It's All about America

Leading Themes and Topics in the Top-Ranked

Academic Journal 'International Security'

An Analysis of the Years 2008 – 2012

Anna Buch

This review is part of the Journal Review project of the research-master Modern History and International Relations (MHIR) at the University of Groningen. For more information, visit **www.rug.nl/research/MHIR-journalreview**

Contents

1. Introduction to International Security: History, Importance, Aspirations

This paper will shed light on the nature of the top-ranked academic journal *International Security* (*IS*): which topics it deals with, how it is produced and which trends and guiding themes it develops and pursues. At first, the journal will be introduced by referring to its history, its goals and aims, its institutional background and importance. The second chapter will take a closer look at who edits this journal: Details about the editors and the editorial board will be presented and editorial procedures will be explained. The third chapter is the centerpiece of the paper: At first, the structure of the journal will be presented and there will be shed light on the background of the authors of the published articles. The next subchapter will deal with the content of the articles: Which topics dominate the journal? Can there be seen any special geographical focus? Which are subject areas that appear again and again? The subsequent subchapter will deal with the enhancement of academic debates within the journal. This is done by taking a closer look at the section 'letters to the editor' since debates are fueled by the feedback of readers: Which articles have been mostly read? Which topics provoke most responses and are given more space and a more prominent place in the journal? After this, it will be seen that the dominating debate in IS is the one on America's relative power decline and changes in the world order. This debate will be addressed more extensively in order to understand which questions are the most pressing ones in that regard. The paper will be concluded with a personal evaluation of the previous results of the study and an overall assessment of how these findings are related to developments in the academic world.

IS is a peer-reviewed academic journal in the field of international and national security and was founded almost 40 years ago at Harvard University. In the early 1970s, the founding Director of the Program for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, Paul Doty, and the President of the Ford Foundation, McGeorge Bundy, shared the belief that university-based research and training in the field of international security and arms control had to be enhanced. Both were convinced that the field of international security was not deeply rooted in the academic world: Back then, not a single academic journal existed that was specialized in this field (Miller 2001: 7). The first issue of IS was published in summer 1976 and has by far not stayed the only journal concerned with international security since then: Since the 1970s, innumerous journals concerned with security studies have followed IS's example and mushroomed in the academic world. However, IS converted its pioneering spirit into academic influence and has stayed on the top of the list.

In 2011, IS was the first-ranked journal in the Social Sciences Edition of the influential *Journal Citation Report*, a ranking compiled by Thomson Reuters (see also Dankbaar 2012: 7). In 2011, IS was the most cited publication in the field of international relations with 1557 cites (Journal Citation Report 2011). Furthermore, it had an impact factor of 2,333 and a 5-year impact factor of 3,529. Besides its current importance, IS has been one of the most influential journals in the field for many years: Considering the impact factor of the journal between 1981 and 2008, it is the fifth important journal in the field of international relations with an impressive impact factor of 11.42 (Science Watch 2009).

Also other important journal rankings attribute an above-average importance to International Security: In *SCImago*'s (2011) ranking of journals in the field of Sociology and Political Science, IS takes the eighth place among over 530 journals. It has a rank indicator of 3,342 whereas the first-ranked journal obtained the indicator of 5,699. Furthermore, IS takes the thirteenth place in total with an H index of 48.

In the *Eigen factor ranking* compiled by the University of Washington, IS ranked eighth amongst the 58 listed top journals in regard to its Eigen factor and third in regard to its article influence score. IS has a relatively high article influence score of 2.832, given that the mean article influence score is 1.00 and that a score greater than 1.00 indicates that each article in the journal has above-average influence (Eigen factor 2013).

IS proclaims on its homepage to provide "sophisticated analyses of contemporary, theoretical, and historical security issues." (International Security 2013a)

> Our goal is to provide timely analyses of these issues through contributions that reflect diverse points of view and varied professional experiences. […] *International Security* offers a combination of professional and policy-relevant articles that we believe will contribute to the analysis of particular security problems. […] Our intent is to balance articles of assessment and opinion with those of analysis and research. (International Security 2013a)

IS wants to function as a "vehicle for communication among scholars, scientists, industrialists, military and government officials, and members of the public who bear a continuing concern for this aspect of international life" (International Security 2013a).

2. The People behind the Journal: Editors, Procedures, Changes

IS is edited by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, a research center located within the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The journal is published by MIT Press, a university press affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which is located as well in Cambridge.

IS Editor-in-Chief is Steven E. Miller who is as well the Director of the International Security Program at the Belfer Center and member of its board. He was born and raised in California and received his complete education in the United States. However, he was, among other things, Senior Research Fellow at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (International Security 2013b).

One of the two editors is Sean M. Lynn-Jones. Lynn-Jones previously served as Managing Editor of IS and was a fellow at the Belfer Center. He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Security Studies*. His articles have appeared in high-ranked journals such as *Foreign Policy, International Security, and Security Studies*. The other editor is Owen R. Coté. Besides being an editor of IS, Coté is Associate Director of the Security Studies Program at MIT. He received his Ph.D. writing about sources of innovative military doctrine from MIT in 1996 (International Security 2013b).

Managing Editor is Diane J. McCree. Before coming to the Belfer Center, she was production and freelance editor and worked on books on international relations and economics. She has also worked at the Embassy of Jordan and in research institutes in Washington. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in the US but studied also in France (International Security 2013b).

With the exception of one German and one Brit, all of the editorial board members are affiliated with US universities, research institutes or governmental structures (International Security 2013b). Among those 51 members, there are well-known scholars such as John J. Mearsheimer, Joseph S. Nye, and Stephen M. Walt who influenced the field of international relations remarkably with their scholarly contributions. Considering the presentations on the homepage, a clear majority of the editorial board is male, middle-aged, and white. Just nine out of 51 editorial board members are women; that is not even one fifth.

In the winter issue 2011 the editors (2011) announced that they had changed the editorial procedures to assess manuscripts in spring 2009 and that these changes have turned out to improve the selection process. As they write in an editor's note, these changes made it

possible to receive more manuscripts and assess them still in a much shorter period of time than before. These changes encompassed the switch to an editorial software system, the extension of the editorial team by five associate editors, and the expansion of the editorial board, so they could ask its members to review more manuscripts.

According to the guidelines mentioned in chapter 1, IS is not looking for short, undocumented papers that consist of opinion and advocacy or highly technical articles (International Security 2013c):

> We are interested in serious analyses of contemporary security policy issues, theoretical and conceptual issues in security studies, and historical questions related to war and peace. We define 'security' broadly to include issues related to the causes, conduct, and consequences of wars. The editors rarely decide to seek articles on a particular topic, although from time to time we may look for articles on topics that have not been addressed in recent issues of *the journal*.

IS publishes articles that fall into four broad categories: policy, theory, history, and technology related to international security. Manuscripts are more likely to be published if they feature originality, challenges to the conventional wisdom, coverage of topics of major interest, accessibility to a wide audience, and the potential to be read with interest for perhaps a decade or more (International Security 2013c). Furthermore, they have to be between 10 000 and 15 000 words long.

ne or more editors read each manuscript that *IS* receives. If the manuscript appears suitable, it is sent to two or three external reviewers which are constantly selected from across the whole field of international security studies. However, IS relies particularly on members of the editorial board, authors who already published an article in IS, and present and former research fellows at the Belfer Center (International Security 2013c).

