

Introduction

Mapping critical security studies, and travelling without maps

Abstract

This introductory chapter situates the text within the existing literature and field of international security, aiming in particular to identify the meaning(s) of the term 'critical security studies'. We begin with an overview and evaluation of three dominant ways in which the field of security studies has previously been mapped and how critical security studies is usually placed within these mappings: an intellectual map; a temporal map (or timeline); and a spatial map. Assessing the merits and disadvantages of each mapping, the introduction then outlines the chapter structure and pedagogical features of the book as a whole.

This book aims to introduce readers to the burgeoning field of critical security studies. Readers are likely to be wondering what security is and what it means to adopt a critical stance in the study of it. The fact that there is no universally agreed answer to each of these questions, however, immediately flags both the complexity and vibrancy of this area of research. For a start, the use of the prefix 'critical' is particularly vexed. It is difficult to imagine any approach to the study of security, or any other area of intellectual inquiry, that would claim to be 'uncritical'. Reference to 'critical' work is therefore a rhetorical device that must be recognised, understood, and interrogated as such. There is no singular definition of what it means to be critical in security studies – and any rigid definition of the term critical security studies will tell you more about the position from which that definition is attempted than anything else. Rather, there is an array of different perspectives that has become associated with this term. Among these perspectives there are crisscrossing lines of convergence and divergence over the object, method, and implications of being 'critical'. In this book we do not wish to get too caught up in the trap of imposing what we think critical security studies *is* or *ought* to be. This seems to us to be neither possible, given the radically different starting points taken by various critical approaches, nor necessarily desirable in light of the plurality of intellectual approaches these different starting points give rise to. Instead, this introduction is driven by claims made in the literature that we survey, and by examining the way different approaches critically assess contemporary issues. In other words, we take the boundaries of 'critical' security studies to be defined by those who frame their work using this label. By consequence this text provides an overview of multiple critical studies *of* security issues and practices rather than an attempt to present a homogeneous or monolithic area of research, and in doing so recognises that there are internal boundaries (and boundary disputes) between these various approaches as well.

2 Introduction

As indicated above, the term ‘critical’ can be used in various ways and evades easy definition. However, the concept of security is in many ways no less contested. The once dominant association of the concept of security with military threats, and with the protection of the state – or ‘national security’, the study of which has in turn provided the original foundation for disciplinary security studies – is no longer unquestioned. Indeed, it would be overly simplistic to think that such an understanding of the concept of security was ever completely taken for granted. Arnold Wolfers, one of the founding fathers of the Realist approach to security that tends towards this ‘traditional’ definition of security, acknowledged early on that national security itself is, at best, ‘an ambiguous symbol’ (Wolfers 1952) that can be defined in multiple ways. The precise definition of what it means to be secure, the causes of insecurity, and who or what the concept of security should apply to, have long been debated. Some have even been led to conclude that security is an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Baldwin 1997: 10): a concept that is identifiable primarily by the lack of shared agreement over its meaning. It is this space for ambiguity and contestation that in turn opens the way (and some would say creates a necessity for) critical approaches to security. The concept of security is itself contested, yet it also remains central to our understanding of the world and has powerful effects when applied to particular issues. On this basis alone, therefore, the study of security remains a particularly appropriate site for the application of critical approaches.

Leaving aside for the moment the particular ways in which different approaches to security define (or are defined) as ‘critical’, it is worth noting that the derivation of the term from the Greek *kritikos* refers to an ‘ability to make judgments’, from *krinein*, meaning to ‘separate’, ‘discriminate’, ‘decide’ (Williams 1976: 74–76). This, it could be argued, is a minimally shared commonality between different critical approaches to security: they are all constantly involved in judgments about what security means, and in deciding and discriminating what the objects and objectives of security studies should be. Moreover, and crucially, critical approaches to security recognise these tasks as central to their intellectual activity. They all, in different ways, refute the idea that security has a constant or definitively settled meaning and content that can be taken for granted. In their landmark 1997 edited volume, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams proposed a broad and flexible understanding of the term critical security studies that also follows from this point:

Our appending of the term critical to security studies is meant to imply more an orientation toward the discipline [of security studies] than a precise theoretical label. [...] If the objective (or at least the outcome) of much scholarship in security studies has been to render the question and problem of security apolitical and largely static, critical theory takes the question of change as its foundation, in both an explanatory and an evaluative sense.

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It is in this vein – one that reads critical security studies as an ‘orientation’ rather than in terms of a ‘precise theoretical label’ – that we want to situate this introductory text. The Krause–Williams volume remains a pioneering collection of important theoretical and empirical interventions that have helped shape critical security studies as a pluralistic field. By now, however, there have been several major developments since the publication of that text that demand contemporary coverage and assessment. The period since 1997, for example, has witnessed the development of various theoretical innovations that are covered

in the preceding chapters. In terms of emerging security challenges, the field has seen increasing scholarly attention given to issues formerly marginalised in the study of security, such as environmental degradation, aid and development, migration, and international terrorism, among others. There have also been fresh appraisals of the nature and value of critical security studies, its relationship with International Relations (IR), ‘mainstream’ security studies and other disciplines, and how best to characterise the field and its component parts.

In this context an updated assessment of critical approaches to security, taking into consideration the mushrooming of such enterprises since the mid to late 1990s, seems both necessary and timely. Of course, there are other introductions to critical security studies available, varying from chapter-length summaries to book-length treatments, which consider the field in relation to IR theory (Fierke 2007) and security studies as a whole (Buzan and Hansen 2009; Collins 2007; Sheehan 2005; Williams 2008). This volume is distinctive, however, in that we take as our running focus the political-theoretical underpinnings of such critical approaches to security. By locating seemingly different perspectives within the wider terrain of political theory (and social theory more broadly), we want to suggest that more sophisticated – and layered – appreciations of critical security studies might emerge. Critical approaches to security do not, after all, exist in a vacuum, and by analysing how various theoretical currents have flowed through and shaped each of these theoretical enterprises we hope to demonstrate the way in which critical security studies can be thought of as comprising a continuum of approaches. As an initial step towards this updated assessment, we first review some of the most prominent ways of representing – or mapping – the field of critical security studies.

Mapping the field of critical security studies

What is at stake in mapping the field of critical security studies? The ‘map’ metaphor has been popular in surveys of critical approaches to security (Buzan and Hansen 2009; Smith 2000; Wyn Jones 1996). Maps of this sort can of course be incredibly helpful, especially when there is an absence of familiarity with the subject matter. They provide an overview of a terrain of study and a sense of certainty about where things are in relation to each other. When reflecting on the maps used to navigate critical approaches to security as they have developed over recent decades it is possible to identify three dominant narratives. The first is an intellectual narrative based on the negative definition of critical approaches to security against more ‘traditional’ perspectives. The second is a range of temporal narratives used to make claims about the trajectory of the development of critical security studies in relation to historical events and discourses about the ‘beginnings’ and ‘endings’ of different periods. The third concerns a set of spatial narratives that emphasises the emergence of different ‘schools of thought’, each anchored by a geographical referent point (Aberystwyth, Copenhagen, and Paris).

Part of the aim of this introduction is to flesh out these dominant narratives in order to provide an acquaintance with some of the chief efforts that have been made to understand and define the emergence of a field of critical security studies. As with any emerging area of study, critical security studies is also marked by the development and use of a distinctive lexicon that is worth noting at this point. Though these three mappings have different emphases, it is possible to identify a series of key concepts, outlined below, which are shared across these mappings and are also frequently referred to later in the text.

Box I.1 Key concepts in Critical Security Studies

Referent object: An entity that is taken as the focus for analysis in security studies (e.g. the state, the human, the ecosystem); or, put differently, ‘that which is to be secured’.

Traditional approaches/Traditional Security Studies: A shorthand, most commonly used by writers in or sympathetic to critical security studies, which refers to Realist, Liberal, Peace Studies, and Strategic Studies perspectives in the study of security that prioritise the state as the referent object of security, and focus primarily on military threats to the security of the state (sometimes also known as a ‘state-centric’ approach).

Broadening: The broadening of the security agenda relates to the move away from a narrow focus on the military sector to analysis of issues in other sectors (e.g. environmental, economic, political, and societal spheres).

Deepening: The deepening of theoretical approaches relates to the idea that the state is not the only referent object of security.

Normative: A normative position is one that explicitly takes a stance on what *should* or *ought* to be analysed, achieved, and/or secured.

Positivism: Refers to a theory of knowledge that argues it is possible to apply scientific principles of objectivity, replication, verification/falsification, and generalisation used to study the natural world to the study of society (and security).

Post-positivism: Refers to a series of approaches, including many critical approaches to security, that reject the idea that it is possible to analyse the natural and social world in the same way. These approaches emphasise the point that truth claims can never be grounded; there is no objective view from nowhere, outside history and politics, from which we might take a neutral position.

Security as a derivative concept: The idea, common among critical approaches to security, that the way we think about security derives from the way we think the world works more broadly.

From ‘traditional’ to ‘critical’

One of the dominant intellectual narratives used to map the emergence of critical security studies involves the invocation of ‘traditional’ approaches to security against which more ‘critical’ variants are then defined. Commonly, the notion of traditional security studies refers to work associated with the broader approach to international relations known as political Realism, in both its ‘classical’ and ‘structural’ (or ‘neo-realist’) variants. As with most categorisations of this sort, this blanket term covers over a diverse range of thinkers and ideas, but at base political Realism is usually seen to emphasise the state as the main object of security, and war as the main threat to it. In the classical vein, Walter Lippmann argued in the early 1940s that ‘A nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war’ (Lippmann 1943: 51, cited in Ayoob 1997: 124). Similarly, neo-realist Stephen Walt has defined security studies as ‘the study of the threat, use, and control of military force’, which is frequently cited as a reflection of the overall position. According to Walt’s perspective, the essence of international security is competition for power among states, understood in terms of coercive capability (military strength). On this view, therefore, security is viewed narrowly in terms of the survival of the state. The state is taken to be the primary ‘referent object’ that is to be secured and, as the quotation from Walt illustrates, the focus is predominantly on the military sector and on other issues only to the extent that they ‘bear directly on the likelihood and character of war’

(Walt 1991: 212–213). Working from the basis that all states seek increased security, and will consequently seek to augment their military strength where possible, Realist security studies have focused particularly on the concept of a ‘security dilemma’. Developed primarily in the context of the nuclear threat in the Cold War period, the security dilemma denotes a situation whereby the move to secure one state leads to the insecurity of another – since there can always be an ambiguity over whether an increase in military capability is for protection or for conquest – and hence to a cycle of insecurity between states.

Political Realism, though dominant in the study of security for most of the twentieth century, is not the only ‘traditional’ (i.e. ‘non-critical’) perspective against which critical security studies has been defined, however. An assorted cohort of peace researchers, war historians, arms controllers, and those working broadly within liberal traditions of international politics, might also be said to fall under the banner of traditional approaches. While these perspectives differ from Realism in some respects (such as the prospects for cooperation among states), they all share a common commitment to thinking security within the context of a military security agenda. Reviewing Liberal and Realist approaches to security, Patrick M. Morgan concludes that, for both, ‘Security has long been about the survival and physical safety of the actors and their people; by extension it concerns the *deliberate* use of force by states (and some other actors) for various purposes’ (Morgan 2000: 40, emphasis in original). Liberals may make much greater allowance for potential constraint of force than Realists, but their object of concern remains fundamentally the same. In addition, these perspectives occupy similar ground theoretically. With few exceptions, this work is typically committed to a positivist problem-solving mode of inquiry that largely takes ‘prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized’ – namely states – ‘as the given framework for action’ (Cox 1981).

In this intellectual narrative, discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, the emergence of critical security studies as a sub-field of the discipline of security studies is bound up with various moves away from the state-centric militarism of the traditional orthodoxy. These moves can be summarised with reference to the so-called ‘broadening’ and ‘deepening’ of the security agenda. The former relates to the expansion of the analytical horizon of the study of security beyond the military sector to encompass environmental, economic, political, and societal spheres (Buzan 1991). The latter is a term used to refer to extension of the referent object of security beyond simply the state to incorporate other actors such as institutions, human individuals and groups, and even the biosphere. In short, this intellectual mapping functions by defining critical security studies in terms of what it is not: namely, traditional or state-centric security studies. Traditional security studies implies a circumscribed focus on war and the state and, conversely, adoption of a critical approach entails making allowance for a more expansive agenda.

As always, the problem with such bipolar characterisations is that they tend to obscure the grey areas that often lie between opposed positions. At the hinge between traditional and critical approaches to security we find constructivism, which has seen its own bifurcation into ‘mainstream’ and ‘critical’ camps. Whereas Realists argue that security and insecurity can be calculated by measuring military strength, mainstream social constructivists such as Alexander Wendt (1999) claim that threats to security are not automatically given but produced through inter-subjective interaction; that is, through dialogue and discourse between individuals and groups. In general terms, then, a mainstream social constructivist approach argues that ‘security’ is a social construction that is context-specific. Threats do not simply ‘exist’ independently of our knowledge and representations of them: they are brought into being by processes (characterisations of the nature of a ‘threat’ in, for example, political speeches and

media coverage) and actors (such as state representatives and media outlets). Furthermore, because threats are socially produced as such, this perspective challenges the ‘traditional’ assumption that security issues must necessarily centre round material factors such as military capability. Ideational and discursive factors – ideas, norms, beliefs, and identities – are therefore given much greater prominence in constructivist approaches (Katzenstein 1996). In their analysis of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for example, the constructivist scholars Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett show how security communities can coalesce around common interests to form the basis for cooperation rather than conflict (Adler and Barnett 1998).

On the one hand, as demonstrated above, there are many aspects of social constructivism that seemingly challenge the Realist hegemony in security studies. On the other hand, though, it is important to note divergences within constructivism itself between more conventional and critical variants. The position of conventional constructivism is particularly contested in terms of its precarious location between traditional and critical approaches to security. Many representatives of the latter have accused conventional constructivists such as Wendt, Katzenstein, and Barnett and Adler, of not going far enough in their critique of Realism. While Katzenstein emphasises the importance of non-material factors, for example, he emplaces his work within a ‘traditional, narrow definition of security’ taking the ‘hard case’ of national military security as his ultimate focus (Katzenstein 1996: 6–11). More substantively, running throughout conventional constructivism it is possible to detect a tacit commitment to the same positivist research agenda undergirding traditional approaches. Ultimately, it is also primarily states’ behaviour that is privileged in this understanding of what studying security means. For these reasons, conventional constructivist approaches sit uncomfortably alongside the approaches surveyed in this book.

A more self-consciously ‘critical’ strand of social constructivism has emerged, however, which has sought to distance itself less ambiguously from Realism. At a broad level, this ‘critical constructivism’ – which includes the work of scholars such as Jutta Weldes (1999), Karin Fierke (2007), and David Mutimer (1999) – can be said to place greater emphasis on the constitutive role of discourse: that is, the ways in which discourses are constitutive not only of actors’ identities, but also of the power relations between them. The central concept here is ‘discourse’, which can be defined as ‘Systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 5). Discourse commonly refers to words, but can also include other data such as visual images, material objects, and social institutions (see Chapter 4). Critical constructivists reject the proposition that discourses are merely ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ forms of knowledge. In this sense, critical constructivism is grounded in a post-positivist approach to knowledge, as distinct from the positivism of its conventional counterpart. For Weldes *et al.* (1999: 13), the underpinning principles of critical constructivism are that: ‘What is understood as reality is socially constructed’; ‘Constructions of reality reflect, enact, and reify relations of power’; and ‘A critical constructivist approach denaturalizes dominant constructions ... and facilitates the imagining of alternative life-worlds’. Whereas the first principle is generally shared with conventional constructivist approaches to security, the latter two are not. They inject a normative orientation into the study of security that is shared by several of the approaches discussed later in this volume, and the emphasis on discourse and power blurs the boundary between this work and several of the approaches covered later (most notably feminist and gender approaches, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and securitisation theory). Rather than agonising over whether constructivism should more properly be situated within the ‘traditional’ or ‘critical’ camp, then, we instead highlight how and where the role of

social construction is incorporated within different critical approaches. More important than such boundary disputes, perhaps, is the fact that the role of social construction is not the sole purview of constructivist approaches. It is, to differing degrees, also a crucial point of analysis for all of the critical approaches discussed in this text.

From Cold War to War on Terror

Another common way of mapping security studies, and the emergence of critical approaches within it, is via the use of different temporal narratives. By ‘temporal narratives’ we mean diverse references to various timeframes, historical events, and the delineation of supposedly distinct ‘eras’ in order to plot developments in the way that security is studied. Two particular ‘ruptures’ stand out in narratives used in contemporary security studies: the end of the Cold War period associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall and revolutions throughout Eastern Europe in 1989, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; and the events of 11 September 2001, which saw two planes flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and a third aircraft into the Pentagon in Washington, DC.

The Cold War period (usually taken to denote the period 1945–1989) refers to the strategic environment that emerged out of the Second World War, which saw the rise of the USSR and US as the two global superpowers. With the collapse of the wartime alliance between the UK, the USSR, and the US, the latter two states became embroiled in an ideological stand-off between communism and capitalism. For most of the twentieth century this ideological split led to the geographical division of Europe and a long-standing military confrontation between the superpowers and their allies. This confrontation was intensified with the development of nuclear technology. The arrival of the inter-continental ballistic missile in the 1950s meant that the USSR could be reached from US territory, and vice versa, within 20–40 minutes. While there were several moments when a clash between the superpowers seemed imminent, most notably during the 1962 ‘Cuban missile crisis’ and in 1983 when the US deployed missiles in Europe in response to the shooting down of a South Korean airliner in Soviet airspace, the confrontation never escalated to full nuclear warfare. Indeed, it was precisely the absence of direct military action, in the European theatre at least, that gave rise to the term ‘Cold’ War.

With its focus on the security dilemma, states’ survival, and military capability, political Realism was considered particularly apposite to the analysis of state behaviour under the threat of nuclear warfare during the Cold War period. However, the inability of Realist scholars to predict the end of this period, together with the changing reality of the strategic environment, meant that a number of scholars began to question the continuing relevance of Realism and traditional security studies more generally. According to this familiar temporal narrative, the ending of the Cold War era went hand-in-hand with challenges to the hegemony of the Realist position in security studies, which, in turn, paved the way for the emergence of more critical approaches surveyed in this volume. It is precisely in this context that the discourses of ‘broadening’ and ‘deepening’ of the security agenda, seen as characteristic of moves away from state-centred militarism, are typically framed.

The broadening and deepening of security studies in a more self-consciously ‘critical’ vein can be read against the backdrop of events and changes associated with the end of the Cold War. For example, the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Yugoslavia in 1992, and Czechoslovakia in 1993, which led to heightened flows of people and the reclassification of formerly ‘internal’ migrants as ‘international’ migrants, was the specific context in which

European government officials, media reporters, and security analysts began to frame migration in terms of security (for more on the securitization of migration see Chapter 9). Similarly, the advent of the UN Development Report in 1994, with its focus on global access to healthcare, education, and resources as components of ‘human security’ was a key milestone in the recognition of the human as a referent object of security (for more on human security see Chapter 8). One way of mapping critical security studies, therefore, is in terms of the relation between the way that security is theorised and the historical context in which that theorisation takes place.

This relation is once more apparent if we consider how the events of 11 September 2001 have provided a powerful framing for the way in which security has been studied in the ensuing ‘war on terror’ and how critical approaches have developed within this context. Indeed, comparable to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, ‘9/11’ has become another key reference point in an array of temporal narratives found in the practice and theory of security alike. Part of the significance attributed to 9/11 in security studies derives from the fact that this date has been invoked frequently by the US administration, and other Western governments, in framings of domestic and international policies. A common thread running throughout former US President George W. Bush’s speeches was precisely the idea of two worlds: one *before* and one *after* the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. In his speech commemorating the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security on 6 March 2008, for example, Bush asserted: ‘The events of September the 11th, 2001 demonstrated the threats of a new era. I say “new” because we found that oceans which separate us from different continents no longer separate us from danger.’

The invocation of this date as a turning point between ‘old’ and ‘new’ eras is politically significant because it has been regularly cited by the US administration as a justification for a range of responses to the threat of international terrorism that includes military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, the rolling out of new homeland security measures at home and abroad, and a battery of counter-terrorism policies and practices (see Chapter 7).

Arguably, one of the defining features of a range of work associated with critical security studies, however, has been a critique of the usage of ‘9/11’ as a key turning point in global security relations. Rather than simply accepting the temporal narrative of 9/11 as ushering in a new era, this temporal narrative has come under intense scrutiny in the critically oriented literature. The very packaging of events on 11 September 2001 as ‘9/11’ has been questioned as an over-simplified coding of a complex series of events and issues. Some scholars have also pointed to what they consider to be the media hyperbole of representations of ‘9/11’. Repeated images and footage of the collapse of the iconic twin towers were watched globally and received unprecedented media coverage. While acknowledging the tragedy of the attacks, it has been argued that other events in global politics, such as the ongoing conflict in Darfur for example, have by contrast claimed more lives yet attracted far less attention.

The tendency to take 9/11 as an unproblematised starting point in a seemingly continuous sequence of events in the ‘war on terror’, now known as simply ‘11/3’, ‘Bali’, ‘Istanbul’, ‘7/7’, ‘Mumbai’, has also been criticised. As well as ignoring the specificities of each of these tragedies, such a narrative implies that global history somehow *begins* with 9/11. In turn, as emphasised by those working in the postcolonial tradition, this de-historicises the various colonial legacies, Western foreign policies, and global inequalities that are part of the broader context in which 9/11 and other terroristic events can be emplaced (for more see Chapter 3). Similarly, scholars associated with poststructuralism and International

Political Sociology (IPS) approaches have sought to critically interrogate discourses of exceptionalism used by Western governments to justify the use of 'exceptional' illiberal practices in supposedly liberal democratic regimes (for more see Chapters 4 and 7). What is common to these critical commentaries, therefore, is an insistence on the importance of paying close attention to the way in which the discourse of a pre/post-9/11 world works politically in order to justify particular policies and interests.

Despite the prevalence of temporal narratives in the study of security there are good reasons to exercise caution when relying on these various historical mappings. The evolution of security studies, and critical strands within it, has not been as linear as this method of framing the field implies. The association between the end of the Cold War and the rise of critical security studies obscures critically oriented work that pre-dates 1989. Richard Falk's (1975) contributions to the World Order Models Project in the 1970s and Richard K. Ashley's (1984) poststructural critiques of Neo-Realism in the early 1980s were, for instance, arguably seminal in the formation of critical approaches to security. Also, many aspects of critical theorising, such as the contributions of feminist and gender approaches, transcend the arbitrary divisions of pre/post-Cold War and 9/11. Another key problem with the un-reflexive usage of temporal narratives is that this type of map can overlook areas of continuity between different periods said to be distinct. Thus, for example, discussions of 'homeland security' and the need for a coordinated approach to counter-terrorism in the US actually pre-date 9/11 (see Chapter 7).

From Aberystwyth, to Copenhagen, to Paris

The most recent attempt to map critical security studies overlays the previous intellectual and temporal mappings with distinctions between different critical approaches indicated via a set of geographical metaphors or 'schools'. Indeed, part of the initial motivation for the delineation of the 'Aberystwyth (or 'Welsh') School', 'Copenhagen School', and 'Paris School' approaches to security, as put forward by its initial proponent, emanated from a more general sense that the distinction between traditional and critical security studies failed to capture the internal variation within the latter (Wæver 2004). In a review of the field of security studies as a whole Ole Wæver, a key author of the securitization approach discussed in Chapter 5, argued that the 'traditional/critical' distinction is generally only recognised within security studies in Europe (and to some extent Canada), and not in the United States. In the US, he argued, the study of security remains concentrated on intra-Realist debates and more narrowly focused on military issues, with the supposed temporal 'ruptures' discussed above leading to much less variation in intellectual approaches in American security scholarship.

In addition, Wæver also suggested that the main critical approaches to security in the European context could be distinguished by their aims and modes of analysis, thus approximating to different 'schools' of thought that might be named by their place of origin for ease of identification. At the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (now Aberystwyth University), Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones had self-consciously developed a brand of 'Critical Security Studies' that challenged the definition of security purely in terms of military threats to the state, and instead linked the study of security to the expansive goal of human emancipation; Wæver, along with Barry Buzan and other colleagues linked to the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) put forward the concept of 'securitization', focusing on how the invocation of the concept of security affects particular issues; and in Paris, scholars working at Science Po (or the Paris Institute of Political Studies) and connected to

the journal *Cultures et Conflits*, edited by Didier Bigo, were seen to be developing a more sociological approach that concentrated on the conduct of everyday security practices ranging from policing to border control.

Although the work of each of these three schools is clearly distinct from security studies as it is generally formulated in the American academic context, Wæver also hinted at potential divergent paths emerging between the Aberystwyth, Copenhagen, and Paris schools. The work of those associated with the Aberystwyth (or Welsh) School adopts an overtly normative approach to the study of security, one that questions the primacy of state security and instead seeks to ascertain the conditions for achieving individual security from the broader threats of poverty, political oppression, and environmental degradation, as well as violence and conflict. By contrast, scholars associated with the Copenhagen School approach originally proposed the concept of ‘securitization’ as a means towards developing a new analytical – rather than explicitly normative – approach to the study of security. Here the focus is shifted on to analysis of the consequences that follow from invoking the concept of security, particularly in relation to non-military issues (or sectors), and proponents of securitization tend to be much more sceptical about the merits of including issues such as poverty and environmental degradation as ‘security’ threats. Those associated with the Paris School approach have concentrated more on the question of how security professionals and bureaucracies ‘do’ security: that is, how security practices are conducted across a range of different contexts, and often in ways that diminish any supposed distinction between internal (policing) and external (military) security.

On face value, this tripartite division of schools of critical security seems to achieve a neat delineation between normative (Aberystwyth), analytical (Copenhagen), and sociological (Paris) approaches. However, the idea of mapping critical approaches to security via distinct schools of thought, like the other two maps outlined above, has strengths and weaknesses in almost equal measure. At a broad level the idea of ‘schools’ highlights the variation between different critical approaches, resisting the temptation to lump these approaches into one category. The schools metaphor also underlines the extent to which critical approaches are products of individual and collective intellectual activity, rather than theories ‘out there’ that appear as if from nowhere. It draws our attention to the extent to which Western Europe has, for the most part, been the site of development for many of these approaches. In the process, it highlights the Eurocentric origins of critical approaches, and then raises valid questions over the role institutional and funding structures play in this. It is worth asking, paraphrasing Wæver, why there is a Copenhagen School but no Calcutta School, an Aberystwyth School but not an Addis Ababa School, Paris but no La Paz?

