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**Master's Thesis of International Studies**

# **The Idea of an Iraqi Threat:**

**An Explanation for George W. Bush's Securitizing Move**

이라크 위협: 조지 W. 부시의 안보화 조치에 대한 설명

**August 2019**

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**Abstract**

Previous research has shown that the events leading up to the Iraq War can be explained by securitization theory. However, existing literature explaining the origin of the Iraq War is often either not sufficiently compatible with securitization theory’s assumptions or overlooks the importance of the dynamics preceding the securitization attempt. This thesis seeks to explain why George W. Bush decided to securitize Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the first place. By applying securitization theory to this case study, the securitization process, and in particular George W. Bush’s speech acts, are illuminated. This then leads to the primary research question: Why did George W. Bush carry out a securitizing move which portrayed Iraq as an existential threat that required extraordinary countermeasures? To explain this outcome, the thesis utilizes a framework developed by Roxanna Sjöstedt in her article, “Ideas, Identities and Internalization: Explaining Securitized Moves.” The first analytical step is an

examination of the diffusion of the idea that Iraq constituted an urgent threat by particular actors. Secondly, the thesis accounts for significant existing and newly constructed identities that facilitated the acceptance of this idea. Finally, it analyzes the individual internalization of the said idea by George W. Bush due to his personal beliefs. As a result, this research finds that, first, the idea entrepreneurs that tried to spread the idea of a threatening Iraq were mainly neoconservatives who envisioned American supremacy. After being appointed to positions in the Bush administration, neoconservative leaders gained more power to diffuse the idea. Furthermore, particular aspects of American identity, such as exceptionalism and civil religion as well as the United States' democratic identity, then served as catalysts facilitating the idea's acceptance. Lastly, the personal beliefs of George W. Bush caused him to externalize the idea in the form of a securitizing move. The decisive beliefs in this context were his religious convictions as well as his changing operational code after 9/11. This thesis concludes that all three factors were crucial for Bush's decision to securitize Iraq. These findings also suggest the implication that individual level factors have greater explanatory value than assumed by much of the literature in the field of international relations.

**Keywords:** George W. Bush, Iraq War, Securitization, Idea Diffusion, Identity, Beliefs, Operational Code

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## **I. Introduction**

If a democratically accountable government decides to go to war with another state, it is always necessary to convincingly justify the decision before the population to maintain domestic approval and increase the probability of staying in power for another term. However, international audiences are highly significant as well and are especially important in an increasingly interdependent and globalized age. Many states are members of various international organizations such as the United Nations, which serve specific purposes, such as working toward global peace. Against this backdrop, multilateral solutions to conflicts are often sought after. If a problem is addressed and solved multilaterally, this circumstance usually increases the legitimacy of the particular approach taken to deal with a certain issue. Nonetheless, a state may occasionally resort to unilateral actions if it perceives the stakes to be high enough.

Such unilateralism can be especially problematic if the unilateral action that is taken involves military engagement or even the full-blown escalation into war. This is because legitimacy becomes an even greater necessity when the sovereignty of another state is infringed and the lives of many members of both parties are threatened. If the justifications for such a drastic move are not convincingly presented, the country could be faced with, among other consequences, a dramatic loss of positive reputation.

One war conducted by the United States considered as unilateral was the war that began with the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. From August 1990 to February 1991 the U.S. had already been at war with Iraq, but the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, remained in power even after the Gulf War came to an end. After the tragic terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush officially declared a

war on terror. In this context of fighting terrorism as a response to 9/11, the Bush administration accused Iraq of possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in an attempt to establish a connection between the Iraqi leadership and its alleged WMDs with the new terrorist threat. The decision to go to war, however, was met with considerable international opposition, including two important U.S. allies: France and Germany. The Iraq War seems especially controversial in hindsight because the WMDs, which served as a major justification for the necessity of war, were not found, even after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Thus, the assumptions of the George W. Bush administration that led to the decision to go to war proved to be false.

Consequently, the reasons behind this controversial decision for war as well as the potential motivations of certain individual actors and the administration as a whole have been subject to scrutiny by many scholars in different academic fields, such as history or international politics, among others. One way to analyze security issues, such as the assumed Iraqi threat to the U.S.' national security, is offered by securitization theory, which has been developed first by the Copenhagen School (CS). Securitization theory posits that security problems are not pre-given, but socially constructed. Through a speech act that describes an issue as an existential threat, the issue becomes a security problem (Buzan et al. 1998: 24). Because the alleged threat constituted by WMDs in Iraq proved to be wrong, viewing the nature of security through the lens of securitization theory can be very useful in this case (Hughes 2007: 101).

This thesis, however, is only partially concerned with the actual securitization process leading up to the Iraq War. The problem addressed by this study rather lies in the dynamics that preceded the Bush administration's attempts to securitize Iraq and its

leader, Saddam Hussein. Thus, the central question of this thesis is the following: Why did George W. Bush perform a securitizing move regarding Iraq? In other words, this thesis engages with the translation of the idea of Iraq's being a security threat into the securitizing move conducted by President George W. Bush during the lead-up to the Iraq War. The primary aim of this thesis is to offer an alternative explanation for the U.S.' securitization of Iraq that contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the government's decision to invade Iraq. This endeavor is undertaken by utilizing a framework developed by Sjöstedt that serves as a tool to explain why a particular securitizing actor makes a securitizing move. This approach follows a specific logic: When a certain idea is diffused identities play a role in the rejection or acceptance of this idea by the decision-maker or securitizing actor. The degree of the subsequent internalization of these ideas, which is influenced by the beliefs of the securitizing individual, then is decisive for whether an idea of a security threat is brought onto the agenda or not. This then constitutes or leads to the securitizing move (2013).

Resulting from this approach there are three distinct problem areas—each including several subquestions—that require analyses in order to answer the central question of this thesis. The first area concerns the idea diffusion process that is scrutinized by answering the following subquestions: Who were the actors that established and spread the idea that Iraq under Saddam Hussein constituted a threat to the U.S.? What did the idea diffusion process look like? Further important in this section is the question of why these actors were motivated to spread such an idea in the first place.

Secondly, this study requires an analysis of international and domestic identities that could have influenced the U.S. president's acceptance of Iraq as a threat.

After identifying said identities the most important question remains why the identities set out in this section exerted influence on whether the idea was accepted or not by George W. Bush.

The third problem area is primarily concerned with the personal beliefs of President Bush. To figure out why Iraq has been securitized, it is necessary to answer the question of the extent of the internalization of the threat idea. This gain in knowledge can be achieved by examining the beliefs of George W. Bush that are related to this issue and how they affected the internalization process.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows: First of all, a thorough review of the most relevant literature explicates where in the research landscape this study is located and which gaps in existing scholarship this contribution fills. This literature review addresses several academic works regarding securitization theory and sources that are related to the concepts of ideas, identities, and beliefs that are utilized in the analysis section of this thesis. An additional research area covered by the literature review are studies on the Iraq War that are related to answering the question of why the George W. Bush administration decided to go to war. By doing so, the relevance of conducting another study of this well-researched case becomes more obvious.

The chapters following the literature review elaborate on which theoretical assumptions the analysis is based and set out the methodological design of the analysis. The method chapter further details the approach of examining each of the three problem areas mentioned above.

Following the theory and method of this research, chapter five contains the primary analysis, which includes four separate analytical portions. The first subchapter

outlines the securitization process to establish the subject of this study, namely the securitizing move conducted by President Bush. Consequently, this subchapter includes the analysis of some of his speech acts in relation to the Iraqi threat. Next, the three problem areas—the diffusion of the idea, the function of identities, personal beliefs and the internalization of the idea—are analyzed in the following subchapters. Subsequently, the thesis ends with a summary and discussion of the findings.

## II. Literature Review

The CS's securitization theory and critiques of this particular version of the theory are reviewed first. The following section then engages with existing applications of securitization of the U.S. and Iraq. The literature review then covers the analytical framework used for this thesis. Each of the three parts is subsequently addressed individually by reviewing important research that is related to these aspects. Lastly, the literature review concludes with an elaboration on this thesis' relevance within and contribution to this body of research.

### 1. Securitization Theory

This section of the literature review first briefly introduces the CS's conceptualization of securitization theory and then as a second step chronologically shows some significant steps in the development of the theory.

Probably the most comprehensive formulation of the CS's Securitization Theory can be found in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* written by Barry Buzan, Jaap de Wilde, and Ole Wæver. In this monograph, the authors explain the origins of securitization theory in the debate about widening security, give an alternative definition of security and set out the theory itself. Despite later developments of the theory by multiple scholars, this book is thus still the best starting point for any elaborations on securitization.

Security, as Buzan et al. state, is defined by the "survival of collective units and principles—the politics of existential threat." The security concept thus does not lose its value even though it is applied to non-military areas (1998: 27), because the

meaning that is assigned to security here is a different one from the traditional strict military emphasis, but, at the same time, does not encompass everything due to its particularity.

According to the CS, the constitution of security issues is enabled through a securitizing actor's speaking of an existential threat that supposedly endangers a referent object. The situation's urgency then makes it possible to receive support for countermeasures beyond normal political solutions (Buzan et al. 1998: 5). Hence, the presentation of a threat as such creates a security issue. The threat does not necessarily have to be real (Buzan et al. 1998: 24).

Lastly, the normative nature of the CS's securitization theory requires further elaboration. Even if an issue is securitized successfully, conflict is not resolved yet. Therefore, the CS advocates desecuritization, a concept that describes the reversal of the securitization process toward solutions within normal politics (Buzan et al. 1998: 4). As Buzan et al. hold, "excessive securitization produces the international equivalent of autism and paranoia. Avoiding excessive and irrational securitization is thus a legitimate social, political, and economic objective of considerable importance" (1998: 208). It becomes obvious that the CS not only developed a theory to analyze the intersubjective construction of threats (Buzan et al. 1998: 30) but also gives a clear normative recommendation directed against the securitization process that is identified and described by the theory.

One of the earliest conceptions of securitization can be found in a working paper written by Ole Wæver. In "Security, the Speech Act: Analysing the Politics of a Word," Wæver argues for a new definition of security that equates it with a speech act. Furthermore, he states the purpose of securitizing moves as the moving of the issue

into an area that requires extraordinary measures to counteract a certain situation (1989: 5-6). Wæver assigns the ability to use speech acts for securitization exclusively to the political center of a particular unit (1989: 7). While this view seems very limited compared to the later conceptualization of securitizing actors and their diversity as presented in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, the paper already hints at the significance of the securitizing actor's position of authority. Lastly, Wæver's working paper introduces the normative aspect of securitization theory in the form of the preference of handling an issue politically (1989: 10). Wæver's demanding "less security and more politics" (1989: 7) in this paper shows that the normative aspect of securitization theory represented by desecuritization was set out from the beginning.

This early work addresses several core assumptions of securitization theory, but is not very fleshed out and streamlined yet. The title "Security, the Speech Act" further implies one of the weaknesses of the CS's conceptualization that was pointed toward by many critics later: the focus lies completely on the securitizing move without considering the audience enough that is crucial for the success or failure of the securitization process and consequently the actual construction of security through the speech act.

In "Securitization and Desecuritization," Wæver delivers a perspective on securitization that is much closer to the fleshed-out version that can be found in *Security*. First, he addresses the dangers of traditional widening of the security field such as the spread of securitization and the difficulty of figuring out where to stop the application of the security concept to avoid becoming all-inclusive and thus losing value (1995: 47-48). As Wæver argues, the concept of security traditionally refers only to the state. Therefore, it is not possible to simply apply it to all kinds of other areas

(1995: 48-49). One solution that is offered by this book chapter is to broaden security in regard to threats. If threats are presented with urgency due to their endangering sovereignty together with an attempt to legitimize extraordinary means, the application of security to other sectors becomes plausible (1995: 51-52).

In this book chapter, Wæver makes an important contribution to the theory's development by elaborating on securitization theory's normative aspect in detail. The problem with the state's claiming legitimacy to counteract a security issue with certain measures lies in the fact that the "*special right* [italics in the original] [...] will, in the final instance, always be defined by the state and its elites" (1995: 54). The use of a securitizing move can, therefore, be motivated by selfish interests (Wæver 1995: 55). Thus, it is crucial to see security in a negative light and demand less of it. Only by framing a security problem in non-security terms can it be overcome (Wæver 1995: 56). Another merit of the book chapter is that Wæver undergirds his theoretical elaborations with several cases. In the case of the European détente for instance, he states that "détente, as negotiated desecuritization and limitation of the use of the security speech act, contributed to the modification of the Eastern societies and systems that eventually made possible, via sudden desecuritization through a speech-act failure, the radical change of 1989" (1995: 60).

## 2. Criticism of the Copenhagen School

Since its establishment securitization theory has led to a diverse and active research field revolving the core assumptions set out by the CS around Wæver and Buzan. Many of the scholars writing on securitization outside of the CS identified aspects of

the theory which they found worth criticizing or requiring further development and specification.

Numerous articles addressing the normative character of securitization in the form of desecuritization have been published. Claudia Aradau, for instance, argues that the concept of desecuritization remains underspecified in the CS's elaborations on securitization theory. According to Aradau, politics, as well as politicization, is not sufficiently defined by the CS, which then leads to the consequence of undercutting the desecuritization concept (2004: 389). Interestingly enough, Jef Huysmans' article "The Question of the Limit: Desecuritisation and the Aesthetics of Horror in Political Realism" aims at the specification of the logic of politicization and the illumination of securitization theory's normativity by showing more precisely how desecuritization is significant (1998: 571). In a way, one could say that Huysmans tried to add the specification to securitization theory whose lacking was later criticized by Aradau. Lene Hansen replied to such criticism by arguing that securitization theory does not have a thin conception of politics. Hansen further goes on to describe four different forms of desecuritization gained from empirical studies (2012: 538-539). By doing so, Hansen makes a valuable contribution to fleshing out the concept of desecuritization.

Another area of critique is constituted by the audience. Thierry Balzacq et al. write in their valuable synthesis of securitization literature, "'Securitization' Revisited: Theory and Cases," that securitization theory left unclear how the acceptance of a security articulation by an audience can be evaluated (2015: 499). Sarah Léonard and Christian Kaunert hold the same view and contend the existence of a contradiction in the CS's conceptualization of the audience. They argue that the necessity of audience acceptance for securitization to succeed and the assertion that it is the securitizing actor

who decides handling an issue as an existentially threatening one contradict each other (2011: 58). Adam Côté further holds that characterizing the audience as an agent but not assigning agency to it undermines the intersubjectivity of securitization theory. Thus, he advocates viewing audiences as agents that can exert considerable influence on how security values are created (2016: 543).

Other scholars such as Felix Ciută argue that “securitization theory needs a stronger contextual orientation” (2009: 324). Balzacq similarly criticizes the CS, asserting that “analyzing security problems then becomes a matter of understanding how external contexts, including external objective developments affect securitization.” The resonating of the speech act with its context thus becomes a necessity for the securitizing actor in Balzacq’s view (2011: 13).

More significant and valuable research on securitization outside of the CS can easily be found. But due to this thesis’ main concern with the identification of the securitizing move and the processes leading up to it, listing all of them would defeat the purpose of this literature review. The high number of studies dealing with the securitization process opposed to the lack of research analyzing the preceding dynamics further undergirds the significant contribution of Sjöstedt’s development of her framework and its application on the case of George W. Bush and Iraq in this thesis.

### 3. Securitization Theory and Iraq

Over the years, some research has been published that engage with the securitization of Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion in particular. One essential article on this matter is Bryn

Hughes' "Securitizing Iraq: The Bush Administration's Social Construction of Security." In this article, Hughes looks at the events preceding the Iraq War to find out if securitization theory can serve as a valid tool for explaining this case. Hughes' makes an important contribution through his finding that securitization is indeed useful and appropriate in this context (2007: 101). What this means for this thesis is that the validity of the CS's assumptions regarding the U.S.' securitization of Iraq is established. Consequently, it becomes viable to speak of the existence of a securitizing move performed by George W. Bush and to make an attempt at explaining it. Here, however, the author of this thesis disagrees with Hughes. While Hughes more or less views the Bush administration as one unit and suggests political motives as major reasons for the securitization (2007: 97), this thesis argues that George W. Bush as the most important and powerful securitizing actor needs to be divorced from the rest of the administration. Furthermore, the argument presented here is that Bush's motivation for securitizing Iraq was based to a great extent on his perception of Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a threat.

Additionally to the research done on the securitization process itself, some authors focus more on the audience acceptance that made the securitization of Iraq successful. Ciaran O'Reilly, for instance, tries to contribute to answering the question of why the U.S.' securitization of Iraq was successful. His article "Primetime Patriotism: News Media and the Securitization of Iraq" concludes that the American media played an important role for the public support of military intervention by not only being influenced by the post-9/11 patriotism that prevailed at the time but also by reinforcing it (2008: 66). Accordingly, O'Reilly speaks of "the news media as a functional actor and patriotism as a facilitating condition" (2008: 72). Paul Roe tackles

the issue of audience acceptance by basing his research on Balzacq's elaborations on moral and formal support for securitization attempts (2005: 184-185). In his analysis of the audience acceptance in the United Kingdom's decision to go to war with Iraq, Roe finds that acceptance of the securitization attempt by the formal audience—in this case the British Parliament—mattered much more for the realization of the extraordinary measures since Tony Blair failed to convince other audiences of their necessity (2008: 632). Based on these findings, Roe makes a meaningful theoretical contribution by establishing a process with two distinct steps: “the ‘stage of identification’, where an issue is defined as ‘security’, and the ‘stage of mobilization’, where the responses to that issue are thereafter established” (2008: 620). Even though this thesis is concerned with audience acceptance to a much lesser degree, Roe's research is of importance when the success of the U.S. government's securitizing move is covered briefly.

