

Amplifying the Social Dimensions of Security

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Introduction

The concepts of security and insecurity have been forever associated with scholarly contemplation on international relations. Thucydides wrote that "real reason" for the Peloponnesian War was linked to rising insecurity among the Spartans: "What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the *fear* which this caused in Sparta."¹ More than two millennia later a similar idea is echoed: "The feeling of insecurity, and the fears which it engenders, are undoubtedly the strongest potential causes of war in the world today."²

Nonetheless, the conceptual arena of security has remained impoverished by the reluctance of international relations scholars to subject it to thorough scrutiny and sustained examination. It should be observed, for example, that the most influential textbook in international relations, namely Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*, did not address the idea of security directly. For the most part the analysis of security was married to the dominant state-centric/anarchic-systemic model of international relations. Outside this Realist framework the concept of security was emptied largely of meaning or sensibility.

This condition started to change by the early 1980s. Initially, a group of scholars began to systematically redefine the concept of security in a manner that directed attention towards the limited opportunity that "military" responses offered to "security" problems. Their primary activity was to *redefine* security in terms of an expanded idea to "threat," with the implication of these efforts necessarily questioning the appropriateness of military solutions - a politically important position given the thrust of Reaganism at that time. With the emergence of a clear post-positivist trend within IR by the late 1980s, however, a number of scholars began to address

¹ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, (Penguin, 1954), p. 49.

² Quote attributed to Wickham Steed in Clyde Eagleton, *Analysis of the Problem of War*, (Garland Publishing, 1972), p. 55.

redefinitional efforts along axiological, conceptual and empirical grounds. These latter efforts - herein identified as an *Alternative school* - yielded important intellectual sanction for political movements, including women's organizations, aboriginal peoples, labour groups, the urban poor and the ecological movement, that often broach ideas of security within the context of a broader transformative agenda. International relations scholarship is arriving at the point, that is, where the breadth of intellectual activity regarding security reflects its polypolitical imbrications at the global and local levels.

An exposition of the full scope of this novel critical line is the primary purpose of this paper.

Development of the Concept of Security

Perhaps the most striking thing about the concept of security within the field of international relations in the post-war period was its undertreatment. Although always implicitly central to any analytical framework within the field of international relations, the need to develop the concept appears to have been overridden by the attention given to the more central organizing concept of power. It is instructive to observe that the main text book in international relations failed to explore the concept of security directly.³ Barry Buzan has identified five reasons for the conceptual underdevelopment of security. First, the idea of security is too complex and has therefore been bypassed in favour of more manageable ideas. Secondly, he notes the overlap between the concept of security and that of power. "In the Realist orthodoxy," Buzan writes, "power dominated both as end and as means. Security necessarily shrank conceptually to being a way of saying either how well any particular state or allied group of states was doing in the struggle for power,

³ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics and Power: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th edition (Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

or how stable the balance of power overall appeared to be."⁴ As a third point, Buzan notes that the assortment of revolts against the Realist tradition within international relations have tended to shy away from the concept of security. With respect to the literature on interdependence, for example, he notes that the "inclination was to push the traditional, military power-oriented Realist model into the background, seeing its competitive, fragmented, force-based approach as increasingly irrelevant to the interwoven network world of international political economy." The nature of Strategic Studies as a sub-field lies behind the fourth reason for the conceptual underdevelopment surrounding security. Buzan notes that Strategic Studies has conventionally offered a shorter-term policy oriented perspective, has been directly linked to Anglo-American defense needs, and has a primary concern with military matters. As Buzan notes: "Security is about much more than military capability and relations, and this ... has made Strategic Studies an infertile seedbed for the further growth of the concept." Finally, and perhaps most provocatively, Buzan claims that any definitiveness around the idea of security would undermine the utility derived from its symbolic ambiguity:

An undefined notion of national security offers scope for power-maximising strategies to political and military elites, because of the considerable leverage over domestic affairs which can be obtained by invoking it. While such leverage may sometimes be justified, as in the case of Britain's mobilisation during the Second World War, the natural ambiguity of foreign threats during peacetime makes it easy to disguise more sinister intentions in the cloak of national security... Cultivation of hostile images abroad can justify intensified political surveillance, shifts of resources to the military, and other such policies with deep implications for the conduct of domestic political life. At an extreme, the need for national security can even be evoked as a reason for not discussing it.⁵

⁴ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, (Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Consequently, for most of the post-war period, the field of international relations paradoxically employed the concept of security but failed to subject it to any critical scrutiny.

Two notable exceptions to this trend appeared during the 1950s. The first was John Herz's discussion of the security dilemma.⁶ In his response to the various forms of "Idealist Internationalism" Herz posited an account of international relations which placed the concept of security at the centre of analysis. His first move was to observe that whenever we find a constellation of groups or social units that are not organized into a "higher unity" there arises the condition known as the security dilemma:

Groups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups or individuals. Striving to attain security from such an attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.⁷

One mechanism of the power struggle for Herz is the unending consolidation of lower groups into intermediate and better organized groups. This process culminates in the "extreme manifestation" of the security dilemma in international relations:

This *homo homini lupus* situation does not preclude social cooperation as another fundamental fact of social life. But even cooperation and solidarity tend to become elements in the conflict situation, part of their function being the consolidation and the strengthening of particular groups in their competition with other groups. The struggle for security, then, is merely raised from the individual or lower-group level to a higher-group level. Thus, families and tribes may overcome the power game

⁶ John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2 (1950), 157-180.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

in their internal relations in order to face other families or tribes; larger groups may overcome it to face other classes unitedly; entire nations may compose their internal conflicts in order to face other nations.⁸

The security dilemma, according to Herz, constitutes an intractable feature of human life in the condition of anarchy, especially within the field of international relations. In international politics there have been two traditional responses: "Either the approach has been expressive of a utopian and often chiliastic Political Idealism, or - when disillusionment with the idealist's ability to mould the 'realist' fact frustrates expectations - it has taken refuge in an equally extreme, power-political and power-glorifying Political Realism."⁹

Herz's formulation contains the common observation that rising spirals of power are associated with falling spirals of insecurity. On the other hand, however, it contains the novel observation that the engine of this dynamic is the struggle for security itself. Power is reduced to the status of an instrumentality. Herz's formulation of the security dilemma challenges the conventional power-centred model of international relations, but it was a challenge that was not taken up analytically. This has the effect of confirming, at least to some degree, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of security, as well, at least in the sense that the challenge does not appear to have been recognized, that the concepts of security and power have been collapsed into each other, and treated, to a large extent, synonymously: "Reduced to little more than a synonym for power," Buzan reminds us, "security could have little independent relevance in wider systemic terms, and therefore the security dilemma approach could function at best as a minor adjunct to the power model of international relations."¹⁰

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁰ **Barry Buzan**, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, p. 3.