At the same time, there are a number of potential drawbacks to mapping critical approaches according to different schools. Wæver’s initial effort in this regard was largely intended as a rough sketch of the field, and he acknowledged that the schools metaphor is potentially problematic for a number of reasons – not least because each of these ‘schools’ usually comprises only a handful of scholars, and many more do not conveniently fit within any of these three categories. The idea of schools also risks overstating the cogency of the positions they are taken to represent. As one prominent rejoinder argued, the schools categorisation ‘can be misleading if taken too seriously ... Aberystwyth, Copenhagen, and Paris are dispersed locations associated with specific individuals and debates, much more than unitary schools of thought’ (CASE 2006: 444). This response by a large collective of scholars under the rubric of ‘Critical Approaches to Security in Europe’ (CASE) argued that instead of ‘schools’, critical security studies in Europe is better thought of as an exten-

sive network, with overlaps and dialogue between different schools generally outweighing their distinctions. On this reading, critical scholarship on security also extends well beyond school boundaries into anthropology, criminology, human geography, and sociology rather than being restricted by school perimeters.

By taking the three schools idea as a starting point, though, the CASE collective's argument is itself indicative of the extent to which the schools metaphor has become part of the 'furniture' in debates over critical security studies. To some extent, then, reference to the schools nomenclature in later chapters is unavoidable, but we are also acutely aware of the limitations of this categorisation as a whole. In particular, the tripartite geographical distinction misses out on two important approaches that are not named as 'schools', but which nevertheless constitute significant critical approaches to security: Feminist and gender approaches (discussed in Chapter 2); and approaches derived from various forms of postcolonial theory and experiences (discussed in Chapter 3). The inclusion of these two approaches in this text addresses two of the often observed lacunae in the schools categorisation: the place of feminist and gender scholarship (see Sylvester 2007), and the potential Euro-centrism/West-centrism of critical approaches.

Travelling without maps ... structure and features of the book

While it is clearly important to get a sense for the narratives according to which critical security studies has been mapped out in existing characterisations, we also want to restate the general point that there are various downsides to these maps and the activity of mapping more generally. An awareness of the maps to which we refer above (and return to elsewhere in the text) is in some ways obligatory, as they frequently form part of the intellectual story of individual approaches as told by their proponents. Detailed discussions of the scholars (and groups) that inform various approaches, and historical events that shape the intellectual trajectory of individual approaches are important, and this is also part of the work of the proceeding chapters. However, it is also worth noting that such maps – if rigidly adhered to – can be counter-productive in that they often impose largely artificial boundaries within and between critical perspectives. In turn, this can prevent readers from making their own connections and detecting similarities as well as differences across the entire field of ideas in critical security studies. It also leads to arbitrary and sometimes unhelpful choices about which 'school' of thought to adopt, which hinders rather than assists the task of analysing pressing issues in global politics.

What we wish to draw attention to, therefore, is a recognition of the importance of reflecting critically on the intellectual maps we often use in critical security studies. Maps are usually two-dimensional, whereas critical security studies is very much a layered body of work, with messy inter-connections as well as areas of divergence. The terrain we are dealing with has a complex topography and it is precisely this messiness or variegation, as reflected in the image chosen for this book's front cover, that we seek to convey and work with rather than brush to one side. To get at this idea, we borrow both from the artist Jackson Pollock's signature style for the cover, and, from the critical security scholar Richard Wyn Jones, the idea of 'traveling without maps'. Writing about the study of security in the context of the Cold War's end, Wyn Jones suggested that as well as the changes to conventional maps required by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the landscape of security and insecurity was also rapidly changing – to the point where the intellectual maps of the Cold War provided by security studies no longer had the same purchase (Wyn Jones 1996). In this sense, security scholars were deemed to be temporarily travelling without

maps. Playing off this idea in a slightly different way, the structure of this book eschews the temptation to frame its overview entirely within one of the usual mappings of critical security studies covered above (including the temporal narrative alluded to by Wyn Jones). Instead, the book is divided into two main parts with the chapters in each simply arranged in alphabetical order rather than according to any unfolding intellectual, temporal, or geographical narrative.

In this spirit, Part I, 'Approaches', surveys the newly extended and contested theoretical terrain of critical security studies. It covers an array of different critical perspectives: Critical theory and its application in security studies (Chapter 1); Feminist and gender approaches to security (Chapter 2); Postcolonial perspectives (Chapter 3); Poststructuralism and international political sociology (Chapter 4); and Securitization theory (Chapter 5). Each chapter aims to offer a clear, concise, and accessible introduction to each of these positions. They are preceded by a short abstract that sets out the key themes discussed, and each chapter also contains text boxes that provide readers with explanations of key terms, background information on each approach, and relevant textual extracts. Each is then concluded with a series of points for further reflection and discussion, and a guide to further reading that gives an indication of where readers might follow up on the themes and discussions covered. In addition to providing an overview and guide to each approach and its key proponents, the chapters also highlight the intellectual heritages that these approaches in turn draw upon. Not all the approaches surveyed here operate along the same intellectual plane; several of the approaches covered in Part I reach out to and engage ideas from beyond disciplinary security studies, such as post-Marxist Critical Theory, Feminism, theories of postcolonialism, poststructuralist ideas, sociology, and Speech Act Theory among others. By examining these distinctive political-theoretical foundations we can gain a more sophisticated understanding of the different starting points of the various perspectives. In keeping with the argument made above, this emphasis on theoretical depth, we hope, potentially provides readers with new ways of conceiving of the various points of convergence and divergence between the different critical approaches covered here.

Part II, 'Issues', then offers an overview of how these various theoretical approaches have been put to work against the backdrop of a diverse range of issues in contemporary security practices. These encompass: Environmental security (Chapter 6); Homeland security and the 'war against terrorism' (Chapter 7); Human security and development (Chapter 8); Migration and border security (Chapter 9); and Technology and warfare in the information age (Chapter 10). These issues illustrate how the adoption of different critical approaches opens up the terrain of study beyond narrow militaristic threats to also include a wide range of contemporary security problems. In turn, the ways in which different critical approaches focus upon and analyse these issues tells us much about how these approaches operate, what they deem to be important, and how they treat the concept of security more broadly. The dynamic interface between theory and practice in critical approaches means that such issues can be used reflexively to assess the insights (and potential limitations) of the various theoretical contentions covered in Part I of the book. To do so Part II makes good use of internal references that point readers back to themes and discussion covered in Part I. As with Part I, each chapter in Part II is introduced by a short abstract and uses text boxes to augment readers' understanding. Each also provides points for further discussion, and a guide to further reading.

The advantage of this mode of organising the text is that by imposing only a minimal structure, new readings of the field and the texts that comprise it may potentially emerge. Even prominent 'traditionalists' in security studies sometimes recognise that 'an active

field is always a mess – fuzzy boundaries, contention, methodological quandaries’, although the same commentator warns that this can ‘be carried too far’ (Morgan 2000: 40). We would argue that this recognition is often not carried far enough in relation to critical approaches to security, and that the merits of critical security studies as an ‘active field’ of precisely this sort are frequently missed. Rather than clumping approaches together, or prematurely prescribing the boundaries between and around critical approaches to security, then, we instead opt to invite readers to engage in their own critical cartography in reading this text. The chapters can be read in or out of the sequence in which they are presented on the contents page, or with chapters in Part I read in tandem with those in Part II and vice versa. The text as a whole, and its individual chapters, are designed in such a way as to allow readers to identify, engage, and judge the interconnections and disjunctions between critical approaches to security for themselves. Using the text in this way will, we hope, prove a productive way of introducing and connecting readers to the subject matter of critical security studies.

Guide to further reading

- Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (1997) *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: UCL Press). A landmark articulation of, and contribution to, the field of critical security studies.
- Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen (2009) *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Offers a comprehensive intellectual history of security studies.
- Steve Smith (2000) ‘The Increasing Insecurity of Security Studies: Conceptualizing Security in the Last Twenty Years’, in Stuart Croft and Terry Terriff (eds), *Critical Reflections on Security and Change* (London: Frank Cass). Provides a comprehensive overview of critical security studies as it stood at the turn of the millennium.
- CASE (2006) Collective, ‘Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto’, *Security Dialogue*, 37: 443–487. A detailed overview of the state of contemporary critical approaches to security that also attempts to outline new avenues of inquiry.
- Jef Huysmans (1998) ‘Security! What do you mean?’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 4: 226–255. Focuses on the issues associated with defining the concept of security; for contrasting discussions on a similar theme see Wolfers (1952) and Baldwin (1997), details in Bibliography.

Part I

Approaches

1 Critical Theory and security

Abstract

Among the multiple critical approaches to security, one specific variant – Critical Security Studies (CSS), or the ‘Welsh School’ approach – has sought to explicitly link the study of security to Critical Theory. This chapter locates the key intellectual origins and developments in this interpretation of Critical Security Studies, before moving on to discuss in more detail its central ideas. Here particular attention is paid to the concept of ‘emancipation’ as viewed from a CSS perspective and the issue of how security theory and security practices are related to one another within. From here the chapter goes on to discuss some of the most prominent criticisms of Welsh School CSS before evaluating the contributions, limitations, and potentialities of this particular interpretation of the relationship between Critical Theory and security.

Introduction

Although critical security studies is increasingly recognised and used as a term, the significance appending the word ‘critical’ to ‘security studies’ has been interpreted in several different ways. One particular school of thought – known variously as ‘Critical Security Studies’, ‘CSS’ (upper case), or sometimes as the ‘Welsh School’ of security studies (see Box 1.1) – argues that relating the study of security to ‘Critical Theory’ generates a specific range of theoretical, methodological, and normative implications. One proponent has summed up these implications as entailing the ‘Broadening’, ‘Deepening’, ‘Extending’, and ‘Focusing’ of security studies (Wyn Jones 1999: 166): ‘Broadening’ refers to a conception of security studies that includes a range of issues beyond military force under the rubric of security. ‘Deepening’ implies a theoretical approach to security that connects our understandings of security to deeply rooted assumptions about the nature of political life more generally. ‘Extending’ denotes the expansion of the security studies agenda to recognise not only a multiplicity of issues, but also a multiplicity of actors beyond the state as sites of insecurity including, most fundamentally, individual human beings. Finally, CSS claims to provide an approach to security that is ultimately ‘focused’ in the sense that it is grounded in a particular normative goal: that of human ‘emancipation’.

This self-styled Critical approach to security departs radically from more conventional (or ‘traditional’) approaches to security for reasons that are discussed in more detail later in the chapter. However, while some of the moves made by the Welsh School’s Critical Security Studies/CSS-project are shared by the other approaches gathered under the critical umbrella, other commitments entailed in its relation of Critical Theory and security have

been more controversial and divisive. The consequent result is that this definition of ‘Critical Security Studies’ is far from universally accepted.

Box 1.1 ‘Critical security studies’ – what’s in a name?!

Within recent writing on security it is possible to find references to both ‘Critical Security Studies/CSS’ (upper case) and ‘critical security studies/css’ (lower case). Why is this distinction made and what significance, if any, should we attach to it?

Generally speaking, security scholars use CSS/css in a manner parallel to a broader distinction made between forms of critical social theory. ‘Critical Theory’ (upper case) is conventionally used to denote a Marxian tradition of theorising that includes elements of Marx’s philosophy – most notably his invocation to not only ‘interpret the world’ but to ‘change it’ – but also several efforts to reinterpret and offset some of the more deterministic aspects of Marx’s thought. In particular, the thinkers associated with the so-called ‘Frankfurt School’ of Critical Theory sought to extend Marx’s critique of capitalism from its focus on economics to a concern with issues ranging from popular culture, psychoanalysis, and technology. Proponents of CSS, such as Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones – tend to reserve the use of the term ‘Critical Security Studies’ to denote a specific approach to security that draws primarily upon this Marxian tradition of Critical Theory as well as interpretations of this tradition within the study of International Relations (IR) more broadly. The use of the lower-case ‘critical theory’ is generally used in the social sciences to identify a more diverse range of ideas and approaches that includes Marxian-inspired thought but is far from limited to it and even challenges it in some respects. Whereas the former has a particular (emancipatory) purpose, the latter is more heterogeneous in its concerns and goals. A good way for readers to get at this contrast further is to compare the interpretations of the term Critical Security Studies taken by Booth (2007) and Wyn Jones (1999) with the multiple interpretations of the term used in Krause and Williams (1997).

More recently there has been an attempt to distinguish the CSS ‘School’ by its geographical origin. Since the key proponents of CSS – Booth and Wyn Jones – both put forward their rendering of Critical Theory and security whilst at Aberystwyth in West Wales, some have suggested referring to it as the ‘Welsh School’ of security studies (see CASE 2006) as a counterpart to various other ‘schools’ of security thought.

From ‘traditional’ to ‘critical’ security studies

The CSS-project has its broad origins in Peace Studies (or Peace Research), which aimed to develop ‘new thinking’ about the Cold War stand-off that threatened nuclear annihilation, and its emergence is also linked to the development of a ‘critical turn’ in international studies more broadly. As Peace Studies evolved in the 1980s it increasingly began to focus not only on the achievement of ‘negative peace’ (the absence of war) but also the idea of ‘positive peace’ – the pursuit of social and economic justice as means of addressing underlying causes of conflict. The latter goal opened peace research out to consideration of issues such as health, economic welfare, and environmental stability as well as its previous focus on military issues such as nuclear weapons, and this ‘broad’ perspective has been a key influence in the development of CSS. The expansive agenda of peace research helped encourage a ‘comprehensive’ view of security within the CSS-project, and simultaneously developments in ‘Critical International Theory’ crucially informed its attitude towards the study of security. At the beginning of the 1980s, the International Relations theorist Robert Cox argued that the study of world politics could be divided into two categories: ‘Problem-Solving Theory’ and ‘Critical Theory’.

Problem-Solving Theory, Cox argued, takes the nature of world politics as a ‘given’. In other words, it assumes that there are a number of actors and issues that we should always focus upon. In security studies, this was traditionally manifested in the assumption that states are key actors in world politics, and that war between states is *the* central problem to be ‘solved’ in world politics.

Cox argued that *Critical Theory*, by contrast, should critically interrogate the Traditional assumptions made by problem-solving theory. Why should we do this? Cox argued that by assuming that world politics is simply a range of problems – such as the problem of war between states – to be resolved, we risk missing out on key dimensions of world politics that don’t fit squarely into a problem-solving mindset. More than this, we also embed and legitimate the ‘problems’ we set out to study. What we should be doing is critically interrogating the way that the *problem* is set up.

Fundamentally, Cox argued, Problem-Solving and Critical Theory can also be distinguished by their approaches to knowledge (Cox 1981). Whereas Problem-Solving Theory assumes that scholars can attain and produce knowledge of the world in an objective and value-neutral fashion, Critical Theory assumes that because academic analysts are necessarily embedded within the social world they seek to analyse, knowledge has an inherently social character. Hence there is no easy distinction that can be made between ‘facts’ and ‘values’. When building a theory or presenting an argument, we necessarily concentrate on some ‘facts’ and not others, highlight certain issues, and cover others in less detail or not at all. All of these decisions will be affected by our own social position, education, beliefs, and so on. The way that we as analysts choose to piece these elements together to either frame or address a specific ‘problem’ in world politics is, therefore, not a neutral act: it is an act that is, consciously or not, built upon a series of choices as to what counts as important and what does not. In turn, the ways that particular theories interpret and present the world will have consequent effects for how others view it, how decisions get made, where we devote our attention, how resources get distributed, and so on. This led Cox, drawing on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci (see Box 1.4), to make his now famous pronouncement that ‘theory is always for someone and for some purpose’ (1981: 128).

If we apply this perspective to the discipline of security studies, it has far-reaching implications. Security studies originally developed with the explicit mandate of solving the problem of war and instability in world politics. It had clear objects of analysis – states – and a clear goal – explaining why states go to war. One of the key exponents of this vision of security studies, Stephen Walt, has succinctly argued that ‘security studies may be defined as *the study of the threat, use and control of military force*’. More specifically, Walt advised that security studies was best understood as the study of ‘the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent or engage in war’ (1991: 212, emphasis in original).

This view of security studies, which originates from Neo-Realist International Relations theory, is what has become known to its critics in CSS as ‘Traditional Security Studies’. As in Problem-Solving theory, the central problem to be addressed (war) is already assumed in this view, as are the key actors (states). Although Walt makes reference to individuals and societies, he leaves us in no doubt that their security is predicated upon the policies adopted by states and that states should, by consequence, be the primary area of concern for security studies.

In keeping with the Coxian approach, critics of the ‘Traditional’ approach argue that this narrowly focused problem-solving approach has several weaknesses. They claim

that Traditional security studies tends to accept the world ‘as it is’, assuming that analysts simply produce knowledge about the world ‘out there’. Traditional security studies assumes a number of ‘enduring features’ of world politics, most prominently it assumes war between states as *the* enduring recurrent feature of the international system. So in other words, Traditional security studies accepts (i) the state, (ii) the ‘anarchic’ nature of the international system (the idea that there is no higher authority or actor above the state level), and hence that (iii) wars between states are an inherent feature of the international system. During the Cold War in particular, these factors tended to be taken-for-granted starting points for the study of security.



Scholars operating within the CSS framework argue that accepting war as *the* fact of international life *is part of the problem*. Think about the logic here: if we begin from the assumption that war is a natural feature of international life, then we are perpetually limited to efforts to constrain it. Following the broader critical move within Critical International Relations theory espoused by Cox, what CSS argues is that we need to be sceptical about the actual benefits of an exclusive focus on war and conflict, which, though still of great importance, are but one among a multitude of contemporary security issues. Instead of the ‘problem-solving approach’ proponents of CSS have called for a study of security that ‘goes beyond problem-solving *within* the status quo and instead seeks to help engage with the problem *of* the status quo’ (Booth 2005a: 10).

A primary objection to the traditional approach is that it is too narrowly focused on the military security of states (what is often referred to as ‘state-centrism’ or ‘statism’). In doing so it paints a static picture of international life that claims to simply portray the world ‘as it is’, but also makes a powerful political statement in assuming that fundamental change in the nature of world politics is virtually impossible. After the end of the Cold War, which radically undermined confidence in this traditional approach because of its preclusion of significant international change, a number of criticisms emerged of this state-centric security focus and these have helped inform the emergence of CSS.

First the contention is that state-centrism is *empirically unhelpful*: in other words, that it is an incomplete description of the nature of contemporary world politics. Following the Cold War, conflict between states – the central traditional focus – was arguably no longer the biggest issue in world politics. In the 1990s, the frequency of wars *within* (rather than between) states led some to coin the concept of ‘New Wars’ (Kaldor 1999), to describe conflicts such as those that have occurred within the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, and later in Sudan. In this context the Traditional focus on wars between states seemed poorly equipped to grasp either the localised nature of new wars or the ways in which they are embedded within global complexes of militarism, aid, and development (Duffield 2001).

Second was that state-centrism often acts as a *justification of the status quo*: in other words it justifies the preservation of the state system. In the ‘developed world’ states might well be argued to uphold the liberty of their citizens; but in many parts of the ‘developing world’ states can be the biggest threat to the liberty, human rights, and lives of their citizens. Some peace theorists have argued that in many cases, states can be a source of *structural violence* – that states are often a major cause of poverty and repression for their citizens (Galtung 1996). Drawing on this line of thinking, scholars such as Richard Wyn Jones argue that we should approach the traditional assumption of the state as protector of its citizens with caution:

Even if a very narrow, military understanding of security is applied, it is apparent that the arms purchased and powers accrued by governments in the name of national security are far more potent threats to the liberty and physical safety of their citizens than

any putative external threat. This is true not only of states in the disadvantaged South but also of those in the North. When a broader definition of security that includes non-military threats is applied, it is clear that many states are deeply implicated in the creation of other forms of insecurity for their own populations, for example, in such issues as food and environmental security.

(1999: 99)

Likewise, Ken Booth has noted that ‘to countless millions of people in the world it is their own state, and not “The Enemy” that is the primary security threat’ (1991: 318).

Third, radical political economists – such as dependency theorists and World Systems theorists – have long argued that the state system as a whole is actually a major *source of poverty, instability, and violence in the developing world* because international capitalism creates a system of winners and losers in the global economy. State-centrism tacitly justifies the existing economic status quo, which is a major source of economic deprivation and dependency in many parts of the world:

the relative security of the inhabitants of the North is purchased at the price of chronic insecurity for the vast majority of the world population [...] So, far from being a necessary condition for the good life, statism appears to be one of the main sources of insecurity – part of the problem rather than the solution.

(Wyn Jones 1999: 99)

CSS: key concepts and core ideas

With these kinds of criticisms in mind, an emerging literature in the 1990s argued that the concept of security in the post-Cold War era needed to be reconceptualised, and ‘Welsh

Box 1.2 Key concepts in CSS

Statism/State centrism: An ontological assumption – challenged by CSS – that holds the state to be both the primary actor in world politics and the provider of security, which leads in turn to a political orientation that holds national (state) security to be the pre-eminent value.

Security as a ‘Derivative Concept’: The idea that understandings of security reflect ‘deeper assumptions about the nature of politics and the role of conflict in political life’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 166).

Emancipation: The ‘freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do’ (Booth 1991: 319).

Immanent Critique: ‘Immanent critique involves identifying those features in concrete situations (such as positive dynamics, agents, key struggles) that have emancipatory possibilities, then working through the politics (tactics and strategies) to strengthen them’ (Booth 2007: 250).

Theory–Practice Nexus: The idea that theories of security inform security practices and vice versa, leading to the contention that ‘reconceptualized understandings of security and strategy might aid the transformation of real-world practices’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 167).

School’ CSS has been at the forefront of attempts to redefine both security and security studies. CSS is based on three core ideas that links it to a broader critical move in security

studies, and one additional key principle dealt with in the following section – ‘Emancipation’ – which tends to be seen as the distinguishing feature of the CSS-project and is more divisive.

Understanding security as a ‘derivative concept’

The first core idea underpinning CSS is the argument that security is a derivative concept. That is, the view of security we have derives from the way in which we see the world and the way we think politics works: what we think of as the most important features of world politics will influence what we think of as threats, what needs to be protected, and hence how we define security.

The question of how we should define security is all at once deceptively simple and of fundamental importance. One would think that academics and analysts working within the field known as ‘security studies’ would at least be able to agree on the meaning of the term. In one sense there must be a minimal shared understanding of the term security given that we speak of the field of ‘security studies’. An example of such a minimal understanding might be Ken Booth’s definition in his 1991 article ‘Security and Emancipation’ where Booth argued that “‘Security’ means ‘the absence of threats’”.

When we examine such a definition in more detail, however, we come up with a range of related questions that are among the most contested (and most interesting) within the subject area: What kinds of ‘threats’ do we want to be free from? Who or what is it that ‘threatens’ us? How do we define the ‘we’ seeking freedom from threats? Is it the individual, group, nation, state, or all of the above? Even if we can answer these questions, how do we go about achieving security?

Traditional security studies, by taking the security of the state as its central concern, assumes ready-made answers to each of these questions. So, for example, the view of security that dominated the Cold War – Neo-Realism – focused on the threat of nuclear war and the security of states, because this was derived from a focus on the political conflict between the US and the Soviet Union. But, for proponents of Critical Security Studies, this definition of security is itself a derivative concept: it derives its meaning from a Neo-Realist worldview and its emphasis on the ‘anarchic’ nature of the international system. Different worldviews give rise to different conceptions of security. This is not something which is usually acknowledged in a Realist/Neo-Realist perspective, which assumes ‘national security’ to be a universal value. From a Coxian-critical perspective this worldview is itself derived from the theories of white, Western, and pre-dominantly male academics working within a particular context. ‘Security’, from the point of view of a refugee in Sudan, for example, is likely to mean something very different. Expanding the point, theories that challenge Neo-Realism’s emphasis on the state as *the* referent object consequently give rise to different conceptions of security.

A broadened security agenda

CSS argues that military force, although important, is not the only potential threat to security, that other threats are equally worthy of consideration, and that the end of the Cold War allowed space to give consideration to these alternative threats that were generally marginalised during the Cold War. The first academic to put forward this argument was Barry Buzan in his book *People, States and Fear*. Buzan (1991) argues that security analysts

needed to think about security in five different ‘Sectors’: military, but also environmental, economic, political, and societal. The basic point that those within the CSS-project borrowed from Buzan was that in the contemporary world, people *are* threatened by a multitude of issues: yes war, but also poverty, famine, political oppression, and environmental degradation to name but a few.

The individual as the ‘referent object’ of security

Accepting for the moment a working definition of security as the ‘absence of threats’, the concept of ‘referent object’ denotes that which is threatened. Within traditional security studies, the identification of the appropriate referent object of security is relatively straightforward: security studies is all about securing one particular object (the state) from forces that threaten its existence (most prominently war). Although those within CSS concur with Buzan that security studies needs to widen its focus to include non-military dimensions, they argue that he does not go far enough because Buzan’s work still exclusively focused on the state as its referent object. As Richard Wyn Jones noted, the title *People, States and Fear* is arresting but also misleading. ‘“States and Fear” is a more accurate representation of Barry Buzan’s ultimate focus in that work’, Wyn Jones argues (1999: 112) because Buzan’s broadening only accounted for the ways in which non-military issues such as environmental degradation and economic crisis might threaten the state. As we saw previously, CSS takes such state-centrism to be problematic. By contrast, what Booth and Wyn Jones want to argue is that military, environmental, economic, political, and societal threats affect *people* in the first instance (see Chapter 8). States are, at base, human communities; therefore the ultimate referents of security should be the human beings that make up the state, not the state itself in some abstract sense. In a similar vein, Bill McSweeney has asserted that ‘security must make sense at the basic level of the individual human being for it to make sense at the international level’ (1999: 16). In short, proponents of CSS argue that security, fundamentally, should refer ultimately to the ‘corporeal, material existence and experiences of human beings’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 23).

Emancipation, community, identity

These three elements – security as a derivative concept, the idea of a broadened security agenda, and challenging the assumption of the state as the referent object of security – might be said to be common points of discussion in all the ‘critical’ approaches to security that we look at in this book. They are addressed not only by the ‘Welsh School’ formed around Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, but also (albeit to differing degrees) by poststructuralists, proponents of securitization theory, gender, and postcolonial approaches. However, the idea of security as a ‘derivative concept’ applies as much to the ‘Critical’ approach to security as it does to its traditional counterpart. As well as originating in ideas drawn from Peace Studies and the ‘critical turn’ in International Relations theory, the argument for thinking of security as ‘emancipation’ links CSS to the broader tradition of Critical Theory and several concepts and ideas derived from Marxian thought.

Box 1.3 CSS and critical theory

Although associated with several strands of political thought as well a variety of social movements (see Nederveen Pieterse 1992), the concept of *emancipation* is usually seen to hold special significance within Marxian thought. At the heart of Marx's philosophy was an attempt to rethink the relationship between 'freedom' and 'necessity'. Marx believed that under relations of capitalism, human beings subject themselves to a range of unnecessary constraints (servitude, wage labour, exploitation), which appear as 'necessities' but from which we can and should become emancipated. The concept was later taken up by a group of German social theorists in the interwar years known as the Frankfurt School – inclusive of thinkers such as Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) and Jürgen Habermas (1929–) (for an overview, see Held 2004) – who sought to develop a form of 'Critical Theory' aimed at illuminating the prospects for emancipation in society.

