

**Geopolitical Change and
Contemporary Security Studies:
Contextualizing the
Human Security Agenda**

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Abstract

The contemporary debate about the concept of security is about both how to best specify the geopolitical circumstances of the post-cold war period and the appropriate disciplinary approaches to take to contemporary political violence. The attempts to extend the remit of academic studies are loosely related to current policy initiatives using the vocabulary of security to justify various humanitarian and political initiatives. Critics argue that such innovations muddy both the policy discourse and add too many considerations into the study of war and peace. Whether either the argument for a broad approach involving policy changes and new academic departures in the study of security, or the traditional narrow focus on strategic and military matters is adopted, it is clear that the geopolitical assumptions of both these approaches need substantial critical reexamination in reformulating security studies.

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I. Geopolitical Change and “Security”

As numerous commentators have noted, we in Europe and North America are living in a geopolitical period often simply called the post-cold war. We have been doing so for a decade. Despite the increasing popularity of discussions of globalization, the fact that there is still no widely agreed term for the period, and that it is still defined in terms of a previous era, is noteworthy. To many it suggests a period in which geopolitical identities are in flux and a period in which there is no hegemonic understanding of the world order and the roles that particular states play. Recent economic events in Asia have also challenged the more simplistic assumptions of either coming Asian dominance in world affairs, or geo-economic competition as a major concern for security analysts. Persisting conflicts and humanitarian disasters in various parts of the world continually suggest widespread human insecurity.

The geopolitical options canvassed by North American analysts of the contemporary scene are many: Samuel Huntington, in a much cited re-articulation of realist pessimism concerning the inevitability of clashing autonomous entities, proclaims a situation where civilizations are doomed to clash in perpetuity.¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski has updated classical geopolitical thinking to focus on central Asia as the key area in the new global “chessboard.”² Robert Kaplan has announced a “coming anarchy” of ethnic conflict and crime induced by environmental collapse.³ Benjamin Barber speculates about a future fate of Jihad and McWorld in which ethnic fragmentation coexists with economic globalization.⁴ Many writers suggest some form of chaos or at least a world that can be understood best as unruly, precisely because the ways in which it is changing are unclear and much disorder prevails.⁵ Richard Barnett and John Cavanagh suggest a future dominated by global corporations in which states are of declining importance in making the major decisions about how populations live.⁶

In focusing on the corporate dimension of the changing order, Barnett and Cavanagh may be closest to the dominant assumptions of the world’s political elites. Globalization is the term most frequently used now for a period of neo-liberal world order where enhancing global trade and restructuring both states and international regimes to enhance the global reach of international capital is the primary political desideratum.⁷ Related to the Clinton administration’s foreign policy of expanding market democracies, this suggests the aptness of Gearóid Ó Tuathail’s term enlargement geopolitics for the current geopolitical period.⁸ Etel Solingen’s recent work, which suggests that states taking a longterm strategy of constructive multi-lateral economic engagement have in the long run better security outcomes, provides empirical support for such updated modernization theory.⁹

The lack of clarity concerning exactly what the dominant geopolitical structure is connects directly to the ongoing debate in “security studies” concerning the subject of security and the meaning of

¹ S. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), 1993, pp.22-49.

² Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books, 1997.

³ R.D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 273(2), 1994, pp.44-76.

⁴ B. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*, New York: Ballantine, 1996.

⁵ Andrew Herod, Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Susan M. Roberts (eds), *Unruly World? Globalization, Governance and Geography*, London: Routledge, 1998.

⁶ R.J. Barnett, and J. Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

⁷ J. Agnew and S. Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*, London: Routledge, 1995 and J. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, London: Routledge, 1998.

⁸ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Postmodern Geopolitics? The Modern Geopolitical Imagination and Beyond” in Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp.16-38; G. O’Tuathail and T.W. Luke, ‘Present at the (Dis)integration: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization in the New World Order’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 84(3), 1994, pp.381-98.

⁹ Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century’s Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998.

the term in contemporary politics. While national security had some basic geopolitical precepts that were understood widely during the cold war, in the Western alliance at least, national security now is less clearly understood. In the aftermath of the cold war the larger scholarly and policy debate about these matters has included at least some of the powerful critiques of cold war policies and conceptualizations of national security. All of which has suggested uncertainty about the future and the likely shape of dangers in the future. This sense of uncertainty is also part of the sense of insecurity shaping contemporary political anxieties in what James Rosenau calls a turbulent world.¹⁰

Realism, the dominant approach to international relations scholarship, has been challenged by analyses concerned to emphasize both the limited capabilities of states in many important spheres of activity and the dangers of defining the relative success of a state as the most important political priority of practitioners of national security. This is a crucial part of the current methodological and philosophical debate within political science and cognate fields about international relations. The limitations of traditional cold war approaches are emphasized by contemporary contributions focusing on culture and identity as well as “critical security studies.”¹¹ This academic debate has recently, at last, found its way into influential mainstream discussions of the future of geopolitics.¹²

The lack of geopolitical consensus, coupled to the broad debate about the concept of security (and it is very important to note their interconnection in what is in question in the debate) leaves room, it seems, for nearly endless discussion of security and how it should be modified, reconceptualised, extended, or addressed in all these three ways simultaneously. Many of the critics of national security in the cold war are no longer so obviously marginal to discussions of contemporary dangers. Their ideas often appear in new forms in the debates in what is now rather inadequately called “global civil society.” These discussions are not without influence as the recent international campaign against land mines, among others, has suggested.¹³

Now, perhaps even more so than during the cold war period, the distinction between scholarly analysis and legitimization practice in discussions of security can be seen to be very blurred. Security is usually a political *desideratum* well before it is an analytical category. In Rob Walker’s succinct phrasing: “The forms of political realism that play such a crucial role in the legitimization of contemporary security policies affirm the way things should be far more clearly than they tell us how things are.”¹⁴ The arguments about extending or broadening security after the cold war make this point very clear, albeit in the process often accentuating many of the dilemmas of the cold war security discourses.¹⁵ The applicability of much of this academic theorizing to the “South,” where so much of the contemporary violence actually occurs, further complicates the debate and highlights some of the most important dilemmas.

The argument in this paper suggests that all these matters have to be considered in trying to think about security studies either as academic research, policy advice or pedagogic practice. While academic institutional concerns and debates over concepts of security matter, considering them in the larger political context of the contemporary geopolitical changes allows one to better understand both the current state of the field and its place in the academy, and to make suggestions as to how practitioners

¹⁰ James Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

¹¹ Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996; Keith Krause and Michael Williams (eds), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, and London: Pinter, 1997.

¹² See *The Economist* Survey, “The New Geopolitics,” 31 July, 1999.

¹³ Max Cameron, Robert Lawson, and Brian Tomlin (eds), *To Walk Without Fear: The Global Movement to Ban Landmines*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 1998; more generally Paul Wapner has examined the importance of international environmental movements in his *Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics*, Albany: State University of New York, 1996.

¹⁴ R.B.J. Walker, “The Subject of Security” in Krause and Williams *Critical Security Studies*, p.62.

¹⁵ Simon Dalby “Contesting an Essential Concept: Reading the Dilemmas in Contemporary Security Discourse” in Krause and Williams, *Critical Security Studies*, pp.3-31.

might rethink what they research and teach as well as the policy advice they suggest to the rich and powerful.

II. Broadening the Ambit of Security

From the late 1940s to the late 1980s, among the major world powers national security focused on the military dimensions of the cold war confrontation. But in much of the rest of the world similar preoccupations dominated state understandings of security. Bradley Klein has convincingly suggested that these practices of security were effectively part of the processes of policy coordination whereby American political hegemony was made effective.¹⁶ In the aftermath of the cold war there have been numerous arguments for expanding the remit of security which have challenged the cold war assumptions, but which are also often shaped precisely by the engagement with dominant themes from the past.¹⁷

Preoccupied by matters of military strategy and technical capability, cold war security studies focused on deterrence and the finer points of preventing nuclear war through ensuring that 1939 did not repeat itself. In Moscow the security professions there worried about a world war caused by the next crisis in international capitalism, assuming that those of 1914 and 1939 were unlikely to be the last.¹⁸ Underscored by taken for granted geopolitical codes assuming the division of the world into blocs, with danger inherent in the dynamics of the opposing social system, security was a matter of “keeping the bad guys out” by the threat of the use of force. The superimposition of the dynamics of the security dilemma aggravated these geopolitical assumptions and, given the usually unquestioned assumptions about the political nature of the cold war antagonist, often focused attention on mainly technical matters.

