

# SECURITY

Dialogue Across Disciplines



EDITED BY PHILIPPE BOURBEAU



## *Security*

Security is a vital subject of study in the twenty-first century and a central theme in many social science disciplines. This volume provides a comparative analysis of the ways in which the concept of security is theorized and studied across different disciplines. The book has two objectives: first, to explore the growing diversity of theories, paradigms, and methods developed to study security; and, second, to initiate a multidisciplinary dialogue about the ontological, epistemological, paradigmatic, and normative aspects of security studies in social sciences. Readers across nine fields are invited to reflect on their conceptualizations of security and to consider how an interdisciplinary dialogue can stimulate and enrich the understanding of security in our contemporary world. Analytically sharp yet easy to read, this is a cutting-edge volume exploring what security is and what it means in today's world.

PHILIPPE BOURBEAU is Temporary University Lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge.



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## *Acknowledgments*

My largest debt of thanks is to the scholars who agreed to participate in this project. In conceiving of the project, I sought to gather together some of the best recent work on security undertaken by researchers in several disciplines.

When I invited the authors to participate in this multidisciplinary book on security, I threw four challenges at them. First, I asked them each to act as the sole representative of his or her respective discipline. Everyone will agree that in and of itself this is a daunting task for any scholar. Second, I asked them to write their chapters with an interdisciplinary audience in mind, laying out clearly how their particular discipline approaches security, while considering how a multidisciplinary dialogue could stimulate and enrich the understanding of security that prevails in their field. Third, I strongly invited each scholar to produce a chapter that served as both a state-of-the-art overview and a thought-provoking piece of argumentation that would push other disciplines to reflect on his or her conceptualizations of security. Fourth, to ensure the book's coherency and to induce interdisciplinary dialogue, I asked each author to engage, directly and without detour, with four questions concerning security: (1) What are the questions orienting the research on security in your discipline? (2) Are there dominant theories of security in your discipline? (3) How is the concept of security studies in your discipline? and (4) What are the biggest strengths and limits of your discipline in the way security is studied and theorized? As the reader will soon realize, each of this volume's contributors has risen to these challenges with undisputable brio, professionalism, and command.

A workshop was held with the contributors in Namur, Belgium, in the spring of 2014. I am indebted to the Department of Political Science, Sociology, and Communication at the University of Namur, the Tocqueville Chair in Security Policies at the University of Namur, to the Department of Political Science at the Free University of

Brussels, and to the Belgium Fonds national de la recherche scientifique for organizational and financial support of this workshop. I thoroughly enjoyed our discussions from the workshop and from the numerous e-mails I exchanged with each contributor, and I thank all the participants for their willingness to have their understanding of security shaken and subjected to debate. Being challenged by a colleague from your own discipline on a particular aspect of security is one thing; being invited to rethink your disciplinary foundations by a scholar from another discipline is another thing altogether.

I am grateful to the efficient team at Cambridge University Press and, in particular, to John Haslam, a great editor. I also want to acknowledge two anonymous reviewers at Cambridge University Press for their stimulating and constructive comments. Finally, I want to thank colleagues in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge for welcoming this project and for their input and discussion on issues presented in this book.

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# 1 *A multidisciplinary dialogue on security*

PHILIPPE BOURBEAU

Security is omnipresent in our daily lives.\* From apparent trivialities, such as locking the front door, wearing a helmet to cycle with the kids on a bright Sunday afternoon, or remembering an increasing number of passwords, to more significant issues like dealing with domestic violence, monitoring nuclear proliferation, and limiting ethnic conflicts, security, it seems, is everywhere.

Likewise, the ubiquity of security in almost all social sciences disciplines is undisputable. Groundbreaking work by prominent criminologists has placed the concept of security at the centre of criminological scholarship for many years to come (Loader and Walker 2007; Shearing and Wood 2007; Wood and Dupont 2006; Zedner 2009). In Anthropology, security is an emerging research area that has recently gained substantial traction (Goldstein 2010, 2012; Hamilton and Placas 2011; Holbaard and Pedersen 2013). Geographers have been active in highlighting the ways in which biopolitics, territoriality and resources deeply influence security considerations and vice versa (Dalby 2009; Ingram and Dodds 2009; Le Billon 2012). Security has been one of the paramount research themes in International Relations scholarship for a long time, but only recently has this focus of this framework shifted, permitting previously marginalized perspectives to be increasingly embraced (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011; Adler and Pouliot 2011; Buzan and Hansen 2009). In sum, scholars from all manner of social sciences are turning their attention to the study of this complex concept.

Despite this demonstrated interest in security studies within a host of academic fields, scholars rarely communicate their findings across disciplines. Students of security do not approach the study of security

\* I would like to thank Keith Krause, Vincent Pouliot, Richard Price, Juha Vuori, and colleagues in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge for input and discussion on issues presented in this introduction, as well as their helpful comments on previous drafts.

from a shared paradigm, but from a variety of theoretical and conceptual viewpoints fragmented across disciplines. In some cases, these various theoretical viewpoints are seen as competing against each other; in most cases, however, these viewpoints are simply expressed and developed in near total disciplinary isolation. Within any given discipline, work done in the other social sciences on security is at best briefly mentioned, at worse, politely ignored.