The second exception appeared in Arnold Wolfers' discussion of the increasingly widespread appeals to 'national security' in the immediate post-war period.¹¹ For Wolfers, this appeal is "understandable" in view of the Cold War and the threat of external aggression, especially when compared with earlier periods when the focus of national attention would have been tilted towards the depression and the need for social reform. The problem, however, is that the idea of national security is sufficiently ambiguous to warrant serious concern. He notes that this ambiguity "may be permitting everyone to label whatever policy he favours with an attractive and possibly deceptive name."¹² Wolfers claims that "it would be an exaggeration to claim that the symbol of national security is nothing but a stimulus to semantic confusion," that we "know roughly" what is meant by it, but that it still "leaves room for more confusion than sound political counsel or scientific usage can afford."¹³ He is motivated by the concern that the "term security covers a range of goals so wide that highly divergent policies can be interpreted as policies of security."¹⁴ In an attempt to clarify the idea of national security, Wolfers identifies three distinct phases through which decision makers must pass. First, he speaks of security in terms of the protection of 'national' values previously acquired, and refers to Walter Lippmann's idea that "a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values." While these values are not a 'given' for Wolfers, that is, that decision makers must define them, it is clear this difficulty should not be overdrawn. He matter of factly stresses that "national independence" must rank high "not merely for its own sake but for the guarantee it may offer to values like liberty,

¹¹ Arnold Wolfers, "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol," *Discord and Collaboration*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), chapter 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

justice, and peace."¹⁵ Secondly, the appropriate "level" of security must be targeted by decision makers in recognition of the fact that "efforts for security are bound to be experienced as a burden..."¹⁶ Wolfers writes that a number of different factors including the salience of external threats, national character and convention will influence the degree of security that a nation targets. Finally, decision makers must find the "means" to obtain the targeted level of security: "It may be good advice in one instance to appeal for greater effort and more armaments; it may be no less expedient and morally advisable in another instance to call for moderation and for greater reliance on means other than coercive power."¹⁷ Consequently, Wolfers drew attention to the political nature of appeals to 'national security', and attempted to minimize this ambiguity by identifying the process through which *national security* could be established.

Redefining the National Security Problem

Although Wolfers and Herz threw down the conceptual gauntlet, the concept of security remained in an emaciated state for most of the post-war period. Beginning in the late 1970s and continuing throughout the 1980s, however, there has been a flurry of intellectual activity around the concept of security. This intellectual effort received stimulus from two high profile reports that chiselled at the edges of conventional views of security. The first was the Brundtland Report by the World Commission on the Environment and Development entitled *Our Common Future*. The second was the Palme Report by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues entitled *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival*.¹⁸ These studies contained a number of pivotal themes,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁸ *Our Common Future: World Commission on Environment and Development*, [Chairman Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norway] (Oxford University Press, 1987); *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival*, [Palme Report], (Simon and

especially the need to demilitarize the concept of security, that were simultaneously scrutinized in the scholarly literature. This revitalized inquiry into security contains two basic directions. The first concerns the attempt to afford the concept its due, so to speak, by expanding its relevance in international relations theory. The second, and by far most energized efforts, are focused upon the need to expand the definition of the concept of security beyond its more conventional militaristic connotations.

The first theme develops the status of the concept of security in international relations. The first attempt at this may be found in Barry Buzan's *Peace, Power, and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations*.¹⁹ Buzan begins by noting that the basic concepts of power and peace have dominated the field of international relations: "The concept of *power* emphasises the parts of the international system at the expense of the whole, and the dynamic of conflict at the expense of harmony. It does, however, identify a factor which is universal both as a motive for behaviour and as a description of the relative status of actors. The concept of *peace* emphasises both the international system as a whole, and individuals as its ultimate building bloc, at the expense of states, and emphasises the dynamic of harmony at the expense of that of conflict. Its principal focus is on a possible universal condition." This fundamental conceptual dichotomy, Buzan notes, has yielded a broad dissatisfaction. The basic opposition between the power perspective of international relations and the peace perspective has engendered contradictory results. Up to a point it provides valuable criticism and "creates incentives to sharpen and deepen thinking." But we have now arrived at a point, according to Buzan, whereby the conceptual polarization has inhibited intellectual development: "Opposition become

Schuster, 1982).

¹⁹ Barry Buzan, "Peace, Power, and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations," *Journal of Peace Research* 21:2 (1984).

institutionalised and politicised, and creative thinking is either overridden by the rituals of intellectual entrenchment, or stifled by the lack of creative room within the tight contradictory confines of the peace/power dilemma."

In view of this conceptual ossification, Buzan offers us the concept of security "as a synthesis" between the two contending poles. He begins by observing that the struggle for security is a basic condition of international relations: "The basic problem which underlies almost all interest in international relations is insecurity." He stresses that the *power* perspective and the *peace* perspective are valuable to the extent that they have offered insight on this basic problem. But their ability to address the struggle for 'security' is insufficient. The *power* and *peace* perspectives have at best offered "a partial view of the security problem." Buzan stresses the need to view the struggle for state security as an impetus by itself: "If security is recognised as an important motive for behaviour in the international system, then it provides a view of international relations which is quite distinct from that which sees security merely as a possible outcome of power relations." Through the aperture of security as a "broader behavioural motive" for states, then, Buzan blends the Power (Realist) and Peace (Idealist) perspectives in order to create a "realist-idealism." The *power* and *peace* perspective, he reiterates, have offered an increasingly sclerotic view of both the international anarchy and the arms race. In their place, he offers the reader the *security* perspective, which takes as its starting point the *struggle against insecurity among states*. Regardless of the aptness of his characterization of the two contending views of international relations, and regardless of the tenable nature of his 'blend' solution, it is important that Buzan has explicitly treated the concept of security as much more than mere outcome in the struggle for power. The struggle for security is a distinct behavioural motive in its own right. In an important manner, the original views of Herz have been resurrected and used as a springboard to construct a 'third' perspective in international relations.

Mohammed Ayooob's work on the Third World also offers us an opportunity to see the concept of security assigned a weightier role in the behavioural calculus of states. Ayooob posits the concept of security as the matrix of state behaviour. Ayooob contends that the seemingly contradictory behaviour of Third World states as an 'intrusive collectivity bent on reordering the international order' on the one hand and as individual states 'trying to maintain some semblance of political and economic stability' on the other are manifestations of "two sides of the same security coin for these new members of the system of states."²⁰ More specifically, the struggle to reorder the rules more favourably to Third World states reflects the struggle for international status. "The perceived security if not the survival of these states," he writes, "hinges upon the terms on which they interact with the dominant powers of the global 'north'." At the same time, the salience of internal security threats predisposes individual Third World states to protect the world order as far as possible. Ayooob concludes that the contradictory behaviour is more apparent than real, reflecting basic considerations of security in both cases. In a manner reminiscent of Herz's original formulations on the subject, Ayooob also suggests that security concerns are the *ultimaratio* of state behaviour, and that considerations of 'power' and 'status' take on an epiphenomenal hue. In the end, Morgenthau's axiom of "interest defined as power" is dramatically reworded as "interest defined as security."

The second, an equally important trend within the *definitional school* of security studies has been the struggle to broaden the meaning of security. The central theme in this respect has been the expansion of the idea of security beyond the military realm. The need to view security in terms which move beyond the narrowness of military solutions was made poignantly clear in the *Palme Report*:

²⁰ Mohammed Ayooob, "Statebuilding and Security in the Third World," *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989), p. 78.

