

SECURITY STUDIES

An Applied Introduction



Edited by
Norma Rossi & Malte Riemann

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Endorsements

This is a fantastic textbook that engages critical issues in the practices and governance of different dimensions of (in)security. The volume brings together effectively the expertise and experiences of top scholars in the field – like learning directly from them. This book is especially suitable for graduate-level teaching and research, and I think will be a welcome contribution to many security studies classrooms, globally.

Toni Hastrup, Professor and Chair in Global Politics, University of Manchester

A vital resource for security studies education, this textbook offers fresh insights into emerging critical topics. It effectively explores security challenges beyond the traditional military-strategic focus, and incorporates excellent contributions from new and established scholars. Educators will value the added features that encourage active learning and discussion.

Andrew Neal, Professor of International Security, The University of Edinburgh

Security is a core matter of international politics. It also is multifaceted. This excellent volume introduces students to a wide range of security problems and the tools to critically analyse them. The chapters are engaging and full of expertise – a fantastic resource!

Felix Berenskoetter, Senior Lecturer of Politics and International Studies, SOAS University of London

New times produce new problems and new solutions. Here they all are, laid out in a well-tempered array and discussed in a highly accessible fashion. State-centred chapters coexist peacefully with more individually oriented ones, realist slants criss-cross rather more critical ones. A rewarding read.

Iver B. Neumann, author of *Concepts in International Relations*

Security Studies teaches us how to think about security in a different way. It is a comprehensive and incisive, yet welcoming, introduction to conceptualising and analysing the pressing security challenges of the day. *Security Studies'* distinct, case-study led approach to pedagogy supports learning by opening up conversations and suggesting transverse, unconventional lines of critical analysis and thinking. The chapters are grounded in practical politics and experiences that make complex concepts come alive to a variety of audiences and scholars. Students will love this.

Katharine M. Millar, Associate Professor in International Relations, London School of Economics

Contents

<i>About the editors and authors</i>	xvii
<i>Preface</i>	xxiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxxii
<i>Online resources</i>	xxxiii
Part I Whose security?: History, theories and institutions	1
1 Introducing security studies: An applied introduction	3
<i>Norma Rossi and Malte Riemann</i>	
2 Security: When? Where? From what? Of what? For whom?	25
<i>R.B.J. Walker</i>	
3 International security	41
<i>Pinar Bilgin</i>	
4 State security	59
<i>Aine Bennett and Laura Sjoberg</i>	
5 Human security	75
<i>Annick Wibben and Jenny Hedström</i>	
6 Security beyond the human	89
<i>Audra Mitchell</i>	
Part II Security challenges	107
7 War and militarism	109
<i>Victoria M. Basham</i>	
8 Genocide and crimes against humanity	131
<i>Benjamin Meiches and Jonathan White</i>	
9 Terrorism	151
<i>Ben Whitham and Nadya Ali</i>	
10 The global arms trade and its control	175
<i>Anna Stavrianakis</i>	
11 Weapons of mass destruction	195
<i>Shampa Biswas</i>	
12 Street gangs and urban violence	217
<i>Kieran Mitton</i>	

13 Global development	237
<i>Maria Stern</i>	
14 Migration	261
<i>Aoileam Ní Mhurchú</i>	
15 Race and security	283
<i>Anna M. Agathangelou</i>	
16 Conflict and gendered violence	311
<i>Johny Arokiaraj P and Soumita Basu</i>	
17 Organised crime	335
<i>Anna Sergi</i>	
18 Cybersecurity	353
<i>Tim Stevens</i>	
19 Financial crises and security	375
<i>Aida A. Hozic</i>	
20 Climate change	397
<i>Maria Julia Trombetta</i>	
21 Health security	421
<i>João Nunes</i>	
22 Resource security	443
<i>Johannes Kester</i>	
23 Maritime security	465
<i>Christian Bueger and Timothy Edmunds</i>	
24 Space security	489
<i>Sarah Lieberman and Jana Fey</i>	
<i>Glossary</i>	513
<i>References</i>	525
<i>Index</i>	585

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Preface

The question is obvious: Why the need for yet another introductory textbook for security studies? In a field that is already crowded with numerous resources, this is the question we asked ourselves when embarking on this volume. Despite the abundance of existing material, we strongly believe that our textbook offers a satisfactory answer to this question. Before expanding on the unique ways in which this textbook reshapes the pedagogy of security, we want to briefly explain how we came to think about the necessity of such an intervention.

When we first thought about the design for this textbook, we were guided by our own concerns while teaching international security to British Army officers, officer cadets and other security practitioners in the Department of Defence and International Affairs at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Back then, we were consistently looking for novel ways to expose our students (who were also future military practitioners) to the complexities and nuances of the field, beyond a militaristic and state-centric perspective on security, while also being haunted by the consistent questions: So what? How would that inform my practice? Our students wanted to know how engaging with security through a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives, learning to challenge prevailing assumptions regarding what constitutes a security issue, and questioning possible responses, would shape their approach and decision-making in their practice and future professional endeavours. Responding to this line of questioning became our main pedagogical concern – that is to demonstrate the connection between theories and practices of security.

Yet, the pedagogical challenges in teaching security with a practical orientation well transcend the realm of civil–military relations. The problem of developing an applied pedagogical approach to security resonates with anyone interested in security studies ranging from students to security practitioners. And so, the starting point of this textbook is to demonstrate the connection between theories and practices of security. This conviction shapes the rationale of this textbook and its pedagogical features in a unique and innovative fashion. Indeed, we think that the more students engage in theorising security, the more effectively prepared they will become as practitioners in the field. We also think that everyday practices of security shape our imagination of what security might be and what it means to be ‘secure’. This is why we designed the textbook to provide a continuous dialogue between theories and practices of security. As such, this *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* is fundamentally grounded in practice and application as well as in theory, while also reflecting on the relationship between the two.

While this has been our personal and professional starting point to think about this textbook, our journey did not stop there. The pedagogical design of this textbook is also the result of numerous conversations with students (both military and civilian), colleagues and editors at Sage. The illuminating and incredibly generous comments, questions and feedback we received from the authors of the chapters you are about to read have been especially important as a constant invitation to sharpen our approach to the study of security ‘in practice’.

Imagining-practising Security

If we say ‘security’, what do you think about? This question sets the stage for *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction*. Students are directly invited to consider that they cannot move beyond a very abstract answer to this question if examined in isolation. Indeed, security seldom stands in isolation as the sole concern; rather, its significance is intertwined with that which we endeavour to secure. This implies that to engage in a discourse on security, comprehension of how we define who/what we seek to secure is imperative. This intuitive realisation underscores the notion that security is already always a *response* to fundamental questions: What or who warrants security? Against whom? In what manner?

The multiple answers to these questions shed light on what or who holds value in our eyes, subsequently guiding what we perceive as deserving of protection and shaping what actions we are willing to undertake to secure it. Consequently, this premise urges us to appreciate the importance of comprehending how security and security-related issues are defined – by whom, in opposition to whom, and in the name of whom security is invoked as a response. It follows, then, that our delineation of security and the intended recipients of this security conveys a deeper understanding of who we are – our own identity, stance, values and political inclinations. Viewed through this lens, security is not something neutral but always embedded into specific ways of looking at the world. Security, therefore, provides us with a window to make sense of the world and ourselves within it while also being a practice which shapes it and us.

Engaging with the study of security from this perspective entails engaging with the role of theory in constructing the answers to the question ‘whose security?’ and bringing in sharp focus the relation between different possible answers and practices of security. Yet, rather than seeing theory and practice as fundamentally separate, *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* considers theories as authoritative forms of practices, (often) holding an elevated epistemological status that allows them to legitimise or challenge other practices within the realm of security (Bilgin 1999). Yet, while ways of theorising security (who needs to be secured, from whom and how) inform actions, theories do not translate easily into practices and there is often an unmatchable gap between the two. This disparity raises significant questions and prompts further inquiry. Instead of disentangling the connection between theories and practices, *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* engages with their interconnections. In doing so, it allows students to become aware of the complex ways in which we are implicated in questioning and practising security. Through this approach, we want to empower students to critically analyse the present and envision alternative possibilities.

Reflecting on this point pushed us to broaden our understanding of ‘who’ is or can be a security practitioner. Today, security can be a focal point for individuals who may lean towards an anti-militaristic stance or have little interest in traditional ‘hard’ security issues. Instead, aspiring professionals in this domain could work in environmental protection, human rights advocacy, poverty relief and more. However, regardless of the specific area, all these aspiring security practitioners face a common challenge: accounting for the complexity of security while remaining accountable to their practice. They need to be able to ‘apply’ this complexity to their everyday professional endeavours. Moreover, they must reflect on how their theoretical assumptions inform their actions. In other words, there is a requirement for students of security to be able to understand the mutually constitutive link between the theory and

practice of security. This also means reflecting on the politics of drawing such distinctions in the first place. For example, the exclusion of political possibilities is often articulated in terms of their detachment from the real world. If imagining new ways of thinking security are to inform different practices, this dichotomy between theory and practice must be engaged.

