
6 International Relations: Celebrating Eclectic Dynamism in Security Studies

*Philippe Bourbeau, Thierry Balzacq, and Myriam Dunn Cavelty*¹

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.

Referent Objects of Security

One way to systematize security research in international relations is through the type of referent object that security researchers choose to focus on. In the post-Westphalian era and definitely since the birth of International Relations as a discipline (Schmidt 1998), security actions have been and still are closely associated with the needs and security instruments of “the state”, a political entity defined by a permanent population, a territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other sovereign states (see Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, Article 1). Security for that referent object is traditionally pursued by classical instruments of the state, most often the national army or other tools of statecraft like diplomacy (Walt 1991).

This particular concept of national security (which connotes a fusion of the state with the nation) took form after the 2nd World War (with roots before (Baldwin 1995)). It is built on a notion of the modern state that combines the importance of territorial

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.

sovereignty, a secular political identity (Walker 1990), the emergence of private property (Ruggie 1983) as well as modern nationalism (Mayall 1990, Anderson 1983). Within this construct, individuals grant the state the right to protect them, in the process giving away part of their individual rights for the service of collective security (Walker 1997). Therefore, security emerges as “a condition both of individuals and of states”, with an inseparable relationship between the two (Rothschild 1995: 61). The combination of the norms of sovereignty with nationalism (linked to the conception of the nation as “imagined community” (Anderson 1983: 7) allowed for a notion of security that regarded the “inside” as different from the “outside” (Walker 1993). The inside is a realm of similarity, progress, and peaceful co-existence, whereas the outside is defined by difference, anarchy, and the constant danger of conflict (Waltz 1959).

For many scholars, security of the nation state is the analytical and normative focus, for at least two reasons: First, because of that inseparable relationship, securing the state means ensuring the security of the entities within that state, i.e. its society, its values and its interests (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 11). Second, because national security is linked to the survival of the referent object that is constantly threatened by the anarchic outside, national security is considered “high politics” - a politics above others (Keohane and Nye 1977).

Against this backdrop, security studies have prominently been defined as “the study of the threat, use and control of military force” (Walt 1991: 22). Often, this conception of security is attributed to the neo-realist paradigm, which claims a strong position in security studies (cf. Legro and Moravcsik 1999). However, there is more diversity than that. First, the other “big school” in IR, neo-liberalism, has also produced much security-relevant literature that takes the state/nation as the main referent object and explains issues of cooperation rather than war (cf. Doyle 1986, Bennett and Stam 2004, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, Gartzke 2007). Second, neo-realism is highly diverse itself (cf. Wohlforth 2001), with scholarship incorporating a

wide range of issues and factors, effectively leading to a differentiation between offensive (e.g. Mearsheimer 2001), defensive realism (Taliaferro 2000/1), and lately neo-classical realism (Rose 1998).

Importantly, however, and even with researchers looking inside states for the domestic and ideational causes of war and peace especially after the end of the Cold War (Posen 1993, Van Evera 1999, Glaser 1994/95), both big schools of IR, despite their diversity, have something in common: they assume a notion of the state that universally applies throughout the international system. Crucially, they take for granted that the external realm of politics is different from the internal; that state interest and the interests of their societies align; that states are (more or less) rational actors, whose actions can be understood through scientific means (Deudney 2007, also Buzan and Hansen 2009: 30-32). In other words, the central importance of “the nation state” as referent object was never questioned.

In the last three to four decades, some security studies scholars have started to critically engage with this dominant conception of national security (and the referent object of “the nation state”) and diversify it in at least three ways: The first move is called “widening” and entails a move away from security as the study of the threat, use and control of military force. The second is called “deepening” and looks more closely at the relationship between the state and its citizens. The third breaks with the tradition of seeing security mainly as outwards oriented and looks more closely at how security also works on the inside and how these distinctions between the inside and outside are effectively broken down.

First, researchers suggested that security was also of relevance in other issue areas (or “sectors”) besides the military such as the environment, the economy, or society (cf. Brown 1977, Ullman 1983, Matthews 1989, Buzan 1983). The reason behind this move was their belief that security was (and should be) much more than just military security. In part, this move was paralleled (and influenced) by changes in practices to

adopt doctrines of comprehensive security on the level of governments and international organizations as well as influenced by influential events such as the oil crisis of the 1970s or environmental degradation in the 1980s. The second move by the “deepeners” served to add more units of analysis to the traditional state-centric view; most explicitly, they have introduced the idea that there are five levels of depth to security: international systems, international subsystems, units, subunits, and individuals (Buzan et al. 1998: 5f, see also Buzan 1991b, Falk 1995).

Foremost, wideners and deepeners focused on the ‘what and the who’ (Barnett 1997) of security, i.e., they discussed the legitimacy and practicability of different security issues/referent objects. Second, scholars also inquired into the meta-political implications of this widening of security politics. Some scholars argued that the extension of security politics to new domains was colonizing the public space with unwanted logics of zero-sum thinking (Deudney 1990), inclusion and exclusion (Booth 1991b), or exceptional politics (Wæver 1995). Prominently, some deepeners have advanced the notion of *human security*, which has been defined narrowly as freedom from fear (cf. Mack 2004) or broadly as freedom from want (cf. UNDP 1994) and is essentially a type of security that is desirable because it “distances itself from the exclusive grip of a state-determined concept and becomes security relevant to people” (Hoogensen and Stuvoy 2006). Again other scholars have focused on particularly vulnerable subjects such as children (Rosen 2005) or have introduced a specific focus on women (and later gender) into the study of international relations (i.e. Enloe 1989, Steans 1998). Similarly, other scholars have focused on challenging the unproblematized link between the state and security from the perspective of non-Western settings (Ayood 1995): the assumption that state-provided “national” security is something desirable only counts if the notion of state is based on a working social contract, which is not a given in many areas of the world.