This book attempts to bridge these disciplinary canyons. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive theory of security applicable across disciplines, cases, and areas. We do not intend to offer a unique paradigm within which to conduct research on security, nor do we want to propose a unified or orthodox view of the concept. Rather, in revisiting security from an interdisciplinary perspective, the book makes two critical contributions. First, it proposes to take seriously the prospect of a multidisciplinary approach to security. Such an approach is both propitious and timely. The rise in electronic surveillance, the prominence given to immigration as a security threat in Western countries, the concern over climate change and environmental degradation, the recent international interventions (or absence of intervention), and the tension between liberty and security arising from terrorist attacks, have mobilized security scholars to analyse the role and the impact of security in our contemporary social world. These issues, and many others, transcend disciplinary boundaries and create the need for a multidisciplinary analysis of how, why, when, and by whom security is deployed, constructed, institutionalized, and structured. Likewise, studying the strategies and processes by which security is challenged and disputed also entails a multidisciplinary approach. To understand how individual, local, national, and international securitization is produced, reproduced, and transformed, as well as how actors are differentially involved in these processes, requires a consideration of different disciplinary expressions of security. If this book gently shakes the relative disciplinary isolation of security scholars and starts to move the conversation in the direction of a multidisciplinary study of security, it will have achieved its objective.

The cross-disciplinary approach advocated in the present volume offers several advantages for students of security. It liberates scholars from pre-emptive rebuttal of their work as being *only* an importation of work done in another discipline. Scholars are sometimes held dismissively to be borrowers or importers, as if these scholars took the

“easy road” by “simply” translating work done in another discipline and tailoring it to their own research theme. International Relations has been (and still is) particularly vulnerable in this regard. Take, for example, the constructivist approach in International Relations – an approach that stresses the social construction of world politics and that is the current dominant perspective among International Relations scholars (even in the United States), according to a recent survey (Maliniak *et al.* 2012). Not so long ago, most constructivists were regarded with contempt as merely translators of work done in sociology (in fact, some would argue that such an attitude still persists in certain sub-fields). Constructivists have gone to great lengths to justify the merits of their approach in its own right, without turning their backs on the fact that that approach has been deeply influenced by sociologists. Acknowledging a multidisciplinary perspective in the study of security invites scholars to move away from the binary distinction of importers/exporters by legitimising and reinforcing cross-disciplinary dialogue. The approach also encourages the consideration of how the different disciplinary understandings of security interact and relate to one another. To be sure, some canyons might still seem too wide to be bridged. Yet, unless we begin the process of opening up cross-disciplinary dialogues on security, scholars might find themselves endlessly trapped in their narrow, discipline-specific fields of inquiry, reinventing the wheel again and again. A multidisciplinary approach encourages scholars to seek external correctives to their own literature gaps and go beyond in-field analytical stalemates.

This is not to suggest that anthropologists should become philosophers or that geographers should become psychologists. I do not wish to “discipline” scholars into embarking on interdisciplinary research projects. It is not the case that all research projects must – or should – be interdisciplinary. Nor do I want to suggest that interdisciplinarity is always, by essence, enlightening. It is not. Work done in an interdisciplinary space has both a dark and a bright side; it is not inherently beneficial. Interdisciplinarity can, for example, be instrumentalized as a disguise to justify a (often hidden) hierarchical understanding of the relationships between disciplines: that is, to produce a unidisciplinary study with “interdisciplinary sugar” on it. Translation problems can also arise, in which scholars import a partial and incomplete set of elements from a discipline to address a given issue, but leave aside the more nuanced understandings of this discipline that have been

developed over the years in the literature. Although a parsimonious shortcut might thus be obtained, it is gained at the great expense of exactitude, richness, and complexity.

While acknowledging the importance of these issues, I argue that multidisciplinary studies can offer a unique and insightful approach to an issue, provided that they are structured in a way that allows different disciplines to actually engage in a meaningful debate around a set of mutual concerns. The contributors to this volume certainly demonstrate that a healthy dose of willingness to communicate across disciplines can go a long way toward enhancing, deepening, and strengthening our understanding of the multifaceted expressions of security.

The second contribution of this book is that it offers a rich and unparalleled understanding of how security is understood, studied, and theorized within the social sciences. The contributions included in this volume bring together essays by leading scholars in Anthropology, Criminology, International Political Economy, Geography, Law, Philosophy, Political Science/International Relations, Psychology, and Sociology.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging that each discipline has its preferred way of framing a research question, of searching for hypotheses, and of conducting research, the contributors were asked to discuss and assess the following four points:

### 1. Research questions

What are the fundamental questions orienting the research on security in your discipline? Is there a large consensus about the benefits of organising the scholarship around these central questions?

### 2. Theoretical perspectives

Are there dominant theories of security in your discipline? Which perspectives are considered marginal? Is the primary objective of the research to propose nomothetic theory building or idiographic explanation?