Security Studies: An Applied Introduction addresses this dual exigency – offering students a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice while critically interrogating the underlying assumptions in both. This guiding principle serves as the inspiration behind *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* and is the reason why it makes a necessary contribution to the field. We combine an applied ethos, exposing students to various approaches of ‘doing security’, with cutting-edge perspectives on ‘thinking’ security. Our focus extends far beyond the traditionalist emphasis on interstate war and state security, while still recognising their significance. Indeed, security as a promise of protection from violence as well as a site of inherent violence is not exhausted only in claims to state sovereignty; however, it is still solidly embedded within it. After all, as Keith Krause and Michal C. Williams claimed a while ago, ‘the question of the place of violence in political life does not vanish at the first challenge to the foundations of state or sovereignty’ (1997b, xiv). Since then, this issue has gained even more prominence given the increasing interconnections and interdependencies among the myriad problems encompassed by the term ‘security’, along with the fragmentation of actors responsible for security and those engaged in defining how we should perceive security. ‘Educating’ the next generation of security studies students means to us, first of all, raising awareness of the stakes of speaking about security. After all, as R.B.J. Walker claims, questioning security cannot be separated from our thinking about who ‘we’ are and the possibilities and limits of politics (Walker 1990).

Security Studies: An Applied Introduction, therefore, aims at catering for the diversity of students engaging in the study of security, considering their varying levels of familiarity and involvement with the subject. For newcomers to the study of security, this textbook provides a fresh and accessible approach that combines theoretical rigour with cutting-edge expertise on the most pressing security issues. For those already more advanced in their studies, this textbook lets them explore how various theories can productively be put into conversation and how this provides novel angles for analysing security issues. It also aids them in improving their critical thinking skills by engaging with practical features designed for students. And for those who are already working in security, this textbook presents many theoretical perspectives in a practical and easy-to-understand way, allowing them to ‘think critically’ about their pre-existing knowledge and practices.

To achieve this goal, *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* is structured around three key principles.

Non-disciplinary, non-compartmentalised and problem-based security

First, *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* embraces a non-disciplinary approach to security. While security studies is considered a discipline in its own right (or at the very least

a well-defined sub-disciplinary field within the wider discipline of International Relations), we do not want to be limited by such disciplinary boundaries. Instead, this book follows the idea that there is much relevant thought dealing with security which is not captured by the discipline of security studies. In fact, we share the concern that the process of disciplining the study of security risks excluding and silencing important issues and perspectives (Krause & Williams 1997b).

For that reason, we asked our authors to put aside their disciplinary affiliations, encouraging them to 'break free' from the confines of conventional theoretical paradigms. Instead, each author draws upon a multiplicity of theoretical and methodological approaches to analyse the specific security problem addressed in their respective chapters regardless of whether these are considered part of the discipline of security studies. This approach ensures a diverse range of perspectives, encompassing even those arguing that discussing the problem through the lens of security may be counterproductive and impede effective real-world responses.

Second, *Security Studies: an Applied Introduction* adopts a non-compartmentalised approach to theory. This means that rather than dedicating a chapter to each theory, in each chapter students explore how different theories offer distinct insights into a specific security problem. This approach presents important advantages for student learning. First, students encounter the same theoretical perspective throughout several chapters which analyse different security issues. This avoids overwhelming the student with theoretical content and instead invites them to consider how the same theoretical lens can illuminate different issues. Second, the application in each chapter of different theoretical perspectives to analyse the same security problem guides students' reflection on how theories and practices of security are mutually constitutive. This challenges the sense that theories are a detached analytical tool employed by 'theorists' in a distant 'ivory tower'. Third, such a non-compartmentalised approach enables students to grapple with how theorising security is not neutral but rather informs the politics of security. Indeed, theories shape the ways in which possible responses to a problem are imagined and actualised, while others are silenced and excluded. In sum, by highlighting the contentious dialogues between these theoretical viewpoints, we encourage students to question the foundational assumptions of each perspective.

Ultimately this theoretical and methodological pluralism, to us, does not mean to invite students (and authors) to assume an equidistant position between the different theoretical perspectives, as if these were all sharing some common (apolitical) ground. Instead, the invitation is to expose students to the distinctions and conflicts between diverse approaches, aiding them in interrogating the fundamental assumptions inherent in each perspective. In other words, a non-compartmentalised approach to theory juxtaposes different theoretical perspectives rather than seeking to harmonise or integrate them. Through this juxtaposition, one theoretical perspective reveals the contradictions of what another theory takes for granted and vice versa. Again, the aim is not to arrive at some sort of synthesis but rather to prompt students to avoid taking any perspective as final or common sense. At the same time – we hope – this will inspire them to be sceptical of any established ground and suspicious of attempts at (re)establishing any transcendental grounding beyond critique.

Concretely this non-compartmentalised approach to theory shapes the structure of Part 1 of this textbook. After R.B.J. Walker's chapter, which guides students to examine the relationship between security and modernity, students are asked to focus their attention on the opening question of this textbook: 'Whose security?' To examine this question each chapter in Part 1 takes into consideration one possible answer, namely the international, the state, the human, and the beyond the human. Each of these broad categories is considered a 'security referent' of security, i.e. a way in which the question 'Whose security?' has been responded to. Each chapter therefore proceeds to illustrate the multiple ways to theorise the security referent and their implications for our understanding of security, how the security referent can be understood through multiple theoretical perspectives and with what implications for thinking about security.

Through this non-compartmentalised approach, the different theoretical perspectives are not ordered to reproduce the disciplinary 'history' of security studies. This avoids three clear shortcomings. First, we run against the late disciplinary tendency of security studies to add those considered 'new entries' to the discipline (such as feminism and postcolonialism) as additional chapters/lectures to the existing and established perspectives. This ignores that these well-established traditions made crucial contributions to the study of security, much before their 'inclusion' in the discipline of security studies. Second, we think that simply appending chapters on feminism and postcolonialism to existing security approaches would perpetuate a simplistic 'add and stir' approach. This obscures the ways in which security and its study are already racialised and gendered (Bilgin 2010). Third, we want to avoid reinforcing the distinctions between so-called 'traditional' and 'critical' theories of security studies. While we want to emphasise the theoretical and methodological plurality characterising the study of security, we also want to avoid it becoming a 'trap' that confines students to narrow boxes, which limit interdisciplinary analysis and critique.

Part 2 of the textbook combines this non-compartmentalised approach to theory with a problem-based methodology to analyse different security 'problems'. Each chapter of Part 2 is structured through a logic which we call Explore, Understand, Respond (EUR). The first part of each chapter (EXPLORE) starts by presenting to the student a specific empirical puzzle as a lens to *explore* a broader topic. This initial exploration is then followed by a discussion (UNDERSTAND) of key conceptual and theoretical perspectives, examining different ways in which the topic under consideration has been framed in terms of security and the broader issues at stake that the empirical puzzle raises. Furthermore, at the end of each chapter (RESPOND), we revisit the empirical puzzle that opened the chapter to demonstrate how specific theoretical understandings of security issues inform possible responses to the problem.

This EUR logic serves students to develop their analytical and methodological tools to grapple with the link between theories and practices of security far beyond a more traditional case-study-based approach. Indeed, the latter often relegates empirical examples to separate boxes aimed at illustrating specific theoretical points, but the case studies stay too separate from their theoretical discussion. Through EUR, instead, theories and practices of security are continuously put into conversation in an applied fashion through a series of innovative and student-centred pedagogical features.

Pedagogical features

The EUR approach engages students through the inclusion of highly innovative pedagogical features, which it is important to illustrate briefly.

First, to strengthen the link between understanding and responding to security problems, we integrate a problem-mapping exercise into each chapter. This exercise begins with a concise illustration of a real-world example directly relevant to the security issue discussed in the chapter. The analysis of this real-world example is developed through a visual map structured around the 'EUR' logic, mirroring structure of the chapter. This visual representation encourages students to review the diverse theoretical perspectives discussed in the chapter and reflect on how these perspectives inform security responses on the specific empirical example under investigation, while at the same time preventing or silencing others.

Second, in addition to the problem-mapping exercise, we introduce another innovative pedagogical feature at the end of each chapter: a practitioner video. In these videos, practitioners provide first-hand accounts of their own experience, understanding and response to a specific security 'problem'. This choice responds to the logic of giving space to the too-often silent voices of practitioners in academic texts. The aim is to help students to capture the relational constitution between everyday practices of security and 'academic' thought about security.