Of course, these contributions to security studies are highly diverse in their (meta-theoretical leaning and in the methods they use. What they have in common though is

that they took explicit position against the traditional and dominant concept of (national) security as described above, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Such positioning was indeed necessary just because the other notion of national security with its referent object was so dominant. The result of this differentiation was an at times aggressive “conflict” between the traditionalists vs. the wideners-deepeners (Krause 1998, Mearsheimer 1994/95). From that conflict emerged another differentiation: a group of scholarship being labelled “critical” (often by themselves) (Krause and Williams 1997). While the label “critical” means different things to different scholars (cf. Mutimer et al. 2013), most of them share an interest in taking up various unquestioned and taken-for-granted aspects of security. By opening them up for analytical and normative inquiry, they initiated important conceptual debates on the deeper politics of security. This is discussed here as the third move.

Though critical scholarship is very diverse, many scholars within that research tradition would probably agree that the definition of referent objects is an unavoidable political act. It is unavoidable since any threat/danger discourse must eventually be tied to some kind of endangered entity in the political process to become meaningful and/or actionable (Buzan et al 1998). At the same time, this necessary selection of referent objects is always political, since it entails a larger argument about legitimate claims to protection (Buzan 1991: 13). Fundamentally, the definition of who or what exactly is threatened promotes or relegates political subjects to different privileged or silent positions, assigning legitimate claims to protection to some, but not to others. Importantly, however, there are quite a few critical scholars that would agree that (international or national) security is related to the highest possible political and social stakes, in other words, it is about existential issues like survival, so that the protection of securitized referent objects legitimizes extraordinary emergency responses (Buzan et al. 1998, Waever 1995, Huysmans 2008). That is why turning issues into security issues always comes with a danger of undemocratic procedures and processes of securitization need to be scrutinized carefully.

However, there are other security scholars that focus on security that is no longer primarily about threats and battles against an enemy, but are characterized by an inward-looking narrative about vulnerabilities. They question the perception of security as “exceptional” and linked to “extraordinary” means and indicate that security is also about routine processes in bureaucracies by means of which security is sought and produced (c.a.s.e. collective 2006: 469). In lines with this, scholars inspired by Continental Philosophy have advanced different notions of security, often lying outside the “state/legitimate-violence complex” (Lobo-Guerrero 2008). This type of security studies is often influenced by the concept of risk (Williams 2008), which has moved into the field of security via other disciplinary approaches that have focused on risk for decades (Petersen 2012). Particular to risk narratives is the understanding that national security is not (or no longer) defined by known and current threats, but rather by potentials of unforeseeable (potentially catastrophic) harm. This is still security, but a security of a different kind, which is empowering a range of specific government rationalities, be it the permanent surveillance of populations, precautionary arrests of suspects, or pre-emptive invasions of foreign countries (Aradau and van Munster 2007).

In this world of non-exceptionality, there is no single essence of security that researchers adhere to – in contrast to the traditionalist. Also, security is not mainly the domain of security elites and politicians (Huysmans 2011: 371). Instead, the research focus shifts to everyday security practices, to less traditional security actors such as civil protection agencies and to actors outside of government that have a central role in the creation of danger knowledge and everyday security (cf. Huysmans 2006, Hagmann and Dunn Cavelty 2012). Security is not understood as a condition that is binary – meaning that either one is secure, or is not – but as a future state of being that is continually approached through i.e. risk management or other routine practices like surveillance, which solidifies security's ubiquity in the everyday (Bourbeau 2014, Huysmans 2014). In terms of referent objects, moving away from

one essence of security and focusing more on routine practices rather than exceptionality opens up the field of security studies to many different issues, including the financial system (Kessler 2011), drugs (Andreas 2008), the environment (Floyd 2010), migration (Bourbeau 2011), urban spaces (Graham 2010), or cyberspace (Dunn Cavelty 2013).

Importantly, the state is still there – but it is by far not the only or the most important referent object within these diverse issue areas. Scholarship within the tradition of the “third move” accepts more amorphous and ambiguous characteristics of national security, composed of a mixture of security problems – international, local, regional, domestic and global security issues are intertwined, put on par, and sometimes not even differentiated conceptually. Its referent objects populate a national security spectrum that connects global threats right down to personal safety. Its referent object is often not the population or life more broadly but technical and social systems that are designated vital to collective life. The sources of insecurity (classically, the “enemy”) are put to the background, as the stability of technical and societal systems become a main aim of security interventions. Many different actors, state and non-state, are responsible for this type of security. Clearly, however, the second, amorphous and ambiguous type of security is not ‘the’ new paradigm. Security practices neither shift from one ideal-type to another nor are they universal or without alternatives. Traditional national security – state, government and elite-centered – still prevails as a dominant tradition in many universities around the world. Yet, this other type of security has been gaining traction recently, and stands in at times competing and at times convergent relationship with other types of security.

Theories, Geographies, and Practices

While International Relations’ literature has seen an explosion of referent objects of security in the past three decades, as the previous section describes, the second preconceived idea that we want to tackle and debunk is the often-heard claim that a

geographical division exists within security studies: scholars based in North America (and particularly in the US) produce mainstream/traditional security studies, while scholars working in Europe are the originators and defenders of critical security studies. Countless times while presenting at conferences we have heard US-based scholars dismissively label European security researchers as “critical” and “non-scientific” scholars. Similarly, you only need to sit in a panel or two at the British International Studies Association annual conference to hear colleagues discuss the “ludicrous” scientific efforts of US-based scholars who are “trapped in the folly” of a mainstream, rational-choice imperialist approach to security.

If we look at major journals in the field, we can certainly observe trends that seem to corroborate these anecdotes. One of the top journals in the field, *International Security*, published by the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, is resolutely traditional and only rarely (if ever) publishes articles that explicitly adopt a critical approach. Equally, you would be hard-pressed to find many articles opting for an “offensive” realist perspective in the most well-regarded critical security studies journal, *Security Dialogue*, published by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo. In short, the field of security studies is often portrayed as a 2X2 field: North America/orthodox vs. Europe/critical.