The review process is double blind: The author sends the manuscript without any identifying references and IS provides anonymous comments to the author when the review is returned. That will only happen, however, if the manuscript contains constructive comments. Manuscripts that receive positive external reviews are circulated to the four editors mentioned above who select those which will be published.

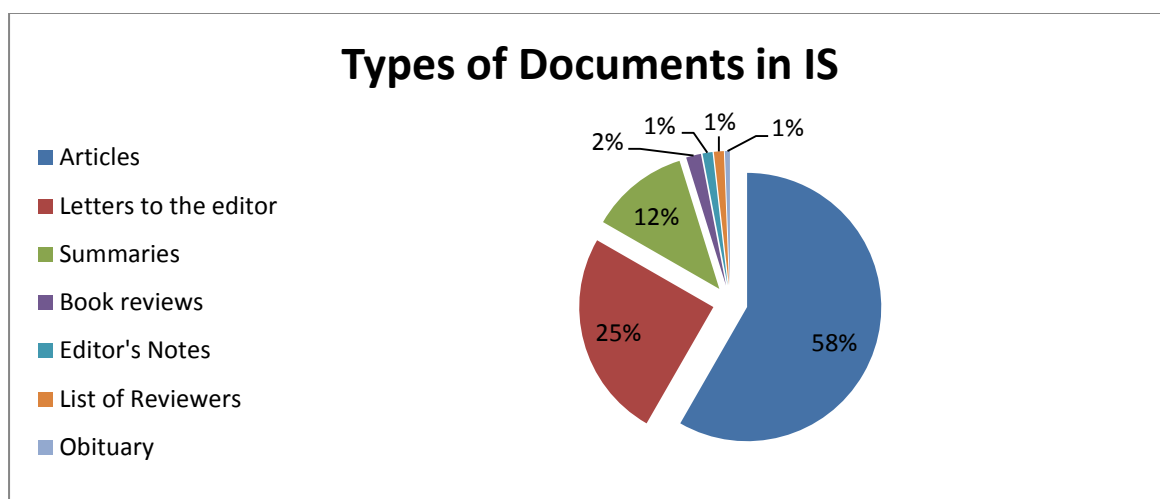This procedure is repeated for every issue. Few articles are saved for publication in a future issue. That makes the rejection process harder and ensures that IS can publish articles more rapidly. IS often accepts revised manuscripts, but not always. The acceptance rate is usually 5 to 10 percent. IS usually receives about 300 manuscripts a year and eventually publishes 20 to 25 of them (International Security 2013c).

3. A Closer Look at the Journal

3.1 The Structure of the Journal

For the quantitative and qualitative analysis of IS, all 20 issues published in the five years between spring 2008 and winter 2012 are considered, beginning with Vol. 32 Issue 4 and ending with Vol. 37 Issue 3. IS is published four times. Its length varied in the considered period between 180 (Vol. 32 Issue 4) and 213 pages (Vol. 36 Issue 1) and had an average length of 196,1 pages.

In total, 168 units were identified in the sample period: 98 articles, 42 letters to the editor, 20 summaries, three book reviews, two editor's notes, two lists of external reviewers and one obituary. Considering all units, the average length of a unit was 23,2 pages. Articles were averagely 34,6 pages long, letters to the editor 8,1 pages, and book reviews averagely 29 pages.

The structure of IS is as follows: IS usually starts with summaries of all articles of an issue. However, three times, summaries were preceded by other types of documents: Vol. 36 Issue 4 started with an obituary for Paul Doty, the founder of the Belfer Center and both Vol. 36 Issue 3 and Vol. 37 Issue 2 started with Editor's Notes. The former dealt with changes of the editorial procedures, the latter brought to the attention of the reader the work of the International Security Studies Forum.

After the summaries, the centerpiece of the journal follows: the section of the articles (on average 4,9 articles per issue). In three cases, a book review is published after the articles.
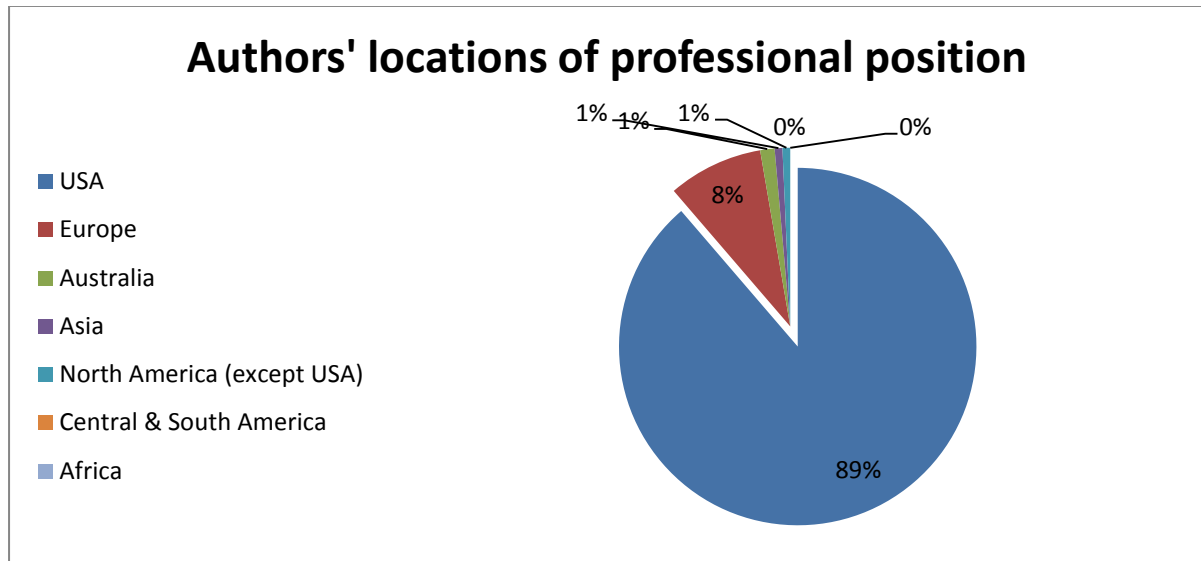
After that, there are sometimes letters to the editor published (on average 2,1 per issue). These are either sent in by readers voluntarily or editors solicit replies for particularly controversial articles. Letters referring to the same article are gathered together in one section which is concluded with a response by the author of the original article: "By organizing such sections, we offer authors an opportunity to defend their work and ensure that the exchange appears in a single issue where readers can examine all of the various arguments." (International Security 2013c) These sections are a special way to give more space to the academic debate about a certain issue and are considered separately in chapter 3.4 because they indicate which topics create most attention both among the readers of this journal and in the area of international security studies according to the editors. In two issues, namely in Vol. 36 Issue 1 and Vol. 37 Issue 1, lists with names of external reviewers were published. Both lists had a length of 2,5 pages and contained about 300 names.