A reinterpretation of the securitization of Iraq in the U.S. is offered by Ido Oren and Ty Solomon who argue that the securitization of Iraq was successful due to the “collective chanting of a phrase”: weapons of mass destruction (2015: 316). According to Oren and Solomon, the securitizing process is the “ritual of iteration, repetition, and material practice.” Furthermore, the repeated usage of particular phrases constitutes securitizing speech acts while arguments play a much lesser role (2015: 320). Interestingly, they also argue that even opponents of the securitization attempt contribute to it simply by using the same phrase that implies danger (2015: 325). However, despite the significant theoretical contribution, this approach is not very useful for this thesis since it deviates from how the securitization process is traditionally understood.

The application of securitization theory on the case of Iraq can have great explanatory value. However, a simple application of securitization theory on this case does not lead to a complete explanation because it lacks the tools to explain why an issue was presented as a security threat in the first place. Many academic sources that try to explain why the U.S. invaded Iraq exist already. However, they do not share the basic theoretical assumptions of securitization theory and are thus not entirely reconcilable with it.

Ahsan I. Butt, for example, sees the Iraq War as a struggle to reinforce American hegemony: “[h]aving experienced status-loss as a result of 9/11, the United States was compelled to burnish its reputation for toughness and establish a generalized deterrence against challenges to its hegemony” (2019: 33). David A. Lake, however, holds that Saddam Hussein’s inability to believably commit to not developing WMDs, together with “informational asymmetries that led the United States to underestimate the costs Iraq could impose on it and Baghdad to overestimate the costs it could impose on Washington,” help understand the occurrence of the Iraq War (2010: 51).

Many other scholars correspond to this thesis in the sense that they identify potential reasons for the invasion on the individual level. David Patrick Houghton, drawing from political psychology, speculates about various potential reasons that may have contributed to the Iraq War decision. Some of the factors suggested by Houghton are impulsive gut decisions (2008: 172-174), the principle of the drunkard’s search — “[looking] for evidence in psychologically *convenient* [italics in the original] places” (2008: 174)—the attempt to keep cognitive consistency (2008: 182), and the groupthink phenomenon which can explain “dysfunctional behavior in groups” (2008:

185). Colin Campbell tells the following causal story about the decision: the administration had

[personalized] the struggle against al Qaeda as a matter of “getting” Osama bin Laden. When bin Laden’s escape, probably to Pakistan, proved that approach a failure, the political impasse thus created left the road open for administration hawks who had long been interested in overthrowing Saddam Hussein to change the subject and press for regime change in Iraq. This gambit played so well to the president’s natural reflexes that it gained primacy within the political executive without a rigorous examination of the complexities of its implementation or the potential damage it could do to U.S. standing in the global community. (2004: 97)

With this explanation, as this thesis’ analysis shows, Campbell gets close to the core of the issue in two important regards. Firstly, the neoconservatives did indeed push for the removal of Saddam Hussein quite strongly when they saw the opportunity to do so effectively. Secondly, Bush’s personality mattered a great deal in subsequently putting the issue on the administration’s agenda. However, much more attention needs to be paid to the role of identity constructions and personal beliefs to add explanatory weight to these factors. This is what is undertaken by this thesis.

Overall, most of these sources only illuminate particular factors that certainly played important roles in the process leading to the invasion but do not explain it sufficiently. Even when taken together, they do not fully account for why the Iraq War occurred. Furthermore, when accepting the presumptions of securitization theory, one cannot help but notice the theoretical incompatibility of many explanations for the Iraq War. Sjöstedt’s framework to explain securitizing moves enables escaping this mismatch by offering a tool that serves to explain the central phenomenon of

securitization theory, namely the securitizing move. By using her framework, this thesis not only adds another explanation that improves the understanding of the events preceding the war but also avoids too much theoretical incongruence.

#### 4. Sjöstedt's Framework for Explaining Securitizing Moves

The for this thesis' method and theoretical framework most relevant article is Sjöstedt's "Ideas, Identities and Internalization: Explaining Securitizing Moves" because it develops the analytical framework that is used to approximate the answer to the question why George W. Bush attempted to securitize Iraq. The article's biggest contribution to the literature on securitization is the illumination of a highly decisive aspect that is overlooked by most of the scholars' applying securitization theory, which is to find out why securitizing actors carry out securitizing moves in the first place. Sjöstedt identifies many securitization scholars' post-positivist stance as a reason for this gap in the literature because such a position leads to reluctance to assign the securitizing move as a dependent variable. Sjöstedt disagrees with this reluctance and assumes that positivist terminology can be applied to analyze ideational phenomena (2013: 146). Based on this assumption it becomes possible to see a securitizing move as the dependent variable and look for independent variables that affect this outcome.

The article agrees with particular assumptions of securitization theory such as the significance of threat framing, the analysis of speech acts, and the necessity of audience acceptance for a securitization process to be successful. However, Sjöstedt also stresses that the audience as a factor of the process can be left aside when the research question revolves around the reasons for a securitizing move's initiation

(2013: 145-146). Hence, this thesis does not primarily focus on the success of the securitization process but rather focuses on the securitizing move and what precedes it. Nevertheless, audience acceptance is addressed because the success of a securitization attempt adds weight to the relevance of its scrutinization. Overall, Sjöstedt's framework shows that securitization theory requires further development regarding the origin of securitizing moves. In this way, the practical utility of securitization theory could be greatly enhanced.

## 5. Idea Diffusion

Sjöstedt defines ideas "as guiding principles regarding a particular condition that may or may not affect an actor's interests and understanding of this condition" (2013: 150). Consequently, the spreading of an idea can potentially have an impact on an individual's decisions. While research on idea diffusion processes has been conducted previously, Sjöstedt holds that there is a lack of "studies that investigate the diffusion of constitutive ideas concerning threat constructions" (2013: 150). Nonetheless, it is possible to find literature that deals with the spread of ideas by particular actors in the context of the alleged Iraqi threat to the U.S from alternative perspectives. What remains to be done, is simply to extract these idea entrepreneurial efforts from these studies and frame them in accordance with Sjöstedt's framework. In doing so this thesis contributes to filling the gap identified by Sjöstedt through giving another empirical example of how the idea diffusion efforts influenced threat construction and threat perception.

In *Wanting War: Why the Bush Administration Invaded Iraq*, Jeffrey Record convincingly elaborates on the neoconservative influence on the Bush administration and thereby illuminates the ideological background of the idea entrepreneurship that strongly characterized the idea diffusion process. Record holds, for instance, that “indeed, central to neoconservative ideology is the perpetuation of America’s post-Cold War, global military supremacy via—if necessary—unilateral preventive military action against rising potential enemies, especially so-called rogue states seeking to acquire nuclear weapons” (2010: 34). Importantly for the comprehension of the idea entrepreneur’s motivations to spread the idea that Iraq was a threat, Record further identifies origins of the neoconservative ideology.

As the title of his book chapter already suggests, Charles-Philippe David’s “How Do Entrepreneurs Make National Security Policy? A Case Study of the G. W. Bush Administration” addresses a question that is of great importance for the analysis of the idea entrepreneurs’ diffusion of the idea that Iraq is a threat. In his analysis of how the U.S. security policy in regard to Iraq was made he finds that “influential advisors guided the policy making process towards their ideational and organizational objectives by promoting their reading and their perceptions of the issues” (2015: 151) and states that Dick Cheney exerted the greatest influence among the entrepreneurs (2015: 158). David’s research is significant for the idea diffusion because he not only identifies important idea entrepreneurs but also suggests that their efforts were characterized by willful intent: “[The] decision-making process was therefore subordinated to the agenda of a small clique of senior officials who dominated the government. [...]he recommendations were sharply truncated as a result of the efforts of an entrepreneur-in-chief determined to exploit any information, no matter how

biased or indeed suspect, in order to legitimate the invasion” (2015: 160). Furthermore, David formulates several strategies used by entrepreneurs that help understand their efforts: “First, they must position themselves as wielders of influence within the administration’s decision-making process and master its workings. Secondly, they must take advantage of opportunities to frame the available options in the way most favorable to their view. Thirdly, they must successfully play the bureaucratic game to advance the option they advocate” (2015: 155).

Another important article in this context is Michael J. Mazarr’s “The Iraq War and Agenda Setting,” in which he utilizes the agenda-setting approach to analyze the decision to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom. According to Mazarr “[t]he agenda-setting literature is concerned with how issues get onto and move up the agenda.” He further describes this approach by writing that “[a]n agenda-setting framework, then, suggests that nations make policy—make decisions, take action, ‘behave’ in certain ways—when a fortuitous combination of problems, options, events, and policy advocates comes together to spring an idea free from the gridlock of the political process” (2007: 9). From this elaboration it becomes obvious that agenda-setting and Sjöstedt’s framework utilized in this thesis have similar purposes: both approaches try to demonstrate how a particular idea was elevated onto the policy level. Therefore, Mazarr’s article offers valuable insights into how certain actors within the Bush administration worked toward their policy goal. By doing so, Mazarr identifies key players in the idea diffusion process such as Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz. However, Mazarr himself seems to be aware that the agenda-setting literature by itself is not sufficient to account for the events leading to the war decision: “truly accurate portraits of national-level decision making can only be drawn using a variety of

frameworks and perspectives. The agenda-setting approach is one among a number of insightful approaches that can aid analysis” (2007: 2). By paying additional attention to identities as well as personal beliefs of the main decision-maker this thesis offers such an additional perspective that enhances the understanding of the Bush administration’s perception of Iraq and subsequent actions.

## 6. Identities

In order to effectively analyze identities, it is necessary to define what exactly one is concerned about here. Alexander Wendt defines several types of distinct identities of which the first category consists of personal or corporate identities. Wendt describes these identities as “constituted by the self-organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities.” In other words, the self-organizational character of these identities means that no Other is necessary to construct it (1999: 224-225). The second kind of identities, namely type identities refer “to persons who share (or are thought to share) some characteristic or characteristics, in appearance, behavioral traits, attitudes, values, skills (e.g. language), knowledge, opinions, experience, historical commonalities (like region or place of birth), and so on.” While such an identity is partly constituted with the help of Others, “the characteristics that underlie type identities are at base *intrinsic* [italics in the original] to actors” (Wendt 1999: 225-226). Role identities, the third category described by Wendt, however “are not based on intrinsic properties and as such exist *only* [italics in the original] in relation to Others” (1999: 227). He further states that “shared ideas can be conflictual or cooperative, which means that ‘enemy’ can be as much as a role identity as

‘friend’” (1999: 228). The former role identity, for example, comes into play when this thesis looks at the American presentation of terrorists after 9/11. Lastly, collective identities consist of “Self and Other” that become “a single identity” (Wendt 1999: 229).

Sjöstedt heavily relies on Wendt’s conceptualization of identity when she incorporates identity into her framework for explaining securitizing moves. In her article, she particularly highlights both type and role identities. She then goes on to explain that identities can be relevant for the threat idea in two distinct ways: 1) the identity itself can engender the threat or 2) the identity can serve “as a catalyst or gate-keeper in accepting a particular idea as a threat” (2013: 153). For the performance of the securitizing move, which portrayed Iraq as a threat that required extraordinary measures, this thesis argues, there were several identities—already existent, newly constructed or reinvigorated—that undoubtedly functioned as catalysts.

Next, it becomes important to briefly review some research on the particular identities that are crucial for the threat perception in the case analyzed by this thesis. The first identity covered is the U.S.’ democratic identity. Here, this thesis mainly draws from Jarrod Hayes’ research. Hayes made important contributions to the field with his applications of democratic identity in relation to securitization. In his article “Identity, Authority, and the British War in Iraq,” Hayes elaborates on how the democratic identity of a country is of consequence for how it interacts with states that do not share this democratic political system. He further holds that this identity influences the construction of a threat: “the securitized state poses an existential threat because it is dissimilar from the democratic self, defined in part by the exclusion of violence from in-group conflict resolution” (2016: 337). In the same article, Hayes

makes a convincing case for the significant role played by the democratic identity in the British securitization of Iraq. According to Hayes, the democratic identity of the population in the U.K. greatly informed how Iraq was presented in the securitizing move (2016: 340). While the article is primarily concerned with the U.K., its findings are meaningful for an analysis of the U.S. as well.

Other relevant aspects of American identity are civil religion as well as American exceptionalism. In his article “Civil Religion in America,” Robert N. Bellah describes American civil religion as follows: “[T]here are [...] certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion” (2005: 42). He further summarizes it as “a distinct set of religious symbols and practices [...] that address issues of political legitimacy and political ethics but that are not fused with either church or state” (1980: xi). Another definition that is more easily grasped, is given by Roger Chapman when he accurately describes American civil religion as “the intertwining of religion and patriotism.” American exceptionalism, on the other hand, is defined by Chapman as “the centuries-old idea that the United States is a unique—and superior—country in the world, in a class separate from other nations and blessed by the divine (or marked by destiny) in an extraordinary way for a special mission.” He further mentions that civil religion’s “expression in the contemporary United States is much related to notions of American exceptionalism” (2010: 24-25). Due to the common denominator of viewing the U.S. as a God-chosen country, it is difficult to separate

both concepts. However, for the analytical purpose of this study, they are treated as two distinct phenomena within the overall American identity.

Despite the rich literature on individual aspects of American identities—such as civil religion or American exceptionalism—it appears to be a rather under-utilized concept when it comes to any examinations of the threat construction in the context of the Bush administration and Iraq. Yet, “American Nationalism and U.S. Foreign Policy from September 11 to the Iraq War” by Paul T. McCartney studies the connection of identity—in the form of American nationalism—with U.S. foreign policy and what role it played between the terrorist attacks on the U.S. and the Iraq War. McCartney identifies and elaborates on the above-mentioned two facets of the American identity, which are of importance in the identity subchapter of this thesis: American exceptionalism and civil religion. The latter affects U.S. foreign policy especially because it allows Americans to perceive their country’s global actions as “not only approved by God, but perhaps even required by His inscrutable plan for mankind.” McCartney further holds that “civil religion can subtly impart that aura to American actions” (2004: 404-405). American exceptionalism has a similar effect on American foreign policy because it implies “that the United States is qualitatively different from—and better than—other states” (McCartney 2004: 403). As McCartney argues, this rationale of exceptionalism was important when “Bush moved the United States considerably closer to an unambiguously unilateralist posture” (2004: 415). What he then shows is that “the terrorist strikes provided a rare clarifying moment in the nation’s collective consciousness, when both American national identity and U.S. foreign policy were reinvigorated [...] and a national focus and sense of mission [...] reemerged” (2004: 400). Later, in the context of making a case for war against Iraq,

aspects of nationalism as described by McCartney were used in Bush's speeches to give legitimacy to actions against Iraq (2004: 418). In this way, McCartney establishes a clear connection between identity and U.S. behavior toward Iraq.

## 7. Beliefs and Internalization

The final step in the analysis is constituted by the examination of George W. Bush's personal beliefs and how they affected his internalization of the threat idea. According to Sjöstedt, the internalization "constitutes a mechanism between the structural factors of ideas and identity and the outcome of threat construction. Internalization concerns how an individual may change his or her opinion regarding a certain issue and how this leads to a change of preferences. Internalization thus opens up the often black-boxed process between the explanans and explanandum" (2013: 149). In other words, the internalization process and the beliefs of the investigated individual that influence the said process are decisive for whether a securitizing move is carried out or not. Internalization translates the threat idea into speech acts that aim at actualizing the alleged threat. The question at this point, however, is how such a process can be measured. Sjöstedt suggests that analyzing "texts over time" can serve this purpose (2013: 156). With regard to the personal beliefs of the securitizing actor, Sjöstedt's conceptualization of belief systems consists of "a set of interdependent beliefs" which are used by the individual to screen what he or she takes in from the environment. Beliefs, thus, exert influence on which information is selected or rejected depending on whether it matches with them or not (2013: 156). However, the author of this thesis argues that it is helpful for the analysis of personal beliefs—and the change of such—

to further differentiate between the actor's operational code and other beliefs that are relevant for the acceptance of an idea.

As Alexander L. George, a central scholar in the field of operational code analysis, writes in "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," the term operational code refers to "a significant portion of the actor's entire set of beliefs about political life" (1969: 197). Since the subject of scrutiny of this thesis is very much political, Bush's operational code deserves particular attention. George goes on to divide the operational code into two separate belief categories: instrumental beliefs about how to achieve certain political outcomes and philosophical beliefs "[referring] to assumptions and premises [...] regarding the fundamental nature of politics, the nature of political conflict, the role of the individual in history, etc." (1969: 199).

Jonathan Renshon applied the operational code approach to George W. Bush to figure out if these political beliefs can change and, if yes, why such change occurs. To find the answers to these questions, Renshon defined four separate periods to examine and identify potential operational code change. Two of these phases are of particular interest for this thesis: Bush's pre-9/11 presidency as well as the period after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. (2008: 828). Renshon's findings make an important contribution to the field of operational code analysis because they support the assumption that particular political beliefs can in fact change under certain conditions (2008: 841). Particularly important for the research conducted by this thesis is Renshon's finding evidence for belief change through traumatic events. He writes that "whereas GWB viewed the world as friendly and cooperative before 9/11, those views became significantly more conflictual and hostile after 9/11" (2008: 835). While

Renshon's article is crucial for the explanation of George W. Bush's internalization of the threat idea, the analysis of one person's operational code does not sufficiently show how much of a difference this particular individual made. Sam Robison's analysis of not only Bush's but also several of his advisors' operational codes, however, offers some evidence that the experience of the same traumatic shock does not necessarily result in the same belief change for different individuals. Robison finds that many of Bush's advisors did not change their beliefs in a significant manner (2006: 121-122).