We argue against the usefulness of this geographical demarcation as a tool with which to analyze the past, present, and future of security studies. In providing an overview of the influential theories of security, we hope to show that the diversity of approaches across geographical locations is so well established that it is hard to sustain a simplistic distinction based on theoretical orientation and location. To be sure, we are not arguing that there are no traces of geographical divisions remaining in the field. Undoubtedly, geographical divides are still present in general and for certain sub-fields of security studies. Yet, we argue that the chasm has shrunk to a point where one can seriously question the usefulness of a geographical representation of the field as a whole.

The dominant theory in security studies has been for a very long time the realist one. Of all the variants of realism, structural realism (or neorealism) has been the most influential. It is widely accepted that structural realism emphasizes four core elements: states are seen as rational actors and by far the most important actors in the international system; there is not an international authority that can prevent the use of force between states (the system is then said to be anarchic); each state cannot take for granted its security and thus, is responsible for ensuring its own survival, most notably through the nurturing of material capabilities; the balance of power (the formation of alliances with certain states to counter the threat of other states) is the defining mechanism that regulates the international system and explains war and peace. The books *Man, the State, and War* (1959) and *Theory of International Politics* (1979) by Kenneth Waltz are largely considered to be the best representatives of this school of thought.

Disagreements exist within the realist tradition as to whether states, in their quest for survival, seek only a certain (minimally necessary) amount of military power – a position known as “defensive realism” – or whether they seek to maximise infinitely their power – a stance labelled “offensive realism”. Defensive realism holds that the international system provides incentives for competitive behaviour only under certain conditions. The security dilemma (the idea that the actions chosen by a state to increase its security in fact decrease the security of others, thereby provoking a spiral model in which interactions between states fuel competition and insecurity) is central here. Under anarchy, states may pursue an expansionist policy because their leaders perceive that it is the only viable and effective course of action to guarantee national security. One of the biggest challenges in world politics then becomes communication; according to defensive realists, how leaders signal their intentions to other leaders and how these intentions are perceived on the international stage can go a long way toward explaining security policies and war. To support this argument, several scholars have sought within states for domestic causes of war/peace and have

imported to the conversation insights and concepts traditionally associated with psychology, such as perception, revenge, reputation and in/outgroup relations (Jervis 1976, Taliaferro 2004, Wohlforth 1993, Mercer 1995, Löwenheim and Heimann 2008). Defensive realists strongly believe that, under most circumstances, the best strategy available to leaders is restraint (Glaser 1997, Taliaferro 2000-01). Scholars indeed argue that states understand, through a rational cost/benefit choice, that excessive power is counterproductive because it gives rise to hostile alliances. A state should therefore seek to possess enough (military) power to ensure its survival, but not more (Waltz 1979, Glaser 2010).

Offensive realism shares with defensive realism the idea that states face uncertainty about other states' intentions, but contends that in facing this uncertainty, states should assume the worse. Offensive realists argue that since no international authority exists, a state can never be sure that a peaceful moment in world history (the end of Cold War, for example) will remain peaceful in the future (Mearsheimer 1990). As a result, the international system compels states to maximise their relative power position; all states are continuously striving to gain more power at the expense of other states. Hence, according to the tenets of offensive realism, states' relative capabilities are of overriding importance and the best strategy to ensure national security is to be the dominant/hegemonic power (Mearsheimer 2001).

Many of the concepts and research questions that first emerged within the realist perspective are still at the heart of the discipline today. Indeed, the causes and consequences of the security dilemma are still actively debated in the field (Jervis 1978, Posen 1993, Booth and Wheeler 2008, Tang 2009). Debates about the utility and the veracity of deterrence (which, to simplify, refers to threats of military retaliation by leaders of a state to convince leaders of another state not to resort to the use of military force in their pursuit of foreign/security policy) abound in specialized journals/press (Achen and Snidal 1989, Morgan 2003, Quackenbush 2006, Sartori 2005, Zagare and Kilgour 2000). Likewise, the questions of (a) whether states

balance against each other or bandwagon (i.e. align with a threatening state to avoid being attacked by it) and (b) whether balance of power is indeed the central mechanism regulating the international system still capture a great deal of academic attention (Brooks and Wohlforth 2008, Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2009, Levy and Thompson 2010, Pape 2005, Paul 2005, Schweller 2006, Walt 2009, Wohlforth, Little et al. 2007).

To be sure, a considerable number of influential realist scholars are based in the US, yet, there is no shortage of such scholars in Europe either. European countries house many prominent researchers in the field of strategic studies, which has deep links with neorealism. One such scholar, Lawrence Freedman (2012) recently argued that the realist tradition might constitute the best starting point for a revival of strategic studies. Along the same lines, Hew Strachan of Oxford University published a passionate defence of strategic studies in which he decries that strategic studies had been replaced by security studies and that war had been “wrenched from its political contexts” (Strachan 2013: 42). Moreover, as Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami (2006) argue, a book by two of the most well-known UK-based International Relations scholars – Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2000) – can be seen as a corrective to Waltz’s structural realist theory. Furthermore, in 2016, the British International Studies Association will be launching a new journal entitled *European Journal of International Security*; one of the main objectives of this journal will be to allow traditional security and strategic scholars to publish in a European context.

The realist theory was seriously challenged in the mid-1980s with the publication of two ground-breaking books and one seminal article: Barry Buzan’s *People, States and Fear* (1983), Stephen Walt’s *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), and Alexander Wendt’s (1987) article *The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory*. While Buzan and Walt agreed with the basic neorealist contention that anarchy is the defining feature of the international system, they both depart from it in substantial ways. On the one hand, Buzan argued that military security is merely one

aspect of security and that a comprehensive understanding of this topic needs to take into account other sectors, such as political security, economic security, environmental security, and societal security. Walt, on the other hand, contends that states do not balance against each other on the basis of systemic power distribution, but rather on the basis of threat; this perspective introduces a subjective dimension into the realist scholarship. Looking back on this period, many security scholars have suggested that the solidity (some would say the rigidity) of realism's premises began to crack from this point on.