3.2 The Authors

For this chapter, the authors of the articles and book reviews were considered since these documents represent the centerpiece of the journal.

There are 141 authors mentioned for 101 units (98 articles plus 3 book reviews). That means that on average, 1,4 authors are responsible for one published unit. Usually, articles are published by one author but one unit even had five authors in the analyzed period. In order to consider the professional background of the authors, only their current positions are regarded. However, some authors occupy several positions and thus may appear double in the results below, for instance as a university-affiliated author and additionally as an author linked to a think tank. This was considered because it gives a better picture of the authors' professional background and adds value to the study because it indicates more in detail which institutions are involved in security discourses of a top-ranked academic journal. Of all 141 authors, 98 are professors (69,5 per cent) and 16 are Ph.D. candidates (11,3 per cent). The others (19,2 per cent) are political analysts, research fellows or occupy other positions.

It is remarkable that, considering all 151 professional positions of the authors, 134 of them were located in the USA (88,7 per cent), 13 in Europe (8,6 per cent) and 4 outside Europe and the USA (2,7 per cent), namely from Canada (North America), Australia, and Asia. None came from South or Central America or Africa.

Authors' locations of professional position

- USA
- Europe
- Australia
- Asia
- North America (except USA)
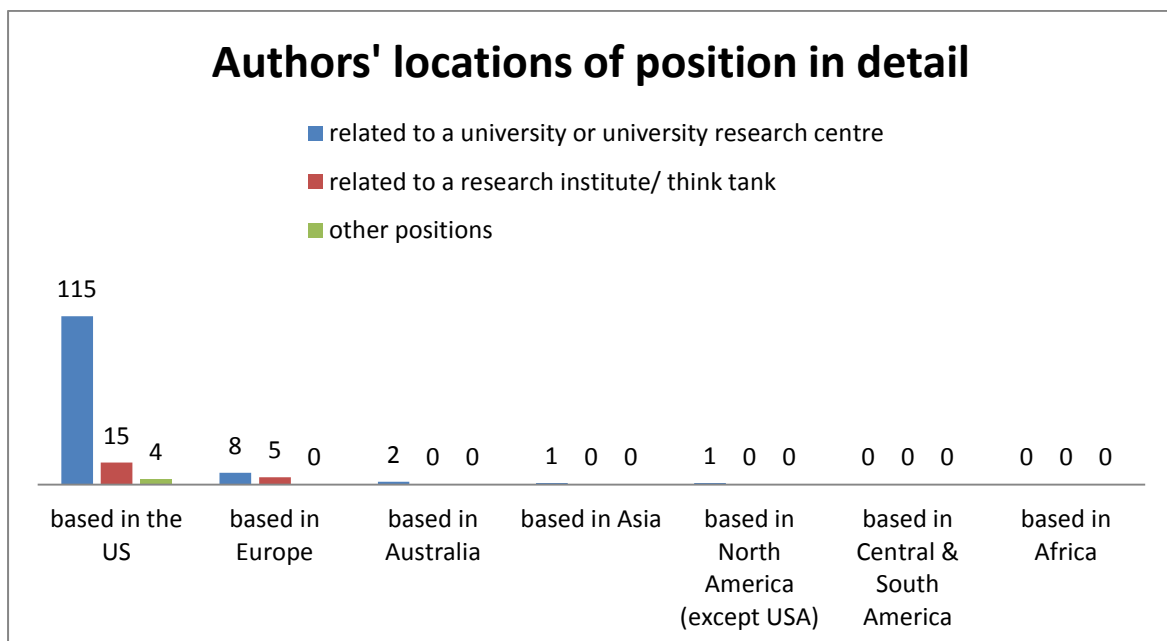- Central & South America
- Africa

1% 1% 1% 0% 0%
8%
89%

Impressively, 115 authors of all 141 authors (81,6 per cent) are connected with a US-American university or a research centre associated with a US-American university. 54 different US-American universities are mentioned and most of them are top-ranked universities in the USA: Harvard is mentioned the most (nine authors). Other universities are: Princeton (seven authors), Yale and Georgetown (five authors each), Dartmouth, Brigham Young, and the University of Southern California (four authors each). Other universities were mentioned fewer times (for a detailed list see the appendix).

20 authors are associated with a think tank or research institute which is not associated with a university. 15 of these authors are based in the US: at RAND (four authors), the Council on Foreign Relations (two authors), the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, the Combating Terrorism Center, the Brookings Institution, the Center for Naval Analyses, the Cato Institute, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the Center for Strategies and Budgetary Assessment, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (one author each).

Four authors are based in the US but neither in a university nor in a think tank or research institute: One is a member of the U.S. National Security Council and another one is a member of the U.S. State Department's Historical Advisory Committee on Diplomatic Documentation (both are additionally affiliated with a university). The two remaining ones are on the one hand an independent defense analyst in Washington D.C. and on the other hand a former Deputy Executive Chairman of the UN Special Commission on Iraq and a former Special Advisor to the Director of the CIA on Iraq Weapons of Mass.

When authors do not have a position in the US, they are most likely coming from Europe. However, they are few: Only eight authors of all 141 had a European academic background. Nine European universities were mentioned as their place of employment: Four of them were located in the UK (University of Cambridge, Sussex College, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of Edinburgh), two were in Norway (Norwegian Defence University College, Norwegian University of Science and Technology NTNU), one in Denmark (Aarhus University), one in Italy (University of Bologna), one in Turkey (Koç University Istanbul).

Authors' locations of position in detail

- ■ related to a university or university research centre
- ■ related to a research institute/ think tank
- ■ other positions

	related to a university or university research centre	related to a research institute/ think tank	other positions
based in the US	115	15	4
based in Europe	8	5	0
based in Australia	2	0	0
based in Asia	1	0	0
based in North America (except USA)	1	0	0
based in Central & South America	0	0	0
based in Africa	0	0	0

Five authors of the 141 are based in Europe in research institutes: One author is based in the German Institute for International and Security Affairs Berlin (Germany), three others are based at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (Norway) and one author works at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment Oslo.

Only four of the 141 authors were based outside Europe, all of them in a university-setting: One author had a Canadian background (Concordia University Montréal), two came from Australia (Australian National University, University of Newcastle), one author had an Asian background (Chuo University Japan).

3.3 The Content of the Journal

As claimed in their aims and goals (see chapter 1), IS tries to present a balanced view on topics, publishing articles which present different or even opposite points of view. For instance, the Vol. 33 Issue 2 contained one article which underlined that nuclear weapons stabilized Indo-Pakistani relations. It followed an article which presented exactly the opposite point of view, arguing that nuclear weapons not only jeopardize peace in India and Pakistan but in the whole region. In Vol. 35 Issue 1, there could be read two articles with different standpoints on the US-American foreign policy orientation and if liberal internationalism was in decline or not. In Vol. 36 Issue 4, decapitation as an effective counterterrorism policy was investigated from two different points of view. Vol. 35 Issue 3 shed light on the US military strategy in Vietnam from two different standpoints. In Vol. 35 Issue 4 and Vol. 37 Issue 3, two different standpoints on the influence of retrenchment on the world order were analyzed.

