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## International Boggarts: Carl Schmitt, Harry Potter and the Transfiguration of Identity

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# **International Boggarts:**

## **Carl Schmitt, Harry Potter and the Transfiguration of Identity**

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### **Abstract**

*Of all the magical monsters in Harry Potter, boggarts are interesting both for the narrative function they perform, and for how they emphasize the complex relation between identity and violence in international politics. In this paper I show that the Potter series illuminates how globalization has transfigured our conceptions of collective identity and violence—to the point where conventionally accepted theories of international relations are having trouble dealing with them. Boggarts arouse our deepest fears, and amorously shape-shift according to those fears. Consequently, no one knows what a boggart really looks like—adding to our insecurities. The parallels with contemporary international relations issues are clear: fear and the centrality of security is still seen as the force driving state behavior in the international arena, and how we should confront the elusive, shape-shifting nature of non-state sources of violent threats. I argue that the complex connections between identity, fear, security and violence highlighted in the boggart metaphor need to feature more strongly in contemporary IR theory and practice than in the past. Using Schmitt’s ‘friend-enemy distinction,’ I contend it is not a Hobbesian freedom from fear of violent death that motivates our search for security, but the need to belong, or the fear of not belonging, to a clearly defined group. For it is not the fear that an international boggart will kill you that makes it so paralyzing, but its lack of a clear identity that renders ‘other’ and ‘self’ indistinguishable. In a world where globalization has blurred traditional state-oriented means of differentiating (national) self and (foreign) other, I argue that the time is ripe for rethinking some of the simpler categories that persist in international relations theories today.*

### ***Boggarts Internacionales: Carl Schmitt, Harry Potter y la transformación de la identidad y la violencia***

*De todos los monstruos mágicos en Harry Potter, los boggarts son particularmente interesantes debido a la función narrativa que desempeñan, y a la manera en la que enfatizan la compleja relación que existe entre la identidad y la violencia en la política internacional. En este artículo analizo cómo la saga de Potter muestra como la globalización está transformando nuestra concepción de la identidad colectiva y la violencia. Los boggarts despiertan nuestros miedos más profundos y adoptan la forma del temor más grande de sus víctimas. Por lo tanto, nadie sabe realmente cuál es el aspecto de un boggart—lo cual aumenta nuestras inseguridades. Las semejanzas con los problemas contemporáneos en relaciones internacionales son evidentes: la seguridad y el monopolio de la fuerza son aún vistos como la principal fuerza que rige el comportamiento del estado en la esfera internacional, así como la forma en la que deberíamos confrontar la naturaleza elusiva y cambiante de las fuentes de violencia provenientes de actores que no son otro estado. Yo sostengo que las relaciones complejas que existen entre la identidad, el temor, la seguridad y la violencia mencionados en la metáfora de los boggarts debe de tener una presencia mayor en la teoría y práctica contemporánea de las relaciones internacionales. Usando la “Distinción amigo-enemigo” de Schmidt, establezco que nuestra búsqueda por seguridad no es motivada por una libertad Hobbesiana derivada del temor de una muerte violenta; sino por una necesidad de pertenecer o miedo a no pertenecer a un grupo claramente definido, ya que lo que hace a un boggart internacional tan paralizante no es miedo a ser ultimado por este, sino la falta de una identidad clara que vuelve a “otros” y “uno mismo” indistinguible. En un mundo donde la globalización ha difuminado los medios tradicionales usados por el estado para diferenciar el yo (nacional) de los otros (extranjeros), argumento que es el tiempo adecuado para reformular algunas de las categorías más simples—y al mismo tiempo fundamentales—que persisten en las teorías de las relaciones internacionales actuales.*

