Security and “Security Studies”: Conceptual Evolution and Historical Transformation

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Abstract and Keywords

The quest for security is one of the most powerful dynamics of modern politics. To ask “what is security and security studies?” is to grapple with an ambiguous, contested, and controversial concept and discipline. This relativity of security—of who or what is being threatened, and from what or whom—has important consequences for understanding security relations between states, within states, and between non-state actors. This chapter traces some of the shifting meanings, practices, and institutions of security, showing how and why they have changed as part of a complex historical process of dealing with the place of violence and order in modern political and social life. New issues and approaches both reflect and challenge these historical lineages, raising key political and analytic questions.

Keywords: security history, concept of security, security studies, violence, security relations, war, geopolitics, strategy

2.1 Introduction

THE quest for security is one of the most powerful dynamics of modern politics. Few claims are as politically potent as those cast within the imperative of “security,” and few can mobilize such enormous political, social, and economic resources. In the pursuit of “national” security, more than one trillion US dollars are spent worldwide each year on military institutions and instruments, with many billions more on police and paramilitary institutions. In the name of national security covert and often extra-legal operations of intelligence services are undertaken and justified, immune from public scrutiny. And in the most extreme case, governments can demand that individuals kill and die in the name of security. Yet the term “security” is not restricted to the realm of military affairs and national security. One of the confounding aspects of the concept is the way in which it has been attached to an array of domestic, international, and transnational issues. Programs of social security are associated with the welfare state, while calls to promote environ-

mental or economic security, or individual concerns with food security or health security all foster the impression that the search for security is omnipresent, and that the concept can be applied to areas far removed from the realms of war, conflict, and violence.

To ask "what is security and security studies?" is thus to grapple with an ambiguous, contested, and controversial concept and discipline. What one person, group, society, or state perceives as a threatening source of insecurity, another may not. To some, widespread individual ownership of firearms furthers their security, while to others it is a source of insecurity. To one state, the possession of a specific weapons system is essential to its defense, to another it appears deeply threatening. For one social group, the right to educate their children in a particular faith or language is vital to their cultural survival (p. 15) as a group; to their neighbors it may appear as a threat needing to be suppressed. Even if one restricts analysis to the realm of *national* security, the complexities do not disappear. The question of the security of the *nation*—of who belongs and who does not—has been at the heart of many recent conflicts and wars. This relativity of security—of who or what is being threatened, and from what or whom—has important consequences for understanding security relations between states, within states, and between non-state actors.

The indeterminacy and ambiguity of security has led some to view any attempt to discuss so broad and multi-dimensional a concept as futile (Wolfers 1952; Buzan 1991; Baldwin 1997). Yet the ambiguities of security are no different than those of other contested political concepts, such as freedom, democracy, or power. Contrasting visions of what it is and how it ought to be achieved are essential elements of political debates and decisions, and the central place of security in political life makes it too important to ignore. Rather than despairing at conflicting or imprecise definitions, or seeing these as a result of fuzzy thinking, our aim in this chapter is to trace some of the shifting meanings, practices, and institutions of security to show how and why these have changed as part of a complex historical process of dealing with the place of violence and order in modern political and social life. Our goal is to avoid imposing an anachronistic contemporary vision of what security is or ought to be, and instead to uncover and explain some of the different understandings that individuals, societies, and ruling elites have had of security at different times and places.

To capture these different understandings while avoiding presenting an account of the progressive development of the discipline, the chapter is organized around three themes: movement, rupture, and dissent. The first captures the mainstream account (and history) of the progressive development of the discipline of security studies; the second captures the breaks with previous scholarship that are reflected in the literature; the third captures the always-present dissenting voices that resisted the disciplining dimension of the mainstream account. In parallel, we briefly trace the symbiotic but not always tight relationship between the *conceptual* ("security studies") and the *socio-political* (institutions and practices) realms of security, best pictured as a loose strand of DNA, with different "bonds" of connection, some distant, some close. The chapter thus traces some of the main moments in the history of security practices and security studies, attempting to highlight moments of greatest convergence and divergence in the two evolving strands. It

briefly reviews pre-twentieth-century contributions to highlight some of the antecedents to contemporary debates, and concentrates on the twentieth century in greatest detail. Given the future-oriented nature of this volume, the past (distant and recent) is presented with an eye to the near-future, both in terms of expected continuities and transformations.