The Critical Theory tradition, in a very broad sense, looks to identify those aspects of modern life, culture, and technology that constrain and enable human freedom, and the work of Richard Wyn Jones (1999) in particular looks to this tradition to inform the 'Critical' in Critical Security Studies. The CSS conception of emancipation is not built around a static or monolithic vision of an ideal society: 'even if a more emancipated order is brought into existence, the process of emancipation remains incomplete. There is always room for improvement; there is always unfinished business in the task of emancipation' (Wyn Jones 1999: 78). Hence the concept of *immanent critique*, also associated with the Frankfurt School, has come to be central to the CSS-project both as a normative and methodological orientation. Broadly speaking, the term refers to a strategy utilising critique in order to identify potentialities that are immanent but as yet unfulfilled in any given theory or historical context by highlighting inherent contradictions. Thus, for example, the CSS-project might be regarded at a general level as an immanent critique of security studies that seeks to retrieve and expand the potential of 'security' from its more conservative statist definitions by highlighting the fact that 'national security' regularly impinges upon the security of individuals.

As well as building on the three elements outlined in the previous section, Booth and Wyn Jones seek to add a fourth principle: the principle of 'emancipation'. They argue that Critical Security Studies should have a purpose, and that its purpose should be the transformation of society itself into a more secure and emancipated form.

Emancipation

At base, proponents of CSS argue that the corporeal, material existence of human beings should be the central focus of security studies: that is, security should ultimately be concerned with the real world security of human beings. Consequently, for CSS, the study of security should seek to illuminate the wide range of constraints on human well-being that exist in many parts of the world, and challenge the forms of security knowledge and practices that perpetuate these constraints.

Locating this goal within a broader tradition of Critical Theory (see Box 1.3), Ken Booth outlined the contours of an 'emancipation-oriented' approach to security in a seminal 1991 article entitled 'Security and Emancipation'. Here Booth argues that:

'Security' means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those

constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security.

(319)

What Booth argues here is that if we broaden the security agenda to include issues like poverty and education, then we are necessarily getting involved in the general well-being of societies (hence the ‘broadening’ and ‘extending’ of security are inherently related). People will feel secure not just through protection from military threats, but also through protection from the threat of poverty, ill-health, environmental degradation, and so on. Similarly, Richard Wyn Jones argues that the welfare of individual human beings – that is their freedom from both military and non-military threats – needs to be placed at the centre of the security studies agenda. We should study security, Booth and Wyn Jones argue, in order to learn more about how individuals can maximise their freedom from threats. The more secure people are from the threats of war, poverty, and oppression, the more emancipated they will be and vice versa.

This necessarily leads to a more expansive conception of security that is more than simply ‘survival’. In the traditional approach to security, state survival is assumed to equate to security for all. Yet for the various reasons outlined in the previous section CSS critiques opposed this assumption, and the tendency to conflate the concepts of ‘security’ and ‘survival’. Booth argues that ‘Survival is being alive; security is living’, or, as he puts it elsewhere, security is equivalent to *survival-plus*: security is ‘an instrumental value in that it allows individuals and groups (to a relative degree) to establish the conditions of existence with some expectations of constructing a human life beyond the merely animal’ (Booth 2007: 106–107). Survival merely implies the continuance of existence in conditions where life is threatened, whereas security denotes a genuine absence of threats and the consequent maximisation not only of an individual’s life-chances but also of their life-choices. Booth and Wyn Jones therefore argue that when we think about security, we are also engaging in fundamental questions about nature of political life and, specifically, the attendant questions of roles of community and identity in the achievement of security.

Community and identity

The broadening of the security agenda and the ‘referent object’ debate have opened up a lively debate between the various critical approaches to security as to what the referent object(s) of security should be. As is discussed in Chapter 5, the focus of the ‘Welsh School’ on the human being as the ultimate referent of security has left it open to charges of methodological individualism. Wyn Jones (1999) argues that this need not necessarily follow from a focus on human emancipation. He recognises that individual identity is a central aspect of what it means to be human, and that by consequence the constitutive relationship between ‘identity, security and community’ requires CSS to engage with the nature of political groupings that exist within concrete historical circumstances:

Identity never occurs in the singular ... The human condition is one of overlapping identities; that is, each person has a number of different identities, all (potentially) in flux, and all of which come into play at different times and in different situations. Thus a focus on individuals strongly discourages any tendency to reify human identity; it points instead to the complex, multifaceted, and even fluid nature of identity.

(1999: 116)

Although the normative basis of CSS centres around the security of the individual human being, Booth and Wyn Jones recognise that individuals do not exist in vacuum; rather, ‘individuals’ are constituted in large part by their membership of overlapping forms of political community. The question of security is, in practice, underpinned by questions of who ‘we’ are and what ‘we’ want to be secured from. In this sense, Booth argues, ‘Community is the site of security’ (2007: 278).

However, the CSS approach to community is also a cautious one. Rather than celebrating ‘difference’ for its own sake, CSS argues that it is *emancipatory* communities – based around inclusionary and egalitarian notions of identity – that should be promoted over communities that are predicated on internal relations of domination (such as patriarchy) and chauvinistic forms of identity (such as notions of national superiority). Fundamentally, human emancipation – both that of individual humans and humanity in general – provides the guide both for relations within communities and between them. Hence ‘As a political orientation [CSS] is informed by the aim of enhancing world security through emancipatory politics and networks of community at all levels, including the potential community of all communities – common humanity’ (Booth 2007: 31).

Reconceptualising security, reconceptualising practice

Appeals to emancipation and common humanity are all very well, but even those operating within CSS have openly recognised that ‘critical theorists must go beyond generalised exhortations concerning emancipation, empowerment, freedom, and happiness. If critical theory is to have practical relevance, it must reflect on what emancipation means in terms of actual institutions and relationships’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 76). A theoretical commitment to emancipation can only be made good by a commitment to emancipatory practices, and the Marxian idea of *praxis* (see Box 1.4) indicates that theory is informed and reformed by engagement with practical issues and, conversely, that concrete situations are affected and improved by new theoretical insights (what Wyn Jones terms as a ‘theory–practice nexus’).

Box 1.4 CSS and Gramsci

As well as Frankfurt School Critical Theory, CSS also draws in part upon the thinking of the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), in particular Gramsci’s thinking on the role of intellectuals and the relationship between theory and practice (Gramsci 1971). Taking seriously Marx’s admonition to not only think about the world but to change it, as Gramsci does, proponents of CSS have focused on *praxis* – the idea that theory and practice are inextricably intertwined – and the potential role of intellectuals in advancing emancipatory change. Critical scholars, Wyn Jones argues, should ‘become the *organic intellectuals* of critical social movements when they exist, or encourage the creation of the political space necessary for their emergence if they do not’. As opposed to ‘traditional’ intellectuals, who regard the study of security as relatively autonomous from its subject matter, the concerns of organic intellectuals grow ‘organically’ out of the everyday struggles for security endured by ‘the voiceless, the unrepresented and the powerless’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 167).

So what strategies are open to those seeking to advance emancipation? How does ‘an emancipatory approach to thinking about security interact with and impinge upon emancipatory praxis?’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 118). Here proponents of CSS offer general principles rather than a set framework for action. The reason for this is that CSS suggests an under-

standing of emancipation as ‘a process rather than an end point, a direction rather than a destination’. The constraints and insecurities suffered by individuals vary across time and space; hence it is not possible to specify with finality abstract criteria for emancipatory action, rather these must be developed in conjunction with an analysis of specific contexts. At a more general level, Richard Wyn Jones has suggested that proponents of Critical Security Studies should seek to act as organic intellectuals (see Box 1.4) that promote progressive social change. The main recommendation from proponents of the CSS-project has been:

through their educational activities, proponents of critical security studies should aim to provide support for those social movements that promote emancipatory social change. By providing a critique of the prevailing order and legitimating alternative views, critical theorists can perform a valuable role in supporting the struggles of social movements.

(Wyn Jones 1999: 161)

There has been a general reluctance to specify exactly what ‘support’ of social movements might consist of beyond this critical-educative function. However, the goal of emancipatory change itself does indicate that some alternative visions and social movements are more preferable than others. ‘Let us consider the ending of apartheid in South Africa’, Wyn Jones offers as an example (see also Box 1.5):

Although the citizens of that country cannot be adjudged to be free after the overthrow of the apartheid system, surely they are freer. Although the establishment of liberal democracy there offers no panacea, it is a better system than the totalitarian one it has replaced. (1999: 43)

Box 1.5 CSS and the case of Southern Africa

Among the attempts to offer practical application and illustration of the CSS-project, Ken Booth and Peter Vale’s (1997) work on Southern Africa remains one of the most instructive accounts. As well as the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa representing the result of a concrete emancipatory struggle, Booth and Vale argue that the historical experience of South Africa and the region more generally highlights several of the key contentions of CSS:

On the perils of statism:

The states of southern Africa ... do not match the textbook images of Anglo-American political science. These states have not stood as reliable watch-keepers over the security of their inhabitants. In the southern African context the state is often the problem, not the solution.

(333)

A broadened security agenda:

The threat of food scarcity is, for many, more fundamental than the threat of military violence ... In [this] and other examples (drugs, violence, falling investment, and the threat to the fulfilment of peoples’ expectations in South Africa) it is evident that the major security threats in the region are intimately interconnected.

(337)

On the referent object debate:

The security of the apartheid regime [...] meant the insecurity of both the majority population of the South African state and the neighbours of their state. National security for South Africa meant security for the white minority, not the vast majority of citizens in the state.

(334)

On the theory–practice nexus:

No small part of the strategic license that enabled South Africa’s minority government to destabilize the region in the 1970s and 1980s was the result of generation upon generation of South Africa’s white youth learning – being taught – to look upon their neighbours as inferior.

(331)

On the role of (organic) intellectuals:

Critical security students have an important role to play, by raising the salience of different security conceptions, referents, threats, principles, institutions, and timetables [...] In the long run, security in the form of peace, order and justice must come from within the people(s) of the region. At present they do not have much of a voice in their own affairs. Consequently [C]ritical [S]ecurity [S]tudies must engage with practical politics in Southern Africa and speak up for those without security.

(354)

Booth has argued that:

We can begin or continue pursuing emancipation in what we research, in how we teach, in what we put on conference agendas, in how much we support Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Oxfam and other groups identifying with a global community, and in how we deal with each other and with students. And in pursuing emancipation, the bases of real security are being established.

(1991: 326)

In this sense for Booth, emancipation is itself ‘*a practice of resistance ... a framework for attempting to actualise both nearer-term and longer-term emancipatory goals through strategic and tactical political action based on immanent critique*’ (2007: 112, emphasis in original). This approach is captured in Booth’s concept of ‘Emancipatory Realism’, where the Marxian origins of ‘emancipation’ are filtered through Kantian idealism and a focus on ‘gradual reforms’ as ‘the only means of approaching the supreme political good’ (2007: 87). In other words, scholars of security should seek to identify and foster elements of progressive social change through their work as part of a gradualist, non-violent strategy for emancipation that is ultimately more realistic than rigid blueprints for utopia that – as in the case of the French and Russian revolutions that heralded the ‘Terror’ and ‘purges’ respectively – often end up generating even more intense cycles of violence and insecurity.

CSS and its critics

As summed up by Richard Wyn Jones (1999: 5), CSS is an approach that:

- ‘eschews statism’
- recognises that non-military issues have ‘a place on the security agenda’ as well as military issues
- and ‘anchors the theory and practice of security in a broader concern with human emancipation’.

Most fundamentally, following Cox’s contention that ‘all theory is for someone and for some purpose’, proponents of the CSS-project argue that Critical Security Studies is ‘for “the voiceless, the unrepresented, and the powerless” [in world politics], and its purpose is their emancipation’ (Wyn Jones 1999: 159).

However, the Welsh School emphasis on ‘emancipation’ is both a distinguishing and divisive feature. As Ken Booth puts it, ‘emancipation is at the contested heart of Critical Security Studies’ (2005b: 181). The introduction of the concept of emancipation into security studies is at the heart of the CSS-project for its proponents, but they also recognise that its introduction generates a series of further commitments and complexities. CSS attaches a particular meaning (emancipation) and referent object (the individual human being) to the concept of security. It thus challenges the state-centric definition of security, but also the idea sometimes put forward that security is ‘an essentially contested’ concept (see Baldwin 1997: 10). The particular threats to an individual may be multifaceted and change over time, and in this sense insecurities are contingent upon time and place, but security is assumed to have a basic meaning that relates to the establishment of freedom from those threats. ‘Security’ thus ultimately has a positive connotation within the CSS perspective when it can be related to the improvement of individual well-being. In this sense the CSS-project has been seen by its proponents to entail a commitment to progressive politics and thus, ultimately, to the spirit of the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment (see Wyn Jones 2005 and especially Booth 2007).

The concept of Emancipation is thus one of the most far-reaching but also one of the most controversial ideas associated with CSS or Welsh School security studies, and is generally seen to distinguish the Welsh School from the other ‘critical approaches’ to security. As noted in Box 1.1, the general convention within security studies is to distinguish the ‘Welsh School’ of Critical Security Studies by using the upper case (‘CSS’). Other approaches to security and other theorists also identify themselves as ‘critical’, but often use ‘critical security studies’ in the lower case partly to disassociate themselves from the approach put forward by Booth and Wyn Jones.

The most fundamental criticism of CSS is that its commitment to ‘emancipation’ is misguided, and this is a primary reason why several other critical approaches to security are seen to be distinct from the Critical Security Studies project. Many poststructuralist approaches to security argue that we can still be critical of traditional approaches to security without invoking a broad goal like emancipation (see Chapter 4). Emancipation, they argue, is a potentially dangerous ‘meta-narrative’ – a term often used in poststructuralist thought to denote overarching explanations of the world, which it regards sceptically (Lyotard 1984) – that is particular to a Western philosophical tradition rooted in European Enlightenment and liberal thought. There is no universal definition of what emancipation is (and many poststructuralists argue that the pretension to universalism is part of the problem), and definitions of emancipation may be used to legitimate illiberal practices. Even sympathetic critics of the CSS-project,

such as Hayward Alker, note with caution the tainted historical association of ‘emancipation’ both with projects for Marxist revolution and Western hegemony and liberal imperialism at the global level (Alker 2005: 189). Others, such as Mohammed Ayoob have suggested the potential inappropriateness of the concept of emancipation to non-Western security contexts, where ‘interpreted as the right of every ethnic group to self-determination, emancipation can turn out to be a recipe for grave disorder and anarchy’ (1997: 127).

In response to such criticisms, Richard Wyn Jones has argued that the distance between the CSS-project and poststructuralist approaches to security has been overdrawn (Wyn Jones 2005: 215). All critical approaches to security, and indeed the very notion of critique, he argues, are implicitly underpinned by some notion of thinking or doing security better by the very fact that they all seek to problematise and criticise traditional approaches and practices. In this sense, Wyn Jones argues, poststructuralist approaches to security are necessarily committed to some notion of emancipation – albeit emancipation with a small ‘e’ rather than the visions of ‘Emancipation’ that originate more directly from Enlightenment thought. Similarly, rather than simply rejecting the idea of emancipation as inapplicable outside of a Western context, Alker recommends instead that:

we still need to achieve the fuller inclusion of multiple Western *and* non-Western perspectives on the meanings of freedom, without giving up the distinctive and attractive appeal to human improvement and emancipatory development that is so central to the ethical/global concerns of the critical security studies project.

(2005: 200, emphasis in original)

For some critics, though, the CSS-project is problematic not for its use of the concept of emancipation but for the linkage it assumes *between* security and emancipation. By simultaneously advocating a broadened security agenda and a symbiotic relationship between security and emancipation, the implication of the CSS-project is that more security is required across a range of issues to achieve human improvement. In short, it assumes that security (of the individual) is a ‘good thing’. A number of thinkers, whilst acknowledging the need for a broadened security agenda, worry that this encourages the practice of simply ‘hyphenating’ security to other issues: that is, the tendency to attach the concept of security to other issues, such as environmental degradation in the notion of ‘environmental security’. For some viewing the environment in terms of security is fundamentally unhelpful (this debate is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). More broadly, proponents of Securitization Theory argue that because ‘security’ carries a specific military connotation historically, its application to non-military issues such as migration and economics can be highly misguided. Rather than emancipation and security being two sides of the same coin, they argue that the logic of security may be inappropriate to certain issues that we should instead look to ‘desecuritize’, as is discussed in Chapter 5.

Others critics of CSS argue that struggles for security and struggles for emancipation – in terms of the achievement of equality at a social level – should be kept separate rather than conflated.

When equated with security, emancipation becomes problematic as it can no longer envisage social transformations outside of the logic of security [...] The struggle for security is re-styled as a struggle for emancipation, without any qualms about the relationship between emancipation and security.

(Aradau 2004: 397–398)

Once again, this is linked to the idea that security has, historically, been linked with a particular type of politics that has often inhibited rather than advanced struggles for political equality (think of the use of police and other state forces against civil rights protesters in the name of ‘national security’).

As an alternative to the equivalence of security and emancipation, then, Claudia Aradau suggests that Critical approaches to security might look to the understandings of emancipation found in the work of the French post-Marxists Jacques Ranciere, Alain Badiou, and Étienne Balibar where emancipation is considered as distinct from security and ‘is linked to democratic politics, extensively defined in terms of equality and fairness, voice and slow procedures open to public scrutiny’ (2004: 401). This alternative vision of emancipation is rooted within a broader critique of contemporary post-liberal capitalism in post-Marxist thought and, in a related vein, some have criticised the CSS-project for failing to say enough on the functioning of contemporary capitalism as a major source of individual insecurities. Criticising Ken Booth’s recent calls for a capitalism more appropriate to individual security globally, Rens van Munster has argued that ‘The world would certainly benefit from a more humane capitalism, but emancipation cannot happen through dialogue and the extension of rights alone. It also involves concrete struggles in the realm of work, production and property relations’ (2008: 439). The implication here is, as has been argued elsewhere (Herring 2009), that CSS is insufficiently attentive to the economic dimension originally so prominent within Marxian historical materialism.

Conclusion

Critics of the CSS-project have highlighted several of its potential limitations but in the process may also point to some of its own inherent potentialities, particularly in regard to the general idea of relating Critical Theory and security studies. The work of Booth and Wyn Jones is suggestive of one possible variation of that relationship, but there may be other ways of relating Critical Theory to security, for example in application to environmental degradation, human security, and military technology, which can usefully enhance our understanding of key issues (see Chapters 6, 8, and 10).

To its detractors the CSS-project remains fatefully wedded to an Enlightenment progressivism whose time has come and gone, a connection that recent restatements of CSS have tended to stress and defend even more forcefully. Some readers, after moving on to later chapters, may become more convinced that this is an inherent limitation of the CSS approach. Others, however, will no doubt be attracted to the innate appeal of an approach that focuses upon the concrete insecurities of individual human beings globally, and deals head-on with the issue of how the study of security can be focused to help address those insecurities. For those readers, the CSS-project may well constitute an attractive basis for attempting to change global security rather than simply thinking about it.

Key points

- The ‘Welsh School’ of Critical Security Studies (or CSS) is built in large part around a critique of state-centric approaches to security – that is, approaches to security that tend to focus exclusively on military threats to the state.
- Proponents of CSS argue that, ultimately, human beings are the most important referent object(s) of security; as a result, CSS adopts an explicitly ‘emancipatory

orientation' – focused on the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do – as the key to achieving security.

- Rather than offering fixed blueprints for emancipation, CSS suggests that the form of emancipatory practices must be contingent upon the identification of the particular insecurities experienced by groups and individuals within a given context.
- The CSS focus on 'emancipation' is seen to distinguish it from other critical approaches to security, and CSS has attracted a significant range of criticisms over its definition of emancipation, its focus on the individual, and its equation of emancipation with security.

Discussion points

- Is the CSS critique of state-centric definitions of security well-founded or misguided?
- How and why has the so-called 'Welsh School' of Critical Security Studies sought to utilise 'Critical Theory' in thinking about security?
- Is CSS right to focus on the individual as the referent object of security?
- What function does the concept of 'immanent critique' play within CSS?
- 'The problem with emancipation is not that it is idealistic, it is that it is dangerous.' Discuss.

Guide to further reading

- Ken Booth (1991) 'Security and Emancipation', *Review of International Studies*, 17(4): 313–326.
The touchstone work in terms of setting out the idea of an emancipation-oriented approach to security.
- Richard Wyn Jones (1999) *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).
Develops the idea of an emancipation-oriented approach further, but in the process roots CSS more explicitly within the tradition and ideas of Critical Theory.
- Ken Booth (2005) (ed.) *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).
An edited collection with various contributions that offer restatements of the CSS approach, sympathetic critiques, and applications of the principles of CSS to empirical issues.
- Ken Booth (2007) *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Provides both a trenchant defence and restatement of the CSS-project and attempts to use it as the basis of a more expansive 'Theory of World Security'.
- Bill McSweeney (1999) *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Although not usually counted within the CSS-project, McSweeney's account offers several interesting overlaps and provides useful comparative reading.
- Michael Sheehan (2005) *International Security: An Analytical Survey* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).
Makes the case for theorising security with a concern for human emancipation, justice, and peace in the context of an overview of the field of security studies.

2 Feminist and gender approaches to security

Abstract

This chapter introduces a range of critiques of both traditional and critical security studies from diverse feminist and gender perspectives. It begins by examining the gendered politics of security studies as a field that has typically marginalised women and the significance of gender structures more generally. A variety of responses to these issues is explored, beginning with liberal and standpoint feminist perspectives that attempt to make women more visible in the context of international security. The move to increase the visibility of women is not free from controversy, however. Some gender theorists, particularly those associated with poststructuralist thought, question the very possibility of referring to the views and experiences of 'women' per se. Concerned with avoiding the essentialised categories of 'man' and 'women', this alternative work deconstructs gender claims, problematises sex and gender as discursive constructs, and politicises the (re)production of different gendered subjectivities. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the various ways in which feminist and gender approaches have stimulated new lines of enquiry in critical security studies.

Introduction

Women and gender structures have long been marginalised in the study of security. In part this is due to their relative invisibility on the terrain mapped out by dominant traditional perspectives. Yet, 'critical' work, including other perspectives in Part I of this book, has also been charged with taking gendered assumptions for granted. Over the past three decades, this gender bias has been identified, interrogated, and resisted by a collection of feminist and gender approaches within the field. This scholarship is nevertheless far from united in terms of its aims, method, or implications, and reflects an array of related positions in political theory. Most notably, writers influenced by poststructuralism have questioned the liberal feminist move to simply 'bring' women into security studies. For some poststructural gender theorists, for example, the categories of 'man' and 'women' are radically unstable and caution should be taken in essentialising and universalising notions of 'female' (and 'male') experience. Liberal standpoint feminists have countered this by emphasising the focus on what they consider to be the unique subjugation of women as a strategy for generating political programmes. As we shall see, there is increasing diversity of scholarship associated with feminist and gender perspectives. Yet, while it is important to note that there is no consensus about what a 'critical' response to gender inequalities *should* be, these debates have opened up new and important terrains of research in critical security studies relating to broader issues involving identity, violence, and justice.

Box 2.1 Key concepts in feminist and gender approaches to security

Feminism: Relates historically to women's struggle for equality with men. Also refers to a diverse range of thought that draws attention to women's knowledge and experience.

Sex: Usually refers to the coding of bodies as either 'male' or 'female' on the basis of biological attributes, but often critiqued by poststructuralists as another form of essentialism.

Gender: A socially constructed identity that categorises subjects as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'.

Femininity: Attributes associated with a female identity (emotionality, dependence, caring); the social construction of women as 'women'.

Masculinity: Attributes associated with a male identity (strength, autonomy, aggression); the social construction of men as 'men'.

Standpoint feminism: A perspective that emphasises the importance of taking real women's experiences as the basis for critiquing patriarchy.

Liberal feminism: An approach that seeks legal, economic, political, and social equality between men and women.

Patriarchy: Refers to the hierarchical arrangement of social, economic, and political structures whereby men are privileged over women.

Performativity: The idea, developed by Judith Butler, that gendered identities are not natural, but produced through being acted out in social life.

The gendered politics of security studies

Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the United States from 1933 to 1945, once commented that 'too often the great decisions are originated and given form in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression' (quoted in Tickner 1992: 1). It is not difficult to see why she said this. The *dramatis personae* in the theatre of global security – state leaders, diplomats, soldiers, and international civil servants – typically have at least one thing in common: they are almost always *men*. Moreover, the persistence of global gender inequalities means that, despite some progress since Roosevelt's era, international politics is still very much a 'man's world' (see Box 2.2).

Box 2.2 Global gender inequalities

In 2000 the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs published a report, entitled *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, which illustrates the extent of gender inequality between men and women in global politics. Despite outnumbering men in most regions (with the exception of some parts of Asia), women comprise only one-third of the global workforce. While this actually represents an historic high, women's earnings remain on average only between 50 and 80 per cent of men's. Women are more likely to work in roles with little or no authority. They also experience more – and longer – periods of unemployment. For this reason it has been argued that 'poverty has a woman's face: of 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70 percent are women' (UNDP 1994: 4).

Resource scarcity also affects men and women differently (see also Chapter 6). For example, in the developing world women are more disadvantaged by water scarcity because they are the main water carriers. In the dry season women spend between 3.5 and 28 hours per week collecting water. Moreover, the effects of water shortage and poor sanitation result in a

disproportionate burden of unpaid female labour in families across the global South. Part of the reason for their disadvantaged position in the global political economy is that women have fewer educational opportunities – two-thirds of the world's 876 million illiterate are female. More generally, there is evidence to suggest that women suffer worse human rights abuse than men. In some African states over 50 per cent of all women and girls have undergone genital mutilation. Female refugees, constituting half of the global migrant population, are also more vulnerable to sexual violence in camps and resettlement.

The possibility of tackling gender inequality is not assisted by the fact that women's representation in government still lags far behind men globally. To some extent there has been increased representation of women on the world stage since 1945: the first female Prime Minister was Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon and Sri Lanka in 1960; Margaret Thatcher became the first female British Prime Minister in 1979; and in the US three women have served in the position of Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright was the first in 1996, followed by Condoleezza Rice in 2005, and Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2009). Despite this seeming 'progress', however, equal representation between men and women is still a long way off, particularly in senior positions in government (only 10 per cent of representatives are female), policy making, the armed forces, and diplomacy.

In 1979 the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the 'Women's Convention'). This Convention aimed to shape national policies in order to guarantee equality between men and women, especially in terms of access to education, employment rights, and marriage. The Women's Convention has received considerable international support with 89 per cent of all states having ratified the agreement. That said, however, 29 per cent of states expressed reservations during the ratification process and there is considerable regional variation in terms of commitment to the Women's Convention. While 100 per cent of states in Latin America and 90 per cent of states in Europe and North America ratified the Convention, these figures contrast with just 35 per cent of states in the Middle East where no government has fully adopted it. Therefore, although patriarchy is a global problem, gender inequalities are manifested in different ways locally. This illustrates an important wider point: various gender inequalities are most acute in certain parts of the world. For example, 1 in 16 women die from pregnancy-related causes in Africa compared to 1 in 65 in Asia and 1 in 1400 in Europe. In India, 75 per cent of women have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner, whereas in New Zealand this figure stands at 17 per cent.