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It is worth mentioning right at the start that neither I, nor the rest of this panel, are using J.K. Rowling's stories as an allegory or political commentary designed explicitly to carry a 'message' or make a political statement about the world today. Like Tolkien before her (1954, 11-12), Rowling has denied any such motive or connection—and rightly so. It is not so much that a reading of Harry Potter gives an interpretation of international politics today, but that reading the saga can give us a fresh perspective from which we can start to view international relations in a slightly different way. Just as the connection between science fiction and philosophy is strong, because science fiction engages in a detailed version of the hypothetical thought experiments that ask exactly the same 'what if?' questions as philosophy, so can detailed works of fantasy like *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*. They seek to discover how changing some of the variables of the real world would change our position in it, and our perception of the issues we have to confront—especially socio-political ones. As we hope this panel will show, there are many reasons for taking the Potter books seriously in an academic setting, particularly when thinking about international relations, since the points of view can really assist us in seeing certain elements of contemporary political importance that have, until now, been overlooked or downplayed.

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Of all the magical monsters in *Harry Potter*, boggarts are interesting both for the narrative function they perform, and for how they emphasize the complex relation between identity and violence in international politics. Boggarts have a very specific function in the Potter stories. They are not directly violent; instead, like Dementors, they both represent and play on the fears of the characters and, in that way, become a mirror for their darker alter egos. Drawing from the boggarts of Old

English folklore,<sup>1</sup> J. K. Rowling depicts these malevolent shape-shifting beings as terrifying not in and of themselves, but because they assume the form of what whoever confronts them fears the most: in Rowling's universe these include a bloodstained mummy, a giant spider, an animated, severed hand, the dead bodies of loved-ones, or in the case of Voldemort, his own dead corpse.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, no one knows what a boggart really looks like,<sup>3</sup> which adds to the aura of fear that surrounds these creatures and to the insecurities of anyone in their presence.

Three initial observations lead us from the boggarts of fiction and folklore to the international politics of today and our theories about them. The first is that the amorphous, indefinable quality of the boggart, poses the question *who* is the 'other', the 'enemy'?—a question that is ultimately unanswerable in terms of a concrete subject. Because they are only definable in relation to ourselves, boggarts reveal more about our own identity and innermost fears than they do about theirs. It is this creature's capacity to reflect nothing except what is projected onto it that rattles our securities so badly. In this paper I relate this aspect of the boggart metaphor to the growing importance of identity and difference in explanations of international behavior, which is central to constructivist theories of IR. Indeed, some reflections on boggarts are very useful in attempting to understand the increasingly complex dynamics that drive how identities are formed, and adopted, in a globalized world. The second connection with international relations concerns the prime emphasis this magical monster places on fear and (in)security—the human motivators that lie at the heart of the realist theories that still drive much contemporary foreign (and domestic) policy. The third connection involves the evident parallels between boggarts and the elusive, shape-shifting nature of non-state sources of violent threats. This has been a particular cause for concern in international politics in the decade since 9/11,

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<sup>1</sup> See "Boggarts," in *Mysterious Britain and Ireland*. Available at: <http://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/england/folklore/boggart.html>

<sup>2</sup> As Rowling divulged in an interview in 2005. See <http://www.mugglenet.com/jkrinterview2.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York: Scholastic, 1999: 133.

and has also proved rather difficult to integrate into IR theories that are grounded on a traditional notion of state sovereignty that no longer fully holds in the contemporary global era.

### *Identity and International Politics*

Rowling's boggarts highlight both the intersubjective quality of identity (which has been long recognized and substantially theorized), and what happens when intersubjectivity ceases to function in simple terms (which, at least in IR, has not). The ground-breaking claim made by Rousseau and Hegel which now forms the basis of social constructivist theories in psychology, psychoanalysis, politics and international relations, was that to identify as a 'self' one requires the existence of an 'other.' This completely turned on-its-head the essentialist model of Descartes or Kant—epitomized in *Robinson Crusoe*—where subjectivity is generated in, and preserved by, an individual self without depending on any required reference to others. It also places identity, and not security or rational self-interest, at the heart of international politics.