We intentionally maintain a broad definition of 'practitioner'. Our 'practitioners' capture the professional aspirations of students of security, going from state officials responsible for shaping cyber security policies to activists within non-governmental organisations (NGOs) challenging the state's securitisation efforts related to migration. In inviting students to encounter the practitioners, we want to prompt their self-reflection rather than presenting them with a blueprint of 'how things are done'. Indeed, we invite students to approach the practitioners' account with critical curiosity. The aim is to interrogate the practitioners' assumptions about the security problem they were facing and understand how these informed their responses. This, in turn, would facilitate students' self-reflection on their own assumptions in 'making sense' of security problems (Riemann 2023). To facilitate this critical and reflective process, students are prompted to complete an additional problem-mapping exercise based on their analysis of the practitioner's insights. This exercise aids students in thinking through the relationship between theory and practice by leveraging the visual learning strengths of an increasingly diverse student body.

Third, we seized upon the growing recognition of popular culture's role in exploring security questions. In this vein, we invited each author in Part 2 to recommend movies or fictional books that could serve as extensions for delving further into their respective topics. We call this 'Security Beyond the Real'. However, our intention is to convey the opposite message – that representations of security (and the politics of security) are constitutive and constituted in our everyday encounters, echoing Cynthia Weber's observation that '[c]ulture is political, and politics is cultural' (2021, 586).

The integration of these pedagogical features represents a deliberate effort to diversify the delivery of the material. The goal is to optimise students' capacity to actively engage with complex theories, concepts and problems. In this way, rather than simplifying its content to

make it accessible, we chose to facilitate student access to complex learning material by offering a multiplicity of sensory entry points. By incorporating visual mapping, problem-based exercises, practitioner videos and cultural references through movies and fictional books, we aim to cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. Students can approach the material from various intersecting angles, reinforcing their understanding and critical thinking. Our approach, then, acknowledges the diverse ways in which students absorb and process information, promoting a richer and more immersive learning experience within the realm of security studies.

By engaging students in this manner, *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* empowers students to become active creators rather than passive consumers of knowledge. This makes them also resistant to simply accept 'ready-made' security responses and more inclined to question their silences and exclusions. While learning to question the assumptions sustaining contemporary debates and responses to security problems, they can put their understanding of the chapter (and related chapters) to the test, gaining a deeper comprehension of contemporary security responses while also imagining alternative possibilities. This approach fosters critical thinking, enabling students to apply the lessons learned and develop their own insights into the complex world of security studies.

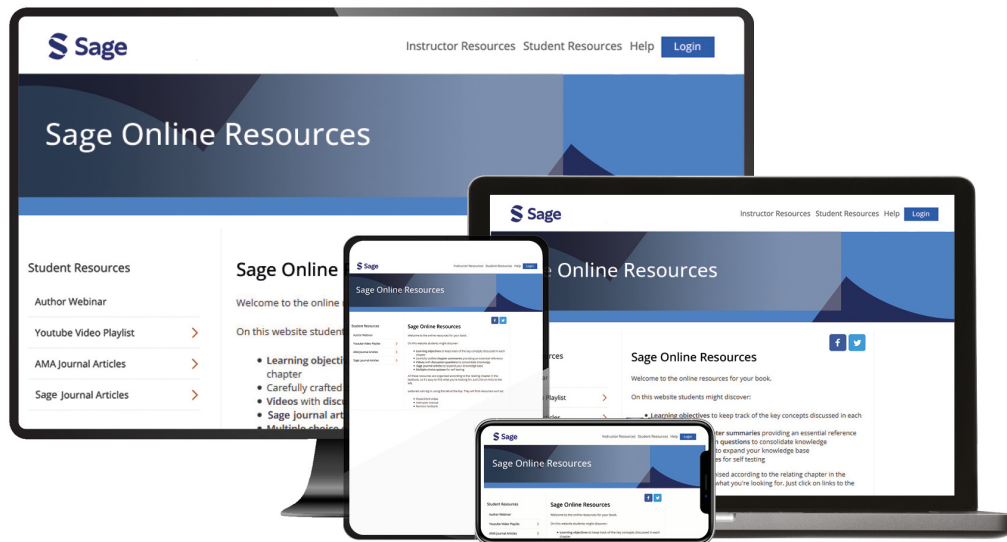
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Part I

Whose security?: History, theories and institutions

Chapter contents

1	Introducing security studies: An applied introduction.....	3
2	Security: When? Where? From what? Of what? For whom?.....	25
3	International security.....	41
4	State security	59
5	Human security.....	75
6	Security beyond the human	89



Chapter 1

Introducing security studies: An applied introduction

Norma Rossi and Malte Riemann

Image 1.1 A selection of locks secured to a chain link fence
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Chapter overview

Welcome to the study of security! This chapter introduces you to the discipline of security studies and to this textbook. We do this in three parts. The first part discusses how we can approach the study of security and explains why the question ‘whose security?’ is the crucial question for understanding security. The second part introduces you to different theoretical approaches to studying security (realism, liberalism, critical security studies, feminism, post-colonialism and posthumanism) and sketches out how each of those orientations answers the question ‘whose security?’ differently. The third part of the chapter examines the relationship between theories and practices of security and explains how the link between theory and practice is the guiding principle informing the organization of this textbook and its pedagogical features. Throughout the chapter, you are invited to pause and reflect on some key questions (for this reason, we provide some blank boxes throughout for you to fill in with your thoughts). Before you continue reading, make sure you have a pen!

Introduction

When you hear the word security, what comes to your mind? Take a blank sheet or use the box provided and draw whatever image your mind has conjured. Do not worry about your artistic skills (both of us are terrible artists!). Just reflect for a second and start drawing.



Done? Great! Now look at your picture. Most likely, it will depict something that might relate to a personal response to insecurity (e.g. a door lock, a password protecting your online accounts), perhaps you have been thinking about a feeling of insecurity (walking alone at night) or perhaps you have been thinking about global security issues such as climate change, pandemics or nuclear threat. This variation should not come as a surprise because, as Rob Walker once noted, security ‘has an overload of meanings’ (1988, 2).

None of these possibilities are right or wrong, and to some extent, we could say that a sense of what are security and insecurity can be direct and intuitive. And yet, there is much more to this when we talk about security. Indeed, many security studies textbooks will start telling you that security is a contested concept which is difficult to define and hard to pin down (Buzan 1991c). The starting point of this textbook is that to orient ourselves in this

intricate field, we cannot ask what security is. Instead, we want to invite you to consider another question about security, namely, ‘whose security?’. In other words, asking who/what is threatened is the main question that needs to be asked when thinking and practising security. This implies that the meaning of security is always ‘derivative’, as its meaning depends on our thinking about what is worthy of security (Williams & Krause 1997, ix). Defining who/what needs to be secured, in turn, will reveal what we value and therefore will say something about who ‘we’ are.

In the next section, we delve deeper into why we think ‘whose security?’ is the central question to ask when thinking about security and outline the implications of taking this question seriously for the study of security. In the second part of this chapter, we outline how different theoretical traditions to study security understand and answer this question. In the final part of the chapter, we connect our discussion of theories of security with their application and we show how this integration between theory and practice informs the logic of the textbook.

Whose security?

Go back to your drawing. Imagine that you have been just recruited by a graphic designer to turn your initial representation of security into a graphic novel. This will probably consist of different protagonists. You would probably depict a security problem (or threat), a possible response to mitigate or curtail the effects of the specific problem (some form of response, like wearing a seat belt for example), someone or something that is threatened (whose security) and possibly also what effects a specific response to a security problem generates (implications).

You might realize that depictions of security often place emphasis on security problems or responses. Think about James Bond movies. Here the focus is mainly on the response (Bond, mainly using violence to (re)establish security) and the threat (the Bond villains) as the main protagonists. However, there is always a third protagonist that frames the films – the entity in need of being secured, be it international stability, an organization, identity, a person/group of people, or an international framework like the global financial market (i.e. a security **referent**). Thinking about it, it is this third protagonist upon which the plot of the story of security and insecurity rests. Without it, James Bond (or Superman/Batman) would simply be a violent fool rather than a hero.

It is this third protagonist, expressed via the question ‘whose security?’, that will frame our engagement with security in this textbook. The reason for this choice was aptly articulated by Williams: ‘The meanings given to “security” emerge from intellectually prior accounts of who or what is to be secured’ (2004, 141). Or, as neatly put by R.B.J. Walker, ‘the subject of security, is the subject [i.e. the referent] of security’ (1997, 78).

Let us unpack this by using the real-world example of migration. Having watched the news and social media feeds, you must have encountered images of people trying to reach the coasts of Southern Europe from Africa or the Middle East using small and precarious boats in attempts that often result in human catastrophes and loss of lives.