... the perceived requirements of national security dictate that nations maintain military forces adequate to the dangers posed to their security - dangers from within and from without. But the realities are such that *military strength alone cannot provide real security*. By every index of military strength it is evident that most nations have become more powerful over the years. Yet, judged by the increasingly strident tone of international and domestic debates about these issues, it is also clear that greater national military might has not led to a greater sense of national security... if the world is to approach even the possibility of achieving true security - ending the danger of nuclear war, reducing the frequency and destructiveness of conventional conflicts, easing the social and economic burdens of armaments - *important changes are necessary in the way that nations look at questions of armaments and security*.²¹

This thrust has its parallel within the scholarly literature on security: "The concern for the security of a nation is undoubtedly as old as the nation state itself, but since World War II the concept of 'national security' has acquired an overwhelmingly military character."²² Another writer notes that "much writing and most political debate about 'national security policy' seem obsessed these days with the inputs to military defense (weapons systems, manpower, logistics, and research and development on military technology) and the planning, strategy, and tactics of organized violence."²³ In his assessment of the concept of security Richard Ullman argues that American national security has been defined in "excessively narrow and excessively military terms."²⁴ Ullman argues that militaristic notions of security guide American political leaders, and may cause them to miss potentially even more harmful dangers while leading to the excessive militarization of international affairs. In order to avoid this path Ullman explicitly calls for "a more comprehensive definition of security."

²¹ *Palme Report*, pp. 4-6, my emphasis.

²² Lester R. Brown, *Redefining National Security*, (Worldwatch Paper 14, 1977), p. 5.

²³ Abdul-Monem M. Al-Mashat, *National Security in the Third World*, (Westview Press, 1985), p. 34.

²⁴ Richard H. Ullman, "Redefining Security," *International Security* 8:1 (Summer 1983), p. 129.

As part of this expanded notion of security these writers focus upon an expanded notion of threat. The logic behind this move is rather straightforward. If threats are no longer of a military nature, then a military response is simply inappropriate. In the context of oil supplies Lester Brown demonstrates this logic:

The overwhelmingly military approach to national security is based on the assumption that the principal threat to security comes from other nations. But the threat to security may now arise less from the relationship of nation to nation and more from the relationship of man to nature. Dwindling reserves of oil ... now threaten the security of nations everywhere. National security cannot be maintained unless national economies can be sustained, but, unfortunately, the health of many economies cannot be sustained much longer without major adjustments. All advanced industrial economies are fuelled primarily by oil, a resource that is being depleted. While military strategists have worried about the access of industrial economies to Middle Eastern oil, another more serious threat, the eventual exhaustion of the world's oil supplies, has been moving to the fore.²⁵

The notion that military solutions can be inappropriate for some security problems was most succinctly expressed in the *Palme Report*: "There are, of course, no military solutions to 'environmental insecurity'."²⁶

Richard Ullman proceeds to expand the concept of security by similarly expanding the notion of threats. Ullman notes that not all threats to the state are immediately obvious, external and military in nature. Rather, Ullman seeks to draw attention to the less apparent, internal, non-military threats to the state including environmental degradation, resource depletion, terrorism, natural catastrophes and the chronic instability of major Third World states. In the process the concept of *national security* is expanded to accommodate a wide variety of 'threats' beyond the military sphere. Another example of an expanded notion of threat may be found in

²⁵ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁶ *Palme Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

Azar and Moon's *Third World National Security: Toward a New Conceptual Framework*.²⁷ Working with an expanded concept of security which includes military, economic, ecological and ethnic considerations, Azar and Moon argue that we must examine the complexity which can surround the nature of threats. Each dimension of security, they argue, has an array of corresponding threat types requiring different policies. A military threat may be overt and external, for example, whereas economic threats can be subtle and internal in nature. In order to understand the security dilemma as it faces most Third World states we must, according to Azar and Moon, take these subtle and complex threats into account.

Beginning in the late 1970s and continuing throughout the 1980s, then, the *definitional school* attempted to revive and rework the concept of security. The task was largely related to finding the appropriate definition of *national security*. This approach sought to provide an expanded view of threats to states, and thereby stressed that the security response of states must move beyond the narrow military realm. The problem of *national security* was uncritically accepted as the central animating concern. The highly political, but seldom recognized, assumption that the problem of security for the state, operationalized and addressed in terms of the *national security* problematic, should form the legitimate point of scholarly departure was never called into question. Within the context of this uncritical posing of the fundamental issue we see writers drawing attention to politically suspect definitions of national security:

In the absence of a consensus on fundamental issues and in the absence of open political debate and contest, many of these [Third World] states are ruled by regimes with narrow support bases - both politically and socially - which usually come to power by means of a coup d'etat and which hang on so tenaciously to office that they have

²⁷ Edward Azar and Chung-In Moon, "Third World National Security: Toward and New Conceptual Framework," *International Interactions* 11:2 (1984).

to be, more often than not, physically liquidated to pave the way for any form of political transition. Since it is these regimes, and their bureaucratic and intellectual hangers-on, who define the threats to the security of their respective states, it is no wonder that they define it primarily in terms of regime security rather than the security of the society as a whole. Security ... has been traditionally defined as the protection and preservation of core values. However, in the case of many Third World states, the core values of the regime - with self-preservation at the very core of this core - are often at extreme variance with the core values cherished by large segments of the populations over whom they rule. Once again, given these discrepancies in the definition of core values and, indeed, of security itself, it is no wonder that major threats to the security of these regimes emanate from within their own societies.²⁸

As this quote demonstrates, the *definitional school* could suggestively draw attention to the political nature of security problems, and acknowledge that other 'subjects' of security must be considered. Nonetheless, there was no meaningful movement away from the view that the *national security* problem is basic and fundamental. The above quote, as an example, is not a repudiation of the basic orientation of the intellectual project but rather a heartfelt acknowledgement that some definitions of national security can be seriously called into question.

The Alternative School of Security Studies

Beginning in the late 1980s a group of scholars began laying the foundations for a radically different approach to the analysis of security in international relations. According to this emerging view, any analysis of security in international relations that begins and ends with the *national security* problem is far too narrow in its concern.²⁹ International relations

²⁸ Mohammed Ayoob, "Regional Security and the Third World," in *Regional Security in the Third World*, (Westview Press, 1986), p. 11.

²⁹ For example, see R.B.J. Walker, *The Concept of Security and International Relations*, Working Paper no. 3, Institute on global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California; Paul A. Chilton, *The Container Concept of Security: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach*, (Unpublished); D.

analysts, they argue, can no longer be content to search for the appropriate 'meaning' or 'definition' of national security. The concept of security, rather, must be decoupled, delinked, disengaged or disentangled from the *national security* problem.³⁰ "By displacing the state as the sole focus of analytic attention," Simon Dalby has written, "critical research allows consideration of the broader aspects of politics, seen properly as a broad concept of how society is organized." Ultimately, these writers analyze the concept of security in terms of a broader social and cultural matrix. The explicit call is for a socially and culturally centred analysis which thoroughly supplants the state focused *national security* problem.

Perhaps the title of Rob Walker's programmatic *The Concept of Security and International Relations* succinctly and unambiguously commences the narrative of the *Alternative* group, suggesting as it does that the concept of security has a social usages and intellectual meanings beyond the narrow appropriation of international relations.³¹ Walker expresses concern at the paradoxical and "deeply disturbing" silence surrounding the concept of security: "The concept of security remains on the margin of contemporary political discourse in a way that is at odds with the importance of security policies in contemporary political life." Walker directly confronts the intellectual silence which cloaks the concept. He argues that the prevailing categorical schemes or conceptual structures of the international relations discipline - Realism/Idealism, community/anarchy, friend/enemy - rest upon a very strict exclusion between *life inside the state* and *life outside the state*. Walker draws upon post-structuralism's thorough critique of the philosophy

Campbell, *Global Inscription: Space, Time and the U.S. National Security Policy*, (Unpublished paper, August 1988); Simon Dalby, *Geopolitics and Security Discourse*, (Unpublished paper, 1988); G.M. Dillon, *Security and Modernity*, (Unpublished); Brad Klein, "After Strategy: The Search for a Post-Modernist Analysis of Peace," *Alternatives* (July 1988).