Constructivist theories of IR, most famously elaborated by Alexander Wendt, claim “(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.”<sup>4</sup> Constructivists thus see identity as inclusive and stimulated ‘from the inside out.’ National identity, for example, is assumed to be created through shared norms, values and experiences of a particular group with a shared history, or a shared perception of one.<sup>5</sup> The further assumption is that the more those norms and values can be spread outside the nation (or state), the more likely larger identity groupings could possibly be forged—one day managing to create

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 1.

<sup>5</sup> Underwritten by the theories of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm.

uncontested, integrated regional or even global groupings based on shared norms, values and experiences of the kind found in liberal universalist and cosmopolitan theories.

Constructivism has become widely accepted in mainstream IR theory largely due to the increasingly complex relations between individuals, communities and states that globalization has brought about (**ref**). Collective identities are no longer fully tied to, and contained by the borders of, nations or states (if indeed they ever really were). And the increased contact between different cultures that global forces have made inevitable has also made it obvious that such identities and the shared values constituting them are contingent and particular across time and space rather than fixed.

However, for all the explanatory power constructivism has demonstrated in unraveling some complex motivations for state and other group behavior on the global international stage, certain key developments in current world politics have not panned out as constructivist theories predicted. Perhaps the best example is the drive toward regional integration—at the economic, political and identity levels—that constructivism seems to underwrite. In the case of North America, for instance, since the run-up to NAFTA, the hope has been that integration would be a process of learning how to forge a collective identity through an increasing awareness of, and focus on, the shared values and circumstances of the partner states. In practice, this premise has proved hopelessly naïve. On most accounts,<sup>6</sup> the three North American partners remain more concerned with those values and interests that are *not* shared and, as a result, “deeper integration,” at least in the form of regional identity development, remains elusive.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Christina Gabriel and Laura MacDonald, “Migration and Citizenship Rights in a North American Space,” in *Requiem or Revival? The Promise of North American Integration*, edited by I. Studer and C. Wise. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2007: 267-87; Emma R. Norman, “Editor’s Introduction to the Symposium: The Unfulfilled Promise of North American Integration.” *Politics and Policy*, 35, no. 4 (Dec. 2007), 641-7; and Lucy Luccisano, “Comparing Public Social Provision and Citizenship in the U.S., Canada and Mexico: Are there Implications for a North American Space?” *Politics and Policy* vol. 35, no. 4 (Dec. 2007): 716-51.

<sup>7</sup> See Emma R. Norman, “Applying Carl Schmitt to Global Puzzles: Identity, Conflict and the Friend/Enemy Antithesis,” paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada. September 3-6, 2009. While the case of the European Union

Rowling's boggarts illuminate some of the flaws inherent in the constructivist account of identity, for while such theories recognize that identity is based on intersubjective inclusion (self/us) and exclusion (other/them), they tend to overplay the role of inclusion in how identities are constructed. Boggarts clearly do depend on the existence of a concrete 'victim' to become physically defined themselves. However, their most interesting feature—which complicates the simple understanding of intersubjectivity in constructivism—is the obverse: their *lack* of a clear, definable identity makes it difficult to identify and perhaps even express, one's own identity with certainty. The insecurities that result produce fear in the magical universe and, in our own world, fear and resistance to mutual identification and cooperation of exactly the kind that North America is experiencing, particularly since 9/11. The best evidence of this, in addition to the War on Terror, is found in the 2010 Arizona Immigration Law (SB1070) and the continuing reluctance of the U.S. and Mexico to work more wholeheartedly together to resolve the problems associated with narcoviolence. It seems that constructivism's emphasis on inclusion rather than exclusion as the key element of identity fails to cast a counter-spell potent enough to capture, let alone evaporate, these kinds of 'international boggarts.' For intersubjectivity does not always function in terms of the straightforward self-other dichotomy this approach tends to assume—a point to which I return later.