### 3. Research methods

How is the concept of security studied in your discipline? Is there a dominant research method? Do we observe a clear demarcation between qualitative and quantitative scholarship?

<sup>1</sup> The limitation of the present discussion to scholars from these particular disciplines is not intended to imply that other disciplines have nothing meaningful to say about security. They do. Sadly, however, a selection had to be made for feasibility and length purposes.

#### 4. Strengths and limits

What are the biggest strengths and limits of your discipline in the way security is studied and theorized? Would a more interdisciplinary approach to the concept of security help in reducing the identified limits of your discipline?

Although the discussion centres around these questions, the contributors were strongly invited to go beyond a traditional literature review to seize on the prime opportunity to push other disciplines' boundaries and encourage them to seriously evaluate the way they study and theorize security. The results are insightful, commanding, and challenging.

In this chapter, I introduce five unifying conceptual elements and areas of common ground that a multidisciplinary approach to security provides: (i) the referent objects of security are multiples; (ii) the processual nature of security; (iii) the objective and subjective dimensions of security; (iv) the instrumentalization of security as a tool for some other purposes; and (v) the importance of methodological pluralism to a compelling and thorough analysis of security. The first section of this chapter discusses each of these unifying elements in more detail. The second section presents the contributions of each chapter, focusing on the substantive research and analytical tools that each discipline offers, while intertwining and situating these contributions within a multidisciplinary study of security.

#### **Toward a multidisciplinary study of security**

While there has been a tendency in the literature on security to consolidate the research into particular disciplines, a need is emerging to zoom in on commonalities rather than differences. The time has come to recognize and harness the strengths of each discipline, and to identify fruitful commonalities that contribute to our understanding of security. One of the objectives is to bolster current research on security by moving the conversation away from disciplinary isolation; sophisticated theoretical and empirical studies do demonstrate the veracity and usefulness of elements of each discipline, an observation that calls implicitly for further investigation into the complementarity of disciplines. Focusing on the factors that unite security scholars, rather than those which separate them, can help us to consolidate security scholarship, allow us to better connect our research with contemporary social

world, and open new avenues of collaborative research that have only been tackled in isolation in the past. As the contributions assembled in this volume demonstrate, five unifying conceptual elements of security can be identified. In the next few pages, I turn my attention to each one of them.

### *Security has multiple referent objects*

In the past two decades, scholars from a variety of disciplines have broken wide open the box of the referent object – i.e., the question of what needs to be securitized. The diversification of the referent objects of security in all disciplines is striking. Whereas the state has been for a long time almost the sole referent object of security studies in Geography and International Relations, other referent objects have gained (and are still gaining) increasing attention of late. As Le Billon points out, while some geographers still consider geography as a discipline at the service of statecraft and be deeply connected with state security interests, others have engaged with broader security agendas, including global warming, population displacement, food and health insecurity, and disaster prevention. In a similar vein, while “national security” was one of the signature concepts of International Relations scholarship in the years following World War II, this field of research has witnessed an explosion of referent objects of security. Security scholars in International Relations have increasingly turned their attention to the environment, ethnic relations, immigration, cyberspace, identity, and gender issues, to name just a few.

While Geography and International Relations have increasingly moved away from a sole focus on state security in recent years, Anthropology has moved somewhat in the other direction. Some anthropologists have lately begun to discuss security in the terms established by the state. For instance, in the context of the United States’ “war on terror,” some anthropologists have offered their expertise on “enemy culture” in the hope of helping the United States to wage counter-insurgency campaigns more effectively (the Human Terrain System program). This approach, which represents the mainstream perspective that has lost its hegemony in Geography and International Relations, is considered marginal in Anthropology. Yet, the mere existence and influence of this approach in a discipline such as Anthropology is revealing of the increasing diversification of

referent objects of security in social sciences. In other words, while the diversification of security referent objects has caused a shift away from national security in the disciplines of geography and International Relations, it has led in Anthropology to a renewed focus on the state's defined security imperatives.

Not everyone sees the explosion of referent objects in positive terms, however. In Geography, scholars have argued for the need for a closer engagement with issues of war and peace. For some, the vitality and relevance of Geography "is sustained by engaging relevant topics and other disciplines: the key, real world issue is war and peace, and peace studies is the relevant body of literature" (Flint 2003, 166). Flint's exhortation suggests that, rather than casting itself as a vector for the diversification of security referent objects, one of the biggest contributions that Geography can make to the study of security is precisely not to deviate from its focus on war.

The most vocal resistance to a wider understanding of security referent objects has come from International Relations. Scholars have argued that an "excessive" expansion of security studies threatens its intellectual coherence. According to "orthodox" or "traditional" security scholars, any field of study – even such a massive one as security studies in International Relations – cannot and should not be too elastic. Even though they are sometimes artificial, biased, and restrictive, boundaries are nonetheless a fundamental axiom of a field of research (Miller 2010). Advocates of this standpoint have forcefully argued that to study security is to study "the conditions that make the use of [military] 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, see also Wohlforth 2009). For most critical-theory-attuned security scholars, this call exemplified the narrow and obtuse nature of the orthodox strand of security studies; for orthodox security scholars, however, it represented a much-needed attempt to provide the field with coherence and delimitation.

