanding of shared meanings but they are constantly being renegotiated. In addition, identities are also socially structured as they reflect the structured social context of the social interaction from which they stem. There is multiplicity of identities in individuals, which are differentiated in the positions and roles available in each person. Finally, these identities have social consequences. They are the basis for social behavior because they serve as the motivator and the narrative for social interaction.<sup>31</sup> This concept of identity serves as a bridge from the social person (self) and the social structure (society). It is this

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<sup>29</sup> Sheldon Stryker and Richard T. Serpe. "Commitment, Identity Salience, and Role Behavior: A Theory and Research Example." in *Personality, Roles, and Social Behavior*, ed. William Ickes and Eric S. Knowles. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982), 119-218.

<sup>30</sup> Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (Dec. 1995): 225.

<sup>31</sup> Simon, *Identity in Modern Society : A Social Psychological Perspective*, 25.



interaction between self and society and the interaction between societies that relates to the thesis of this paper. Without an understanding of one's group identity, relations between groups would be impossible. It is this link between groups that relates to the thesis of this paper; informed understanding of group identity shapes reactions toward certain groups. A misinformed understanding will no doubt lead to an inappropriate reaction.

## **Social Identity Theory**

This section discusses the key theory linking self and society. Henri Tajfel, the father of social identity theory, developed this theory as way to explain social conduct. He believed that a social psychology theory had to be developed to explain social conduct as individual psychology was inadequate for the task.<sup>32</sup> A former research partner, John C. Turner, writes that Tajfel

“tried ... to create an intergroup theory that gave proper due to the social dimensions of social conflict, which inserted intergroup relations ... into its macro-social context, but which nevertheless showed how the emergent psychological aspects of group relations and self-definition could have relatively autonomous and at times decisive consequences.”<sup>33</sup>

It is in this respect that it differs from identity theory discussed in the previous section. Social identity theory studies and defines identity primarily through intergroup relations and group behavior whereas identity theory is mostly concerned with role behavior and role identities.

Social identity theory can be viewed as a tripod. The first leg is the basic psychological dynamic of people who perceive their social identities as inadequate attempting to improve this reality by “restoring positive distinctiveness” to their association with relevant groups. Composing the second leg of the tripod is a complex collection of both social and psychological processes and their consequences involved in changing the focus of conflict from the individual to the group level. Socially constructed barriers tend to make interpersonal solutions impossible;

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<sup>32</sup> John C. Turner, “An Introduction,” in *Social Groups and Identities – Developing the Legacy of Henri Tajfel*, ed. Peter W. Robinson (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996), 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

therefore, people dissatisfied with their social identities are much more likely to search for group solutions in which they are predisposed to act along the *in-group's* shared social category behavioral traits. In this collective level of action they will also perceive the *out-group* as being stereotypically homogeneous. The final leg of Tajfel's social identity theory tripod is the social contextualization of the psychological dynamic. Individuals are part of a social environment and it is within this environment that human interaction takes place. Each section of the social environment has developed specific rules and values that guide individual conduct within that section. Therefore, the analysis of any human interaction must take into consideration the social context in which it takes place. Individuals define themselves subjectively by associating and being associated with particular social groupings that have evolved socially and historically. These categorizations and "the political, sociological and economic relationships between them have psychological aspects and consequences."<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, an individual draws his social identity from a hierarchical list of self-inclusive social categories such as nationality, religion, race, language, etc. This social identity both describes and prescribes the attributes of that distinct group's members. When a specific identity is chosen as the basis for self-regulation then the attributes associated with that identity become the standard for the 'in-group' and the given perceptions of those not in the group set the parameters for defining the 'out-group'. Depending on how the groups have behaved towards each other over time, the intergroup behavior then becomes competitive and discriminatory. The more difficult relations have been between the groups, the more intense the reactions to members of the out-group will be. This is important because, as Hogg wrote, "social identities have important self-evaluative consequences, groups and their members are motivated to adopt

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<sup>34</sup> Turner, "An Introduction," in *Social Groups and Identities – Developing the Legacy of Henri Tajfel*, 17.

strategies for achieving or maintaining intergroup comparisons that favor the in-group, and thus the self.”<sup>35</sup>

The common beliefs shared by the members of the ‘in-group’ and the difference of their beliefs with those of the ‘out-group’ thus influence membership to a particular group. Therefore, “individuals who live in groups hold common beliefs which define their reality, not only as persons, but also as group members.”<sup>36</sup> This membership to a group is central to the theme of social identity. The need to belong to a particular group or otherwise put, the need to adopt a particular social identity depends on the beliefs one shares with that identifiable social group. The next section examines the role of group beliefs in creating social identities.

## **Group Beliefs**

The central issue of the relation of group beliefs to identity is addressed in Daniel Bar-Tal’s comprehensive study: *Group Beliefs – A Conception for Analyzing Group Structure, Processes, and Behavior*. His definition of group beliefs is two fold: “group beliefs are defined as convictions the group members (a) are aware that they share and (b) consider as defining their ‘groupness.’”<sup>37</sup> It is the formulation of this understood groupness that is germane to this monograph’s thesis as groups are the basis for international interaction. The content of group beliefs is limitless. They can be as diverse as the individuals that make-up the group. This variety of beliefs makes their study difficult therefore; they must be classed into broad categories to facilitate an overall understanding of the particular identity of the group. Bar-Tal suggests the

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<sup>35</sup> Michael A Hogg, “Intragroup Processes, Group Structure and Social Identity,” in *Social Groups and Identities – Developing the Legacy of Henri Tajfel*, ed. Peter W. Robinson (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996), 67.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, *Group Beliefs : A Conception for Analyzing Group Structure, Processes, and Behavior* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989), 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

existence of four distinct categories of group beliefs – group norms, group values, group goals, and group ideology.<sup>38</sup>