However, despite the political nature of a particular situation, the internalization of an idea and the subsequent decision-making are not only determined by political beliefs. According to Sjöstedt, the belief system is "formed by a number of different factors, for instance childhood experiences, education, culture, and domestic structures" (2013: 156). As the analysis chapters show, in the case of George W. Bush, his beliefs based on his religious development over time were of great importance, especially in the post-9/11 context. The research on Bush's religiosity is quite expansive. Covering it all would thus go beyond the scope of this work. However, particular previous research shall be accentuated here. Alexander Moens, for example, engages with the personal background of George W. Bush in *The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush: Values, Strategy, and Loyalty*. Consequently, he also elaborates on Bush's religiosity and holds that Bush's "religious values" are genuine (2004: 17). Lauren Frances Turek's article "Religious Rhetoric and the Evolution of George W. Bush's Political Philosophy," on the other hand, specifically addresses the extent to which Bush utilized religious language during his political career (2014). Other scholars examine the role of religion in the Bush administration's foreign policy (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004; den Dulk and Rozell 2011). Andrew J. Bacevich and

Elizabeth H. Prodromou pay particular attention to how Bush's religiosity shaped the response to the terrorist attacks from September 11. Additionally, they convincingly show the connection between Bush's religious beliefs and the neoconservatives' opportunity to press for their policy after 9/11 (2004).

## 8. Relevance

As shown in the above review of some relevant literature, this thesis carves out a niche for itself in which it makes a meaningful contribution to the research field. When it comes to securitization theory, the contribution of this thesis is two-fold: first of all, it adds weight to Sjöstedt's framework for the examination of the process preceding the actual securitization attempt by offering another example case that proves the framework's utility. Secondly, and more specifically, applications of securitization theory on the case of the Bush administration and Saddam Hussein's Iraq are in a way extended by explaining events prior to the securitization with a theoretically much more compatible framework as opposed to other traditional explanations for the decision to invade Iraq.

To be sure, the dependent variables—the decision for war in those studies as opposed to the securitizing move—are different. However, when adding the successful securitization with the consequence of mobilizing the military against Iraq, the outcome, namely war, is the same. It is, thus, indeed possible to argue that this thesis makes a contribution to the research regarding the decision to invade Iraq as well. Engaging with the literature on the U.S.-Iraqi conflict during the Bush administration quickly reveals that these sources not only do not share central assumptions of

securitization theory but also illuminate only partially why Iraq became a security issue for the U.S. after 9/11. Following Sjöstedt, this thesis argues that the idea of Iraq as a threat, particular identities, and personal beliefs of the central decision-maker all together account for why Iraq under Saddam Hussein was constructed as a threat to the national security of the U.S.

Additionally, the majority of scholars fail to assign sufficient explanatory weight to the role of George W. Bush himself in the events leading up to the war. Often the Bush administration is viewed as one single actor that made decisions, perceived threats, and securitized certain issues. However, as this thesis shows, Bush as an individual mattered, especially when it comes to his internalizing the idea of the Iraqi threat. Furthermore, the individual level was of great importance with respect to the diffusion of the idea due to efforts by certain individual persons. Lake writes about the consequences of the Iraq War for the field of international politics the following word: “one likely result will be to turn new attention to the importance of individual and cognitive factors in foreign policy decisionmaking” (2010: 51). This thesis is part of this change in attention proceeding from a perspective that is greatly informed by the CS’s assumptions about securitization.

### **III. Theory**

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists mainly of two parts. The first theory the author instrumentalizes is securitization theory as established by the CS. This theory offers the general assumptions and logic concerning the nature of security and the speech act theoretical foundation of it. Therefore, it is suitable to analyze the presidents' speech acts to identify the securitizing move. Hughes convincingly argues that securitization theory is more suitable for explaining why the Iraq War occurred than more traditional approaches to security: "If it is shown there is a weak connection between the practice of security and the existence of material threat factors, then traditional perspectives falter" (2007: 92). For securitization theory, however, the actuality of an objective threat is not required. Since the evidence for the alleged Iraqi threat was inadequate the utility of securitization theory becomes obvious for this case (Hughes 2007: 95).

The CS argues that security issues are constituted by specifically existential threats that are presented as such by a particular securitizing actor who relates them to a referent object that is supposedly threatened by them. By doing so, the support of measures that are above standard political rules becomes possible due to the situation's urgency (Buzan et al. 1998: 5). This presentation of an issue as a danger to the referent object—as opposed to an objectively real, given threat—creates the security issue (Buzan et al. 1998: 24). Here, two crucial units become obvious. These two units are the securitizing actor and the referent object. However, there are other, less obvious actors that play an important role, namely functional actors. These actors exert an important influence on security-related choices (Buzan et al. 1998: 36).

The important factors that turn something into a security issue are its urgency and the consequent priority attributed to the issue. This urgency results from the existential character of the threat. As Buzan et al. hold, not dealing with such an existential threat would result in the loss of all meaning for any other issue because the referent object might not exist anymore or simply not be able to act freely any longer (Buzan et al. 1998: 24).

Securitization can be seen as the last stage of a three-stage spectrum that consists of a nonpoliticized, a politicized, and a securitized stage. When the issue is still nonpoliticized, the issue is not addressed at all in the public area. If, however, government resources and actions are used to deal with the issue publicly, it reaches the second, politicized stage of the spectrum. Only when the above-mentioned process of framing the issue as an existential threat takes place and extraordinary measures are required due to its urgency, the third stage of the spectrum is reached (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-24).

However, the securitization can only be successful if the existential threat to the referent object is accepted by the audience addressed by the securitizing actor. The discourse itself, which frames the threat, is not sufficient for securitizing an issue (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). This is why legitimacy plays a significant role in the securitization process. At least in democracies, the securitizing actor needs to make an effort to create legitimacy (Buzan et al. 1998: 28). Hence, the success of the speech act carried out by the actor is, in addition to the set-out factors that make it a securitizing move, dependent on the position of the securitizing actor (more authority means a higher chance of success) and the threat itself. For instance, if the threat is already commonly viewed as such, the probability of success of securitization is further

increased. All these factors together form what Buzan et al. call facilitating conditions (1998: 33).

The second part of the overall framework of this thesis consists of the above-mentioned framework developed by Sjöstedt. The three aspects of this framework are the establishment of the idea diffusion, identities, and the internalization of the idea due to individual beliefs. Sjöstedt further outlines the individual parts of the threat construction. The starting point of the construction process is constituted by an idea entrepreneur's diffusion of an idea. The identity construction of a particular actor then exerts influence on whether the idea is accepted or not by the said actor. Lastly, the extent of the concurrence of the actor's personal beliefs and the idea affects how fast the idea is internalized and as a result established as part of the agenda (2013: 144).

Since Sjöstedt describes the ideas that are diffused "as guiding principles regarding a particular condition that may or may not affect an actor's interests and understanding of this condition" (2013: 150), it is crucial to recognize such ideas and what kind of influence they exerted on the securitizing actor. However, according to Sjöstedt, idea diffusion is not very valuable for any explanations without identifying the corresponding idea entrepreneurs. Another important factor to take into consideration is the position of power the idea entrepreneurs find themselves in because of the connection between the power of the entrepreneur and the credibility of the idea he or she diffuses (2013: 150). Overall, this idea diffusion process can be seen as the starting point of the threat construction that leads to the eventual securitizing move (Sjöstedt 2013: 144).

According to Sjöstedt, identities can "constitute the threat" or serve as a "catalyst or gate-keeper in accepting an idea as a threat" (2013: 153). One peculiarity

of this framework is the argument that not only international but also domestic identity constructions can be seen through the Wendtian lens in regard to the explanatory capability of the formation of the Self and the Other for interests and actions (2013: 153). The concept of identity, in accordance with Sjöstedt, is based on what Alexander Wendt describes as type identities and role identities. The former refers to particular shared characteristics that create a certain category. One type identity could be, for instance, the democratic system of a state (1999: 225-226). As the analysis chapters show, the democratic identity of the U.S. played an important role in the acceptance of the threat idea. Role identities, according to Wendt, are identities that come into existence due to the relationship with an Other (1999: 227). What is also of importance here is that “interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is” (Wendt 1999: 231) Hence, interests result from identities. Against this backdrop, it appears plausible to assume that identities not only can facilitate the acceptance of a threat idea but also contribute to the perception of force as being in accordance with an actor’s interests.

One fundamental assumption here is that decision-makers are not entirely a result of external influences from the environment they are situated in. Their individual beliefs influence how they interpret their surroundings, which leads to policies exerting influence on this environment (Sjöstedt 2013: 155). The concept of internalization refers to the opinion change of the decision-maker, which can consequently affect his or her interests (Sjöstedt 2013: 149). Assuming that the beliefs of the individual correspond with the diffused idea, this circumstance increases the speed of the internalization process (Sjöstedt 2013: 144). Consequently, the author assumes that Bush’s belief had a significant influence on the decision to make a securitizing move

addressing Iraq. As Sjöstedt elaborates, “ideas and identity are employed here as explanatory factors for the [...] concept of a securitizing move. The notion of internalization is viewed as the causal mechanism linking the two together” (2013: 147). Thus, it becomes obvious why George W. Bush’s beliefs and his internalization process play such a crucial role in explaining the securitization of Iraq.

## **IV. Method**

This research is a case study with George W. Bush as the case regarding his conduct of the securitizing move concerning the Iraqi threat ahead of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This constitutes the subject of the case study. The object of the study is the adopted theoretical framework that includes securitization theory and Sjöstedt's framework that serves as a tool for explaining securitizing moves. The case is scrutinized through textual analysis of primary and secondary sources with an interpretive method.

The timeframe of this study primarily encompasses the period from the idea diffusion process initiated by the idea entrepreneurs who promoted regime change in Iraq until President Bush's carrying out the securitizing move that preceded the Iraq war.

In accordance with the CS's theoretical conception of securitization, an analysis of such a process requires the identifying of the important units for this thesis, which are the securitizing actor, the referent objects and the target audiences. Functional actors and facilitating conditions certainly existed in this case as well. However, the emphasis is placed on the dynamics before the actual securitizing move. Additionally, for measuring the success of the securitization they are not necessary. Scrutinizing the functional actors and facilitating conditions thus would not serve any purpose in the context of this research.

Even though other scholars in the case of Iraq have already addressed the securitization process itself, it is necessary to elaborate on the development of the securitization of Iraq and point out the securitizing move to establish the phenomenon this thesis attempts to explain. Furthermore, while many other studies include speech

acts performed by other persons as representatives of the administration as a whole, the outlining of the securitizing move here is focused on George W. Bush's speech acts due to this thesis' goal of extrapolating the importance of the individual decision-maker from the influence exerted by his identities and personal beliefs. Moreover, Buzan et al. (1998: 25) argue that due to the requirement of acceptance of the securitization process by the audience, one can only speak of a securitizing move before this is achieved. Consequently, the post-CS criticisms regarding audience and context, which—as is argued by the critics—are not elaborated on enough in the CS's texts, do not matter much in the context of identifying the securitizing move and the process of the securitization. Since this study is for the most part concerned with the securitizing move and the process that leads to it, critiques regarding aspects of the CS's securitization theory that concern processes following the move or speech acts themselves can be factored out to a great extent. Thus, the acceptance of the securitizing move by the target audience is covered in a relatively superficial manner to avoid straying off the path leading to an explanation of the securitizing move itself. Audience acceptance is a studied object in this thesis only insofar as it matters to define whether the securitization attempt was successful or not.

The basic selection criteria for Bush's speech acts are their availability in text form and their public character. These texts consist, of speeches, addresses, remarks at press conferences, and presidential debates. Sjöstedt summarizes the characteristics of a securitizing move as public and as containing both the threat framing of a certain issue and a strategy to counteract the security problem (2013: 146). The reason for primarily focusing on Bush as a securitizing actor simply lies in the president's

decisive role as the central decision-maker. Speech acts performed by the U.S. president himself naturally come with greater impact.

The second major part of the analysis is based on the analytical steps of Sjöstedt's framework. The levels of analysis in this framework consist of an international level and a domestic level. The third level is the individual level where the internalization process described below takes place (2013: 144).

This part of the analysis first aims at identifying the threat idea that found its way into the securitizing move to account for the origin of the threat construction. This is done by first looking at the diffusion of ideas. The identification of such entrepreneurs is a crucial part of this step. Thus, this thesis draws on a number of sources concerned with the neoconservative influence before the Bush administration as well as the policy entrepreneurship within the administration after the inauguration in order to identify the idea entrepreneurs and trace the idea diffusion. As Sjöstedt explains in "Ideas, Identities and Internalization: Explaining Securitizing Moves," the analysis of idea entrepreneurs also addresses those entrepreneurs' characteristics as well as the instruments they utilized when framing the idea (2013: 150).

Why were these ideas accepted by the decision-maker in question? To address this central question, it is necessary to continue the analysis with the identification and understanding of existing identities and identity constructions during the chosen timeframe. Identity constructions can take place internationally and domestically and, when determined, help comprehend why ideas were accepted (2013: 152). Hence, the utilized framework considers identity formations both on the international and the national level in order to account for their facilitating influence on the acceptance of a threat idea and, thus, a securitizing move.

The last major analytical step of this thesis is constituted by the study of George W. Bush's personal beliefs and the consequent internalization of the idea that has previously been diffused and then was accepted by the decision-maker due to particular identities. According to Sjöstedt, differences over time can be useful for determining an internalization (2013: 156). If the analysis finds significant change over time—meaning that later statements or behavior more clearly embrace the diffused idea—an internalization of the idea can be assumed. Therefore, this method offers an adequate explanation of how the diffused and accepted threat idea translates into the individual securitizing actor's securitizing move. Self-evidently, the level of analysis for this stage is the individual level since it constitutes where the internalization process takes place.

This last step further interprets the findings by methodically drawing from the congruence procedure which George describes as the conclusion from a consistency of the individual's beliefs with the decision made—in this case, a securitizing move—to a potential causal character of said beliefs. The interpretation of the effects of the beliefs on the decision is made deductively (1979: 105-106). The particular beliefs scrutinized in this part are, on the one hand, Bush's political beliefs—his operational code—and, on the other hand, his religious beliefs.

As a whole, this thesis can be viewed as a narrative of the translation of an idea into a securitizing move in which the individual analytical stages represent the respective steps. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the analytical separation in the method of this thesis is not based on a chronological reality. In actuality, the individual processes are very much intertwined.

## **V. Analysis**

This chapter consists of the analysis of the case at hand. To establish the dependent variable of this research, the securitizing move, the securitization process is outlined first. This is important because it establishes not only the backdrop against which the analytical framework is applied but also gives necessary context to the securitizing move, which constitutes the dependent variable. The rest of the chapter then covers the identification and explanation of the independent variables that caused the outcome—in the shape of a securitizing move—according to this thesis' argument. In line with Sjöstedt's framework, this part begins with the tracing of the idea diffusion process to account for the idea's origin and the subsequent efforts to spread it. Secondly, the relevant identities are illuminated to show how they served as catalysts for the acceptance of Iraq as a threat. Lastly, this chapter demonstrates how George W. Bush internalized the idea due to particular existing beliefs and the change of others.

### **1. The Securitization of Iraq**

Before 9/11 the Bush administration appeared to focus primarily on domestic issues (Massoud and Mitchell 2009: 279). However, the circumstances were about to change quite radically with the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001. Soon after that, the U.S. found itself in a war on terror proclaimed by President Bush. Against the backdrop of the tragic events of 9/11 and the fight against terrorism the U.S. government eventually decided to invade Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Such a drastic measure, however, required the valid construction—and subsequent perception—of Iraq as a credible and urgent threat. Thus, leading up to the invasion of

Iraq, a very clear securitization process took place which turned Iraq into a security issue that necessitated immediate action.

This subchapter covers the said process. It, first, begins with a brief review of the essential units of any securitization process as established by the CS. Subsequently, these concepts are applied to the case of the securitization of Iraq by the Bush administration with particular focus on the securitized stage to show how Iraq was turned into an urgent security issue. In this section, certain speech acts performed by George W. Bush himself are singled out to present the particular phenomenon this thesis attempts to explain. As the last step, the question of whether the securitization attempt of the Bush administration was successful or not is addressed.

In this subchapter, the author attempts to avoid going into a very detailed analysis due to two reasons. Firstly, as demonstrated in the literature review, the securitization process itself has been the object of investigation for several studies already that illuminated the issue from different perspectives (Donnelly 2013; Hughes 2007; Oren and Solomon 2015). Secondly, the research question of this thesis is concerned with the securitization process only indirectly. The primary question here is not how but why George W. Bush made a securitizing move. Thus, the main focus lies on the dynamics preceding the securitizing speech acts. Nonetheless, covering the securitization of Iraq is important for a better understanding of the following chapters.

For the analysis of a securitization process, it is necessary to identify the particular units that are actively involved in formulating the securitizing move or referred to in it. Despite the existence of functional actors that undoubtedly influence choices related to security issues, the securitizing actor constitutes the most essential active unit in any securitizing attempts since it is the one that performs the speech acts.

In the speech acts, the securitizing actor then typically refers to an existential threat that constitutes an immediate danger to a referent object. The situation's urgency then is supposed to legitimize resorting to extraordinary measures that lie outside of the normal political rules. To complete a securitizing move, these measures are typically spelled out as well.

However, securitization is only the last step in a three-stage process that begins with the issue' not being politicized—which means that it is not dealt with publicly. At some point, it is usually moved onto the politicized stage on which it is dealt with publicly and with government policies within the realm of normal political rules. The securitizing move outlined above then elevates the issue to the securitized stage.