In many respects, these calls for understanding security only in military terms are not only strikingly unidisciplinary in nature but also seem to speak to what security studies should be rather than offering an analysis of current expressions of security. Clearly, other issues than war have entered the realm of security in the past decades, and defining security as (only) the study of the role of military forces in war does not

sit well with the vast majority of the literature discussed in this book. Equally, it makes very little sense to exclude the use of military force from security studies – an argument rarely heard in some critical security studies journals. Instead of searching for what security scholars should be studying, which incidentally increases the likelihood of proliferating calls for scholarly closure, the central questions that all contributors to this volume underscore are: why do some issues get securitized and not others?; do all the referent objects of security possess the same significance?; does the interaction of referent objects, and consequently security itself, express itself in scalar terms, or not?

### *Security is processual*

Security is not a fixed attribute or a dispositional quality, but a dynamic and complex process. It is constantly in flux and it does not express itself in a flat, stable or variation-free way. Security, then, does not imply finality, as the process can never be fully completed; security needs to be produced and reproduced all the time. This understanding of security dislodges the scholarship from a research programme that seeks to capture the essence of security, and it consolidates studies on how, when, why, and to what effects an issue becomes securitized.

Several disciplines explicitly recognize that security is processual. Critical anthropologists understand security not as a reality immanent in the public arena but as a process that is produced, reproduced, and transformed through cultural and political forces at work in contemporary societies. In International Law, the process of security is often put in place and then invoked to justify measures that deviate from rules that would otherwise apply. Geographers have recently focused much of their attention on how particular issues are framed within security narratives and practices. Starting from the premise that framing a phenomenon as a security issue is both a performative event and a social process, geographers have focused much of their attention on underscoring the descriptive, prescriptive, and reflexive aspects of the processes of securitization. Equally, many criminologists understand security as a process founded in ambiguity, uncertainty, and incompleteness. As Jan Froestad, Clifford Shearing, and Melani van der Merve points out, multiple calls have been made by criminologists to embrace the study of security rather than to fight it, precisely because security does not breed certainty.

A similar situation is arising in Sociology, where an increasing number of scholars are advocating for a break from the traditional focus on attributes and vectors of economic security or food security to a study of the institutional, discursive, and ‘practice’ processes by which certain phenomena get to be classified as security issues. In International Relations, one of the most dynamic strands in security studies of late has been research on the process of integrating an issue into security frameworks. Debates persist as to whether the process follows the logic of exception, which holds that speech acts labelling an issue as an existential security threat best explain the securitization process, or the logic of routine, which contends that issues become securitized through the routinized practices of particular social agents (Bourbeau 2014a). Yet, scholars on both sides of the fence share the consensus that security is processual.

In a related way, if security is a process that is constructed, reconstructed and transformed time and time again, then surely the study of security invites analysis of other social mechanisms occurring prior, concurrently, and subsequently to security. For instance, Werner, inspired by the work of Judith Shklar (1986), juxtaposes the logic of security with the logic of legalism in order to highlight and to illustrate why lawyers find it increasingly difficult to accept that international law in fact contain provisions that prioritize the logic of security over the logic of legalism. Such lawyers have, consequently, sought to contain, limit, and fight the logic of security by subjecting it to international legal standards and accepted canons of interpretations. Whereas the politicization process seem to remain within the disciplinary boundaries of International Relations and has been hypothesized as a process that leads to security on some occasions (Williams 2011; Zürn *et al.* 2012), desecuritization (broadly defined as the unmaking of the securitization process) is studied in both Geography and in International Relations. Geographers, such as Hyndman (2007), have argued for the need for desecuritization, on the grounds that security practices create uneven contemporary regimes of power, while heated debates are currently unfolding in International Relations concerning the ethics of desecuritization (Browning and McDonald 2013; Floyd 2014; Hansen 2012; Vuori 2011). Resilience is another social mechanisms interacting with the process of security in Psychology, Geography, and International Relations, where it is interpreted, respectively, as the capacity of an individual to bounce back following a threatening event,

the ability of an ecosystem to adapt and regain its equilibrium after a disturbance, and the pattern of adjustments adopted by a society or an individual in the face of endogenous/exogenous shocks (Berkes *et al.* 2003; Bourbeau 2013; Luthar 2003). Elsewhere, I have argued that the process of securitizing an issue is the disturbance in the face of which a resilient strategy is deployed in order to challenge, counter, and debunk the dominant security-attuned reading of the issue at hand. The collective strategy is not to take the issue out of the security realm (i.e., to de-securitize it) but rather to build social and community resilience in the face of an increasingly securitized world (Bourbeau 2014b, 2015).

### *Objectivity, subjectivity, intersubjectivities, and security*

A central theme in several disciplines is the distinction between objective and subjective dimensions of security. In Philosophy, the objective/subjective dichotomy juxtaposes the idea, points out Jonathan Herington, that security is the actual protection against basic forms of violence with the idea that security is constituted by freedom from the fear of violence. This debate exhibits striking parallels with the much-talked about concept of ontological security (Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006; Noble 2005; Steele 2008).