The study of each one of these categories helps when defining what a particular group's identity is because it is from these common beliefs that the group draws its uniqueness and overarching identity. Group norms, based on cultural values, traditions and goals, provide the criteria by which members of the group are judged both from within the group and from without. A norm is “an idea in the minds of the members of a group, an idea that can be put in the form of a statement specifying what the members or other men should do, ought to do, are expected to do, under given circumstances.”<sup>39</sup> Some examples of group norms are those espoused by professional military officer corps. The group expects the adherence to certain norms such as the obligation to respect authority, the requirement to be physically and mentally fit, and the necessity to wear a uniform to name but a few. It is through the observance of these norms that the members of the group will judge each other. Following these norms partially ensures that a member will remain part of the group.

Group values, on the other hand, do not specify patterns of behavior but rather guide the choice of the means and ends to be taken in a given situation. Milton Rokeach defines a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is ... socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.”<sup>40</sup> The group aspires to values. Values can be prescriptive such as a military code of ethics, which prescribe group behavior. In response to the code of ethics, military officers aspire to lead with integrity, loyalty, selflessness and courage. These values distinguish the officer corps from greater society and reinforce the group's identity.

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<sup>38</sup> Bar-Tal, *Group Beliefs : A Conception for Analyzing Group Structure, Processes, and Behavior*, 49.

<sup>39</sup> George Caspar Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), 123.

Group goals are useful in determining membership to the group as individuals join groups to achieve common goals. They are “beliefs of valued or desired future specific states for the group.”<sup>41</sup> In the case of our example, the goals of the group would be their devotion to protecting the constitution or their society in general. This commitment to the greater good and the willingness to give the ultimate sacrifice in defense of these goals is definitely one trait that sets the professional officer corps apart from other groups.

Finally Bar-Tal affirms that the final category for group beliefs is that of group ideology, which is an “integrated set of beliefs constituting a program, a theory of causes and effects, and premises on the nature of man and societal order.”<sup>42</sup> The extent of beliefs contained in an ideology is a determinant for it being the strongest provider of group identity. Its contents can be political, social or even religious and its sets the conditions by which groups justify the ends and means of their organized social actions. As for how ideology is represented in our example, professional officer corps possesses the ideology held by the society that it has sworn to defend. In the case of most Western Armies, that ideology is one based on democratic principles.

Group determination – “we are a group” – flows from the sharing of at least one of these categories of group beliefs, from the emergence of the group belief into a group existence. The process of framing a common group identity by recognizing the commonality of certain group beliefs is thus a collective of individuals cognitively seeing themselves as one. This theory, which takes root in the social identity theory discussed earlier in this paper, is self-categorization. It was developed by John Turner as a supplement to Tajfel’s theory. Turner posits that “any collection of individuals in a given group setting is more likely to categorize themselves as a group (become a psychological group) to the degree that the subjectively perceived differences

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<sup>40</sup> Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Bar-Tal, *Group Beliefs : A Conception for Analyzing Group Structure, Processes, and Behavior*, 53.

between them are less than the differences perceived between them and other people (psychologically) present in the setting.”<sup>43</sup> Group beliefs, whether they are norms, values, goals, or ideology, are central and key to the formation of a group identity. Religion actually provides individuals with all four of these group beliefs and serves as a very strong identity.<sup>44</sup>

## Religious Identity

Through the Cold War and into the latter part of the last century, there was a generalized feeling that the impact of globalization was going to marginalize the impact of religion throughout the world. Shah and Toft, in their paper *Why is God Winning*, state, “the conventional wisdom shared by many intellectual and political elites was that modernization would inevitably extinguish religion’s vitality.”<sup>45</sup> Religion’s influence is growing.<sup>46</sup> How is this so? The answer lies in the ability of religion to coalesce identity through group beliefs. The previous section of this paper discussed the impact of group beliefs, notably norms, values, goals, and ideology on identity. Religion provides a very strong influence on all four of these categories of beliefs and thus creates impressive group identities. Seul writes, “religion frequently serves the identity impulse more powerfully and comprehensively than other repositories of cultural meaning can

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>43</sup> John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group : Self-Categorization Theory* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1987), 52.

<sup>44</sup> This is not to discount secular value systems as they can also inform identity. Religion is the focus here because it leads to the issue at hand – how does Islam inform the threat’s identity.

<sup>45</sup> Timothy Samuel Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, "Why God is Winning," *Foreign Policy* , no. 155 (2006): 39.

<sup>46</sup> This paper acknowledges that the opposite view also exists, that in fact, religion is not gaining popularity and that its influence is actually diminishing as highlighted in Christopher Hitchens’ book, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. However, the point is that religion remains a very powerful influence in identity salience and it is from this point that this paper addresses religious influence.

do.”<sup>47</sup> This section will examine Hans Mol’s theory of sacralization to explain the pivotal role that religion plays in identity reinforcement.

According to Hans Mol religion is the sacralization of identity. It is through the process of sacralization that identity is stabilized and eternalized thus protecting individual identity from the onslaught of the “infinite adaptability of symbol-systems.”<sup>48</sup> It is the power of sacralization that permits religious identity to persevere as one of the most powerful sources of personal identity. He defines it as the “process of safeguarding and reinforcing a complex of orderly interpretations of reality, rules, and legitimizations.”<sup>49</sup> Its relevance is in the interpretation of existence and in the dramatization of the dialect of sin and salvation. Sacralization is achieved through four mechanisms.