Wendt's article imports the agent-structure debate from sociology into security studies. In this article, he convincingly argues that much of International Relations literature (and especially Waltz's theory) wrongly postulates that the international structure can only constrain states, and thus generates inter-state regulation based on the distribution of military power. Employing Anthony Giddens' concept of structuration, Wendt contends that structure also constructs state identities and interests. In a subsequent article, Wendt criticizes the mainstream theories of the time for postulating that the anarchic international structure causes states to adopt self-help mechanisms to ensure their own security. Self-help and power politics, argues Wendt, are processual, not essential, products of international anarchy; hence "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992: 395).

The diversification of security studies shifted into high gear in the 1990s. The publication of landmark studies such as Ken Booth's (1991) article on security and emancipation, J. Ann Tickner (1992) article on feminism and security, David Campbell's (1992) book on the role of identity in security policy, and R.B.J Walker's (1993) book on sovereignty set the stage for the publication of three books that have significantly contributed to the development of alternative approaches to the realist standpoint on security.

A first ‘game changer’ book was Peter Katzenstein’s (1996) edited volume entitled *The Culture of National Security: Norms and identity in world politics*. This book sought to challenge the material-based neorealist explanation of national security and to present an alternative approach based on ideational factors. The book aimed to deal a major, potentially fatal, blow to neorealism by demonstrating, in the context of the hard case of national security, that an ideational explanation trumps a material one. In setting up its battle with neorealism Katzenstein’s book even gave the method-home advantage to its theoretical opponent by adopting a largely positivist epistemology.

The Culture of National Security is one of the first books to have adopted a constructivist approach to security. In broad terms, constructivists posit that both knowledge and social reality – including the reality of security – are social constructions. Constructivism understands security as a project under construction, as becoming rather than being. Culture, identity, and norms are at the centre of the constructivist “tool kit” for understanding and explaining contemporary security policies (Price 1997, Reus-Smit 2004, Hurd 2007).

Katzenstein’s book was a seminal yet polarizing volume³. Some scholars felt that the book considerably shook the then-dominant approach and established constructivism’s usefulness and legitimacy in security studies. By framing the development of constructivism through a dialogue with the dominant approach, the book has been highly influential in promoting constructivism as an important approach in security studies (Adler 2012, Barnett and Duvall 2005, Tannenwald 2007, Finnemore 2003). Advocates of this approach would later be labelled ‘conventional constructivists’ – although it remains unclear to what extent they would themselves agree with that categorisation. For others, Katzenstein et al.’s decision to open the possibility of working within the epistemological framework of the

³ For example, a team of scholars published a book a short while later entitled *Culture of Insecurities: States, communities and the production of danger* (Weldes, Laffey et al. 1999). Many saw the book as a direct response (and rebuttal) to *The Culture of National Security*.

mainstream approach was a regrettable move that positioned “conventional constructivism” as a supplement to neorealism. This strand of scholarship is sometimes referred to as ‘critical constructivism’ (Fierke 2007, Huysmans 2006).

The distinction between conventional and critical constructivism is sometimes made in conjunction with a geographical divide between North America and Europe, respectively. Yet, here again, we question the usefulness and to some extent the veracity of this dichotomy. In the first place, the fact that several critical constructivists are based in North America and that many conventional constructivists are affiliated with European universities renders this geographical division debatable. In the second place, it remains unclear what is gained by advocating for such a locational division, which runs the risk of further entrenching disciplinary tendencies toward isolation and compartmentalization.

A second ground-breaking International Relations book published in the 1990s is Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams’ edited (1997) book, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and cases*. Careful not to produce an orthodox or rigid view of critical security studies, Krause and Williams (1997: x-xi) offer a broad definition of *critical security studies* that is “meant to imply more an orientation toward the discipline than a precise theoretical label;” this definition encompasses the work of a wide range of scholars working in such approaches as post-structuralism, feminism, neo-gramscian, and foucaultian. Krause and Williams start from the standpoint of Robert Cox’s (1986) distinction between problem-solving theories and critical theories: the former do not question the prevailing social and power relationships when conducting research, while the latter problematize these same relationships by analysing their origins and their evolution. Krause and Williams’ book seeks to employ this distinction to address *what* is studied when scholars study security, and *how* security is studied. This book has been influential in developing an alternative approach to the traditional/orthodox one and in stimulating the incorporation of non-military issues into the realm of security studies.

Critical approaches to security have indeed burgeoned in the past two decades. A particular focus of interest has been the analysis of the (social) power relations that underpin security policies, especially in liberal states: various scholars have contended that security should be understood as (i) a collection of discourses that serve to empower and reproduce gender-biased hierarchies (Shepherd 2008, Sjoberg 2013, Sylvester 2007a); (ii) a powerful political technology for social (and political) control (Burke 2007, Dillon and Reid 2009); or (iii) a series of routinised practices carried out by security professionals to create a governmentality of unease (Bigo 2002).

From the beginning, critical security studies has never been an exclusively European field of research. In fact, several of the pioneers of the critical security perspective are Canadian. The newly created journal *Critical Studies on Security* is based at York University in Toronto, Canada. Several central figures of critical security studies are – or have been for a long time – based in the US (Ashley and Walker 1990b, Debrix and Barder 2011, Der Derian 1995, Doty 2007, Sjoberg 2013, Steele 2008).