While the objective/subjective differentiation finds its way into Criminology literature, it is at the heart of the scholarship in Sociology. As Lisa Stampnitsky and Greggor Mattson note, sociological studies on security are divided into two strands. One sees security as an “objective, real state of affairs” and seeks “to measure the realities of security” in fields of research including economic security, social security, and family security. The other strand of literature emphasizes the subjective, socially constructed dimension of security, including how individuals perceive security dangers and the production of knowledge associated with discourses about security.

In International Relations, the objective/subjective dichotomy goes back to one of the founding texts of the discipline. In the early 1950s, Arnold Wolfers (1952, 485) argued that “security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.” From 1950 to the mid 1980s, the focus was decidedly on the objective components, with the military agenda of security questions surrounding

nuclear weapons and their proliferations omnipresent in the literature. In the late 1980s, with the end of the Cold War, the pendulum swung to the other side, helped by poststructuralist and critical scholars who argued that security is self-referential and does not refer to objective threat; security is thus open to interpretation.

Psychologists offer a unique spin on the debate. Studies of intergroup conflicts distinguish between realistic threat and symbolic threat. The former refers to the perception by one group that its security and very existence are imperilled by another group, while the latter refers to the perception by one group that its way of life or value system is endangered by the presence of an outgroup. Drawing a distinction between types of threats is important, argue psychologists, because it can have profound consequences on intergroup relations and their potential conflict.

A good example of the diversity and disciplinary interconnectedness of security studies can be found in the realm of human security. Indeed, human security is a concern that transcends disciplinary isolation, with anthropologists, geographers, psychologists, and scholars of Law and International Relations actively participating in the debate (Eriksen *et al.* 2010; Matthew *et al.* 2009; Owen and Martin 2014). Leaving aside both the exhilaration and the lambasting which have arisen concerning human security, the fact remains that the emergence of human security as one of the most important referent objects of security studies has put the objective/subjective divide at the forefront of the scholarship. Caroline Thomas (2000), on the one hand, regards human security as describing an indivisible “condition of existence,” while Roland Paris (2001, 2004) and Kyle Grayson (2008), on the other hand, contend, respectively, that the numerous definitions of human security illustrate the inherent subjectivity and asymmetrical power relations of the concept. Analysing the ways in which the objective/subjective security divide is connected with the diversification of referent objects of security should capture a good deal of scholarly (and interdisciplinary) attention in the near future.

Scholars have recently tried to reconcile the objective/subjective divide by proposing a middle-ground position that accepts the existence and the complementarity of both objective and subjective security threats. In laying out the foundations for her analysis of the link between security and justice, Rita Floyd (2011) argues that while one can accept that threats become security threats by virtue of social and

political construction, some threats are real and objectively present whether or not anyone has even taken note of them. Although Herington disagrees with such a dualist position, he nonetheless acknowledges that some philosophers have also started to move in that direction as well (e.g., Waldron 2006).

Building on the objective/subjective debate, the idea of intersubjectivities has gained momentum of late in several disciplines. In Geography, this discussion takes place under the rubric of space. On the one hand, mainstream security geography understands space as a set of “facts” guiding the elaboration of security policies. Using Geographical Information Systems (GIS), for example, scholars can describe the spatial pathways by which security threats are diffused. On the other hand, reflexive geographers have proposed a wider understanding of space that underscores the importance of intersubjectivities, social dimensions, and the contingent historical particularities of spatial “facts.”

Intersubjectivities are a focal point as well in International Relations, although most of the discussion in this discipline centres on the role of political communities. Scholars have argued that, rather than focusing on objective security threats (and their measurements) from which all communities must seek to protect themselves, we might more fruitfully focus on security as an intersubjective process. Different communities identify some issues as security issues and not others, diachronically and synchronically. Most scholars would not reject the idea that some issues have nearly universal security implications or that some security situations have less interpretation “space” than others. However, proponents of an intersubjective approach to security point out that, by examining how a given community interprets and potentially securitizes an issue, we gain insight into how security is expressed, conveyed, experienced, and dealt with.

This standpoint dovetails neatly with recent psychological research on security, although the latter focuses on groups rather than political communities. This scholarship has indeed been arguing for some time now that examining how different groups perceive and react to security threats provides fertile grounds for theorizing intergroup conflicts. A much-discussed hypothesis in the literature (which for some is now an accepted and confirmed proposition due to the weight of favourable evidence accumulated over the years) holds that greater perceived threat is typically accompanied by greater xenophobia and greater support for violent policies against outgroups.

*Security is instrumentalized*

The instrumentalization of security – the idea that security, rather than being regarded in absolute terms or as an objective to aspired to, should be seen as an instrument or a tool for some other purposes – can take several forms. The use of security, and in particular of national security, for political purposes is well documented, whether in the form of authoritarian regimes instrumentalising security to legitimize their positions of power, or in the form of a democratic leader invoking security to legitimize particular policy viewpoints on a given issue.