First, through objectification, the “tendency to sum up the variegated elements of mundane existence in a transcendental frame of reference where they can appear in a more orderly, more consistent, and more timeless way,”<sup>50</sup> man is able to make sense of an uncertain future. The belief in the coming of the Messiah in Judaism provides its followers with purpose for the present and hope for the future. The objectified item must be abstract enough to allow for change to be incorporated to its meaning but remain relevant to current interpretations. Objectification is the means that allow those who are involved in a particular situation to make sense of the contradictions and exceptions that everyday life presents.

The second mechanism is commitment, which is a “focused emotion or emotional attachment to a specific focus of identity.”<sup>51</sup> Man makes daily choices about how to behave or

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<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey R. Seul, “‘Ours is the Way of God’: Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 5 (Sep. 1999): 567.

<sup>48</sup> Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred : A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

how to react in certain circumstances based on his/her values. These choices are strongly influenced by the assumptions about and the commitment to his/her social identity. In social interaction man searches for consistency and predictability which derive from consensus. Commitment therefore anchors a social group's system of meanings to a given identity and provides this identity's stability. The holy enforces emotional commitment through the creation of strong emotions like awe and reverence, so faith is frequently the theological synonym for commitment and acts as the link between the ordering focus and the actual identity.

The third sacralizing mechanism is the one of rites. Repetition and practice are key to acquiring a new skill, through consistent repetition athletes are able to internalize the abilities required to excel at their particular sport. Concerning identities and their unique systems of meaning, rites act in the same way that repetition and practice do for the athlete. They “articulate and reiterate a system of meaning, and prevent it being lost from sight.”<sup>52</sup> They reinforce the bonds between society and the individual by sacralizing sameness. Religious rites and rituals reinforce identity through their ability to tie the past to the present and to fill the emotional voids cause by the mundane of daily existence.

The final mechanism for sacralization of identity is that of myths. Myths are “narratives, tales, or speculations not just for their own sake but with the added function of sacralizing meaning and identity.”<sup>53</sup> They are a statement of man's place in his environment and reinforce his definitions of reality especially when it comes to the applicable religious myths. Myths are able to sacralize through the emotional anchorage that they create in contrast to the ambiguities presented by daily existence.

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<sup>52</sup> Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred : A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion*, 233.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.



## Theories of Identity

Identity theory just like identity itself is hierarchical and layered. Man is linked to his world through the process of symbolic interaction. He gives meaning to objects in his surroundings in order to effectively plan his actions. Should the meaning of an object change or be modified, then he must change his plan of action. Meanings are social and must be agreed upon by all actors or else coherent action is impossible. Categorization of identity into social identities through role-identity helps define interaction between people based on their social position and also sets the limits for the expectations of the social category in question. Stryker and Simon highlight the fact that people have more than one identity and that their multiple identities are organized in a hierarchy of salience. This salience is the probability of a certain identity being invoked. Therefore, determining an individual's most salient identity under certain circumstances will help predict how that individual will react. Identity Theory, a theory concerned with role behavior and role identities, is the precursor to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, which concerns itself with intergroup relations and behavior. Individuals are motivated to adopt strategies that favor the in-group. Beliefs are the cornerstone to groupness. Bar-Tal's four categories of group beliefs, norms, values, goals, and ideology, create the conditions for the creation of group identity. Religion is one of the world's strongest group identities because its dogma fits nicely into all four of the categories of group beliefs. Furthermore, the power of sacralization also sets religion apart from other identities creating a much more stable and enduring identity.<sup>54</sup> That is not to say that other identities cannot be as powerful as religious identities but it highlights the fact that religion plays a very important role in the hierarchy of identity. The power of identity is clear. Can this characteristic of the human reality be used to enable security policies? If identity is about adopting common strategies favoring groupness and

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<sup>54</sup> Non-religious people are not dissociative but they define their identity in different terms than religious ones. In their case other factors can be stronger or higher up in their identity hierarchy.

a state's security strategy is about defining the threats to its national interests and determining how it intends to deal with those threats, then one could conclude that the two concepts can be related. The next chapter will address this link.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM AND NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The questions to be answered at this point are how can the concept of identity relate to IR theories and how can it inform National Security Strategies? The rapport between theory and practice in the policy realm has been and remains contentious. Stephen M. Walt's article "The Relationship between Theory and Policy in International Relations" highlights the difficulties involved in bridging the gap between academics (theory) and government (policy). He points out that however difficult it may be getting relevant and timely information to policy makers, this requirement remains fundamental to good decision making.<sup>55</sup> He defines theory as "a causal explanation – it identifies recurring relations between two or more phenomena and explains why that relationship obtains."<sup>56</sup> Therefore, theories are beneficial to policy creation as they can simplify reality to make it easier to understand.

Theories inform policy in four ways. First, they provide policy makers with a wide range of diagnostic tools that enable them to determine what type of phenomenon they are actually facing. Second, IR theories are very helpful in predicting the possible outcomes. Theories provide an analysis of the international context that the policy makers are facing and thus outline the causal influences at play. Third, they can help with prescription. The causal nature of policy actions require that policies be evaluated for desirability and feasibility. Theories help determine what can be done to achieve desired results and they facilitate the identification of the conditions that are necessary for policy success. Their scrutiny of the causal chain assists policy makers in determining how and why policies fail. Finally, they aid in the evaluation of policy decisions and how they are achieving the desired effects. Theories sketch out objectives, benchmarks, and success criteria, which are the tools for evaluating whether or not a policy is achieving the desired

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Relationship between Theory and Policy in International Relations." *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 8 (2005): 25.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

results.<sup>57</sup> It is this link between theory and policy that this chapter addresses. It will highlight how the IR theory of constructivism can be beneficial to policy makers and ultimately how it can inform the National Security Strategy. This will be accomplished by defining constructivism, by examining the transition between theory and application, and addressing the link between constructivism and policy making.