A third book that has had tremendous impact on the development of security studies imported speech-act theory into the field of security studies. In *Security: A new framework for analysis*, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (1998) introduced a new approach that became known as the “Copenhagen School.” The authors contend that to label something as a security issue imbues that issue with a sense of significance that legitimizes the use of emergency measures extending beyond the usual political processes. A security speech act not only describes a state of affairs but also determines appropriate ways of acting and participating in relation to that state of affairs. The process of securitization then becomes what in “language theory is called a speech act. It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done (like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship)” (Buzan, Wæver *et al.* 1998: 26). In a powerful rebuttal to the realist tendency to understand security as objectively given,

the authors presented a cogent framework for investigating who securitizes, on what issues, and for whom. In contrast with many critical security scholars of the time, who did not feel the need to establish a demarcation between practices that relate to security and those that do not, Buzan et al. argued that security is about existential threat and survival.

Securitization has been one the most active field of research in security studies in the past few decades. Although European security scholars were the quickest to contend with the Copenhagen School (Williams 2003, Balzacq 2005, Stritzel 2007, McDonald 2008, Vuori 2008), it was not long before Canada-based, US-based, and Australia-based scholars joined the debate (Alker 2006, Bourbeau 2011, Curley and Wong 2008, Hayes 2009, Nyers 2009, Salter 2008). If initially much of the discussion centred on speech act theory itself, as well as the political roots and philosophical underpinnings of the framework, much of the recent debate has focused on the notion of security performativity and the ethics of de-securitization (Hansen 2012, Browning and McDonald 2013, Floyd 2014, Bourbeau 2014, MacKenzie 2009).

After several decades of debate, International Relations' take on security is now an eclectic mix of theories and approaches. If, in the 1990s, several observers were openly asking whether realism had a future and whether "anybody was still a realist?" (Legro and Moravcsik 1999), the 2000s saw formidable rebuttals of that line of questioning from multiple realists (Glaser 2003, Walt 2002, Schweller and Wohlforth 2000, Feaver, Hellmann et al. 2000). For example, Mearsheimer's book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, published in 2001, mounts a powerful defense of the realist approach to security studies. Working with the assumption that great powers "are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal" (2001: 29), the book has undisputedly been influential in further developing the realist approach to security – compelling realism-attuned scholars to distinguish, as we have seen, between defensive and offensive realism. Others have abandoned structural realism's assumption that states are unitary actors and have put

forward a renewed, neoclassical approach, which postulates that domestic politics and internal characteristics of states are a fundamental vector explaining how states respond, over-respond, and under-respond to security threats (Schweller 2006, Lobell, Ripsman et al. 2009).

While realism is certainly far from being dead, it has nonetheless lost its former unquestionably dominant position in the field. Indeed, studying security from an International Relations perspective is particularly exciting these days, because we are potentially witnessing an important shift: constructivism (broadly defined) is replacing realism as the dominant approach.⁴ According to the latest TRIP survey of International Relationships scholars (2012) the most frequent response to the question “which paradigm best describes [your] approach to the study of International Relations?” was “constructivism.” This is true both in the United States and Europe. To be sure, this is only a single snapshot of a complex reality; many other proxies should be analysed before making a definitive statement. Nonetheless, the TRIP data are indicative of a trend toward general acceptance that the world we are living in – and in the context of which we understand security – is socially constructed.

Studying security nowadays is also exciting for another reason – and it is perhaps this reason that best illustrates the fact that a clear-cut distinction between North America/orthodox and Europe/critical scholars is becoming a thing of the past. We are potentially witnessing the emergence of another ‘game changer’ perspective in security studies: the practice turn has (finally) come to security studies shores. Of course, a focus on practices is not entirely new. A practice approach has indeed been employed for decades by scholars to highlight the textual interplay behind world politics (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989) and the cultural and symbolic form of power

⁴ It is exciting not, primarily, because of the outcome (whether constructivism will indeed become the ‘new’ dominant approach), but rather because the tectonic-theoretical plates are moving, which always makes for stimulating debates in any field of research.

in security policies (Gheciu 2005, Williams 2007), and the idea of a multi-based diplomacy (Neumann 2002).

Yet, few would disagree that the practice approach truly came into its own in the late 2000s with the publication of Vincent Pouliot's seminal (2008) article entitled "The logic of practicality". Pouliot, a constructivist trained and currently working in Canada, argues that most of what people do in world politics is not the result of rational decisions (as realism claims), nor of norm-following or Habermasian communicative action (as strands of constructivism contend), but of routinized and inarticulate know-how that makes what is to be done appear commonsensical. Pouliot's article was followed by a co-edited book with his former supervisor that brought together scholars (based in the US, Canada, Denmark, UK, and Australia) employing a practice approach to issues ranging from deterrence, balance of power, emotions, and media performativity, to the privatisation of global security (Adler and Pouliot 2011).

The jury is still out as to whether these contributions, which seek to establish a practice approach in security studies, will be capable of steering the field toward a more pragmatic International Relations scholarship. Yet there is little doubt that questions of how, when, under what conditions, and why practices permeates security policies will attract a great deal of scholarly attention in the near future.

Epistemology and Methods

We have argued above that, since the end of the Cold War, the field of security studies has been shaped and guided by the relation between critical and conventional (classical or traditional) approaches to security. Thus, in the previous sections, we insisted upon the transformations in our understanding of referent objects of security and of our theoretical lenses to study security. To a certain extent, the discussion in the first section was primarily about ontology, in the sense that we emphasized what

security problems were and how decisions about their “reality” came about. But, as often, ontology related questions are loaded with epistemological concerns, which in turn affect methodological choices. In *The Conduct of Enquiry in International Relations* (2011), Patrick T. Jackson’s has been instrumental in demonstrating that, despite divergences about what they mean by it, debates around epistemology often mirror broader discussions on the scientific character of a given scholarly endeavor. The problem is that these quarrels usually end up in dead ends, as epistemological questions are turned into “commitments”. In turn, these commitments are translated into methodological terms, which unfortunately limits the room for dialogue between theories that claim to belong to separate epistemological families and live by different methods.

In this section, the myth (or caricature) that we want to challenge is the following: 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.