According to Hughes, U.S. policy regarding Iraq was the removal of Saddam Hussein already since 1998. However, the issue was continuously addressed within the political arena by the Bush administration: “the ‘normal politics’ of international relations sufficed” (2007: 89). Colin Powell, for example, described the sanctions against Iraq as successful and further stated that “we have not seen that capacity emerge to present a full-fledged threat to us” (2001). Hughes further argues that Bush rejected calls for planning military action in Iraq even after the events of 9/11. Although Iraq had already been referred to as a threat at this point, urgency and extraordinary measures outside of normal politics were lacking in the speech acts. Instead, a post-9/11 securitizing move to securitize the Taliban in Afghanistan was performed first (2007: 89). Concerning Iraq, not enough urgency was assigned to the threat to legitimize going beyond diplomacy and pressuring the Iraqi government with economic means up until September 2002 (Hughes 2007: 84). Thus, assuming that breaking free from the normal rules of problem-solving in the international arena

involves military intervention, Iraq still appeared merely politicized at this point. As mentioned before, a securitizing move that aims at the securitization of an issue require urgency to justify special measures to take care of the existential threat.

From these elaborations, this thesis concludes that President Bush's famous State of the Union Address from 2002 was not a full securitizing speech act yet. Nowhere in his speech, Bush stated that Iraq was of highest priority compared to other members of the axis of evil and alleged sponsors of terrorism such as North Korea and Iran. This conclusion is also in accordance with Sjöstedt's definition of a securitizing move as a public declaration that not only stresses the threat to national security but also brings forth a strategy to deal with the security issue (2013: 146). Similarly, this thesis agrees with Hughes that the following utterance by Bush addressing regime change in Iraq did not contain any statements establishing much urgency or corresponding special measures (2007: 84):

It's the stated policy of this government to have a regime change. And it hasn't changed. And we'll use all tools at our disposal to do so. [...P]eople shouldn't speculate about the desire of the government to have a regime change. And there's ways, different ways to do it. (2002b)

Here, Bush left space to deal with Iraq in non-military ways. Consequently, the urgency of an existential threat was still missing in his speech act. It thus serves as an example demonstrating that the issue did not fully arrive at the securitized stage yet.

Nonetheless, soon the speech acts became more drastic in their presentation of the Iraqi threat. The securitizing actors in the Bush administration eventually arrived at a point where they tried to free themselves from rules in their attempts to change the

Iraqi regime. It was declared in their speech acts that the U.S. would resort to any measure if it was required to counter the threat emanating from Iraq (Donnelly 2013: 73). Hughes identifies September 2002 as the point in time at which the rhetoric of certain members of the administration escalated. Now, “key members took on the role of ‘securitizing actors’ by constructing the *perception* [italics in the original] of Iraq as a security-level threat that would trigger a national security emergency” via “[a] variety of discursive vehicles.” Compared to the previous speech acts, the threatening Iraqi regime was now presented as an issue necessitating measures beyond normal politics. Hughes thus concludes that “in accordance with the conception of securitization theory the speech form of the security claims now put forward by the Bush administration constituted a narrative stressing an existential threat, a point of no return, in addition to a way to overcome the danger” (2007: 90).

Bush himself, for example, carried out such a speech act with the radio address on September 28, 2002, in which he implied the use of military force as a strategy to deal with the Iraqi threat:

We’re moving toward a strong resolution authorizing the use of force, if necessary, to defend our national security interests against the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. And by passing this resolution, we will send a clear message to the world community and to the Iraqi regime: The demands of the United Nations Security Council must be followed; the Iraqi dictator must be disarmed. These requirements will be met, or they will be enforced. (2002d)

An even clearer instance of Bush’s securitizing move can be found in his Address to the Nation on Iraq from October 7, 2002. Bush first stressed the existential and urgent nature of the threat again:

Members of Congress of both political parties and members of the United Nations Security Council agree that Saddam Hussein is a threat to peace and must disarm. We agree that the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons. (2002e)

This statement further illuminates two separate referent objects that are each endangered by Iraq's WMDs: the American population in particular and international security in general. He further added the Iraqi people as a third referent object by saying that "the situation could hardly get worse for [...] the people of Iraq. The lives of Iraqi citizens would improve dramatically if Saddam Hussein were no longer in power." He also addressed the urgency of the security threat very directly by connecting it with the tragic events from September 11, 2001:

Some ask how urgent this danger is to America and the world. The danger is already significant, and it only grows worse with time. If we know Saddam Hussein has dangerous weapons today—and we do—does it make any sense for the world to wait to confront him as he grows even stronger and develops even more dangerous weapons? [...] Saddam Hussein would be in a position to pass nuclear technology to terrorists. Some citizens wonder, after 11 years of living with this problem, why do we need to confront it now? And there's a reason. We've experienced the horror of September the 11th. We have seen that those who hate America are willing to crash airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. Our enemies would be no less willing—in fact, they would be eager—to use biological or chemical or a nuclear weapon. (2002e)

Lastly, and most importantly for the categorization of this speech as a clear securitizing move, Bush addressed the strategy for action beyond normal politics. While Bush

uttered his preference of a non-military solution he also expressed his skepticism quite clearly and mentioned the use of the military as a potential strategy:

After 11 years during which we have tried containment, sanctions, inspections, even selected military action, the end result is that Saddam Hussein still has chemical and biological weapons and is increasing his capabilities to make more. And he is moving ever closer to developing a nuclear weapon. [...] If we have to act, we will take every precaution that is possible. We will plan carefully. We will act with the full power of the United States military. We will act with allies at our side, and we will prevail. (2002e)

The speech act meets all criteria of a securitizing move by being public and including a description of the existential threat as well as a strategy for action. The following chapters thus attempt to explain why George W. Bush decided to move the issue to the securitized stage. Before, however, the question of the success of the securitization attempt is addressed.

As expounded by the theoretical framework of the CS, a securitization attempt can only be considered a successful securitization if it is accepted by the particular target audience addressed by the securitizing actors. In other words, only if the idea of an existential threat to the referent object justifying extraordinary measures is accepted as such by the audience, the issue is successfully transformed into a security issue. Thus, the analysis of the audience acceptance is an integral part of the examination of the securitization of Iraq by the Bush administration as well, for it assigns greater significance to the explanation of George W. Bush's securitization move. When considering the radical consequences of the successful securitization, it becomes obvious why it is so crucial to analyze the dynamics that led to it. Unsuccessful

securitization attempts simply make for less momentous case studies. However, this is not to say that such an analysis would be meaningless.

This thesis argues that there were four target audiences addressed by the securitizing move that can be divided into international and domestic audiences. The international audiences were important Western allies and the United Nations. Domestically, the securitization attempt aimed at convincing the general population and the United States Congress to gain the authorization to use force. In this context, Balzacq's and Roe's elaborations on the role of the audience in securitization theory become quite meaningful. According to Balzacq, there are two different kinds of support provided to the securitizing actor: moral as well as formal support. While moral support, potentially given by the public and institutions, is important because politicians' "breaking social bonds with constituencies can wreck their credibility," formal support is crucial as well since the relevant institution's approval is required in order to realize a particular policy (2005: 184-185). Following Balzacq's theoretical development of the audience concept, this thesis categorizes the international and domestic audiences into different audiences offering moral and formal support to the securitization claim. As expounded in the literature review, Roe then takes this idea one step further, arguing that these distinct roles of the different audiences also expose two corresponding stages: identification and mobilization (2008: 620).

In the case of the U.S. government's securitization of Iraq, the international moral support could have been offered by other Western, democratic countries. Success at this stage of identification would have helped define security on the international level. However, many important allies of the U.S. did not share the perception of Iraq as a threat that was urgent enough to justify special measures. Many European voices

already expressed their discontent with George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address in which he included Iraq in the axis of evil as well as with the U.S.' insistence on the righteousness of waging a preventive war if necessary (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez 2005: 42). While certain European states—most notably Germany, France, and Belgium—opposed invading Iraq, others such as the U.K., Spain, Italy, and a majority of countries in central and eastern Europe took side with the U.S. (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez 2005: 44). Thus, there seemed to be a great number of European countries being in favor of the U.S. policy at first glance. However, as Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez assert, at least in the cases of the U.K., Spain, and Italy, big parts of the populations did not agree with the position of their governments, which led to negative domestic consequences for them (2005: 45). Consequently, it is difficult to see significant moral support for the Bush government's securitization claim in this regard. To be sure, opposition to war does not automatically exclude a threat perception. However, it is plausible to argue that such an opposition implies that the perception of the alleged threat was not urgent or existential enough to legitimize the use of force as a special measure to counter the threat. It can thus be argued that at the stage of identification, which constitutes the security issue, the securitization was not entirely successful on the international level.

The stage of mobilization also cannot be described as successful since the Bush administration failed to win the formal support from the relevant international institution, namely the U.N., which could have given legal authority for the use of force through the U.N. Security Council (Donnelly 2013: 64). To be sure, the U.N. did, in fact, agree on a resolution (Resolution 1441) that again urged the Iraqi leadership to “comply with inspectors and imposed tough new arms inspections” (Buzan and

Gonzalez-Pelaez 2005: 47). Thus, it is possible to interpret the resolution as an acknowledgment of the U.N. that a security problem existed concerning the Iraqi development of WMDs. Nonetheless, the unsuccessful British efforts to secure a further resolution demonstrated that the majority of the Security Council opposed the war against Iraq (Ralph 2011: 319).

Yet, this failure of the securitization on the international level did not prevent the U.S. government from deciding to invade Iraq. As Balzacq accurately articulates, “states can do without the U.N. Security Council, but need the support of their legislative branch to launch a military action” (2005: 185). Bush undoubtedly received the latter when Congress authorized the use of force against Iraq to protect the interest of national security in October 2002 (Congress 2002). Thus, Bush’s securitization was domestically successful at the stage of mobilization. Consequently, he could mobilize the U.S. military and carry out the extraordinary measures demanded by the securitizing move.

However, since gaining moral support is crucial too for the success of a securitization attempt, it is necessary to take a look at the acceptance of Iraq as a threat in the American population. Here, it is important to note that the “approval of Bush’s job performance soared to 86 percent” after 9/11. In March 2002, he received the same approval regarding his fight against terrorism and “seventy-two percent of the public approved of his handling of the Middle East” (Edwards III 2004: 24-25). Even though these approval ratings enable speculations about approval of Bush’s approach toward Iraq, they alone do not serve as evidence for a successful acceptance by the domestic audience yet. However, other polls have shown that a majority of Americans concluded that Saddam Hussein was complicit in the terrorist attacks. In addition, many believed

that he would use WMDs against the U.S. if no countermeasures were taken (Edwards III 2004: 36). The polls get even more specific concerning the potential military character of such countermeasures: From February 2001 to March 2003 a majority of respondents were in favor of using force to achieve the goal of regime change in Iraq (Edwards III 2004: 38). Such data suggests that the majority of the American population not only trusted the Bush administration's presentations of Iraq as a threat—and thereby helped to constitute the security issue at the stage of identification—but also approved of military means as an appropriate solution to the security issue. Therefore, the domestic success of the securitization attempt can be established.

## 2. The Diffusion of the Threat Idea

This section elaborates on the idea diffusion process—initiated and driven by particular idea entrepreneurs—that created the crucial foundation for the securitizing move carried out by George W. Bush. This is done by first describing the idea entrepreneurs themselves to account for the acting units in this diffusion process. Next, the attention shifts to the most crucial factor in the idea diffusion process, which is the idea itself that is so imperative for the threat construction. This section explains the idea of Iraq as a threat and explicates the course of the diffusion including the tools and means that have been utilized to spread the said idea. However, for a more comprehensive understanding, it is also useful to deal with the origin of the idea that Iraq constitutes a threat to the U.S. Hence, this subchapter addresses all of these issues.

## 2-1. Neoconservative Idea Entrepreneurship

The most influential ideological camp regarding the presentation of Iraq as a threat to the U.S. was the neoconservatives. Many neoconservatives made it into George W. Bush's first administration after he was elected (Barry 2006: 1). This circumstance gave them a very unique position to push for their idea to get on the agenda. However, to properly account for the idea entrepreneurship, it is necessary to start the narrative much earlier.

Neoconservatism, in the beginning, referred to a camp within the Democratic Party during the 1960s that had moved from a left-leaning position toward strong sentiments opposing communism. In the next decade, the term mainly described the opponents of détente, who at the same time supported Ronald Reagan's anti-Soviet stance (Dumbrell 2005: 37-38). Then, during the 1990s some of these neoconservatives attempted to influence the Republican Party toward "an internationalist foreign policy, rooted in the commitment to spread American values and to sustain US military primacy" (Dumbrell 2005: 38). This aim was in line with the neoconservatives' idea that "American ideals define America's purpose, to be achieved through the exercise of superior American power" (Bacevich 2005: 75). The neoconservative ideology further included the conviction that evil does indeed exist, and if one does not act in the face of it, it will be able to assert itself (Bacevich 2005: 73). Additionally, the proponents of this political ideology held a positive view of authority and thought that leadership was necessary to deal with crises such as the alleged American loss of determination to win the Cold War and appeasement of the Soviet Union (Bacevich 2005: 76-77).

In 1992, Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby authored a document called Defense Planning Guidance for Dick Cheney, who was George H. W. Bush's Secretary of Defense at the time. This document, in line with the neoconservative propositions outlined above, advocated U.S.' military domination (Record 2010: 36). These three persons later played significant roles in the ideational stage of the threat construction, especially during the first administration of George W. Bush. David even determines Cheney as the primary entrepreneur concerning the invasion of Iraq (2015: 165). An important instrument for spreading neoconservative ideas was *The Weekly Standard*, which was a political magazine founded by William Kristol in 1995 (Record 2010: 36). According to John Dumbrell, *The Weekly Standard* formed, together with the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), key institutions of neoconservative ideology (2005: 37-38). Neoconservative sentiments also must have been imperative for William Kristol and Robert Kagan to found the PNAC in 1997. As stated by Tom Barry, the think tank was created to promote policies that would enable the U.S. to reign supreme in the new century (2006: 1).

Not all of the PNAC's members were strictly speaking neoconservative. For instance, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, who both filled minister positions in George W. Bush's administration, could be seen as such exceptions. Nonetheless, they had the same vision of the U.S.' supremacy and established close connections with proponents of neoconservatism over time (Barry 2006: 4). One is almost inclined to call such national security hawks neoconservative by association. In total, ten PNAC members and several additional neoconservatives found their way into George W. Bush's first administration (Record 2010: 41-42). This high number of neoconservatives and their associates in the U.S. government under Bush makes the

success of the idea of Iraq as a threat to the U.S. appear much less surprising. Mentioning and describing all of those actors would go beyond the scope of this subchapter. It is sufficient to view certain key members such as Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz as representatives of the neoconservative vision for America and its influence on the Bush administration's Iraq policy.

## 2-2. The Spreading of the Threat Idea

Now that some of the most important idea entrepreneurs and their ideological stance are identified, it becomes feasible to outline the steps taken to spread the idea of Iraq's being a threat. As Record states, "momentum for a war with Iraq had existed before 9/11 and even before President George W. Bush took office" (2010: 28). Thus, efforts to spread the idea have been made already significantly earlier than George W. Bush's first administration and September 11. Consequently, the diffusion efforts can be divided into three phases: endeavors before George W. Bush's presidency, efforts at the beginning of Bush's first term, and lastly, actions taken after the 9/11 attacks.

In March 1992, *The New York Times* reported about the document, whose drafting was supervised by Wolfowitz, that advocated the U.S.' being the only superpower in the world. Importantly, it stressed the significance of the threat constituted by the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons. Military engagement for preventing not only the use but also the development of such weapons was further considered as a possible approach by this document (Tyler 1992). It becomes obvious that this early document already reflected the rationale that was later applied to Iraq ahead of the invasion.

The years from 1996 to 1998 were a highly productive period for the neoconservative idea entrepreneurs. For example, the founders of PNAC, Kristol and Kagan, wrote an article for the *Foreign Affairs*, in which they used the term “rogue state” to describe Iraq (1996: 21). It does not require much fantasy to conclude that Iraq was presented as a threat in this context since the term “rogue state” itself implies a threat emanating from the state in question. Furthermore, as stated above, 1997 was the founding year of the PNAC, in whose Statement of Principles it said that “we cannot safely avoid the responsibilities of global leadership or the costs that are associated with its exercise. America has a vital role in maintaining peace and security in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. If we shirk our responsibilities, we invite challenges to our fundamental interests. The history of the 20th century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire” (Abrams et al. 1997).

In the same year, *The Weekly Standard* published an article that called for regime change in Iraq with military means. It further claimed dangerous progress in Saddam Hussein’s program to develop WMDs (Kagan and Kristol 1997). Taken together, these statements implied that Iraq constituted a threat that needed to be taken care of before it could “become dire” (Abrams et al. 1997). In concurrence with this displaying of Saddam’s Iraq as a threat, a PNAC letter sent to President Bill Clinton in January 1998 directly called for regime change via military means: “The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power” (Abrams et al. 1998). Clinton,

however, only showed a willingness to support opposition forces in Iraq, but did not assign much urgency to the issue. Moreover, the Clinton administration did not seem to show much interest in a solution involving the U.S. military any time soon (Loeb 1998). In conclusion, the neoconservative idea entrepreneurs did not appear to be able to convince the U.S. government under Clinton of the necessity to remove Saddam Hussein via the means they advocated. Nevertheless, it is plausible to assume that their efforts in this phase helped establish the idea that Iraq was a more or less urgent threat to the U.S. Furthermore, the next phase of the diffusion process gave them a starting position that enabled the achievement of a more successful outcome from a neoconservative perspective.

As David holds, one strategy for entrepreneurs is to “position themselves as wielders of influence within the administration’s decision-making process” (2015: 155). Hence, the fact that many of the neoconservative forces pushing for regime change in Iraq became part of the U.S. government put them in a position of power, which is a crucial factor for increasing the entrepreneurs’ credibility and the attention paid to the idea (Sjöstedt 2013: 150). In other words, by assuming positions in the Bush administration, the probability that the central decision-maker, President George W. Bush, got exposed to the idea and decided in favor of the neoconservative agenda could be increased drastically in the second phase of the idea diffusion.