This phenomenon of migration has been capturing the attention of European public opinion and policy makers, and the aspiration to block such migration flows has become a concern increasingly driving the rise of the far right in Europe (Rossi 2023a). Especially right-wing politicians insist on the fact that migrants constitute a threat to European citizens (both in terms of jobs security as well as their cultural identity; Rutazibwa & Shilliam 2018). This claim implies a value judgement – i.e. the answer to the question ‘whose security?’ implies a trade-off between the security of migrants and the security of the citizens, where the latter



Image 1.2 Migrants request help from a cruise ship as they cross the Strait of Gibraltar en route to Spain in 2018

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should take priority. The meaning of security which derives from this answer to the question ‘whose security?’ would be the absence of migration. If we want to challenge such value judgement (and therefore our meaning of what security means) we need to question the answer to the question ‘whose security?’

What if, for example, we posit that the answer to ‘whose security?’ should not be citizens but humanity? This would have profound political implications as it would challenge the trade-off between citizens and migrants and open up possibilities for alternative politics in which the meaning of security is tied also to our ability of rescuing those at sea. Think about humanitarian organizations operating in the Mediterranean

Sea; their rescue operations are based on the principle that all humans, irrespective of their nationality, merit security. Their meaning of security would be very different from the one of the European far right.

This is not the only way to critique the answer to the question ‘whose security?’ as proposed by the far right. Another way would be to question the category of citizenship, which takes a trade-off between migrant and citizen security for granted. For example, stronger anti-immigration laws would mean that those citizens who agree with the idea that migrants are a threat would potentially feel more secure. Instead, citizens who disagree with this assumption might see anti-immigration policy as a threat to their own security and values. We could also go one step further and cast doubt on the assumption that all citizens are indeed equally protected by the state.

Indeed, states often provide security selectively, favouring certain citizens over others. Research has shown that different citizens experience different levels of security within the same state depending on their socio-economic condition and identity. For instance, Ali and Whitham (2021) have shown how anti-immigration policies are means to enact cuts to the welfare state, disproportionately impacting the working class. Furthermore, at times being a citizen does not provide security at all, especially in cases in which the state becomes a threat. An illustrative example is the Black Lives Matter movement, which has exposed how police violence and institutional racism render the state a security threat to specific segments of its citizenry rather than being a provider of security.

As the above discussion demonstrates, challenging the answer to the question ‘whose security?’ leads us to identify other possible answers and with those, the meaning of security (and its threats) changes significantly. To conclude this reflection, it is important to extrapolate the key implications of this point for the study of security.

First, security does not have a fixed normative value, i.e. a general good for all, independent of actors that enunciate security claims in their contexts (Bigo 2008, 123–124). This means that security is fundamentally a political concept and who and what should be the referent of security is an object of contestation. This is why many authors, following Buzan, have labelled security an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Buzan 1983, 6). In terms of our discussion, this means saying that the answer to the question ‘whose security?’ always implies some value judgements and therefore it is not possible to ‘find’ an answer to such a question which would conclude or resolve the discussion once and for all.

Second, this indeterminacy of security is important, because while contested, the meaning of ‘security’ is politically extremely powerful. As R.B.J. Walker explains in the next chapter, ‘How we think about what security is and what it encompasses will heavily influence what is to be done in its name’. Think about for example how anti-terrorist legislation in the US post-9/11 has authorized surveillance mechanisms reducing citizens’ right to privacy in the name of their security.

Third, security must be treated as ‘a matter for serious political thought’ (Walker 1988, 4). This is what we are doing throughout this textbook. Inviting you to question the assumptions constitutive of security claims – assumptions that lead us to think that ‘something’ is worthy of our security and something else is not. In turn this implies specific claims about the values and the identity of the secured as well as the actions that should be undertaken to protect it. Security, therefore, is ‘an important window into our worlds’ (Grayson & Guillaume 2023, 3) as well as a way to imagine ways of being and acting in it.

The next part of this chapter proceeds by discussing how different theoretical approaches in security studies have answered the question ‘whose security?’.

Theories of (in)security

How can we answer the question ‘whose security?’. This part of the chapter engages with different ways to address this question by outlining key theoretical approaches to studying security. Each of the traditions that we present below are much richer and more complex, and this is just an introduction to some of their key tenets. However, it is very important to understand these as this will enable you to then deepen your knowledge of each (and more!) in the following chapters.

Before you start reading, it is important to consider that the order of appearance of each theoretical perspective reflects how the discipline of security studies has traditionally self-narrated its disciplinary history (Buzan & Hansen 2009). However, this does not reflect the chronological order of the emergence of these theoretical perspectives. For example, the point at which the discipline of security studies recognizes the importance of post-colonial scholarship (which is only very recently) must not be confused with the start of

postcolonial literature which far precedes its inclusion in security studies. Examining the disciplinary history allows us to showcase the growing diversification of debates within the field, illustrating that students of security during the Cold War had a narrower approach compared to the broader perspectives present today. This, in turn, links us back to our original question – whose security? Multiple theoretical perspectives give you the ability to approach the answer to this question from multiple angles.

Realism

For a long time, when confronted with the question ‘whose security?’, security studies scholars would have unquestionably asserted that protecting the state from the threat posed by other states (i.e. interstate war) was the answer. In fact, the state has historically been, and for certain security scholars remains, the main security referent, and as such posing the question ‘whose security?’ might have been regarded as almost unnecessary. Realism (in its different variations) has predominantly embraced this viewpoint. Stephen Walt articulates this perspective:

Security studies assumes that conflict between states is always a possibility... Accordingly, security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use, and control of military force. (1991, 212)

Realism presents a pessimistic view of global politics, portraying it as a domain where self-interested states interact within an anarchic international system. Anarchy, here, refers to the assumption that states are autonomous actors in an international arena which lacks a supreme authority that can restrain their actions. This lack of central authority, plus the impossibility of states knowing each other’s intentions, means that states are inherently distrustful and tend to embrace an approach guided by self-help, rational calculation and self-interest to ensure their security and power.

These proprieties mean that competition is the dominating feature of the international system, and cooperation is very difficult because states define their power and security in relative terms to those of other states. In terms of power, this means states will compare their power to that of other states. The increase of one state’s power could be perceived as threatening and potentially lead other states to ally against it to maintain an equilibrium or balance of power (Schweller 2016). Offensive realists emphasize this aspect, asserting that states act as power maximizers and exploit opportunities to disrupt the system for their benefit. Consequently, the system is seldom in balance, resulting in frequent wars (Mearsheimer 2001). Furthermore, the fact that security is also measured in relative terms implies that when a state strengthens its military capacity to enhance its security, another state may perceive it as a threat and respond in kind (remember, states for realists distrust each other due to the fact they cannot know each other’s intentions, nor can they rely on a higher authority as the system is anarchic). This dynamic can escalate as the first state, feeling increasingly insecure, augments its military capabilities, prompting a similar response from the second state and

triggering a spiral of insecurity, famously termed the 'security dilemma'. Regrettably, this spiral can unintentionally culminate in armed conflict (Jervis 1999).

In the realm of realist thought, the pursuit of power or security by states creates 'a relentless security competition, with the possibility of war always in the background' (Mearsheimer 1994, 11). Realists, therefore, tend to harbour a generally pessimistic outlook on the prospect of achieving international security and often view the possibility of war as a persistent and recurring concern.

To summarize, for realists, the core focus of the study of security should be theorizing ways that will help ensure the state's survival within an anarchic international system by protecting it via military means from external threats that primarily emanate from other states.

Liberalism

Many of the primary criticisms directed towards realist approaches to security have historically emerged from liberal thought. Liberalism is a rich and diverse political tradition. In this section, we focus on two main strands in the study of security. One, neoliberalism (also known as liberal institutionalism), is concerned with developing international institutions to improve interstate relations and state and international security. The second strand has focused on how improvements to the domestic security of states (in terms of their economy, system of governance and the rights of individuals) can benefit state and international security.

Both strands emerged during the Cold War. However, while the first strand has grounded itself in security studies from its onset, the second strand was initially located outside the discipline of security studies and grounded instead in development and comparative studies.

Liberal institutionalism (neoliberalism) is '[r]ecognised as the dominant strand of Liberal theory within contemporary International Relations' (Smith 2015, 21). Neoliberal scholars share with realists the assumption that the international system is anarchic and the main concern when studying security is the security of the state. Yet they believe interstate conflict is not inevitable. Instead, they focus on minimizing the likelihood of conflict and claim that international institutions foster interstate cooperation and mitigate the insecurities caused by anarchy.