For this study, the content of the articles was captured by one to three subject and geographical keywords respectively. For most articles, two subject and geographical keywords were sufficient to describe the content of the article. Keywords were distilled from the ones given by IS itself and from keywords in the article abstracts. For instance, an article about a military maneuver implemented by US forces during the Iraq War was described by the subject keywords 'military strategy' and 'Iraq War' and by the geographical key words 'USA' and 'Iraq'. An article about how the tribal system in the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan could help the USA in their counterterrorism efforts was marked with the subject keywords 'Islamic terrorism', 'counterterrorism policy', and 'tribal system' and with the geographical keywords 'USA', 'Afghanistan' and 'Pakistan'. This categorization implies that some articles can appear more than one time in the classification below, depending on the search criteria. For instance, both given examples would be considered in regard to articles about the US, but the first one would be considered additionally when articles about Iraq are searched for. Furthermore, articles with a clear historical focus were marked. Their major research focus had to be put on developments that took place in the past. That implies, for example, that also articles about the Kosovo War or about foreign policy decisions of the Bush administration can be found in this category. As soon as current developments were involved – for example, when a current conflict involved only references to historical events – the article was not marked as an historical article.

It turned out that one fourth, namely 25, of all 101 articles had an historical focus. Other articles had a focus on rather recent developments or were 'timeless' since they

focused on theoretical considerations (see more information below in the section about geographical focus).

31 of all articles dealt with warfare and military issues: Most of them (15 articles) discussed nuclear weapons and military strategies (six articles). However, also NATO (two times), ballistic missiles (two times), biological warfare (two times), air and sea power (one time each), preventive attacks (one time), and humanitarian interventions (one time) played a role in IS.

15 articles were about softer security-related issues: Psychological factors such as perception, identity, propaganda, and evolutionary psychology were mentioned seven times. There were also articles about treaties and negotiations (three times each), diplomacy (two times) and mediation (one time).

Many of the articles focused on a certain conflict or war (23 times). Most of these conflict-related articles dealt with historical conflicts: Cold War (six times), Vietnam War (four times), World War II (three times), World War I (one time), Kosovo War (one time). However, recent conflicts such as the Iraq War (five times) or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (three times) appear often in IS as well.

19 articles dealt with issues related to hegemony, balance of power, world order; four of these 19 articles dealt with alliances.
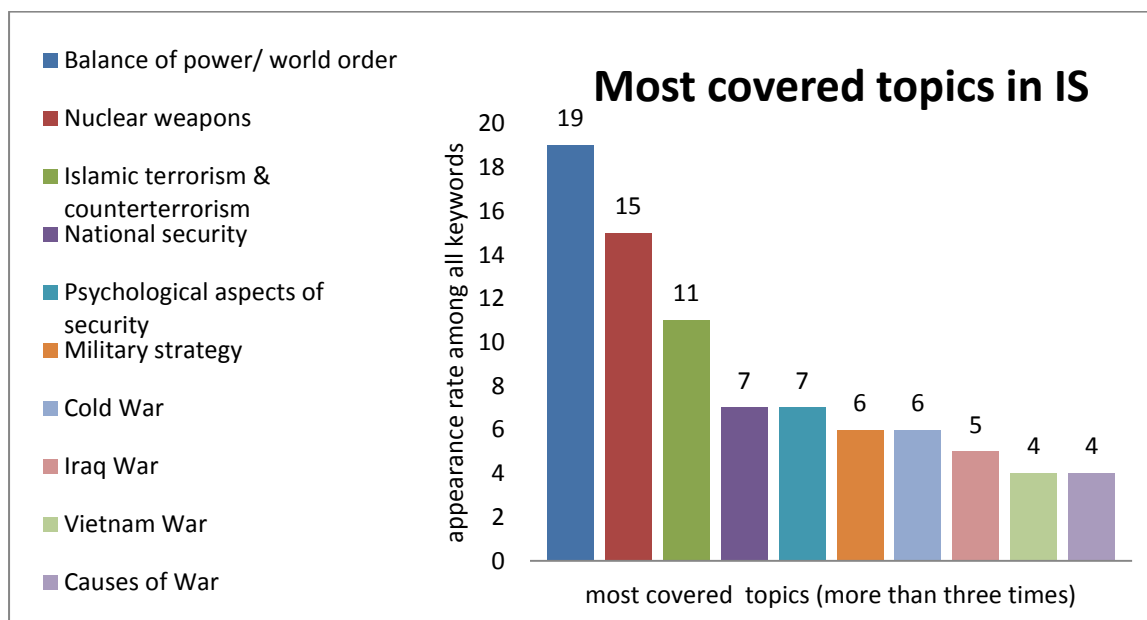
13 of all articles dealt with war and peace theory: with causes of war (four times), prevention of war (two times), war termination (three times), war ethics (one time), and factors that correlate with or maintain peace (three articles).

One topic that appears to be very crucial for IS is Islamic terrorism (11 times). Four of these nine articles dealt also with Al Qaida (two of these four dealt also with the Taliban), two with suicide bombers. Four of these nine articles contained ideas about counterterrorism policy. Two articles of all articles dealt with terrorism and counterterrorism but were not connected to Islamic terrorism in particular. Three articles in total dealt with insurgency.

11 articles investigated more ideological aspects of security and forms of government: Three articles dealt with democracy and democratization and two dealt with authoritarianism. Three articles dealt with liberalism as the grand strategy of the US. One article each dealt with European integration, nationalism and antimilitarism.

Seven articles dealt with the national security of a country. Other topics were: state reconstruction (two articles), humanitarian assistance (one article), failed state and maritime war scenario (one article each), climate change (one article), leadership (one article), political

resistance (one article), security studies (one article). The graph below shows which single topics were mentioned mostly.

Most covered topics in IS

24 articles did not have any geographical focus and were rather theoretical. Although some of them included case studies, a geographical classification would have biased the results: The articles usually included cases to test the theory and single countries or regions were not the major focus of the article, so they were registered without geographical classification.