³⁰ As R.B.J. Walker writes "The concept of national security is a consequence of the theory of the state as the Sovereign locus of political identity." *The Concept of Security and International Relations*, op. cit., p. 23.

³¹ *Ibid.*

of identity, a conceptual constellation that has been central to Western thought. He contends that the basic categories and conceptual schemes of international relations thought reflects the tendency to fetishize the moment of unity - community or life inside the state - and to subordinate the moment of difference - anarchy or life outside the state - to it. Perhaps the most striking conceptual casualty of these discursive practices within the international relations discipline has been treatment of the concept of the 'state'. Although central to the discipline of international relations, it is understood primarily in spatial terms and as the sole locus of political identity, and has escaped any serious and sustained examination.

It is against this backdrop that the concept of security has been introduced into the dominant discourse of international relations. This peculiar appropriation within the field of international relations, according to Walker, has been informed by the view which sees "the state as the primary locus of political life." As Walker writes: "The concept of national security is a consequence of the theory of the state as the Sovereign locus of political identity." Security is a problem of *the outside of the state*: "The most important characteristic of the concept of security is neither that it is *essentially contested* nor that it is *silent* but that it is derivative from and dependent upon an historically specific conception of political community." The focus upon the *national security* problem is the product of the view of the state as the exclusive basis of political community. Indeed, his most basic conclusion is that only by breaking the equation of security with identity, of security with community or *life inside the state* will a critical approach to security develop. It is valuable to observe Walker at length:

The fact that international relations theory has depended on only the sketchiest outlines of a theory of the state has mattered surprisingly little to a discipline that has been so self-conscious about the primacy of the state. It has only been necessary to be sure that the distinction between inside and outside, between politics and relation, between community and anarchy, could be maintained as an absolute exclusion. However

appropriate this formulation may have been in the past - it has, arguably, always been misleading - it is difficult to sustain in a world in which states are both growing "stronger" in some sense but are also increasingly embedded in complex global structure whose contours do not conform to the expectation of a global Leviathan.

Walker draws his line of argumentation to conclusion:

The issue is not whether the state is obstinate or obsolete; or whether "realism" expresses a recognition of tragic necessity and idealism is merely a dangerous naivety; or whether drawing on the "domestic analogy" is a sign of professional incompetence; or any other version of the false choice between the community of identity within and the difference - the barbarian, the other, the anarchy without. In this sense, the problem with the claims of realism on which the concept of national security depends is its simultaneous rejection yet deeper acceptance of idealism, of the priority of the moment of identity against which the tragedy of the "security dilemma" can be measured. This priority produces the problem of national security. Concepts of peace that build upon this same priority cannot provide a way out. The silence of prevailing concepts of security - and peace - can only be broken by refusing the equation of security with identity, and thus with the obliteration of difference: a refusal that necessarily constitutes a struggle for new forms for political community.

The analysis of security in international relations, in other words, has heretofore been incarcerated by the naturalization of an historically specific conception of political community. The state cannot be continued to be viewed as the 'natural' or even 'obligatory' sight of political community. We must move beyond these Procrustean barriers to contemplate security in terms of a wider social and cultural matrix that necessarily embraces alternative questions of political practice and political community.

From another quarter we see Mick Dillon's embellishments upon the rather abstract ideas on the 'subject' of security. Dillon reproaches those 'modern' discussions of security which assume that the subject of security - individuals or states - are unproblematically constituted outside of language. He argues that the common

`referential' view of language, whereby words `refer' to things or essences, has been extended to the idea of `identity' of the `subject'. That is, the subject (of security) is conceived of "as an essence; something autonomous, standing outside language and beyond our way of representing it, but which our modes of representation should seek as accurately as possible to reflect."³² Dillon calls attention to the `constitutive view of language', a view that sees language as not merely referring to the presence of an external world but rather as actively constituting it: "We have language, but how often do we discover, and not only through the pre-eminently playful language games of humour, that we are had by it." It follows from this view that we must revise our conception of the subject (of security), and especially, of the manner in which its `identity' comes to be formed. Conventional conceptions of `identity' tend to attribute order and unity to the inside, he notes, and privilege and value these qualities over the disorder on the outside. The notion of `boundary' was understandably regarded as the barrier which preserved internal order (of the individual, group or state) from the disorder of the external world. According to Dillon, however, a constitutive view of language forces us to reconsider the very notion of boundary:

... it is the boundary that "differentiates between inside and outside", and hence the boundary should be elevated in our attention because it is the structure which produces mutually-defining perspectives. Though the boundary is commonly thought to belong to the system (individual, groups or state), giving it shape and form, it necessarily also shapes the environment. Hence the system is just as much inside the environment (actively shaping it), as the environment is inside the system (actively shaping that too). Thus the boundary has to be conceived not as an inert thing belonging either to the system or its environment, but as an active process of differentiation which serve system and environment equally. Neither the inside (order, community, identity or system), nor the outside (disorder, anarchy, plurality or environment), can

³² G.M. Dillon, "Modernity, Discourse and Deterrence," *Current Research on Peace and Violence* 2 (1989), p. 100.

be regarded as the source of identity. They should, therefore, not constitute the central problematic of social or psychological science. *It is the process of differentiation that counts.*³³

In a somewhat simpler form, the boundary is conceived as an active process which continually constructs and constitutes 'difference' which in turn constructs and constitutes 'identity': "No longer an inert barrier, it emerges as a dynamic liminal domain where the constant interplay of difference continually constitutes meaning, knowledge and identity - in short, forms of life (individual, group or state)." Without difference, Dillon emphasizes, there is no identity.

We learn through Dillon's post-modern disquisition that "the subject (of security) is both the subject and object of security policies." That is, as surely as the subject inaugurates and promotes and develops security policies, it is 'had' by them in the sense that these policies contribute to the process of differentiation which lies at the root of identity. Despite the difficult and somewhat prohibitive style, we learn that the dominant discursive practices of security manage 'difference' "into otherness, a negative, undeserving and threatening difference requiring destruction or deterrence." He creatively restates the contemporary understanding of the security dilemma à la John Herz in terms of this typical process of differentiation:

... the urge to translate difference into otherness is a common one, confined neither to West nor East. If I am tolerant of different identities, there is no guarantee that they will be equally tolerant of me. An identity that differs from mine may well constitute me as other, and I may have to try to fend it off. To establish or renew myself, my identity might also require that I, in turn, construe some difference as otherness. From this perspective the study of security is concerned with the construction of identity through the interplay of difference and the imposition of otherness.³⁴

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 100, my emphasis.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

It is this common move, a move that has brought us to the brink of nuclear war, that Dillon admonishes us to escape. The post-structuralist "revitalization of politics," he strongly contends, offers us a chance to reinstate the ambiguity and indeterminateness of 'identity' and accept (rather than caricature) the necessity of difference.