Werner offers a unique perspective on the instrumentalization of security. He argues that, in international law, security often works as a “trump card” allowing agents to present in an acceptable way the deviation from – or the annulment of – rules that would otherwise apply. Readers attuned to Securitization Theory as developed by Buzan *et al.* (1998) will find his discussion particularly insightful.

In broader terms, security is also seen, on some occasions, as a neoliberal tool for governance. Strands of the literature in several disciplines understand security, and the production of security discourses, as representing regimes of power that produce vast inequalities. The omnipresence of security and its ever-expanding jurisdiction serve in part to reproduce and to legitimize time and time again a particular neoliberal mode of governance. To be sure, most scholars go at great lengths to contextualize and relativise this claim. They don't argue that security is *by nature* a neoliberal strategy for higher social controls across time, areas, and cultures. While this claim constitutes the mainstream approach to security in some disciplines (Anthropology), it is a marginal one in others (Criminology, Psychology), and a much-discussed alternative in others (Geography, International Relations, and Sociology). Yet, in all disciplines, there is the notion that the omnipresent, ever-expanding umbrella of security serves in parts to reproduce and to legitimize neoliberal forms of governance.

Ronen Palan and Hannah Petersen show that a large section of the International Political Economy literature understands security as a social process at the service of the (re)production of a particular type of governance by a dominant class. Taken in this context, security represents the language of power and of domination by the ruling class; in short, security is nothing less than a form of violence.

Many anthropologists see security as a set of power-infused discourses and practices that fully participate in neoliberal processes of creating, consolidating, and advancing a particular socio-political order. Promoting a “critical anthropology of security,” these scholars seek to demonstrate that the process of securitization is coloured by and maintained through the relation of power within a given historical (and neoliberal) context. Geographers have also highlighted the instrumentalization of security as a neoliberal component of global governance. Scholars have talked about a neoliberal nexus between security and biopolitics, or about security as an effect of neoliberalization. The instrumentalization of security has also been a key research theme in Criminology. Some scholars have criticized mainstream criminology for viewing only the bright side of security, and ignoring the fact that security is in fact a mode of governance that shapes societies around a specific ideology of order. In this sense, security is seen as a discursive practice allowing governmental authority to neutralize political resistance and thus legitimize the institutional violence on which the contemporary social-political order is built.

Yet, it would be a mistake to reduce security to a neoliberal product at the service of state domination. Although security may be in some instances a neoliberal device for governance, it has a wider range of meanings as well – a point to which the numerous chapters of this volume unequivocally testify to. The relationship between security and contemporary global governance is multifaceted, and one of the fruitful ways to tackle the complexity of the relationship might be to combine insights from one discipline with expertise of another discipline. For instance, International Relations scholar Rita Floyd (2011) has proposed to take seriously the morality of the process of securitising an issue. Inspired by the “Just war” theory developed in Philosophy (McMahan 2002; Orend 2013; Walzer 2006), she argues that, if there is an objective existential threat endangering a morally legitimate referent object to which a security response is seen as appropriate, then and only then will the securitising process be morally right and justifiable. Floyd’s approach is one path among many. As the reader will discover, the contributors to this volume offers numerous, equally strong propositions including among many others a combination of Geography-attuned idea of the Anthropocene to Criminology to push criminologists toward developing a security focus in their field, or a suggestion to blend Psychological and Sociology’s work on symbols

and symbolic security representations. Such a multifaceted approach to security not only enhances our understanding of the possibility that a multidisciplinary approach offers, but also provides further incentive for taking a broad approach in analysing the complexity of the relationship between security and contemporary local, national, and global governance.

### *Security invites methodological pluralism*

Although each discipline has its preferred ways to frame research questions that relate to security and, thus, to organize a research design, a willingness to study security with methodological pluralism is hard to miss upon reading the contributions included in this book. The pluralism implies the transdisciplinarity of methods; methods usually associated with one particular discipline are increasingly employed in other disciplines. Take, for example, the experimental method, which is closely associated with Psychology. A particular strength of experimental research design, as O'Brien and Tropp remind us, is that it demonstrates causal relationships between variables while controlling for a range of variables that might influence relationships among those variables. Yet, scholars in Geography, Anthropology, and International Relations have capitalized on the strength of this method – without disregarding the numerous concerns that have been raised about the generalizability of applying experiments to real-world situations – and have employed experimental research design in their own studies on security (Gartner 2008; Johnson *et al.* 2014; Levy 1997; Mercer 2010, Mintz *et al.* 2006; Tucker 2012).

Another example of methodological transdisciplinarity is the use of ethnography, which represents the main research method in Anthropology. As Goldstein notes, ethnography grounds anthropologists' "interpretations in the observed realities of life actually lived." At the same time, ethnography has also been employed in International Relations and Geography, and has made a significant contribution to the study of security in these disciplines (Ackerly *et al.* 2006; Cohn 2012; Hyndman 2004; Megoran 2006; Tickner 1997; Wilkinson 2011). Experimentation and ethnography are not alone; discourse analysis, process tracing, content analysis, and statistical analysis are methods found across the broad range of disciplines covered in this book.