The dominant view that the realm of the international is a 'masculine sphere of life' has meant that women have been marginalised in the study of security (Enloe 2000: 4). Much of the earlier feminist work in security studies argued that this bias resulted from the dominance of various strands of political Realism in defining what studying 'security' in 'international politics' means. Indeed, with a 'top-down' focus on political elites, the state, and the state system, Realists have been criticised by many prominent feminists for constructing a worldview that is profoundly *unrealistic* in failing to take half of the human population into consideration. This worldview has meant that, while the actions, careers, and policies of men have been taken for granted as legitimate objects of study, the experiences of women, by contrast, have not been considered worthy of investigation in their own right (Enloe 2000; Tickner 1992). Rather, for the most part, the tacit assumption in Realist-oriented security studies has been that men's experiences are somehow representative of human experience as a whole. Feminist and gender theorists of all hues thus converge on the basic point that research in security has been overwhelmingly the study *of men by men*:

Quite simply, and with deadly monotony, women's systematic *oppression* – and insecurity – is not taken seriously; to the extent that it is 'visible', either gender hierarchy is justified by 'nature is destiny' beliefs, mystified by apparent 'equal opportunities' options, and/or its transformation is deferred until 'after the revolution'.

(Peterson 1992: 49)

In this way, feminists have sought to emphasise that security studies are not separate from but fundamentally a part of broader gender dynamics in global politics. As such, the gendered practices of sovereignty, political identity, and labour considered in Box 2.2 above have translated into a systematic bias in the way that international security has conventionally been analysed.

At base, the aim of feminist and gendered approaches to security has been to identify, interrogate, and resist the multifarious ways in which the views, interests, and actions of men have been privileged over those of women in contemporary social life. It is precisely this privileging that the concept of 'patriarchy' refers to (see Box 2.1). While this minimal commitment to a critical engagement with patriarchy is shared by feminist and gender approaches, it is nevertheless important to emphasise that in this chapter we are dealing with a very diverse and heterogeneous body of work. Indeed, there is no singular 'feminist' or 'gender' perspective on international security, as such. On the contrary, as we shall see in the course of the discussion, there are areas of huge disagreement concerning the identity of 'women' and what should be done in response to gender inequalities in both theoretical and practical contexts. In other words, although feminist and gender scholarship is bound by a common criticism of patriarchy, the object, method, and consequences of critique vary considerably. Such disagreement is not at all surprising, however, and many of the positions within feminist/gender security studies mirror the broader field of perspectives in social and political thought (see Table 2.1).

As well as an increasing diversity of perspectives, the targets for critique have also been extended within feminist and gender approaches to security studies. Whereas earlier work focused primarily on the poverty of traditional approaches to security such as political Realism, various critics have more recently pointed to what they consider to be the patriarchal and/or gendered assumptions of some of the more critically oriented viewpoints

Table 2.1 Key positions in feminist and gender approaches to security studies

	<i>Focus points</i>	<i>Implications</i>	<i>Exponents</i>
Liberal feminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the women in security? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make women more visible in security studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynthia Enloe
Standpoint feminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes the views and experiences of women in global politics as basis for theorising global security relations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical analysis of views and experiences of women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Ann Tickner
Poststructural gender approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No special ontological status given to 'woman'. • 'Woman' (and 'man', 'sex') are discursive constructs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of instability of gender categories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V. Spike Peterson

explored in Part I of this book. Lene Hansen, for example, has argued that Securitization Theory (see Chapter 5) presupposes a situation in which speech is indeed possible. Yet, the very problem is that many women, like the mythical Little Mermaid in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, are prevented from being subjects worthy of speaking. Thus, Hansen accuses the Copenhagen School, and other approaches reliant on the concept of securitization, of lacking an understanding of gender-based *in*securities (Hansen 2000). Furthermore, poststructural feminist and gender approaches are suspicious of the possibility of applying abstract notions of 'emancipation' associated with the 'Welsh School' (see Chapter 1) in response to the patriarchal structures of global security.

Making women visible in international security

In 1989 US academic Cynthia Enloe published the first edition of *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, which has since become widely acknowledged as a landmark text in feminist security studies. Writing from a broadly liberal feminist perspective, Enloe argued that 'if we employ only the conventional, ungendered compass to chart international politics, we are likely to end up mapping a landscape peopled only by men' (2000: 1). Ironically, she claimed, 'making women invisible' led to a profoundly unrealistic caricature of security relations, because it 'hides the workings of both femininity and masculinity in international politics' (2000: 11). Against the tide of 'malestream' Realist dominated approaches, therefore, Enloe dared to ask: Where are the women in the study of security?

Enloe's research strategy was to focus on marginal women in order to show how the conduct of international security to some extent depends upon men's control over them. One of Enloe's case studies was the relationship between women and nationalism. She analysed the way in which, via their roles as teachers in missionary schools, women performed a vital role in helping to establish core nationalist values and institutions central to the US colonial project, for example in the Philippines during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (2000: 48). Through the transmission and cultivation of certain Western gendered ideals, such as notions of 'respectability', the US attempted to shape the hearts and minds of the colonised. Indeed, according to Enloe, the notion of 'lady-like' behaviour was very much seen as the 'mainstay of imperialist civilisation' (48). Moreover, in the highly gendered context of imperial rule, relationships between men and women were either tolerated or condemned according to how they were perceived to impact upon prevailing relations of power: 'Sexual liaisons between colonial men and local women were usually winked at; affairs between colonial women and local men were threats to imperial order' (48).

Another gendered site investigated by Enloe is the military base. By the mid-1980s there were around 3000 military bases across the globe controlled by one state in another state's territory. Enloe analysed the various gendered practices through which bases are produced as 'normal' places in order to make the lives of 'base women' more visible in security studies. Her study considered interactions between bases and local economies/infrastructures and she concluded that 'the normalcy that sustains a military base in a local community rests on ideas about masculinity and femininity' (2000: 67). Though usually unnoticed, the unpaid domestic work of women was fundamental to the assimilation of the base in local communities and to the support and furtherance of their husbands' military careers. The gendered division of labour at bases typifies the association of femininity with the domestic sphere and masculinity with the international domain considered above.

Moreover, the presumption among many base families that sons will pursue a military career and daughters will stay at home as military wives illustrates how these values and the prevailing gender order they sustain are reproduced from generation to generation.

The marginalised position of women in international political economy, and the male dependency on this subjugation, is also explored by Enloe across various contexts. Via a gendered history of the banana, for example, Enloe demonstrates how even the most seemingly masculine of work environments, the banana plantation, fundamentally relies on women: 'behind every all-male banana plantation stand scores of women performing unpaid domestic and productive labour' (2000: 137). The labour provided by women is almost always unpaid or low paid, seasonal, and with little or no training or chance for promotion. With few other options, women end up supporting the very forms of agricultural labour patterns that perpetuate patriarchal landownership and reinforce their subjugation.

Enloe's analysis was considered path-breaking in security studies because it took the feminist insight that the 'personal is political' and applied it for the first time to the realm of international. In this way Enloe undermined the prevalent notion that the private sphere was somehow 'out of bounds' in the study of security. According to Enloe, the realisation that the personal is political is profoundly 'disturbing' because it means that 'relationships we once imagined were private or merely social are in fact infused with power, usually unequal power backed up by public authority' (2000: 195). By insisting that security impinges not only on the public but also the private sphere, Enloe was able to bring issues formally marginal to the centre stage of the study of the state and international security more generally (for example the politics of marriage, the role of unpaid domestic labour, the patriarchy of landownership). The insight that the functioning of the international relies on 'private' divisions of labour complicates and personalises traditional approaches to foreign affairs and security. In making women more visible in global security relations Enloe drew attention to the importance of struggles between masculinity and femininity in making the world go round. Consequently, her analysis highlights the way in which gendered structures are intrinsically infused with relations of power: 'It has taken power to deprive women of land titles and leave them little choice but to sexually service soldiers and banana workers' (2000: 197–198).

While a classic text in the formation of feminist security studies, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* has been subject to a number of criticisms as the field has developed over the past three decades. The primary critique of Enloe and the liberal feminist position with which her work is associated has focused on the proximity between this perspective and the theoretical assumptions underpinning traditional security studies. Although Enloe defines her approach in contradistinction to 'malestream' political Realism, on closer inspection there are several areas of common overlap. Most fundamentally, Enloe does not question the positivist foundations of Realist approaches, which assume that analysts can observe and detail the nature of security and insecurity. On the contrary, she accepts that there is such a thing as the 'reality' of global security relations and claims that making women more visible offers a 'more realistic approach to international politics' (2000: 199). This has led some post-positivist critics to argue that hers is merely an 'add women and stir' perspective that takes problematic notions of 'reality', 'men', 'women', and 'gender' as givens rather than social constructs (Steans 2009). Indeed, as we shall see in the light of poststructural approaches, Enloe's position is vulnerable to the charge of essentialising women's identities rather than appreciating difference according to race, class, ethnicity, and other forms of social and geopolitical stratification.

Gendering global security relations

An alternative approach to the liberal position adopted by Enloe is offered by J. Ann Tickner. Whereas Enloe largely brought women into a Realist framework, Tickner questions that very framework as a suitable starting point for analysing international security. Instead of an ‘add women and stir’ approach, Tickner aims to ‘think about how the discipline of international relations might look if gender were included as a category of analysis and if women’s experiences were part of the subject matter out of which its theories are constructed’ (1992: 5).

In general terms, Tickner’s emphasis on the importance of the views and experiences of women for theorising security has been categorised as a standpoint feminist approach (see Box 2.1 and Table 2.1). In her *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (1992), Tickner analyses the various ways in which women define national security and considers how this affects the way security can be theorised. From her perspective it is not simply that women have been historically excluded from the institutions of international security. Rather, it is possible to identify how some of the most basic structures in global politics taken for granted in Realist approaches, such as the very distinction between ‘international’ and ‘domestic’, rely on acutely gendered assumptions, tropes, and metaphors (see also Carol Cohn’s feminist critique of the gendered nature of debates about nuclear security during the Cold War, discussed in Chapter 10).

The notion of the realm of the ‘international’, for example, has long been associated with specifically *masculine* traits: strength, power, and autonomy (Tickner 1992: 1). According to Tickner, ideals of both manhood and the state have been mutually reinforcing throughout the history of warfare, as encapsulated in the figure of the ‘citizen-soldier’. For this reason, Tickner refers to what she calls the prevalence of an ‘essentialist connection between war and men’s natural aggressiveness’ (1992: 40). In this context, Tickner cites the observation made by Simone de Beauvoir that the highest form of patriotism is to die for one’s country – an accolade that, until very recently, women have been systematically excluded from achieving (1992: 28).

In contrast to the masculine traits of the international, domestic politics is typically portrayed in feminine terms. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the term ‘domestic’ – one pertaining to the home – is the sphere with which women are primarily associated. The gendered politics of international security has meant that men abroad are charged with

Box 2.3 Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986)

Simone de Beauvoir was a French twentieth-century philosopher, feminist, and political activist. Beauvoir helped to develop a movement in philosophy called existentialism. She is perhaps best known for her path-breaking feminist work *The Second Sex* (1997) [1949]. This text examines how ‘woman’ comes to be a mode of existence. For Beauvoir men and women have no fixed essence, but are produced as such socially. In other words, ‘woman’ is a relational concept to ‘man’, and vice versa. Yet, however, woman has been produced historically as both less than man (other) and radically different from man (Other). On Beauvoir’s view, it is therefore necessary for women to challenge the notion of their radical Otherness with men if they are to achieve equality. This is because the move to subordinate women is usually based on an appeal to their biological difference with men, which needs to be overturned. While the work of Beauvoir has been subject to many interpretations, it has paved the way for much of the feminist theorising in security studies. In particular, it has inspired work that sought to make more women visible and draw attention to the social construction of gendered identity (Hutchings 2009).

protecting citizens (primarily women and children, who are in most need of defence) inside states' borders. Thus, while women have performed roles intrinsic to the 'functioning' of this gendered organisation of social life, their involvement in security has usually been associated with maintaining order at home. Historically female labour has involved so-called caring roles such as teaching and nursing and these have long been considered secondary to those of men. As such, women's roles are often discounted as mundane, extraneous to the serious business of state security, and unpatriotic (Tickner 1992).

There are several important implications of Tickner's analysis for the study of security. First, Tickner problematises rather than accepts the inside/outside, domestic/foreign, public/private binaries that characterise traditional approaches to security studies. Her work demonstrates that behaviour in the 'domestic' and 'international' realms are fundamentally inseparable. For example, women in militarised societies are far more vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual violence (1992: 56). Similarly, the idealised notion of the brave male citizen-soldier abroad is shown to *depend upon* the devaluation of the female subject and myths about the need for her protection at home.

Second, Tickner emphasises the importance of identity in international security. By considering women's views and experiences, she argues, it is possible to construct a less militarised account of security relations. On this view, the identity of states begins to change. Somewhat controversially, as we shall discuss later, Tickner also believes that this alternative perspective opens up the possibility of more peaceful relations: 'A feminist perspective would assume that the potential for international community also exists and that an atomistic, conflictual view of the international system is only a partial representation of reality' (1992: 63). By re-thinking states' identities from a female standpoint, it is suggested that a focus on autonomy, self-help, and perpetual conflict might be replaced by one that privileges peace, togetherness, and cooperation.

Third, in many ways pre-empting discourses of human security and the concept of emancipation in the 'Welsh School' (see Chapters 1 and 8), Tickner develops an explicitly normative perspective about what *should* be done to address global gender inequalities. Part of this programme involves showing how different human insecurities often have gendered origins and histories. Above and beyond this, however, Tickner argues it is also necessary to overcome gender inequalities by establishing parity between male and female views and experiences. Since women are disadvantaged economically, she claims that critical feminist thinking demands a re-privileging of values associated with justice over those linked to order. In the final analysis, Tickner advocates a reorientation of security studies along these lines in pursuit of what she refers to as a 'non-gendered discipline': 'Only through analysis that recognises gender differences but does not take them as fixed or inevitable can we move toward the creation of a non-gendered discipline that includes us all' (1992: 144).

Tickner's commitment to a wholesale critique of Realism and her insistence on analysing the production of 'gender differences' rather than simply making women more visible certainly marks her approach as different from Enloe's. Yet, while Tickner claims not to take gender differences as 'fixed or inevitable', there is a sense in which her analysis still clutches on to the notion of 'authentic' female views and experiences (Steans 2009). Other feminists, for example those working in the poststructural tradition, have fundamentally questioned the extent to which it is possible to generalise across time, space, and culture in this way (Peterson 1992; Shepherd 2008). Furthermore, despite claiming to focus on gender rather than women per se, the extent to which Tickner adequately deals with the (re) production of masculinities and the subjugation/exposure to violence of particular groups

of men might be called into question (Jones 2004; Parport and Zalewski 1998, 2008). Finally, we might also wish to express a certain degree of scepticism regarding the possibility – and desirability – of achieving a ‘non-gendered discipline’ in the study of security. Is it sufficient to wish the category of gender away or should security theorists be constantly vigilant to claims made in the name of gender difference?

Poststructuralist approaches to gender and security

When considering the contributions of poststructural feminists and gender theorists to security studies it is again necessary to bear in mind that we are not dealing with a single approach or body of thought. There are multiple strands of work associated with the label ‘poststructuralism’ and often these diverge (for more see Chapter 4 in this book). Nevertheless, it is possible to draw out some common themes in order to characterise the differences compared with liberal and standpoint feminist positions considered so far. Perhaps the overriding commonality among poststructuralist feminism and gender perspectives is a resistance to the ‘reconstructive’ projects of Enloe and Tickner (Steans 2009). In other words, whereas these authors seek to develop a feminist programme out of a critique of patriarchy, poststructuralists are hesitant to determine what should be done in such an abstract, essentialist, and universalising way. This hesitation, however, should not be misunderstood as an inability or unwillingness to engage in the question of political action. Rather, it is precisely because of a broader commitment to questioning what it means to make claims about and in the name of ‘men’ and ‘women’. At the broadest level, poststructuralists argue that it is not simply that ‘gender’ is constructed socially: the category of sex is produced discursively as well. This means that there is no ‘essence’ to being a man or woman and neither shares a particular perspective on the world per se. In this way, poststructuralists go further than standpoint feminists in claiming that we should not confer any special ontological status to ‘manhood’ or ‘womanhood’: there is no *uniquely* male or female view or experience. Instead, and often through detailed empirical work, the challenge of poststructuralism is to interrogate the politics of the construction of different gendered identities and question the stability of gender categories to show how they always breakdown or ‘deconstruct’ (see Chapter 4).

Politicising gender relations

The work of V. Spike Peterson in particular has been seminal in the development of poststructural feminist and gender approaches in security studies. Peterson argues that the pressing task of this work is not simply to make women more visible nor raise awareness of women’s views and experiences. More fundamentally, it is about ‘transforming ways of being and knowing’ in the study of security (Peterson 1992: 20). Peterson takes as her starting point the idea that our understandings of the ‘world’ are intrinsically shaped by gendered ontologies (theories of being) and epistemologies (theories of knowing). In other words, our viewpoints are never gender-neutral, but reflective of dominant assumptions about masculinity and femininity: ‘that is, we do not experience or “know” the world as abstract “humans” but as embodied, gendered beings’ (1992: 20).

If we follow this logic through then it is not simply that gender, in other words masculine or feminine traits, is socially constructed. Rather, a further step is required in order to demonstrate that sex and meanings associated with it are not ‘natural’ either. Peterson argues that all too often a distinction is maintained between gender as a construction and

sex as a biologically determined fact. Sexual identity, however, like any other, is no less socially produced. A series of interlinked factors are usually referred to in the categorisation of someone's sex as 'male', 'female', or 'intersex': phenotype (physical appearance); psychological sex (what a person feels like); gonadal sex (whether someone has ovaries, testicles, or a combination of sexual organs); and chromosomal sex (how many X/Y chromosomes). In this way, the determination of sex is based upon complex interlinked factors that form a continuum of sexual characteristics. It is not necessarily the case, therefore, that sexual identity is always straightforward. Indeed, 1 in 3000 children born in the UK are categorised as being 'intersex'. The case of the South African athlete Caster Semenya, forced by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) to have a gender test to check her eligibility for entering the 2009 world athletics championship as a woman, indicates the complexity, sensitivity, and politically fraught nature of this question of identity.

Peterson thus calls for a radical decentring of biological explanations of social relations. Men and women are not separate with mutually exclusive views and experiences. Instead, gendered identities are constituted and reconstituted through everyday practices. In the context of security studies this means 'asking what security can mean in the context of interlocking systems of hierarchy and domination and how gendered identities and ideologies (re)produce these structural insecurities' (Peterson 1992: 32). For example, Peterson calls for a reconsideration of the very concept of national security as it relates to marriage. Both institutions, she argues, can be interpreted as 'protection rackets' that are 'implicated in the reproduction of hierarchies and in the structural violence against which they claim to offer protection' (1992: 51). What is necessary, therefore, is much more than an analysis of women's involvement in global security relations. This perspective 'requires *politicising* structural violence as historically constituted – as contingent rather than natural – and specifying some of its implications and consequences' (1992: 50).

Performing gender security

A recent contribution to poststructural feminist and gender approaches to security is Laura Shepherd's *Gender, Violence, and Security: Discourse as Practice* (2008). Shepherd demonstrates how the politicisation of gender structures called for by Peterson might lead to analysis of concrete aspects of international security. She takes as her focus gendered violence as it relates to security and investigates how violence is constitutive of subjectivity and different types of bodies. In keeping with poststructuralist feminism, Shepherd's curiosity lies in the way in which gender is made meaningful in social and political interaction. She does not take for granted the existence of a pre-established female subject whose views can be accessed, experiences analysed, and rights claimed. Importantly, however, this approach does not imply the abandonment of all notions of subjectivity. Rather, following the work of US poststructuralist feminist thinker Judith Butler (see Box 2.4), Shepherd argues that different performances produce subjects *as* gendered in specific contexts.

Shepherd's substantive research investigates the (re)production of gendered subjectivities in relation to the case study of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. This resolution was adopted in 2000 with the aim of expressing the importance of sensitivity to gendered violence and inequalities in the contexts of armed conflicts, international peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. Drawing on a discourse analysis approach influenced by Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault (see Chapter 4), Shepherd

Box 2.4 Judith Butler (1956–)

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler argues that the common distinction between ‘sex’ on the one hand and ‘gender’ on the other is a misnomer. From her perspective it is not that sex is a pre-discursively constituted natural condition upon which gender is then added. Rather, following Michel Foucault (see Chapter 4 in this book), sex is the bodily effect of gendered regimes of power/knowledge in society. In other words, there is no originally sexed person who then acquires masculine or feminine traits. Indeed, those traits do not necessarily coincide with a particular type of body. The example Butler gives to illustrate her reading of sex/gender is drag. Drag queens demonstrate that gender is not static, stable, or a given. Rather, it is an identity that is assumed by people and performed through their looks, behaviour, and interactions. In order to grasp the production of gendered subjects in this way Butler has developed the key concept of performativity: ‘Gender is always a doing, though not by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. [...] Identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’ (1990: 33).

Performativity is used to refer to the activity through which gendered subjects are (re)produced. Over time the practices that bring those subjects into being acquire a sense of permanence and normality. It is because of their repetition, rather than anything else, that they come to be seen as in some sense ‘natural’.

interrogates the gendered assumptions of the text, the claims made in the name of gender, and its implications for the (re)production of female subjectivities. She argues that, in referring to and making representations of ‘women’ (rather than the broader category of gender), the resolution runs the risk of reconstituting the very problems relating to gendered forms of violence that presumably the UN seeks to overcome.

The focus in UNSCR 1325 is on women in global politics, but women primarily understood as mothers. According to Shepherd, this unproblematised association of women with children supports rather than challenges the ideals of nationhood that are often to blame for conflict in the first place. Such an approach also fails to take account of the multifarious ways in which some women are actively engaged in the oppression of other women (and men). Moreover, in Shepherd’s view, the recommendation that more women should be included in decision-making roles in the realm of international security does not deal with the key issues at stake. Rather, she argues, ‘this liberal notion (re)produces the subject of “women” as a homogenous group whose interests are *essentially* peaceful and socially beneficial’ (2008: 162).

Criticisms of poststructuralist approaches

The challenges of poststructural feminist and gender approaches to the study of security are considerable. The work of Peterson, Shepherd, and others draws attention to the problems of abstract universalistic generalisations about supposedly ‘female’ views and experiences across time, space, race, class, and culture. Not only are notions of femininity and masculinity socially constructed but so too is the concept of ‘sex’, which is revealed as a discursively produced categorisation. Nevertheless, despite these problematisations of some of the fundamentals of liberal and standpoint feminist thinking, poststructural work has been criticised for eliminating the very grounds upon which a progressive response to patriarchy might be mounted. Tickner, for example, recognises the importance of poststructural perspectives, but counter-argues that ‘to be unable to speak for women only further reinforces the voices of those who have constructed approaches to international relations out of the

experiences of men' (1992: 17). From Tickner's point of view some form of strategic essentialism might be required in order to struggle for women's rights, justice, and equal opportunities. In response, the poststructural argument would be that any form of programmatic engagement with patriarchy is unable to deal the specificity with which it manifests itself at a localised level. Furthermore, while concepts of emancipation are intrinsically appealing, one needs to ask what this means in less abstract terms, who benefits, and what are the potential costs to others?

Conclusion

Under the banner of 'feminist and gender approaches' are various perspectives, each with nuanced political theoretical underpinnings, targets for critique, and consequences for the study of security. One of the main faultlines running throughout the literature divides those who emphasise the commonality of women's experience on the one hand, compared to others who refuse to make essentialist claims about gendered identities on the other. Yet, when taken as a whole, work in feminist and gender approaches constitutes one of the most dynamic areas in critical security studies. While, of course, this scholarship has raised important questions about the role of women in international security, its significance stretches beyond this core thematic. Research into the gendered nature of security has opened up new insights into the behaviour and identity of the state and the sexualised politics it relies upon. It has problematised aspects of the relationship between human security and international political economy drawing our attention to inequalities otherwise relatively obscured in security studies. Such work has also cast new light on problematic distinctions between domestic/international, private/public, and order/anarchy. Moreover, the insight that the personal is political has drawn attention to links between militarism and structural violence, the importance of the 'everyday' as a site in international security, and the private sphere as one no longer beyond relevance. Finally, despite fierce disagreement about the implications of these insights for critical theorising and practice, this field has brought *people* into the forefront of analysing global security relations (for potential overlaps here with the discourse of 'human security' see Chapter 8). Understanding international security 'from the point of view of subjugation' (Tickner 1992: 18) brings not only gender inequalities, but also those connected to race, class, and culture squarely into the frame. For this reason, feminist and gender approaches are likely to continue to innovate, broaden, and deepen the field of critical security studies.

Key points

- Women and gender structures more generally have been marginalised in both traditional and critical security studies.
- Feminist and gender approaches to security have attempted to address this marginalisation, but there is disagreement about the focus, method, and implications of critique.
- Liberal feminists seek to make women more visible in the realm of international security, but they have been accused of an 'add women and stir' approach that does not question Realist frameworks.

- By contrast, standpoint feminists draw on the views and experiences of women in political life, rather than abstract Realist principles, to theorise international security.
- Poststructural feminist and gender approaches, however, criticise liberal and standpoint work for essentialising and universalising the ‘female’ subject, and call for a politicisation of all claims made in the name of gendered difference.

Discussion points

- In what ways have security studies marginalised women and gender structures in global politics?
- To what extent does the liberal feminist move to make women more visible in international security challenge or reaffirm the gendered assumptions of traditional security studies?
- What are the similarities and differences between a liberal feminist and a standpoint feminist perspective?
- Why do poststructuralists call the category of ‘woman’ fundamentally into question?
- How do feminist and gender perspectives open up the field of critical security studies?

Guide to further reading

- Cynthia Enloe (2000) [1989] *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California Press). The classic articulation of a liberal feminist approach to security studies.
- Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (1989) 18(2). Issue contains seminal articles by Robert Keohane, Maxine Molyneux, and Sandra Whitworth in the formation of feminist debates in International Relations theory.
- Jane Parport and Marysia Zalewski (1998) (eds) *The ‘Man’ Question in International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press). Contains essays that analyse the production of masculinities in global politics.
- V. Spike Peterson (1992) (ed.) *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner). An important articulation of poststructuralist approaches to feminism and gender in security studies.
- Jill Steans (2009) *Gender and International Relations: Issues, Debates, and Further Directions*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press). Offers an excellent overview of theoretical positions within feminist and gender scholarship.
- J. Ann Tickner (1992) *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press). A landmark contribution to feminist security studies from a standpoint perspective.

Weblinks

United Nations statistics and indicators on women and men: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/>.

UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm.

Women in International Security (WIIS), Centre for Peace and Security Studies, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University: <http://wiis.georgetown.edu/>.

WomenWatch, the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE): www.un.org/womenwatch/.

3 Postcolonial perspectives

Abstract

This chapter evaluates critiques of traditional and critical security studies emanating from postcolonial experiences and theories. To do so the chapter outlines and discusses the multiple meanings of 'the postcolonial' in geographical, spatial, and theoretical terms. It emphasises that there is no single monolithic postcolonial approach to security. Rather, there are multiple ways of interpreting the postcolonial (itself a highly contested term) and each gives rise to different, and often contrasting, approaches to security. These include 'Third World Security' and the related idea of 'Subaltern Realism' as well as approaches to security that draw more explicitly on postcolonial theory and concepts, which are also discussed in this chapter.