Liberal institutionalists highlight a facet often overlooked by realism: that states are interested in cooperation to maximize gains. The term 'institutions' is used to describe these mechanisms. Institutions are defined as 'persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations' (Keohane 1989, 3). These institutions establish widely recognized rules or customary ways of conducting social interaction. Institutions create opportunities for cooperation in the international arena, minimizing the insecurities of anarchy rather than eliminating them. They achieve this by providing information and coordinating opportunities, ultimately enhancing the likelihood of cooperation and reducing the likelihood of conflict. This is achieved through various means, including discouraging cheating by promoting long-term cooperation that rewards loyalty and fostering interdependence between states which dissuades cheating in one area due to fear of retaliation in another.

In summary, liberalism generally presents a more positive outlook on the potential for cooperation among states or the need for conflict and believes that institutions significantly influence state behaviour in the pursuit of security. Consider the transformative process of European integration and the establishment of the EU, where France and Germany, once bitter enemies, achieved a level of cooperation that defies imagination when viewed through a purely realist lens. Even though they are seen as opponents, liberalism and realism have important similarities. They both see states as self-interested entities navigating anarchical international systems, and this leads them to approach the question of 'whose security?' in similar ways – that is, focusing on the state. However, they differ in their expectations regarding how this security can be attained. Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin stress this point when arguing that 'for better or worse, institutional [neoliberal] theory is a half-sibling of neorealism' (Keohane & Martin 1999, 3).

The second strand of liberalism explores several issues at the domestic level, positing that instability within states can significantly impact the security of both the international system and individual states. This perspective gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, coinciding with the era of decolonization, where former colonies sought inclusion as sovereign, autonomous entities within the anarchical system. The question of their inclusion became an object of discussion, especially through concepts of 'modernization', 'development' and 'democratization'. These concepts align with a branch of the liberal tradition that emphasizes the potential for human progress and highlights the pivotal role of domestic institutions, including constitutionalism, democracy and capitalism, in promoting this progress (Owen 2018). From this vantage point, the incorporation of new states into the established system aimed to align their processes with those of the 'First World', aspiring for similarity, if not sameness, with Western states. Cynthia Weber has argued that these concepts inherently imply a security concern: how to ensure the security of newly established states and, notably, how to prevent them from disrupting the existing system and posing a threat to the 'developed' and modern states. Therefore, while this aspect of liberal thought might not have been explicitly discussed in Cold-War-era security studies textbooks, '[s]ecurity has always been a hidden agenda of this tradition' (Weber 2021, 550). Understanding this perspective is crucial, as it continues to hold significant influence in shaping security claims today. For instance, the notion that fragile states serve as breeding grounds for terrorism underpins what is known as the security – development nexus, highlighting the ongoing relevance and impact of this line of thinking on contemporary security discourse. What do you think? What advantages/limitations do you perceive in thinking of security in these terms? Take a minute to reflect on this.

Reflection point

Is there a link between development and security?

Be aware that later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 13, you will be encouraged to engage critically with this understanding and question the assumptions at play in such accounts, but for now let's continue with our journey.

Broadening and deepening

Starting in the 1980s and intensifying after the end of the Cold War, security studies began to 'broaden' and 'deepen' its understanding of security issues and actors. The term 'broadening' encapsulates the pluralization of insecurities, arguing that focusing solely on states and interstate war overlooks 'many of the most intense salient contemporary security dynamics' (Krause & Williams 1996, 243). Without the pretence of being exhaustive, consider the following trends. First, new domains of security, such as space and cyber, present security dynamics that have the potential to exceed the control of states. Second, the rise of violent non-state actors, from organized crime to terrorist groups, and the increasing privatization of security, necessitates a different understanding of what constitutes security and who is presumed to provide it against which threats. Third, transnational and global issues like climate change and pandemics reshape or challenge established accounts of security predicated on the assumption of protecting state borders with military force.

The term 'deepening' suggests that security operates at different levels above and below the state. It questions the assumption that the answer to 'whose security?' should unequivocally be 'the state'. It proposes that there could be other plausible answers, encompassing broader entities like the region and the globe or focusing on smaller units, particularly the human. It is especially the shift towards human security which will need further consideration here as it constitutes a departure from the traditional focus on state security.

Considering human security challenges, a fundamental assumption often taken for granted by both realist and neoliberal accounts is the belief that as long as the state is secure from external threats (other states), the people within the state are secure. However, history is replete with examples where states have become threats to the very people they are supposed to protect, evident in instances of torture, ethnic cleansing or genocide. Moreover, think about situations of extreme poverty, highlighting a paradox where people may live free from military threats, but their daily survival is constantly threatened.

The notion of 'human security' gained traction, particularly within the United Nations, with the United Nations Development Programme report in 1994 (see Chapter 5). Here, 'Human security refers to the security of individuals and communities, expressed as both "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want". Severe threats to human security range from genocide and slavery to natural disasters such as hurricanes or floods to massive violations of the right to food, health and housing' (Kaldor 2007, 273).

In this framework, human security answers the question 'whose security?' by invoking a security referent – the human – distinct from the state. While individuals might indeed be citizens of a particular state, and their security should be a paramount concern, the category of humanity implies that in situations where there is a contrast between the security of the

state and the security of the human, the latter should be prioritized. While you can read more about the implications of this change for the answer to the question ‘whose security?’ in Chapter 5, at this point it is important to highlight that this change has significant ramifications. It opens up the possibility for the international community to consider military intervention in states perceived as unwilling or unable to safeguard their citizens. For instance, NATO military interventions in the Balkans (1993–1995 and 1999) and Libya (2011) were justified based on these principles (further details in Chapter 7).

Opening?

In addition to a broadening and deepening of security studies, the discipline has also seen an ‘Opening’ (Wibben 2008). This term captures heterogeneous (and at times opposing) approaches and theoretical orientations, which fall under the umbrella of ‘critical’ approaches to the study of security. Before engaging with these, we want to take a moment and discuss the adjective ‘critical’ briefly.

The tradition of critical thought and the meaning of critique are too rich and diverse to give you an account or even an overview of the different meanings and traditions which have been attributed to and have engaged with the meaning of critique. At the broadest level, critical thought indicates a disposition to question the world (Grayson & Guillaume 2023). Simply, thinking critically means refusing to take ‘it is what it is’ for an answer. When enticing you to think ‘critically’ about security, we are not inviting you to subscribe to a specific school of thought, but rather we suggest adopting an intellectual disposition to question. What are we questioning? And how?

A key point of practising critique is questioning what is taken for granted, what is indeed usually deemed out of questioning. Critiquing is strongly related to questioning, the opposite of accepting the state of things as they are, as if these were taken for granted. To give you a sense of what we mean by ‘taken for granted’, the term common sense comes to mind. ‘Common sense is what we know but don’t think about, what Roland Barthes described as “what-goes-without-saying”’ (Barthes, in Weber 2021, 58). Common sense works in a way that naturalizes certain claims as if these were irrefutable facts; saying that something is natural invites you to leave it unquestioned, as if it was beyond contestation, therefore beyond reasoning (Hollinger 1999). Saying that something is natural invites you to abandon the idea that changes could be made. Naturalization therefore makes something appear at once unquestionable and unchangeable. But ‘these sorts of “natural facts” are arguably the most intensely political stories of all, because of what they do (they remove themselves and the tradition they support from political debate)’ (Weber 2021, 65). Furthermore, accepting something as natural or common sense has important limitations for our ability to critique. For example, if we accept the statement ‘Humans are self-interested’ as common sense, this will shape how we think about our interactions as well as our political possibilities of living together.

But, how to practice critique? What kind of questions can we ask to de-naturalize our knowledge?

There is no single answer to these questions, and as you will see while engaging with this textbook, each author conducts critique in their own way (indeed, prescribing a singular method for critique would be quite dogmatic – the opposite of being critical). Yet a general orientation runs through *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction*, which is to understand critique as immanent. Immanent critique considers it an impossibility to find a point of critique that is objective and/or beyond critique. Instead, immanent critique sees knowledge to be ‘conditional and delimited’ (Walker 2015, 2). This acknowledgement means focusing our critique on how certain claims appear to be beyond questioning by asking questions about their historical emergence (historicization) and their geographical, cultural, political location (contextualization) (Riemann 2021, 2022). The aim is to understand the ways in which certain ideas/theories/ways of seeing the world became dominant (even common sense), while others were excluded, discarded or silenced. This line of questioning pushes us to interrogate the interconnection between knowledge and power, which made and makes certain stories look reasonable and others not (Weber 2021).