Perhaps the most obvious analogue with real-world problems that boggarts highlight concerns terrorism and the difficulties involved in dealing with non-state sources of violence. As I mentioned earlier, the amorphous, indefinable quality of the boggart, poses the question *who* is the 'enemy'?—a question that is ultimately unanswerable in terms of a concrete subject in the Potter books. This is, of

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has been more successful in generating a shared regional identity, even there, recent political rhetoric emphasizing the failure of multiculturalism and calling for a return to the values of national identities suggests this might be deteriorating. See Friedman, George. "Germany and the Failure of Multiculturalism," STRATFOR, October 19, 2010. Cited on March 9, 2011. Available at: [http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20101018\\_germany\\_and\\_failure\\_multiculturalism?utm\\_source=GWeekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=101019&utm\\_content=readmore&elq=c02dbcc02ca74bf8b1cab74400f424ec](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20101018_germany_and_failure_multiculturalism?utm_source=GWeekly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=101019&utm_content=readmore&elq=c02dbcc02ca74bf8b1cab74400f424ec) and Laura Kuenssberg, "State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron," *BBC News*. February 5, 2011. Cited on March 9, 2011. Available online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994>

course, precisely the problem that has confronted realist theories and the politicians who implement their principles in their attempts to identify terrorists: many of those principles don't work as well when the perpetrators of violence and fear are not sovereign states. Boggarts thus portray perfectly the elusive, unpredictable, shape-shifting and often invisible nature of terrorist cells and individuals who are generally indistinguishable from the rest of the population. And when they are momentarily revealed, they tend to exhibit more about our own collective identities and innermost fears than they do about themselves. Because the intersubjective dynamic of identity, like Nature, abhors a vacuum, it therefore becomes almost paramount to concretize 'the terrorist,' to fill the lack of identity in the other that feeds our own insecure identity with some content. Among other things, an exploration of the boggart metaphor raises the question: how much of that content comes from our own imagination?

Concretizing the enemy, as G.W. Bush's famous "Axis of Evil" speech attempted, certainly generates—indeed perpetuates—the very Hobbesian fear and search for security that underpins and is used to justify realist theory and policy. It is nevertheless unclear that realist principles can actually solve the basic problem. This is primarily because realism continues to be grounded in a traditional view of the state system, based on state sovereignty that globalization has already eroded on several fronts.<sup>8</sup> Again, this provides rather shaky ground on which to base any real-world counter-spell that could defeat such terrifying international boggarts.

While they might be a surprising source for clarifying key issues in international relations, reflection on the boggarts and other facets of how identities are formed and maintained in *Harry Potter* does seem to be helpful in demonstrating that the complex connections between identity, fear, security and violence need to feature more strongly in contemporary IR theory and practice than they are at

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<sup>8</sup> For the details on these arguments on this see Emma R. Norman, "Falling through the Cracks: Superfluous Women at the Fault Lines of Citizenship, Sovereignty, and Human Rights," in *Feminist (Im)Mobilities in Fortress North America: Identities, Citizenships, and Human Rights in Transnational Perspective*, edited by Anne Runyan, Marianne Marchand, Amy Lind, and Patricia MacDermott. London: Ashgate, 2012 (forthcoming).

present. The suggestion I develop throughout the rest of this paper for how these connections might be better theorized involves the work of a thinker who is only just becoming known in the study of international relations, though his ideas have informed political theory for some time. Because Carl Schmitt's theory is based on elements of political realism and group identity construction in a way that avoids the problems identified above with constructivism and realism, the potential explanatory power of his paradigm and its applicability to today's international boggarts is hard to ignore.