## Development of a Theory

Where did the theory of constructivism come from and why was there a perceived need to develop a theory beyond the traditional IR schools of thought – Realist and Liberal? In the wake of the Cold War, IR theorists were confronted with the fact that existing theories had not predicted the end of the Cold War nor could they adequately explain the demise of the Soviet Union.<sup>58</sup> The breakup of the bi-polar world has unleashed a variety of challenges to national security, including such forces as globalization and ethnic struggle. These new challenges are deeply affected by the issues that deal with norms as they pertain to social identity and culture. The impact of these norms and identities have been ignored or accepted at face value by the traditional IR theories. In sum, Christian Reus-Smit writes that “not only had the end of the Cold War thrown up new and interesting questions about world politics ..., the rationalist failure to explain recent systemic transformations encouraged this new generation of scholars to revisit old questions and issues so long viewed through neo-realist and neo-liberal lenses.”<sup>59</sup>

Constructivism has allowed societal analysis to reintegrate the debates within the field of International Relations. It had been marginalized by the over reliance on the materialistic perspectives of the other competing IR theories. Ted Hopf, in his 1998 article *The Promise of*

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<sup>57</sup> Walt, *The Relationship between Theory and Policy in International Relations*, 29-34.

<sup>58</sup> Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics : A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994), ix and 4.

*Constructivism in International Relations Theory*, provides a compelling argument in favor of the constructivist theory. He states that neorealism and constructivism share four fundamental precepts – the role of structure in world politics, the effects of anarchy on state behavior, the definition of state interests, the nature of power, and the prospects for change but that they fundamentally differ on each.<sup>60</sup>

The central concept of structure in neorealist theory is the anarchical nature of the international system. There is no overarching structure beyond the state to enforce behavior. Constructivists argue that this structure is pointless without some kind of intersubjective set of norms and practices to give it meaning since without them the application of power would be meaningless.<sup>61</sup> This point relates back to the discussion of identity theory in which relations and mutual understandings of Others is only made possible through the application of norms.

Christian Reus-Smit also makes the structural argument. He argues that constructivism adds three core ontological<sup>62</sup> propositions about social life to IR theory. First, actual structures help form the behavior of actors in the international system. These structures, material or ideational, exert a very strong influence on social and political action.<sup>63</sup> Secondly, normative structures shape identity and therefore inform both interests and actions.<sup>64</sup> This supports Katzenstein's point that identity is not an unrelated artifact of a state's behavior but rather that it is central to the choice of actions by the state. Lastly, Reus-Smit points out that agents and structures are

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<sup>59</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism" in *Theories of International Relations*, 2nd ed., ed. Scott Burchill (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 216.

<sup>60</sup> Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 181.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>62</sup> The word ontological (the study of existence) is used here to link the realities of social life to the realities of international relations.

<sup>63</sup> Reus-Smit, *Constructivism*, 216.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

mutually constituted.<sup>65</sup> That is to say, that one would not exist without the other. The reciprocal relationship between the two informs identity and in turn transforms the actual structures themselves.

As for the effects of anarchy on the state, Hopf posits that if the structural nature of the international system is based on intersubjective meanings for different actors then it follows that multiple understandings of anarchy also exist.<sup>66</sup> Alexander Wendt introduced the concept of intersubjective meaning in his seminal work – *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, in which he defines intersubjectivity as “the conceptions of self and other.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the actual impact of anarchy on a state’s behavior is greatly mitigated by these pluralistic interpretations thus rendering the concept rather irrelevant. Hopf’s article reiterates Katzenstein’s central theme that places norms and identities central to our ability to understand and predict state responses to insecurity. Identities provide stability as they offer certain predictability in a state’s behavior because “they tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are.”<sup>68</sup> The contrast between constructivism and realism remains that for constructivists identity is an intersubjective variable that depends on an historical, cultural, political, or social context, whereas realists fix the state’s identity to one of progressing its self interests. The following quote highlights the importance of identity in IR:

The identity of a state implies its preferences and consequent actions. A state understands others according to the identity it attributes to them, while simultaneously reproducing its own identity through daily social practice. The crucial observation here is that the producer of the identity is not in control of what it ultimately means to others; the intersubjective structure is the final arbiter of meaning.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Reus-Smit, “Constructivism” in *Theories of International Relations*, 218.

<sup>66</sup> Hopf, *The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory*, 173.

<sup>67</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics.” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring, 1992): 397.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Another element of constructivism that links it to the concepts of identity discussed in the previous chapter is its understanding as it relates to the international system.

Realists and liberals have a material definition of power. Power is either military, economic or both. Although constructivists maintain that material power is important, they argue that the idea of discursive power is equally necessary for understanding international politics. Hopf highlights that the “power of social practices lies in their capacity to reproduce the intersubjective meanings that constitute social structures and actions alike.”<sup>70</sup> This discursive power reproduces actors from identities and an intersubjective social structure from social practice. It is a predictability of social action that is produced through this intersubjective understanding which makes it so powerful. It creates common meanings of actions and consequences for the actors. This social practice is mutually reinforcing; strengthening over time it creates a power of practice which in turn reproduces and polices an intersubjective reality. This strength of practice, coupled with various meanings of anarchy, make change in world politics very difficult. Constructivism does not in any way offer an easy fix for international affairs but rather suggests that, as long as difference exists, there is a change of change. It “conceives of the politics of identity as a continual contest for control over the power necessary to produce meaning in a social group.”<sup>71</sup>

Constructivism as defined up to this point has dealt with states and their role in the international system; this does not mean that a constructivist approach is not applicable to dealing or even defining a non-state actor. Katzenstein recognizes that states continue to be the focal actors on the international stage in questions of security. However, the increasing relevance of non-state actors in international security issues demands the breaking down and recreation of the

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<sup>70</sup> Wendt, *Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, 178.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

traditional analytical distinctions.<sup>72</sup> This assumes that the core precepts of constructivism would also apply when dealing with an internationally relevant non-state actor whose identity could be studied.