Introduction

An emerging body of literature drawing on postcolonial theories and perspectives (broadly understood) has increasingly sought to critique the Western/Eurocentric bias of both traditional *and* critical security studies. Scholars such as Mohammed Ayoob have pointed to the ethnocentric tendencies of security studies in general, and Ayoob has instead proposed a brand of 'Subaltern Realism' that is more attuned to the security concerns of 'Third World' states than the 'fashionably expansionist definitions of the concept of security' associated with variants of critical security studies (1997: 139). From a different angle, others have argued that security studies derives its core precepts almost exclusively from European experience and is hence underpinned by taken-for-granted historical geographies of the 'Third World', the 'West', global 'North', and global 'South'. This, they contend, is again true not only of traditional security studies, but also of critical approaches to security by virtue of their commitments to varieties of (Western) Enlightenment political thought. The consequence of this has been the marginalisation of the world beyond the global 'North' and the inability of critical security studies to recognise its own particularity and ethnocentrism.

The 'Third World' in security studies

In dealing with postcolonial approaches to security, we begin first with a consideration of what the Third World means and how it has figured within security studies. This is not to say that the terms 'postcolonial' and 'Third World' are interchangeable (indeed, many proponents of postcolonial studies, particularly in cultural and literary studies, use the term

'postcolonial' much more broadly to include parts of the 'First' and 'Second' worlds as well – see Ashcroft *et al.* 1989). However, the 'Third World' (see Box 3.1) is now often assumed to be *postcolonial* even if only in a historical sense referring to the processes of decolonisation that occurred in the wake of the Second World War. Thus, Arif Dirlik argues that the word *postcolonial* 'claims as its special provenance the terrain that in an earlier day used to go by the name of Third World' (1994: 329).

As is discussed later in the chapter, many scholars now find all-encompassing 'meta-geographical' terms such as the Third World objectionable on a number of grounds. Yet for some the idea of the Third World retains its utility as a broad designation. Mohammed Ayoob, the foremost proponent of an approach to security explicitly grounded in the experience of the 'Third World', claims to use the term in a 'generic sense'. While recognising that multiple distinctions and internal cultural and political differences are skirted over by the term, Ayoob argues:

these [Third World] countries share enough in terms of their colonial past and their unequal encounter with the European powers following the Industrial Revolution to set them apart from the European states which have traditionally formed the 'core' of the modern system of states. They also share the attributes of economic underdevelopment and social dislocation, which are at least partly attributable to their encounter with the West (and which have continued even after the formal process of decolonization has been completed).

(1983/1984: 43)

Thus, for Ayoob at least, the Third World is distinguished as geographically, historically, and economically *postcolonial* and he has retained this 'generic' use of the term in his more recent writings as well (see, for example, Ayoob 2002).

For much of the history of security studies (and related subdisciplines such as strategic studies), the study of security in the Third World played a distant second fiddle to consideration of the stand-off between the 'First' and the 'Second' worlds during the Cold War. Where the Third World did feature, it too tended to be framed within the broader contours of this stand-off rather than being treated as a stand-alone concern. As Ayoob noted in the early 1980s:

Most states in the Third World are only recently participants in the modern system of states, which is European in origin and in its defining characteristics. Until a few decades ago they were mere 'objects' rather than 'subjects' in international relations.

(1983: 44)

In other words, during the Cold War the states of the 'Third World' were generally viewed as 'pieces' or 'objects' to be 'taken' or 'lost' in a global contest between the US and the USSR, as 'bit [part] players in the larger drama of superpower conflict' (Krause 1998: 125). Hence, as Pettiford (1996: 289) notes, the dominant political and intellectual concern with the Cold War rivalry meant that, among many possible examples, the insurgency in El Salvador in the early 1980s was assumed *a priori* to be the product of Soviet and Cuban machinations rather than domestic social and political grievances. In short, the 'regional' conflicts of the Third World generally only became of import to the mainstream of security studies if and when they could be related to the 'central strategic balance' (Acharya 1997: 300).

Box 3.1 Where is the ‘Third World’?

The term ‘Third World’ is generally seen to have entered the political lexicon in the 1950s. Although there is some debate about the origins of the term, most pinpoint its first use to the work of the French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952. Sauvy, referring to the struggle for decolonisation in India and China, used the term ‘Third World’ as an equivalent term to the ‘third estate’ as used during the French revolution to distinguish the struggle of the ‘common people’ against the ‘first’ and ‘second’ estates (the clergy and the aristocracy). Later the term ‘Third World’ came to be adopted, often self-consciously, by the leaders of decolonisation movements and it gained currency during the Cold War as a descriptor for states that were neither part of the ‘First World’ (capitalist states) nor ‘Second World’ (communist states) (Weiss 1995: x; Thomas 1999: 226). As Weiss (1995) notes, the term ‘Third World’ has always remained open-ended with regard to membership (see Figure 3.1 for one contemporary interpretation) and subject to different users’ own categorisations, although in political terms it was often associated with the states involved in the ‘Non-Aligned Movement’ (primarily comprising states located in Africa, Latin America, and East Asia) in much the same manner as ‘First World’ status was associated with membership of NATO and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and ‘Second World’ status with membership of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

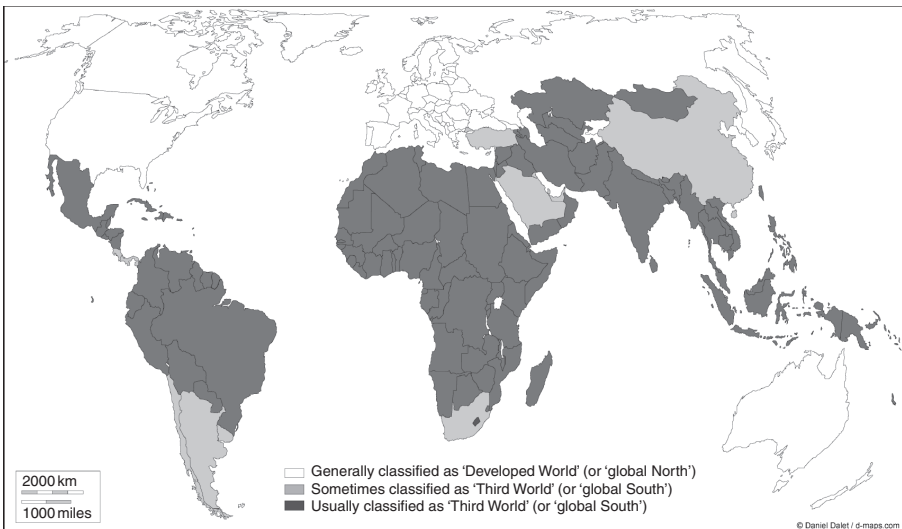


Figure 3.1 Where is the Third World? A common interpretation, via pictorial representation.

The porous nature of the term ‘Third World’ has always led some analysts to be sceptical of its actual utility as a categorisation, and the (pejorative) connotations of underdevelopment often assumed to accompany the term (partly resultant from its use within ‘Modernisation theory’) have led some states, such as China and India, to at times reject their inclusion within its scope of reference. Use of the term has, however, persisted despite the collapse of the so-called ‘Second World’ communist states in 1989–1991 (epitomised, for example, by the continued title of the journal *Third World Quarterly*). It now tends to be used to emphasise the disjuncture between ‘First’ and ‘Third’ worlds (and is now also broadly paralleled in distinctions made between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ worlds, and between a global ‘North’ and ‘South’). Indeed, far from disappearing, Caroline Thomas argues, the Third World ‘is becoming global’ due to processes of economic globalisation that place an ever-increasing number of people among the world’s poor. In this sense, for Thomas at least, the term Third World ‘still has meaning today’ (1999: 225–226), although as is discussed later in the chapter many scholars within postcolonial studies critique the use of the term for a variety of reasons.

A 'Subaltern Realist' approach to security

Assuming, as most uses of the term 'Third World' do, that sub-Saharan Africa and Asia are included within the term, Third World security is surely deserving of more sustained attention within security studies than it received during the Cold War. In terms of military conflict alone, the vast majority of wars in the post-Cold War era have been fought in the Third World (Acharya 1997: 300–301), and most of these have been *intra-state* rather than inter-state in character (that is, wars that have occurred within state boundaries, rather than between states – see weblink to the Upsala Conflict Data Program). Against this backdrop the focus on inter-state conflict is of questionable merit, and even during the Cold War some scholars such as Ayoob had already begun to identify traditional security studies as insufficient to the study of security of Third World/postcolonial states. For him:

The three major characteristics of the concept of state security as developed in the Western literature – namely, its external orientation, its strong linkage with systemic security, and its binding ties with the security of the two major alliance blocs – have been so thoroughly diluted in the Third World that the explanatory power of the concept has been vastly reduced when applied to Third World contexts.

(Ayoob 1995: 6; 1983/1984: 43)

On the first point, Ayoob argues that in the Third World 'the sense of insecurity from which these states – and more particularly, their regimes – suffer, emanates to a substantial extent from within their boundaries rather than from outside' (1983/1984: 43). This does not mean that external threats to the state – the traditional concern of national security – are entirely absent. Rather, Ayoob argues, external threats to state security in the Third World are almost always bound up with *internal* threats to state structures and regimes, often to the point where it makes little sense to speak of 'external' and 'internal' threats to the state in distinct terms (Ayoob suggests that we should think in terms of a 'nexus' of internal and external threats – 1997: 128). Where inter-state wars do occur in the Third World, Ayoob argues that they are still usually closely related to domestic divisions. He cites, as just one example, the case of internal crisis in Pakistan in 1971 leading to the subsequent India–Pakistan war (1995: 49), and Amitav Acharya similarly points to the internal drivers of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (1997: 309).

In this light, the traditional Realist focus on external threats to national security is highly problematic. The problem, Ayoob argues, is that security studies has traditionally assumed a one-size-fits-all conception of the state in its consideration of national security. This, by its very nature, fails to recognise the fact that the type of state assumed within this conception – based around the so-called 'Westphalian' model of the state – is the product of particular historical circumstances (for example, centuries of state building, war, and then later industrialisation). The modern state was forged in Europe, and then later exported as a model (often, if not always, violently) to North America, Australia, Africa, and Asia by European powers. However, as Ayoob points out, the process of state formation in the Third World is distinctive in character and, he argues, gives rise to a different type of state and, consequently, a distinct conception of security. In the Third World the process of state formation has tended to be accelerated (that is, it has occurred over a much shorter period of time than in the Western/European 'core') by virtue of its imposition by external powers; it has depended on a particular pattern of elite recruitment from along local populaces; and, in the period after 1945, it has occurred under the conditions of rapid decolonisation.

In short, for Ayooob, different experiences of state formation determine differences in the 'primary security orientations' of 'two sets of states' (1983/1984: 44): those in the West, and those of the Third World. In particular, on his account, the accelerated nature of the process of state formation in the Third World has tended to give rise to a type of state structure that has, at best, weak roots. Hence, 'The dimensions of the security problem, and of the concept of security itself, in the Third World are [...] very different from those applied to, and common in the literature of, the developed West' (1983/1984: 46).

The argument is made, therefore, that security means something very different in the Third World as compared to its meaning for other states. Third World states, Ayooob argues, tend to be 'weak' as states in comparison to their Western counterparts. This is not to say that Third World states are necessarily lacking in material resources or power (the opposite may often be the case), but that the legitimacy accruing to Western states by virtue of centuries of development is often weaker within Third World states (leading some to speak of 'quasi-states' – see Jackson 1990). In these conditions, Ayooob argues, fundamental 'internal' issues of political, social, and economic organisation are equally as much of a concern to Third World regimes (i.e. those in power in Third World states) as they might lead ultimately to destabilisation of the state and regime collapse: 'security-insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities – both *internal and external* – that threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes' (Ayooob 1995: 9, emphasis in original). It is for this reason, Ayooob argues, that Third World regimes have, in practical terms, always 'broadened' national security to include economic and social issues as well.

Ayooob and others focusing on Third World security consequently tend towards the view that 'If there were good reasons for the dominance of traditional security analyses in International Relations they are not, and never were, very relevant for understanding the Third World' (Pettiford 1996: 300). Ayooob, however, does not view the various critical alternatives to traditional security analyses as much of an improvement with regard to Third World contexts, and in many ways he regards them as a backward step. He rejects what he classes as the 'fashionably expansionist' definitions of security associated with some critical approaches:

While it is essential to move beyond an exclusively ethnocentric Western definition of security to include domestic and non-military dimensions, especially issues of intra-state conflict and political legitimacy ... one should not ... run away with the concept to make it all things to all people.

(1997: 139)

Many of Ayooob's concerns in this regard parallel those raised by proponents of Securitization Theory in response to the 'broadening' of the concept of security (see Chapter 5). But Ayooob reserves particular ire for the 'deepening' of security proposed within Critical Security Studies (see Chapter 1). Ideas of 'emancipation' remain rooted in Western political philosophy and hence, for Ayooob, the notion of aligning 'security' and 'emancipation' is still fundamentally Western-centric in orientation (and he even goes so far as to suggest that it has a 'neocolonial bias' (1997: 140)). In regard to Ken Booth's (1991) linkage of security and emancipation Ayooob contends that:

such semantic acrobatics tend to impose a model of contemporary Western politics – of national states that have by and large solved their legitimacy problem and possess

representative and responsive governments, which preside over socially mobile populations that are relatively homogenous and usually affluent and free from want – that are far removed from Third World realities.

(1997: 127)

As an alternative to both traditional *and* critical approaches to security, Ayoob suggests what he terms as a ‘Subaltern Realist’ approach to security. This approach argues that greater recognition of the particular positioning of Third World states within the international system is required than has generally been the case within security studies. Third World states, Ayoob argues, endure a particular ‘security predicament’ (1995) that encompasses three interrelated dimensions: state making (as outlined previously); regional conflict (often as a consequence of internal factors); and the position of Third World states in the international system. With regard to this last category, Ayoob argues that Third World states occupy a ‘subaltern’ position in the world order: they are states of ‘weak and inferior rank’ (1997: 121), due to the historical legacy of colonial exploitation. This legacy continues to have visible effects, such as in the weak institutional structures inherited by Third World states after decolonisation, border disputes and irredentism as a product of boundaries imposed during the colonial era, and continued economic dependence. In turn, this accentuates internal social and economic instability, which leads to regional conflict – and so the predicament is perpetuated.

The ‘Realist’ part of Ayoob’s ‘Subaltern Realism’ refers to his maintenance of the state both as the referent object of security and the means of security provision. The problem for the Third World as Ayoob sees it, and here again he is at odds with the Critical Security Studies (Chapter 1) critique of ‘statism’, is that there is *not enough* state competence in too many cases (cf. Krasner 1981; Jackson 1990): that is, Ayoob sees many of the security issues of the Third World as emanating from ‘incomplete’ processes of state formation.

The overriding importance of the state – both as a territorial unit and as an institutional complex – to the political, and therefore security, realm in the case of the large majority of countries is justified in the context of the historical juncture at which most members of the international system (that is, the large majority that is located in the Third World) currently find themselves.

(1997: 131)

For as long as the world remains a world of states, therefore, Ayoob sees development and enhancement of state institutions (or ‘adequate stateness’ (1997: 140)) as the only way out of the security predicament for the countries and people of the Third World.

Criticisms of Subaltern Realism

Ayoob’s ‘Subaltern Realism’ offers a pointed and refreshing critique of the assumptions both of traditional and critical approaches to security. However, though Ayoob makes a sustained and valid critique of Western-centrism in security studies, his own approach to security has been accused of retaining ‘strong residues’ of the traditional/Realist paradigm that he initially sets out to critique.

One of the primary criticisms of Ayoob’s ‘Subaltern Realism’ is that it conflates security with the state and, from here, with the regime that rules the state. Although beginning from

a similar basis to that offered by Ayooob, Pettiford's (1996) analysis of Central America illustrates several cases where state militaries have been used to repress 'subversion' of internal order, and this often constitutes a major source of insecurity for citizens of these states. Yet, Ayooob seems to want to maintain the development of institutionally 'strong' states in the Third World as the path to ultimate security, which implies that a degree of state violence may be 'almost inevitable' in this process of development (Ayooob 1997: 133). As Keith Krause notes in this regard, 'Ayooob's understanding of security rests on a narrow conception of "the political" that privileges the state without even raising the question whether or not it should be the proper *subject* of security' (1998: 129, emphasis in original). In this sense, the 'predicament' of Third World security might be reread as an equation where the increasing (state) security of Third World regimes often comes at the cost of the individual liberties and lives of those that might oppose or object to such regimes. Here, Ayooob would probably counter that Western states have undergone similar processes in their trajectory of development in centuries past, and that Western observers can hardly afford to take the moral high ground on this basis. Yet, many would side with Krause in objecting that Ayooob's account focuses too heavily on security as defined by state elites in the Third World, and that it is overly permissive in terms of the methods used to achieve security defined on these terms (and here there are some parallels with criticisms of the alleged elite focus of Securitization Theory – see Chapter 5). Amitav Acharya, though broadly sympathetic to Ayooob's general approach, warns that over-emphasis on the security of the state often leads to a problematic conflation of national security (the security of the state) and regime security (the security of those who rule the state) (Acharya 1997: 303).

In short, Ayooob puts forward a view of security that is avowedly statist, and for critics this puts him firmly back into the ambit of the Western approaches to security that his 'Subaltern Realism' is supposed to challenge. By taking the unitary Western state as a model for the development of security infrastructures, Ayooob risks prematurely ruling out the question of 'what *kinds* of states might be most appropriate to deal with the challenges diverse social and communal groups face' (Krause 1998: 134, emphasis in original).

Ayooob's use of the terms 'Third World' and 'Subaltern' has also been viewed as problematic by several critics. Krause contends that Ayooob's generic use of the term 'Third World' 'collapses the multiple distinctions between vastly different parts of the world such as Africa, Latin America and East Asia', and to do so risks encouraging Western tendencies to 'see these regions as an undifferentiated zone of turmoil' (Krause 1998: 133). Ayooob's use of the term 'subaltern' within his 'Subaltern Realist' approach is also seen as problematic. As is acknowledged by Ayooob himself, his use of the term 'subaltern' has little relation to the movement known as 'Subaltern Studies' within postcolonial theory (see Box 3.2) from which he borrows the term. Rather than referring to a range of subaltern 'classes' and their subjugated positions within societies (as within Subaltern Studies), Ayooob deliberately uses the term subaltern to refer to Third World *states* and their subordinate position relative to First World states in the international system. Once again this points to Ayooob's statist orientations but, to play off the title of Michael Barnett's incisive (2002) critique, it clothes his Realism within a thin veil of 'Radical Chic' associated with the notion of the subaltern. Indeed, Ayooob himself locates the intellectual groundings of his Subaltern Realist approach not in postcolonial theory (see Box 3.2), but in a combination of ideas that all emanate primarily from Western traditions: (Hobbesian) Classical Realism, historical sociology, and – somewhat ironically – the 'English' School or international society approach (Ayooob 2002: 28–29).

A postcolonial moment in security studies?

In contrast to Ayoob's admission of a thin connection between 'Subaltern Realism' and postcolonial studies, there have been more recent attempts to foster a 'postcolonial moment' (Barkawi and Laffey 2006) in security studies that is linked more explicitly to several postcolonial thinkers and ideas (see below).

In many ways, Barkawi and Laffey's conception of a postcolonial moment within security studies is animated by similar concerns to those motivating Ayoob's Subaltern Realism. However, their call for a 'non-Eurocentric security studies' (2006: 330) has as an additional motivation: a desire to get to grips with the rise of non-state terrorism, Al-Qaeda in particular. Efforts at understanding the rise of groups such as Al-Qaeda need, according to Barkawi and Laffey, to be situated within the broader historical context of relations between the 'global North'/'First World' and 'global South'/'Third World' and a critical assessment of the functions these categorisations play (cf. Doty 1996; Lewis and Wigen 1997; Slater 2004). Traditional security studies is, they suggest, 'at best a poor basis for understanding and action in contemporary security environments' (2006: 330) in this regard for at least two reasons. The first is that traditional security studies focuses upon 'great power'/inter-state conflicts and 'as a result provides few categories for making sense of the historical experiences of the weak and powerless who comprise most of the world's population' (2006: 332). Traditional security studies not only struggles with the emergence of non-state actors, it also cannot fathom the reasons for recourse to 'terrorist' acts as a potential recourse of the 'weak and powerless'. Barkawi and Laffey do not seek to justify such acts per se but rather to point out that the 'War on Terror' represents but the latest variation of North/South conflict in which *all* forms of resistance from the global South have been characterised as illegitimate. In keeping with the spirit of Frantz Fanon, they instead want to keep open the possibility that violent resistance may at times be the only recourse of the weak and oppressed (2006: 251).

In part this relates to a second failing of traditional security studies as characterised by Barkawi and Laffey: the 'Eurocentric' nature of security studies, which 'regards the weak and the powerless as marginal or derivative elements of world politics as at best the site of liberal good intentions or at worst a potential source of threats' (2006: 332). Here the overlaps between Barkawi and Laffey's critique and ideas in postcolonial studies, most notably Edward Said's writings on 'Orientalism' (see Box 3.2), become apparent. As John Hobson notes, drawing on Edward Said (2003):

Eurocentrism or Orientalism is a discourse that was invented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by European thinkers as they went about constructing European identity [where] Western man was elevated to the permanent 'proactive subject' of global politics/economics – past, present and future – standing at the centre of all things. Conversely, Eastern 'man' was relegated to the peripheral status of global politics' 'passive object', languishing on the Other side of an imaginary civilizational frontier, stripped of history and dignity. In this Eurocentric imaginary, then, the line of civilizational apartheid separates the Western heart of light from the Eastern heart of darkness.

(2007: 94)

In short, Eurocentric/Orientalist accounts assume European centrality geographically, historically, and politically, and Western development (with its roots in Europe) as the apex

Box 3.2 Theorising the postcolonial: key thinkers and ideas in postcolonial studies

Although the term ‘postcolonial’ now has wide usage, there is no agreed or settled definition as to what might constitute postcolonialism (or postcolonial studies) as a distinct theoretical movement. As one review of the field comments ‘probably no term within literary and critical studies is so hotly contested at present as is the term “post-colonial”’; probably no area of study is so thoroughly riven with disciplinary self-doubt and mutual suspicion’ (Slemon 2001: 100). In fact it might be argued that the only minimal common ground between postcolonial thinkers is a shared effort to come to terms with what, exactly, the nature of the ‘postcolonial’ condition is. In the process, the group of thinkers loosely connected under the rubric of postcolonial studies have produced ‘a radical rethinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and western domination’ (Prakash 1992: 8). Frequently this has entailed questioning the term ‘Third World’ itself as a description ‘authored and authorized’ by Western domination where the colonial subject is defined in contradistinction to a Western ‘core’. Instead, thinkers such as Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992, 2000) point us towards an examination of colonial/postcolonial histories and experiences authored by the subjugated. Borrowing Antonio Gramsci’s concept of the ‘subaltern’ – used to denote groups or classes within society that are subject to the authority of ruling groups – this school of ‘Subaltern Studies’ attempts to make common cause with subordinated people *everywhere*, thereby linking the specific subjugation associated with colonialism to the experience of subjugated minorities globally (see Guha and Spivak 1988; Prakash 1990).

Although very different in its form and goals, this emphasis on the shared experience of subjugation (and the forms of knowledge and action it gives rise to) is also indicated in the title of Frantz Fanon’s seminal (1961) work *The Wretched of the Earth* [*Les damnés de la terre*] (Fanon 2001). Fanon (1925–1961), a psychotherapist and an active member of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in Algeria during the war against French colonialism, sought to illustrate the inherent and brutal violence of colonial rule and to articulate a liberating counter-violence on the part of those subjected to colonialism. Where Fanon’s work points to a form of postcolonial identity forged out of the violent struggle against colonialism (and has sometimes been criticised on this basis), Edward Said’s (1935–2003) seminal account of Orientalism (Said 2003) takes a longer historical view of the development of the relationship between Western colonial powers and the people of the Middle East, and the forms of identity and power produced as a result. Said’s work examines the ways in which particular constructions of an ‘exotic’ oriental ‘Other’ and romantic notions of the ‘orient’ in Western literary and cultural writings have continually underpinned imperialism, racism, and, ultimately, the notion of the ‘West’ itself.

More recent work in postcolonial studies has exhibited a concern with whether and how a more ‘authentic’ version of the postcolonial experience might be rendered, and whether this is even possible. Indeed, for some, contemporary postcolonial studies, intersecting with theoretical currents from poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida (see Chapter 4), is generally distinguished by an attempt to ‘abolish all distinctions between center and periphery as well as all other “binarisms” that are allegedly a legacy of colonial(ist) ways of thinking and to reveal societies globally in their complex heterogeneity and contingency’ (Dirlík 1994: 329). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942–), drawing on both feminism and poststructuralism, has focused on the question of who speaks for the subaltern (Spivak 1988) in the context of unequal power relations, whilst Homi Bhabha (1949–) argues that the postcolonial condition is best thought of in terms of ‘hybridity’ – the ways in which the cultures, languages, and experiences of ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised’ are inherently mixed and reformulated (or ‘hybridised’) rather than essentialist categories (Bhabha 1994).

of ‘civilisation’. Critics have suggested that such Orientalism has been a pervasive feature of traditional security studies, during the Cold War in particular. Barkawi and Laffey detect strong Orientalist currents in accounts of strategic theory, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Second World War, and the Holocaust where, in each, the West has been routinely and unquestioningly configured as ‘a force for good in world politics’ (2006: 343). In a similar vein Bradley Klein has examined the ways in which strategic studies provided a map of the world in which the West always ended up on the ‘good’ side (1994: 5). In doing so it reified Western culture and values and, in the process, has helped legitimate various forms of Western intervention (military and economic) in the global South.

As with Ayoob, Barkawi and Laffey find that critical approaches are of little improvement over their traditional counterpart and often exhibit their own Eurocentric/Orientalist tendencies. They too are concerned that ‘emancipation’, as advocated in Critical Security Studies (see Chapter 1), is ultimately rooted in Western political theory. More substantively, and distinct from Ayoob’s critique of CSS, Barkawi and Laffey argue that the problem with CSS is that it ultimately maintains a distinction between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ where only the former are assumed to have the capacity and agency to emancipate the latter:

The politics of critical and human security approaches revolve around the concept of emancipation, an idea derived from the European Enlightenments. In this literature, the agent of emancipation is almost invariably the West, whether in the form of Western-dominated international institutions, a Western-led global civil society, or the ‘ethical foreign policies’ of leading Western powers ... Even when the concrete agents of emancipation are not themselves Westerners, they are conceived of as the bearers of Western ideas, whether concerning economy, politics or culture.