Critical thinking, therefore, asks you to be vigilant and sceptical of statements that assume that something is or must be beyond debate. This vigilance also includes (especially, one might say) your own opinions and beliefs. Critique requires you to adopt a line of self-questioning. Pause your reading for a minute and think. What do you take for granted when thinking about security? What are the assumptions that you think do not require discussion because these are uncontestedly true?. After this brief reflection on the meaning of ‘being critical’ let’s briefly look at different approaches which broadly fall under the umbrella of Critical Security Studies.

Reflection point

Write down ‘your common-sense’ assumption about security and try to think where and how you came to think that way.

Critical security studies

‘Critical security studies’ (CSS) encompasses a range of approaches that share a deep discontent with what is commonly referred to as ‘traditional’ security studies (approaches such as realism and liberalism). Its overarching goal is to challenge the fundamental principles underpinning dominant perspectives that centre around the state and the military. In this section we will focus on three different approaches to CSS as outlined by a group of self-identified ‘critical scholars’ (c.a.s.e. collective, 2006). The selection of these three strands is not an act of closure or an attempt at defining who gets to be critical and who does not in the study of security. Indeed, as we discussed above, being critical is a disposition not reducible to a school of thought.

If, as we outlined above in the section on ‘being critical’, security claims cannot be taken at face value, then a key concern lies in understanding the process by which something becomes understood as a security issue. **Securitization theory**, which originated from a research group at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute in the 1980s, with Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and

Jaap de Wilde being key founding fathers, is aimed at understanding this process (Buzan et al. 1998). At its core, the theory argues that security is not something objectively 'real' but rather a subjective and politically driven process. Following securitization theory, 'security' issues become security problems when labelled as such, rather than being inherently threatening. As such, the theory places special emphasis on 'speech acts', which is the act of declaring something as a security issue. By employing specific linguistic and discursive techniques, the securitizing actor (usually a government) attempts to create a sense of urgency, fear and necessity for immediate action. For example, when a government frames an issue as an existential threat to a specific referent object (state, society or any other entity), and if this move is successful, we witness the process of 'securitization'. This often grants securitizing actors the power to respond to the issue with exceptional measures even at the cost of suspending democratic frameworks (Rossi 2020). For instance, reflect on how the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US prompted the authorization of extrajudicial forms of incarceration, like Guantanamo Bay. Through this lens, securitization illuminates the perilous nature of security, wherein an inability to address issues through regular political means can result in the implementation of authoritarian measures (Neal 2006). Securitization, therefore, does not provide an answer to the question 'whose security?'. Instead, it urges us to scrutinize the processes of securitization, wherein something is construed as a threat, consequently identifying a security referent that needs protection.

Secondly, the attention to the constructed nature of security raises another line of inquiry: how some narratives of security have become dominant and others are discarded. Posing this question invites reflection on another critical aspect of security: its conditions of possibility, especially the power–knowledge relations that perpetuate our understanding of what needs to be secured, assuming this understanding to be common sense (Neal 2006). Asking such a question not only can focus on the securitization acts of a government, but needs to significantly widen its net and focus on the societal and cultural ways in which security is constructed. This necessitates a specific sensitivity to how specific **discourses** of security are produced and circulated, and how some become dominant. This approach underscores the sociology of security, wherein the role of security practitioners and technocrats is especially questioned (Bigo 1996), along with a focus on everyday security practices. For example, studies have analysed how security professionals, including police, private security personnel, intelligence services and experts, operationalize security through their routine activities, encompassing tasks like data collection, surveillance and profiling. This approach aligns with the need to examine the constructed nature of the response to the question 'whose security?'. However, it diverges from securitization theory by placing less emphasis on 'speech acts' and instead focuses on the role that actions, technologies and professional knowledges play in providing such an answer (Bigo 1996; Huysmans 2006).

A third significant concern of CSS revolves around how to challenge existing accounts of security and insecurity, particularly their excessive focus on state security at the expense of individual or human security. This approach is guided by a normative concern to make security genuinely work in favour of people. Usually associated with the Welsh school of security studies, Ken Booth has argued for a rethinking of the meaning of security (and therefore security politics) in this direction, utilizing the concept of emancipation. Emancipation calls

for a re-evaluation of the concept of security, aiming to align it more closely with notions of freedom and ‘freeing people’ from physical, socio-political and economic constraints, with specific attention to how states’ concerns can override and prevent these liberations (Booth 1991, 319). Differently from the previous two approaches, the Welsh school provides us an answer to the question ‘whose security?’ by placing the ‘human’ at the centre of it. However, its critique focuses on how realist and liberal approaches to security have either overlooked the human or not given a satisfactory response to it. This approach is driven by a normative aspiration to ensure that security genuinely serves the best interests of its (human) subjects and contributes to their progressive enhancement. In other words, while the previous two critical approaches warn us against the dangers of framing problems in terms of security, the Welsh school wants to harness the powerful language of security for the advantage of human emancipation. Consequently, the role of security scholars and citizens involves advocating for and supporting progressive political initiatives, such as global human rights frameworks, in the name of security.

While this brief overview can only provide a glimpse into the diverse critical perspectives within the study of security, you will find that many of the chapters in *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction* will refer to and expand on each of those.

Postcolonialism

The discipline of security studies has only recently recognized postcolonial interventions, but as you will see throughout this textbook, postcolonialism makes vital contributions to engaging critically with security. Postcolonialism is varied and multifaceted, comprising various orientations and communities of scholars and activists. As such, it is unsurprising that the definition of ‘postcolonial’ is contested. However, as Pinar Bilgin notes, ‘thinking postcolonially need not be. For it entails taking into consideration the imprint that colonialism has left on the colonisers, the colonised and everyone else’ (Bilgin 2021b).

What is colonialism?

Colonialism can be characterized via three intertwined aspects: capitalism, racism and knowledge production (Nur Küçük 2020, 158). First, colonialism is rooted in capitalism, driven by the pursuit of profit through the exploitation of resources and labour in colonized lands. According to Persaud and Sajed (2018, 3) European colonialism established capitalism as the dominant mode of production, reshaping societies globally (p. 3). Second, the beginnings of racism in world politics can be traced back to the start of colonialism with the conquest of the Americas in the 15th century. As such, argues Shilliam (2022, 277), race is a ‘fundamental ordering principle of world politics in that it divides humanity into a hierarchy of distinct groups’ which leads to ‘discriminatory and exclusionary’ practices. Third, colonialism entails specific forms of knowledge production

(Continued)

used to justify colonial subjugation. European colonial powers employ representations that attribute themselves with 'all the virtues and achievements of enlightenment, such as reason, science, progress, universality, beauty, truth', while associating their others ('the Orient', 'the rest', 'the Third World', 'the non-West') with 'dark irrationality, superstition, backwardness, particularity, ugliness, and myth' (Ling 2002, 70).

How should we think 'postcolonially' about security? To begin, it means acknowledging colonialism's global and enduring legacies. Indeed, the 'post' in postcolonialism does not suggest that colonialism is over but rather calls for 'a double re-engagement with global politics as both historically constituted through colonialism and presently delineated by struggles over colonial legacies even in an era where, formally speaking, colonialism has mostly ended' (Rutazibwa & Shilliam 2018, 1). Bilgin (2021b) calls this the 'imprint that colonialism has left', which means considering the 'colonial present' (Gregory 2004) and the constellations of power, knowledge and geography that continue to impact lives worldwide.

While you will deepen your understanding of postcolonial contributions throughout this textbook, it's important to outline how this perspective challenges the responses of other theories to the question 'whose security?'

As an opening, a postcolonial perspective on security urges us to acknowledge important imprints of the erasure of colonialism from accounts of security. Security studies often overlook the imperial and racial dimensions of key world events (Adamson 2020). An illustrative instance of this neglect is that of the seldom-considered significant contributions that black American soldiers and soldiers from the British colonies made during World War II (Barkawi & Laffey 2006). The erasure of histories signifies a broader pattern, namely the marginalization of perspectives from the Global South. Consequently, 'security studies' offers limited frameworks for 'making sense of the historical experiences of the weak and the powerless who comprise most of the world's population' (Barkawi & Laffey 2006, 332). For example, the category of terrorism as a de-legitimizing label is deployed to frame the 'armed resistance to northern domination of the international system' (Barkawi & Laffey 2006, 332). As highlighted by Whitham and Ali in Chapter 9, even today, the concept of terrorism is frequently used as a tool to delegitimize non-white forms of political violence, while it is rarely applied to describe instances of white violence.

Building on this, postcolonialism underscores the reliance of security studies on racialized forms of knowledge perpetuated through the categories and concepts used to discuss security (Bilgin 2010). Most of these concepts developed out of the colonial encounter and reflect deeply racist worldviews. Errol Henderson, for example, has shown that the idea of anarchy as the structural condition of international relations according to realism and liberalism 'was largely assumed to inhere in the "primitive" polities of the "inferior" races – primarily in ... what we'd now consider the "third world"' (2013, 85). As these concepts form the foundation for the study of security, the discipline of security studies is implicated in legitimizing and reproducing forms of racism and colonial domination, both historically and today.