## **From Theory to Practice**

Peter Katzenstein made an early attempt to merge constructivist theory with practice. This attempt was captured in the book *The Culture of National Security – Norms and Identity in World Politics*. This reference is important to the thesis of this paper not only because it frames the theory and illustrates its application but because it applies the normative approach to identity. That is to say, as detailed in the previous chapter, norms are a constitutive element to identity creation. He focuses his studies on how culture and identity affect national security because the traditional approaches to IR minimize their effects. In realist terms they are only “derivative of the distribution of capabilities and have no independent explanatory power.”<sup>73</sup>

The thesis of Katzenstein’s book differs from traditionalist views in two important ways. First, it argues that within the three layers of the international cultural environment – formal institutions of security regimes, world political culture, and international patterns of amity and enmity – shape and inform the security environments of states.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, these cultural environments affect both incentives for state behavior and their basic character.<sup>75</sup> The effects of cultural environments on national security, according to Katzenstein, are threefold. The external cultural environment determines the states’ potential for continued existence in their current form.

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<sup>72</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security : Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 523-24.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson and others, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security : Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 33-5.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



It may also change the modal character for statehood and finally, it may cause a variation in the character of statehood within a given international system.<sup>76</sup> This culturally informed perspective of international relations differs from the materialistic focused views and offers a new avenue for the analysis and prediction of state actions.

## **Constructivism and Insecurity**

We have looked at the development of constructivist theory and how it contrasts with other prominent IR theories. This section examines some of the methodologies that have been used within the constructivist approach. This paper has already outlined the normative constructivist approach in the description of Katzenstein et al's theories. Although Hopf also highlights a normative approach in *The Promise of Constructivism* article, he subsequently uses an inductive method for defining identity through texts instead of examining norms and their relation to identity. His book, *Social Construction of International Politics*, is a detailed analysis of identity on the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and Russia during two seminal periods in their history. He concludes that his inductive approach allowed for the discovery of identities that would not have fit into role or norm based approaches.<sup>77</sup>

The research highlights the applicability of both the normative and the inductive methodologies. The blind corners of identity discovered by Hopf using the inductive method was appropriate for the Soviet and Russian experiences that he was examining, a case where norms were not as central to the state's identity as they were for Thomas U. Berger's study of Germany and Japan in the post World War II era.<sup>78</sup> The applicability of different approaches for similar

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<sup>76</sup> Jepperson, *Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security*, 36.

<sup>77</sup> Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics : Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 261.

<sup>78</sup> Tomas U. Berger, "Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan," in *The Culture of National Security : Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 317-56.

case studies is relevant when discussing the different theories of IR. That is to say that some have argued that realist and liberal approaches can be supplemented by the constructivist approach and vice versa. This point is highlighted by Anthony D. Lott in *Creating Insecurity – Realism, Constructivism, and US Security Policy*.

Lott's analysis explores what realism and constructivism offer to the overall understanding of security and subsequently how that understanding can be implemented into successful policy. His study concludes that neither of these two theories offers a complete understanding of insecurity.<sup>79</sup> Although realism excels at defining material threats that influence state behavior, it is unable to predict ideational sources of insecurity. Constructivism, on the other hand, provides this ideational perspective but fails to take into account the material threats facing the state and in so doing actually marginalizes the state. Ultimately, Lott states that a balanced approach between realism and constructivism is necessary to achieve a more secure future.<sup>80</sup>

In an effort to merge theory and practice, Peter J. Katzenstein, J.J. Suh, and Allen Carlson offer a more complete IR approach to security in the book *Rethinking Security in East Asia*. This book submits an evolutionary perspective from the earlier works in the domain of IR Theory.<sup>81</sup> It proposes 'analytical eclecticism' as a methodology of analyzing and understanding insecurity. This approach is not based on a rejection of traditional IR theories but rather it attempts to create synergy between realism, liberalism, and constructivism. They argue, "the case for analytical eclecticism is dependant not on its ability to solve specific problems already identified by one or another research tradition, but on the possibility of expanding the scope of research problems

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<sup>79</sup> Anthony D. Lott, *Creating Insecurity : Realism, Constructivism, and US Security Policy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 156.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>81</sup> This is an example of the great evolutionary step forward that the realm of IR theory has taken over the past decade. It demonstrates the links between the theories and practice.

beyond that of each of the contemporary traditions.”<sup>82</sup> They conclude that analytical eclecticism offers a better conception of the interactions between power, efficiency and identity and therefore, provides a much more complete understanding of security.<sup>83</sup> However, one decides to analyze security, it is clear from both Lott and Suh’s works that a cross-theoretical approach is better and more complete than a narrow simple theoretical approach. More importantly, none of these approaches is possible without an in-depth study of identity as it applies to IR.