To the critics of cold war politics these conceptions of security seemed unduly constraining, especially in terms of the obvious dangers of military action in a nuclear armed world. States appeared to be endangering the very populations that they were supposedly protecting precisely by trying to ensure national security.¹⁹ These dilemmas were acute when viewed through feminist lenses where women are understood to be especially vulnerable to militarism.²⁰ When cold war tensions relaxed as the Gorbachev initiated policies took effect in the Soviet Union in the later years of the 1980s, this critique of national security was extended once more to encompass other matters but especially concerns with the environment. While it is important to note that this is not the first time such matters have come under the security rubric - in the late 1940s matters of population and resources were on the agenda, likewise they appeared on the agenda in the 1970s when concerns with environment, resources, and in particular oil, were prominent in American discussions - it is probably fair to argue that they are now more comprehensively incorporated into mainstream discussions.²¹

¹⁶ Bradley Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order: The Global Politics of Deterrence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

¹⁷ Ken Booth (ed.), *Statecraft and Security: The Cold War and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹⁸ Michael McGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security*, Washington: Brookings Institution, 1991.

¹⁹ S.H. Mendlovitz and R.B.J. Walker (eds), *Towards a Just World Peace: Perspectives from Social Movements*, London: Butterworth, 1987.

²⁰ J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, London: Pandora, 1989.

²¹ For earlier articulations, see Harrison Brown, *The Challenge of Man's Future*, New York: Viking, 1954; Dennis Pirages, *The New Context for International Relations: Global Ecopolitics*, North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, 1978. The 1990s literature is now extensive; see Nils Petter Gleditsch (ed.), *Conflict and the Environment*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997; Daniel Deudney and Richard Matthew (eds), *Contested Grounds: Security and Conflict in the New Environmental Politics*, Albany: State University of New York

Numerous items are on the post cold war security agenda. It is an agenda that is now understood in global terms as a matter for all humanity, although the majority of the authors of such books and articles on security are probably still Americans. Paradigmatic here is Davis Bobrow's presidential address to the International Studies Association in 1995 where the vast diversity of "new" themes, Bobrow suggested, required rethinking the identity of the security practitioner and reformulating it in terms of medical metaphors to diagnose and prescribe remedies to numerous symptoms threatening the health of the American body politic.²² The contents list of the 1998 edition of the text book *World Security* also suggests the comprehensive nature of these concerns.²³ From chapters on world interests, global dynamics and great powers through discussions of conventional arms transfers and the causes of internal conflict, the book goes on to consider violence against women, criminal organizations, socio-economic disparities, world trading systems, environmental scarcity and demography as well as the need for new world-wide institutions. The important argument, made forcefully in the opening chapter of this volume by Seyom Brown, is that the traditional understanding of realist politics, that the state was the highest object of concern to the statesperson, is no longer tenable in a world of global interconnections.²⁴

Barry Buzan and his colleagues in Copenhagen have synthesized many of these themes into a "new framework of analysis" to incorporate the additional dimensions of the concept and some of the critical thinking about security as a political performance.²⁵ In parallel with other contemporary social theorizing they emphasize that security is in part a "speech act" that calls into existence a situation of extreme danger requiring extraordinary actions that are understood as such by at least part of the audience to which it is addressed. These authors then go on to link this formulation of security to the broadened agenda of security suggesting that there are at least five obvious "sectors" in which security is relevant to considerations of world politics. This follows long standing practice among social scientists to distinguish between society, economy and politics. The assumptions built into such divisions are not without difficulties, but Buzan, Waever, and deWilde suggest that the sectors can be understood in terms of specific types of interaction.

In this view, the military sector is about relationships of forceful coercion; the political sector is about relationships of authority, governing status and recognition; the economic sector is about relationships of trade, production, and finance; the societal sector is about relationships of collective identity; and the environmental sector is about relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere.²⁶

Given this broadened agenda of matters to be considered in terms of security, the state can no longer be the only factor that is a "referent object" of security. In the case of environmental security the referent object is the planetary attributes necessary to sustain civilization.

Press, forthcoming; Miriam Lowi and Brian Shaw (eds), *Environment and Security: Discourses and Practices*, London: Macmillan, forthcoming.

²² Davis Bobrow, "Complex Insecurity: Implications of a Sobering Metaphor," *International Studies Quarterly* 40(4), 1996, pp.435-50.

²³ Michael Klare and Yogesh Chandrani (eds), *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, New York: St. Martin's, 1998.

²⁴ Seyom Brown, "World Interests and the Changing Dimensions of Security," in Klare and Chandrani (eds), *World Security*, pp.1-17.

²⁵ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998. On the earlier work of the "Copenhagen school" see Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold-War Era*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991; and the critical review of work on European security in B. McSweeney, "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School," *Review of International Studies* 22(1), 1996, pp.81-93.

²⁶ Buzan *et.al*, *Security*, p.7.

III. Broader Still: Human Security

Other analyses have broadened the concept of security even further. In doing so they have drawn on senses of the term “security” beyond the specifications conventionally used in international relations. Through the cold war Western states paralleled their military security concerns with social security programs, understood as providing at least some health and education services that supposedly ensured the basic welfare of all parts of their population. Likewise income support payments were sometimes considered in terms of the provision of “economic security.” The historical dimension of these themes should not be forgotten in all the claims to novel understandings of security.

The impetus for the United Nations was in part to try to ensure that the breakdown of the international economy in the early 1930s which was related to the rise of Fascism and Nazism did not reoccur. “There have always been two major components of human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want. This was recognized right from the beginning by the United Nations. But later the concept was tilted in favour of the first component rather than the second.”²⁷ The understanding of widespread political instability as an indirect cause of war also partly underlay attempts to establish the Bretton Woods financial arrangements and a variety of United Nations agencies dedicated to various social and economic programmes.

The highest profile articulation of these in terms of “human security” comes from the United Nations *Human Development Report 1994*.²⁸ The concept of human security has, we are told by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) authors, at least four essential characteristics. First, it is a universal concern relevant to people everywhere. Second, the components of security are interdependent. Third, human security is easier to ensure through early prevention. Fourth, and perhaps the crucial innovation in this formulation, is the shift of the referent object of security from states to people. More explicitly this formulation defines human security as “first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life - whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development.”²⁹

The argument suggests that the concept of security must change away from cold war and realist preoccupations with territorial security to focus on people’s security, and from armaments towards a reformulation in terms of sustainable human development. Demilitarization is obviously part of this agenda, but human welfare broadly conceived is the overall thrust of the concept. As such there are numerous threats to human security, although specific threats are likely to be locale dependent. Nonetheless, in a list that overlaps with the Copenhagen framework, according to the UNDP, threats to human security come under seven general categories: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political. Food, health and personal security are additions to the Copenhagen framework, but there is a broad congruity with the other four themes of economic, environmental, political, and societal security.

While many of the UNDP list of threats to human security are local threats, global threats to human security in the next century are said to include at least six categories, caused more by the actions of millions of people rather than deliberate aggression by specific states. As such they would thus not be considered security threats under most narrow formulations of security studies. These six are 1) unchecked population growth, 2) disparities in economic opportunities, 3) excessive international migration, 4) environmental degradation, 5) drug production and trafficking, and 6) international terrorism.³⁰ These categories and the formulation of human security underlie a growing number of

²⁷ United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.24.

²⁸ *Human Development Report 1994*

²⁹ *Human Development Report 1994*, p.23.

³⁰ *Human Development Report 1994*, p.34.

assessments of the current state of world politics and in particular recent attempts to encapsulate political agendas for reform of the international system.³¹

The multiple extensions of security are usefully summarized by Emma Rothschild in four themes. First, (“downwards”) “(T)he concept of security is extended from the security of nations to the security of groups and individuals...” Second, (“upwards”) “it is extended from the security of nations to the security of the international system, or of a supranational physical environment...” Third (“horizontally”) “from military to political, economic, social, environmental, or “human” security.” Fourth, and in some ways most importantly for the argument below,

the political responsibility for ensuring security (or for invigilating all these “concepts of security”) is itself extended: it is diffused in all directions from national states, including upwards to international institutions, downwards to regional or local government, and sideways to non-governmental organizations, to public opinion an the press, and to the abstract forces of nature and the market.³²

This suggests a multiplicity of extensions that any conceptual analysis will be hard pressed to accommodate, and which have provoked sometimes intense responses as to the analytical utility or political desirability of such formulations.³³

IV. Rethinking Security

In a recent overview of the concept of security David Baldwin suggests that the lack of clear definition of the concept of security, which is part of what the whole rethinking discussion is about, is because through the cold war period most practitioners were interested in military statecraft and were largely unconcerned with whether what they studied was designated as security, military, strategic or war studies.³⁴ Security apparently had utility as a label for an academic practice rather than specifically as an analytical concept. This obviously changed in the 1980s and after the cold war there has been a growing literature on the subject. More saliently, Baldwin argues that security may no longer be any use as an analytic concept, having been so widely used for numerous political reasons as to have lost any kernel of meaning that could be elaborated into an academic concept.