Considering the geographical focus of IS, it becomes clear right away that the African and the European continents are of little interest for the journal and both Central and South America and Australia/Oceania are not interesting at all.
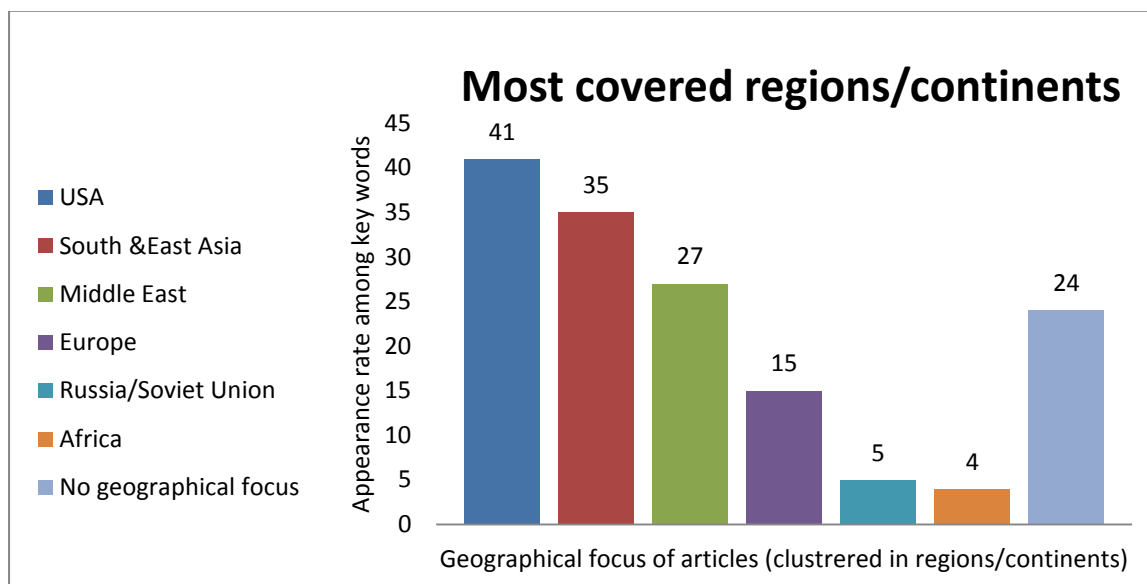
Articles dealt only four times with African issues: Two articles were concerned with Africa in general, one dealt with Uganda and one with Rwanda. The European continent (Russia excluded) was discussed in 15 articles: six times as Europe in general, four times in terms of Germany, three times in terms of Great Britain, one time in terms of France and one time in terms of Kosovo. However, only two of all 15 articles that dealt with Europe were related to current issues; 13 articles were historical.

The case of Russia is especially interesting: Russia is one of the BRICs and could be expected to be looked at more carefully from a security perspective. In Europe, for example, especially energy security is a major concern and also the connection to China could be interesting for security considerations. However, IS does not devote much importance to a

'rising Russia': It dealt in only one article with the situation of the current Russia – and that only in connection with China. However, four articles talked about issues connected to the Soviet Union and thus were historical. That suggests the importance of this region has faded in regard to security issues after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and is not acknowledged as a current security concern.

Much more important for IS is the Middle East region: Articles dealt with this region 27 times. Iraq attracted most attention in this region (10 times mentioned). Iran was dealt with four times; Afghanistan and Israel were included three times; the Gaza Strip, Saudi Arabia and the Middle East in general were mentioned two times; Libya one time.
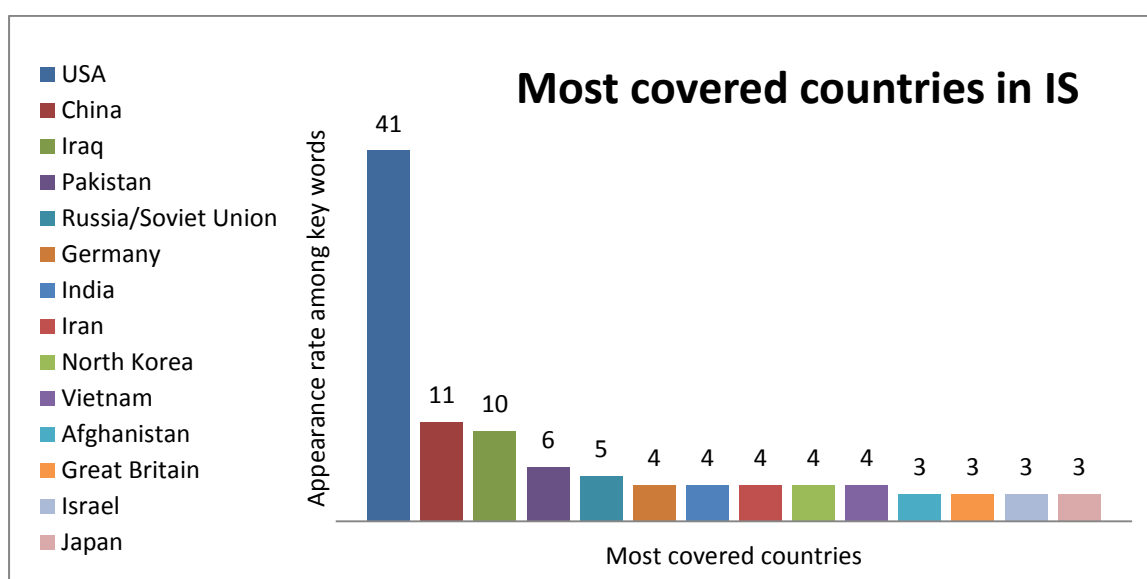
However, the most important areas for security considerations are located in South and East Asia for IS: Articles were related 35 times to countries in this region. The country that was mentioned the most (after the US) was China with eleven times. Also Pakistan (six times) and India (four times) are considered important and appear often in combination. Pakistan plays also an important role in regard to the Afghan border. Furthermore, countries like Vietnam (four times, mentioned especially in historical terms), North Korea (four times), and Japan (three times) are dealt with repeatedly. Taiwan, the East Asian region as a whole and South Asia as a whole are both mentioned one time each.

However, IS's favourite location to talk about is little surprising: It is the US itself. The US was a major part of articles 41 times and even when articles dealt, for instance, with nuclear