Therefore, a postcolonial perspective exposes how other theories of security (including those which we have considered so far) hide in plain sight their real answer to the question ‘whose security?’, which is not the state, not the human, but instead the maintenance of an international order based on white supremacy, understood as ‘the system of domination by which white people have historically ruled over and, in certain important ways, continue to rule over nonwhite people’ (Mills 1997, 1–2). Contemporary security discourses which label former colonies as failing or failed states are an example of this. Viewing former colonies as both a threat to ‘advanced’ states in the global north and as requiring assistance through modernization, democratization, and development perpetuates white supremacy. These types of security discourses relegate the non-white to an inferior political, societal and moral status (Grovoqui 2002).

In conclusion, a key contribution of postcolonial scholarship to security studies is to cast doubt on how security studies have responded to the question ‘whose security?’. In the next section, we will show how feminism also calls key assumptions of security studies in doubt

Feminism

In 1989, Cynthia Enloe posed a crucial question – ‘Where are the women?’ (2000 [1989]). We can take this question as the starting point of feminist interventions into the realm of security studies. The answer can only be: everywhere. However, the prevailing theoretical lenses that shaped security studies since the beginning of the Cold War, namely realism(s), have overlooked the importance of **gender** in their analysis of security. The reason for this lies in the framing of the question ‘whose security?’. Indeed, answering the state or the human to this question assumes that security concerns are essentially identical for both men and women. However, we cannot automatically equate the security of the state with the security of women. Similarly, the security of men does not necessarily translate to security for women. Think about it: you can think of a world in which men are very secure in the state and yet this could be hell for the women living in it. (Have you watched the series *The Handmaid’s Tale*? If not check it out.) Furthermore, it is evident that women face unique security threats, and this extends to anyone who does not conform to assigned biological and/or gender roles and identities. This includes individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+, queer, transgender, gender non-binary, and those challenging traditional gender norms. As Spike Peterson explains, “real world” events are not adequately addressed by androcentric accounts that render women and gender relations invisible’ (1992a, 197).

After the end of the Cold War, the policy realm, significantly the United Nations, has actively embraced the integration of women’s security as a central aspect of the security agenda. Under the broader human security framework, the security of women and children, especially their vulnerability in times of violent conflict, has gained prominence within the UN (see Chapter 5). Notably, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security), adopted on October 31, 2000, plays a pivotal role in acknowledging the unique impact of conflict-related violence on women, particularly through gender-based violence such as rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Additionally, it highlights the frequent exclusion of women from peace processes and post-conflict resolution arrangements.

While this development has been largely welcomed by feminist scholars and activists, they have also emphasized that feminist contributions to security go beyond the mere inclusion of women in the security agenda. In fact, a fundamental feminist contribution has been to uncover how security is inherently gendered in both theory and practice.

What does it mean to say that something/someone is gendered?

Gender refers to the socially constructed behavioural expectations, identity stereotypes and role assignments linked to masculinity and femininity within a specific socio-political and historical context. It is essential to understand that femininity and masculinity are not isolated but are part of gender relations, which 'define what is masculine or feminine, where particular attributes are said to inhere in "men" and "women", and therefore different systems of values can be said to derive from masculine or feminine subjects' (Khalili 2011, 1476).

The focus on gender – masculinity and femininity rather than men and women – carries two significant implications. First, as highlighted by Laura J. Shepherd, the focus on gendered violence as 'violence against women (and children)' in itself reproduces existing gender relations (and therefore gender subordination) as it 'functions to constitute the subject of "woman" as a perpetual victim, in need of protection and lacking in agency, while positioning men as saviors' (2009, 212). Second, the inclusion of women in prominent roles does not automatically challenge existing gender relations. The integration of women into frontline combat roles illustrates this. Soldiering has been historically characterized as a 'manly activity' and being a soldier has been central to the construct of masculinity (Hooper 2001, 47). Hence, merely including women in masculinized roles is insufficient to eradicate gender subordination without challenging the masculine traits expected of men (or women when included). Indeed, '[w]ar-making and warfighting have been associated traditionally not only with men, but also with the traits that men are expected to have, or masculinities' (Sjoberg 2014, 2–3). If we assume that a woman can also be effective in warfighting, we are not necessarily questioning the masculinity and the gendered nature of warfighting; rather, we might be reinforcing it through the inclusion of some women who, however, must conform to masculine norms. In fact, women might even be pushed to exhibit hyper-masculinized traits to fit in (D'Amico & Beckman 1995, 8). This, in turn, reproduces established gender relations and gender subordination of feminine traits.

Though feminist security studies encompass a wide range of approaches and perspectives, Laura Sjoberg identified a set of common themes uniting these. An important starting point is that feminist security studies project a broad understanding of what constitutes a security problem and who should be secured. Within this perspective, security threats not only encompass war and international violence but also extend to domestic violence, rape, poverty, gender subordination and ecological degradation (Sjoberg 2010b). In addition to this broad understanding of insecurities, feminist scholars also challenge the assumption that

state security equals women's security by highlighting 'that secure states often contain insecure women' (Sjoberg 2010b, 5). Furthermore, feminist approaches to security highlight the gendered nature of security discourses and the gender hierarchies these establish, which perpetuate inequality in perceived gender difference. Adopting a feminist perspective on security therefore has the potential to transform the theory and practice of security, because '[i]f we were to re-envision security as starting from the perspective of individual women's lives, it would change not only what security is, but how it is conceptualized, operationalized, and acted on' (Sjoberg 2010b, 5). The insights generate via the themes above culminate in a concluding theme: 'that the omission of gender from work on international security does not make that work gender-neutral or unproblematic' (Sjoberg 2010b, 5). Instead, it simply obscures and therefore reproduces existing gender relations and hierarchies. Many chapters of this textbook draw on feminist approaches to analyse security, but for now we want to conclude this section by briefly reflecting on the intersection of feminism and postcolonialism. These critical approaches have increasingly converged to analyse the insecurities experienced by individuals, particularly women, considering the influence of intersecting identities like race and class (Crenshaw 1991). It is insufficient, for instance, to contemplate women's security without recognizing that women of colour in the Global South may encounter different insecurities compared to white women in the Global North. In other words, 'gender is never "alone" but always intersected with and by other vectors of identity' (Masters & Zalewski 2022, 16), including class, race, sexuality and geopolitical location. The concept of precarity, as proposed by Judith Butler, seeks to encompass and understand the intersection of these dimensions.

'[P]recarity' designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection. Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection. So by precarity we may be talking about populations that starve or who near starvation, but we might also be talking about sex workers who have to defend themselves against both street violence and police harassment.

Precarity is, of course, directly linked with gender norms, since we know that those who do not live their genders in intelligible ways are at heightened risk for harassment and violence. Gender norms have everything to do with how and in what way we can appear in public space; how and in what way the public and private are distinguished, and how that distinction is instrumentalized in the service of sexual politics; who will be criminalized on the basis of public appearance; who

(Continued)

will fail to be protected by the law or, more specifically, the police, on the street, or on the job, or in the home. Who will be stigmatized; who will be the object of fascination and consumer pleasure? Who will have medical benefits before the law? Whose intimate and kinship relations will, in fact, be recognized before the law? We know these questions from transgender activism, from feminism, from queer kinship politics, and also from the gay marriage movement and the issues raised by sex workers for public safety and economic enfranchisement. So these norms are not only instances of power; and they do not only reflect broader relations of power; they are one way that power operates.

(Butler, 2009)

'More-than-human' security

We are almost at the end of this overview. Before concluding, we want to push you to consider that our answers to 'whose security?' so far have been centred around humans or around humans' social and political constructs (i.e. states and the international system). Is that all? Can we answer the question 'whose security?' beyond a human-centric lens? Security generally does not give attention to other life forms that contribute to and are impacted by conditions of our human (in)security. Have you – for example – ever stopped to think about how war also implies the killing of animals and the destruction of their natural environment? And what would it mean to include these 'more-than-human' actors in our discussions of security?

The emerging perspective of posthuman security aims to engage with this question and to challenge the position of the human as the ultimate answer to the question 'whose security?'. Audra Mitchell describes this perspective as follows:

'Posthuman security'... starts from the proposition that international security is not solely a matter of securing human lives and bodies. Diverse beings other than humans are implicated in the conditions of (in)security. Whether other animals, machines, networks, minerals, water, ecosystems or complex assemblages thereof, a wide range of beings other than humans shape the contexts of (in)security and the ways that we define them. (Mitchell 2014)

The posthuman security perspective thus raises attention to an aspect generally ignored by security studies, that the security of 'us' humans is embedded within the security of life on Earth and the multiplicity of 'more-than-human' beings with which we are entangled. As such, '[p]ost-humanism rejects a dualism between the human and the rest of nature, and hence not only disputes a human-comprised referent for security but also divides between the human and the rest of nature. Humans are 'of' nature rather than 'in' nature ... there is nothing that is outside of nature' (Cudworth & Hobden 2017, 75).