Apart from this difficulty of specification there are two obvious conventional counter arguments to the assumption that extending the security agenda is necessarily an appropriate way to think about contemporary geopolitical issues. First, is the concern from traditional realist analysts of national security that the agenda is expanded in a way that dilutes concern with military matters, the primary concern of the military to fight wars may be compromised by competing “threats” that might be better considered by other policy discourses and with policy instruments that are not directly connected to traditional matters of defence.³⁵ This line of argument suggests that matters traditionally understood as defence and military strategy should remain the appropriate analytical domain of strategic thinking and that the ‘broadened agenda’ is not a matter for consideration in what might better be understood to be the appropriate concern of strategic studies.

The second argument against the broadened agenda for security is ironically the opposite of the first one. It suggests that military approaches are inappropriate tools to tackle many of the new items on the political agenda and that matching appropriate institutions to the new items on the agenda is

³¹ See for instance The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford University Press, 1995; The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, *Caring for the Future*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

³² Emma Rothschild, “What is Security?” *Daedalus* 124(3). 1995. pp.53-98, at 55.

³³ See the discussion in Keith Krause and Michael Williams, “Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies: Politics and Methods,” *Mershon International Studies Review* 40, 1996, pp.229-54.

³⁴ David Baldwin, “The Concept of Security,” *Review of International Studies* 23(1), 1997, pp.5-26.

³⁵ Steven Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35, 1991, pp.211-39.

important.³⁶ Especially in the case of environmental matters and human rights, traditional military concerns with secrecy and strategic planning are inappropriate for issues where transparency and dialogue, monitoring and cooperation are crucial across international frontiers. The argument here is for a demilitarization or “de-securitization” of many aspects of social life on the assumption that treating them as dangerous invokes exceptional measures rather than dealing with them as routine political and economic matters.³⁷

The political ability to specify a threat to a collectivity is obviously an important part of the process of security. The ability to specify danger and mobilize a “we” against a supposedly threatening “them” has long been fundamental to the processes of politics. Carl Schmidt’s insight that the distinction between friend and enemy is basic to what politics is about is often clearest in discussions about danger and threats, the subject matter of security.³⁸ Neo-realist scholarly articulations of security sometimes obscure the political dimensions of the matter in detailed technical analyses of weapons systems, defence budgets, or the social propensities of states to warfare. The debates about rethinking security in the last decade have also often operated to obscure the political dimensions of the matter in constructing normative schemes which turn into political wish lists to secure all manner of things.

One of the key arguments in the postmodern, post-structuralist, and feminist inspired critiques of conventional international relations thinking in general, and security in particular, has been that the taken for granted categories of security are better understood as political constructions.³⁹ Whatever the impression from the discussions in contemporary literature and the less than helpful designations of these discussions in terms of various “posts,” this is not a novel argument, but one that runs back through the debates about modernity and the emergence of sovereign states. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke both wrote about language and understanding as important parts of politics, although these arguments frequently disappear in the oversimplifications of international relations textbooks and the claims to scientific method invoked by contemporary neo-realists. The contemporary interests in discourse and theories of representation follow up these themes, making the point in various ways that security is a highly contested political concept precisely because of its location within numerous political difficulties.⁴⁰

The analytical task that arises from the insights of contemporary social theory is not one suggesting the need for yet more conceptual analysis to understand the content and meaning of security better because security is not just a matter of content. This point is one that Baldwin misses in his dismissal of arguments about security’s essentially contested nature. He does so by using a narrow distinction between political and analytical categories which doesn’t allow for an understanding of political language and the social construction of security as part of the processes that analysis has to engage. Rather, maintaining an understanding of conceptual analysis as only a matter of clarification and stabilization of meaning, he fails to open up his careful and apposite review of Wolfers’ earlier arguments about the ambiguity of the concept.⁴¹

Analyzing its invocation as a political discourse can however reveal much about the political “values” that Baldwin argues security is but one among. Understanding security as a “thick signifier” in Jeff Huysmans’ inelegant phrasing, suggests that it is important to understand the wider order of meaning

³⁶ Daniel Deudney, “The Limits of Environmental Security” in Sheldon Kamieniecki, George Gonzales, and Robert O. Vos (eds), *Flashpoints in Environmental Policymaking*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, pp.281-310.

³⁷ Ole Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization” in R. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, pp.46-86.

³⁸ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Originally published as *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 1932.

³⁹ See in particular R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

⁴⁰ R.B.J. Walker, “After the Mushrooms,” forthcoming.

⁴¹ Baldwin, “Concept”; he cites Arnold Wolfers “‘National security’ as an ambiguous symbol,” *Political Science Quarterly* 67. 1952, also reprinted in Arnold Wolfers, “National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol,” *Discord and Collaboration: Essays in International Politics*, Baltimore: John’s Hopkins Press, 1962.

that security itself is embedded within.⁴² Security as a thick signifier “...does not refer to an external, objective reality but establishes a security situation by itself. It is the enunciation of the signifier which constitutes an (in)security condition. Thus the signifier has a performative rather than a descriptive force. Rather than describing or picturing a condition, it organizes social relations into security relations.”⁴³ This implies that “...security is not just a signifier performing an ordering function. It also has a ‘content’ in the sense that the ordering it performs in a particular context is a specific kind of ordering. It positions people in their relations to themselves, to nature and to other human beings within a particular discursive, symbolic order.”⁴⁴

Threats and dangers, and who or what is threatened, is then a matter of politics in particular contexts, rather than of an ontology that can be clarified through conceptual analysis. Security is constituted rather than given, even when reality is specified in ways that obscure these processes of representation. In Mick Dillon’s succinct summary:

For security, the genealogist would insist, is not a fact of nature but a fact of civilization. It is not a noun that names something, it is a principle of formation that does things. It is neither an ontological predicate of being, nor an objective need, but the progenitor instead of a proliferating array of discourses of danger within whose brutal and brutalizing networks of power-knowledge modern human being is increasingly ensnared and, ironically, radically endangered.⁴⁵

While such theoretical considerations have sometimes been interpreted to suggest that questions of identity and culture need to be brought back into analyses in international relations Michael Williams argues that identity never left international relations. Rather “a specific conception of identity is in fact constitutive of, rather than missing from, prevailing theories of International Relations and security.”⁴⁶ A liberal identity has been present and taken for granted in international relations all along. This is an identity that has roots in the attempts to rethink the politics and knowledge of a very violent period and specifically has to be understood in response to the violence of the thirty years war, the emergence of the Westphalian system, and in the case of British thinking, a response to the violence and disruptions of the civil war in the same period.

Williams suggests that this transformation is both political and epistemological and has the effect of challenging ontological categories profoundly. Empiricism is a social practice which through its skepticism reduces the provenance of “truth” and in the process allows for individual religious freedom which has the political consequence of depoliticizing ontological claims to identity that require violent assertion.

Liberalism sought and represented a transformation of knowledgeable practices involving not simply a theoretical innovation of a naive vision of a natural evolution toward ‘objective’ knowledge, but was part and parcel of an attempt to construct a new set of political institutions and practices within the state, a set of practices which had the question of ‘security’ in the broadest sense at their heart. The new knowledgeable practices of liberalism sought to provide foundations within which political agreement could be obtained and social concord achieved. It sought, above all, to restore a foundation and provide stability to a culture wracked by political conflict and slaughter.⁴⁷

⁴² Jef Huysmans, “Security! What do you Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier,” *European Journal of International Relations* 4(2), 1998, pp.226-55.

⁴³ Huysmans, “Security!” p.232.

⁴⁴ Huysmans, “Security!” p.232.