There is another facet to this pluralism: increasingly, scholars use a combination of research methods when studying security. Of course, these scholars would not necessarily label their work as the “mixed-method” described by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007). Nor do all such scholars subscribe to James Fearon’s and David Laitin’s (Fearon and Laitin 2008; Laitin 2002) provocative argument that a research design should involve a combination of qualitative research methods, formal theory, and statistics. Yet, a consensus is emerging that one of the most useful ways to understand the multifaceted process of security is by drawing evidence from several research methods. The process of combining methods can take three forms: first, an intra-qualitative (or quantitative) combination in which several qualitative methods (such as interviews, content analysis, ethnography, genealogy, and so on) are employed; second, a sequential use allowing evidence obtained through qualitative research method to be contrasted with – or enriched by – findings obtained through quantitative (or formalization) research method (or vice versa); third, a concurrent use where qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously in order to provide the most comprehensive analysis of a particular securitized issue. As the contributions assembled in this book show, Geography, International Relations, Psychology, and Sociology all use sequential and/or concurrent methodological combinations. Overall, the incorporation of a multiplicity of research methods into our quest to better understand security is both immensely valuable and desirable.

The question of whether security should be understood in binary terms is an important one to be raised in the context of methodological pluralism. By and large, scholars have studied whether an issue is securitized or not. The question of *level*, *intensity*, or *variation* of security is, by contrast, rather underdeveloped and under-theorized in all disciplines included in this book. Scholars distinguish between un-securitized and securitized issues, but once an issue enters the security realm, no further distinction is made. In other words, security is largely seen as a one-size-fits-all concept.

This tendency calls into question the issue of how to distinguish, label, describe, and measure variation in security. Variation can be problematized across cases, across time, and across issues. This is not a disguised attempt to squeeze post-positivist scholars within the confines of a single and dominant model of understanding variation in

security. The study of the level or intensity of security need not and should not be limited to one particular epistemology. The main point is that not all interpretations of a phenomenon are equal, not all dangers are equal, and not all securitized issues are equal. It certainly seems important for scholars to consider whether, for example, security practices that relate to migration are more or less prevalent in one country vs. another, and in one time period vs. another. It also seems relevant to be able to determine whether migration is securitized to the same extent as, say, nuclear weapons. And if a given issue is “more” securitized than another issue, it also seems rather pertinent to be able to pinpoint the knowledge mechanisms through which we have arrived at this conclusion.

This speaks to the issue of generalization. While some security scholars aim to present an understanding/explanation of security that is applicable across cases and times, others bristle at the idea of generalizing their set of arguments beyond the specifics of their particular study. While it is hard to dispute the (generalizing) claim that throughout history, humans have sought security for themselves and their loved ones, it is equally difficult to disregard the argument that security has expressed itself quite differently across spaces and times. Similarly, accepting the possibility of generalization within and across the social sciences does not necessarily mean searching for all-inclusive, comprehensive, or law-like generalizations. There are reasons to believe that circumscribed, confined or contextualized generalizations not only exist, but are relevant and welcome in the social sciences. Surely, then, investigating the generalizability of security might include problematizing the variation in security.

Several disciplines are participating in this effort. Philosophers draw a distinction between “thick” and “thin” security. While the former captures the idea that security is an inescapable component of an individual’s state of being, the latter conveys the notion that security is a mode of enjoying other goods. In Geography, one of the foci has been to interrogate and to compare the spatialities of security issues in terms of whether they were global, regional, or local (Ingram and Dodds 2009). In International Relations, I have proposed to distinguish between weak and strong securitization in my comparative analysis of legal documents, policy statements, and security practices that relates to the securitization of migration in Canada and France between 1989 and 2005 (Bourbeau 2011). Undoubtedly, initiating a

dialogue among these ways of understanding security in scalar terms will significantly enhance our comprehension of contemporary and multifaceted expressions of security.

## **Organization of the volume**

In Chapter 2, Jonathan Herington traces with unquestionable clarity the philosophical evolution of the concept of security from the Romans and the Epicureans to the contemporary usage, demonstrating that a major shift occurred in the Enlightenment era. Whereas security was understood in the pre-Enlightenment period as a sense of internal-psychological calm attained through a detachment from religious or political commitments, it came to be interpreted in the Enlightenment as physical safety in the inescapable condition of war that can only be guaranteed by a political authority. The work of Thomas Hobbes was pivotal in this regard, argues Herington. Noting that contemporary philosophers have treated security with relative neglect, he nonetheless explores with great insight the current engagements of philosophy with security, notably the metaphor of a balance between security and liberty, that security is an “essentially contested concept,” and the proliferation of untargeted surveillance of private communications and public spaces.