## **Identity and Security**

Regardless of the security issues being studied, it is clear that the traditional IR approaches are insufficient for the analysis of the issues at hand. The spread of ethnic and religious strife since the end of the Cold War have highlighted these deficiencies. Societal issues must find their way back into IR theory and the constructivist approach is the means for this to take place. The central role of identity in creating intersubjective relations between states, or non-state actors, cannot be ignored or taken for granted and must be addressed. The answer is not a “this over that” approach but rather a “little bit of this and a little bit of that” approach just as long as societal factors are included in the analysis. Improved responses to insecurity depend on a holistic study of both ourselves and the Other. Getting it right depends on it. A misinformed definition of an adversaries’ identity could easily produce a very inappropriate reaction to a situation of international insecurity. The link between constructivism theory and the creation of the National Security Strategy lies here at the juncture between the realist application of material power and the struggle between differing identities.

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<sup>82</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein and Rudra Sil. “Rethinking Asian Security : A Case for Analytical Eclecticism,” in *Rethinking Security in East Asia : Identity, Power, and Efficiency*. ed. J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

## CONFOUNDED IDENTITIES

To this point, this paper has reviewed some of the key theories that explain how one's identity is formed and how that identity can be defined by and extended to a group identity. It has looked at how religion, through its identity-supporting institutions, rituals and traditions, can function as a powerful identity initiator. The key role of identity in a constructivist approach to IR theory was also examined and it highlighted the importance of considering societal factors when formulating a response to insecurity. At this point it is important to note that there are two clearly distinct interpretations of the National Security Strategy threat's identity. There are those that argue that the threat has a violent ideology that exploits the proud and peaceful religion of Islam for their own extremist purposes. In the other camp there are those who argue that the threat draws its identity directly from Islamic scripture and they represent true Islam. It is this dichotomy that will now be examined.

This chapter will review the United States Government's definition of the threat in its National Security Strategy with the aim of deriving the stated substance of its identity. Then the same will be done from the opposite perspective. We will look at how the threat defines its own identity. These two models will be compared to establish what divergences, if any, exist between these two identities. By establishing an understanding of the threat's identity and examining any possible existing deltas between these understandings, one can establish possible approaches to broaching the problem.

### **United States Government's Definition of Threat's Identity**

National Governmental Policies are the best source to glean the bureaucratic apparatus' understanding of the nature of the threat faced by the country. It is from these central policies that the government creates appropriate responses to counter or in response to a stated threat. The key governmental policy documents relevant to the issue at hand are the *National Security Strategy*, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* and *9/11 Five Years Later: Successes*

*and Challenges*. These three documents are hierarchical; one informs the next in the order that they are listed here and they are all consistent in their depiction of the threat in the War on Terror.

The strategy documents have categorized the threat as one with an aggressive totalitarian ideology.<sup>84</sup> An ideology based on hijacked precepts of the proud religion of Islam. They purport that the terrorist's ideology has distorted the Islamic concept of *jihad* to serve their recruiting purposes. The strategies focus on al-Qaeda and their networks as the central or prime organization responsible for spreading this totalitarian ideology. The entire premise of this characterization is that these terrorist organizations have simply twisted the teachings of the Qur'an to suit their own objectives. In essence, they are going against the true meaning and intent of the scriptures. Many different academic studies and books echo this characterization of the threat. In the next section, this paper will examine some of these supporting theories to describe the underlying identity of the threat.

Karen Armstrong, in her book *Islam – A Short History*, opines that the current religious fundamentalism of radical Islamists is not a new phenomenon, nor is it exclusive to the Islamic faith. She explains that religious fundamentalism exists in most faiths and develops as a reaction to modernization and secularization of the state. Religious fundamentalists share a deep disenchantment with modernity, the fear of losing their faith, and a radical reinterpretation of their religion.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, fundamentalism is not the “exploitation” of religion but rather a revolt against the secularist exclusion of religion from public life.<sup>86</sup> It is from this fundamentalist movement within Islam that the corruption of the concept of *jihad* is born. It is the reaction of fundamentalists to the encroachment of Western secularization. She attributes the innovation of

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<sup>84</sup> United States. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Islam : A Short History*, Rev. ed. (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 164-5.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

violent jihad to two Islamic fundamentalists: Mawadudi, the founder of the Jamaati-i Islami in Pakistan, and Sayyid Qutb of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Mawadudi introduced the concept of jihad as a central tenet of Islam because of his belief in the fundamental obligation of all Muslims to fight, as Mohamed did, the *jahiliyyah*<sup>87</sup> of the West. This, in Armstrong's opinion, was the "development of a more extreme and potentially violent distortion of the faith."<sup>88</sup>

Viewed by some as the founder of Islamic fundamentalism,<sup>89</sup> Sayyid Qutb is best known for his work redefining the role of Islam in social and political change. He first gained his notoriety as a member of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. In response to the perceived threats of Western influence and of al-Nasser's secular government, the Brotherhood developed a violent ideology that espoused that "the nature of Islam [is] to dominate, not to be dominated, to impose its laws on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet."<sup>90</sup> Qutb advocated a violent jihad to overthrow what he deemed to be an apostate government in Egypt. Armstrong views this call to violence as a distortion by Qutb of both the writings of the Qur'an and of the teachings of the prophet Mohammed.<sup>91</sup> Her overarching thesis is that fundamentalists have hijacked the true meanings of Islam to serve their own purposes. They draw their identity from this extreme ideology of violence and conquest.

John L. Esposito supports the theory that Islamic fundamentalists have altered the Qur'an's messages to serve their own violent purposes. He states that both "Hassan al-Banna and

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<sup>87</sup> Jahiliyyah or jahalia (Arabic: جاهلية) is an Islamic concept of "ignorance of divine guidance" or "the state of ignorance of the guidance from God" referring to the condition Arabs found themselves in pre-Islamic Arabian society prior to the revelation of the Qur'an.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>90</sup> Vartan Gregorian, *Islam : A Mosaic, Not a Monolith* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 77.