(2006: 350; cf. Hobson 2007)

What is problematic here, for Barkawi and Laffey, is that the non-West is often represented within both traditional and critical approaches in terms of what is ‘lacking’ in comparison to the West, in this case the agential capacity of those in the non-Western world. Indirectly addressing Ayoob’s Subaltern Realism, they also critique accounts that explain conflict ‘in terms of a lack of those institutions and attributes associated with European modernity, such as sovereignty, rather than as a consequence of long histories of colonial and postcolonial interaction with the West’ (2006: 347) (recall Ayoob’s argument that the ‘Third World security predicament’ emanates primarily from a *lack* of adequate state institutions). Instead of assuming such binary divisions, Barkawi and Laffey suggest a ‘relational approach’ that recognises the mutual constitution of the ‘strong’ and the ‘weak’ and ‘begins with the assumption that the social world is composed of relations rather than separate objects, like great powers or “the West”’ (2006: 348). Thus, the ‘postcolonial moment’ highlights ‘the *interconnectedness*, rather than the separateness, of the colonial and the postcolonial and the North and the South’ (Abrahamsen 2003: 196, emphasis added) as a key focus of investigation within security studies.

What this might mean, and what precisely is a ‘non-Eurocentric security studies’ in this vein remains to be fully fleshed out (see Box 3.3 for an indication). As is discussed in Chapter 8, though, several critical approaches to the issue of development and security in particular might be said to adopt a stance that seeks to emphasise the relational aspect – between ‘metropole’ and ‘peripheries’ – of development ‘complexes’ (Duffield 2001). Ultimately, what this ‘postcolonial moment’ might entail, at a minimum, is a refusal to treat

Box 3.3 Relating the ‘West’ and ‘the rest’: outlining a ‘relational approach’ to the War on Terror

For many, the War on Terror is a clash between the West and the Islamic world. Al-Qaeda, bin Laden and his allies are conceived as ‘Islamic fundamentalists’ with a passionate hatred of everything Western. The problem with this way of framing the conflict is that it ignores the long history of interconnection and mutual constitution out of which bin Laden’s ideas and organization were produced. Currents of Western, Arab and Islamic cultures and histories, modern technologies and communications, and the policies of various regimes and great powers combined to form crystallisations, amongst them bin Laden’s and Al-Qaeda’s particular way of being modern. Attempting to disaggregate these phenomena and squeeze them into boxes marked ‘Islam’ and ‘the West’ will not aid understanding of the dynamics of the War on Terror. More importantly, policies derived from such binary understandings may create the very conditions that crystallise future bin Ladens and Al-Qaedas.

(Barkawi and Laffey 2006: 347)

the terms such as ‘West’ and ‘Third World’ as self-evident, even – and perhaps especially – in self-proclaimed accounts of ‘Third World security’.

Postcoloniality, race, and ‘necropolitics’

The postcolonial critique of the West-centric tendencies of traditional and some ‘critical’ approaches to security such as CSS (Chapter 1) can be extended to poststructural perspectives within the field. Sankaran Krishna argues that, on the one hand, there are many synergies between postcolonialism and poststructuralism, such as the common focus on questions of identity and difference, notions of otherness, and the problem of universal grand narratives (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, he also claims that there are some key differences precisely around the issue of who the political subject is and where s/he is presupposed to be:

Emerging from a rather comfortably self-contained view of the West, [poststructuralist perspectives] seem to contain little recognition that a totalizing critique of all forms of essentialism and identity politics might play out very differently for people situated outside putative mainstreams or that the demise of narratives such as the nation may have different political implications for those situated elsewhere.

(1999: xxix)

In a similar vein, Christine Sylvester has referred to the typically Western focus of much of the poststructural work on sovereignty, practices of exceptionalism, and contemporary biopolitics. This geographical and cultural bias, Sylvester argues, is not unique to poststructuralist works specifically in security studies, but the very thinkers who have inspired this scholarship. Thus key thinkers associated with poststructuralism, such as Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, typically draw on Western examples and delimit their analyses to specifically Western juridical-political order (Sylvester 2006: 66).

Nevertheless, there have been some attempts at applying the insights of Foucault and Agamben to the postcolonial context. Sylvester refers to the work of Rajeev Patel and

Philip McMichael (2004), who argue that colonial governance was in essence about controlling and managing bodies. In this sense, the colony was the epitome of a 'biopolitical' space:

local people were routinely made to cover their bodies, subject their bodies to hygiene, fill their bodies with Western knowledge, move their bodies to different lands, use their bodies for slave and wage labour, and fight other bodies in the name of the colonizing state.

(Sylvester 2006: 68)

Moreover, the point made by Patel and McMichael, as well as Sylvester, is that the prefix 'post' in the term 'postcolonial' inaccurately implies that such practices are confined to history. Rather, via contemporary expressions of the state of exception, colonial biopolitical practices are arguably very much alive in current global political life. Indeed, for Sylvester, one of the rationales for postcolonial studies is precisely to 'see and address more of the troubling biopolitics of our times' (2006: 76).

Thinking about various biopolitical practices through the lens of postcolonialism enables the interrogation of an otherwise neglected dimension of global security relations: race. In this context Achille Mbembe is of note in his insistence on the racial characteristics of contemporary biopolitics. Mbembe takes as his starting point Foucault's understanding of racism as a form of control based upon the distribution of the human species into different groups and the 'establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others' (Mbembe 2003: 17). A racist logic is one that divides, separates, and distinguishes between people based upon biological characteristics so that some lives may count as worthy of living and others may not. In this way racism can be considered as a form of biopolitical economy that serves to regulate who dies and who stays alive depending on the imperatives of the state. Yet, despite the overt prevalence of racism, Mbembe claims that it 'has been the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice; especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples' (2003: 17).

Mbembe considers the racial biopolitics of practices in the colony. Slavery, he argues, was one of the first manifestations of biopolitical governance. On his view, the structure of the plantation, where a slave belongs to his master and is kept alive but in a permanent state of injury, is akin to the figure of the state of exception (see Chapter 4). The colony does not conform to the norm of the state: the army is not a distinct entity; wars are not fought between regular armies; there is no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. 'As such', writes Mbembe, 'the colonies are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended – the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of "civilization"' (2003: 24). In other words, echoing the work of Giorgio Agamben, those who inhabit the colony find themselves living a 'bare life' banned from conventional juridical-political structures in a permanent state of exception.

For Franz Fanon colonial occupation is first and foremost about the division of space into different compartments aligned with the biological categorisation of those living within them (Fanon 2001). Using this insight Mbembe refers to the way in which the establishment of the colony relies upon the writing of new spatial relations via new boundaries, hierarchies, and classifications. If space is the 'raw material' of the sovereign, as Fanon suggests, then Mbembe argues that 'sovereignty meant occupation, and occupation meant relegating the colonised into a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood' (2003: 26).

According to Mbembe, however, the concept of biopolitics has become insufficient for an understanding of contemporary forms of subjugation of some peoples' lives to the power of death. Foucault's focus on the ability of biopower to 'make live and let die' does not take into account

the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of the *living dead*.

(Mbembe 2003: 40)

Under conditions of late modernity, therefore, Mbembe claims that colonialism combined what Foucault calls disciplinary power and biopower with a third form of governance: 'necropower'.

Mbembe develops the concept of necropower to characterise the way in which the dynamics of territorial fragmentation referred to by Fanon combine with a proliferation of sites of violence that result in death in the colony. The 'splintering occupation' of colonies involves the separation of communities not only in two but three dimensions. Battlegrounds are not solely located on the earth's surface: 'the underground as well as the airspace are transformed into conflict zones' (Mbembe 2003: 29). Necropolitics, on Mbembe's formulation, involves the cultivation of such spatial arrangements that put populations in daily contact with the possibility of death. Under necropolitical conditions people acquire the status of the living dead: a liminal position between life and death that means they are easier to manage (and dispose of). The concept of 'necropolitics' thus carries deliberately macabre overtones that seek to alert us to the radical insecurities suffered in many parts of the world that are not adequately captured by accounts of security emanating from the developed 'West'. Mbembe argues that the 'most accomplished' form of necropower is the occupation of Palestine, but the idea of the 'death world' can be applied to many parts of Africa and other areas of the global South where 'the sovereign might kill at any time or in any manner' (2003: 25). Thinking postcolonial insecurities in terms of necropolitics therefore expands the horizons of critical security studies beyond a Western frame that has typically sought to expunge both race and death.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, and as evidenced in its presentation of the multiple and often disparate 'postcolonial' perspectives relevant to security studies, the term postcolonial encompasses a variety of meanings. Whereas some scholars interpret the 'post' in postcolonial purely in terms of historical and geographical differentiation of the 'Third World' and its security predicaments, others argue the term should be more accurately deployed to critique the Western-centric biases of (critical) security studies, or to highlight the essential continuity of colonial practices in the creation of 'death-worlds' as opposed to any clean break between colonial and postcolonial epochs. The extent to which any or all of these postcolonial perspectives on security overlap or are compatible is open to question. Indeed, for some 'the term "postcolonial" seems increasingly to be straining at its seams, incorporating a proliferating set of theories with varying ontologies and epistemologies many of which are incommensurable, as even some postcolonialists recognise' (Hobson 2007: 103), and the same might well be said of the various postcolonial approaches to security outlined here.

Yet, the plurality and diversity of postcolonial perspectives might equally be cast as a particular source of interest for students of security. Taken as a whole, and in spite of their internal differences, postcolonial approaches can be said to draw our attention to the parts of the world, parts of theory, and perspectives that are usually only partially considered or even absent from both traditional and critical accounts of security. In relation to critical security studies in particular, postcolonial approaches are notable not only for the extent to which they reinforce some of the moves within the critical ‘turn’ in security studies, but also for the ways in which they continue to challenge many of the theories and approaches covered in other chapters in this book.

Key points

- Many scholars working from a ‘Third World’ perspective argue that during the Cold War in particular the security concerns of the Third World tended to be read through the lens of the superpower rivalry or simply neglected altogether within security studies.
- The Subaltern Realist approach sets out to highlight the specificity of the Third World’s ‘security predicament’ but has in turn been criticised for its explicit statism, which many critical approaches suggest is often a source of individual insecurity.
- The idea of a ‘postcolonial moment’ is used to denote the opportunity for a more substantive overlap between security studies and postcolonial studies that addresses the Eurocentric/‘Orientalist’ biases of both traditional and critical security studies.
- Some question the term ‘post’colonial, suggesting that many people continue to live under colonial conditions, and that race has been a neglected aspect of the study of global security relations in both the traditional and critical literatures.

Discussion points

- How does security look today from a ‘Third World’ perspective?
- ‘Interpreted as the right of every ethnic group to self-determination, emancipation can turn out to be a recipe for grave disorder and anarchy’ (Ayoob 1997). Why might a ‘Third World perspective’ lead to a critique of ‘emancipation’ as the basis of security studies?
- What are the main strengths and weaknesses of a ‘Subaltern Realist’ approach to security?
- What, does the ‘postcolonial moment’ contribute to the study of security?
- How does thinking in terms of race affect the study of global security relations?

Guide to further reading

Mohammed Ayoob (1995) *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner). For a self-defined ‘Third World’ perspective on security, Mohammed Ayoob’s work is still the primary point of reference within security studies.

Amitav Acharya (1997) ‘The Periphery as the Core: The Third World and Security Studies’, in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: UCL Press). Provides a broadly complementary account of ‘Third World Security’ to that espoused by Ayoob, albeit one that is more open to the ‘broadening’ of the security agenda.

- Keith Krause (1998) 'Theorizing Security, State Formation and the "Third World" in the Post-Cold War World', *Review of International Studies*, 24: 125–136; Michael Barnett (2002) 'Radical Chic? Subaltern Realism: A Rejoinder', *International Studies Review*, 4(3): 49–62. Krause's article provides a critical review of Ayoob's *Third World Security Predicament*, while Barnett makes an incisive critique of the notion of 'Subaltern Realism'.
- Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey (2006) 'The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies', *Review of International Studies*, 32: 329–352. The most substantive attempt to relate security studies and postcolonial studies to date.
- Sankaran Krishna (1999) *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood* (Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press). An empirically detailed and theoretically sophisticated account of the relation between nation building and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. A more expansive version of Krishna's arguments can be found in his (2008) *Globalisation and Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).

As well as consulting these texts, readers are also recommended to go straight to one or more of the seminal works in postcolonial studies such as Fanon (2001) [1961], Said (2003) [1978], Chakrabarty (2000), or Bhabha (1994). Alternatively, or as an introduction to these texts, the review chapter by Slemmon (2001) and the text in which it appears (Castle 2001) both provide useful overviews of key themes and work in postcolonial studies as do Abrahamsen (2003), Loomba (1996), Moore-Gilbert (1997), and Young (2001). Critical perspectives on the use of meta-geographical terms such as 'the West', 'Third World', and 'global North/South' are to be found in Doty (1996), Lewis and Wigen (1997), and Slater (2004) (see Bibliography for details of all these readings).

4 Poststructuralism and international political sociology

Abstract

This chapter is organised into five sections. The first offers a sketch of the term 'poststructuralism', but warns of the inherent difficulty of referring to 'it' as a coherent position or approach. The second introduces two thinkers associated with the poststructural turn in political philosophy – Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault – to give a flavour of the range and diversity of thought under consideration. The third considers the impact of this turn on security studies via a discussion of seminal poststructural works influenced by Derrida and Foucault. The fourth offers a survey of more recent research informed by poststructural thought associated with International Political Sociology (IPS) and the so-called 'Paris School'. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the possible limitations of poststructural approaches within security studies.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, security scholars inspired by poststructuralist thought have highlighted the politics of language, interpretation, and representation in the construction of notions of danger, threat, and identity in international security. More recently, especially in the context of the 'War on Terror' unleashed in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001, this work has proliferated in new directions involving analyses of discourses of exceptionalism, debates about 'liberty' and 'security', and practices of security as a technique of government. It is possible to trace the emergence of a more sociologically oriented approach to security, which is producing some of the most provocative research in the field. While poststructuralism was once seen as marginal to security studies, it has become increasingly prominent, though has not gone without criticism, especially in the UK and European contexts.

What is 'poststructuralism'?

It is not uncommon to find the terms 'poststructuralism', 'postmodernity', and 'postmodernism' used interchangeably in the literature. This can be quite confusing as each refers to something potentially very different.

'Postmodernity' implies a particular historical periodisation: the idea that we are currently living in an era, sometimes said to have been ushered in by the Second World War,

that is in some sense *after* or *beyond* the epoch known as ‘modernity’. ‘Postmodernism’, while often related to this view of history, is more of an umbrella term for an artistic, architectural, and cultural movement in the West that emerged in the 1950s/1960s. ‘Poststructuralism’, our primary concern in this chapter, is a fragmentary assemblage of diverse social, political, and philosophical thought that engages with, but also calls into question, the ‘structuralist’ tradition. ‘It’ is commonly associated with a particular intellectual milieu, including Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Jean-François Lyotard among other, typically (though not exclusively) French, thinkers of the twentieth century.

A word of caution is required here, however, since many of the thinkers whose work is labelled ‘poststructural’ seek to distance themselves from this term. Derrida, for example, considers it inherently suspect and problematic. One of the reasons for this distancing is that the label tends to be used more by critics than supposed proponents as a way of dismissing so-called poststructuralist works without engaging with them on their own terms. Another reason, which offers a clue as to the ethos of poststructural thought, is a refusal to accept practices of labelling, categorisation, and generalisation unproblematically – as paradigmatically captured by Lyotard’s ‘incredulity towards meta-narratives’ (‘progress’, ‘emancipation’, the ‘end of history’, and so on).

Nevertheless, poststructuralism, if there is such a thing, pays especial attention to detail, the specificity of context, and how claims about ‘the world’ are dependent upon certain forms of knowledge. Indeed, many of the above thinkers challenge the very idea that we can think and speak of ‘the world’ in any straightforward meaningful sense. This is because what we might mean by ‘the world’ always already depends upon representations of ‘it’, which, in turn, are not separate from but fundamentally a part of that world. In this context, then, the role of language is essential, because any knowledge or experience of ‘the world’ is unthinkable outside interpretation.

Language and the security of meaning

Before we delve deeper into the implications of poststructuralism for the study of security, it is instructive to briefly consider the structuralist tradition in relation to which the former is often defined.

Structural linguistics

One route into a characterisation of the relation between structuralism and poststructuralism is via Ferdinand de Saussure’s structural approach to language and Jacques Derrida’s subsequent ‘deconstruction’ of it.

Saussure (1857–1913) was a Swiss linguist whose *Course in General Linguistics* (1986) [1916] was published posthumously by his students. The focus of Saussure’s work was the production of meaning and he developed a theory of the structure of language.

For Saussure, the structure of any language consists of a series of different sounds and ideas. The basic unit of the linguistic structure is called the ‘sign’ (e.g. ‘chair’). Each sign comprises two component parts: the signifier (e.g. the sound of the word ‘chair’ when spoken); and the signified (e.g. the idea of a ‘chair’ as something to sit in). Crucially, Saussure argued that there is no intrinsic relationship between the signifier on the one hand and the signified on the other. In other words, there is nothing essential about the connection between the sound of the word ‘chair’ when spoken and the piece of furniture known as a

'chair' to which we refer when we say that word. This is because, for Saussure, there are no positive terms within the linguistic structure, only differences. Put another way, the meaning of the sign 'chair' is not present in and of itself. Rather, we only know what is meant when someone says 'chair' because it is *not* a 'table', 'footstool', 'desk', and so on. So, the meaning of the sign 'chair' is not given as such, but produced in contradistinction to other signs in the linguistic structure.

The key point of Saussure's approach to language, therefore, is that meaning depends on *difference* within the structure of language. Indeed, it is because of the very structure of language – a series of differences between signs – that there is such a thing as 'meaning' in the first place.

Deconstructing the security of meaning

Derrida's encounter with Saussure goes some way to illustrating the relationship between structuralism and poststructuralism. As we shall see, the latter does not reject the former, but rather works with it, on its own terms, to produce a more sophisticated understanding of language and the production of meaning. This is why many writers refer to 'poststructuralism' as one word.

Derrida (1930–2004) agreed with Saussure's fundamental insight that meaning is produced through differences within the linguistic structure. However, Derrida argued that meaning is not always as stable as Saussure's structuralist approach implies: the meaning of signs in any given sentence often remains ambiguous and can lead to confusion. How many times, for example, have you received a text message from someone and not quite understood what has been meant? Some messages, such as those arranging a time and place, might be straightforward enough. Others, though, may leave you wondering things like: Am I being asked out on a date? How much should I read into this? What does s/he really *mean* by such and such? In these instances, there is a delay between the thought of the person sending the message and the point of communication with the recipient of the SMS.

Derrida's overall point is that 'meaning' is often difficult to pin down: it is always already slippery, 'on the move', so to speak, endlessly differing and deferring. Therefore, whilst Saussure paid attention to the spatial differentiation between signs within the linguistic structure, Derrida argued that he neglected the importance of *time* and the *deferral* of meaning. In this way, Derrida did not argue against or 'critique' Saussure. Instead, he brought the issue of temporal delay to Saussure's structuralist account of the production of meaning in language.

Although Derrida wrote very little about security issues as traditionally understood, in a certain sense he can be thought of as a theorist of security. Having shown that meaning is always already differing and deferring, Derrida was interested in attempts to secure it. He argued that in Western thought the inherent instability of meaning is secured through the use of binary oppositions, for example man/woman, cause/effect, presence/absence, and so on. According to Derrida, these terms are not equal, but implicated in a hierarchical relation: the first term is usually privileged over the other (man *over* woman, etc.), which gives the sense of a firm foundation for meaning. Although the first term is granted a higher status, however, it cannot function without the second term on which it relies. In other words, the superior term *depends* on its shadow: it is only through the exclusion of the secondary term that the first term comes into being.

The focus of Derrida's work, then, is not ontology or 'what *is*', but what he called *hauntology* or 'what *is not*' – in other words that which is left out or excluded in order for

meaning to be secured. Despite his famous hesitation in defining it, this is what Derrida meant by a 'deconstructive' way of reading. Deconstruction is a mode of thinking that takes the instability of meaning as its starting point in order to then trace attempts at securing it. As we shall go on to see, Derrida's work has inspired a number of deconstructive readings of an array of issues in the study of global security relations – including what 'security' itself might mean.

'Truth', discourse, and power

Another figure central to poststructural approaches in security studies is Michel Foucault.

Foucault (1926–1984) was a historian and social theorist who, like Derrida, was drawn to marginal phenomena to analyse the (re)production of norms in Western society. He traced the way in which different understandings of insanity and sexual deviance came to define 'normal' behaviour in different historical periods. Instead of asking questions like 'What is madness?' Foucault explored how the meaning of madness is produced through different social institutions at different times. Through hospitals, universities, and the scientific community more generally, a context is formed within which an understanding of madness is made possible. In such a context, the 'truth' of what counts as insanity and sanity is configured: particular 'regimes of truth' then emerge over time as certain 'facts' become manufactured and accepted as such. On this basis, according to Foucault, there is such a thing as 'truth', but it will vary according to social, economic, and historical context. Hence Foucault focuses on the role played by prevailing 'discourses'.

In a general sense, 'discourse' is the context within which regimes of truth come to be. Importantly, Foucault's use of this term does not merely refer to 'language'. Rather, in Foucauldian terms, discourse is understood as a series of practices, representations, and interpretations through which different regimes of truth, for example the boundary between sanity and insanity, are (re)produced. The realm of the discursive, then, is one in which identities are constructed, social relations established, and ethical-political outcomes made possible. For Foucault, however, the study of discourse is significant not only because it permits an analysis of different regimes of truth. It also tells us about the nature of power, or more accurately what Foucault called 'relations of power', in society (see Box 4.1). What counts as 'true' is always implicated in the relationship between knowledge and power (or what is sometimes referred to as the 'power–knowledge nexus'). Discursive analyses, therefore, identify 'subjugated knowledges', which have been excluded by the regime of truth.

The poststructural turn in security studies

Reflecting broader developments in social and political theory, the late 1980s/early 1990s saw the publication of several landmark texts in IR, including Richard K. Ashley's article 'Untying the Sovereign State: A Double-Reading of the Anarchy Problematique', published in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (1988); Michael J. Shapiro and James Der Derian's edited collection *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (1989); and R.B.J. Walker's (1993) *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Taken together, these texts constitute what some surveyors of the disciplinary landscape consider to be the beginning of a 'poststructural turn' in IR theorising. Much of the focus of this early work was directed against the tendency of the then dominant Realist/Neo-Realist paradigm to take the social world as a given rather

Box 4.1 Michel Foucault: the 'how' of power

Power

For Foucault, power cannot be approached as if 'it' were something that can be possessed by someone. Rather, we must think of power as a relation or interplay between people. To study power, therefore, is to analyse the *relations of power* or terms of that interplay. In other words, instead of thinking about the 'who' of power, it is necessary to question the 'how' of power relations in any given context. For this reason, Foucault argued that we need to cut off the king's head in political philosophy. By this, he meant shifting our attention away from the sovereign to *mechanisms of power* understood as the techniques, tactics, strategies used to influence behaviour, colonise space, and enable/constrain ethical and political practice. Crucially, for Foucault, relations of power should not be conceived of as entirely repressive. The relation between the master and the slave, whereby the latter is in total subordination to the former, is not one of *power* but of *violence*. On the contrary, specifically power relations presuppose some form of freedom in order to operate. Hence, where there are relations of power there are always sites of *resistance*. In this way, power relations are said to have a *productive* dimension.

Disciplinary power

Foucault argued that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the emergence of new equipment, instruments, and procedures that gave rise to a new type of power relation. This new type relied heavily on different forms of surveillance of individuals as represented by Jeremy Bentham's (1785) model of the *panopticon* – the perfect prison designed so that inmates in cells would feel as though they were under the constant watch of guards in the watch tower without being able to see them or each other (see Figure 4.1). Such a power, which Foucault called 'disciplinary power', structures space by enclosing people to enable control over their movement. Disciplinary power relations therefore work at an individual level with, for example, the body of the inmate as the focus of various techniques, tactics, and strategies.

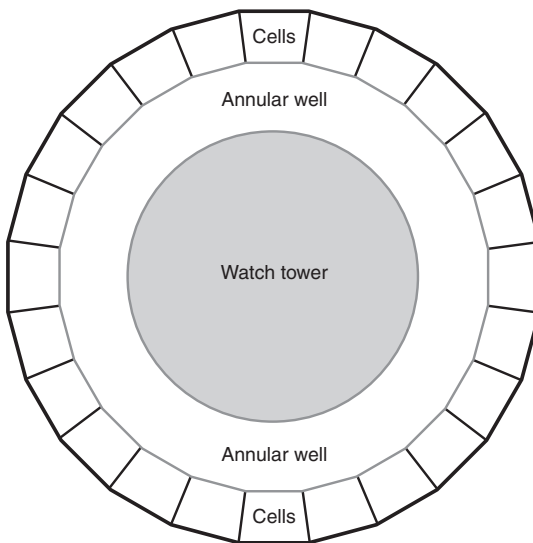


Figure 4.1 'The panopticon.'

Biopower

Towards the mid-eighteenth century, Foucault identifies the rise of another type of power relation. At this time, new statistical methods pioneered by early demographers gave rise to the idea of the *population* as a category. Western societies increasingly came to think of the human as a species and the biological features of the population became the target of political strategies. In this context, new relations of power emerged, not based on man as an individual body, but man as a living being. Biopolitical techniques, designed to 'make live and let die', enabled new forms of governance. Instead of disciplining individual bodies, biopolitics seeks to maximise circulation, flows, and movement of people, in order to control movement by sifting 'good' elements of the population from 'bad'.

than understanding the role that knowledge plays in (re)producing it. More specifically, poststructural critics questioned how the image of international politics as portrayed by prominent Realists like Kenneth N. Waltz came to appear natural, neutral, and unchanging. Drawing on the insights of Derrida and Foucault among others, they analysed Realist discourses of hierarchy/anarchy, inside/outside, and self/other, in order to demonstrate how those accounts rely upon particular binary oppositions to give the impression that the structure of international politics is stable and immutable.

It is against this backdrop that the poststructural 'turn' in the disciplinary sub-field of security studies should be considered. For many writers associated with this turn, the distinction between 'IR' on the one hand and 'security' on the other is inherently problematic. Indeed, many earlier poststructuralist-inspired works in international politics, such as James Der Derian's *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, War* (1992), David Campbell's (1992) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, David Campbell

Box 4.2 R.B.J. Walker: deconstructing international relations

In his *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (1993), R.B.J. Walker argues that theories of international relations are less interesting for the analyses they provide than as reflections of the ways in which we try to make sense – and attempt resolutions of – the mysteries of human existence. At the heart of these attempted resolutions in IR theory is the concept of *sovereignty*. For Walker, sovereignty is not a natural given. Rather, it is an historical construct that emerged from the seventeenth century as a principle for organising ourselves politically. Specifically, it resolves the paradox of our twin identity *both* as citizens of a universal common humanity *and* citizens of particular nation states. The principle of sovereignty, according to Walker, relies upon a spatial and temporal distinction between inside and outside. Spatially, a line is drawn between the *inside* of political community, associated with safety, security, and amity on the one hand, and the *outside* of the international associated with lawlessness, insecurity, and enmity on the other hand. Temporally, this demarcation provides the condition of possibility for aspirations towards justice, democracy, and 'progress' within the boundaries of the state, as compared with the immutable prospect of conflict, barbarism, and warfare between states. Through different discursive practices, for example in the realms of foreign policy and international law, the inside/outside dichotomy is reproduced thereby creating the effect of sovereignty and a sense of stability. According to Walker, conventional IR theories rely upon but fail to acknowledge this logic of inside/outside, which serves to reaffirm the limits of the modern political imagination.

and Michael Dillon's *The Political Subject of Violence* (1993), and Michael Dillon's *The Politics of Security* (1996), deliberately sought to blur the terrains of IR theory, security studies, and political philosophy.