It did not take much time until members of the administration who assumed key positions addressed the Iraq issue after Bush’s election. Consequently, the Bush administration discussed what to do about Saddam without, however, achieving any clear consensus (Mazarr 2007: 5). Nevertheless, “national security advice to the president was dominated by Vice President Cheney, and he was effectively able to

manage the policy process to ensure that his preferences prevailed” (Pfiffner 2009: 366). As explicated above, these preferences concurred with neoconservative ideas about the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. This circumstance makes the newfound power of the idea entrepreneurs even more obvious. Wolfowitz, who served as Deputy Secretary of Defense under Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the time, also pushed for moves against Saddam Hussein (Mazarr 2007: 17). Yet, the debates during the early administration lacked urgency and did not result in any actions (Mazarr 2007: 5). Michael J. Mazarr, drawing on agenda-setting literature to explain the decision to invade Iraq, writes that the “policy community [...] lurked beside the stream of events with ready-made options, waiting for an appropriate problem or issue or crisis to come along to which they could attach their pet project” (2007: 12). Even though the entrepreneurs had already spent many years to foster and spread their idea and managed to get into a position of increased legitimacy, such a crisis simply did not occur yet at the very beginning of George W. Bush’s administration. The situation changed drastically however when 9/11 initiated the third and most decisive phase.

The attacks from September 11 were an opportunity for the entrepreneurs to connect the policy to remove Saddam Hussein from power to an event (Mazarr 2007: 15). The relationship between Iraq and the particular incident of 9/11, however, is not necessarily an obvious one. Therefore, the proponents of regime change had to find ways to logically explain Saddam Hussein’s involvement to effectively use the attacks to support the policy option they offered for Iraq. Mazarr supports the intentionality of these endeavors by stating that they “used the post-9-11 atmosphere to promote a policy option in which they fervently believed” (2007: 13). On September 20, for instance, a letter from the PNAC was sent to Bush. This letter suggested the possibility

that Iraq was involved in the terrorist attacks. Interestingly, the letter went on to argue for the general necessity to overthrow Saddam Hussein in the context of fighting terrorism even in the case of an inability to prove his involvement in the 9/11 attacks (Kristol et al. 2001). Record states that the underlying logic of this argument was that the assistance from a rogue state was needed to conduct “such spectacular actions” (2010: 44). He further holds that this combination of the threats from al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein was necessary to gain support for the Iraq invasion policy (2010: 29). The idea entrepreneurs had a particular policy—regime change in Iraq—in mind, and they had already tried to diffuse the idea of Iraq’s being a threat for a long time to eventually achieve said policy preference. When the terrorist attacks on the U.S. happened, it only required a slight adjustment of the threat idea to effectively utilize the event for their purposes. This adjustment was the linkage of the threat emanating from Iraq with the War of Terror. This behavior is in line with another strategy of entrepreneurs set out by David, who writes that “they must take advantage of opportunities to frame the available options in the way most favorable to their view” (2015: 155).

Since, as explicated in the previous subchapter, President Bush eventually made a securitizing move, it can be safely assumed that the neoconservative idea entrepreneurs’ calculations tallied. If Condoleezza Rice can be credited, Bush decided to invade Iraq in July 2002 (Bumiller 2007: 185). More evidence for the successful diffusion of Iraq as a threat can be found in the National Security Strategy (NSS) that was published in September of the same year. Firstly, the official strategy of the Bush administration contained the idea that rogue states serve as supporters of terrorists by stating for instance that the U.S. “must be prepared to stop rogue states and their

terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States” (Bush 2002c: 14). This sentence assumed that terrorist organizations actively seek out support from such states. The NSS tried to further strengthen this connection by using the words “rogue states” and “terrorists” in the same sentence five times (Bush 2002c: 13-15). Such a coupling of the two terms undergirds the assertion of a direct relation between them. The above-cited sentence also demonstrates the successful establishment of pre-emptive action as a possible strategy against such states before the threat becomes too great, as it was advocated in the PNAC’s Statement of Principles. Furthermore, the NSS mentioned Iraq in the context of rogue states supporting terrorism and asserted Iraqi efforts to acquire WMDs (Bush 2002c: 14). Thus, it can be concluded that not only the linkage of terrorism and rogue states but also the idea of Iraq as a threat to the U.S. were successfully diffused after 9/11.

### 2-3. Origins of the Threat Idea

For a comprehensive understanding of the idea diffusion, in this case, it is not sufficient to merely account for the idea entrepreneurs and the diffusion process. Therefore, this section further shows why these actors were inclined to come up with the threat idea in the first place. The origin of the idea reveals itself when further examining certain factors that influenced the neoconservative ideology.

One early historical event that certainly influenced neoconservative thinking was the outcome of the appeasement of Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler. According to Record, many of the neoconservatives were Jewish (2010: 34). This circumstance

can also be seen in the neoconservatives' tendency "to identify Israel's security as a top U.S. priority and to lean heavily toward hawkish Israeli preferences when dealing with the Palestinian issue" (Herrmann and Reese 2004: 194). Record further states that the policy of appeasement toward Hitler by the U.K. and France served as a foundation for neoconservative ideas (2010: 32). This shows how deeply influenced they were by the European experiences during Hitler's reign. Wolfowitz, one of the major idea entrepreneurs, even described his perspective as affected by the Holocaust and the Second World War (Houghton 2008: 181). Some neoconservatives even directly compared Hitler and Saddam Hussein (Record 2010: 32). Equating Saddam with Hitler is not any different from explicitly describing him as a threat. In this comparison, the threat does not have to be spelled out. Against this backdrop, it becomes clear why the neoconservatives advocated taking care of Iraq preemptively before it could become too great of a threat. In their view, Saddam Hussein had to be removed from power before he could cause any catastrophic events in the future.

The collapse of the Soviet Union also played a significant role in this context. As explained above, the neoconservative ideology included a vision of American supremacy and pursuing U.S. interests with force if necessary. According to Record, how the neoconservatives envision the U.S.' global role can be traced back to when the Soviet Union ceased to exist in its former form. Now, they thought that the time was ripe for "an ambitious, forward-leaning foreign policy reliant on force to rid the world of tyranny and to promote the spread of democracy" (2010: 34). The latter was set as a goal because neoconservatives believed in the democratic peace theory. If the world was more democratic it would imply increased security of the U.S. because of the assumption that democratic states do not go to war with each other. However, since

democracies do not necessarily develop on its own, the neoconservatives viewed the active use of military means as necessary. Tyrannical regimes were seen as obstacles to achieving American values for the people in these countries, who strive for said values (Record 2010: 35). In other words, the U.S.' values were viewed as universal and their spread via force was perceived as a way to increase national security. Thus, the underlying logic of targeting Iraq and getting rid of Saddam was the spread of democracy in the Middle East (Record 2010: 40). Nonetheless, the question of why specifically Iraq was singled out remains yet unanswered.

Even though the argument that Iraq was simply a “manageable target” after the attacks from September 11 (Dumbrell 2005: 35; Houghton 2008: 175) seems plausible, it does not sufficiently explain why the idea of the Iraqi threat has been spread so consistently by neoconservatives over a relatively long time before 9/11. One potential explanation can be found when looking at the Gulf War at the end of George H. W. Bush’s presidency. As Campbell holds, Iraq seemed like “unfinished business” because the allied forces only expelled the Iraqi army from Kuwait without going one step further and invade Iraq (2004: 82). In line with this assessment, according to Packer, Wolfowitz saw Iraq as “an unfinished war” (2006: 32). It is thus plausible to argue that neoconservative idea entrepreneurs tried to find a way to do what, in their opinion, should have been done already during the Gulf War. Such a goal was, however, not necessarily based on irrationality. The desire to remove Saddam Hussein from power was backed up by the experience of his “aggressive regional ambitions” during the Gulf War and U.S. intelligence data on his nuclear program after the war had ended (Mazarr 2007: 3). The lack of rationality comes into play when the later unwillingness to diverge from long-held positions—despite contradictions regarding the justifications

of the 2003 Iraq war and its alleged benefits for the U.S.—are taken into consideration. Houghton draws on cognitive consistency theory as a potential tool for explanation. He argues that it is possible to assume that the connection between the al-Qaeda attacks on the U.S. and the plans to invade Iraq has been made in order to restore the consistency of particular beliefs (2008: 183). However, the question of whether the idea entrepreneurs knowingly tried to manipulated Bush to pursue their interests or simply believed in the reality of the Iraqi threat cannot be fully answered here and requires further research.

### 3. Identities as Catalysts

Having covered the actuality of George W. Bush's securitizing move and the idea diffusion process initiated by neoconservatives in the two previous chapters, the obvious assumption is that the idea was indeed accepted by President Bush. Therefore, the next essential task is now to figure out which identities were present and exerted influence on this acceptance by functioning as catalysts for the acceptance of the threat idea. The identities that are examined here are not only international but also domestic ones and can be categorized by Wendt's conceptualization of type and role identities. What the analysis in this subchapter shows is that these identities are intertwined and overlapping to a certain extent. In a way, they even reinforce each other. Furthermore, similarly to the idea diffusion, the terrorist attacks from 9/11 played a decisive role again. The subchapter begins by elaborating on the U.S.' democratic identity and then goes on to explain the significance of American exceptionalism and the religious identity of the U.S.

### 3-1. The U.S.' Democratic Identity

The identity category that is relevant in the context of the U.S.' democracy is the type identity. Wendt holds that type identities for states can coincide with their specific form or system. Hence, just like monarchies can constitute a type identity, a democratic system creates a corresponding type identity for the state in question (1999: 226). In the case of the U.S., the type identity is democratic. Moreover, considering that the U.S. “grew into the greatest representative democracy, with greater participation of the public and of the legislative branch in foreign affairs than occurred anywhere else” (Hoffmann 2005: 225), it is plausible to assume that Americans must possess a very pronounced democratic identity. The U.S. democratic system plays a very significant role in the argument of this section due to particular implications of a democratic identity as outlined below.

According to Hayes, such an identity is necessary for a stable democracy and serves as a basis for how political actors behave as well as for the peaceful manner in which conflicts are resolved. Furthermore, this democratic identity is not only decisive in regard to the relationship between democratic countries—states increasingly believe that democracies do not engage in activities of war with each other (Wendt 1999: 226)—but also consequential for how democratic states interact with states that do not belong to this group (2016: 337).

To comprehend this difference in interactions, it is crucial to include the construction of the Other into the analysis. According to Wendt's conceptualization, additionally to the constitution of the Self, ideas about the Other are also part of identities (1999: 224). In line with this assumption, Hayes states that decision-makers

in democratic countries “attempt to demonstrate that the external actor is beyond reason or trust and could use violence against the home state (an existential threat)” to justify policies involving force against such states. This behavior includes stressing how undemocratic they are (2016: 337). Here it also becomes clear why the democratic identity is not just a national type identity—as Wendt holds, “a state can be democratic all by itself” (1999: 226)—but also an international identity in this context. According to Kevin Coe and Rico Neumann, “international identity is fundamentally *relational* [italics in the original], involving reference to foreign entities” (2011: 145).

Hayes wrote several articles analyzing the relationship between democratic identity and diverging interactions with fellow democracies on one hand and non-democratic states on the other by viewing it through the lens of securitization theory (2009; 2012; 2016). These studies serve as valuable examples supporting the significant effect of democratic identity. In the case of the British securitization of Iraq ahead of the invasion by the U.S. and the U.K., for instance, Hayes concludes that the democratic identity of the public in the U.K. exerted influence on the way the Iraqi threat was established (2016: 334). Another stark contrast can be found in the U.S. policies toward nuclear developments of India and Iran. While Iran, a state that signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), was presented as threatening, the same did not happen in regard to India despite its not even being a signatory of the NPT (2009: 979). However, even in the rare occasion of democratic leaders’ trying to securitize another democracy, the public’s democratic identity can constitute a big obstacle to its acceptance of the securitizing move. In 1971, for example, U.S. President Nixon and Henry Kissinger attempted to securitize India and simultaneously tried to present it as undemocratic by connecting India to the Soviet Union (Hayes 2012: 78-80). Yet, their

securitization attempt was only “half-hearted” because they had assumed difficulties due to the democratic identity of the public. Consequentially, the securitizing move did not succeed (Hayes 2012: 86). Hayes thus argues that “in democracies, securitization fails when the object is also generally regarded as a democracy” (2012: 64). These cases all show the same underlying logic. If a state identifies as democratic it becomes quite unlikely that a fellow democracy is be perceived as a threat. However, the undemocratic nature of an allegedly threatening Other has the opposite effect. It drastically increases the likelihood of the securitization to succeed and the state is seen as threatening.

While Hayes’ analyses are primarily concerned with the significance of the democratic identity for securitizing moves conducted by political leaders in order to convince the public audience, this thesis argues that such an identity plays the same role for the acceptance of a threat idea by the decision-makers themselves because they possess the same democratic identity as the general public. As Hayes states, “leaders have internalized the democratic norms and identity, shaping their personal perception of threat” (2009: 983). Thus, it is only logical that the presentation of a regime as undemocratic—as it has been done by the American idea entrepreneurs in the case of Iraq and Saddam Hussein—increases the probability to perceive said regime as a threat. Therefore, it is clear that the collective democratic identity of the U.S. at least contributed to the acceptance of Iraq as a threat not only by the public after George W. Bush’s securitizing move but also by Bush himself as a consequence of the idea diffusion efforts described in the previous subchapter. Moreover, Hayes explains how leaders can utilize the democratic identity to securitize an issue by portraying the threatening state as “beyond reason or trust” (2009: 337). This thesis argues that the

idea entrepreneurs similarly instrumentalized democratic identity when trying to convince Bush of the Iraqi threat. Brian C. Schmidt and Michael C. Williams hold that “[a] democratic Iraq, it was argued, would result in a dramatic change in its foreign policy and would remove the terrorist threat that was (erroneously) argued to emanate from Baghdad” (2008: 200). This argument undoubtedly implies a connection between the threat and Iraq’s undemocratic political system.

The perception that non-democratic states constitute a threat while other democracies do not is based on assumptions related to the democratic peace theory. Hence, if democratic states do not pose a threat, the global spread of democracy can easily be presented as desirable. Why neoconservatives did so when diffusing the idea that Iraq constitutes a threat becomes more obvious when considering that “[t]o be an authentic neoconservative was to be a crusader of sorts, if not on God’s behalf at least on behalf of liberal democratic ideals” (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 50). The U.S.’ identity as a “democratizer” after 9/11 (Sjöstedt 2007: 248) is thus related to its general democratic identity. The U.S.’ active democracy promotion is of importance in this context because it establishes a relation between the democratic identity and American exceptionalism that is covered in the following section. According to Eric Van Rythoven, the “narrative of a destiny of democracy promotion and combating tyranny came to represent a unique and desirable self-image, an *identity* [italics in the original] of ‘American Exceptionalism’” (2016: 497).

### 3-2. American Exceptionalism

A second major type identity contributing to the acceptance of Iraq as a threat was American exceptionalism, or what Michael Kammen describes as “the notion that the United States has had a unique destiny and history” (1993: 6). It is a type identity because American citizens share it. According to Michael Ignatieff, American exceptionalism expresses itself in different ways, of which the first one is exemptionalism. In this context, exemptionalism refers to the U.S.’ reserving the right to exempt itself from the regulations of particular international laws as well as treaties even though they have been signed by the U.S. Secondly, the U.S. applies double standards in regard to how it views itself or friendly states and what it considers its enemies. Lastly, the U.S. insists on the supremacy of its domestic law over international human rights law or the law of other democracies (2005: 3-8). Stanley Hoffmann adds to this characterization by listing several components of American exceptionalism. The first one is America’s geographical position that not only enables relative safety but also gives the U.S. the ability to expand into other regions without significant contention. The democratic institutions of the U.S. constitute the second component. The third one is described by Hoffmann as the “distaste for the rule of force that characterized European diplomacy and colonialism, the repudiation of aristocracy and its wiles, enshrined in a sacred text, the Constitution” (2005: 225). Furthermore, one of the forms American exceptionalism took was “crusading and militant” and aimed at the global spreading of democracy as well as the creation of international institutions that served the U.S.’ interests. This also included the projection of “what made the United States, in American eyes, unique—its values and

institutions” (Hoffmann 2005: 226). This circumstance already makes clear how the American identity—expressed through the concept of American exceptionalism—is connected to the global diffusion of U.S. values such as human rights and a democratic political system. However, American exceptionalism did not always imply that these values needed to be promoted and spread actively.

The American self-perception as unique can be traced back to the very beginning of the English colonization of the American continent (Litke 2012: 198). Justin B. Litke attributes an exemplary version of American exceptionalism to the Puritan English settlers by writing that “[t]hey were to be an example to be imitated, an exemplar to the world. But being hailed as an exemplar is fundamentally different from conquering and ruling an empire” (2012: 213). In this way, Litke draws the line between this exemplary exceptionalism that was to serve as an inspiration for others and “the usual imperial sense of the term” (2012: 213). Without going into too much detail concerning the early Puritan settlements of the American continent or covering subsequent developments of the understanding of America’s exceptional role in the world—this would clearly go far beyond the scope of this thesis—this early emergence of American exceptionalism is significant because it shows that international interventions for the sake of promoting human rights and democracy were not an inherent or pre-given element of the U.S.’ self-perception.