2.2 Antecedents

The language of security has deep Roman and Greek roots (Rothschild 1995; Arends and Frederik 2008) connected with images of freedom from care or concern, but the (p. 16) crystallization of a distinctly modern preoccupation with security coincides with the rise of the modern state. Security, for Thomas Hobbes, is a precondition for civil and law-governed life, and requires political institutions to provide that which individuals in the state of nature cannot obtain, since "we cannot expect security from others, or assure it to ourselves" (Hobbes 1998 (1651): 26).

This conceptualization of security did not produce a discipline of security studies; rather, it provided an explanation and justification for the increased centralization of state power and its growing monopoly over the legitimate use of force. What did emerge, however, was systematic thought on strategy and warfare at the service of this new form of state power. "Strategic studies" can thus credibly claim to be a precursor of mainstream security studies, defined by one of its foremost proponents as "*the study of the threat, use and control of military force …* [that is] the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent or engage in war" (Walt 1991: 212, emphasis in original). The tight bond between the development of state power, the increasing scope and scale of warfare, and strategic thought was reflected in the close relationship of strategic thinkers and the "science" of war to actual state policies and practices. This covered such diverse domains as the seventeenth-century development of fortifications to secure borders (Vauban) and systematic forms of training and drill for soldiers (Maurice of Nassau), battlefield deployment and tactics in the Napoleonic era (Jomini), or the importance of twentieth-century military innovations such as air power (Douhet) (Mead Earle 1944; Paret 1986; Parker 1996).

By the late nineteenth century strategic thought began to take on a more *conceptual* or theoretical cast, as well as a simply practical one, with the development of geopolitical doctrines that attempted to explain the underlying forces shaping nation states, conflict between states, and the evolution of world politics. These ranged from the more purely geographic ideas of continental versus naval powers (Halford Mackinder and Alfred Thayer Mahan), to the racially-tinged, Social Darwinist and Hegelian ideas of German geopolitical thought that fused state power to the destiny of peoples (Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Haushofer). Dissent from this vision of strategy at the service of the state was not absent, however, and the increasing scope and scale of modern warfare spurred humanist thinkers to posit "peace projects" on a grand scale. These ranged from the early four-

teenth-century projects of Dante and Dubois, nostalgic for the hegemonic unity of Latin Christendom, to those of scholars such as William Penn, the Abbé de St Pierre and Immanuel Kant who attempted to reconcile the anarchic nature of the state system with an end to war (Arcidiacono 2011). While these projects did not form a *discipline* of "peace research," they served in important ways as the backdrop to twentieth-century efforts at security governance and institution-building that explicitly claimed this heritage, in particular under the umbrella of *collective security* within the League of Nations (Kennedy 1987).

This *external* vision of securing the state against external military threats, linked tightly to strategy and policy, was facilitated by increasing levels of *domestic* safety and public order, generated by the growing administrative power of the state (Eisner 2003). (p. 17) From the French Revolution forward, as the state mobilized and subjected greater numbers of its citizens to the risks of violence from warfare in the name of the national and territorial state, it also assumed greater responsibility for their well-being and protection and a larger role in the management of society and the population. This increasing concern with "policing" society in its narrow sense implicated institutional development and differentiation in three ways: the expansion of the police as an institution (Bayley 1975), the slow elimination of the armed forces' role in providing domestic order, and the "pacification" of the state's relations with its subjects (rule of law, elimination of arbitrary exercises of state power such as punishment, detention, torture, and deprivation of rights). More broadly, it involved the development of what Michel Foucault termed the "conduct of conduct": the shaping of forms of subjectivity and social action, and the development of new forms of governing the self and society ("governmentality") that had the security of populations as their heart (Foucault 2003). Policing in this broader sense is not only about "negative security" (preventing people from acting in certain ways and punishing them if they do so), but also about fostering the creation of particular kinds of individuals and social orders.