### *Freund vs Feind: Carl Schmitt's Theory of Identity*

The first area in which the strengths of Schmitt's theory emerge is his refusal to ground (inter)national politics on the concept of the state. Politics has long been defined in terms of the (early modern) state, and the state defined in terms of politics. But how do we isolate what is political if the early modern model of the state becomes eroded? This question is as pertinent now, in an era when globalization is eroding the sovereign state, as it was in the interwar period. The collapse of the Weimar Republic and the transformation of the international order after the First World War prompted Schmitt to conclude that the statist definition of politics so familiar in legal and political thought is circular in logic and subject to collapse if its referent becomes unstable. He thus set about finding a referent for the concept of 'the political' that is more stable than the sovereign state. In 1932 he came up with the famous claim that every sphere of human endeavor is characterized by an irreducible antithesis: profitable and unprofitable in economics, beautiful and ugly in aesthetics, sacred and profane in religion, good and evil in morality and friend and enemy in the political. None of these distinctions, he said, can or should be directly reduced to, or confused with, the others<sup>9</sup>—though we often do so.

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<sup>9</sup> Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996: 26.

The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is nevertheless the other, the stranger... existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible... Each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence.<sup>10</sup>

Schmitt thus saw 'the political' as a result of a fundamental struggle in the quest for achieving identity, where identity is based, in contrast to constructivism, on the *exclusion* of the enemy. Schmitt's clear focus on the enemy as more significant than the friend underscores the pivotal claim that while inclusion and exclusion always logically accompany each other (to say 'us' presupposes a 'them'), for Schmitt it is *exclusion* that is crucial in creating group identities. Identifying the other is required for the self to be fully recognizable.<sup>11</sup> The friend side of the equation is nevertheless still important—not merely to preserve the distinction that ultimately gets lost in the constructivist account, but because it highlights that a people's sense of belonging is *tested* by being prompted to take sides. For Schmitt, whenever a group engages in taking sides, they are actively consolidating their group identities. The more intense the degree of unification or separation, and the more this raises the prospect of violence, the more political the group becomes.<sup>12</sup>

Before examining the implications of these claims, a few qualifications are needed in the face of Schmitt's radical, unusual and, frankly, disturbing theory. First, this is no celebration of violence. The alignment and the decision about *who* is the enemy and about whether or not to go to war with him, rather than fighting the war itself, is what galvanizes a collective identity. Schmitt was careful to emphasize that "[t]he politics of avoiding war"<sup>13</sup> was one plausible outcome of his model.<sup>14</sup> Second, a

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<sup>10</sup> Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> There is a clear debt to Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic in this intersubjective understanding of identity requiring otherness—one reason why Schmitt's work fits so well with critical and poststructuralist approaches in International Relations. Additionally, the emphasis on the exclusive nature of identity construction means an inter-national context (or other postnational plurality of identities) is *required* to provide the contrast necessary for clear definition of a collective identity, which has implications for projects like regional integration. I cannot elaborate here, but the full set of arguments to this effect are set out in Norman, "Applying Schmitt to Global Puzzles," 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 35.

possibility is not an actuality. Physical conflict is not required to *occur* for Schmitt, however, the *possibility* of the relation escalating into violence must exist if functional group identities are to be formed and preserved.<sup>15</sup> In the Potter saga, for example, we know far more about the group identities of Gryffindor and Slytherin Houses through their potentially violent rivalry than we do about Hufflepuff or Ravenclaw. The salient idea for international politics concerns the necessary connection between identity and potential conflict. For Schmitt, humans are only really prepared to take full responsibility for their lives, values and the groups they belong to and identify with, if the possibility of losing all these things is real—a point that J.K. Rowling seems to agree with.

The friend-enemy distinction is the most fundamental of human antitheses for Schmitt precisely because, like Harry Potter, he felt that the threat of losing one's identity is the strongest motivation for a human being to choose to die for their beliefs—though his argument indicates that one's motives for doing so might be thoroughly buried under successive layers of justification. This sounds inconsistent and highly contestable at first, which in the Potter stories can be seen in how Voldemort's view of death contrasts so deeply with Harry's: dying, of course, doesn't preserve one's identity, it *ends* it—unless one's particular beliefs indicate otherwise. Yet, as Harry comes to realize at the end of the saga, there is a crucial difference between losing one's life and ending it. The idea starts to make more sense when we consider that the threat of remaining alive and yet being forced to subsume one's identity under that of another group in times of conflict has been a perennial motive for dying for one's "country," nation, religious or ideological views, or cultural values whether one is a professional or conscripted soldier, insurgent, suicide-bomber, civilian or member of the Order of the Phoenix. From