The fact that American exceptionalism can be traced back to a religious group, the Puritans, leads to the assumption that religion plays an essential role in this self-perception. Thus, America’s religious tradition is also of importance if one intends to fully comprehend why American exceptionalism is such an essential part of American identity and self-conception and why it resulted in the desire to promote its values

including democracy. Kammen connotes a relation between the good conditions of the American climate and land fertility and New England's idea that America was approved by God, "predestined to be a New Jerusalem" (1993: 8). Similar conclusions are drawn by other scholars such as Litke, who writes that the Puritans perceived their colony as "willed by God" (2012: 212-213). This idea of connecting God's will with the singularity of the American nation was never really abandoned by its people. According to Ignatieff, the "messianic cultural tradition" continued through the 19th century and both world wars. He further states that U.S. presidents of all political alignments shared a "messianic vision of the American role in promoting rights abroad" since the end of World War II (2005: 13). The fact that presidents of both the Democratic and the Republican parties had such a vision for their country hints at a strong relationship between this vision and the American identity shared by both political camps. Therefore, it can be assumed that American identity makes the U.S. inclined to perceive itself as special due to its religious origin.

What role did American exceptionalism play during the Bush administration? As briefly indicated above, there are multiple forms of American exceptionalism in existence. For instance, the early Puritan settlers advocated a more exemplary kind of exceptionalism. H. W. Brands writes that exemplarists see the U.S.' responsibility only in serving as an example and are afraid that intervening in other state's issues "could jeopardize American values at the source." On the opposite side of American exceptionalism are the vindicators, who believe that military power should be utilized to deal with evil (1998: vii-viii). Such an interpretation of the U.S.' responsibility that uses words like *evil* also hints at a substantial degree of black-and-white thinking. At the beginning of Bush's first term, it seemed like a more exemplarist form of

exceptionalism was to be expected. For instance, Bush “argued that an arrogant and overbearing U.S. interventionism would generate resentment and only complicate U.S. foreign relations” and “less emphasis should be put on nation-building in far-off places” (Herrmann and Reese 2004: 199). Such a stance implies the desire for the U.S. to be less involved in international conflicts. This position seemed to be more in line with conservatives in the administration such as Colin Powell, who initially did not want to resort to military measures to remove Saddam Hussein from power (Herrmann and Reese 2004: 203).

However, as established before, the neoconservative camp preferred a much more forceful approach regarding regime change in Iraq. Their positions strongly concurred with the description of vindicators above. Military intervention to enforce regime change and the subsequent establishment of a democratic political system in that state are clear indicators of the imperial sense of American exceptionalism. Robert Kagan, one of the founders of the PNAC, for instance, created the concept of “benevolent imperialism” (Hoffmann 2005: 229). The term itself already implies the pushing for the diffusion of American values, which are considered to be good. As Barry holds, “exceptionalism and supremacy” were part of the PNAC’s Statement of Principles from 1997 already (2006: 1). Therefore, this thesis argues that neoconservative ideology brought a rather imperialistic version of American exceptionalism into the Bush administration. Nonetheless, Bush did not decide in favor of regime change in Iraq through military means before September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks on the U.S., again, proved to be a decisive event.

Mike Milford argues that 9/11 revealed how vulnerable the U.S. was and effectively endangered the superior feeling resulting from American exceptionalism:

“When such crises occur, they undermine that assumption of supremacy and jeopardize the national identity it sustains” (2016: 20). This thesis argues that this insecurity regarding the U.S.’ own identity was connected to the perception of Iraq as a threat. Such a loss of security concerning one’s identity requires an adequate response to counteract. Thus, President Bush made an effort to restore the identity of the U.S. (Milford 2016: 21) and emphasized the superior position of the U.S. He utilized American exceptionalism to “[give] the audience a familiar frame through which to view the current crisis” (Milford 2016: 22). In other words, the Bush administration counteracted the insecurity of American identity by stressing the U.S.’ exceptionality. In this context, it is also important to mention that Bush further strengthened his people’s identity by contrasting it to an Other that was “antithetical to American values” (Milford 2016: 23). As Milford states, Bush’s “clarity of conviction that functioned so well to reestablish American identity calcified into a rigid rhetoric of demarcation between American interests and un-American opposition” (2016: 26). Constructing the Other as opposed to what characterized America thus served as a tool to restore the American identity of being exceptional and morally superior. To summarize, the terrorist attacks from September 11 damaged the American identity based on exceptionalism. Subsequently, arguments of superiority and exceptionalism, as well as the construction of an Other that was the opposite of America, helped to reestablish said identity.

9/11 was also decisive insofar as it enabled the vindicator camp of American exceptionalism to prevail in the Bush administration. Domestically, the identity of exceptionalism thus moved closer toward its imperialistic form. The Bush Doctrine brought this to light very clearly. Maria Helena de Castro Santos and Ulysses Tavares

Teixeira “identify four major tenets in the Bush Doctrine: preemption, unilateralism, military supremacy and the exporting of democracy. The first three pillars are directly linked to American security and the new terrorist threat” (2013: 142). Therefore, it is plausible to argue that the terrorist attacks on the U.S. contributed to those elements’ coming to the fore. Furthermore, these guidelines for the Bush administration’s security policy clearly showed the influence of American exceptionalism. Unilateralism can be viewed through the lens of exceptionalism because exemption is an element of American exceptionalism. Moreover, as sufficiently established by now, American supremacy is a defining feature of American exceptionalism as well. What indicates this doctrine’s imperial sense of American exceptionalism most obviously is the advocacy of preemption to deal with threats and subsequently establishing American values such as democracy in the targeted state. As de Castro Santos and Tavares Teixeira state, in the Bush Doctrine democracy was “the ultimate and definitive solution to terrorism and tyranny” (2013: 143). Hence, the events of 9/11 made it easier to resort to an imperial interpretation of exceptionalism in order to establish democracy in Iraq. Nicholas J. Wheeler comes to a related conclusion when he writes that the Bush administration used the unique terrorist threat to the U.S. as a justification for “laying claim to special rights that it wishes to deny to others” and “[using] its position of military superiority to promote a world safe for democratic values, and is thus justified in deciding when other states should forfeit their sovereign rights” (2003: 214). Arguments based on exceptionalism were used to bolster up the Bush Doctrine (Wheeler 2003: 211). As Taesuh Cha holds, the neoconservatives used the attacks from September 11, 2001, as a chance to substantiate “‘America’s Mission’ to reshape the world” (2015: 357). The American people’s exceptional identity made

this endeavor much easier to materialize since many justifications used by the neoconservatives were already deeply anchored in the self-conception of Americans. The wide-spread acceptance of American exceptionalism in the U.S. becomes more clear when considering the example of Barack Obama's drawing from Robert Kagan's article "The World America Made" in his 2012 State of the Union address. American exceptionalism enjoys considerable "bipartisan consensus" in the U.S. (Cha 2015: 356). Against the backdrop of all this, it becomes difficult to avoid the argument that American identity made the acceptance of the idea that Iraq and Saddam Hussein constituted a threat that needed to be dealt with much more likely.

### 3-3. The Influence of Religion

At this point the role of religious identity needs to be elaborated on briefly due to the following important question: Considering that American exceptionalism can be traced back to the Puritan origin of the U.S. and the religious justification of the U.S.' exceptionality as God's chosen nation, does religious identity play a significant role in the acceptance of Iraq as a threat? This question seems especially obvious due to the Islamist ideology of the terrorists that attacked the U.S. on September 11, 2001.

However, the above-posed question cannot be sufficiently addressed with a simple affirmative or negative answer. American democracy decreases the influence exerted by religion. The democratic identity of the U.S.—as covered in the previous section—requires flexibility of the religious identity. For a democratic political system to work, it is necessary to tolerate religious differences (Hayes 2009: 982-983). In other words, the democratic identity overwrites religious identity to a certain degree

and makes it more difficult to resort to the Christian identity of the majority of Americans as opposed to Iraq's being primarily Islamic.

George W. Bush further made considerable efforts to prevent a religiously infused conflict. After the attacks of 9/11, the president "insisted that war on terror would not be a retaliation against Islam itself. He took the pains to frame Islam in non-violent language." Nevertheless, Bush resorted to "religiously-tinged language" (den Dulk and Rozell 2011: 75). However, this thesis argues that compared to the U.S.' general religious identity religion played a more significant role when it comes to President Bush's personal religious beliefs and how they influenced him to carry out the securitizing move portraying Iraq as a threat because of the categorization of states into good and evil.

Nonetheless, religious identity cannot be negated. Sjöstedt observes that even though the Bush administration stressed the diversity of religion in the U.S., "Muslims [...] constitute a definite outgroup in the public discourse" (2007: 244). Lance Morrow's article in the *Time*, for instance, postulated that "the Muslim introspection must confront the failures of Islamic societies, political and economic and moral, and the evil, fascistic dreams that these societies sometimes export with vivid results. The Americans find themselves in the unaccustomed position of being the injured party" (2001). This statement shows that certain connections between the terrorist threat to the U.S. and Islam itself have indeed been made in the aftermath of 9/11. However, if Hayes' elaborations on the supremacy of the democratic identity are correct, it seems plausible to assume that despite the American population's being largely Christian, Christian identity was not as decisive as American exceptionalism, which does not contradict its strong democratic identity. Quite the contrary, the U.S.'

democratic tradition contributes to its perception as exceptional. Still, as established above, religious perceptions of the U.S. are undoubtedly an undeniable part of American exceptionalism. However, even if the assumption is correct that due to the supremacy of democratic identity America's Christian tradition mainly fueled American exceptionalism instead of exerting a direct influence, there is a quite peculiar loophole in American identity that enables the exertion of influence by the religious identity of the U.S. on the acceptance of the threat idea. This loophole is the U.S.' civil religion.

As established above, democracy normally does not tolerate much religious discrimination. Civil religion makes it possible for the government to uphold this principle while simultaneously drawing from Christian religion. While the American "civil religion is based on a protestant belief system or morality and values and the need for a religious foundation to life. Divine characteristics are ascribed to the United States itself, while the president, rather than any religious leader, in times of crisis becomes pastor-in-chief" (Marsden 2011: 330). What is of great importance here is the fact that civil religion creates an identity shared by all Americans. It further allows presidents to "draw from a Christian heritage, and often individual Christian belief, without alienating believers of other faiths and non-believers" (Marsden 2011: 330-331). This is exactly what happened when Bush resorted to religious language influenced by protestant morality and tried to avoid demonizing Islam at the same time. This thesis thus argues that this shared identity brought about by civil religion indirectly allowed for the perception of Iraq—particularly Saddam Hussein's human rights violations—from a Christian perspective when Iraq was presented as a rogue state that allegedly supported Islamist terrorist groups.

One very significant consequence of the American civil religion together with a self-perception based on exceptionalism was that it allowed for a particular identity construction that juxtaposed in opposition the U.S. and terrorists after September 11. To be sure, George W. Bush's personal beliefs most likely gave the impetus to initiate this identity construction of a "good" Self against an "evil" Other that was constituted by terrorists and their supporters. However, such a constitution could be effective only due to the civil religion permeating American society and the self-understanding as a country chosen by God himself. Neil J. Smelser holds that a close connection between a country and God can lead to strife with another state being framed in terms of good against evil (2004: 276-279). Furthermore, as Wade Clark Roof states, "[w]ith this identification of an enemy there came a resurfacing of the nation's myths of innocence and goodness" (2009: 295). There was thus a mutual constitution taking place between the identity construction as the good U.S. versus evil terrorists and other identity aspects such as American exceptionalism that emphasize the goodness of the nation. In other words, this newly constructed identity and already existing ones reinforced one another. Logically, in this identity environment that was characterized by a very simplistic understanding of who is good and who is evil, the acceptance of Iraq as a threat was greatly facilitated. When applying Wendt's identity categories, it can be said that civil religion contributed to the construction of an enemy role identity for terrorists.

## 4. Beliefs and Internalization

In this subchapter, the main subjects of analysis are, on the one hand, the individual level internalization process of the threat idea in the case of George W. Bush and, on the other hand, personality features and different beliefs that facilitated said internalization. The latter can be divided into separate parts of which the first one covers particular features of President Bush's personality whose exertion of influence on Bush's decision-making and threat perception can be assumed. Bush's personal beliefs then are split into two major categories that facilitated the internalization of the threat idea. Those categories are formed firstly by his operational code that consists of his beliefs about the political world and secondly by his religious beliefs, which he acquired throughout his life. This subchapter shows how these individual level aspects contributed to Bush's perception of Iraq under Saddam Hussein as a threat and thus constitute crucial explanatory factors regarding the conduct of the securitizing move addressing Iraq.

### 4-1. Individual Internalization

As a presidential candidate, George W. Bush appeared to hold a relatively humble attitude regarding America's foreign policy. According to Bush himself, the Bush administration was going to be characterized by humbleness (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 53). The second presidential debate of 2000 demonstrated Bush's hesitancy regarding the use of military force very clearly. Even though Bush stated about Saddam Hussein that "[w]e don't know whether he's developing weapons of mass destruction. He better not be or there's going to be a consequence should I be the

president,” he continued saying that “it’s important to have credibility and credibility is formed by being strong with your friends” (2000). The latter statement, despite threatening Saddam with a U.S. intervention, quite obviously implies the preference of avoiding unilateral action instead of coordinated action with allies to achieve greater credibility. Bush further said that he was

worried about overcommitting our military around the world. I want to be judicious in its use. You mentioned Haiti. I wouldn’t have sent troops to Haiti. I didn’t think it was a mission worthwhile. It was a nation building mission, and it was not very successful. It cost us billions, a couple billions of dollars, and I’m not so sure democracy is any better off in Haiti than it was before. (2000)

Here, the message seems to be clear: Bush did not think very positively about nation-building efforts in faraway countries with great costs for the U.S. Furthermore, he seemed to doubt the benefit of such endeavors for democracy. As becomes obvious below, this position changed when the threat perception of Iraq became stronger. However, at the beginning of his first term, Bush still held similar views. As Richard K. Herrmann and Michael J. Reese write, Bush himself expressed that imperiously intervening would cause irritation and thus impede the U.S.’ relations with other countries (2004: 199). Considering Bush’s early reluctance for military operations in other countries makes it possible to assume that he did not perceive any foreign countries as immediate and urgent threats to the U.S.’ national security at this point. Thus, this thesis argues that the idea of Iraq as a threat was not internalized yet at this stage.

However, if not an immediate threat, Iraq became an issue even before the terrorist attacks of September 11. Before 9/11, as Bob Woodward states, Iraq was not seen as particularly dangerous, but certainly problematic (2004: 27). Bush, at this point, was not entirely satisfied with the current policy toward Iraq, but saw non-military options as plausible (Woodward 2004:12). Mazarr, who interviewed former senior government officials in the Bush administration, supports this evaluation by stating that “no one with whom I spoke read the meeting as an indication that George Bush was anxious to go after Saddam” (2007: 5). This statement refers to the first meetings of the National Security Council during the early Bush administration in January and February 2001 that addressed the Iraq issue. Hence, Bush did not seem to perceive Iraq as an urgent threat yet at this stage despite Iraq’s being problematized.

As one might have expected, 9/11 was decisive for the internalization process as well. Yet, it remains difficult to narrow down when exactly George W. Bush internalized the idea that Iraq was a threat to the U.S. that necessitated military force. To roughly demonstrate that an internalization process took place, this thesis divides the post-9/11 internalization process into three stages, whose exact beginning and end are hard to pinpoint. However, secondary literature and speech acts that support the existence of these stages can be found easily. The three stages are 1) when Bush viewed Iraq as threatening but not sufficiently to justify preemptive war, 2) when he began to consider the option to go to war and gave instructions to plan such an option, and 3) when the actual decision for military intervention was made. The second and third stages are considered as a consecutive intensification of the threat perception because unilateral military action hints at a greater threat due to the underlying urgency, especially when the use of force is preemptive. Hence, if Bush was willing to

go down this path, it is likely that the perceived threat was big enough to risk great reputation loss, which Bush himself declared to not only be aware of but also trying to avoid before as well as at the beginning of his presidency.

Tansa George Massoud and David Mitchell hold that the terrorist attacks not only changed President Bush's perception of Iraq but consequently also led to more support for the idea of the neoconservative advisors to Bush (2009: 279). Nonetheless, the internalization of the threat idea did not seem to have reached its climax yet right after the attacks. On September 19, for example, when asked about a connection of Iraq with the attacks eight days prior, Bush avoided making any direct statement about Iraq and said that "anybody who houses a terrorist, encourages terrorism will be held accountable. And we are gathering all evidence on this particular crime and other crimes against freedom-loving people" (2001b). While the idea of terrorist supporting states was established at this point, such an evasive statement makes possible the interpretation that the idea of the Iraqi threat was not internalized enough yet by Bush to make any confident statements about a direct relationship between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In the Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress one day later, Bush also made no mention of Saddam Hussein or any connection of Iraq with the attacks in the context of the war on terror (2001c). According to Massoud and Mitchell's account, Bush agreed with Collin Powell at first, who rejected laying any focus on Iraq so shortly after the attacks due to an assumed lack of international backing (2009: 274). Furthermore, Woodward states that Bush was also worried that Wolfowitz and Cheney might be trying to "settle old scores with Saddam Hussein" (2002: 84-85). If this account is correct, it implies that Bush considered the possibility that action against Iraq was not pushed for by his neoconservative advisors

because of the actuality of the Iraqi government's threatening nature, but because of old personal scores to settle.

However, even if Bush was not confident enough about the Iraqi threat to make an explicit statement at this point, he certainly began to internalize the idea very shortly after September 11. This becomes especially clear on the backdrop of Richard Clarke's recalling President Bush's giving the following instructions just one day after the attacks: "See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way." Even Clarke's assuring that there was no evidence for such a connection was followed up by Bush with the repeated instruction to inspect Iraq (2004: 32). Thus it can be safely assumed that Bush started to internalize the idea that Iraq was a threat since he suspected Saddam Hussein to be a supporter of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. Consequently, Bush pushed his team to uncover evidence that would support such a suspicion.