All of these (external, internal, state-society) dimensions of security practices can be presented both as *trade-offs* between liberty and security, but also as *productive*; as part of complex processes of structuring conceptions of freedom and agency in ways that support specific visions of security. Consider, for instance, the elimination of duelling in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This prohibition involved much more than the development of state capacities to prevent or punish duelling. It also involved a marginalization of heroic conceptions of aristocratic honor, a shift which made duelling seem uncivilized, illegitimate, and even absurd, in addition to being illegal. "Policing" society here combined with the evolution of the police to bring about a shift in security practices that was itself symptomatic of much broader processes of state consolidation and social and political transformation. Such a process was fundamental in the consolidation of the capacity for violence in the hands of the state during the process of state formation in Europe. While institutional developments in security provision were complex and diverse, they all involved a centralization of security structures (policing) within the state, an extension of state power and surveillance throughout a given territory, and a growing dis-

tinction between the institutions of internal security and those responsible for external security.

2.3 Movement: Consolidating Cold War Security Studies

The early twentieth-century study of security is most easily identified as a rupture with nineteenth-century strategic thought, and the ascendance of two strands of work that presaged (and influenced) subsequent scholarship. The first strand is best described (p. 18) as analyses into the conditions of peace, much of which—associated with the League of Nations experiment in collective security and various forms of disarmament—was normatively oriented and tightly linked to the concerns of particularly internationalist policy elites (Webster 2006). Although it broke definitely with nineteenth-century strategic thought and great power diplomacy, regarded as in part responsible for the tragedies of the Great War, the foundations of such conceptual and institutional innovations as collective security were in fact extensions of earlier thought about the balance of power (Niemeyer 1952; Ashworth 2006). Later work on security regimes (Jervis 1982) and security communities (Adler and Barnett 1998) can be seen as following in these footsteps, albeit with a much more scholarly focus. The second strand focused on the problem of war, and its major contribution, Quincy Wright’s collaborative *A Study of War* (Wright 1942), was “notable for its inattention to problems of national strategy and national security” (Fox, quoted in Baldwin 1995: 120). It arguably stands along with Lewis Richardson’s *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Wilkinson 1980) at the origins of what its proponents now call the “scientific study of war” (see Section 1.6). The only major strategic studies contribution (Mead Earle 1944) was predominantly historical (except for the epilog on the Nazi concept of war).

The mainstream of security studies that emerged in the early Cold War period was not, however, an extension of these two strands. It emerged out of the matrix of the Second World War and geopolitical confrontation between East and West, was in part a reaction to the failures of multilateral security institutions of the interwar period, and narrowed its focus of security primarily to the security of the state (and its citizens) from external military threats (Baldwin 1995). In one sense, this was coherent with the nineteenth-century vision of state–society relations and of domestic order/international anarchy. More importantly though, early scholarship was predominantly America-centric and policy driven, and cohered will the geopolitical rise of the United States and the crystallization of the concept of “national security,” which made its first appearance in the late 1940s (Bock and Berkowitz 1966). By 1947 national security had been institutionalized in the American National Security Act, the National Security Council (NSC), and the “national security state,” in which domestic “security” concerns were occluded by the predominance of an externally-oriented focus for the word. As Daniel Yergin noted, “at certain moments, unfamiliar phrases suddenly become common articles of political discourse, and the concepts they represent become so embedded in the national consciousness that they seem

always to have been with us" (Yergin 1978: 195)—so it was with the phrase "national security."