David Campbell's *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (1992) is a seminal poststructural account of the role of identity and the production of danger in international security. Inspired by Derrida's account of language and the production of meaning, Campbell argues that *identity* is constituted by *difference*: 'The constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an "inside" from an "outside", a "self" from an "other", a "domestic" from a "foreign"' (1992: 8).

He refers to this identity/difference problematic in a general sense as 'foreign policy' (small 'f' and 'p'). Applying this logic, the identities of states are never given but (re)produced in relation to other states through repetitive practices that code, constitute, and discipline the boundaries on which the identity/difference problematic depends. Indeed, on this view, 'the state' does not exist as such outside the gamut of practices that bring it into being. In other words states, and their identities, are *performed* (for connections with Judith Butler's concept of 'performativity see Box 2.4). Furthermore, states are never finished political entities, but must always be considered as a 'work in progress'.

Campbell's study explores how the identity of the US is constituted via an analysis of texts written in its name. It proceeds by offering a close, detailed, empirical examination of how those texts secure the meaning of the identity of the US as a major actor in international politics. Specifically, Campbell investigates the reliance upon notions of *danger* in order that the US can portray itself in a particular way. Danger, he argues, is not an objective condition: 'it (sic) is not a thing that exists independently of those to whom it may become a threat' (1992: 2). There is nothing that is inherently 'dangerous' and not all dangers are treated equally in international politics. Rather, danger must be understood as a 'category of understanding': 'those events or factors that we identify as dangerous come to be ascribed as such only through an interpretation of their various dimensions of dangerousness' (1992: 2). It is against the designation of state *x* as dangerous that the identity of state *y* is defined and produced. For Campbell, Foreign Policy (with a capital 'F' and 'P') – as traditionally understood in terms of the external affairs of the state – is only one of a number of discourses of danger made possible by foreign policy. He argues, however, that it has been afforded a privileged position within the discursive economy of the state, which, 'by virtue of telling us what to fear, have been able to fix who "we" are' (1992: 170).

In his reading of US Foreign Policy texts during the period of the Cold War, Campbell considers how a particular view of danger and dangerousness came to be associated with communism and the Soviet Union. Following the Second World War, the US government confronted an array of domestic challenges including high unemployment, low wages, and the growing demands of the Trade Union movement. Yet, despite seemingly having no connection with these challenges, the Soviet Union became a threat to the nation, which generated a 'red scare' whereby external threats came to be associated with internal disorder. Through the exteriorisation of the threat, and the demonisation of the Soviet Union as 'other', 'alien', 'subversive', 'dirty', and 'sick', US Foreign Policy texts attempted to secure a particular version of American identity. It is precisely this attempt at securing the meaning of the US, in contradistinction to the identity of the Soviet Union, which Campbell refers to as the practice of *writing*.

International political sociology (IPS)

More recently, especially against the backdrop of the US-led 'War on Terror', poststructural approaches to security have been invigorated and taken in new theoretical and empirical directions. Much of this research is associated with the so-called 'Paris School', which fuses a concern with discourses of security and constructions of danger with a focus on security *practices*. The focus on practices such as the role of security professionals, the conduct of policing, and the activities of private security companies, for example, aligns this work with a more sociologically oriented approach. It is in this context that the term 'International Political Sociology' has been used.

One of the prominent figures of the Paris School, Didier Bigo, examines the relation between liberty and security from an IPS perspective. Methodologically, Bigo takes much inspiration from the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his related concepts of *habitus* and the *field*. Briefly, Bourdieu developed the concept of *habitus* to refer to the framework of orientation, provided for both by formal and informal social structures, within which actors are emplaced in society. The *field* is the social universe within which actors relate to each other and those structures: a complex web of relations between different positions determined by inequalities such as power and wealth.

Applying these concepts, Bigo has analysed shifts in the *habitus* of security relations in the West. Whereas, for example, the distinction between the police on the one hand and the army on the other mapped on to and further entrenched a logic of inside/outside as diagnosed by Walker (see Box 4.2), Bigo argues that this correlation no longer holds. A new *habitus*, underpinning what he calls the 'transversal field of globalised (in)security' has emerged, whereby the traditional separation between inside/outside has become ever more blurred:

In very simple terms, we can no longer distinguish between an internal order reigning, thanks to the police, by holding a monopoly on legitimate violence, and an archaic international order which is maintained by an equilibrium of national powers vis-à-vis the armies and diplomatic alliances.

(2008: 11)

According to Bigo, however, the border between inside and outside has not so much been eroded, but *deconstructed*, in the Derridean sense. That is to say, while the realms of internal and external are hard to discern, they have not disappeared entirely. Rather, the deconstruction of inside/outside has led to the playing-out of that binary in new and often unexpected ways (for more on this in relation to border security see Chapter 9).

In turn, this has given rise to a novel *field* of security relations, between security professionals, governmental and non-governmental institutions, the police, military, and private enterprise, across an increasingly *globalised* terrain. What is specific about this *field* in the context of the War on Terror is that it constitutes a 'semantic continuum' in which security actors cultivate fear, unease, and (in)security. Through the development a harsher legislative climate, acts of profiling and containing foreigners, and practices of exceptionalism (see Box 4.3), *liberal* regimes create an atmosphere that both justifies and necessitates further *illiberal* practices. Consequently, this field of (in)security opens up new possibilities as far as the governance of populations in the West is concerned. Here the concept of (in)security is pivotal in Bigo's diagnosis of contemporary political life.

For Bigo, security is always necessarily about *sacrifice*: the security of *x* always leads to the *insecurity* of *y*. In other words, the practice of securing one actor simultaneously

renders other actors insecure. For this reason, and this is a crucial point, it makes little sense to think of ‘security’ as a positive condition and ‘insecurity’ as its negative correlative. Furthermore, this view holds that security and insecurity are *not* polar opposites, but fundamentally interrelated and interdependent.

On the one hand, there is a striking similarity between Bigo’s formulation of (in)security and the classical ‘security dilemma’ in Realist thought. On the other hand, however, while both point to the sacrificial logic of security, Bigo does not delimit the application of this insight to *states* acting within an anarchical system. Rather, the ‘actors’ in this context comprise all those who constitute the field of security relations. Bigo refers to the practices through which different actors are produced as (in)secure as practices of ‘(in)securitization’.

Despite the obvious semantic connection, overlaps with the Copenhagen School concept of ‘securitization’ are minimal, however, as Bigo seeks to flesh out a ‘thicker’ sociological conception of securitizing (speech) acts (see also Chapter 5). Along with this conception is an attempt at a more nuanced and sophisticated treatment of the affects of an (in)securitizing move, which, given the multiplicity of actors in the field of global security relations, are difficult to quantify:

The actors never know the final results of the move they are making, as the result depends on the field effect of many actors engaged in the competitions for defining whose security is important, and by the acceptance of different audiences of their definition.

(2008: 124)

The ultimate task of a more sociologically oriented critical security studies, then, is to address the question: ‘Who is doing an (in)securitization move, under what conditions, towards whom, and with what consequences?’ (Bigo 2008: 124).

Security and discourses of exceptionalism

Discourses of exceptionalism have become a major concern of recent poststructural-inspired work in security studies. The concept of the ‘exception’ has a rich political, philosophical (and theological) heritage within the tradition of Western thought. Different thinkers have used the concept of the exception/exceptionalism in various ways (see Box 4.3).

Today it is not uncommon to find the phrase ‘exceptional times call for exceptional measures’ used by politicians who seek to justify an array of illiberal practices such as those identified above. Indeed, throughout the War on Terror, this phrase has been especially popular. Former US President George W. Bush, for example, used it to justify the indefinite detention of ‘unlawful enemy combatants’ at the US naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Clearly, however, the usage of this phrase is not something new or unique in the context of Western politics post-9/11. Rather, there is a long history of declarations of emergency conditions said to necessitate exceptional measures in the West. During the 1920s, for example, successive governments of the Weimar Republic in Germany repeatedly invoked emergency powers under Article 48 of the constitution. What this kind of move enables is a suspension of the normal rule of law and its replacement with a ‘state of exception’.

While formal declarations of states of emergency are few and far between in the West, many contemporary security analysts argue that a *logic of exceptionalism* nevertheless pervades contemporary counter-terrorist policies. Such a logic enables techniques of govern-

ance, often of a biopolitical nature (such as torture, rendition, or indefinite detention) that would otherwise be stymied by normal liberal democratic checks and balances on coercive and authoritarian regimes. Indeed, by invoking discourses of exceptionalism, such as the notion that in any given context it is precisely the security of the nation that is at stake, it is arguably more likely that populations in liberal democracies will not only sanction but in fact *demand* further illiberal practices.

In recent years the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1942–) has become popular among security analysts seeking to analyse discourses and practices of exceptionalism in the context of the War on Terror. Agamben takes his inspiration from the debate between Schmitt and Benjamin in the 1920s and sides with the latter arguing that the state of exception has become the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics. In support of this view, Agamben refers to contemporary sovereign practices

Box 4.3 Thinkers of the exception

Carl Schmitt (1888–1985)

Schmitt was a German legal theorist who wrote a number of influential works of political philosophy, including *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1922). In this text Schmitt argued that the essence of sovereignty was the ability to decide on the exception: ‘For a legal order to make sense, a normal situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitely decides whether this normal situation actually exists’ (Schmitt 2005: 13). Such a decision involves two steps: first the decision that an emergency has emerged beyond the scope and provisions of the existing legal order; and second the decision about what can be done to remedy the situation. The sovereign, he who makes a double decision on the exception, has an unusual relationship to the juridical-political order. At once the sovereign both *belongs to* and *stands above or outside* that order in his capacity to decide when the constitution no longer applies. According to this formula, therefore, the law is paradoxically outside itself, since the sovereign who is outside the law declares that there is nothing outside the law. Schmitt refers to the strange situation arising from the suspension of existing legal norms and practices in this way as the ‘state of exception’.

Walter Benjamin (1892–1927)

Benjamin was another early twentieth-century German thinker, engaged critically with Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty in an attempt to move the concept of the exception away from emergency provisions towards a more original function within Western political structures. In his ‘Eighth Thesis on the Concept of History’, Benjamin (2003) responded to Schmitt’s theory of exception by arguing:

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of exception’ in which we live is the rule. We must attain to a concept of history that accords with this fact. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about the real [...] state of exception, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism.

Benjamin points to the way in which, for example, the Third Reich thrived precisely on confusing the difference between norm and exception, law and fact, and order and anomie. On this basis, as the quotation above highlights, Benjamin suggested that the task of the oppressed is to bring about a state of exception proper since it is only then that fascist rule might be overcome.

that blur the otherwise taken-for-granted threshold between democracy and absolutism. One example is former US President George W. Bush's 'Military Order' authorising the indefinite detention and trial by military commissions of non-citizens suspected of terrorist activities. This Order works to secure sovereign power by blurring the legal and political status of a suspected individual thereby producing a legally unnameable and unclassifiable being. In Guantánamo, for example, the use of the term 'unlawful enemy combatant' is not recognised by the UN or any other international institution. In contravention of Article 5 of the Third Geneva Convention, none of the detainees have been classified as prisoners of war and, as such, there is a deliberate ambiguity surrounding their status. Such ambiguity deprives those detained from access to a competent tribunal in order to establish who they are and what their rights might be. Agamben argues that detainees in Guantánamo reflect a form of life that is mute and undifferentiated: what he calls a 'bare life'.

Bare life does not exist before or outside sovereign power relations: it is not something we are all born with and can be stripped down to. Rather, bare life is a form of life that is *banned* from law and politics. The fact that bare life has such an unclear juridical and political status means that it is more amenable to the sway of sovereign power. Caught in a vacuum, bare life is exposed and vulnerable to exceptional practices that may eventually even become considered as 'normal'. Under biopolitical conditions in which the paradigm of security has become the normal technique of government, Agamben argues that the distinction between the citizen and bare life is increasingly blurred: 'Living in the state of exception that has now become the rule has [...] meant this: our private body has now become indistinguishable from our body politic' (2000: 39).

What this means is that it is ever more difficult to maintain a distinction between the 'normal' lives of the citizen and the 'exceptional' existence of bare life. In other words, the generalisation of the state of exception puts entire populations under the perpetual threat of insecurity. We are all, potentially, bare life, Agamben argues. This insight, and Agamben's argument more generally, has been used by analysts to examine the shooting of electrician Jean Charles de Menezes in Stockwell Station (Vaughan-Williams 2007), the treatment of victims of terrorist attacks in New York and London by authorities (Edkins 2007), and the biopolitics of life and death in the War on Terror more generally (Dauphinee and Masters 2007).

Criticisms of poststructural approaches

The poststructural turn in IR and security studies is not without its critics. Indeed, some of the fiercest intra-disciplinary debates have centred not only on the implications but even the validity of poststructuralist scholarship. For some outspoken critics, such as Robert Keohane (1988), poststructuralism does not constitute a *bona fide* approach to international security because 'it' fails to have a cogent scientifically rigorous research agenda. Others have criticised what they consider to be a relativistic and nihilistic 'anti-foundational' attitude (Brown 1994).

These criticisms, however, are problematic because they rely upon caricatured (mis)readings of some of the main characteristics of poststructural thought. For example, many of the authors associated with this genre have set out to call into question the very framework within which Keohane's notion of 'bona fide' research can make any sense. Similarly, Brown's charge is problematic because it mistakes a questioning of foundations for their rejection. Derrida, for example, does not seek to *destroy* but rather *politicise* the foundations of Western knowledge. Nevertheless, while poststructuralism has attracted a

number of hackneyed criticisms, there are a number of possible areas of limitation that are worth taking seriously.

First, while poststructural inspired scholarship offers a number of powerful diagnoses of contemporary global security relations, the extent to which it privileges critique over praxis might be called into question. On the one hand, a defence would be that it is inherently troublesome to imply that critique and praxis are somehow separate or separable to begin with. On the other hand, an aversion to making abstract, generalised prescriptions arguably entails few prospects for generating security policy advice. Inevitably, this calls into question the role of the security analyst: Why do we study security? Is it sufficient to comment critically on global security issues? Do scholars have a responsibility to think about the practical 'real-world' implications of their research?

Second, others have pointed to the way in which, by focusing on the dominant assumptions of specifically Western thought, poststructural scholarship is in danger of being Western and/or Eurocentric in its outlook. On the one hand, it could be counter-argued that the motivation for a critique of the Western/European foundations of knowledge is a deliberate move and indeed motivated by a desire to identify, interrogate, and ultimately even resist this dominance. On the other hand, postcolonial scholars highlight the possibility that starting with a focus on Western/European foundations, values and practices ultimately end up reproducing their centrality in global politics.

Third, a number of scholars, including some of those associated with poststructural work in security studies, have raised criticisms specifically of Agamben and approaches to the politics of exceptionalism inspired by his thought. One high-profile critique is that of Judith Butler (2004), who has argued that Agamben fails to offer an account of how power functions differentially among populations. Focusing on issues of race and ethnicity, Butler accuses Agamben of ignoring the ways in which different people are more likely to be produced as 'bare life' than others. Andrew Neal (2009) has pointed to what he considers to be the apparently ahistorical treatment of sovereignty in Agamben's account of the production of bare life. Others have questioned the extent to which law is 'suspended' entirely in Guantánamo Bay, as Agamben claims, or whether it is more accurately a site of hyper-intensive legal efforts and authorities (Johns 2005).

Key points

- 'Poststructuralism' is a diverse and heterogeneous body of intellectual thought that engages with, but does not reject, the 'structuralist' tradition.
- Saussure developed a structuralist theory of language that says meaning depends upon differences between units in the linguistic structure. Derrida pushed Saussure further, however, by emphasising that meaning not only differs between static units, but is also deferred across time.
- Foucault analysed the way in which 'truth' is always a product of the relation between knowledge and power. A Foucauldian approach to power does not see 'it' as something that can be possessed. Rather, power is always *relational* and where there is power there is always *resistance*.
- David Campbell's *Writing Security* was a pioneering application of poststructural thought to the study of security in which he argues that states' identities are not given but (re)produced through discursive practices.
- In recent years poststructural approaches to security have embraced a more sociological focus on practices particularly those associated with the politics of exceptionalism.

Discussion points

- What different aspects of the study of security are opened up by a poststructuralist perspective?
- How significant is the (re)production of identity in global security relations?
- What is more threatening to civil liberties: international terrorism or responses to it? (Discuss with reference to (a) the UK/EU and (b) US contexts.)
- What is meant by the concept of ‘exceptionalism’ and how does this contribute to an understanding of contemporary practices in the global ‘War on Terror’?
- Does the Paris School offer security practitioners any policy guidelines?

Guide to further reading

Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala (2008) (eds) *Terror, Insecurity and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes after 9/11* (London and New York: Routledge). An analysis of the liberty/security relation from an IPS/Paris School perspective.

David Campbell (1992) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press). A seminal contribution to poststructural approaches that emphasises the politics of identity in international security.

Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina Masters (2007) (eds) *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan). An interesting collection that applies a biopolitical approach to security practices in the War on Terror.

Michael Dillon (1996) *The Politics of Security* (London: Routledge). A significant application of a range of poststructuralist thought to the study of security.

Andrew Neal (2009) *Exceptionalism and the Politics of Counter-Terrorism: Liberty, Security, and the War on Terror* (Oxford and New York: Routledge). A good starting point on the concept of the exception and contemporary usages of it.

Weblinks

The ‘InfoTechWarPeace’ project at the Watson Institute, Brown University: www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/index2.cfm.

The website of the CHALLENGE project on the relation between liberty and security in Europe: www.libertysecurity.org.

The ‘Biopolitics of Security Network’: www.keele.ac.uk/research/lpj/bos/index.htm.

5 Securitization theory

Abstract

This chapter outlines the main features of 'Securitization Theory', its theoretical underpinnings and its applications. It begins by introducing the concept of securitization and establishing its intellectual origins. After outlining the meaning of the concept of securitization in more detail, the chapter then goes on to address the issue of how securitization occurs at a general level, before examining the dynamics of securitization in specific 'sectors' (military, environmental, economic, societal, and political). Following this it discusses the related concept of 'desecuritization' and several other key debates in Securitization Theory. Finally, the chapter assesses the place of Securitization Theory within the broader category of critical security studies.

Introduction

The notion of 'securitization' is one of the most significant conceptual innovations to emerge out of debates over the nature of security in recent decades. It is primarily associated in security studies with a group of scholars commonly referred to as the 'Copenhagen School', which is usually taken to consist of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and the collective authors of works such as Wæver *et al.* (1993) and Buzan *et al.* (1998). The term 'Copenhagen School', actually first employed in a critique of works by these authors (see McSweeney 1996), derives from the association of this school of thought with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research (latterly known as the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute or COPRI) in the Danish capital. Like so many of the ideas discussed in this text, however, the concept of securitization has been employed, and generates debates, far beyond the geographical or intellectual confines suggested by the idea of a 'school'. By consequence, the term 'Securitization Theory' is generally preferred in this chapter as it is increasingly possible to argue that although work produced by those associated with the Copenhagen School remains *the* key point of reference in discussions of securitization (particularly the Buzan *et al.* (1998) text *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*), the core idea of securitization has also been adopted, adapted, and developed by other scholars beyond the immediate original circle of the Copenhagen School, sometimes even in ways – as is discussed later – that challenge and test the limits of the framework originally outlined by Buzan, Wæver *et al.* Paralleling this line of development, this chapter begins by examining the core understanding of securitization as originally put forward by the Copenhagen School and then moves to a consideration of challenges to this particular vision of securitization, as well as critiques of the very notion of securitization itself.

What is ‘securitization’?

The work of the Copenhagen School and their initial development of the concept of the concept of securitization as the basis of ‘a new framework for analysis’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998) can, at a very simplistic level, be said to represent the fusion of two major theoretical and conceptual innovations in security studies: Barry Buzan’s notion of different sectors of security (first put forward by Barry Buzan in the book *People, States and Fear* in 1983 and then later in an updated version in Buzan 1991), and Ole Wæver’s concept of ‘securitization’ (see Wæver 1995 for an early iteration). Buzan *et al.* endorse the widening of the security agenda as identified and advanced by Buzan’s earlier work, but their development of a theory of securitization emanates from a concern that there are ‘intellectual and political dangers in simply tacking the word *security* onto an ever wider range of issues’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 1, emphasis in original). For Buzan *et al.*, then, the main question is how to define *what is and what is not* a security issue in the context of a broadened understanding of security. If we accept the necessity to broaden the security agenda, they argue, then we need some sort of analytical grounding or principle to judge what is and what is not a security issue; otherwise there is a danger that the concept of ‘security’ will become so broad that it covers everything and hence becomes effectively meaningless.

So how do we judge *what is and what is not* a security issue? Buzan *et al.* argue that security, as a concept, is fundamentally about survival: it is when an issue is represented as posing an *existential threat* to the survival of a referent object. Here the term ‘referent object’ can be defined simply as ‘that to which one can point and say, “It has to survive, therefore it is necessary to...”’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 36). This is the same basic principle that underpins the conventional focus of national security and defence: war threatens *the very existence* of a referent object, the state (hence the term ‘existential threat’). Within the concept of national security it is assumed that the state ‘has to survive’, therefore it is assumed that it is necessary for the state to maintain standing armies, weapons production and procurement, intelligence agencies, and so on.

One of the ways we can distinguish an existential threat, then, is the level of response it generates. When an issue is successfully presented as an existential threat, it legitimises the use of exceptional political measures. A classic (military) example in International Relations is a state’s right to self-defence: if a state is under attack, it can legitimately use extraordinary measures that go beyond normal day-to-day politics. A state under attack can declare a state of emergency during which it suspends or changes its functions. It may declare martial law, for example, ration the provision of certain services, close roads and schools, and so on. Commonly, Wæver argues, existential threats set in chain a number of

Box 5.1 Key concepts in Securitization Theory

Securitization: Shifting an issue out of the realm of ‘normal’ political debate into the realm of emergency politics by presenting it as an existential threat.

Securitizing Speech Act: The act of ‘saying security’ in relation to an issue.

Securitizing Move: An attempt to securitize an issue by labelling it as a *security* issue.

Desecuritization: Shifting an issue out of the realm of securitization and emergency politics back into the realm of ‘normal’ political or technical debate.

Asecurity: A condition in which issues tend to remain un-securitized, and are dealt with primarily as political issues or considered as non-political.

effects that characterise the specific quality of security problems: urgency – the issue takes priority; and extraordinary measures – authorities claim powers that they would not otherwise have, or curtail rights and liberties that might otherwise apply (1995: 51). So, ultimately, we have a seemingly simple formula: *Existential Threat to a Referent Object* = *A Security Issue*. Identifying the presence (or absence) of this formula allows us to get an analytical handle of what is and what is not a security issue.

How does securitization occur?

This leads to the question of how the process of securitization happens, and the conditions required for successful securitization to take place. According to Securitization Theory, when an issue comes to be treated as a *security* issue, it is justifiable to use exceptional political measures to deal with it. In other words it is *securitized*: we treat it with the same degree of urgency as we would a military threat. Buzan *et al.* argue that we can think of this process of securitization in terms of a spectrum that runs from nonpoliticised (meaning that an issue is not a political issue), through politicised (meaning it is part of a public policy debate) to securitized (meaning that the issue is thought of as an existential threat and therefore justifies responses that go beyond normal political practices).

Nonpoliticised -----► Politicised -----► **Securitized**

Figure 5.1 The securitization ‘spectrum’ (source: adapted from Buzan *et al.* 1998: 23).

Box 5.2 Speech Act Theory and securitization

As formulated by Wæver, the idea of securitization draws heavily on the theory of language, in particular the branch known as ‘Speech Act Theory’:

What then *is* security? With the help of language theory, we can regard ‘security’ as a *speech act*. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance *itself* is the act. By saying it [security] something is done (as in betting, giving a promise, naming a ship). By uttering ‘security,’ a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.

(1995: 35)

Here Wæver draws upon Speech Act Theory as formulated in the work of the philosopher John L. Austin (1911–1960). In his 1962 book *How to do Things with Words*, Austin proposes that many utterances are equivalent to actions; when we *say* certain words or phrases we also *perform* a particular action. Classic examples of ‘doing things with words’ are cited by Wæver in the example above. For instance, when we give a promise (‘I promise to...’) we are not simply promising to do something in the future, the promise is itself a type of action.

Certain speech acts are known as ‘performatives’ whereby saying the word or phrase effectively serves to accomplish a social act (what Judith Butler (1996) terms as a kind of ‘social magic’), as in the act of naming a ship. Of course, not just anyone can name a ship! For this type of performative speech act to work, certain conditions have to be met: the words have to be said by someone in authority, in the right context, and according to certain pre-established rituals or conventions. These are what are known as ‘felicity conditions’ in Speech Act Theory – conditions required for the successful accomplishment of a speech act.

How does this occur? Simply put, securitization begins by ‘saying security’: ‘Traditionally, by saying “security”, a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 21). Building on this template, Wæver argues that this process of securitization has to be initiated through what is known as a ‘speech act’: a securitizing ‘move’ occurs when an issue not previously thought of as a security threat comes to be *spoken of* as a security issue by important political actors (see Box 5.2).

On this basis, Buzan *et al.* argue, the meaning of security is in many ways secondary to ‘the essential quality of security in general’ (1998: 26) that resides in the *act* of saying ‘security’ rather than in any essential meaning of the word:

That quality is the staging of existential issues in politics to lift them above politics. In security discourse, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labelling it as *security*, an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means. For the analyst to grasp this act, the task is not to address some objective threats that ‘really’ endanger some object to be defended or secured; rather, it is to understand the process of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat.

(1998: 26)

In this sense there is an explicitly constructivist (see the Introduction) component to Securitization Theory: issues can become *security* issues by virtue of their presentation and acceptance as such, rather than because of any innate threatening qualities per se (although Buzan *et al.* do retain a sense that some threats are easier to present as existential threats than others, as is discussed below). Hence, ‘the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 25). Successful securitization, Buzan *et al.* argue, requires some degree of acceptance between the perpetrator of the securitizing speech act and the relevant audience that is appealed to; otherwise, a securitizing move remains incomplete.

Securitization thus has a certain ‘modality’ (a general pattern of operation) that is constant and identifiable, even if the context in which securitizing speech acts occur may vary. Yet not every ‘securitizing move’ is successful, even if they are presented in a way that adheres to the general pattern of operation required for securitization. As Buzan *et al.* stipulate:

Threats and vulnerabilities can arise in many different areas, military and non-military, but to count as security issues they have to meet strictly defined criteria that distinguish them from the normal run of the merely political. They have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.