If ontology deals with the emergence, evolution, and transformation of entities – observable or not – that populate global politics, epistemology asks what kind of knowledge claims can be made about these entities and the consequences, if any, they have on practice (Wight 2006, Chernoff 2007). In brief, the discussion pitches positivists against post-positivists.

Neo-utilitarian theories (i.e., realism, liberalism, and their ‘neo’ variants) are commonly defined as positivist approaches, just as critical theory and postmodernism are regarded, respectively, as post-positivists and anti-positivist. But constructivism defies easy classification. Though constructivists work with largely similar basic ontological assumptions, they have quite different opinions as regard epistemology; different strands emphasize alternative stances and inevitably discount others. Fundamentally, constructivists are united in an opposition to empiricism – meaning

that experience is the final test for our knowledge claims – and behaviourism – meaning that the rationale that undergirds actors’ explanation of their behaviour is of no relevance (Smith 1996: 35ff.). The vast bulk of constructivists argues that ‘theory does not take place after the fact. Theories, instead, play a large part in constructing and defining what the facts are’ (Zalewski and Enloe 1995: 299, Guzzini 2000, Price and Reus-Smit 1998).

However, these commitments cannot bridge the gaps between modern and postmodern constructivism, as each invokes a specific epistemological argument. The postmodernist or critical variant is decidedly interpretivist, while the modernist encourages both realist and positivist epistemologies (on this distinction, see Bevir and Rhodes 2002). Postmodernist constructivists develop a sceptical take on core notions of positivism such as truth, objectivity, and reason. Following this approach, to study world politics requires students to sort out the social discourse within which actions are designed and acquire meaning. The epistemological implication is that understanding, not explaining, constitutes the primary activity of social science (Hollis and Smith 1990).

Modernist constructivism, on the other hand, is compatible, though not coterminous, with interpretivism. For instance, Kratochwil (1989), and Onuf (1989) hardly adhere to the language of causality, falsity, or truth usually associated with conventional constructivism. They argue, instead, that explanation could be expressed in terms of reasons, not causes, i.e., in terms of ‘how possible’ claims (Fierke 2007). Within modernist constructivism, scientific realist and positivist strains occupy a distinctive epistemological space. On the one hand, those who adopt scientific realism (e.g., Wight 2006) attempt to explain both the causal and constitutive effects of unobservables in world politics (e.g., structures or processes). In this regard, ontology predates epistemology. On the other hand, those who defend a positivist posture encourage the use of the traditional language of causality and covering-law techniques (Wendt 1999). What distinguishes a realist from a positivist approach to

epistemology is thus essentially the fact that the former acknowledges the existence of unobservable entities, while the latter does not (compare Ruggie 1998, Carlsnaes 1992). However, the boundaries between scientific realist and positivist strands are permeable. In fact, many constructivists use scientific realism and positivism; sometimes interchangeably. Wendt (1994: 75), for instance, asserts that ‘constructivists are modernists who fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence.

Method

One of the consequences of these epistemological disagreements is that critical studies on security tend to overlook methods that are usually associated with positivist epistemologies. For instance, in their otherwise excellent volume, Mark B. Salter and Can Mutlu (2013) disregard any method that is usually associated with a positivist epistemology (e.g., content analysis, process-tracing). In the realm of critical approaches to security, then, the two dominant methods used are discourse analysis, which comes in different shades (Hansen 2006), and ethnographic research, which is practiced, for instance, by students who work on border security (Bigo 1996, Andreas 2009, Léonard 2010). That said, critical scholars, as neo-utilitarian views, often rely on case study and when they do resort to comparative analysis, they favor small-n studies. Yet, neo-utilitarian scholars usually stick to their covering-law technique (Waltz 1979, Mearsheimer 2001). For instance, Glaser’s (2010) work on competition and cooperation in world politics attempt to develop a deductive approach to state’s security policies, and derive from it a set of assumptions that are supposed to characterize states’ behaviours. Put differently, there seems to be a tacit consensus that critical studies are not amenable to approaches that lent credibility to traditional views of security. As such, the “epistemological chasm” is translated into a methodological divide (Silverman 1997: 94). In particular, critical security studies treated issues pertaining to methods in two main ways. First, some scholars held that the construction of methodological standards were dangerous because they prevented

alternative experiences from being taken into account in the research process (Ashley and Walker 1990a: 398, Campbell 1998). Because this approach has proven unproductive, a second position has been developed, which argues that security studies is best understood through the lens of qualitative methods (cf. Salter and Mutlu 2012; Shepherd 2012). In this context, for a long time, critical studies on security in general, and securitization studies in particular, were usually associated with methods that fall within the conspectus of interpretive epistemologies which, often, relied upon an inductive approach to scientific enquiry (Vuori, 2014).

To understand the divide between different methods which is said to embody the barrier between critical and traditional views of security, it might be useful to refer to the guiding principles which underpin them. Typically, traditional approaches relied on quantitative research whereas critical approaches to security offered more, if not exclusive space to qualitative views. Thus, on each side of the divide, one type of research seems to dominate and tend to overstate its own value, with detrimental effects on the dialogue between corresponding methods. However, this debate should not be regarded as restricted to security studies; anyone who enters the field would discover that it is actually a discussion that traverses, and structures social sciences, including political science and IR (King, Keohane and Verba 1994). Moreover, critical scholars often treat quantitative research as quintessentially the study of data-set observations while they regard qualitative approaches as concerned with understanding “how” phenomena take a particular shape, and the meaning actors attribute them. The study of data set observations is concerned with observation in the sheer statistical sense and aims to develop correlations of data across cases. This approach has been very influential in the literature on deterrence, war and the balance of power (e.g., Sagan 1996-1997; Niou, Ordeshood and Rose, 1989; Mitchell, Diehl and Morrow, 2012; cf. also ‘the correlates of war project’, Singer, 1979, 1980). In a recent study, Vipin Narang (2014), for instance, attempts to code the sources of nuclear postures in the modern era. Such a technique allows him to design hypotheses

that are then tested across a wide range of cases (China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa). In this respect, data set observations are meant to “increase the number of observable implications of a theory” (George and Bennett, 2005: 13). For quantitative approaches to security, therefore, the challenge is to widen the scope of their N, so that data collected enable researchers to systematically probe causal inferences (i.e. the value of one variable impacts on the other). The most common approach to a quantitative view of security remains that which follows on the footsteps of Thomas Schelling (1960). For example, in a nice analysis of trust and mistrust in the Cold War, Andrew Kydd (2005) uses game theory in order to explain why trust obtains in certain security situations, and not others. In many ways, the emphasis on game theory is one of the key characteristics of orthodox or traditional security studies, as evidenced by the work published by the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* since its creation in 1957.