The subsequent evolution of mainstream security studies in the four decades until the mid-1980s has been sketched by Steven Walt, David Baldwin, and others (Walt 1991; Kolodziej 1992; Baldwin 1995). Security studies scholarship focused on such topics as weapons proliferation, nuclear deterrence theory, military strategy in counter- insurgency wars, arms control, the security dilemma, alliance formation and dynamics, the offence–defense balance, and other such topics (for examples, see Snyder 2007; Shiping 2010; Williams and Viotti 2012). Research by communities of scholars in each of these areas ebbed and flowed according to broader developments in International (p. 19) Relations theory and methods. Deterrence theory occupied center stage in the 1950s and 1960s (Schelling 1980; Kaplan 1991; Morgan 2003); arms control was a focus in the 1970s; alliance theory re-emerged at the end of the Cold War, and so forth. Although scholars such as Walt celebrated this as a "renaissance," associated with increasing rigor, methodological sophistication, and theoretical inclination in research (Walt 1991: 211), others took a more skeptical view of these claims, highlighting the narrowness of the conception of security that underpinned this work, and its implicit claim for the primacy of security (as a precondition for political and economic life, and not subject to diminishing margin returns). As Baldwin put it, security studies "has tended to focus on *one* set of means by which security may be pursued … military statecraft," and has "tended to assert the primacy of military security over other goals" (Baldwin 1995: 129, 127, emphasis in original).

While the broad outlines of mainstream security studies scholarship are captured by this account, the narrative obscures at least three issues. First, to scholars working outside the United States, the curious conflation of American national security concerns with the scholarly discipline of "international security studies" (treated synonymously, as in the title of a major journal in the field) smacked of academic imperialism, and obscured the way in which mainstream security studies was deeply enmeshed with current American policy concerns: deterrence, counter insurgency, arms control, terrorism. Second, the subjects covered by security studies tended to occlude much scholarship that directly concerned "issues of war and peace" or the use of force, but was not directly oriented toward immediate political concerns. This was especially the case for the large literature on the "causes of war" (Levy 1998; Levy and Thompson 2011), and the scholarship associated from the early 1960s with the Correlates of War project (COW) (Suzuki et al. 2002). Mainstream security studies resembled much more a revival of nineteenth and early twentieth century geopolitics (with an admixture of strategic thought), stripped of its tainted legacy and presented as a form of "grand strategy" to analyze the competition between the rival superpowers and their blocs. Finally, "dissent" was confined to the margins, with peace research and disarmament advocates in particular effectively cut off from the mainstream of the discipline (Rogers and Ramsbotham 1999), and pursuing their own intellectual agendas through such bodies as the International Peace Research

Association, the *Journal of Peace Research* (both launched in 1964), or the publications of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (founded in 1966).

2.4 Dissent: Broadening and Deepening Security Studies

The past three decades have seen wide-ranging debates over how security should be studied, understood, and practically provided (Kolodziej 2005; Williams 2008; Buzan and Hansen 2009; Collins 2010; Bourbeau 2015). At the core of these debates has been (p. 20) *dissent*: questioning whether the mainstream way of studying security (of the state, from primarily external military threats) in International Relations is adequate. While the mainstream view of security studies was always contested, two aspects of the post-Cold War critique were most telling. The first pointed out that in the name of "state security" the security of individual citizens is most often threatened. This is clearest when the individual is compelled to go to war, and the security of the state requires the sacrifice of the security of the individual. This paradox is even starker in situations where the state—in the name of "national security"—declares certain individuals or citizens as threats. In many places, the major threats to individuals come from the security institutions of their own states (from the intelligence and "security" services, or from militaries aligned with one social group, political faction, or regime) rather than from any external sources (Davenport 2007).

The second challenge argued that the focus of traditional security studies on states and interstate war fails to capture many of the most intense dynamics of contemporary security relations: in the areas of national identity and culture; with the security of groups, individuals, or the biosphere; with questions of state stability or fragility; with economic dislocation, and global flows of people and information; and with structures and institutions of security cooperation. Environmental, economic, demographic, and other transformations posed significant threats to the well-being of states and peoples for which military force was largely irrelevant, and that traditional conceptions of security were ill-equipped to recognize. In his classic work, *People, States and Fear*, Barry Buzan argued that "a notion of security bound to the level of individual states and military issues is inherently inadequate" (Buzan 1991: 29). He, and a legion of subsequent scholars, went on to develop an expanded agenda for security studies that included different sources of insecurity, including economic and environmental dynamics, as well as political and military factors (Buzan 1991, and for an overview of one issue Brauch et al. 2008; Floyd and Matthew 2013). *Broadening* security studies thus refers to the need to address threats and sources of insecurity beyond the military security of the territorial state, the most prominent of which have been environmental or economic challenges, but which have also included issues such as transnational migration, global health, food, energy, or human rights.