<sup>91</sup> Armstrong, *Islam : A Short History*, 169.

Mawlana Mawdudi misappropriated and reapplied the vision and logic of the revivalist tradition in Islam to the sociohistorical conditions of twentieth-century Muslim society.”<sup>92</sup>

This therefore defines the threat facing the West as one with an identity of extreme ideology somewhat separate from the true interpretation of the religion of Islam. The radical and fundamentalist ideology is the foundation for the threat’s identity. This view emphasizes that the West is not engaged in a “Clash of Civilizations” with Islam but rather it is engaged in a struggle with a threat that identifies itself with an ideology that is truly distinct from the core values espoused within the religion of Islam. The next section will examine the other possibility, one that puts religion at the core of the threat’s identity.

### **The ‘Others’ Definition of its own Identity**

The previous discussion on the radicalized Islamic identity no doubt appeals to the leaders of the Islamic faith and most of their followers worldwide as it takes great strides to separate the nature of the identity from the Islamic religion. The Judeo-Christian sensibilities of the US government have led the strategic analysis of the threat down a secularized path, which is unable to recognize the importance of the religion in defining the threat’s identity. This section will address the threat from this unpopular approach. It will examine how Islam actually informs and shapes the threat’s identity.

In *Religion of Peace*, Gregory M. Davis contends that designating the threat’s identity as radical, extremist or fundamentalist suggests a Western prejudice that authentic religion is essentially peaceful in nature.<sup>93</sup> His thesis is that there is no justification in the belief that peaceful Muslims are necessarily genuine Muslims. His argument relies entirely on Islamic

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<sup>92</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat : Myth Or Reality?*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 130.

<sup>93</sup> Gregory M. Davis, *Religion of Peace? : Islam's War Against the World*, 1st ed. (Los Angeles, CA: World Ahead, 2006), 22.

doctrine, which is derived from two sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an being the words of Allah upon which all Muslims base their beliefs and the Sunnah being that way of the Prophet Muhamed lived his life. This approach of analyzing foundational texts reflects Hopf's inductive method discussed in the previous chapter. This approach also echoes the writings of all of the historical Islamists as they rely entirely on both the Qur'an and the Sunnah to support their teachings.

The Qur'an can be a difficult book to decipher as the surahs (verses) are listed by length and not in the chronological order in which they were revealed to the prophet. The later surahs abrogate the previous surahs and therefore, their chronological order is key to their meaning and importance. Davis' analysis of the Qur'anic surahs clearly demonstrates the Muslim obligation to fight non-Muslims. The lessons from the Sunnah put even more emphasis on this interfaith fight underlining the Prophet's central role in this struggle. Mohammed was a man of faith but was clearly a man of war and would fight non-Muslims wherever he came across them. What does this say about the threat's identity? It is clear that if individuals define themselves as devout Muslims they will subscribe to the core doctrine of the religion. The application of the Islamic teachings from the Qur'an and the Sunnah leave no room for anything but strife against non-believers. Stephen C. Coughlin further develops Davis' inductive analysis of Islamic doctrinal texts in his thesis *"To Our Great Detriment": Ignoring What Extremists Say About Jihad*. This seminal study takes the analysis of Islamic texts well beyond any other current work on the subject therefore; it is well worth reviewing for this paper's requirements.

Coughlin undertakes the task of performing a threat based assessment on the jihadi enemy's declared strategic doctrine, that of Islamic law which forms the threat's doctrinal basis.<sup>94</sup> He clearly demonstrates the overarching authority of Islamic law over every facet of Muslim life.

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<sup>94</sup> Stephen C. Coughlin, "To Our Great Detriment": Ignoring What Extremists Say About Jihad." (Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence Thesis, National Defense Intelligence College, 2007), 3.



Therefore, it is a duty for every Muslim to adhere to Islamic law. The contentious issue that he highlights is that jihad against non-Muslims to establish Islam is at the core of Islamic law. He found no exception to this duty. Jihad is therefore part of the very essence of the religion as Islamic law sets the conditions for the religion's practice. The duty of jihad is a central tenet of the Muslim faith and consequently a core principle of a Muslim's identity. This contrasts the previous understanding of the threat as it puts the Islamic faith's concept of jihad at the core of identity instead of on the periphery. Coughlin concludes, "if Islamic law is to serve as the measure, and there is no doctrinal basis to argue that it should not, there may not be an Islam that is not under obligation of jihad that remains in force until the world has been claimed for Islam."<sup>95</sup> Admittedly, Coughlin's position is contentious; however, his analysis of Islamic texts provides an important understanding of a possible alternate threat identity and merits further attention.

Stephen P. Lambert provides an excellent counter to National Security Strategy's proposed threat identity in his book *Y: The Sources of Islamic Revolutionary Conduct*. He proposes that the threat does not identify itself as a terrorist but rather as a revolutionary seeking to shatter the status quo and install a worldwide caliphate. Lambert suggests that the revolutionaries have not hijacked Islam but that they identify themselves as Islamic purists striving to live their lives as the Prophet Mohamed did in the Seventh century.<sup>96</sup> This revolutionary Islamic vanguard possesses an historical lineage beginning with the prophet and continuing through scholar jurisprudence to the recent writings of Qutb and Mawdudi.<sup>97</sup> Again, these scholars set the duty of jihad as an individual responsibility. Duty to Islam and ultimately

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>96</sup> Stephen P. Lambert, *Y: The Sources of Islamic Revolutionary Conduct* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic Intelligence Research, Joint Military Intelligence College : U.S. G.P.O., Supt. of Docs., distributor, 2005), 130.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 135.

to Allah is the foundation of their doctrine. Lambert ties the ideology to identity by stating that revolutionaries “have turned identity into a religion – the concept of the ummah has become synonymous with Islam itself.”<sup>98</sup> This is clearly counter to the concept of creating the threat’s identity around a hijacked religion and an ideology of violence.