⁴⁵ Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought*, London: Routledge, 1996, p.19.

⁴⁶ Michael C. Williams, “Identity and the Politics of Security,” *European Journal of International Relations* 4(2), 1998, pp.204-25, at 205.

⁴⁷ Williams, “Identity,” p.213.

Toleration and the removal of religious identity from citizenship was a political strategy designed to reduce the likelihood of warfare by removing the direct temptations to assert identity politically. It also acted to reduce the efficacy of heroic identities and the glorification of warfare. This was a politics of pacification designed to reduce the dangers of political violence in both public and private realms freeing the latter to concentrate on wealth accumulation.

While this line of analysis has considerable implications for the methodological discussions within international relations in general, the point of importance here is to note that security is understood as individual freedom from political violence and as the precondition for economic activity. Emma Rothschild suggests that the contemporary notion of the security of states dates from later, and particularly from the Napoleonic wars and political upheavals that these caused. This extension of the term security in some ways eclipsed the definition of security in individual terms. But contemporary concerns with human security, and the broadened agenda of political responsibilities for their provision, parallels the earlier liberal politics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus it connects to other themes of enlightenment thinking, and in later forms, to human rights. All these liberal themes appear in the recent discussions of global and human security. These extend the ambit of security in ways that can simultaneously induce both conceptual confusion and produce policy statements of sweeping generalization that may not offer useful criteria for either clarifying political priorities or choosing the appropriate allocation of state bureaucratic resources. Neither does this discussion present any obvious indication of how scholars might tackle these matters. What should be studied, why and how is also far from clear in the academic discussions of these things.

V. Security Studies: Narrow Approaches

Indeed it's precisely these kind of difficulties that suggest to advocates of a narrow approach to the subject that security be restricted to the traditional concerns with intentional trans-border attacks of a military and political nature. But even such a narrow formulation of security does not provide a straightforward answer to questions about the place of security studies in the academy. The conventional assumption that these matters were the primary preoccupation of the discipline of international relations is not unchallenged. David Baldwin raises this issue in terms of a question as to whether security studies is a sub-field of international relations or rather the very core of international relations.⁴⁸ The assumptions about force and the use of force in pursuing state objectives are then considered either as the most important theme of international relations which suggests that a sub-field is unnecessary, or merely one among a number of themes in international relations, requiring an explicit sub-disciplinary existence to prevent its subsumption into a larger more general scholarly concern. The question of the place of security studies in the academy cannot ignore this issue of the relationship to the central role of political science and to a lesser extent history in international relations, but its role even within this field is not straightforward either.

If the narrow definition of security wins out and the formulation of war studies and military statecraft becomes the dominant understanding of what it is that should be under study in the field, then there is little to suggest that the place of security studies in the academy will change from what it has been in the last few decades, a matter mostly of concern to political science and more specifically the sub-discipline of international relations. No doubt the cold war disciplinary mix would be retained in North America at least. Political science would continue to dominate and be supported by links to technical specialists relating to the engineering and science specialties needed to discuss the technical matters of

⁴⁸ David A. Baldwin, "Security Studies and the End of the Cold War," *World Politics* 48, 1995, pp.117-41.

weapons systems. “Cyberwar” and new forms of information warfare may further stretch these disciplinary concerns into the worlds of computer engineering and related fields.⁴⁹

If matters develop in this way, the corollary within the field of security studies may be a further marginalization of critical approaches. Within the writings of many of the North American scholars on this topic there is a suggestion that security has a fairly well defined collection of research questions which, while allowing for some plurality of research methods, are fairly clearly demarcated as appropriate scholarly activity. Critics can easily be dismissed on grounds of their not measuring up to accepted standards. How one defines what this literature is, or what is going on, is highly dependant on what is included in one’s literature search. Baldwin even argues that there isn’t a debate about security in that there have been a number of critical perspectives towards realism but not much by way of a response from within the realist camp who have apparently continued on doing what they do without responding to their critics.⁵⁰

Keith Krause, in contrast, enumerates a series of disciplining practices within the field whereby critical work has been marginalized by a combination of co-optation, exclusion, character assassination, and definitional fiat.⁵¹ This suggests a political turf fight over the appropriate definitions of legitimate scholarly activity. This is not a new argument in the international relations literature where debates between international relations and peace research have a murky history and where dissident approaches have been challenged and fought over for the last decade.⁵² Adding numerous other disciplinary perspectives is not likely to reduce the turf fight dimensions of this, although the European literature on these matters seems to be developing in ways that are both more eclectic and critical, despite some arguments that international relations has at best borrowed selectively from other disciplines, and missed some of the more important intellectual contributions that might be useful.⁵³

But the utility and political consequences of such understandings of security studies in particular circumstances needs attention too. Many of the political elites in the poorest states see national security in military terms as their highest priority and the necessary base for constructing a state that might subsequently provide other forms of security. They are supported in this by some modified realist analyses, notably articulated by Mohammed Ayooob, that suggest that states have to be made and nations built first, if necessary by force, prior to attaining the benefits of western liberal prosperity.⁵⁴ This argument is supported by the recent historical construction of states by military force. Many Southern states’ are more effectively military security organizations than anything else, and in so far as they are, they frequently render their own populations insecure.⁵⁵ But:

[C]ontra Ayooob, one is likely to find the obverse relation between security and the achievement of other societal goals. Said to be mutually constitutive, the practices of civil society and the state in the South Asian case in fact provide a stark rebuttal to the notion that the pursuit of

⁴⁹ Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict*, London: Routledge and New York: Guilford, 1997.

⁵⁰ Baldwin, “Concept.” p.11.

⁵¹ Keith Krause, “Critical Theory and Security Studies: The Research Programme of ‘Critical Security Studies,’” *Cooperation and Conflict* 33(3), 1998, pp.298-333.

⁵² The classic discussion of how dissident scholarship is marginalized in international studies is Richard K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, “Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 34(3), pp.367-416.

⁵³ Necati Polat, “Poststructuralism, Absence, Mimesis: Making Difference, Reproducing Sovereignty,” *European Journal of International Relations* 4(4), 1998, pp.447-77.

⁵⁴ Mohammed Ayooob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System*, Boulder: Rienner, 1995.

⁵⁵ Keith Krause, “Insecurity and State Formation in the Global Military Order: The Middle Eastern Case,” *European Journal of International Relations* 2(3), 1996, pp.319-54.

“national” security can create either a more viable, say democratic, polity or an autonomous civil society. Instead, the pursuit of national security undermines both.⁵⁶

Similar arguments can be made in the case of Southern Africa where the pursuit of national sovereignty provides political elites with powerful arguments for enhancing their wealth and prestige but does so at the cost of maintaining political and economic systems that are antithetical to the needs of the poorest segments of the population or practices of sustainable environmental management.⁵⁷

Looking at a map of the location of large scale political violence in the last few decades makes it clear that, with a few notable exceptions, most of the violence is in the “South” while many of the weapons come from the “North.”⁵⁸ As the Carnegie Commission on “Preventing Deadly Conflict” ruefully notes: “Even as governments in many of these states have lost the ability to provide basic services for their populations, they still find ample resources to buy arms.”⁵⁹ Military organizations are often the dominant organization in many places where human insecurity is greatest. This is especially true among the poorest states of the “South” where the suggestive statistics of the ratio of military expenditure to health spending is often highest.

The dangers of exporting the concerns with security that have long preoccupied international relations as a discipline are clear in this context. Understanding military forces as the principal security problem for many populations links to larger critiques of militarism and to contemporary analyses of the causes of violent conflict, as well as to the larger agendas of restricting weapons production and utilization as part of the human security agenda. These extensions of security thinking lead away from a European and American focus on inter-state warfare and towards an understanding of security in the context of global processes which extend beyond narrow concerns with inter-state military and power competition.

VI. Security Studies: Broad Approaches

If the broader perspectives win out and security is understood in its multitudinous dimensions then surely the place of such studies in the academy has to change. Nuclear weapons required links to specific sciences; broad definitions of security will also require cognate fields to be brought into the dialogue. Broadening the scope of security studies inevitably extends the number of relevant disciplinary contributors further beyond political science. There are numerous cognate fields that have many things of relevance to say about security once it is understood in its larger conceptualizations. But so far these are disciplines that have often largely ignored concerns with security despite some very obvious linkages. Psychology has had some things to say about both leadership and popular understandings and predilections that are related to warfare propensities. Economics too has entered the security debates on some occasions and may much to say relating to attempts at global cooperation to deal with environmental concerns, especially where such matters are discussed in terms of economic “securities.” If liberal institutionalists are right and cooperation between states is increasingly viewed as essential, then clearly the overlaps between IR and sociological investigations of organizational behaviour are another obvious disciplinary connection that might be fostered.