On September 17, only six days after the attacks, George W. Bush signed the war plan for Afghanistan, which also contained the instruction for the Pentagon to plan options to invade Iraq. Whether this can be regarded as a sign that Bush ordered the planning of military options at this point is questionable though. As Glenn Kessler further remarks, this direction to plan a potential war in Iraq was mentioned in the more than 20 pages long document "almost as a footnote" (2003). At the latest in November 2001, it became clear, however, that Bush began to seriously consider the option to go to war with Iraq when he asked Rumsfeld to plan the invasion (Woodward 2004: 3). One speech act proving that Bush was considering the option of war because of the threat that Iraq constituted was his statement regarding war in Iraq one month later: "Saddam's a threat. This is an option" (Woodward 2004: 66).

In the State of the Union Address from January 29, 2002, Bush made one of the clearest statements about the threat emanating from the Iraqi leadership by directly claiming that Iraq supported terrorists. Intentions to preemptively attack Iraq, however, were not explicitly stated (2002a). James P. Pfiffner suspects that Bush “made up his own mind about the war sometime early in 2002” (2009: 374). According to Nicholas Lemann, a senior administration official said that “the President internalized the idea of making regime change in Iraq a priority” during the first half of 2002 (2003). This is in line with Richard Haass’ recalling Condoleezza Rice’s telling him that Bush decided for war in early July 2002 (Lemann 2003). Therefore, at the latest in July, George W. Bush fully internalized the idea that Iraq under Saddam Hussein was a threat severe enough to enforce regime change by military means. In September of the same year, President Bush then sought a congressional resolution that would authorize such a use of force (Mazarr 2007: 8).

The fast nature of the internalization process leads the author of this thesis to the assumption that George W. Bush’s beliefs concurred with the threat idea to a great extent, as predicted by Sjöstedt’s framework, which says that concurring beliefs accelerate the internalization. The obvious question now is which of Bush’s beliefs enabled such a quick internalization of the threat idea, especially after the events of September 11, 2001.

#### 4-2. The Change of Bush’s Operational Code

To review, George describes the operational code as “a particular significant portion of the actor’s entire set of beliefs about political life” (1969: 197). According to Renshon,

the beliefs encompassed by the operational code are “especially relevant in the context of political decision making” (2008: 824). This set of beliefs can be further broken down into the following two categories: philosophical beliefs and instrumental beliefs. The former category of beliefs consists of how the actor sees “the fundamental nature of politics, the nature of political conflict, the role of the individual in history.” The latter comprises of “his beliefs about ends-means relationships in the context of political action” (George 1969: 199), or as Renshon phrases it, “the methods leaders should use to attain the ends they desire” (2008: 824). In his analysis of George W. Bush’s operational code, Renshon also makes a distinction between philosophical beliefs’ being essentially about the Other and instrumental beliefs as beliefs reflecting the behavior of the Self (2008: 841). He further attaches importance to the following three philosophical beliefs since “they are at the heart of how the individual views the political universe” (2008: 835): 1) the nature of the political universe and the political opponent, 2) optimism or pessimism regarding the realization of political goals, and 3) the predictability of the political future (George 1969: 201-203). This is in line with George, who assumes the particular importance of how an actor views his opponent and the political world regarding conflict (1969: 221). This aspect of the operational code is crucial for any conclusions regarding Bush’s perception of Iraq. The instrumental beliefs are important in the sense that they play a role in how he would go about achieving his goal resulting from his perception.

Before the terrorist attacks happened, George W. Bush was not aiming at regime change in Iraq (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 53). This lack of interest in removing Saddam Hussein from power was reflected in Bush’s operational code before September 11, 2001. According to Robison, Bush initially had a “moderately strong,

positive belief in the use of cooperation toward achieving his policy objectives” and saw “himself as a benign leader in a moderately friendly world” (2006: 111). Bush thus clearly saw the world as relatively harmonious and believed that cooperation was an effective approach to achieve one’s political goals. In regard to cooperation, Bush was even above the average of pre-9/11 U.S. presidents (Robison 2006: 111). As the results of Renshon’s study demonstrate, Bush’s beliefs about the nature of the political universe were even reinforced when he became president insofar that he viewed it even more optimistically (2008: 834). Renshon connects the reinforcement of Bush’s existing beliefs in this context to the gain in power resulting from being the president. Since Bush was “confident in his own abilities and optimistic about his future,” increased power that could be used to reach goals was likely to strengthen views of a cooperative world (2008: 829). It is plausible to assume that such optimistic political beliefs constituted a big hindrance to successful diffusion of the idea that Iraq was a threat that had to be taken care of urgently, at least to the extent that President Bush would fully accept this idea. By 2002, however, regime change in Iraq became the highest priority in the U.S.’ foreign policy despite rather weak evidence (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 53). The obvious reason for this policy change to suggest would be the terrorist attacks. However, this thesis argues that not the attacks themselves, but the resulting change in George W. Bush’s operational code was decisive for this policy change. The connection between the events of 9/11 and a regime change policy in Iraq as well as a prior perception of Iraq as a threat thus appears to be more indirect.

After 9/11 Bush’s political beliefs changed quite drastically. Robison holds that Bush became not only “more conflict-oriented and hostile toward the rest of the world” but also “more pessimistic regarding the realization of his goals” (2006: 121).

Renshon's study of Bush's operational code results in the same findings (2008: 835), thus offering more evidence that Bush's decisive political beliefs indeed changed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. According to Renshon, the three philosophical beliefs listed above were the ones "that experienced a statistically significant change." (2008: 835-836). In line with the above statement that philosophical beliefs concern the perception of the Other, Renshon writes that Bush's "conception of the 'other' shifted dramatically" (2008: 841). Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Bush's perception of Iraq as a threat increased after 9/11. Because he viewed the world as significantly more conflictual and hostile, the neoconservatives' attempts to portray Iraq and Saddam Hussein as threatening matched well with Bush's newly changed perception of the world itself. Robison similarly speculates that the philosophy of the more hawkish advisors in Bush's administration seemed to be more reasonable to the president. Offensive action now appeared to be necessary (2006: 123-124).

Interestingly, and crucial for one of the central arguments of this thesis—that George W. Bush as an individual made a decisive difference—Bush's advisors did not change much after 9/11 regarding their political beliefs. While Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz—three primary idea entrepreneurs—held quite pessimistic and conflictual views of the world, more dovish members of the Bush administration such as Powell thought of it in more "cooperative and friendly" terms. According to Robison's findings, they maintained their views even after the terrorist attacks (2006: 123). These findings imply that the events of 9/11 were not necessarily themselves causing a change in the U.S. foreign policy. The fact that George W. Bush was the leader of the country played a crucial role in bringing about this new direction. Another president might have kept his more cooperative beliefs of the political world—assuming that

they would have been cooperative to begin with—just like Powell did even after the shock of 9/11. Religious beliefs could be a decisive factor explaining why George W. Bush’s operational code shifted after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. Further below this thesis elaborates on the specific role played by Bush’s religious beliefs for his changing perception of the world and, consequently, Iraq.

### 4-3. Significant Personality Traits

At this point, it is helpful to first establish a brief overview of three of George W. Bush’s character traits that played important roles in regard to his decision-making and perception in the case of the invasion of Iraq. Some of them reveal their significance even further in the context of Bush’s religious beliefs and values covered in the next section of this subchapter. Overall, the role played by such personal characteristics, in this case, supports the assumption of this thesis that the person in power makes an essential difference for how a political situation is handled and which outcomes follow.

The first, and perhaps one of the most crucial, traits is Bush’s moral certainty. As Pfiffner convincingly argues, “moral certainty can lend rhetorical support and firm leadership when there is unanimity of purpose; but it can shut off a full debate when there is serious doubt about a course of action” (2004: 176). Pfiffner goes on to infer certain behaviors such as Bush’s accepting questionable evidence of Iraq’s threat or the decision to invade Iraq from his moral certainty (2004: 166). The next section of this subchapter clearly shows the relationship between this morality and Bush’s deep, personal religious beliefs. As his post-9/11 speeches clearly show, there was also an obvious tendency for black-and-white thinking that was directly related to Bush’s

religious beliefs and the consequent moral clarity he drew from. Thinking in such strict categories further contributed to the perception of Saddam Hussein as a threat.

Massoud and Mitchell argue that logical arguments mattered less to Bush than his gut feelings about a particular issue, which caused an aversion to altering already made decisions (2009: 273). Hence, this tendency to act according to his intuition constitutes the second significant personality trait. It is very likely that Bush's intuition was greatly informed by his religious values and beliefs as well. Together with a moral evaluation of Iraq that resulted in greater threat perception, such an inclination to act intuitively would then lead to the avoidance of contradicting perspectives on the issue. As Pfiffner writes, Bush's tendency to rely on his instinct in his decisions becomes obvious when looking at how he based his arguments on evidence without instructing experts to first scrutinize them (2004: 165).

Lastly, Bush often viewed international affairs from a very personal perspective. Pfiffner holds that such a tendency to approach political issues personally "can also narrow options and forestall reconciliation" (2004: 176). Bush's describing Saddam Hussein as "the guy who tried to kill my dad" (King 2002) hints at his taking Saddam Hussein's past actions personally. Taking into account Pfiffner's assertion that a personal view of the world can reduce the options at hand, it is plausible to assume that Bush sympathized with the war option because he was to a certain degree inclined to perceive Saddam Hussein as a threat due to the "alleged plot by Iraqi intelligence to assassinate Bush's father, former president George H.W. Bush" (Lobe 2004). Therefore, this personality trait of Bush most likely also contributed to his threat perception and the subsequent conduct of the securitizing move.

#### 4-4. Bush's Religious Beliefs

George W. Bush's religious convictions are certainly amongst the most significant factors contributing to the successful internalization of the idea that Iraq constituted a threat to the U.S. Thus, it is useful to first briefly outline the context of Bush's faith. The origin and development of his religious beliefs further portend their actuality contrary to the mere utilization of religious values for political gains. The former is necessary to plausibly argue that such beliefs contributed to his perceiving Iraq under Saddam Hussein as an actual threat that required action. Additionally, when this thesis quotes George W. Bush, it does not distinguish between spontaneous remarks and prepared speeches. To be sure, one could argue that Bush himself did not draft his speeches. However, Michael Gerson, who was the main speechwriter of Bush, knew and shared his faith (Mayer and Rozell 2005: 214). Moreover, Bush requested Gerson to include biblical references in the speeches he wrote for him, which are, as Moens phrases it, "pieces of Bush's own identity" (2004: 18). For these reasons, it can be assumed that Bush's speechwriter had similar values and reflected Bush's religious ideas and convictions in his speeches. Inferring Bush's views in regard to his religiosity from these speeches thus becomes viable and valid.

Even though George W. Bush was raised in a Christian environment attending a Presbyterian church, he had an "undisciplined young adulthood and struggles with alcohol." However, after marrying Laura Welch in the late 70s, they started to attend a United Methodist church in Texas. When he additionally began participating in a Bible class, he found back to Christianity as a personal guide that further led to his restraining from consuming alcohol any longer and his public statement about

“[devoting] his life to Jesus” in 1986 (den Dulk and Rozell 2011: 73). In 1993, Bush even went so far as to say to a reporter that heaven would be inaccessible to those who do not believe in Jesus (Fineman 2003). Moens holds that Bush’s faith became more conservative than his parents’ interpretation (2004: 17). Thus, when Bush stated that Christ was his favorite philosopher “because he changed my heart” (Buttry 1999), the statement seemed genuine against the backdrop of his young adulthood and later return to Christian guiding principles. Although Bush’s winning the presidential election was also due to the support from the Christian Right (Mayer and Rozell 2005: 207), Moens states that “[t]he notion that his religious values are only political is baseless, and frankly ridiculous. If so, he would have tripped up on his hypocrisy long ago” (2004: 17). Furthermore, Bacevich and Prodromou write that Bush’s “personal theology is not deeply nuanced, but it is intensely personal” (2004: 46). Therefore, when covering Bush’s religious beliefs, it can be safely assumed that they are real and thus likely contributed to his threat perception.

Against the backdrop of his personality traits described above, it becomes obvious why his religious convictions mattered so much in the context of the alleged Iraqi threat. His gut decisions and instinct were likely based on a religiously informed moral certainty. Lastly, his tendency to see the world from a very personal perspective made it likely to perceive Saddam Hussein’s actions—such as human rights abuse in Iraq—as violations of Bush’s values and principles. Bush himself buttressed this assumption with one of his post-9/11 statements: “my principles that I make decisions on are a part of me, and religion is a part of me” (2004b). The relationship between his religious beliefs and the perception of Iraq as a threat is explained in greater detail in the remainder of this section.

Bacevich and Prodromou hold that how Bush saw the global role of the U.S. was not influenced much by his religious convictions before the presidential election (2004: 47). However, that does not mean that he did not hold religious views. Rather, it seems that he simply did not apply them to foreign affairs prior to his presidency. One reason could be his “inexperience in world affairs” to which Bush himself admitted during the presidential campaign (Daalder and Lindsay 2003). However, he undoubtedly held particular religious beliefs that influenced how he approached politics. The prominent position religious guiding principles took in George W. Bush’s political life is demonstrated by his own words in *A Charge to Keep*: “I could not be governor if I did not believe in a divine plan that supersedes all human plans. Politics is a fickle business. Polls change. [...] My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. [...] Frees me to do the right thing, even though it may not poll well” (1999: 6). Thus, religious values played a role for Bush already before 9/11 and even before he became the U.S.’ president. After 9/11 occurred, however, Bush’s rhetoric could be characterized as “messianic and crusading.” Turek speculates that Bush’s response to 9/11 was influenced by “his experiences as a governor, incorporating religious rhetoric into his political philosophy” (2014: 997-998).

As Bacevich and Prodromou argue, immediately after September 11, “Bush had to rely on his own resources and trust his own instincts. Thus the personal theology of George W. Bush began to infuse itself into the Bush administration’s statecraft” (2004: 48). They further state that “religion offered an immediately available frame of reference that enabled President Bush to make sense of otherwise senseless events” (2004: 47). Thus, since 9/11 his religious values’ exerted influence

on American foreign policy (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 43). This religious impact on U.S. foreign policy became obvious through the way in which the war on terror, as well as the Bush Doctrine, was articulated in distinctly religious language (den Dulk and Rozell 2011: 73).

George W. Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric mainly featured two central convictions that resulted from his religiosity: These convictions were, firstly, the universal desirability of freedom and, secondly, the existence of good and evil. In his first inaugural address, Bush said that "[o]ur democratic faith is more than the creed of our country. It is the inborn hope of our humanity" (2001a), thus expressing that all humans equally desire democracy. Three years later, in his 2004 State of the Union Address, Bush showed the connection of his belief in the universal value of freedom and religion more clearly: "God has planted in every human heart the desire to live in freedom" (2004a). Not only is freedom a universal value but also a desire that was given to humanity by God.

Here civil religion comes into play again. Bellah states that one "important tradition of interpretation" is constituted by the ideas that "America is God's country, and that American power in the world is identical with morality and God's will" (1980: xiii). To be sure, the fact that there is a shared American identity under civil religion does not mean that such an extreme interpretation is necessarily shared as well. However, when taking a look at George W. Bush's post-9/11 speeches, it becomes apparent that he shared this particular interpretation of civil religion to a certain degree. This circumstance means that the American civil religion had a significant impact on how Bush himself viewed the role of the U.S. in the world after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Since Bush relied on his religious compass immediately after the

attacks occurred, his convictions came to the forefront. Together with the civil religion they then established a clear mission from Bush's perspective. Jillinda Weaver writes, that "George W. Bush mixes civil religion and mission, religious symbolism and legitimation of national purpose" (2008: 11).

What all of this means is that George W. Bush saw a religiously infused mission for the U.S. in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Based on his conviction that freedom is a universal value desired by all peoples and America's civil religion, the U.S.' duty became the fight for freedom. In 2002, for example, Bush's State of the Union Address included the following words:

History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight. [...] Our enemies send other people's children on missions of suicide and murder. They embrace tyranny and death as a cause and a creed. We stand for a different choice, made long ago on the day of our founding. We affirm it again today. We choose freedom and the dignity of every life. Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory. (2002a)

When Bush stated in the 2003 State of the Union Address that "the liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity" (2003), he further clarified that the fight for freedom is one that is fought in the name of God.

For the securitizing move concerning Iraq, this is meaningful insofar that Bush's convictions about the universal nature of freedom and the desire of all humans to achieve it match very well with the idea that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He constituted an obvious obstacle to the fight for liberty. In Pfiffner's words, "[t]he

pursuit of regime change in Iraq was part of President Bush's vision of extending liberty to the rest of the world" (2004: 168). This becomes further obvious through the code-name that was given to the military intervention in Iraq—Operation Iraqi Freedom. Furthermore, according to Weaver, the desire of Iraqi people to live free of an oppressing regime could be assumed by Bush because his beliefs implied that people in Iraq, just like anywhere else, want to live under freedom (2008: 14-15). One of the personality traits listed above is significant in this context as well. Bush again demonstrated his tendency to see the world in black-and-white terms. Weaver argues that Bush's framing implies that the audience of Bush's statements "can choose to be with Bush, God and freedom or against them" (2008: 22). However, since the lack of freedom of other peoples in the world does not directly threaten the U.S., this aspect of Bush's religious beliefs should be viewed more as a factor that facilitated the securitizing move. In other words, it further legitimized them from his perspective. More central to Bush's actual threat perception concerning Iraq and Saddam Hussein was the second major aspect of his beliefs in the post-9/11 context, which was the actual existence of both good and evil.