Another example of the movement towards a sociological approach can be found in the writings of Paul Chilton. Chilton is concerned with analyzing security "in a culture in general, and in various modes of discourse within the culture." To this end he addresses the concept of security in terms of linguistic analysis. While his goal is to meld linguistics and international relations, he argues that the approach is not as quixotic as it may appear at first glance, and that it is congruent with the influence of the "cognitive revolution" upon IR.³⁵ Chilton argues that there are two broad linguistic themes that can assist us in the analysis of international relations: the first are theories of communication and the second concerns theories of underlying conceptual structures. It is the latter theme that Chilton uses as his point of analytical departure. Chilton begins his analysis with the straightforward observation that the words *security* and *secure* are polysemic, that is, that the words occur in numerous social contexts and tend to "pervade our lives," and that as a result we can safely conclude that security is "very much a cultural concept."³⁶ Chilton notes that cognitive semantics assumes that the meanings of words are constructed upon "preconceptual structures" deriving to a large extent from bodily experience. "Concepts from this source domain," Chilton writes, "can be mapped into less directly experienced, less well-comprehended domains."³⁷

³⁵ Chilton directly refers to Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations*, (Princeton University Press, 1976) and Deborah Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation*, (Princeton University Press, 1985).

³⁶ Paul A. Chilton, "The Container Concept of Security: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach," (Unpublished), p. 17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

That is, words are rendered sensical through a process of metaphorical mapping from simple experiences onto more abstract levels. "The point here is that metaphor," Chilton writes, "is a fundamental and unconscious principle in the production of meaning."

Chilton identifies three relevant groups of metaphors based upon bodily experience. The first is the CONTAINER schema, with three crucial elements including interior, boundary, and surface. The accessing of the CONTAINER schema is extremely common. "All day long humans go in and go out, especially so in urban environments; they are in and out of states of mind; in and out of clothes; they take in air and let out air; they ingest food and excrete it; they are `insiders' and `outsiders' with respect to social groups." The second preconceptual structure is that of the PATH schema. This source domain "involves structural elements such as a starting point (origin), destination (endpoint), path, and directedness toward the endpoint." In terms of the metaphors that may be mapped from this domain Chilton draws out attention to the concept of purpose, and especially national purpose. "We can talk of going a long way *toward* our purposes, meeting *obstacles* on the way, getting *there* in the end, and so on." The third important source domain focuses upon FORCE DYNAMICS. It is valuable in this respect to quote directly from Chilton: "This image schema derives from the physical experience of pressure and resistances, both exerted and received - i.e., from pushing and striking and from being struck and pushed. The most important cases are probably the experience of lateral push and pull, gravitational force and the experience of balance."³⁸

With respect to the higher level concept of security Chilton argues that these source domains of CONTAINER, PATH and FORCE DYNAMICS are accessed as part of the construction of meaning. With respect to the concept of security he identifies two common metaphorizations. First,

³⁸ Chilton, What Do We Mean by `Security'?, p. 8.

security comes to mean something that is fixed or firmly held in place: "... one of the conceptual elements in our understanding of security is connected to the absence of motion, to stasis, and more precisely to the physical restraint of undesired motion." As a consequence we are prone to speak, he contends, in terms of "tight security" or "loose security" or to collocate security with stability. The second image schema that is frequently accessed is the CONTAINER. In this sense, if something is secure then it cannot be entered or exited, and, since containers have an inside and an outside, then to be secure is to prevent movement in and out. Common expressions of this nature include the idea of being "secure *in* one's beliefs", a "penetration of security", or "security leaks", or of "holes or breaches in security".

Chilton argues that these conceptualizations help to make certain conceptualizations of security plausible, and can profoundly influence dominant discourses around security. With respect to the United States, for example, Chilton notes that the CONTAINER schema has been particularly influential in post-war security doctrines, especially the Doctrine of Containment. Chilton argues that the US is now in a "critical discourse moment," particularly in the sense that the CONTAINER metaphors seem less and less viable: "New thinking is required in the west as in the Soviet Union. The United States is seeking to formulate a policy concept 'beyond containment'; the Soviet Union has introduced openness concepts into international political discourse with the notion of Glasnost - the reverse of the CONTAINER schemas." The implicit tenor of Chilton's work is that the construction of meaning through metaphor contributes to the resiliency of particular conceptions of security. Linguistic plausibility is not in itself a sufficient explanation for security policy. Rather, Chilton is concerned with providing an explanation of the perseverance or "historical memory" of conceptions of security in the minds

of both analysts and policy makers.³⁹ It would follow from this, that this resiliency would partly explain why alternative 'meanings' of security within society might remain peripheral.

Simon Dalby's *Geopolitics and Security Discourse* provides an excellent example of the relationship between prevailing conceptions of security on the one hand and the post-structuralist themes of identity and difference on the other. Dalby begins by observing that the hegemonic conception of security in the post-war period in the United States is inherently geopolitical, especially the manner in which geopolitics refers to the relationship between power and the control of territory. He identifies the common process constructing "exotic Others and disciplining domestic selves," and of then defining "their [the Others] place as different from ours." Dalby notes that the common theme underlying these moves is the conception of security as "the spatial exclusion of Others." Although the terms 'geopolitics' often gets left out of the discussion, the dominant debates on US security are:

... structured within understanding of *political power in spatial terms*, within an implicit division of political *space* into *territorially demarcated states*. These states in turn are strategically important because of their location in terms of geopolitics. The presence of geopolitics here is clear, the geographical occupation of the Machinderian heartland and the potential Soviet domination of the Eurasian landmass are persistent themes of American security discourse, even if the term geopolitics is rarely mentioned. Operational foreign policy was structured in terms of an implicit geopolitical understanding of global

³⁹ See his discussion of Steven Kull's *Minds at War*. Chilton notes that Kull observes that certain *mindsets* persevere within defence policy-makers, and responds to it in the following manner: "Though his study is based on rich verbal material ... the clues that language can give us as to the full details of cognitive structures in this field still remain to be explored. In particular, Kull's account rests crucially on the concept of 'perseverance'. But this notion is not in itself capable of any explanatory hint as to *why* some forms of thought persevere and why they have a powerful influence on other minds to the extent that they guide action."

events in which the motive force is the bilateral competition of the USSR and the "free world" led by the U.S. This competition, and with it deterrence as the key to Western survival, necessitates a global militarisation to *contain* the expansion of the totalitarian sphere led by the USSR. All the principal aspects of the political discourse of post-war U.S. politics are present here. In combination they acted to limit the fields of discourse, asking ultimately "but what about the Russians?" to close off potentially counterhegemonic formulations.⁴⁰

It underlines strategic thinking and sovietology, he contends, and gives meaningful shape to the doctrine of containment: "All the arguments for containment, drawn from various disciplines and political discourses understood security as a matter of spatial limitation of other powers." For Dalby, the construction of otherness is intimately linked to underlying spatial currents. In speaking especially of the U.S., he notes that projects such as the Strategic Defense Initiative are founded upon the specification of a spatially excluded otherness:

Others are spatially excluded, to be feared, ostracised, and ultimately reduced to extensions of an imposed identity. Security is identified as identity, unity and an imposed order. Difference is a threat, Otherness has to be spatially contained, ultimately reduced to an extension of sameness, implies a reduction of difference, making their space like ours. Inherent in all this are conceptions of absolute space, and the metaphysical construction of a universalist epistemological position where true knowledge triumphs, gradually extending through absolute space.⁴¹