proliferation in South Asia, the US-American point of view is often included although it does not appear prominently.
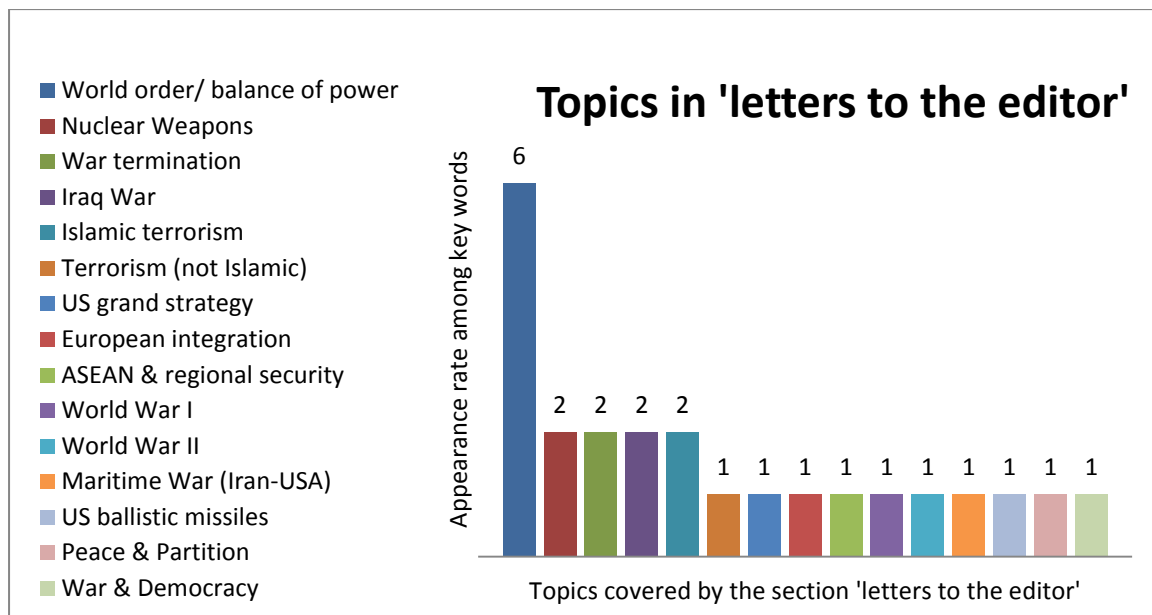
Topics are almost always interpreted from the perspective of the US in one way or the other. That becomes clear when taking a closer look at the selection of topics: Areas of 'major interest' are quite congruent with the US-American areas of interest – and their areas of intervention. This shows that IS is a truly US-American based academic journal: Not only the authors are mainly based in the US. What is considered a relevant security issue by the editors is most of the times above all relevant to the United States.
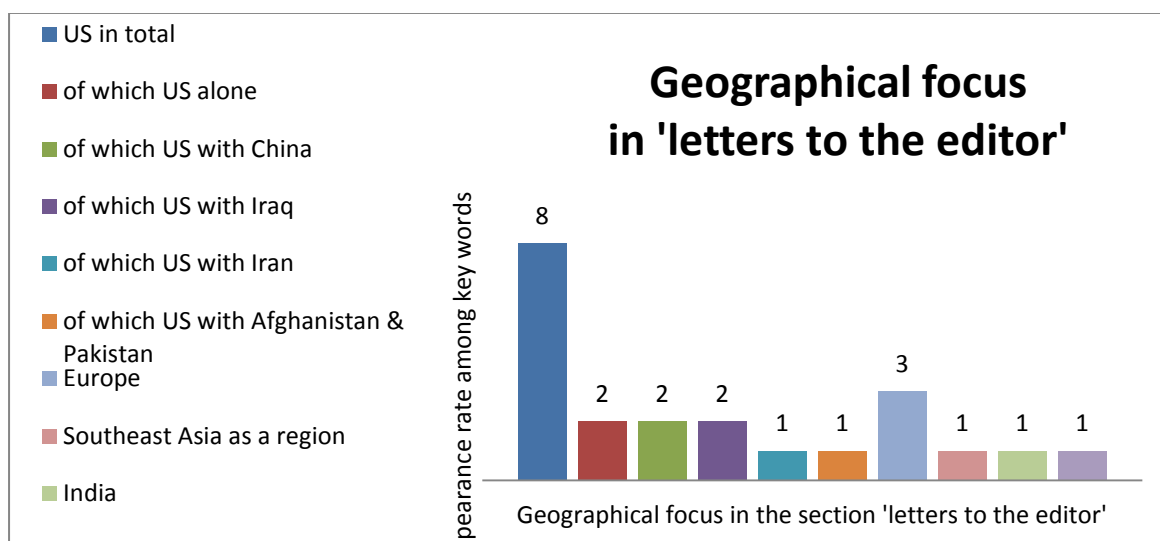
Most covered countries in IS

Legend:
- USA
- China
- Iraq
- Pakistan
- Russia/Soviet Union
- Germany
- India
- Iran
- North Korea
- Vietnam
- Afghanistan
- Great Britain
- Israel
- Japan

Values (Appearance rate among key words): 41, 11, 10, 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 3

X-axis: Most covered countries
Y-axis: Appearance rate among key words

3.4 Feedback and the Advancement of Academic Debates

The IS homepage shows that the most viewed articles in 2012 were "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity is Not Peaceful" (Vol. 36 Issues 3), "China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure" (Vol. 36 Issue 3), "Strategies of Terrorism" (Vol. 31 Issue 1) and "Why Terrorism Does Not Work" (Vol. 31 Issue 2). The former two articles deal with world order and the latter articles deal with terrorism – two topics that are anyway crucial topics in IS as we have seen in the precedent chapter. This chapter will take a closer look at the letters to the editor, a special way to give more space to academic debates about certain issues. They indicate which topics created most attention both among the readers of this journal and in the area of international security studies in general. They bring together the perceptions of academic relevance of both the editors and the readers.

24 sections under the name 'letters to the editor' were considered and contained 42 units. Each section contains a number of letters from readers and, in the end, the reply to them from the authors of the original article. Of the 24 debates, one fourth (six debates) dealt with balance of power/world order. No other topic was by far so often discussed. Two debates each were published about nuclear weapons, war termination, Iraq War and Islamic terrorism. Which other topics appeared once in the section 'letters to the editor' can be seen in the graph below. All these topics are worth considering, since they represent the enhancement of a debate in the journal. Even if a topic was dealt with only once, it obviously generated more feedback than other topics and thus deserved to be discussed more prominently in IS.

The same applies to the geographical focus of the articles: Considering the small number of debates, the subject and geographical focuses of the existing ones really matter. Nine of the 24 debates did not have any special geographical focus. Eight dealt with the US and six of these involved other countries: two times China, two times Iraq, one time Iran, one time Afghanistan and Pakistan. Three debates dealt with Europe. One debate each dealt with developments in Southeast Asia as a region, in India and in Uganda. This makes clear that the US is mostly concerned with itself and its commitment in the greater Middle East and Southeast Asia. Developments in Europe are of importance for IS as well.

**Geographical focus
in 'letters to the editor'**

- US in total
- of which US alone
- of which US with China
- of which US with Iraq
- of which US with Iran
- of which US with Afghanistan & Pakistan
- Europe
- Southeast Asia as a region
- India

Geographical focus in the section 'letters to the editor'

(y-axis: Appearance rate among key words)

Bar values: 8, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1

3.5 The Dominant Debate: The Creeping Concern about American Power Decline

When considering the findings of the two precedent chapters, it becomes obvious that the balance of global power and the world order is the mostly discussed topic in IS. As the graphs of the most covered topics in both the articles and the letters to the editor suggest, the academic world – and in case of IS mostly the US-centered academic world – is mostly attracted by the question if and how the world order is shifting and what this means for international security. The US feels threatened and one glance on the graphs presented above gives the answer who they feel mostly threatened by: Southeast Asia.

Of course is the Iraq War still an often discussed issue in IS and the region around Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan is still crucial for international security. However, the major security concerns have shifted somewhere else now: Highly worrisome for IS authors are questions related to rising powers in the Middle East region and Southeast Asia, the spread of Islamic terrorism there and how this is connected to security. However, a much more existential threat has come closer to North America: US-American hegemony is said to be endangered.

The consensual view among IR theorists is that unipolarity is peaceful. However, the US has been at war more than half of the time since this world order was created through the breakdown of the Soviet Union – in Kuwait, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan. IR scholars argue that the unipole is supposed to maintain peace by guaranteeing the status quo and no state will balance against it. But what happens if the power of the unipole is on decline?

Some argue in IS that US power cannot be challenged by China or any other country in the world. Beckley wrote in Vol. 36 issue 3 that the USA it is wealthier, more innovative, and more militarily powerful compared to China than 20 years ago. Moreover, the US benefits clearly from its own hegemony and from globalization since it can manipulate the international system to its benefit.