Looking at some of the recent literature in the field suggests that some links to cognate fields may be occurring. Peter Katzenstein’s edited volume on *The Culture of National Security* suggests the

⁵⁶ Mustapha Pasha, “Security as Hegemony,” *Alternatives* 21(3), 1996, pp.283-302, at p.287. See also Andrew Linklater “Political Community and Human Security,” mimeo, 1999.

⁵⁷ Larry A. Swatuk and Peter Vale, “Why Democracy is not Enough: Southern Africa and Human Security in the Twenty-First Century,” *Alternatives* 24(3), 1999, pp.361-89.

⁵⁸ See for instance Dan Smith, *The State of War and Peace Atlas*, London: Penguin, 1997.

⁵⁹ Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1997, p.17.

necessity of understanding states in much more complex ways than is possible in the neo-realist frameworks of the 1980s.⁶⁰ The focus on culture, identity, and norms in this book suggests a more sophisticated sociological imagination even if the framework in the book frequently doesn't escape the assumptions of states as the basic entities that have cultures and identities. Looking at the academic affiliations of the contributors nonetheless suggests that the political scientists continue to dominate matters. In the conclusion to this volume Katzenstein raises the question of the emergence of different regional understandings of security and security studies.⁶¹ He points to the obviousness of including economic matters in any understanding of security among Asian scholars and the importance of understanding the complexity and the changes in European states, not least the shift historically from warfare to welfare states, in understanding the emergence of new thinking about security in Europe.

Taking the Copenhagen framework seriously suggests even more clearly that academic approaches from a multitude of disciplines are apposite. The military sector clearly requires strategists, military historians, and political scientists, as well as engineers and other technical specialists. The political sector suggests that political scientists obviously are important here, too, economic security is a matter that might interest economists, although they play a small direct role in the current literature. They do of course have an indirect influence in American thinking in particular in terms of providing economic models of rational choice and decision taking over the allocation of scarce resources. Societal security suggests the need to include sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of cultural studies in addition to the psychologists who have found their way into some security thinking. Extending the remit of security to environmental matters suggests the importance of including perspectives of biologists, ecologists, and geographers. Geographers might also have something to say about the spatial and territorial assumptions of such concepts as the Copenhagen framework of regional complexes and the dynamics of overlays. Linguistic analyses are also being brought to bear on the subject matter of security in ways that challenge the assumptions of neo-realism and which have influenced Waever's contribution of speech act theory to the Copenhagen framework.⁶²

However, this attempt to link with other fields may not be so easy as in many cases it seems that the disciplinary distances between security studies and other fields are large. Even in such obvious areas of overlap as disaster research, population vulnerabilities and national security there has been remarkable little work and conceptual synthesis is in its infancy.⁶³ If serious attention is paid to matters of food security and the related themes in the UNDP "human security" agenda then development workers and agricultural analysts also need to be included. Such additions may be possible where other disciplinary concerns parallel the basic assumptions of sovereign states, economic development, liberal subjectivities and knowledge practices that constitute international relations. Geopolitical concerns were closely connected to "development" projects such as agricultural modernization and the green revolution for most of the cold war period.⁶⁴

But as this paper itself attests, adding even geographical thinking to security studies introduces a series of categorizations that are not necessarily congruent with conventional security thinking. If attempts to broaden the ambit of security are already resisted within security studies dominated by one

⁶⁰ Peter Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

⁶¹ Peter Katzenstein, "Conclusion: National Security in a Changing World," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, pp.498-537.

⁶² See recently, for instance, Paul Chilton, *Security Metaphors: Cold War Discourse from Containment to Common House*, New York: Peter Lang, 1996; Karen Fierke, *Changing Games, Changing Strategies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

⁶³ But see L. Pettiford, "Towards a Redefinition of Security in Central America: The Case of Natural Disasters," *Disasters* 19, 1995, pp.148-55; on the possible theoretical links between disasters and security, see Denis Arsenaault, "Environment, Security and 'Natural' Disasters: Contesting Discourses of Environmental Security," Carleton University, Unpublished MA Thesis, 1998.

⁶⁴ John H. Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

discipline, then the potential for larger academic “turf” fights, should a multiplicity of incongruent disciplinary perspectives be admitted to the discussion, should not be ignored. This is not only a matter of accommodating diverse methodological approaches from a variety of disciplines. When contemporary critical thinking and intellectual fields such as anthropology are added into the mix, profound questions of who precisely is being secured against what threat by the practices of security studies themselves are inevitable.⁶⁵ Security is, as Huysmans, Dillon, Williams, and others make clear in a variety of theoretical genres, unavoidably a matter of culture and politics in a very unevenly globalizing world.

VII. Security, Identity, and Global Hegemony

As the Copenhagen authors make clear, an important part of the whole question of security is the ability to specify matters of danger, invoke emergency measures and gain at least some political adherence to the crisis script. As such security is a profoundly political processes, most obviously so when it works precisely to constrain politics. Dissidents can be silenced most effectively when they are portrayed as aiding the enemy. Resources can be mobilized and solidarities cemented in the face of a common threat. Security in these contexts is not only a matter of state action and formal politics but also a matter of ‘civil society’ where policies and identities are argued, affirmed, and articulated in the routine quotidian practices of culture.⁶⁶

To be effective in stimulating new thinking, concepts like the United Nations formulation of human security face a series of problems dealing with the legacy of cold war thinking and also dealing with contemporary geopolitical understandings of security, which, despite the broadening of the agenda of security, still frequently operate on assumptions of internal secure spaces kept separate from external threats by surveillance and technological acumen. That this assumption should be the starting point for security studies is not surprising. The United Nations system is premised on stable borders and a fixed geography of states. Territorial aggrandisement was understood in the 1940s as a major cause of international conflict and the acceptance of the norm of non-intervention is tied into an assumption of territorial stability. Defence departments and national security, as the highest priority of states, are premised on these geopolitical assumptions, although in many post-colonial cases such artificial constructions may be more of a source of violence than a solution.

The theme is taken to its illogical extreme in recent Hollywood movies where the earth is saved from external destruction (in among others “Deep Impact,” “Independence Day” and “Armageddon”) by American ingenuity and, of course, nuclear weapons. This point is not a flippant reference to the distractions of popular entertainment, but rather a serious argument that security is part of the hegemonic understanding of who “we,” who are insecure, are. The dangers of simply attaching human to security without engaging in these larger challenges to what security means now, and might mean in the future, should not be underestimated. Obviously these difficulties also relate to the fact that many of the contemporary concepts of security have a particular liberal heritage. Who invokes which script of danger and has the capability of propagating a widely shared understanding of danger is crucial.

Hegemony is about the construction and reproduction of taken for granted political categories, and the more formal knowledge practices that can be used to legitimate state policies and practices. But the point about hegemony is that it is not a matter of complete domination, it is a matter of complex contested discourses and the possibility of disruption of both state definitions of security and the identities that follow from such definitions. This is a lesson that the Zapatista rebels understand in their media

⁶⁵ Simon Dalby, “Geopolitics and Global Security: Culture, Identity and the ‘Pogo Syndrome,’” in Ó Tuathail and Dalby, *Rethinking Geopolitics*, pp.295-313.

⁶⁶ Pasha, “Security.”

campaign which disrupts the technocratic modernization claims of the Mexican state.⁶⁷ As the Copenhagen authors make clear, not all securitization moves are effective. There is a complex cultural politics of defining danger that is crucial to the processes of security.

But there are other questions of the relations of human security to hegemony that demand attention here too. In so far as hegemony and the routine practices of politics are dependent on commonly accepted identities, the modern liberal subject as citizen of a single state is now the hegemonic identity in these discussions in most places in the “North.”⁶⁸ Whether as consumer or citizen, and the two identities are especially closely related in the contemporary discourses of neo-liberalism, as well as in many discourses of human rights, this autonomous knowledgeable being is both the ontological given and the political and economic *desideratum* in contemporary discussions of both security and economy.