Dalby admonishes the reader that we should not underestimate the degree to which this prevailing formulation of security concerns has shaped U.S. policy, especially the underlying U.S. foreign policy themes of Atlanticism (Euro-American political economy of liberal capitalism with its political, cultural and economic arrangements) and the Containment doctrine.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

The socially constructed nature of the language of security is most clearly presented in Rob Walker's *Canadian Security Policy and the Language of War at Peace*.⁴² Walker begins his study with a very blunt question: "Is it possible for Canadians to speak coherently and effectively about peace and security?" In sketching out an answer to this question he asserts that a complex "discourse" or "rhetoric" or "culture" of military affairs can be identified in Canada: "They invoke authority and expertise. They give meanings to certain terms and exclude those who do not speak properly from the conversation. In short, they engage in a politics of language." Walker then focuses upon the question of what is meant by the infinitive "to speak." In his response he draws attention to the political nature of language, to the mechanisms that shape or amplify or distort or silence some types of communication, and to more fundamental questions about the relationship between language and power, a relationship that determines who gets to speak, about which type of speech is permissible, about tacit understandings surrounding speech, and about the process through which some images ascend in terms of cultural importance. Walker assumes the constitutive nature of language in general, that is, that language does not merely 'refer' to an outside world but rather makes and remakes it. He observes that people themselves are constituted by language, and, in contrast to the cynic's assumption, attempt to tell the truth. The recognition, he writes, of the intimate relationship between 'language' and 'security' has been lost upon those within the security field:

To flirt with language, or rhetoric, or discourse, or the cultural production of militarization is, by definition - the self-definition of the professional analysts and policy advisors - to admit professional incompetence. Machiavelli may have offered sage advice about the need to appear virtuous, and Clausewitz may have offered timely warnings about the intemperate passions of

⁴² R.B.J. Walker, "Canadian Security Policy and the Language of War and Peace," (September 1988), unpublished.

democratic society, but in the end, security, it is said, is about hard realities and immediate necessities. Some things are important, some are not, and, according to the conventional wisdom, *the politics of language hardly merit a passing footnote.* Peace and security call for pragmatism and action, for logistics and technological expertise, for hardware and bullets. *The rest is all talk.*⁴³

Walker stresses that the security dialogue is fundamentally about the politics of language despite the protestations of the security community. It is valuable to quote him at length:

The trouble is that it is not only the rest that is all talk. Missiles may well stand silent in their silos, but they are only part of enormously complex systems of communication and control. They fit into "strategies," "scenarios," and "postures" and are directed at an "enemy," all of which are constructed on the basis of certain articulations of the way the world is or might be. Conjectures and imagination, secrecy and disinformation, theory, hypothesis and historical memory are all as much a part of the "reality" of security as the hardware, fire-power or finger on the button. Military experience is just as subject to codification and romanticization with a sub-culture as any other area of human experience. Thinking about peace and security draws upon all kinds of cultural influences which find their way into the everyday discourses of strategic planners and front-line military personnel alike. Those concerned with matters of peace and security may pay little attention to the politics of language, *but this does not mean that they are not engaged in them.*⁴⁴

The very process of naming and defining permits analysts and practitioners to 'forget' the historical struggle behind security concerns. The language of security elucidates and obscures simultaneously. "Where part of the politics of language depends on the fluidity of meanings, another part depends on the practices of reification, on the crystalization of flux into a claim of permanence." Elsewhere he writes: "Language slips and translates. It fixes and reifies. Living within language it is difficult to be aware of its effects, impossible to know exactly how one is located within its grammars and locutions." Most importantly, Walker

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 14 of unpublished copy, my emphasis.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15, my emphasis.

emphasizes that no one can escape this fact of life: "To speak is always to be caught within the cultural codes, rhetorical motifs, philosophical assumptions and institutionalized patterns of conversation that make speech possible." In the end, Walker has placed security concerns and security debates firmly within the discursive nature of social life, thereby amplifying its distinctive political character.

How, we might ask, does Walker's emphasis upon the social and political nature of security concerns and problems differ from that identified by Arnold Wolfer's over thirty years ago? We would have to answer this question by stressing that security policy and security proclamations are, for Walker, essentially about controlling and policing the boundaries of security discussions, that is, about what can and cannot be said: "... we are led to questions about the way the limits of discussion are set, about the boundaries between what can and what cannot be said, about what is taken seriously and what can be dismissed as trivial."⁴⁵ It follows from this, as he points out, that what is not said about security concerns are equally important. In the Canadian case Walker notes that discussions of security are intimately linked to discussions of national sovereignty, a move which facilitates the policing of the boundaries of security debates within Canada:

It is ... instructive to consider how the very focus on sovereignty as an immediate policy makes it difficult for Canadians to pursue the most fundamental questions posed by contemporary forms of insecurity. What does it mean to be secure? Whose security are we talking about? Who gets to decide on what conception of security is most appropriate? The great attraction of the concept of state-sovereignty, of course, is that it provides a clear answer to such questions. Indeed, as an answer, it was once so persuasive that the questions came to be regarded as trivial. It gave voice to a broad understanding of political community bounded by clearly demarcated borders and organized by the autonomous authorities within.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44 especially.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Walker emphasizes that recent political trends, such as the rising concerns surrounding environmental degradation, are strongly suggesting that "the meaning of insecurity has begun to be radically rewritten." Consequently, recent state pronouncements concerning the nature of Canadian security concerns, such as that found in the 1987 White Paper, tend to follow an older, and increasingly antiquated, script.

With this we can begin to clearly see how Wolfers' 'politics of security' and Walker's 'politics of security' differ fundamentally. For the former writer, the politics of security proceeds according to a basic agreement or consensus around fundamental security concerns. Clearly, for Wolfers, the difficulties of establishing the 'core values' at issue should not be overstated, and the protection of territorial independence would necessarily rank high among these. 'Political' debates would tend to focus upon instrumentalities of achieving 'security', of having decision makers set the appropriate level and choose the appropriate means. Wolfers' acknowledgement that we know "roughly" what is meant when we appeal to national security underscores the intra-discursive nature of his discussion; the 'political' is housed within the same security discourse. For Walker, in stark contrast, the political aspects of security refers to the clear possibility of alternative or fundamentally antagonistic security rhetorics and meanings. The pale of the political is much broader than the realm of policy. Here, the political nature of security is about the manner in which dominant security concerns are established and reproduced, and about the possibility of alternative security discourses fundamentally challenging the dominant characterization. It is about security concerns in the wider context of a somewhat fractionated and "expansive" political culture, not the 'holistic' and 'inclusive' context embodied in Wolfers reference to "the nation." To collapse politics into narrower policy debates is to succumb, as Walker puts it, to the "lure of the Prince."