Not all positivist scholars, however, clothe their subject within a quantitative frame. Indeed, some orthodox scholars adopt a positivist perspective but not the data set observation of quantitative approaches, which brings them a little bit closer to, though without aligning them with some qualitative approaches to social phenomena. On this view, most articles published in one of the flagship journals of the field, *International Security*, while adopting the vocabulary of positivism, do not delve into quantitative technicalities. Those articles’ strength do not necessarily depend on correlation based inferences, but primarily on a causal process observation, that is “an insight or piece of data that provides information about context, process, or mechanism, and that contributes distinctive leverage in causal inference” (Collier, Brady and Seawright, 2007: 277; Liam, 2014; Tanisha, 2014). Often, indeed, they concentrate on “sequential processes within a particular historical case” (George and Bennett, 2005: 13). Many conventional constructivists map their work on this approach. Hence, they confront the same problem, that is, the existence of the cause that they claim effects an outcome. For instance, when Nina Tannenwald (1999)

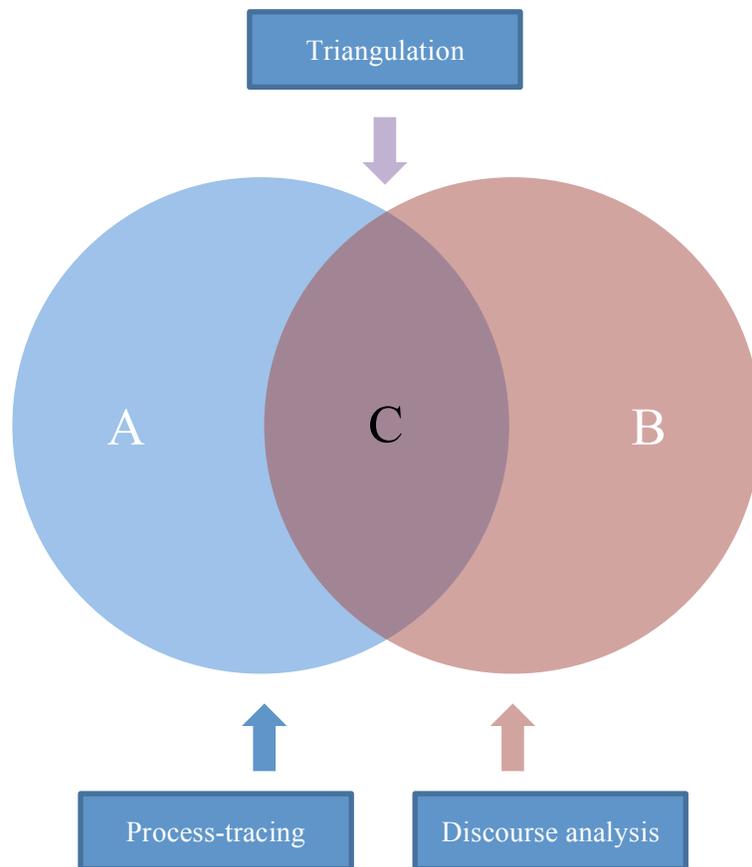
brings the nonuse of nuclear weapons to rest on the existence of a nuclear taboo, which is a cause for nuclear restraints, she collects data that seems to concur with her initial intuition. However, this does not “test” the presence of a nuclear taboo; rather, it supports its presence.

A new strand of security studies examines how qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined, while respecting the specificities of each technique, but with an eye toward developing a richer perspective on the issue at hand. Unfortunately, it is not common to encounter works that go beyond appeals to integrating these approaches. We therefore provide an illustration of a recent attempt to cross-fertilize the distinctive research methods. Bourbeau (2011) demonstrates the usefulness and added value of thinking about research methods for the study of the securitization process along these lines in his comparative analysis of the securitization of migration in Canada and France. In the same lineage, Balzacq (2011) argues that there is nothing so specific about securitization that makes it incompatible with quantitative approaches. The upshot of these sets of argument is that security problems can be captured using a variety of methods, quantitative and qualitative. The fact that an approach uses qualitative methods does not align it immediately with critical view of security. In this light, Balzacq (2014) suggests that students of security should resort to triangulation of methods. In the case of securitization, for instance, relying upon one single method has provoked two pathologies in securitization studies. First, it led to confirmation bias. Second, perhaps as a consequence, it delayed the advancement of the theory.

Some methods, we know, are better equipped to deal with some types of research puzzles than others. In the figure below (adapted from Gorard and Taylor 2007: 7), it appears that each method provides distinctive evidence about the phenomenon examined (A, B). Less acknowledged yet is the fact that combined, methods generate an original perspective, C, that is different from A and B. In other words, by ignoring possibilities offered by triangulation, securitization has missed other perspectives (A

and C). In terms of theory development, the consequences are numerous, but it is urgent to raise one here. By leaving out “A” and “C”, researchers are less lucid on how and when to rule out rival accounts, and the extent to which those sharpen the scope of their theories.