But significantly for the discussion of the universal aspirations implicit in the broadened concepts of security, and their utility as a response to “global” dangers, these identities are now also frequently understood in terms of global tropes. The globe has been appropriated as a powerful icon by numerous advertisers to peddle all sorts of commodities.⁶⁹ Globalization is a cultural process as well as an economic one. To mention just a few examples from TV advertising in Canada in the late 1990s: “Malibu” cars go four times around the world before they need a tune up; Sprint Canada literally makes the spinning globe in its commercials smaller which is equated with reduced overseas rates making the world a smaller place. But perhaps most significant for this argument are the Chevy Blazer sports utility vehicles seen negotiating numerous hazards on their journeys before arriving unscathed either at a beach or at a large suburban home. The vehicles are sold with the slogan “a little security in an insecure world.” Security is a matter of a safe space provided technologically to keep external dangers at bay.

But this is an individualist’s technological response to a “dangerous” world, a response that only the global corporations can, however, provide. It is one that uses the technology to ensure that the autonomous subject, and their family, is not endangered. But there is a very powerful irony here in that the vehicle uses fossil fuels to propel itself and its passengers through storms, the frequency of which may be increased by the global climate changes brought on precisely by the use of fossil fuels. Big vehicles, and specifically the popular sport utility vehicles like the Chevy Blazer, are also fuel inefficient and likely, if current buying trends are maintained, to ensure many states have little hope of meeting carbon dioxide emissions levels agreed to in Kyoto and in subsequent international climate change agreements.

This theme further links to the discussions of neo-liberalism, to the contemporary reduction of state functions and the provision of public transport. Suburban families in the “North” increasingly use vehicles to transport children to schools and to numerous other social events. The rationale for using vehicles is frequently an assumption of safety in a political culture of personal insecurity where strangers are often viewed as dangerous predators.⁷⁰ In environmental terms, this all raises the question of whether the modern subject is sustainable, but it also points very directly to the assumptions about what is to be secured, and how security is to be provided. In particular it suggests that the suburban consumer lifestyle aspirations of modern autonomous citizens are premised on an unsustainable global economy. Clearly security in these terms does not take the environment or the insights of ecology very seriously in its specifications of the sources of danger. This concern is especially germane when neo-liberal formulations emphasise voluntary and private sector initiatives as a method of ensuring compliance with such international agreements as climate protocols.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Paul Routledge, “Going Globale: Spatiality, Embodiment, and Mediation in the Zapatista Insurgency,” in Ó Tuathail and Dalby, *Rethinking Geopolitics*, pp.240-60.

⁶⁸ Walker, “The Subject of Security.”

⁶⁹ P. McHaffie, “Decoding the Globe: Globalism, Advertising and Corporate Practice,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15(1), 1997, pp.73-86.

⁷⁰ This is the case in Britain: see Alan Hallsworth, Rodney Tolley, Colin Black, and Ian Cross, *Fear and the Car as Haven: Parental Justifications for Car-Use on Trips to School*, Staffordshire University, Centre for Alternative and Sustainable Transport Working paper, 1997.

⁷¹ See Heather Smith, “Human (In)security and Canadian Climate Change Policy,” *Environment and Security* 2(1), 2000, forthcoming.

There are further ironies in this formulation of security. In actuarial terms, most women who die violently are killed by either partners or other family members. Domestic violence suggests that the place specified as safe is in fact most dangerous. The public sphere, constructed in the contemporary political imaginary as the source of threats is less likely to produce fatal violence. This reasoning is compounded when the death toll due to automobile accidents and pollution induced respiratory failure is considered. Once again the automobile, sold as the provider of “a little security in an insecure world” is ironically a source of very considerable insecurity.⁷² This is especially so because, in a richly ironic reprise of the international relations literature on security dilemmas, these larger “secure” vehicles are likely to do more damage to other vehicles and their occupants in a collision. All this is important, not only because it reprises the dynamics of security dilemmas, but also because it emphasizes the point in the Copenhagen framework about security as a political act. In terms of the political specifications of danger, the numbers killed in domestic violence and vehicle accidents are apparently very much less important than the cultural codings of spaces and technologies in terms of safety and danger.

The related point is the importance given to technology and the assumptions that technical acumen can provide the answers to many insecurities. Global security is now sometimes understood as requiring global surveillance. In one prominent rendition, American superiority in information technology is argued to be a competitive advantage in assessing and dealing with new threats to the global order.⁷³ But the assumption that technology is the answer often occludes the crucial questions about the causes of insecurity, many of which might be better understood as consequences of the globalization of modernity and the disruptions implicit in its dynamics.

VIII. Geopolitics and Security

In a line of argument loosely parallel to the discussions in Rothschild’s and Williams’ work on liberalism and security, Gwyn Prins argues that security studies faces a major rethinking due to the collapse, in 1989, of the French Revolution “solution” to political difficulties, wherein the state provided some basic security for the population within its bounds in return for the population’s incorporation into a geopolitical “hybrid” of the nation state.⁷⁴ The suggestions Prins draws from the events of 1989 are both that the narrow focus on military power in realism and the assumption of contract theory have collapsed with the emergence of globalization and the demise of the cold war. While the judgement that 1989 marks such a watershed in terms of political change may be premature, what he implies, but does not develop in detail, is the suggestion that globalization splits the world more irrevocably into haves and have-nots; the two thirds of the global population that haven’t ever made a phone call from those connected into the electronic communication circuits.

Drawing on Bradley Klein’s recent analysis of the changing geography of security we can develop this line of thinking a little further.⁷⁵ Klein argues that, at least in North America, security is being privatized in the form of a rapidly growing number of security firms and the increasing phenomenon of gated communities where residents live in a neighbourhood of restricted access, complete with guards controlling entrances to residential areas with checkpoints and a panoply of security fences and surveillance systems. This is a further extension of the argument made above about automobiles as a security commodity that the affluent can purchase. The theme of the retreat of the state in the provision

⁷² According to the United Nations statistics slightly over 12 American males are murdered per 100,000 of population per annum. The comparative figures per year per 100,000 are that about 120 women report rapes and early 1,400 injuries occur from road accidents: *Human Development Report 1994*, p.30.

⁷³ J.S. Nye and W.A. Owens, “America’s Information Edge,” *Foreign Affairs* 75(2), 1996, pp.20-36.

⁷⁴ Gwyn Prins, “The four-stroke cycle in security studies,” *International Affairs* 74(4), 1998, pp.781-808.

⁷⁵ Bradley S. Klein, “Politics by design: remapping security landscapes,” *European Journal of International Relations* 4(3), 1998, pp.327-45.

of security can also be seen in contemporary debates about the increasing role of private corporations in the provision of policing and prisons.⁷⁶

While this may not amount to a confirmation of Prins' assertion that 1989 marks the end of the social contract of the nation state, it does call into question the taken for granted assumptions of the role of the state in security provision. In particular, Prins insistence on understanding security in terms of changing social practices and the entities that might be secured as objects for analysis, rather than the taken for granted premises for scholarly activity, connects to both the Copenhagen framework and to Keith Krause's recent summary of the major themes of critical international relations that are relevant to security studies.⁷⁷ The affluent enclaves within gated communities in a world of globalized poverty suggest a very different landscape of security than that long assumed in neo-realist assumptions of states as security actors in the international arena.

This raises the crucial question of the geographical assumptions underpinning security discourses that are the subject matter of security studies. Privatized security provision undermines partly the spatial logic of states as the focal point of security discussions from within the state. The geographical assumptions of states as security containers might also be inadequate at the largest geopolitical scale. This simple question of geographical assumptions in security discourse might then also lead to an argument that much of the contemporary confusion about security, whose security, and how to think about these questions, can be traced to the early formulation of the problematique of international relations as a field of study in the twentieth century.

Without rehearsing yet again the discussions of international relations in terms of either its "great debates" or "great men," its emergence after the First World War, in part as an academic response to the questions of why the slaughter occurred, is important in understanding what subsequently transpired.⁷⁸ The post Second World War emergence of the discipline as a predominantly American concern is also significant. The American concern with superpower rivalry dominated much of what followed either directly in terms of the analysis of the superpower relationship or indirectly by shaping the logic of inquiry in its terms. Interstate warfare, and the need to avoid it between nuclear armed rivals is obviously an important matter for scholarly inquiry. But in the post-cold war world the assumption that security can be primarily understood in terms of the consequences of inter-state rivalry is no longer useful in many ways. As research reports from many sources attest, violence and insecurity are widespread contemporary human problems, but they may not be a matter best comprehended within the traditional assumptions of either international relations or strategic studies.