Elements of a New Approach to Security and International Relations

The state centred approach and the attendant notion of *national security* has traditionally dominated the field: "A subject that is only remotely related to central political problems of threat perception and management among sovereign states," Nye and Lynn-Jones affirm, "would be regarded as peripheral."⁴⁷ The *Alternative* group of security researchers, however, are collectively swathing a new approach to the problem of security in international relations. They are no longer content to search for new definitions of *national security*. The definitional exercise is firmly supplanted by an approach which seeks to extol the intensely social and political nature of the concept of security."⁴⁸

The contours of this *Alternative* approach to security and international relations must still be set out. The writings of the *Alternative* school carry serious limitations, limitations which reflect the fact that the writings are largely informed from the *post-modernist* vantage point. At the risk of oversimplification, while these writings are particularly strong with respect to the analysis of security in the context of language and culture, they still fail to adequately assess the cultural dimensions of security in terms of relatively basic structural relations of power within society. In other words, the concept of security is not explicitly contemplated from the perspective of dominant and subordinate classes and groups within society. A few examples with respect to class power will suffice to illustrate this point. R.B.J. Walker, for example, lucidly and persuasively contends that some conceptions of security are 'policed at the margins'. But we do not learn which classes or groups might be benefiting by the patrol. Basic questions and considerations are unfortunately overlooked. What is the relationship between

⁴⁷ Joseph S. Nye and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "International Security Studies: A Report of a conference on the State of the Field," *International Security* 12:4 (Spring 1988).

⁴⁸ Fred Halliday, "State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda," *Millennium* 16:2 (1987), 219.

the capitalist class in Canada and the 'policed' conception of security? Were the interests of the capitalist class the formational forces behind the prevailing view of security in Canada? Is there a class alliance behind the prevailing view? How might this prevailing conception of security tie into other prevailing political discourses, such as neo-liberalism, which have 'clearer' class links within Canada? Equally importantly, what class dynamics lie behind attempts to transform dominant conceptions of security in Canada?

Similarly, although Simon Dalby writes that prevailing conceptions of security can better reflect the interests of some groups over the interests of others, there is little or no attempt to identify any classes in this respect. Again, we should inquire about the class dynamics and struggles that might lie behind this tendency to universalize conceptions of security across society. In what manner, for example, does the prevailing view contribute to the blurring or mystification of class relations? In what manner does the prevailing conception of security damper or mute class antagonisms or, alternatively, how does it fetter subordinate class projects? To what extent does the universalized conception of security incorporate the struggles or aspirations of the subordinate classes? None of these questions are ever posed. Again, while Paul Chilton suggests that some understandings of security have greater resiliency partly by virtue of the metaphors that they draw upon, he is completely silent about the class projects which may lie behind this resiliency. We are never afforded any analysis of fundamental class divisions within society that may underline, inform, exploit or actively promote the original conceptualizations. And finally, while Mick Dillon contends that the contorted construction of 'Otherness' in the post-war period has brought us to the brink of nuclear annihilation, we are not afforded any analysis, or even a hint for that matter, of the relationship that this construction might have to the struggles of international capitalist classes in the post-war period. In what manner does this construction, we might also

ask, conveniently enter into and 'soften' the class struggle 'back home'?

In short, security is not analyzed in terms of the basic class fissures embedded in the social canvas. Nor is the need to do this acknowledged. Paradoxically, while these writings refreshingly celebrate the political nature of security in one sense, the failure to adequately extend the analysis to basic configurations of social power within society, especially class power and class struggle, tends to give these writings an apolitical hue. One task of this study is to reassert, in the strongest possible terms, that a complete analysis of security must include considerations of class and other social relations of power. With this affirmation in mind, we note that a 'complete' analysis of the social and political dimensions of security will include two pivotal themes: *First*, an examination of security in terms of the rudimentary relations of power within society. *Secondly*, an examination of security within the broad context of culture, a process well underway in the *Alternative* group of security analysts. Although these two themes are treated separately, there is no intention here of committing an isolationist fallacy by arguing that culture and relations of power in society somehow represent separate and distinct spheres of social life. The separation is for analytical identification only.

Theme One: Security and Social Relations of Power

We must examine the way in which conceptions of security are bound up with the historically contingent but conjuncturally specific relations of power embedded in the social canvas. Included here are the social relations of production (class defined primarily in terms of the mode of production) and other social relations including gender and race. More directly, we must explore the manner in which conceptions of security are conditioned by the class dialectic along with the specificities of gender and race. This theme is premised upon the belief that prevalent ideas about society will be profoundly related to its dominant power relations, a

premise drawing on the orientation of historical materialist critiques. In considering security from the perspective of the dialectic among social classes and groups within society we are making the claim that conceptions of security will reflect, in other words, the basic socio-political struggles within society. No conception of security will be politically innocent in that it transcends these social struggles.

The recognition that prevailing conceptions of security can be linked to specific interests within society underscores the distinct possibility that subordinate class and groups, such as the working class or women, may have fundamentally different conceptions of security. Those factors deemed to be most threatening to subordinate social classes may be largely marginalized by the dominant security discourse. The clear likelihood exists that any 'discourse of threat' among women, for example, may be fundamentally at odds with the prevailing notions of 'threat'. These marginalized discourses on security will largely reflect basic struggles between dominant and subordinate groups within society. The fact that there can be multiple discourses around security raises an additional set of analytical problems including *interalia* the relationship between these various conceptions and wider elements of social consciousness, especially ideology. Multiple discourses around security and insecurity, for example, may be bound up with the inability for ruling classes and groups to establish ideological hegemony. We might also explore the manner in which competing views of security are aired within the state apparatus, particularly if we suspect that the prevailing security discourse might only be firmly lodged within the military.

Theme Two: Security and Culture

The concept of security must be approached "less in terms of any coherent technical definition of national security," Rob Walker writes, "than of the way the concept of security enters into all kinds of other codes, symbols, rhetorics,

propagandas, ideologies, discourses, and other terms usually subsumed under the generic concept of culture." The need to examine the relationship between security and culture arises from at least two basic observations. *First*, there is the idea of culture as context. As the work of Paul Chilton helps us see, language permeates the social consciousness and maintains a certain resiliency; it can affect politics by conditioning people quite independently of any immediately apparent configuration of social power. Moreover, the concept of security links to other dimensions of contemporary culture. Security clichés such as Hawk and Dove "connect the world of national security with the art gallery, sports stadium, kindergarten and drive-in movie."⁴⁹ *Secondly*, there is the idea of culture as a *political front*. We must recognize that any effort to transform relations of domination and subordination and recast social practices must consider the relationship between 'ideas' and social change, and address the manner in which 'new' ideas can create resistant social practices.

When the two aspects of this alternative approach are melded together an almost infinite number of research themes are possible. This *Alternative* approach will also help us to avoid some common errors that have been made in past approaches to security. A brief discussion of these errors, many of which have been identified in the alternative writings will be very valuable:

The Problem of Universalization

We must avoid the mistake of *universalizing* conceptions of security by *privileging* widely held or dominant views on the matter. "The possibilities that there may be other interests within the nation state whose security might be better served in other ways," writes Simon Dalby, "is usually neatly excluded by the simple ideological operation of universalising the particular interests of a narrow segment of

⁴⁹ R.B.J. Walker, *Security in Canada*, p. 79.

the population within the ambit of the concept of *national security*." While this move might be more recognizable in government policy statements and documentation, analytical approaches which begin and end with the *national security* problem also privilege, in varying degrees, conceptions of security favoured by ruling classes and dominant groups within the nation state. This is especially true to the extent that these approaches emphasize certain *core values* such as the integrity of the state apparatus, or they speak of a hierarchy of *vital interests* established by the *nation*, or that they discuss *internal threats* to the state. This is not to suggest that analysts of security are the mere mouthpieces of ruling groups or institutions within society, although this dynamic is undoubtedly played out: "The road from academia to the foot of the prince," Walker reminds us, "is lined with comfortable institutes, specialized funding organizations, aggressive consulting firms and large quantities of cash." While analysts can and do participate in ideological production of this type, the links are likely less infusionalist and more contextual in nature. The definitional exercise, for example, that is, the struggle to find the appropriate parameters and boundaries of *national security*, accepts this as the correct way to characterize security problems. In discussions about the appropriate definition of *national security*, moreover, specific conceptual categories and academic discourses are frequently employed as givens. The uncritical appropriation of concepts such as territorial integrity, political integrity, core values, core interests, vital interests, internal threats, nation, state and national values unwittingly reproduces and legitimizes a wider political discourse which assists in maintaining specific and often highly repressive configurations of social power within society. As long as we proceed as though these analytical categories are divinely inspired the mirth of the Gods will be on our account. To speak of a insurgent group as a 'threat' to the state, for example, is a politically loaded move, and one which buys into the dominant characterization of social problems. Security issues of the 'top-dogs' (Galtung's phrase) are unwittingly privileged and extended across society.