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<sup>14</sup> Schmitt takes care to distinguish himself soundly from the usual misreadings of Clausewitz on this. *The Concept of the Political* 34, 34fn. Schmitt points out that Clausewitz's phrase "politics is a continuation of war by other means," is almost always misquoted and misunderstood. The correct quote is "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, vol. 3, trans. [Colonel J.J. Graham](#), ed. Colonel F.N. Maude. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Company, 1908: 120.

<sup>15</sup> Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 33.

Yugoslavia to Rwanda, this has been the underlying force in the fragmentation and collapse of these states amidst waves of inter-ethnic violence.

The ground-breaking idea to be drawn from Schmitt here adds a complex dimension to our understanding of identity that constructivism fails to capture, as well as a deeper layer of reasons behind violence and war missed by realism. Country, nation, religion, and cultural values are secondary tokens of what Schmitt saw as their underlying *raison d'être*: identity. “[I]t would be senseless to wage war for purely religious, purely moral, purely juristic, or purely economic motives...War today is in all likelihood none of these. This obvious point is mostly confused by the fact that religious, moral and other antitheses can intensify to political ones and can bring about the decisive friend-or-enemy constellation.”<sup>16</sup>

To us, Schmitt’s point may not be quite as obvious as he thought. However, it is easiest to understand in terms of the actions between nation-states, some of which do escalate to war for reasons that are as much (if not more) to do with preserving and re-clarifying a threatened group identity as they are pursuing economic interests or defending a set of moral values. This is, I think, precisely what underpinned so much of the global uneasiness that met the “moral justifications” for the War on Terror given by Bush *et al.* Yet Schmitt’s work exposes those justifications from a perspective different to the familiar realist line that the moral discourse merely functions to cloak “baser” motives of economic (or security) self-interest, which are justifiable on rational grounds, though not always on ethical ones. A Schmittian view adds that such economic motives *also* serve as a cloak for the more elemental motive of preserving a threatened group identity *which is even less open to justification on either moral or rational grounds*. The grounds for justification are purely political, in Schmitt’s very precise understanding of this term.

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<sup>16</sup> Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 36.

If this is the case, it matters very little which particular moral values are invoked in the War on Terror or any other war, in *Harry Potter* or in our world, or how plausible the arguments used to uphold them are. It also matters little whether justifications based on ‘rational’ assessment of an imminent threat, such as the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a certain territory, turn out to be erroneous or even fabricated. Each group would still fight to protect “their” way of life regardless, merely on the basis that it is “theirs.” This conclusion might be one we are uncomfortable with, particularly if we feel morally committed to the “rightful causes” of conflicts like the fight against Voldemort, or Sauron, or Darth Sidious, or Mr. Smith and the Matrix, or against the obstructions to human freedom and human rights posed by other fundamentalist exclusionary views of different kinds. But, disturbing though it might be, if we take Schmitt’s argument seriously, we would likely fight these battles *even if that moral commitment disappeared*. Another one would be found to take its place.

If Schmitt is right, then the War on Terror and the new world (dis)order has less to do with the confrontation of radically incompatible cultural worldviews (a confrontation belonging to Schmitt’s sphere of morality, not the political), than with an urgent need to sharpen the distinctions between collective identities—distinctions that have been blurred or diluted by the forces of globalization/glocalization and the collapse of the bipolar international order. The claim here complicates Samuel Huntington’s famous hypothesis “that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among human kind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.”<sup>17</sup> Contra social constructivist<sup>18</sup> or

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<sup>17</sup> Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 72, no. 3, (Summer 1993): 22-49: 22.