Much of the violence of the last fifty years might be better understood in the geopolitical terms of the other function of European, and later American, military power. If the underdeveloped world is looked at more closely, then the traditional use of European military forces in the role of imperial administrators and pacifiers, may be a more apt geopolitical framework for thinking about contemporary violence. If interventions in Vietnam, or recently in such places as the Persian Gulf, Sudan, Afghanistan, Kosovo and East Timor, are understood as imperial ventures, rather than as military actions directly concerned with inter-state rivalries, a different picture emerges. There has long been a concern among critics of American policies that the failure to understand indigenous nationalism and anti-colonial movements as such, because of the bipolar preoccupations of the cold war geopolitical specifications of the world, caused all sorts of violence that was avoidable. The geopolitical assumptions on which the arguments about security are premised are crucial. Adding the large scale geographical questions of security for whom where makes these themes clear.

The historical use of European military force in colonial conquest and pacification cannot easily engage the formulation of international relations understood in the narrow sense of inter-state warfare.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ian Loader, "Thinking normatively about private security," *Journal of Law and Society* 24(3), 1997, pp.377-94.

⁷⁷ Krause, "Critical Theory."

⁷⁸ Steve Smith, "The self-images of a discipline: A genealogy of international relations theory" in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds), *International Relations Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity 1995, pp.1-37.

⁷⁹ Michael Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

The assumptions of newly independent states as formal and legal equals in the system allows for the consideration of military force only in these terms. But if one understands the use of military force as an hegemonic endeavour, or even as an international policing action, then an additional question about international relations as the conceptual infrastructure of liberal hegemony is unavoidable. In so far as the broadening of security studies is about the new threats of environment, migration, population, drugs and so on, the violence related to these “dangers” may be better understood in terms of the use of military forces for tasks of occupation and pacification. This requires a rather different overarching conceptualization of the use of force, as well as a shift from the abstract neo-realist assumptions of autonomous power balancing entities as the basic ontological given for security analysis.

Viewed in terms of the history of hegemonic policing actions then, the “new” dimensions of security seem much less new. Indeed the extension of analytical work on security to encompass the broader Copenhagen framework, or even the UNDP “human security” framework has in many important respects been anticipated by peace researchers a generation ago. In particular the work by Johan Galtung on imperialism and structural violence suggests that the new agenda of security studies is not all that new.⁸⁰ What has changed is the demise of the Soviet Union and the shift of focus after the cold war to other matters. The impossibility of now attributing violence in the South to the machinations of the cold war antagonist demands a different understanding of the world political scene. While the cold war understandings of security are no longer easily applicable, it is also worth noting that the other dominant cold war discourse, that of development, is also under intense criticism in ways that render human insecurity a much more politically fraught issue than the categories of development discourse have usually allowed.

IX. Globalization and Post-Development

In the context of globalization and a global geopolitics of rich and poor, the necessity of rethinking politics, and specifically the role of states in providing what might be called security, is unavoidable. It is no longer reasonable to always assume that the compact between state and citizen holds; in the face of forces of globalization, either assuming that many states can substantially influence the factors that affect the lives of their population, or will act on their behalf is in many places no longer tenable. The World Order Models Project has gone so far as to specify such matters in the language of “Global Apartheid,” a reading of the world political scene that emphasizes both the inequities of the world economy and the spatial segregation that at least partly controls the flow of poor populations by the invocation of inviolable state frontiers.⁸¹ The global politics of security in the face of accelerating inequities require new tools of analysis and new understandings of the identities that might be rendered secure.⁸²

A crucial point about globalization and security that needs attention is that globalizations have specific geographies.⁸³ Understanding the geopolitical specifications that underlie particular insecurities is important. Political science, in its comparative guise, as well as in international relations, is often

⁸⁰ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, 1969, pp.167-91; Johan Galtung, “A Structural Theory of Imperialism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 8, 1971, pp.81-117.

⁸¹ See Richard Falk, *On Humane Governance: Toward a New Global Politics*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995.

⁸² I have explored these themes in terms of ecological security in Simon Dalby, “Ecological Metaphors of Security: World Politics in the Biosphere,” *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance* 23(3), 1998, pp.291-319.

⁸³ Simon Dalby, “Globalization or Global Apartheid?: Boundaries and Knowledge in Postmodern Times,” *Geopolitics* 3(1), 1998, pp.132-50.

preoccupied by the category of the state and fails to look more closely at which state and where.⁸⁴ It also often fails to ask questions about non-state communities and the need to think about institutions appropriate to the task of global security which do not take states for granted as security providers. The importance of demolishing the category of “the state” in the face of the inevitable insistence on the question of “which state?” is worth noting, as is the related point about the inadequacy of many states to supply security in the terms of territorial autonomy that neo-realism has always assumed.⁸⁵ This too links to the assumptions of differentiation within a system of connections as a much better starting place for understanding contemporary international relations than as a matter of the interaction of autonomous spaces.⁸⁶

This argument is important if globalization is to be taken seriously because it changes the focus of analysis from local autonomy to an understanding of global processes occurring in specific places. Much of the focus on the environment as a source of security threats has focused on growing populations which supposedly cause both environmental degradation and migration as peasants move when they can no longer eke out a living on degraded landscapes. The neo-Malthusian fears of population and migration induced disruptions voiced by the environmental security advocates can easily be read as a re-articulation of the geopolitical dimensions of the limits to growth debate from the early 1970s.⁸⁷ Social conflict over scarce resources and identity conflicts may indeed result from these processes as analyses by Thomas Homer-Dixon and others have suggested.⁸⁸ But understanding the global dimensions of these processes suggests that the processes that are most important are linked to global patterns of political economy and the spread of commercial agriculture and other forms of development such as large dams, into landscapes marked by very unequal access to land and water.⁸⁹

Among the most important of the norms and practices that are being globalized are the European colonial assumptions of land as *terra nullius* unless it is formally surveyed and “title” granted to settlers. The related cultural assumptions of nature as a resource and land as waste unless cultivated by agriculture underlie these appropriations.⁹⁰ Thus aboriginal ecologies and the subsistence economies that they support are disrupted and often destroyed. Bringing anthropologists into the discussion raises the questions of the fate of indigenous populations. Critical anthropology suggests that modernity is the gravest threat to all forms of “security” that numerous indigenous peoples face. A parallel process often occurs with the displacement of peasant farmers and the enclosures of “commons” in the processes of expanding commercial agriculture, the only type of agriculture taken seriously in many technologically defined formulations of food security. The assumption that modernization of agriculture is a process that improves security is contested by numerous campaigns on the part of dispossessed peasants.⁹¹

This line of argument parallels others in the critique of development in the last few decades where the assumptions of universal modernity as desirable are challenged and the role of marginal locations reinterpreted as part of global processes of commodification and expropriation. In economic terms the

⁸⁴ Carlo Bonura, “The occulted geopolitics of nation and culture: situating political culture within the construction of geopolitical ontologies” in Ó Tuathail and Dalby, *Rethinking Geopolitics*, pp.86-105.

⁸⁵ Peter Taylor, *Modernities: A Geohistorical Approach*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

⁸⁶ John G. Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,” *International Organisation*, 47(1), 1993, pp.139-74.

⁸⁷ Jon Barnett in “Environmental Security: A Critical Examination and a Human Centred Reformulation,” Australian National University, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1998.

⁸⁸ Thomas Homer-Dixon and Jessica Blitt (eds), *Ecoviolence: Links among Environment, Population and Security*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1998; Thomas Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

⁸⁹ Dharam Ghai (ed.), *Development and Environment: Sustaining People and Nature*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994; Raymond Bryant and Sinead Bailey, *Third World Political Ecology*, London: Routledge, 1997.

⁹⁰ Tom Kuehls, *Beyond Sovereign Territory: The Space of Ecopolitics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

⁹¹ An especially thoughtful meditation on this theme is Gustavo Esteva and Suri Prakesh, *Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures*, London: Zed, 1998.

debate about the global environment, atmospheric change and “sinks” to absorb carbon emissions leads logically to the assumptions that emission permits are tradable because everything is ultimately reduced to exchangeable commodities.⁹² But in light of post-development critiques one has to ask whether the South simply becomes a tree growing zone for large Northern states and corporations trying to find a way to “sink” their emissions. It is not difficult to construct an “eco-imperialism” argument suggesting that this is simply more Southern subsidies to Northern consumption.⁹³ Globalization challenges the assumption that states are the only obvious referent object of security, although the theme obviously will be especially tenacious where states are seen as the administrative mechanism that ensures (“secures”) the financial investments in biodiversity and (violently?) administers the North’s carbon sinks in the South.