(1998: 5)

As this formulation indicates by noting the condition of endorsement, in any securitizing speech act there is always a speaker and an audience. In order for securitization to work, an audience has to accept a threat as credible. Hence successful securitization, Wæver argues, not only requires a securitizing speech act, but also the presence of what he terms (drawing

again on Speech Act Theory) as ‘felicity conditions’ (2000: 252; see Box 5.2) – conditions that increase the likelihood of successful securitization.

The first of these conditions, as already outlined, is that the internal logic of a securitizing speech act follows the conventional ‘plot’ of securitization: an existential threat is presented as legitimating the use of extraordinary measures to combat that threat.

The second condition entails the requirement that the securitizing actor – the actor attempting to securitize a given issue – is in a position of authority and has enough social and political capital to convince an audience of the existence of an existential threat. Typically, for example, those designated as ‘security experts’ are assumed to have the capacity to speak authoritatively on what constitutes a security issue due to their background and qualifications, whereas non-experts are not usually assumed to have the same capacity to ‘speak security’.

Third, it will be easier to present an issue as an existential threat if objects associated with the issue carry historical connotations of threat, danger, and harm, or where a history of hostile sentiments exists. So, for example, tanks are generally held to be threatening owing to their status as weapons and historical experience of their use in war; so the massing of tanks along the border of a state is relatively conducive to securitization by elites and security experts. Similarly, where there is a history of conflict between two states, a rapid increase in the production of weapons by one will be relatively easy for the other to present as a potential existential threat.

In short, certain actors and institutions are better at securitizing than others, because they are perceived as being more credible by the relevant audience, and certain issues and objects are easier to securitize than others depending on the associated connotations. However, no one of these conditions on their own is sufficient to achieve securitization, nor are they ever entirely assured. Perceptions of actors’ credibility can fluctuate significantly over time for instance (credibility can be won or lost), and this can radically impact upon the chances for success in any securitizing move (think of the extent to which the credibility of the US and British governments on security issues was affected by the failure to find weapons of mass destruction following the invasion of Iraq in 2003). Likewise, representations and perceptions of historical threats or enmities can change over time. Securitization Theory thus emphasises the importance of the speech act component, and the ultimately political and intersubjective nature of securitization:

No condition (any number of tanks at the border) or underlying cause (motivation of leaders), not even a solid position of authority of the speaker of security, can make for a securitization – they can only *influence* a political interaction which ultimately takes place among actors in a realm of politics with the historical openness this entails.

(Wæver 2000: 252, emphasis in original)

The dynamics of securitization

Securitization Theory seems to make sense when thought of in the familiar terms of military security. But can we apply this formula outside the military realm? Buzan *et al.* argue that we can, but that we need to be aware that the types of interaction, referent objects, and threats to referent objects associated with non-military sectors (which they identify as environmental, economic, societal, and political following Buzan’s earlier (1991) categorisation) can be very different from those associated with the traditional military focus. Understanding securitization as a ‘mode of thinking’ allows the security analyst

to investigate how ‘the *same* logic’ might apply to non-military issues (Wæver 1995: 51). But what constitutes an ‘existential threat’ in one sector may not necessarily be identical to threats in other sectors, even if Buzan *et al.* caution that these sectors should be treated as distinct and separate only to make the analysis of securitization more manageable. In reality, as they acknowledge, sectors frequently overlap; but they also argue that the disaggregation of security into different sectors allows us to discern distinctive patterns or dynamics of security that are found in each, as well as allowing us to identify the likely securitizing actors and prospects for securitization.

Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Buzan *et al.* 1998) provides an initial attempt to identify how these dynamics operate in relation to the military, environmental, economic, societal, and political sectors, and this is summarised initially in Table 5.1.

With regard to the *military* sector, unsurprisingly the traditional/military conception of security prevails. Security is ‘about survival’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 21), and in this sector the security agenda is geared towards the goal of *national* security. With the rise of the nation state, the priority became the preservation of the state such that the concepts of security and ‘national security’ became virtually interchangeable for much of the twentieth century. Defence of the nation was seen to legitimate extraordinary measures. Hence, for example, the US targeting of the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons that could wipe out millions of people (and vice versa) was legitimated in terms of maintaining national security.

Securitization Theory makes two important assumptions in relation to the *military* sector of security. First is that, as noted previously, military security is not the only sector worthy of consideration in security studies or analysis of securitization. Even state militaries increasingly carry out a range of activities and functions, such as humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping, associated with a ‘broadened’ security agenda. Indeed, owing to processes of institutionalisation, state militaries tend to be maintained even in the absence of an obvious existential threat. However a second and equally important point to note is that the traditional conception of security operative in the military sector is in many ways paradigmatic for other non-military sectors. Non-military threats do not necessarily have to be as dangerous as war, but they do have to follow a logic (existential threats to a referent object) and have effects (the use of emergency powers) that parallel the traditional military–political understanding of security. As Wæver (1995: 47) argues, the concept of security – like

Table 5.1 Dynamics of securitization according to sector of security

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Type of interaction (Buzan et al.: 7)</i>	<i>Dynamic of securitization</i>
Military	Relationships of forceful coercion	Existential threat to state/populace/ territory/military capacity
Environmental	Relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere	Existential threat to biosphere/species/ natural environment
Economic	Relationships of trade, production, and finance	Existential threat to markets/finance/ resources
Societal	Relationships of collective identity	Existential threat to collective identity/ language/culture
Political	Relationships of authority, governing status, and recognition	Existential threat to sovereignty/ organisational stability/ideology of a social order

Source: adapted from Buzan *et al.* (1998).

any other concept – carries with it historical connotations. In the case of the concept of security, these connotations relate to practices of war, threat, and defence. Hence invoking the term security potentially initiates what Wæver has termed elsewhere as the ‘Clausewitz effect’, that is, dynamics of threat and defence that parallel those conventionally associated with warfare (Bagge Lausten and Wæver 2000: 724; Wæver 1995: 53).

Certain *environmental* issues, such as global warming, pollution, and overuse of limited energy resources may be construed by securitizing actors as threatening the very existence of animal species or even human life itself. For example, it could be argued that the very existence of Bangladesh is threatened by rising sea levels globally, and an environmental issue such as this can also have knock-on effects in other sectors: refugees from Bangladesh might be seen to threaten the societal, economic, and political integrity of neighbouring states. Some within the scientific community have sought to securitize the issue of climate change on this basis, and these can be characterised as securitizing actors within this sector. But as Buzan *et al.* note, ‘Crucial for environmental security is whether states, major economic actors, and local communities embrace the scientific agenda’ – in other words, successful securitization of environmental issues requires acceptance by the relevant audience (1998: 91).

National or global markets might be threatened by financial collapse, and hence equate to an issue of *economic* security on a large scale with direct consequences for communities and individuals. It is worth remembering, however, that even though we speak quite commonly of our personal ‘economic security’, this needs to be an *existential* threat to fall into the category of securitization. In extreme cases, a financial crisis can compromise or remove access to basic necessities such as food, water, clothing, and shelter and hence could be presented as an existential threat to individuals. At a broader level, threats to the existence of large firms and companies might also be presented as issues of security. Buzan *et al.* tend to focus on ‘security spillovers’ from the economic sector (1998: 117). Thus, for example, state actors may present financial crisis or collapse as a potential threat to the funding of national defence.

Within the *societal* sector, which is discussed in more detail below, securitization occurs when issues are accepted as threatening the existence of a group’s identity. For instance, an influx of migrants who hold rival and potentially competing values could be presented by securitizing actors (such as state or community leaders) as threatening the very existence of a ‘way of life’, a language, or a community.

In the *political* sector, the referent object is usually the constitutive principle of a political unit, the thing that makes a political unit ‘hang together’ – such as sovereignty in the case of states. Anything that threatens the existence of this principle can be presented as a security issue. One example Buzan *et al.* give is that the European Union could be existentially threatened by events that might reverse the process of European integration, which can be said to function as its constitutive principle. Or, at the state level, threats to state sovereignty that are non-military in nature could fall into this category.

As we can see, Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, in their *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, do seek to make the case that non-military issues can be considered as security issues under certain circumstances. What they try to do is to distinguish what types of referent object and what types of threats should fall under the heading of security. But they reject the idea that the study of security should focus purely on the welfare of individual human beings; even though this may seem like an attractive ideal, this would stretch the study of security too far. Wæver cautions that ‘the individual has various needs and can be hurt by threats to those needs, and this makes everything a potential security problem’;

hence, in his view, ‘the concept of security becomes all-inclusive and is thereby emptied of content’ (1995: 49). Focusing on the individual level simply perpetrates the over-expansion of the meaning of security, which is what the analytical tool of securitization seeks to avoid.

Wæver illustrates this with what he terms as the ‘hourglass’ model of security (Figure 5.2), arguing that whilst it can be accepted that “‘security” is influenced in important ways by *dynamics* at the level of individuals and the global system’, terms such as individual security and global security remain fundamentally opaque and impractical for the purposes of analysis.

Buzan *et al.* hence maintain a commitment to methodological collectivism – a focus on the dynamics of collective units – and have conversely charged other critical approaches to security (such as those concerned with ‘emancipation’ – see Chapter 1) with an ill-judged resort to methodological individualism. For Buzan *et al.*, the state remains an important (and possibly the most important) ‘level of analysis’ in security studies. Further to this, they also concentrate attention on the role securitization of external threats plays in the formation of regional ‘security complexes’: subsystems of states within the international system whose major security concerns are inextricably linked and where the securitization of an external threat lends internal coherence and unity to an otherwise diverse group of states (see Buzan *et al.* 1998: 15–19; Buzan and Wæver 2003; and recently Buzan and Wæver 2009).

However, Buzan *et al.* do acknowledge that referent objects other than the state can be subject to securitization. In particular they have sought to explore the concept of ‘societal security’ as a ‘new referent object’ (Wæver *et al.* 1993: 17), arguing that societal identities

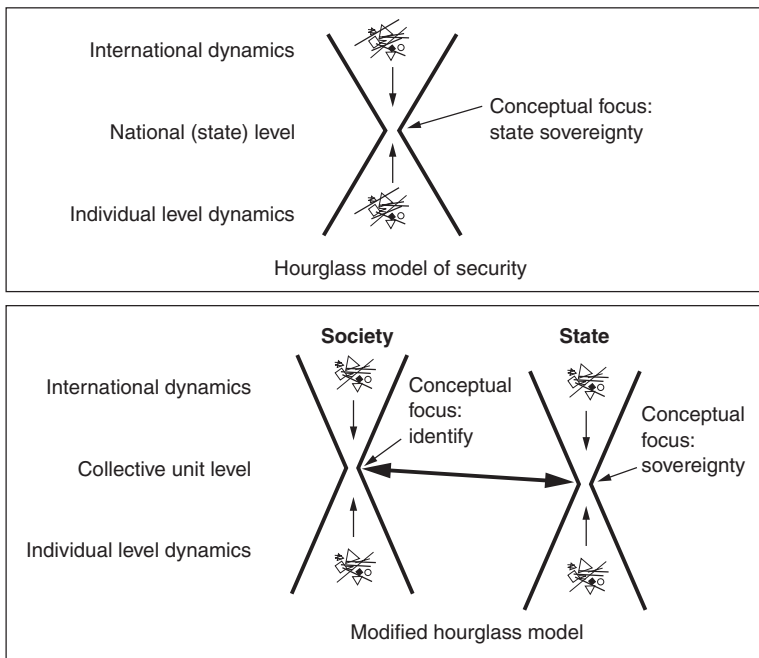


Figure 5.2 Wæver’s ‘hourglass’ models of security (source: adapted from Wæver 1995: 49).

have the degree of consistency and tangibility to function as a referent object in processes of securitization (see the ‘Modified hourglass model’ of security illustrated in Figure 5.2, which implies that society can be treated as a collective unit in a way that parallels the state, albeit with a different conceptual focus). Societal security denotes the security of ‘large-scale “we” identities’ (Wæver *et al.* 1993: 21) such as national (‘we Germans’; ‘we Irish’) and religious (‘we Christians’; ‘we Muslims’) identity groups. Since the boundaries of states and societies are rarely identical, and since state boundaries may contain multiple identity groups, focusing on the state alone fails to capture the dynamics of securitization within the societal sector. As is explored in more detail in Chapter 9, Securitization Theory has been applied to the study of migration in particular in order to assess how, when, and by whom migration has been securitized as an existential threat to group identities (see Wæver *et al.* 1993 and more recently Huysmans 2006). Here it is usually some notion of ‘society’, as opposed to the state, which is being threatened: migrants may not be presented as direct threats to state institutions or political stability, but instead as threats to traditional conceptions of national identity.

Securitization and desecuritization

In contrast to the traditional assumption that security is an intrinsic good and something that we would instinctively want more of, one of the most striking implications of Securitization Theory is that security is not always a ‘good thing’. Following the logic of Securitization Theory, more security is not necessarily better as securitization of an issue brings with it a particular type of emergency politics where the space (and time) allowed for deliberation, participation, and bargaining is necessarily constricted and brings into play a particular, militarised mode of thinking. Thus, for instance, many have argued that the securitization of migration actually has a negative impact in limiting the political space required to think through this complex issue, and instead introduces an unhelpful degree of enmity and urgency (Aradau 2004; Huysmans 2006).

Consequently, Wæver in particular has argued that we should in most cases ‘aim for *desecuritization*: the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere’ (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 4, emphasis added). The question of what desecuritization means and what it might involve in practice is the focus of much current attention in debates on Securitization Theory. It is generally acknowledged that the concept of desecuritization figures more prominently in Wæver’s individual work (such as Wæver 1995, 2000) than in the collective efforts of the ‘Copenhagen School’, which spend less time on exploring desecuritization. In his early work on securitization and desecuritization, Wæver gives a clearer sense that the rationale for developing Securitization Theory as an approach is not simply analytical but is also motivated by a concern that ‘radical’ or ‘critical’ approaches to security have fostered a tendency to simply append the term security to an ever-increasing variety of issues (environmental, economic, societal, and political) without altering the substantive meaning of security from its traditional military origins. In so doing, Wæver argues, such approaches unwittingly risk facilitating and exacerbating the



Figure 5.3 Desecuritization?

introduction of threat–defence dynamics and emergency politics into non-military realms of activity, and this is of questionable merit.

As an illustration of this point, some have argued that the securitization of environmental degradation (via the presentation of processes such as climate change as an existential threat to the planetary biosphere and species survival) could have a positive effect in motivating emergency measures to alter human and state activities that may well lead to such degradation. As Buzan noted in the context of increasing use of the term ‘environmental security’ by environmental campaigners in the early 1990s, ‘The security label is a useful way both of signalling danger and setting priority, and for this reason alone it is likely to persist in environmental debates’ (cited in Wæver 1995: 63).

Wæver has, however, questioned the appropriateness of introducing the ‘grammar of security’ into environmental debates for several reasons. First is that intentionality is more difficult to ascribe in environmental issues than in traditional military issues. Whereas conflict takes place between warring parties, it is difficult to make the case that processes of environmental degradation, even if produced by human activities, are deliberately aimed at creating a threat to others. Second, because the label security is traditionally associated with the state, the term ‘environmental security’ implies that a state response is most appropriate. This implication, however, overlooks the fact that environmental problems frequently transcend and traverse state boundaries both in their likely causes and their impact. Third, securitization of environmental issues brings with it an increased likelihood of militarised thinking, that is, of thinking in terms of threat and defence. Doing so might well encourage a reactive approach to environmental problems, whereas what might well actually be required is a more fundamental consideration of the extent to which environmental problems are the product of patterns of human activity that require substantial rethinking and deliberation (Wæver 1995: 65; see also Deudney 1990). The issue of the ‘securitization’ of the environment is explored in more detail in Chapter 6. Others have similarly argued that the securitization of issues such as health, aid, and development is actually unhelpful in attempting to deal with these issues (Grayson 2003; Abrahamsen 2005).

Wæver thus expresses his preference for *not* securitizing issues where possible, and for desecuritization, that is, shifting issues from the realm of emergency politics back into the realm of ‘normal’ political deliberation and haggling. In some of his work, Wæver suggests the condition of ‘asecurity’, rather than security, is in fact optimal. Asecurity denotes a condition where actors ‘who do not feel insecure, do not self-consciously feel (or work on being) secure; they are more likely to be engaged in other matters’ (Wæver 1998: 71). Asecurity thus describes a condition where the occurrence of securitization (and hence any consequent requirement for desecuritization) is minimal or absent, and issues are not conceptualised in terms of security.

Yet this still leaves the question of how issues that have already been securitized might be downgraded or moved back to the status of ‘normal’ political issues. Several authors have noted this as an as yet undertheorised aspect of securitization theory. As Claudia Aradau notes, the concept of desecuritization has received ‘comparatively scant attention’ within Securitization Theory as compared with the more prominent concept of securitization (2004: 389). Examining the securitization of migration in the European Union, in which migrants are presented as a threat to existing forms of identity, Huysmans (1995: 66–67) suggests three possible strategies of desecuritization: an ‘objectivist strategy’ (we might try to prove that migrants are not really a threat to ‘our’ identity); a ‘constructivist strategy’ (developing a broader understanding and awareness of how migrants are constructed as threats in processes of securitization as a possible means of undercutting the

potency of securitizing moves); and a 'deconstructivist strategy' (where we might try and listen to the voices and experiences of migrants themselves as means of breaking down exclusionary notions of 'us' and 'them'). However, Roe (2004) has argued that in some cases (such as the securitization of minority rights), securitization is so entrenched (in, for example, constituting and perpetuating the identity of minorities) that it becomes virtually impossible to conceive of viable strategies for desecuritization. In sum, while the concept of securitization has been developed in a way that allows for clearly identifiable speech acts, securitizing actors, and conditions for success, the equivalent concept of desecuritization, and what that might entail, remains much less well specified in Securitization Theory and is a source of continuing intellectual ferment.

Debates, dilemmas, and developments in Securitization Theory

As well as debates over the nature of desecuritization, there are several other debates, dilemmas, and developments in Securitization Theory that distinguish it as one of the most vibrant areas of research in contemporary security studies.

One of the initial points of contention over the development of Securitization Theory concerns the concept of 'societal security'. In particular, the 'Copenhagen School' has been accused of essentialising identity in its rendering of Securitization Theory. Criticising the notion of societal security, McSweeney (1996) argues that identities (even national identities) are fluid and change over time. He consequently suggests that the concept of societal security 'will make claims for the protection of national identity all the easier to substantiate, without investigation of the interests underlying them or of the moral choices involved in any decision to authenticate them' (1996: 91). In short, McSweeney worries that the concept of societal security risks legitimating and hardening notions of 'us' and 'them' that in turn tend to fuel identity conflicts. Buzan and Wæver have countered this by arguing that they do not treat identities as objective or given, but that 'once mobilized, identities have to be reckoned with as something people perceive that they belong to, and act upon as objective, given' (1997: 246). Although we might find the practice objectionable or regrettable, securitizing actors frequently speak *as if* group identities exist as hard facts for purposes of mobilisation, and hence this is something that the analysis of securitization should take account of.

Others have, however, questioned whether even the distinction between securitizing actor and the analyst of securitization is so easily made (see Eriksson 1999). Securitization entails the analysis of when actors 'speak security' in relation to a particular issue. But logically, the analyst of securitization ends up reproducing this 'security talk' in the process of analysis, as well as privileging the role of elite actors. As Wæver has acknowledged, this creates something of an ethical dilemma for the prospective analyst of securitization as 'Even when talking security in order to achieve desecuritization, it is possible that one contributes to securitization by the very fact of producing more security talk' (2000: 252).

The issue of 'speaking security' and the emphasis on speech acts within Wæver's conception of securitization is a further key point of debate within Securitization Theory. For one thing, as Lene Hansen has argued, 'reliance on speech act theory presupposes the existence of a situation in which speech is indeed possible' (2000: 285). Examining the case of honour killings in Pakistan, Hansen argues that the version of Securitization Theory put forward by Buzan *et al.* in their *New Framework for Analysis* is blind to the ways in which gender can have a major impact upon our social position and hence our ability to speak security. She also points to the ways in which the discursive aspect of securitization is often

accompanied by practices targeted against the body (stoning to death, flogging, and bride burning in the case of honour killings) that ‘exceed’ speech acts given that they are physical and corporeal, rather than discursive, in nature.

From a different direction, Williams (2003b) argues that an exclusive focus on speech acts is ill advised when so much of contemporary political communication takes place through primarily visual media such as television and the internet. In this context, Williams suggests that an analysis of the securitizing potential of images to accompany the analysis of speech acts is a necessary development in Securitization Theory. Others have recommended that greater attention to the non-discursive aspects that facilitate securitizing speech acts is also needed. Bigo (2002) advocates a focus on the key role played by security ‘experts’ and institutions in securitization, while Balzacq (2005: 173) suggests that the focus on speech acts needs to be supplemented by awareness that audience, political agency, and context are ‘crucial’ to successful securitization (see also McDonald 2008).

More recently, debate in Securitization Theory has centred on the relationship between politicisation and securitization, and the vision of politics that underpins the concept of securitization. Buzan *et al.* declare that “‘Security’ is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics’ (1998: 23). However, the question has been raised as to whether politicisation (the treatment of an issue within the ‘normal’ sphere of political haggling) and securitization (where issues are given priority and responded to with emergency measures) can be treated as distinct and separate (Acharya 2006: 250), and this raises a further analytical question about the possibility of a distinctive ‘political’ sector of security.

Some have suggested that rather than plotting politicisation and securitization on a spectrum, as illustrated in Figure 5.1, the distinction between politicisation and securitization is better represented in terms of a ‘sliding scale’ where issues move only very gradually from ‘normalcy’ to ‘emergency’, and are usually conceived of as ‘security risks’ rather than existential threats in between these two stages (Abrahamsen 2005: 59). More fundamentally, the question arises as to how we conceive of ‘normal’ politics in distinction to the politics of emergency associated with security: what is ‘normal’ politics? For some this question can only be answered by assuming conditions in which ‘exceptions’ actually define the normal day-to-day workings of politics (see Williams 2003b), and that this in turn brings Securitization Theory into the ambit of ‘exceptionalism’ as discussed within recent poststructural approaches to security (see Chapter 4).

Conclusion

Securitization Theory has had such a significant impact on the way security is studied partly because it seems to offer a clearly identifiable research agenda: When, where, and why do securitizing speech acts occur? Why are some successful and others not? How do dynamics of securitization differ across different sectors? For various reasons, though, this agenda in itself raises questions as to whether or not Securitization Theory should be counted within the category of ‘critical security studies’ (and, once again, what the latter entails). Although Securitization Theory shares in common with many critical approaches a concern with a ‘broadened’ security agenda in examining issue areas other than traditional military security, its development is also motivated out of desire to circumscribe the range of issues considered under the rubric of security lest the study of security becomes ‘the study of everything, and hence the study of nothing’. Similarly, most

proponents of Securitization Theory (particularly those associated with the ‘Copenhagen School’) have largely resisted calls made by some critical approaches to ‘deepen’ the study of security to the individual level. Allowance has been made for the study of societal security as an alternative to focusing solely on the state, but many have argued that Securitization Theory still encourages an analytical commitment to the state level and to those who already occupy positions of power (Eriksson 1999; Wyn Jones 1999: 111–112).

Against potential charges of conservatism and elitism, or ‘not being critical enough’, Wæver counters that Securitization Theory:

may be a more serious challenge to the established discourse [of security studies] than a critical one, for it recognizes that a conservative approach to security is an intrinsic element in the logic of both our national and international political principles [...] the dynamics of securitization and desecuritization can never be captured so long as we proceed along the normal critical track that assumes security to be a positive value to be maximized.

(1995: 57)

In addition, more recent applications and developments of Securitization Theory (see ‘Guide to further reading’) have sought to explore the ethical dimensions and implications of securitization. If – as Buzan, Wæver, and other proponents of Securitization Theory have suggested – successful securitization entails the suspension of processes of deliberation and democratic procedures then, as Aradau argues, ‘the dynamics of securitization/desecuritization raise questions about the type of politics that we want’ (2004: 388): the ‘emergency politics’ associated with securitization, the identification of existential threats, and the likely corollary of closed decision-making processes that are the purview of security experts; or a form of politics that emphasises the virtues of desecuritization as means of creating transparency and enhancing democratic participation in political processes. In this sense Securitization Theory offers not only an analytical framework but also a site of critical opportunity for thinking through larger questions about the nature of contemporary security politics.

Key points

- Proponents of Securitization Theory (such as Buzan and Wæver), acknowledge the broadening of security beyond traditional military issues to include environmental, economic, societal, and political ‘sectors’, but they have tried to develop an analytical framework for judging what is and what is not a security issue in each of these sectors.
- To do this they employ the concept of ‘securitization’, which denotes the process by which an issue, military or non-military, comes to be presented as existential threat to a referent object.
- Securitization takes place through a ‘speech act’; this is known as a ‘securitizing move’, which requires that certain ‘felicity conditions’ are present in order to succeed.
- Some variants of Securitization Theory also consider the prospects for ‘desecuritization’, the process of moving an issue out of the realm of security and back into the realm of normal political deliberation, although whether and how desecuritization can occur is still a keenly contested issue.

Discussion points

- What is meant by ‘securitization’?
- What are the arguments for and against the securitization of issues?
- Does the concept of ‘societal security’ add to our understanding of security?
- What are the potential limitations of Securitization Theory?
- Does the analysis of securitization necessarily entail an ethical dimension?

Guide to further reading

- Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (1998) *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner). The key starting point for those wishing to explore Securitization Theory further. As well as detailing the theoretical underpinnings of an approach that focuses explicitly on securitization, the book also examines the dynamics of securitization within different sectors of security with relevant illustrations.
- Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morton Kelstrup, and Pierre Lemaitre (1993) *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London: Pinter). Provides an extensive exploration of the concept of ‘societal security’.
- Ole Wæver (1995) ‘Securitization and Desecuritization’, in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press). Offers an explicit discussion of desecuritization, as well as reflections on the ethics of securitization/desecuritization.
- Jef Huysmans (2006) *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU* (London: Routledge). Advances a more sociologically grounded version of Securitization Theory with reference to how migration and asylum are dealt with in the European Union.
- Mely Caballero-Anthony, Ralf Emmers, and Amitav Acharya (2006) (eds) *Non-Traditional Security in Asia: Dilemmas in Securitisation* (London: Ashgate). Discusses the merits and limitations of Securitization Theory with reference to several empirical studies drawn from South and East Asia.
- Claudia Aradau (2004) ‘Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 7: 388–413, and Rita Taureck (2006) ‘Securitization Theory and Securitization Studies’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 9: 53–61, offer contending perspectives on whether Securitization Theory is inherently political, or simply a tool for practical analysis.
- Holger Stritzel (2007) ‘Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 13: 357–383, offers a broadly sympathetic critique of Securitization Theory as formulated by Buzan *et al.* and suggests possible revisions and extensions of their theoretical framework, as do Williams (2003b), Balzacq (2005), and McDonald (2008) (see Bibliography for full details).