<sup>18</sup> I am thinking here not just of Wendt *et al.*, but also Benedict Anderson and Eric J. Hobsbawm’s influential accounts of national and cultural identity. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991) and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

communitarian<sup>19</sup> accounts, for Schmitt the cultural values that galvanize our group identities are not equivalent to collective identities. They are emergent properties of them. Though he does not say it explicitly, it is the cohesive distinctiveness of the identities themselves that Schmitt posits at the foundation of group identity and international tension—in constructing a ‘we,’ the fact of sharing, or not sharing ‘something’ is not dependent on ‘what’ exactly is shared. The value of the sense of belonging itself goes deeper than this: the merit of ‘what’ is shared is a consequential moral and cultural justification of that belonging, not a cause of it.

A good illustration of this quite complicated point would be Neville Longbottom’s placement in Gryffindor House. The cultural values associated with belonging there are bravery and daring—which poor Neville patently does *not* possess at the beginning of the saga. Rather, he aspires to belong (or is afraid of not belonging), and so cultivates, or “discovers,” those values within himself and externalizes them as the narrative progresses, in the end justifying his belonging—to himself and to others—without doubt. The need to belong, to fit in, is what motivates Longbottom’s character arc perhaps more than any of the other characters<sup>20</sup> except Harry. The values he externalizes are secondary to this need, and could feasibly have been substituted by others. Schmitt’s point, as illustrated by Neville, thus highlights a significant causal distinction between *identity* (the need to belong, or a sense of belonging/not belonging) and *identification* (expression of belonging through shared ‘signs’ that represent and reinforce a group: e.g., flags, House/national colors, language, values, practices) that is often elided or missed altogether in international relations theory.

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<sup>19</sup> See especially Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge & Oakley, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1989), MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 2nd edition, 1985) and Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Because, at first, Neville in fact displays none of the characteristics that define any House: bravery (Gryffindor), intellectual cleverness (Ravenclaw), conscientiousness (Hufflepuff), or ambition (Slytherin). In a way very different to Harry, Neville is also afraid that he might not really belong anywhere in the magical or nonmagical universes. As such, his commitment to dying for his group is at least as strong as Dumbledore’s or that of Sirius, and may even equal Harry’s.

The conclusion to be drawn from this gives an interesting new twist to the centrality of both security and identity in international relations theory and practice. Underlying Schmitt's position is the assumption that it is not so much a Hobbesian (or Voldemortesque) freedom from fear of violent death that motivates our search for security (which rests on an individualist assumption of self-preservation that neither Schmitt nor Harry accept), but rather the need to belong to, or the fear of not belonging to, a *clearly defined* group. As we have seen, the way to define any group is to contrast it with an "other" which requires exclusion. However, Schmitt's emphasis is on a more complex, extreme form of "othering": clear definition comes only where the "self-other" relation can potentially intensify into a "friend-enemy" one. In other words, only an intense relation of difference, with a strong and well-defined other, can produce a similarly strong and well-defined sense of self identity.

### *The Enemy Within*

Schmitt's argument is intricate and difficult, primarily because he makes such a concerted attempt to understand the complexity of how identity functions and its relation to violence and fear in a way that does not oversimplify matters. Rowling's stories, however, can be of some assistance in making his general points more intelligible, and it is here that boggarts reveal something truly interesting. These creatures do not represent the strong, well-defined, unequivocal other/enemy that Bellatrix or Voldemort (from the end of Book 4) do. Shape-shifters are "weak others," because they have no self-derived physical identity or strong, unequivocal continuity of personality. They frighten us because their lack of identity, their inconsistency, makes us question our own. Although they don't pose a physical threat to our lives—a boggart wouldn't kill us directly—in playing on our insecurities, they weaken our sense of self from within, which in an extreme case might cause us to self-destruct, or at least psychologically 'fall to pieces' as Molly Weasley does when she confronts a boggart alone in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Given this, it seems to be no accident that Rowling chose

laughter as the (*Riddikulus!*) counter-spell for a boggart. For to laugh at something, to genuinely find it amusing, requires a strong sense of security and identity, and the absence of fear. As a result, the boggart disappears. However, the complex, intersubjective dynamic of identity functions in the Potter saga here, too, since other, stronger enemies are present in the books to serve the more Schmittian political function of sharpening the identities of the main characters and the magical communities themselves.