As the criticisms of "narrow," traditional views of security gathered force, proponents of these views argued that the concept of security needed also to be *deepened* to include different referent objects including individuals, sub-state groups, states, regions, the global

system, and the biosphere, to capture the complexity of contemporary security dynamics and the political and ethical issues involved in studying and practicing security. *Deepening* the security agenda involves moving away from an exclusive focus on the state, toward individuals or social groups below the level of the state (societal or human security) (Buzan et al. 1998; Hanlon and Christie 2016), or to institutions and structures above it (regional security arrangements, or wider cooperative security mechanisms) (Buzan and Waever 2003; Neack 2017). In each case, shifting the referent object for security (what is being secured; from what threats) reveals new and important elements and dynamics of contemporary security, yet also reveals the difficulty in analyzing these (p. 21) dynamics: "if everything that causes a decline in human well-being is labelled a 'security' threat, the term loses any analytical usefulness and becomes a loose synonym of 'bad' " (Deudney 1990: 463–4).

A further extension of the broadening/deepening argument holds that the negative view of security as threat is too conservative. Precisely because security is so evocative, and because it captures vital vulnerabilities of the human condition as no other term does, it is crucial that it be understood positively, defined broadly, and mobilized politically. Conditions of insecurity defined as threats to life or well-being are everywhere: poverty, disease, environmental degradation (Booth 2007). On this account, the promotion of security has an emancipatory dimension, liberating people from various forms of physical and structural violence, empowering them to control their own futures (Nunes 2012).

The challenge presented by broadening and deepening the concept of security has generated significant debate. The most straightforward reaction from mainstream security studies has been to argue that "in considering the problem of security in international politics, the place to start is with war" (Morgan 2006: 1). This reaction may reflect the power of entrenched scholarly (and policy) paradigms, or an ahistorical and unquestioning acceptance of the fusion of security and war. It is also, however, underpinned by a dual theoretical and practical claim: while new issues might represent important problems, they do not represent threats that warranted being labeled as security issues; and that if security is broadened to refer to issues beyond the security of the state from military threats, it could be expanded to mean anything. This would not only lead to analytic anarchy, it would also mean that security studies would be unable to contribute to understanding the most important issues on its agenda, those of war and peace (Mearsheimer 1994). Both of these concerns represent important challenges that have not always been taken seriously by advocates of a broadened or deepened agenda.

2.5 Rupture: Securitization Theory

A second, radically different, reaction both to "broadening and deepening" and to mainstream security studies came in the development of securitization theory (Buzan et al. 1998; Balzacq 2011). Unlike those who rejected the ambiguities of security by retreating to the supposedly secure foundations of prevailing orthodoxies, securitization theory embraced the apparent indeterminacy of the concept and sought to transform it into a basis

for theoretical clarity. To do this it is necessary to relinquish the idea that security has an essential meaning or fixed condition: what are considered security issues in different times by different people is variable. But this does not imply that security is a meaningless term or that security studies is condemned to conceptual chaos. On the contrary, in securitization theory, security represents a "speech act," involving the naming of particular phenomena as "existential threats," and having that declaration accepted by a relevant audience. The concept of security is not important for what it (p. 22) *means*; it is important for what it *does*: for the way it marks an issue as one of survival, requiring the adoption of emergency measures and the suspension of normal rules of social and political life.

While securitization theory retains elements of the traditional view of security, particularly its association with existential fear, extreme situations, and the potential for violence, it delinks the concept from any specific object to be secured (such as the state), or a specific type of threats (originating solely from external, military forces, for example). Anything can in principle be an object to be secured: for instance, the government, the territorial state, and the nation are analytically separable referent objects that connect and conflict in practice and that often need to be distinguished in order to understand how they are combined in specific situations. In the same way, the economy, social identity, and the environment can be threatened referent objects and international corporations, migrants, HIV/AIDS, or global warming can represent threats. The analytic question thus becomes what security claims (speech acts) are made, by whom, and with what success in a given context. Security analysts recognize that these processes are underway when an actor invokes "existential threats"—processes in which mainstream conceptions and traditional institutions of state security have considerable power in setting the security agenda—but they are not exclusive, unchallengeable, or unchallenged.