Let us consider some key implications of thinking this way. First, 'security threats do not affect humans in isolation. Rather, they irrupt within the heterogeneous collectives that humans co-constitute with diverse nonhuman beings' (Mitchell 2014, 5). We only need to

think about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected both humans and animals. Second, it invites us to re-think why we think about humanity as fundamentally distinct from nature. For example, historicizing such a claim means considering that this distinction is tied to the emergence of European modernity and it perhaps must be fundamentally challenged if we want to secure 'our' future (see Chapters 6 and 20).

The above considerations would pave the way to think and act differently about security. For example, we could consider 'whether major ecosystems – such as the Amazon basin, the Arctic and Antarctic, and the Pacific Ocean – should be given the status of nations in the UN General Assembly and other bodies' (Burke et al. 2016, 516). Furthermore, posthuman security might even force us to question the notion of security altogether. Following Mitchell 'the kind of "security" that might emerge from a serious engagement with posthumanist thought may not resemble anything like traditional and existing paradigms. In this sense, perhaps this line of thought would better be called 'post-human post-security' (2014, 14).

Either of these lines of thinking really pushes us to think more about 'whose security?' we are referring to and the implications of our answers for ourselves and/with planet Earth.

Having concluded the overview of key theoretical perspectives, the next section will outline the guide to the textbook and clarify the meaning of 'applied' in *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction*.

Theory and practice of security: A guide to the textbook

So far, this chapter has invited you to consider why the study of security is important and introduced you to a variety of theoretical perspectives from within the field of security studies. Now, we want you to consider how you can use this textbook to further your knowledge. To do this, we invite you to think about the title: *Security Studies: An Applied Introduction*. What does 'applied' mean? As we explain below, this is the keyword informing the structure of this textbook.

By proposing an applied approach to the study of security, we want to emphasize the importance of the link between the ways we think about security and the way we act in its name. In other words, we want you to think about the ways in which theories of security relate to practices of security. If, as we said at the beginning of this chapter, security presupposes the answer to a question (whose security?) we must also ask what practical implications the different possible answers have in the real world. This means that theories are not removed from the real world far away in some 'ivory tower', but instead, that we need to think how those are part of it.

To examine this last point further, it is necessary to reflect on what it means to say that theories are part of the real world. This statement needs some further explanation, as we do not see 'theories' walking around on the streets.

As Cynthia Weber states, theories are stories that make sense of the world (Weber 2021). These stories help to organize our knowledge, and in turn, this knowledge 'enables, privileges,

or legitimises certain practices while inhibiting or marginalising others' (Bilgin 1999, 33). This means that theories contribute to constituting reality rather than simply explaining it. As such, '[h]ow the problem at hand is understood shapes thinking about the solutions' (Bilgin 2021b). So theories of security matter because they inform practices of security. To go back to the example at the beginning of this chapter, if we theorize that migrants are a threat, this will guide our evaluations of which actions (i.e. which security policies) are deemed necessary while excluding alternative possibilities.

If a theory is one possible story, this also means that many other stories are possible. In other words, no theory (like no story) exhausts all possible ways to make sense of the world, but rather each theory is necessarily partial Rossi (2023). By partial we mean two things. First, a theory is always a redaction of a real-world problem. Indeed, no matter how detailed it is, a theory will never manage to capture all the complexity of the real world (Levine 2012). On reflection, this might not even be the aim of 'theoretical thinking'. When you theorize, (i.e. make sense of something), you want to know only the things that matter the most to organize your knowledge. As Anne Sisson Runyan (2019, 28) has put it, this means that adopting a specific theoretical perspective shapes 'our thinking by focusing our attention on what seems most relevant'. If then we base our security policies on the basis of the elements which we think are the most relevant to make sense of the problem at hand, we need to ask ourselves what stories we excluded, and therefore what practices we are excluding too.

This leads us to the second point, which is that each theory (as any story) is not neutral but 'always for someone and for some purpose' (Cox 1981, 128). This means always considering how theoretical knowledge is situated – which means that knowledge is not independent of where it is produced and by whom. Making such a claim means assuming that the gap between our theorization of the world and the real world will never be able to be closed by discovering what is 'really' real. This is because there is not an outside, neutral and objective position from which the researcher can stand and observe how the world really is. Instead, researchers (or security analysts) are themselves parts of the world and so are their stories that make sense of it (i.e. their theories).

Therefore, if theories are already part of reality (as they contribute to constituting it) and are always partial (i.e. they are always a redaction and are always situated), we cannot find one theory (one story) that exhausts all possible explanations and is true everywhere and always. Instead, what we can study are the different stories about security as well as the processes through which certain stories (theories) manage to prevail and shape security practices while others are side-lined and even silenced.


At the same time, we can ask ourselves what happens if we change the story of how we understand/frame a specific security problem (for example, what if we stop thinking about migrants as a security threat and instead highlight how a multicultural society can benefit everyone?). Perhaps if this change concerns only one of us it will have little effect, but what if many of us (or let's say a key policy maker) would adopt a different way of making sense of the world? Would that change security policies? And how? What conditions would be necessary for this change?

The textbook is organized to guide you through these questions, to enable you to make sense of how real-world security policies are informed by specific ways of thinking about security as well as asking to evaluate and think why certain stories are excluded and what it would take to think and act differently.

To achieve this, Part 1 focuses on the question ‘whose security?’. Chapter 2 opens this part by situating this question, in relation to other values and aspirations arising from modernity. The subsequent chapters then discuss how the question ‘whose security?’ has been answered by different theories of security (focusing on the theories you have briefly encountered in this chapter, i.e. (neo)realism, (neo)liberalism, feminism, postcolonialism, critical theories, posthumanism). To do so, each chapter in Part 1 takes into consideration one possible answer (which we call ‘security referent’), particularly the international, the state, the human and the beyond the human, and it illustrates how different theoretical lenses understand this ‘referent’ differently and therefore arrive at different conclusions about what it means to secure it.

The Part 2 chapters focus on analysing different contemporary issues, from interstate war, to organized crime, to space security. To emphasize the link between theories and practices of security (how the problems have been understood and their real-world responses), each chapter adopts what we call the Explore – Understand – Respond (EUR) logic. Each chapter starts by presenting you with a real-world example which speaks to the wider issue discussed in that chapter (EXPLORE). It then proceeds by illustrating a variety of ways to theorize about this issue (UNDERSTAND). It then concludes by examining the concrete responses, how these have been justified (i.e. through which stories/theories?) and with what policy implications (RESPOND). Each chapter then presents you with an additional real-world example using a visual problem-mapping exercise. As you can see from the template example provided below, this representation reproduces the Explore – Understand – Respond logic of the chapters in Part 2. This visual representation helps you to break down the analysis of a security issue into its essential dimensions (context, problem, key actors, key theories/ideas, responses, policy implications) to consolidate your understanding.

SECURITY STUDIES
In Digital Editions



Edited by
Norman Risset &
Malte Rissmann

Problem-Mapping Exercise

Context

— Explore —

Problem

— Respond —

Responses

— Understand —


Key Concepts and Theories

— Explore —

Key Actors

— Respond —

Policy Implications



Finally, each chapter in Part 2 includes a QR code, which gives you access to a practitioner video with their account of how they faced a specific problem, and a discussion of how they interpreted it and what actions they undertook. This gives you a first-hand account of how security is thought of and made. As you watch this video, we invite you to complete a practical security analysis exercise. Use the blank problem-mapping exercise template provided online, like the one shown on the previous page, to analyse the practitioner's account. As you will see, we adopted a very broad definition of who is a practitioner and throughout Part 2 you will hear from a variety of voices, from high-level government officials to activists on the ground, all practising security and imagining possible responses. Finally, we want you to notice another important pedagogical feature, which concludes each chapter in Part 2. This is called 'Security beyond the real', where you will find useful suggestions of fictional books, movies and series, as well as documentaries, to continue exploring the topic.

Matching different learning styles, all these features, combined, will push you to question your own assumptions about security and interrogate how contemporary security politics are shaped in theory and practice.

Review questions

- 1 Why is it important to ask the question 'whose security'?
- 2 What is the relationship between theories and practices of security?
- 3 What does it mean to move from state-centric to human-centric security?
- 4 How do gender and postcolonial lenses challenge our understanding of security?

Further reading

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