The Reification of Analytical Categories

The second common error that the alternative approach to security will avoid is the reification of analytical categories. The most flagrant error in this regard surrounds the idea of the security dilemma. In the writings of John Herz, the security dilemma was 'deduced' or 'distilled' from third imagistic assumptions. The multi-state system simply creates insuperable dynamics wherein the struggle for greater security leads to spirals of power struggles which rendered international relations inherently unstable. As long as there are states, so the Herzian view must run, there will be security dilemmas similar to the Cold War era. The security dilemma reflects the 'essence' of international relations, not the contamination of social and political struggles in the post-war period. It has, so to speak, a life of its own, at least in the sense that its only contingency is the presence of the state system or some facsimile thereof. While the approach was first employed to describe conditions commonly perceived at the time of the Cold War, recent writings regard the security dilemma to be a basic condition or feature of international relations.⁵⁰ Leaving aside the question as to whether this was an appropriate characterization of the immediate post-war period, the permanent assignation of the security dilemma to international relations effectively cuts it off from all social relations. Something akin to one historical era is presumed to be a kindred condition of all historical periods. The security dilemma is cut loose from any aspect of society and held to be relatively immune to it.

In contrast to this move, the alternative study of security would emphasize that all security problems are contingent upon the push and pull of social forces in society. Security dilemmas, to the extent that this idea is useful, would be anchored firmly in society. Threats and seemingly intractable conditions for social actors (including parts of a

⁵⁰ See, for example Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* (1978).

state) are made by concrete social and political struggles, not by the mere presence of the state system. Security dilemmas reflect upward determinations from the social floor rather than the downward determinations of the systemic ceiling. In other words, the development and evolution of the 'security problematic' for states is fundamentally historical and intimately tied to the evolution of social relations within and between societies.

Another error of reification concerns the identification of certain "core" security concerns. Understood usually as the protection of political and territorial integrity, these "core" concerns are then assumed to operate for all states at all times. "Put more strongly," Azar and Moon argue, "this way of conceiving national security is almost universal across time and space as long as there exists an entity called the nation-state." The caveat "almost" does not lessen the fact that these "core" concerns can be identified apart from the historical evolution of societies, and they are elevated to the status of general truths. That is, the "core" concerns are not understood in terms of any social contingency. Rather, they are understood to operate notwithstanding the imperatives of any particular societal dynamics. In contrast to this, the alternative approach outlined would begin with the assumption that there is a social contingency where security issues are involved. One can even find numerous exceptions, for example, to the apparently incontrovertible truth of territorial integrity, 'violations' that are clearly the product of social dynamics within and between societies.

The Problem of Hypostatization

A third error concerns the tendency towards hypostatization. That is, analysts must avoid premising their discussions of security on the idea that there is some 'real' or 'objective' or 'independent' confluence of social conditions to which the word 'security' corresponds. Simply stated, analysts must avoid assuming that the abstract concept of 'security' has any real existence. In his discussion of Barry Buzan's

contribution to the security literature Chilton argues that he "assumes that the meaning of a word (such as security) is its correlation with some entity or process out there in the real world." As Chilton notes, Buzan speaks of the meaning of security in the general sense, of transferring this meaning of security to "specific entities like states" and of discovering the "referent object of security." As Chilton argues, "the presence of the word (in this case security) does not mean that a corresponding entity exists in the 'real' world."

Other writers are equally prone to Buzan's move. Numerous discussions of *national security* proceed on the assumption that there some actual configuration of events or circumstances characteristic of a "secure society." That is, the correct meaning of *national security* is the linguistic conformation of some real state of 'secure' affairs for the 'nation'. Indeed, the writings aimed at redefining the meaning of *national security* intend to use the definition to contour domestic and foreign policy with the goal of achieving this 'real' or 'total' security. The cut of the exercise, in other words, is thoroughly correlative. The alternative approach to security studies offered here would help guard against hypostatization in that it explicitly draws attention towards the relationship between the employment of the concept of security by actors within society on the one hand and the broader cultural and social relational context on the other. *Politics and perceptions are our plot.* We must seek to understand the various conceptions of security and security issues as social constructions rather than as 'reflections of' or 'references to' some 'external' reality.

The Denial of Politics

Finally, the cumulative effect of the alternative approach to security is to explicitly draw attention to the political nature of all security problematizations. In speaking of scholarly discussions of security Rob Walker notes: "Contemporary discourse about security draws attention to the intensely political character of concepts that have been naturalized and

rendered relatively apolitical within the discipline." Our discussion underscores a view which sees security problematizations and discussions as fiercely political in at least two ways. First, characterizations of security are contaminated by basic social relations and the wider cultural milieu. There is no 'natural' security problem or scenario defined into our midst. Secondly, scholarly inquiries into security, as with all scholarly inquiries within international relations and beyond, are stained by the wider social and cultural setting. The only relief from this condition is by pretension. We must guard against losing sight of the political nature and effect of the analytical categories. "The very terms themselves," stresses Ian Forbes, "must be treated with the utmost suspicion."⁵¹ We do this, ultimately, in recognition of the fact that international relations theory stands as a form of power/knowledge: "To speak of security on terms other than those of Realism and Idealism ... is to confront a brick wall, the palpable limits of permitted discourse."⁵²

Conclusion

The contribution of the *Alternative* school of security studies has created a consonance between IR scholarship and contemporary efforts to redefine security issues in the post-Cold War era. Groups in danger of further political marginalization in the context of the neo-liberal globalizing economy, including women's organizations, labour groups and the ecological movement, regularly enlist ideas of security in the context of their efforts. Appeals to security are now routinely voiced outside of the idea of statehood, citizenship and militarism in favour of community, humanity and empowerment. IR scholarship thus helps to create a

⁵¹ See Ian Forbes' discussion of the implications, for example, of a reconceptualized state within international relations in "The International Relations Discourse and Halliday's Second Agenda," *Millennium* 17:1 (1988), quote from p. 62.

⁵² R.B.J. Walker, *The Concept of Security and International Relations*, p. 22.

legitimizing intellectual birth for these overtly political efforts historically considered to be on the margins of global politics. This is a radical departure for the IR field given its historical trajectory, one characterized by exceptionally close ties to narrowly understood foreign policy communities. Although somewhat more conventional approaches to security studies are far from vanishing, their claims are now systematically challenged and their conservative political connotations more fully explored.