Unlike much of mainstream security studies *and* many of its critics, securitization theory does not necessarily regard security as a positive thing in which "more is better." Since defining a security issue casts it within logics of fear, extremity, and emergency, securitizing an issue carries significant risks to groups such as refugees or migrants, for example. Accordingly, issues should only be securitized with a full appreciation of the potentially negative implications of doing so, and great caution should be exercised. More positive action involves *removing* an issue from the security agenda: "desecuritizing" it, and placing it within the sphere of "normal" politics where debate, negotiation, and compromise, rather than the politics of fear and emergency rule the day (Aradau 2004).

This vision of security, and particularly its division between "security" and "normal" politics provides another opening onto contemporary debates about security governance and the management of risk by networks of security professionals distinct from political elites and policy-makers. The divide between normal and securitized politics has become increasingly blurred by the rise of mentalities, technologies, and practices to manage risk and forecast security threats. Risk management practices are partly a response to the changing landscape of global security, with analysis including non-traditional as well as traditional sources of threat: to airline passengers on commercial flights as well as mod-

ern air forces; to computer hackers as well as columns of tanks; to self-radicalized violent extremists and organized terrorist groups; and to transnational non-state actors as well as state militaries. As a consequence, massive intellectual and material resources are now directed toward data collection and analysis, toward developing profiles and algorithms that can render this expansive and complex new security terrain visible and manageable.

(p. 23) In this way, the focus on concepts of risk in security studies opens up another of the fundamental conceptual and practical distinctions that has traditionally underpinned security studies, the divide between security inside and outside the state. As security issues and threats have become globalized, so too has the practice of policing stretched beyond borders, and as domestic threats are linked to transnational networks, domestic policing has become increasingly militarized. The two faces are often entwined, as for instance when drug trafficking, illicit arms supplies or transnational terrorism are involved; or when foreign fighters return to their “home” states and “home-grown” extremists act with global connections. Contemporary security challenges often thus cut across and partially erase the conceptual and institutional divides between internal and external security concerns. One could even argue that the post-9/11 security condition is one in which the external has become the internal: the War on Terror, and the very name and function of the Department of Homeland Security is *about* external threats having intruded into the sphere of domestic political, social, and economic life.

2.6 Retrenchment: “What Has War Got to do with this?”

Both the “dissent” and “rupture” outlined above occlude or even exclude questions of war and violence. Yet even mainstream security studies, despite a commitment to studying the *use of force* is increasingly isolated in scholarly terms from research and analysis on actual wars and armed conflicts (with the exception of terrorism)—representing a decisive rupture with the heritage of strategic studies. Current mainstream research concentrates more on what could be called geopolitics or grand strategy, focusing (from the webpage of *International Security*) on topics such as: the causes and prevention of war, ethnic conflict and peacekeeping, terrorism and homeland security, European, Asian, and regional security, US foreign policy, arms control and weapons proliferation, International Relations theory, and diplomatic and military history. One reason for this can be found in the changing nature of warfare itself: the decline of great power and interstate wars has meant that actual war-fighting takes place predominantly in the global South, involves a range of state and non-state actors, and/or is asymmetric in nature (Münkler 2005; Kaldor 2013). Even within the dissenting strands of security studies, only recently has attention been paid to the study of war as a phenomenon and “in a world made in no small measure by ongoing histories of organised violence, we lack a social science of war.”

One result is that the study of the organization for and the conduct of wars and armed conflict is increasingly the preserve of scholars working within the tradition of the “scientific study of international conflict.” Work regarding the recruitment and dynamics of

armed groups, the logic of civil wars, mass killing and genocide, civilian victimization and the analysis of factors leading to violence is published, for example, in outlets such (p. 24) as *Civil Wars, or Terrorism and Political Violence*; the *Journal of Peace Research*; or the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. These examples cover the ends of the spectrum ranging from contemporary strategic issues to research on peace and post-conflict peacebuilding; and much of this scholarship is driven by a concern with data-driven or model-based methods of social science, directly drawing upon the groundwork laid by the Correlates of War and the work of Nordic peace researchers in the 1980s and beyond (Urdal et al. 2014). For a discipline whose mainstream is oriented around "the study of the threat, use and control of military force" (Walt 1991: 212), this result is at best paradoxical, and has seen the rise of calls from more critical sociological approaches to return war to a more central place in security studies (Barkawi and Brighton 2011).