Figure 1. A Visual Model of Triangulation by Method



In the field of securitization, there have been sustained calls for triangulation, as a way of strengthening the results generated by this field (Bourbeau 2011: 5). In order to show how this might help a theory’s development and dialogue with others, Balzacq (2014) has proposed an example of triangulation by methods, articulating

two types of methods that are usually associated with different epistemological stripes, namely discourse analysis and process-tracing. In fact, discourse analysis and process-tracing capture different aspects of the object of study. In particular, the core of process-tracing is to examine social mechanisms which brought a social phenomenon into being. According to Hedstrom and Swedberg (1998: 25), social mechanisms are ‘a set of hypotheses that could be the explanation for some social phenomenon, the explanation being in terms of interactions between individuals and other individuals and some social aggregate.’ In short, process-tracing deals with issues of interactions, causal chains linking the independent variable(s) to the outcome of the dependent variable, and the conditions under which such causal paths obtain (Checkel 2008). In this sense, process-tracing can be a cure to confirmation bias. In fact, the explanation of process-tracing lies upon the strategy of condition-seeking, which asks: “under what conditions does securitization occur?” Process-tracing fares better than discourse analysis in that regard, as the latter often concentrates on whether securitization has happened or not, and how it has taken shape; less frequently, if ever, does discourse analysis ask why. This is where, we surmise, process-tracing is probably at its best. The point is that the concern with “has securitization occurred and how?” has led some scholars to assume (among other things) that accumulating facts in order to confirm the desired outcome (i.e., successful) was the *summum bonum* of securitization studies. In brief, discourse analysis is strong in understanding how securitization operates, but weak in uncovering why certain securitizing moves succeed and when. By contrast, two techniques capture the significance and specificity of process-tracing: condition-seeking and design strategy. First, condition-seeking aims to sort out ‘limiting conditions for a known finding’. The aim of design strategy is, on the other hand, to discover ‘conditions that ... produce a previously unobtainable result’ (Greenwald, Pratkanis *et al.* 1986: 211). This means, for example, that within the conspectus of process-tracing, failed securitizing moves are outcomes worthy of investigation, in

part because they enable us to explain why other moves were successful and, in part, as a consequence, because the knowledge culled from failed securitizing moves can ‘enrich the general theory’ of securitization (George and Bennett 2005: 215). In this light, process-tracing is decisive both in constructing and testing theories.

However, the nature and particular blend of triangulation one articulates depend on the purpose of the study. Yet, it is generally argued that triangulation by method remains the most common form of triangulation social scientists resort to. Kopinak (1999: 171) defines multi-method triangulation as the procedure of “gathering information pertaining to the same phenomenon through more than one method, primarily in order to determine if there is a convergence and hence, increased validity in research findings.” In our view, the basic idea here is that when a phenomenon is approached from more than one perspective, something new results. In other words, triangulation is not, at least not essentially, about using other methods to “inspect” or “test” the result obtained through a different method. The most productive character of methodological triangulation emerges when and if researchers acquire a new vision of the phenomenon examined or aspects of it, at variance with the one enabled by another method. That is, triangulation works best when methods are treated less as substitutable than complementary techniques.

Conclusion

If, as is often stated, culture, space, and liberty are the signature concepts of Anthropology, Geography, and Philosophy, respectively, security is usually regarded as one the defining concepts of International Relations. Unsurprisingly, then, security is a topic that is much debated in International Relations literature. Debates breed diversity and, for our part, we think that this eclectic diversity is one of the biggest strengths of International Relations.

As we have highlighted in the previous sections, all the current approaches to International Relations engage with the topic of security. The vast majority of textbooks on security include chapters on realism, liberalism, constructivism, critical theory, gender, and post-structuralism. We believe that this situation should be celebrated not only because it legitimizes, solidifies, and stimulates debates and dialogues across particular standpoints on security, but also because it testifies to the health of International Relations' take on security. While we have organized our discussion of the literature on security through an analysis of three myths, we have tried to underscore some of the strengths that International Relations offers to a multidisciplinary approach to security.

Another strength of the current scholarship is that scholars are now focusing on what unifies them instead of what separates them. For instance, whereas much of the discussion in the early 2000s centred on disagreement concerning the boundaries of critical security studies and the meaning of the label "critical" (Booth 2005), recently, there has been a return to the broader and more encompassing definition of critical security studies espoused by Krause and Williams (1997). As Browning and McDonald (2013) argue, talking about critical security studies means analysing the social construction of security through, notably, problematizing the role of knowledge, politics, and representations in contemporary security policies. Similarly, some scholars have argued that "moving forward together" – i.e. searching for similarities rather than differences between approaches – consolidates the scholarship and permits a better connection between theoretical models and contemporary security politics (Bourbeau 2014, Sylvester 2007b). Others, like James Fearon and Alexander Wendt (2002), and Jeffrey Checkel (2012), have argued that a "pluralist" or "bridge-building" approach provides scholars with a better understanding of world politics. In sum, an increasing number of scholars are recognizing the need to cut across traditional divides and to shift the discussion towards the factors that unite security scholars rather than those that divide them.

Another significant strength of current International Relations scholarship on security is the growing acceptance that “more is better” – to paraphrase a central debate in the field (Sagan and Waltz 2012) – when it comes to the choice of methods one uses to conduct a study. Clearly, the embracing of a plurality of methodologies nourishes a constant renewal in debates within the field; certain approaches are more strongly associated with certain methods, and thus scholars feel compelled to discuss work employing ‘their’ method from a different theoretical standpoint. The encouragement of multiple methodologies also facilitates and induces interdisciplinary dialogue, as scholars who share the same methodology feel encouraged to enter into a cross-disciplinary discussion on their particular security issues.

In sum, the sub-field of security studies has started to renew itself on multiple fronts and appears to be in a superb position to embrace, tackle, and push a multidisciplinary approach to security. This is certainly no small achievement given the history of the field, and we believe it is a development that holds great promise for the future of the scholarship.

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