However, there is broad scholarly consensus in IS that the relative power of the United States is on decline: US travails in Afghanistan and Iraq point towards an imperial overstretch and the recent financial crisis seems to have pushed the USA in a downward spiral – and in China's arms.

For instance, Drezner mentions that growing concerns are articulated in the academic and policymaking world about US dependence on China as a source of credit to fund trade and budget deficits. In his article 'Bad Debts' in Vol. 34 issue 2 he argues that this surely increases China's deterrent capabilities, but that it will be difficult for China to convert this financial power into political power which can effectively coerce the US into changing its policies in China's favor. However, the financial crisis is not over and US-Chinese economic (inter)dependency will last and might even increase in the near future.

This leads to another issue which illustrates how the financial crisis could influence the global world order: Great powers have few options to deal with acute relative decline. One of the most discussed ones in academia is a policy that entails to scale back global commitments – which are costly and bring few visible benefits – and to pursue retrenchment. This policy is discussed, for example, by MacDonald and Parent in Vol. 35 issue 4 and by Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth in Vol. 37 issue 3: Advocates of retrenchment contend that an end of deep global engagement will not only save the US blood and money but will also result in a more secure America. Opponents argue, however, that the costs of the grand strategy are overestimated, the benefits underestimated and the consequences of retrenchment immeasurable and dangerous. It can demoralize allies and create conflicts in left-behind regions. How Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth write in Vol. 37 Issue 3, p.10:

> The United States' globe-girdling grand strategy is the devil we know, and retrenchment advocates effectively identify some of its risks and costs. A world with a disengaged United States is the devil we don't know, and we provide strong reasons why it would present much greater risks and costs.

Retrenchment could lead to a self-imposed change of the world order, a change away sooner than it would happen if global developments only took their 'natural' course.

However it might happen, an American relative power decline will surely have consequences for international politics. Layne writes in a book review under the title "The Waning of U.S. Hegemony – Myth or Reality?" in Vol. 34 Issue 1, that emerging great power powers will probably not seek to radically alter the international system as Germany and Japan did in the last two centuries. However, the international environment could become more tense because of the declining deterrence capabilities of the US, more competition for natural resources, the systemic changes due to the financial and economic crisis, and the change of international institutions.

Or is the US not really declining – but the others are only rising?

As Schweller and Xiaoyu in Vol. 36 issue 1 contend, China's growth results in increasing relative wealth and economic development and creates the wish in Beijing to make it a new pole in a multipolar world. Chinese foreign policy is already shaped by the ambition to restore China's former great power status. If China as an emerging power joins the US as a pole of influence in the international political system, how will a transition be like? It is of major concern to the USA, what China's aims at the international level are and if it will achieve them peacefully or not. The current situation suggests that China confines itself to the deployment of diplomatic and economic means to challenge US hegemony. However, China is proceeding in any case with the modernization of its military capabilities – its naval power, its nuclear power. US-China cooperation will be challenged in any case as Ross contends in Vol. 34 issue 2.

When a new world order will be established, what will the result be like? To which extent will international governance structures change which the US created after the end of World War II and that have provided the foundation for the international order (and its hegemony) ever since? It has not only been discussed in the United Nations, for instance, that the structures do not reflect anymore the current distribution of power in world politics. What will happen with the achievements of US hegemony (the free-market democracy, an open, globalized economic system based on multilateral institutions and the liberal internationalism)?

Scholars build future scenarios that encompass a wide range of possibilities. On one end of the range, it is argued that we will have to adjust to an Asian-centered world once the world order has changed: We will learn Chinese and not English; we will consume Bollywood instead of Hollywood movies; we will live in a world that follows eastern value

systems and rules. On the other end of the range, however, scholars argue that the US can still remain a pivotal actor at the center of a multipolar international system for a long time, since economic, geopolitical and especially ideological considerations will still gather enough countries around the table of the USA. One of them is Beckley who wrote the article 'China's Century?' in Vol. 36 issue 3. These scholars argue that this implies a renunciation to unilateral decision-making à la George W. Bush and calls for the unexceptional embrace of multilateralism. Furthermore, they do not take seriously open claims for a multipolar world: They reject these claims since most countries benefit strongly from the cooperation with the US – which will prevent them from challenging US hegemony.

Be it as it may: It is undoubted that China's economic rise will bring along a *challenge* to the international system in one way or the other. The crucial questions IR scholars do not avoid to address anymore in IS in regard to this world order debate can be summed up as follows: Will the international system change in the near future? On which grounds will that happen and how? And if American hegemony might end, what are the implications for the international system and international security?

4. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the peer-reviewed journal IS, edited by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, is one of the most important journals in the fields of international relations and especially in the field of international security. In its almost 40 years of existence, it has managed to stay on top of the list although many other similar journals mushroomed in the academic landscape: In 2011, IS was the first-ranked journal in the Social Sciences Edition of the influential *Journal Citation Report* and the most cited publication in the field of international relations (Journal Citation Report 2011). Other rankings underline the importance of this journal for the academic world.

IS's claim to provide "sophisticated analyses of contemporary, theoretical, and historical security issues" and that "through contributions that reflect diverse points of view and varied professional experiences" (International Security 2013a) was clearly confirmed by this study. Indeed, one fourth of all articles have a rather historical focus (25 of 101 articles), another fourth can be seen as rather theoretical (24 of 101 without geographical focus) and the rest of the articles is based on contemporary developments. Furthermore, IS provably publishes articles which present different or even opposite points of view. As asserted by its

homepage, IS does not publish clear articles of opinion or comments. Articles have featured methodological transparency and theoretical references across the board.

However, taking a closer look at the background of the editors, the editorial board members and the authors, one is surprised about the stunning predominance of US-based scholars who also work predominantly in a university setting. All editors have a US-American professional background (although some spent parts of their career in Europe) and that is also the case for the majority of the editorial board members (International Security 2013b): Most of them are male, middle-aged, and white. Not even one fifth is female. The background of IS authors points in the same direction: It is remarkable that, considering all 151 professional positions of the authors, most of them, namely 134, were located in the USA (88,7 per cent) and most of them in a top-ranked university.

These findings are perfectly in line, however, with large-scale analyses of IR journals that have been carried out in the past and often included IS as well: An overwhelming majority of authors and editorial staff in leading IR journals is of US nationality or affiliation and non-Western countries are strongly underrepresented. The more prestigious the journal, the more striking is this characteristic (Dankbaar 2012: 8ff). IS, indeed, is a top-ranked journal and, remarkably, only 13 authors were based in Europe (8,6 per cent) and four outside Europe and the USA (2,7 per cent). These four authors came from Canada, Australia, and Japan.

This certainly clashes with the actual interest areas of IS which lay in the greater Middle East region and Southeast Asia. However, only *one* author wrote *one* article for IS in five years who had a professional position in these areas (Japan, Chuo University). Europe – as a geographical focus in IS articles not even very present, especially not for current developments – was by contrast represented well in terms of authorship. However, no author came from South or Central America or from Africa but this is congruent with the representation of these continents in the articles. However, both facts – the complete lack of authorship and of coverage – is highly problematic since it suggests that the academic world in security studies consists mainly of authors based in a Euro-Atlantic environment who write about regions far away from their safe offices.