2.7 On (Future) Securities

As even this brief survey shows, the field of security studies is now rich in both its theoretical perspectives and empirical concerns. This diversity is both a strength—in that research covers a wide array of topics from diverse approaches—and a weakness—in that there is no agreed core to the discipline, and perhaps even "two solitudes" of security studies as the wide gulf between mainstream and other approaches testifies (see Hayes 2015). Any attempt to map its present and future contours would thus likely result in failure. In this final section we can only offer clues for thinking about the future of security studies, based on the diverse understandings of security and security studies outlined in this chapter.

To begin, our account highlights that security is a historically shifting set of social and political practices, not an objective condition or fixed set of perceptions. Who is being secured, from what, and by what means, has evolved throughout history. Security studies has ebbed and flowed along with these shifting practices, and the orientation it takes cannot be separated from them. Security studies is not "basic research." Embedding an analysis of security within the broader evolution of the relationships between states, societies, and institutions of organized violence leads us to scrutinize the foundations of any particular conception of security, rather than to declare one of them correct for all times and places. Nor can security be reduced solely to the existential threats to an individual, a state, or a society. While these are important, it is crucial to examine the ways in which risks are transformed into threats, and how particular issues become accepted as security issues. And it is equally important to examine the conditions under which security issues become de-intensified to the point where they are considered only to be challenges to be met through normal politics; in short, how relations of insecurity can be transformed into stable and pacific relations and systems.

The study of security will also not be reduced to violence and warfare, but war, as the ultimate expression of the potential for organized violence, is central to how security has been understood and practiced. But this needs to be set in a wider context of the process-

es by which individuals and communities determine what—or who—constitutes (p. 25) threats to their safety and well-being, since these processes tell us much about an individual's (or a community's) vision of themselves, their identity and their values—and of what they are willing to fight, kill, and die for. Traditional issues of interstate war and peace continue to present challenges that will be central to security studies. However it does not follow that this requires scholars and analysts to restrict the analysis of security only to these issues. It recognizes the many different *forms* of contemporary organized violence (large and small; highly or loosely organized; materially or politically motivated), shares mainstream security studies' concern with the institutions and instruments of coercion, but looks beyond the military, beyond war, and beyond the external exercise of force by states (Barkawi 2011).

In an increasingly globalized world, the question is also not whether the state should or should not be the focus of security studies, but rather how security provision came to be synonymous with the state, and how contemporary social and political challenges and transformations have an impact on that specific historical resolution. This is important in those parts of the globe where fragile states never provided security to their citizens, and where predatory rule represented the greatest source of insecurity. It also applies within states where the historically formed practices and processes through which internal and external forms of security provision became institutionally and politically distinct are eroding or being challenged. Too narrow or timeless a vision of security restricts our understanding of the role of the state as a political institution with a certain relationship to a community that may be emancipatory, protective, or repressive. It also hinders us from analysing many of the most important aspects of contemporary insecurities, and potentially developing creative or effective responses to them that are not bounded by the state.

Finally, treating security as a concept that has a history and that exists within a wider social and political field means that the evolution of the concept and practice of security, and the relationship between the two, is an important subject of inquiry in itself. Stressing the connections between theory and practice does not mean either that theories drive reality, or that they are simply a reflection of it. Bringing the two into a clearer relation and showing how different understandings of the concept of security are historically contingent can illuminate both changes in the concept and in the practices of security. Ultimately, the powerful "sign of security" serves to structure the mentalities, values, conceptions of the self, of social order, and of the condition of security that are embedded in institutions that we encounter on a nearly everyday basis. In this way, debates over security and the scope and ambit of security studies are connected to broader values and political judgments about desirable forms of domestic and global order.

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