
6 International Relations: Celebrating Eclectic Dynamism in Security Studies

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While security is hardly discussed in Philosophy (as Jonathan Herington, this volume, points out) and while theories of security are politely neglected in Law (as Wouter Werner, this volume, shows), security is the preeminent concept in International Relations. Courses on security studies are taught in almost all undergraduate/graduate programs in International Relations around the globe. There is at least one security specialist (and often, many more) in almost all departments of Political Science and International Studies in North America, Europe and Asia. Security is the primary focus of no less than four major journals in the field, including *International Security*, *Security Dialogue*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Security Studies*, and this list is presently expanding, with the newly created *Critical Studies on Security* (2013), the *European Journal of International Security* (2016), and the *Journal of Global Security* (2016). In the top twelve journals in International Relations according to the 2012 Thompson Reuters Citation Journal Report, four are security-related journals. In short, security studies is a massive field of research in International Relations.

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In the past decades, debates surrounding security studies have evolved through several interrelated turns. Security has been structured, systemised, broadened, deepened, gendered, criticalised, humanised, constructed and privatised. Theoretical and empirical studies detailing the contours and the importance of each of these approaches to security abound in specialized journals. In this chapter, we want to celebrate this eclectic dynamism. Through our discussion, we will show that the diversification of referent objects, approaches, and research methods is a crucial vector in the development and relevance of security studies.

Scholars have organised and reviewed this immense field of study in several ways. Some of the most influential reviews address how the various International Relations approaches *understand* security (Williams 2013), distinguish between *types* of security (Collins 2010), and security *problematics* (Baldwin 1997). Still others tackle the *evolution* of international security studies as a field of research (Buzan and Hansen 2009). Although the discussion we offer in this chapter will necessarily be influenced by these important contributions, we have a different set of objectives here.

We seek to offer an analytical review of the main research questions, theories, and methods driving security studies by analysing three mistaken beliefs that persist in International Relations scholarship: first, that security's typical referent object has always been and will always remain national security (or the security of the state); second, that scholars based in North America (and particularly in the United States) produce traditional/orthodox security studies, while those working in Europe are the architects and the gatekeepers of critical security studies; third, that critical approaches to security are incompatible with methods generally associated with positivist epistemology, whereas orthodox or traditional approaches to security cannot work with anything else than a positivist epistemology.

To be sure, a one-chapter survey of this enormous field of inquiry cannot hope to be comprehensive. There will certainly be those who criticize this overview for eschewing a particular strand of literature or for failing to provide sufficient bibliographical references for a particular approach.² It is important to keep in mind, however, that our intended audience is not necessarily International Relations folks. Rather, the goal of our chapter is to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue on security; we hope that the discussion contained herein will provide newcomers to the field with a reasonable sense of the prominent schools of thought, authors, debates, concepts, questions, and answers that form the necessary basis for such an interdisciplinary dialogue to commence.

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² In our effort to offer a synthesized overview of the field, several concepts or issues have been excluded or not significantly discussed, such as arms controls, nuclear weapons proliferation, terrorism, military doctrine, strategic studies, and ethnic conflicts. Readers should not see this as a theoretical statement on what constitutes a security issue.

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