## **Identity and the National Security Strategy**

This chapter set out to contrast the definitions of the threat as it is defined in the National Security Strategy of the United States of America. The first definition highlighted the central theme that the ideology which underscores the threat is one of extreme violence and one that exploits a proud and peaceful religion for its own perverted objectives. This definition clearly helps placate the Judeo-Christian need for political correctness but does little if anything to inform the National Security Strategy. The second definition examined was that Islam is the very foundation of the threat’s identity and that every action it takes is informed by that identity. This is important because it points policy makers in the direction of Islamic doctrine for more in-depth analysis. Furthermore, as identity is hierarchical, this understanding allows policy makers to target the Muslims who might be sympathetic to the threat’s goals but who have yet to internalize the threat’s identity as their own overarching identity. Whether or not this proposed alternative for the threat’s identity is accurate, it highlights the importance of scholarly analysis in order to get it right.

The religious nature of the threat’s identity has hampered the US policy makers’ ability to have any kind of strategic discourse on possible policy options. It is clear from the above analysis that there is a distinct possibility that Lambert and Coughlin are correct about the true nature of the threat’s identity. What are the impacts if this is the case? Lambert writes that US policy makers should question the feasibility of the current policy in light of the religious nature

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<sup>98</sup> Coughlin, *To Our Great Detriment*: Ignoring What Extremists Say About Jihad, 132.

of the threat.<sup>99</sup> He adds that the US must recognize that it is engaged in a religious war. He defines this war as being between a religion of secularity and Islam. It is only once there is recognition of the religious component to this conflict can policy makers create a coherent strategic policy.<sup>100</sup> Coughlin somewhat reflects this analysis. He believes that the current definition of the threat has led the US to an Underlying Causes policy.<sup>101</sup> The Underlying Causes model uniquely addresses economic deprivation as the causal effect of terrorism. This approach has been critiqued because studies have shown that the majority of the terrorist attacks against western targets have been perpetrated by individuals from the middle class.<sup>102</sup> In Coughlin's opinion this myopic definition of the threat is directly related to the refusal of the current administration to recognize the religious nature of the threat and to perform a systematic analysis of Islamic Law as it forms the basis for all action. Without a recognition that Islam is the central issue in the GWOT, there is a distinct possibility that the National Security Strategy will fail.

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<sup>99</sup> Lambert, *Y: The Sources of Islamic Revolutionary Conduct*, 153.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 158-9.

<sup>101</sup> Coughlin, *To Our Great Detriment: Ignoring What Extremists Say About Jihad*, 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

## CONCLUSION

The United States current National Security Strategy has identified the threat as one possessing an extremist ideology that has hijacked the proud religion of Islam. This paper set out to argue that understanding and addressing the nature of the threat's identity is paramount to the United States' ability to win the GWOT. The discussions on identity theory highlighted the fact that identity is central to human nature. One cannot exist in a society without having at least one over-arching identity because societal action and reaction are based on the common understanding of one's identity. Social identity theory sets the parameters by which inter-group relations are structured and analyzed. The theory advances that the analysis of human interaction must take into account the social context in which it takes place. Individuals define themselves by associating with and being associated with particular social groupings and these groupings share common beliefs, which help define their group identity. Religion is an extremely powerful group identity because it encompasses all of the group beliefs defined by Bar-Tal and also serves to sacralize personal identity.

Identity, therefore, must somehow be taken into account by an IR theory as international relations are all about group interaction. The IR theory which addresses group identity and its impact on relations is constructivism. Although a mixed IR approach to security studies is necessary for a more complete analysis, constructivism and taking into account the ideational factors present in an issue remain crucial to dealing with international insecurity. This is not a trivial issue; states deal with one another based on an intersubjective understanding of the social constraints at play and should a state misinterpret the identity of its foe this could lead to a totally inappropriate reaction to a perceived issue of insecurity. This is true for states but it is also true for international non-state actors as they possess both a group identity and an international security agenda. The intersubjective understanding must be created with them also.

With identity theory and constructivism as the foundations for understanding, analyzing and reacting to a perceived threat, this paper analyzed two possible definitions of the threat's identity with a view to highlighting possible gaps in understanding in order that they may be addressed by a National Security Strategy review. The conclusions were that the National Security Strategy defines the threat's identity as one based on an ideology of violence and on a perversion of the proud religion of Islam. This is contrasted by the identity based in the laws and scriptures of the religion, by an identity of revolutionary vanguard that sees itself as keepers of the faith and as Islamic purists. It is clear that if this gap in understanding is not analyzed and possibly reconciled, an intersubjective understanding will be impossible. The constructivist approach is not possible if efforts are not made to reconcile the differences in narratives between what the threat is saying their identity is and what the policy makers understand it to be.

As the US transitions to a new administration next winter, it will undoubtedly need to review its Security Strategy. The question will be whether or not it will re-analysis of the nature of the threat to determine to what extent the current policies are achieving their goals. Although Lambert and Coughlin represent an alarmist view of the threat and their recommendations are very difficult to implement, ignoring their warnings would be at the nation's peril. National Security Strategy is aimed at protecting a state's citizens and interests, doing so is difficult at the best of times but the nation counts on its leaders to make the difficult choices. Hopefully this paper is but the first step on the path to a culturally relevant National Security Strategy.

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