IS claims to be interested in articles that cover topics of major interest (International Security 2013c) but these areas of 'major interest' are actually quite congruent with the US-American areas of interest – and their areas of intervention: Most covered topics in IS are the balance of power in the world, nuclear weapons and other military strategies, Islamic

terrorism, wars that involved the US such as the Iraq War, the Vietnam War or the Cold War. This shows that IS is a truly US-American based academic journal: Not only are the authors mainly based in the US; also what is considered a relevant security issue of major interest is most of the times above all relevant to the United States and its position in the world. Even when topics are not directly connected to the US, the US-American point of view often shines through. Topics which are a major security issue for Europe – for instance, energy security in Europe – do simply not appear. This characteristic has also been brought to light by previous studies and has been criticized broadly in the academic world: American dominance in IR journals leads to the fact that scholarly attention shifts to certain issues that are relevant for US foreign policy. As a consequence, the existing global power relations – in which the US acts as a hegemon – are reinforced and helped to be maintained (Dankbaar 2012: 5f).

This turns out to be especially problematic because the most prominent of all IS topics is, indeed, America's concern about its relative power decline in the world and, as we have seen in the precedent chapters, the majority of all articles is placed within this debate. American authors, by using IR theories which have mostly been developed by American scholars, produce knowledge which in turn legitimizes indirectly the position of the most privileged international actors. Thereby, these scholars work to the advantage of Western states and at the expenses of others – and thereby *influence* the process they are writing about. Of course, international security is in great part dependent on the US: for both the perception of security threats and actions aimed at securitization. However, not all security issues of major concern are of major concern to the US government – and let alone sufficiently covered by IS. Consequently, US dominance in a leading IR journal leads to a serious distortion of reality. However, that is not likely to change as long as the overwhelming majority of IS authors is predominantly of US nationality or professional affiliation.

It was striking in this study that Harvard as the 'home institution' of IS was mentioned the most among all universities – despite the fact that the review process is said to be double blind. However, this can be explained by structural conditions and is a general problem in editorial departments of academic journals: Manuscripts are sent to external reviewers after a pre-selection by IS and these reviewers are mostly members of the editorial board, authors who already published in IS, or former research fellows of the Belfer Center at Harvard (International Security 2013c). That implies that standards for an ideal article are set within this small group which is closely connected to Harvard and IS. Even if the process is double blind, the bias works more subtle by being related to writing style and underlying

research culture: "What is understood or recognized as 'good' research, is usually broadly similar to one's own research approach and orientation. […] American editors will have a tendency to privilege American authors, since their academic writing, in form and content, will be more similar to theirs." (Dankbaar 2012: 18) Consequently, the background of the authors remains rather homogenous. Furtermore, the IS acceptance rate lies between 5 and 10 per cent, so even if IS is interested in articles that challenge conventional wisdom (International Security 2013c) there is not much room for experiments. This characteristic, together with other economic, institutional and language conditions, reinforce US predominance in academic IR journals on a large scale (Dankbaar 2012: 19).

Analyzing IS was a good way for me to read up on guiding debates in the field of international security. Despite the fact that IS clearly focuses on certain issues and countries, topics are discussed from different points of view and analyzed with different approaches. Furthermore, unexpected topics such as insurgency in Uganda or nationalist violence in France also appear in IS from time to time. Readers can expect sophisticated and interesting analyses when they read IS: Some might change the reader's mind, some might provoke him or her into throwing the journal off the desk. This journal is surely worth considering and an interesting read – but it always has to be treated with a certain caution, especially when you are not from the US. IS clearly needs some more foreign scholars concerned with security issues of the region around them – and these have to know how to deal with the US-American academia.

Sources

DANKBAAR, Sabine (2012): The American Monopoly in International Relations and History. A Comparative Analysis of Leading Academic Journals. Unpublished research paper, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

EIGEN FACTOR 2013: Journal Ranking University of Washington International Relations. [Link:http://www.eigenfactor.org/rankings.php?bsearch=OE&searchby=category&orderby=eigenfactor; last access: 5th April 2013]

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY 2013a: About International Security. [Link:http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/58/quarterly_journal.html?page_id=146&parent_id=46; last access: 5th April 2013]

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY 2013b: Staff and Editorial Board. [Link:http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/58/quarterly_journal.html?page_id=147&parent_id=46; last access: 5th April 2013]

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY 2013c: FAQs. [Link:http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/58/quarterly_journal.html?page_id=151&parent_id=46; last access: 5th April 2013]

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY 2013d: Start Page. [Link:http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/58/quarterly_journal.html?parent_id=46; last access: 5th April 2013]

EDITORS (2011): Editor's Note. *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011), pp. 3-4. [Link: http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d23bdaa2-a29c-47c8-8e10-cbca190055fe%40sessionmgr198&vid=2&hid=108; last access: 5th April 2013]

JOURNAL CITATION REPORT (2011): Thomson Reuters Social Sciences Edition. [Link 1:
http://admin-apps.webofknowledge.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/JCR/JCR?RQ=RECORD&rank=1&journal=INT+SECURITY; last access: 5th April 2013;
Link 2:
http://admin-apps.webofknowledge.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/JCR/JCR?RQ=LIST_SUMMARY_JOURNAL; last access: 5th April 2013]

MILLER, Stephen E. (2001): *International Security* at Twenty-five: From One World to Another. *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Summer 2001), pp. 5-39.

MITPRESS (2013): Homepage of International Security.
[Link:http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/isec; last access: 5th April 2013]

SCIENCE WATCH (2009) by Thomson Reuters.
[Link:http://archive.sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/09/sep13-09_1/; last access: 5th April 2013]

SCIMAGO (2011): SCImago Journal & Country Rank Social Sciences – Sociology and Political Science Ranking.
[Link:http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=3300&category=3312&country=all&year=2011&order=sjr&min=0&min_type=cd; last access: 5th April 2013

Appendix

Detailed list of how many IS authors were connected with the respective US-American university or research centre within a US-American university (see chapter 3.2)

three authors each: Naval Postgraduate School, University of California Los Angeles, Tufts University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford, Indiana University Bloomington, Brown, Northwestern University, Duke University, University of California San Diego, Williams College, Ohio State University, Monterey Institute of International Studies

two authors each: University of Maryland College Park, Rutgers University, University of Texas Austin, George Mason University, University of Notre Dame, University of Chicago, Boston College

one author each: Pomona College, Wesleyan University, Wake Forest University, University of Massachusetts, Colombia University, University of Minnesota-Duluth, Wellesley College, National Defense University, Lehigh University, University of South Carolina, University of Connecticut, State University of New York Plattsburgh, George Washington University, University of Pennsylvania, Baylor University Texas, California State University Fullerton, Air War College, University of California Davis, New York University, Yeshiva University, University of Miami, Swarthmore College, Marquette University, US Military Academy, State University of New York Buffalo, Georgia State University, Texas A&M University