This question of how one understands responsibility, environments, and the matter of “sinks” reintroduces Prins’ question of whether security studies is understood in terms of a science or a humanity. Science suggests security as a matter of technique and technology, a problem to be managed by the appropriate state mechanisms and researched by global corporations. The late 1990s Archer Daniel Midlands corporation television advertisements, narrated by David Brinkley, focus on hunger and want as a security problem in need of corporate technical fixes. The invocation of these themes in terms of food security, during the broadcast of the CNN TV series on the cold war in the last few months of 1998, dramatically raises issues of definition and response. In the corporate discourse, hunger is a technical problem above and beyond politics. But most contemporary literature suggests that famine and social disruption is rarely a matter of food shortages overall, but a matter of local distribution, political disruptions, and the availability of cash to purchase food. Is this a technical problem for corporations or a political matter of social organization? Once again security is a complex social phenomenon.

This raises the larger general question of technical practices and the potential for global managerial efforts. Who defines the problem and designs the practices that deal with the so specified issue matters. In light of the numerous failed development projects and related attempts at social engineering of the last half century, attempts to manage social problems at the global scale using similar modes of control raise great skepticism among those familiar with the literature on development.⁹⁴ One important point in this argument is that some, although obviously not all, of the causes of insecurity and violence are as a result of the disruptions caused by the processes of globalization. Put in the terms of the UNDP human security agenda, the point is that attempts to enhance economic security through modernization often undermines food, environmental, and community security among the poor and marginalized. Security across these themes is not necessarily additive. Dilemmas abound and imply that politics will not easily be avoided.

This is a contrary argument to many of the assumptions in the “enlargement geopolitics” mode of reasoning, which suggest that modernization and markets is the answer to the conflicts understood as endemic in areas not yet blessed by the presence of modern liberal states and market economies.⁹⁵ The assumption that modernization is the answer overlooks the violence inherent in the process, often by ignoring the distant consequences of specific changes. The United Nations concept of human security has the considerable analytical advantage of drawing attention to many of these contradictions. Any security studies approach to dealing with the South has to grapple seriously with these themes or risk perpetuating the processes that cause so many contemporary insecurities.

⁹² See for instance, Graciela Chichilnisky and Geoffrey Heal, “Economic Returns from the Biosphere,” *Nature* 391 (12), February 1998, pp.629-30.

⁹³ See the classic statement on this theme in Vandana Shiva, “Conflicts of Global Ecology: Environmental Activism in a Period of Global Reach,” *Alternatives* 19(2), 1994, pp.195-207.

⁹⁴ A detailed discussion of these points is beyond the scope of this paper, but see for instance Jonathon Crush (ed.), *Power of Development*, London: Routledge, 1995; Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (eds), *The Post-Development Reader*, London: Zed, 1997; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

⁹⁵ Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders*.

X. Placing Security: Implications If Not Conclusions

The emergence of critical perspectives and the addition of methodological concerns from contemporary social theory challenge the cold war definitions of the appropriate subject matter of security in a manner that simultaneously broadens the consideration of security and suggests that there is more to the discussion than considerations of academic turf alone. Both the critical approaches, and the addition of wider concerns from other fields, call into question the underlying assumptions of security by asking questions that shift the focus of concern away from the specifications of national security preoccupied states as the only, or most important, actors in matters of security. More explicitly, as Gwyn Prins notes, whatever the aspirations of its practitioners, security studies also remains largely a part of the humanities rather than a science. As such it has to be concerned with history and interpretation, matters that concern security scholars despite their often self-imposed nomenclature in North America as social scientists.

All this suggests that security studies has much to offer in terms of understanding the contemporary world scene, but it also suggests that it may be long overdue cutting itself loose from the strictures of twentieth century international relations thinking and its state centric premises. If the assumptions of European inter-state war, and subsequently the concerns of bloc rivalries, are understood as historical episodes for which international relations in part acted as a legitimization practice for American, and subsequently Western, policies, then the basic parameters for thinking about security might be much better understood by distancing thought from the categories that we have inherited from the past. But, as Rob Walker has repeatedly argued, such distancing will not be easy given the limited categories of thought available.⁹⁶

Security studies might draw intellectual support from cultural studies and post-colonial critiques. It might, as Prins argues it cannot but, recognize itself in terms of a branch of interpretive humanities. In doing so the task of academic practitioners, or insecurity specialists, to adopt Davis Bobrow's term, but not his conclusion,⁹⁷ becomes one of engagement in a conversation about the fate of humanity on an endangered planet, rather than one as scientists to "objectively" examine a given series of structural relationships. As such, if it also takes the geographical arguments into account, security studies might also understand itself as many geographical selves, as security studies plural, with Asian, European and American variants in addition to a variety of post-colonial and, crucially, perhaps post-development understandings. Security is not then read as a universal condition, as the American behavioural scientists might like us to do, but understood as a highly contested signifier which invokes numerous specifications of danger and legitimates practices of violence while simultaneously frequently promoting a modern liberal subjectivity on the bases of this violence.

Many of the suggestions in this paper may go further than international relations trained scholars will be comfortable accepting. Perhaps the topic of interstate warfare should simply revert to its traditional moniker of strategic studies and divorce itself from other questions of insecurity. Perhaps also desecuritization of all non-strategic themes is in order. But some part of the academy still has to look at state organized violence and the problems of political order, war, and political collapse. Questions of peacekeeping and the practicalities of organizing military force in the face of contemporary complex humanitarian emergencies obviously need detailed consideration drawn from more than North American political science perspectives. Detaching these things from the traditional ethnocentrism of international relations is probably a necessary part of the construction of an international and inter-disciplinary security studies. Very careful conceptual thinking in light of the critical literature is no longer avoidable.

If this broader agenda is accepted, can it be used as a way of rescuing politics from the geopolitical stipulations of communities living in boxes with violence ultimately arbitrating disagreements? Hopefully it can. But to do so such studies will need a much more complicated

⁹⁶ R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

⁹⁷ Bobrow, "Complex Insecurity."

geographically diverse world of interconnections as the ontological premise for contemplation and analysis. Violence and insecurity then can be addressed more directly without the intellectual detours through assumptions of inter-state violence, territorial states, national security, or even “civilizations,” obscuring the social processes in question. International relations and strategic studies it probably isn’t, but “security studies” it might still be, albeit in a rather different guise from that bequeathed from the hegemonic practices of the past.

The human security agenda has given rise to the heated debate in academic circles over the scope of the human security concept. The study of human security could be very tricky, since it is a multifaceted construct. This paper will now look at the academic debate stemming from differentiation of freedom as from fear and from want. The former interpretation promotes a narrow way of understanding of human security. The nature of contemporary security threats does not render the traditional principles of state security as anachronistic (McCormack, 2011, p. 99 in Trobbiani, 2013). Ultimately, the human security approach has normative characteristics. These changes have inevitably affected the concept of security, and the extent to which security is influenced by geopolitical factors. In the absence of globalization, the problem of delimiting the concepts of security and geopolitics would have been less important. In the postindustrial states, security and geopolitics are interconnected in a different way from in the traditional states. So far, the contemporary world is still preserving its diversity, even though there is an obvious trend toward the development of "unified globalization standards." Rather, this is the only historical stage at which the industrial, preindustrial, and postindustrial states co-exist side by side.

human and Environmental security: An agenda for change, London, Earthscan , 2005 , P.28. 2 Simon Dalby, Geopolitical Change and Contemporary Security Studies: Contextualizing the Human Security. Agenda, Institute of International relations the University of British Columbia, Working paper, NÂ°:30, April 2000, P.6, <http://www.ligi.ubc.ca/sites/liu/files/Publications/webwp30.pdf>. 3 Thierry Balzacq ,Op .Cit. ,PP.42-43 . Human security is an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities whose proponents challenge the traditional notion of national security through military security by arguing that the proper referent for security should be at the human rather than national level. Human security reveals a people-centred and multi-disciplinary understanding of security which involves a number of research fields, including development studies, international relations, strategic studies, and human rights. The...