Clearly, laughing at international boggarts is not going to be much of a defense. But the boggarts of Harry Potter's world do help us understand why Schmitt insists that the potential for violent conflict is a crucial factor in identity formation. And why, if that potential is not there, a strong group identity might be hard to maintain—to the point where we may even go out and look for 'another other' to contrast it with. Neutral liberal toleration of others, or half-hearted partnerships to foster economic integration or security or prosperity<sup>21</sup> fail to provide the required clear definition. An obvious illustration of this, though I can only outline it simplistically here, involves the transition to a unipolar international order after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The effects of losing such a starkly defined "enemy" placed the collective identity and global role of the United States in serious question, both internally and externally. This blurring of a solid sense of national identity was reflected in the haziness of U.S. foreign policy during the 1990s, which lacked a clearly defined geopolitical strategy<sup>22</sup> and resulted in a continuous wavering over whether and how to intervene in some admittedly daunting international crises. In Schmittian fashion, 'another other' subsequently had to be found (or invented) to balance the inescapable tension that the post-Cold War blurring of U.S. national identity had entailed. The U.S. reaction to the attacks of 9/11 reflected this. And although an enemy clearly existed after that date, its identity was not altogether defined, and thus much effort was devoted to embellish

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<sup>21</sup> See Debora VanNijnatten, "The SPP [Security and Prosperity Partnership] as an 'Indicator Species' for the Emerging North American Environmental Regime," *Politics and Policy* vol. 35, no. 4 (Dec. 2007): 664-82.

<sup>22</sup> Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*. New York: New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008.

an account of its “evil” origins and purpose.<sup>23</sup> As Kelanic observes regarding Schmitt’s theory, “[t]he seemingly infinite and recurring supply of existential enemies suggests that the real action stems less from the presence of any finite, essentialist differences between peoples, leading to the recognition of “Other” as “enemy,” and more from the inclination of peoples to *reinvent each other as existential enemies*.”<sup>24</sup> G.W. Bush’s comment in 2006 illustrates the wider implications of Kelanic’s point here: “[y]ou know, one of the hardest parts of my job is to connect Iraq to the war on terror.”<sup>25</sup>

### *Conclusion*

It can, of course, be argued that fear is still at the base of motives for international politics, but what Schmitt shows us is that, like the boggarts in *Harry Potter*, fear is far more complex and our understanding of it is far more elusive than on the traditional Hobbesian-Realist model. Returning to the books, this certainly invokes a clear distinction between the rather simple Hobbesian character of Voldemort whose worst fear is dying, so his entire character arc is consumed with avoiding death, and Dumbledore who claims consistently that there are far worse things than death. It also contrasts with Harry, the orphan who feels such an ‘outsider’ in the world of the muggles, who is prepared to die to save his friends and the wider magical community he so strongly identifies with because it gave him a place to belong and an identity to cherish. It is the fear of *not belonging*, rather than the fear of violent death that drives Rowling’s hero. The complexity of Harry’s character and the sources of his fear reflect the complex dynamics of identity in today’s world.

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<sup>23</sup> See J. Maggio, “The Presidential Rhetoric of Terror: The (Re)Creation of Reality Immediately after 9/11,” *Politics and Policy* vol. 35, no. 4 (December 2007): 774-809.

<sup>24</sup> Rosemary A. Kelanic, “Carl Schmitt, the Friend-Enemy Distinction and International Relations Theory,” *Paper Prepared at the ISA*, San Francisco, March 28, 2008: 17-18. While this does not contradict widely shared perception that anarchy is endemic, it certainly undermines the grounds that both liberals and realists deploy to expect international cooperation.

<sup>25</sup> George W. Bush, interview with CBS News’ Katie Couric, Sept. 6, 2006.