Daniel Goldstein, in Chapter 3, explores the complex engagement of Anthropology with security by arguing that in some ways Anthropology has always been concerned with security. To do so, he draws a distinction between “security anthropologists” and “critical anthropologists of security.” The former engage with security in terms determined by the state, while the latter advance an understanding of security as a set of discourses and practices producing particular social realities and social differentiations. Goldstein underscores that anthropologists are not “strict disciplinarians” but “omnivorous” and deeply interdisciplinary scholars when it comes to the study of security. Anthropology is thus superbly positioned, argues Goldstein, to make sense of contemporary expressions of security and of insecurity, which have become so complex that a single disciplinary approach is bound to offer only a partial understanding. Among the strengths of Goldstein’s analysis is his illustration of the insights that critical anthropologists of security bring to the study of the securitization of migration in the United States. He contends that ethnographic approaches can not

only reveal the repressive practices of both state and local governments, but can also uncover the strategies employed by migrants themselves to contest these security practices.

Philippe Le Billon splendidly makes the case for taking a critical stance on security in Geography in Chapter 4. Wanting to move beyond the traditional understanding of Geography as a discipline in the service of statecraft (particularly with issues involving national security), he shows that geographers have engaged with broader security agendas, including human security and environmental security. Le Billon convincingly demonstrates that geographers have also been particularly interested in sites of desecuritization where, on the one hand, the impact of spatial security representations, discourses and practices on social power relations is exposed, and, on the other hand, alternative narratives are proposed.

Lisa Stampnitzky and Greggor Mattson, in Chapter 5, explore how Sociology theorizes and studies security. They argue that the study of security within Sociology is bifurcated, with a small but robust tradition that studies political security alongside other disciplines, while the disciplinary core has focused on social, economic, or interpersonal insecurity. In comparing these two sociological conceptualizations, the authors suggest that scholars should distinguish between political security as an explicit object of discourse and practice, and security as a broader category of cultural understandings of safety and disorder. They conclude with a univocal and compelling message: one of Sociology's unique contributions to a multidisciplinary study of security is to provide tools to examine the relationships among these different kinds of (in)security – connections that are lost when research focuses solely on external threats to the nation at the expense of internal, domestic processes.

In Chapter 6, Philippe Bourbeau, Thierry Balzacq, and Myriam Dunn Cavelty celebrate the eclectic dynamism of security studies in International Relations. They discuss three preconceptions or myths that seem to be persisting: (i) that security's typical referent object is still national security, (ii) that American scholars produce mainstream security studies while European scholars are the gatekeepers of critical security studies, and (iii) that critical approaches to security are incompatible with methods generally associated with a positivist epistemology, whereas orthodox or traditional approaches to security cannot work with anything other than a positivist epistemology. They

highlight works that cut across traditional divides and that shift the discussion towards the factors that unite security scholars rather than those that divide them to argue, ultimately, that International Relations is in a superb position to embrace and champion a multidisciplinary approach to security.

Thomas O'Brien and Linda Troop, in Chapter 7, examine how the discipline of Psychology tackles the issue of security and insecurity. Starting from the assumption that insecurity is an undesirable psychological state that people feel motivated to act upon and diminish, they analyse the psychological factors that typically predict feeling of security between groups. Focusing on intergroup relations, they underscore the many factors that can induce (in)security on a phenomenological level, such as an individual's threat perceptions, emotional responses to conflict, and identity as a member of various social groups. Studying these factors is central to gaining a better understanding of situations in which a group seeks a renewed sense of security through in-group protective measures, contend O'Brien and Troop. They conclude with a strong and coherent set of strategies to enhance feelings of security, including the deconstruction and reconstruction of boundaries between groups toward superordinate group identity and dual identities.

In Chapter 8, Ronen Palan and Hannah Petersen examine the deep interconnections between International Political Economy and security. Their main claim is that, contrary to common perceptions, all major theories of International Political Economy assume a connection between economy, stability, and security. They raise the stakes by arguing that attempts to ignore this intimate connection are bound to lead to analytical failure. In urging scholars not to consider political economy and security in isolation, Palan and Petersen expose the roots and influence of various strands of political economy paradigms in the study of security.

Jan Froestad, Clifford Shearing, and Melani Van der Merwe, in Chapter 9, describe how strands of criminology have started to move beyond the traditional focus on crime and crime management to embrace the notion of security and of security governance. This is a road littered with hurdles, however; the authors underscore the relatively high level of resistance with which this strand of scholarship is received by some fellow criminologists. Nonetheless, they argue that if criminology wants to embrace the notion of security, the discipline

will have to abandon its reliance on a Hobbesian understanding of the management of human-to-human relationships as the foundational order of security, as well as its reliance on the criminal justice system as a set of responses to security threats. Readers will find their analysis challenging and penetrating.

Finally, Wouter Werner, in Chapter 10, argues for a more methodologically informed study of security in the field of international law. His main claim is twofold. He first demonstrates that, although methods seems generally left unconsidered, the literature is structured by a well-developed set of assumptions that allow certain forms of argumentative practices and exclude others, notably the widely shared assumption that “international law is ultimately rooted in the consent and practices of states.” Werner also shows that the logic of legalism and the logic of securitization are very much in competition. Using the case of the United Nations Security Council, he shows that the Security Council is empowered to use security as a trump card that allows deviation from rules that would otherwise apply. The fact that security provisions prioritize the logic of securitization over the logic of legalism in the highest political organ of the UN has profound methodological and theoretical consequences for international lawyers, superbly contends Werner.