John M. Murphy writes that "[f]or President Bush, the world is, as it ever was, divided between good and evil" (2003: 626). These two opposites are further in a struggle between each other in which the U.S. is located on the side of the good, while its enemies are considered evil (Herrmann and Reese 2004: 209). The terrorists who attacked innocent people on September 11 assumed the evil side. Bush was very convinced that terrorists carried out these cruel actions because of their evil nature. To him, pure maliciousness was the only reason for terrorism (Bacevich and Prodromou

2004: 49). Correspondingly, the above-mentioned mission of the U.S. had another aspect to it, which was to “rid the world of evil-doers” (Perez-Rivas 2001).

All it took to fuse the threat emanating from the terrorists that attacked the U.S. with an alleged Iraqi threat was the idea of rogue states. If Iraq was a rogue state and supporter of terrorists, it belonged to the evil side of the above-mentioned struggle between good and evil. In this way it constituted a threat to the U.S. Together with the accusation that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs, the threat appeared to be a real and indeed immediate one. Hence, the 2002 State of the Union Address said that

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade. [...] This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. (Bush 2002a)

In this context, Bush’s character traits are again of great importance. According to Bacevich and Prodromou, “Bush’s theology gives him confidence in his own ability to discern good from evil” (2004: 46). Such a personal approach means that Bush was convinced that he could tell good from evil. Expert opinions were thus not necessary to make a decision or evaluate a specific situation or opponent thoroughly. Combined with his tendency to rely on his instinct, it is plausible to assume that for President Bush, it was essentially a gut decision whether something was to be considered good or evil. Therefore, it is not surprising that he internalized an idea that made sense to him.

The idea that Iraq was a threat perfectly fit the religious beliefs outlined above because it did not contradict his beliefs and convictions

The neoconservative idea diffusion matched Bush's beliefs so well because the neoconservatives thought about the world in similar ways. Similarly to George W. Bush's tendency for black-and-white thinking, neoconservatives "tended to see the world in stark, with-us-or-against-us terms." Moreover, they were long convinced "of American righteousness and of its mission to the world." However, for neoconservatives, it was less about a fight between good and evil, but more about opposing political systems—namely democracy versus dictatorship (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 50). Bush and neoconservatives had in this sense corresponding worldviews. One was simply based on a more religious fundament, while the other was framed in a more secular manner (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004: 52-53). Overall, it can be said that the events of 9/11 forced Bush to utilize his religious compass to navigate the new situation. Since his religious beliefs matched extraordinarily well with neoconservative ideas, the idea diffusion efforts quickly came to fruition.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The primary purpose of this research was to apply securitization theory in order to establish the successful securitization of Iraq by the Bush administration and subsequently, with the help of Sjöstedt's framework, explain the process before the actual securitizing move performed by the U.S. president. This was achieved by analytically separating the idea diffusion process, existing and newly constructed identities as well as Bush's personal beliefs, which were in actuality all deeply intertwined phenomena. By doing so, another goal of the thesis was to demonstrate that all of these aspects are necessary to explain why George W. Bush carried out the securitizing move. Each factor additionally comes with its particular implications.

The first subchapter of the analysis engaged with the securitization process itself. It showed that Iraq remained in the politicized stage of the securitization spectrum for quite some time. Since 1998 regime change in Iraq was already U.S. policy. But the issue was still politicized, meaning that it was addressed with normal political means. No special measures were taken or seriously considered at this point. Even when many speech acts of key members of the Bush administration portrayed Iraq as a threat they did not formulate much urgency or the explicit need for extraordinary measures. In 2002, however, the rhetoric escalated in its presentation of the threat emanating from Iraq and transformed into a full securitizing move that aimed at breaking free from the standard rules of politics. In this way, the Bush administration tried to securitize Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In this context, this thesis gave examples of the dependent variable of its analysis: Bush's securitizing move. Yet, the securitization attempt was not successful on the international level. Both many important European

allies as well as the U.N. did not see military action as legitimate. However, domestically, the attempt showed much success and convinced both the American population and Congress of the threat and the necessity of military countermeasures.

Next, the focus shifted to where the idea of Iraq as a threat came from, how it was diffused, and which actors pushed for the spreading of said idea. The central idea entrepreneurs, in this case, were the neoconservatives who had a vision of American supremacy and the dissemination of American values. Years before George W. Bush was elected as president they were already trying to spread the idea that Iraq was a rogue state and a threat. Furthermore, they advocated preemptive intervention to address the threat. Their opinion and vision gained weight when many of them were appointed to Bush's administration. However, until 9/11 neoconservative efforts to present Iraq as a threat were not sufficiently successful. The tragic terrorist attacks provided them the opportunity to connect their idea to policy—removing Saddam Hussein from power. Their ideas thus became part of the National Security Strategy and led to Bush's securitizing move. The origins of the threat idea that was spread by these entrepreneurs lie in the appeasement of Nazi Germany, the desire to spread democracy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the previous Gulf War under President George H. W. Bush.

The examination of the idea diffusion brings with it important implications. Firstly, it becomes clear that the Bush administration as an analytical unit needs to be dismantled to identify even smaller units for a greater comprehension of the case. Furthermore, individual actors formally external to the administration should be taken into consideration. Neoconservatives and their associates, both within the administration and outside of it, pushed for certain policies and the spread of closely

related ideas. Only by doing so and the additional illumination of these actors' backgrounds and their early diffusion attempts can one account for the particular idea in the threat construction process. Moreover, accounting for this idea and diffusion efforts is important for another reason: it can be decisive for whether the securitization of an issue takes place or not. This becomes clear when asking the question of why Iraq was securitized while other dictatorships with comparable characteristics and threat potentials such as the remaining "members" of the axis of evil—Iran and North Korea—were not treated in the same manner. Pfiffner demonstrates this credibility problem: "Declarations of universal values in pursuit of U.S. foreign policy goals are sometimes useful, as they were in the war on terrorism. But writing them into policy could cause problems, especially when applied to other nation states. The Bush administration wanted to use the principles to move against Saddam but did not want to use them against North Korea. Nor did it want North Korea to conclude that the United States was serious about its declared principles and likely to attack North Korea" (2004: 172).

Taking idea diffusion into the equation can give answers in this context. Despite undoubtedly working on a nuclear weapon program whose weapons could end up in terrorist hands, North Korea was not securitized in the same manner as Iraq because there was no immediate idea diffusion of North Korea's being an urgent threat. Concerning North Korea or Iran identities and personal beliefs could have had a similar impact as they did in the Iraqi case. Consequently, the lack of comparable idea diffusion can offer a partial explanation for the irrational and exclusive securitization of only one selected rogue state. To be sure, other determinants affected this decision as well. Hence, assigning the entire causality to the idea diffusion would likely be too

simplistic. Yet, these considerations hint at the idea diffusion's being a crucial part of the explanation. Record seems to agree when he writes the following: "Why did Bush pick Iraq? Largely because of key neoconservatives and their allies" (2010: 29).

In the second step of the explanation for Bush's securitizing move, the role of identities as catalysts for the idea acceptance was examined. The first significant identity in this context was identified as the U.S.' democratic identity. States outside of this group were presented as beyond reasons or trust and as violent. On the one hand, this increases the probability that the non-democratic state is viewed as a threat and securitization succeeds. On the other hand, however, before this identity exerted influence on the securitization process, it also affected how Bush apprehended the threat idea. Since he shared this democratic identity with other Americans it is likely that he perceived Iraq's being outside the democratic group as more threatening when the idea entrepreneurs presented the country in such a way.

American exceptionalism constituted another factor that contributed to the acceptance of the idea. This part of American identity led to a self-perception of America as unique and exempt from international regulations, if conditions warranted it. American exceptionalism can take an imperial form in which the active spread of democracy is promoted. 9/11 gave weight to the more imperial vision of the neoconservatives and consequently, this version of American exceptionalism prevailed in the Bush administration. Furthermore, due to the religious origin of American exceptionalism, many possessed a messianic vision of the U.S.' role to promote rights abroad. Such circumstances strongly facilitate the acceptance of the idea that the threat justifies military means.

Religious identity was, to some extent, overwritten by a democratic identity that stressed freedom of religion. For Bush, who showed efforts after 9/11 to control damage and avoid the demonization of Islam, the matter did not ultimately become one of Christianity versus Islam. However, the prevalence of civil religion in the U.S. made it possible to draw from a shared identity that had certain religious values at its core. Hence, to a certain degree, an aspect of American identity that was based on religious values also contributed to Saddam Hussein's appearing more threatening since it allowed for the construction of an enemy role identity.

Therefore, the analysis of threat constructions or perceptions as well as decision-making would benefit greatly from an increased scholarly focus on whether any identity constructions took place in a given situation. Especially in the field of security studies the concept of identity deserves increased attention because identities can affect threat constructions. This thesis has shown that Sjöstedt's framework that incorporates identities to explain why an actor conducts a securitizing move indeed comes with significant explanatory value. Examining a threat construction process without looking at identities would inhibit its understanding substantially.

In the last analytical stage of the framework, George W. Bush's internalization of the idea was assessed. In the beginning Bush promoted a humble foreign policy considering the potential loss of reputation when intervening in conflicts abroad. He further did not seem to perceive Iraq as an urgent threat despite the diffusion efforts' being already well underway at that time. But after 9/11, the internalization process began. At first, Bush tried to avoid connecting Iraq to the attacks publicly. However, against the backdrop of 9/11, the idea diffusion seemed to have a greater effect on Bush as he increasingly appeared to perceive Iraq as an extraordinary threat. At the end

of 2001, Bush started to consider the option of war because he was sure that Iraq was a danger that had to be addressed. In 2002, the U.S. president decided to go to war. Thus, it can be argued that Bush perceived Iraq as an urgent threat at this point. The idea was now fully internalized. This also corresponds with Hughes' assertion that the securitization of Iraq properly began in the same year. The observations hinting at a gradual internalization process were made after the change of Bush's operational code toward a more hostile one. Subsequently to the internalization, the securitization was attempted. These two factors enframing the internalization process—the change of Bush's operational code and the securitizing move—serve as evidence for its actuality.

It was further shown that Bush's operational code—his political beliefs—were a key factor for the successful internalization of the idea after 9/11 occurred. This was the case because his operational code changed in important ways after the event. Before the U.S. experienced the terrorist attacks of 9/11, he had a quite cooperative view of the world. Following 9/11 he became much more conflict-oriented and saw the world generally as more hostile. This alteration of Bush's political beliefs contributed to his threat perception and caused his beliefs to converge with the neoconservative hawks in the administration.

This thesis argued that several personality traits played an important role in the fast internalization and the subsequent securitizing move. First of all, George W. Bush had a strong tendency to think in black-and-white terms. Related to this tendency, he showed very pronounced moral certainty. Secondly, Bush relied much on his instinct and accordingly gravitated toward gut decisions. Thirdly, the president possessed an inclination to view international issues in personal terms.

The second major set of beliefs influencing the internalization process was Bush's religious beliefs. Before his presidency, the religious beliefs did not matter much for foreign affairs—perhaps because he did not engage much with international issues at this time. September 11 then triggered his religious convictions because Bush needed a frame to assess the situation. Consequently, he relied on his religious beliefs to make sense of the post-9/11 world. One important factor here was the conviction that the desirability of freedom is universal. Together with the influence of civil religion and American exceptionalism, this led to Bush's perception of the U.S. mission to fight for freedom. Military intervention in Iraq was part of this mission. The second major conviction was the existence of good and evil and the struggle between the two sides. Terrorists were located on the side of evil. Thus, Iraq, who was assumed to support them, was seen as evil by Bush as well. His post-9/11 beliefs therefore perfectly matched with neoconservative ideas. Bush and the neoconservatives had corresponding worldviews at this point: one was simply more religious and the other more secular. Thus, after 9/11 the idea diffusion was eventually successful in the sense that it bore fruit in the form of a securitizing move.

One of the implications is that the entire Bush administration might not be the appropriate unit of analysis in every case. Considering how powerful the position of the U.S. president is, an individual level analysis with him as a separate actor is necessary to understand why the administration—or the state as an extension of it due to the government's representative function—acted in a particular way. If one assumes that the president acted and made decisions because of his own beliefs and that he genuinely thought of Iraq as a threat, it is plausible to conclude that he thought of his actions as doing what is right in the given situation according to his own beliefs and

values. Such a perspective further suggests the absence of expediency. Political motives appear less likely at least for George W. Bush himself. This then implicates that one needs to pay more attention to worldviews, beliefs, and effects of identities on an individual with high decision-making authority in order to prevent conflict or even war by recognizing dynamics and constellations in which threat constructions may take place and potentially escalate into an objectively unjustified—due to a lack of evidence of a threat—securitizing move.

Against this backdrop, it becomes obvious that rational decision-making cannot be applied to every situation. Rationality can have varying meanings and implications for different individuals due to diverging belief systems and values. In other words, states might not merely act to pursue objective material interests, but also according to the decision-makers' perceptions based on beliefs and values.

For the Iraq War specifically, the implication is that alternative actors perhaps would not have made a securitizing move because of differing beliefs and less or no internalization of the threat idea. Despite the decisive events of September 11, which can easily be perceived as a primary cause at first glance, Bush as an individual made a greater difference. As the results of Robison's study of Bush's and his advisors' operational codes show, the traumatic events of 9/11 did not change every actor's belief system in the same manner. The fact that Powell's beliefs, for instance, remained more or less cooperative allows for the speculation that another president could have maintained cooperative views of the political world even after 9/11 and thus might have handled the situation quite differently.

Acknowledging the significance of beliefs also has implications for securitization theory's normative aspect due to their ability to undergo a

transformation. Renshon establishes the following implication from his study of Bush's operational code change: "How beliefs change has implications not just for the study of political leaders and decision making but also how we attempt to persuade others in the international system. For instance, the United States has evinced a desire for China to become more democratically accountable and to accept the responsibilities of being a world power. Coercion might change their behavior, but it is obviously preferable to effect a change in Chinese leaders' beliefs about how they should act" (2008: 842).

Even though Renshon's research was not conducted within the theoretical framework of securitization, a similar conclusion can be drawn in the context of this thesis. As mentioned before, the CS generally advocates desecuritization over securitization. Political solutions to problems are preferred. In order to decrease conflict, effecting change in leader's beliefs and thus potentially initiating desecuritization efforts would be preferable over allowing escalation into further securitization of an issue.

In sum, Bush's unique personality traits, the change of his operational code, and the triggering of his preexisting religious beliefs in combination with the above-described identities made the appearance of the idea of an Iraqi threat on the political agenda possible and thus resulted in the securitizing move. These findings support the assumption that all three of these factors have to be scrutinized to effectively make sense of how a threat idea was translated into a securitizing move. The results further show that a multiple-level analysis can lead to an enhanced comprehension of threat perception and a particular decision-making situation. The interplay of the domestic idea diffusion, domestic and international identities and, lastly, the beliefs and internalization on the individual level needed to be taken into consideration in order to

answer the initial research question. In this approach lies a major contribution. As Mazarr remarks, “[i]t is only in a set of overlapping frameworks—agenda-setting, social construction, cognitive dynamics, group dynamics, beliefs and ideas—that we can begin to capture the full richness of national behavior” (2007: 19). The research conducted in this thesis aimed at applying another framework that overlaps with others and contributes to a better understanding of the U.S.’ behavior regarding Iraq.

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## Abstract in Korean

기존의 연구들은 이라크 전쟁을 일으키게 한 사건들을 안보화 이론에 의해 설명해왔다. 그러나 이라크 전쟁의 기원을 설명하는 기존 문헌들은 종종 안보화 이론의 가정과 충분히 호환되지 않거나 안보화 시도 이전의 역동성의 중요성을 간과하기도 한다. 이 논문은 조지 W. 부시가 사담 후세인이 통치한 이라크를 안보화하기로 결정하게 된 이유를 설명하고자 하며, 특히 이 사건에 안보화 이론을 적용함으로써 안보화 과정과 사담 후세인의 연설활동에 초점을 맞추고자 한다. 따라서 이 논문은 조지 W. 부시가 왜 이라크를 특별한 대책을 필요로 하는 실존적 위협으로 묘사하였는지 대한 이유를 주요 연구 문제로 다루며, 이를 설명하기 위해 Roxanna Sjöstedt가 개발한 프레임워크인 “아이디어, 신원 그리고 내부화: 안보화 움직임에 대한 설명”을 활용한다. 이 논문은 먼저 이라크가 특정 행위자들에 의해 ‘긴급한 위협’이 된 생각의 확산을 조사한다. 두번째로는 아이디어의 수용을 용이하게 한 현존하는 중요한 정체성과 새롭게 생성된 정체성들에 대해 설명한다. 끝으로는 조지 W. 부시 개인의 신념으로 인해 내부화된 그의 아이디어를 분석한다. 그 결과, 이 연구의 첫번째 결론은 이라크가 위협적인 존재라는 생각을 확산시킨 기업가들은 주로 미국의 패권을 염두에 둔 신보수주의자들 이었다는 것이다. 이들은 부시 정부에 임명이 된 후, 이 아이디어를 확산시키는데 필요한 힘을 더 많이 얻었으며, 이에 더해 예외주의와 시민 종교, 민주주의 정체성과 같은 미국 정체성의 특정 측면은 이 아이디어를 수용하는 데에 촉매 역할을 하게 되었다. 마지막으로 조지 W. 부시의 개인적 신념들은 그의 아이디어를 안보화의 움직임으로 표면화되도록 하였다. 이러한 맥락에서 그의 결정적인 신념은 그의

종교적 신념뿐 아니라 9/11 사건 이후의 운영규범의 변화를 통해서도 이해될 수 있다. 이 논문은 이 세가지 모두가 이라크를 안보화하기에 이른 중요한 요인들이 되었다는 결론을 내린다. 또한, 이 연구결과는 개인적인 요소가 국제관계 분야의 많은 문헌들이 부여하는 설명가치보다 더 큰 가치를 가질 수 있음을 함의한다.

주요어: 조지 W. 부시, 이라크 전쟁, 안보화, 아이디어 확산, 정체성, 신념, 운영규범

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