

# SECURITY AND SELF REFLECTIONS OF A FALLEN REALIST

Ken Booth

Professor  
Department of International Politics  
University College of Wales  
Aberystwyth

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Personal experience has always been an explicit feature of feminist theorising. Making sense of one's own life has been seen as a way of making sense of the lives of others. The personal, the political, and the international are a seamless web. In this chapter I want to make some reflections, in a similar spirit, about self, profession and world politics. Instead of purporting to describe or explain the world 'out there', as is one's professional training, I want to reflect on the world 'in here'—as 'part of our innermost being' (Berger, 1966, p.140). This is academically and temperamentally a somewhat difficult thing to do. It is especially out of line with the traditions of several decades of strategic studies, which involved 'telling it as it is'—'it' begin a realist account of the purported state(s) of the world. As a profession, security specialists have not been particularly self) reflective. We have sometimes been invited to think the unthinkable, yet 'we' have been out of bounds. At what is thought to be a period of 'intellectual crisis' in 'security studies', 'we' should not be. For most of us we are our last and most difficult frontier. Hence the personal nature of this paper, which attempts at the same time to confuse and clarify what it means to study 'security' at the end of the twentieth century.

## **Out There**

The traditional image of positivist international relations is that we take issues—European integration, the Cuban Missile Crisis, foreign policy behaviour, security or whatever—and place them under our social science microscopes. We then try to describe and explain the phenomena on view. Occasionally, there will be enough changes in a particular pattern of thought or behaviour that we need to reconsider how we think about the phenomenon, or how we should study it. Implicitly, the assumption of this approach is that our conception of security derives from changes 'out there'—in what is thought to be the real world of international affairs—rather than 'in here', in the mind of the analyst. Cold Wars rise and fall according to this perspective, and with the shifts come changes in our theories, agendas and relevant expertise. But is it as simple as the natural science analogy suggests? Is the relationship between the observer and observed as direct, as common)sensical, as just suggested? The answer is 'no'. It is much too simple to believe that changes in academic theory and agenda necessarily derive from changes in the real world, as seen under the academic's microscope, as opposed to changes deriving from reinventions 'in here' (within the mind of the academic). At least in some cases, the 'facts' of world politics look back through the microscope and examine the mind of the observer, rather than vice versa.

It has already become a cliché that the end of the Cold War has stimulated a major change in the way international relations scholars think about the way we conceive security. Like all clichés, it has at least a grain of truth, but it is a considerable exaggeration. The end of the Cold War—marked by anti-climatic speeches of the representatives of its main protagonists—was not in this case such an important event. In any case, it is best to grasp

Cynthia Enloe's insight about the *'endings'* of the Cold War' (emphasis added) since this underlines that what happened means and meant different things to different groups of people. Except for the congenital 'keepers of the threat', the most committed bombs-and-bullets types, or 'doctrinaire realists', attitudes about security had already shifted significantly before 1989. By the mid-1980s, there were plenty of signs of discontent about the equation 'military strategy equals security'.

From the late 1970s/early 1980s 'new thinking' about strategy and international security gradually expanded, particularly in Europe (both east and west). It was given focus and encouragement when Gorbachev came to power and coined the phrase 'new thinking', but already a significant body of opinion labelling itself 'alternative defence' (Booth and Baylis, 1989) had been developing, and this played some part in creating a radically different group of experts in Moscow to those the General Secretaries of the CPSU had usually drawn upon. This and other varieties of 'new thinking' about strategy predated the conventional end of the Cold War, and the recent changes in world affairs that now demand attention. Critical thinking could not but recognise that the Cold War was deadly, but it also believed that it was brain dead. There was an understanding, even if imperfectly articulated, that the iron curtain and the military confrontation imprisoned us all, east and west, into old thinking about the games nations played. What kept the Cold War going was the Cold War, and what kept Cold War strategic studies going was Cold War intellectuals. In place of the traditional statist/militarised perspective on international security, which characterised academic strategic studies from the mid-1950s on, alternative thinkers emphasised non-offensive defence, common security, democracy, human rights, disarmament, confidence-building and civil society—in short, a broader conception of security, with a wider agenda and changed practice.

The discussion of a wider understanding of security in international relations in the 1980s—greatly helped by the publication of Barry Buzan's *People, States and Fear* (1983)—was itself nothing new. The incorporation into the security debate of a broader set of issues than those included in the traditional 'high politics' of so-called national security studies had long been the staple diet of peace studies and peace research and the world order/world society approaches. Most mainstream international relations scholars would still now hesitate before placing the work of the following theorists on reading lists and calling them in as 'authorities', because of their 'radical' perspectives: John Galtung's writing about structural violence (as opposed exclusively to direct violence); Kenneth Boulding's concept of stable (as opposed to unstable) peace; John Burton's individualist rather than statist world view; and Richard Falk's world order as opposed to realist values. Such ideas, which promoted a broad conception of security, gained some ground in the 1950s and 1960s, but not in mainstream international relations; yet they represent philosophically more original contributions to the present security debate than any of those articles prominent in the workaday academic journals at the closings of the Cold War. The important (historical)

point, therefore, is that the real 'redefiners' of contemporary security studies predated the end of the Cold War, although they were never accepted into the Cold War international relations security literature. In addition to the approaches just mentioned, the advocates of Third World security perspectives have also made a significant case for a different slant on the concept of security to that which prevailed in strategic studies before the late 1980s.

After even this briefest introduction, it should be evident that the 'intellectual crisis' in security studies on the cusp of the Cold War's endings, exist more or less exclusively in the camp of those self-defining realist 'owls' who want to rescue the assumptions of strategic studies as the basis for approaching security in the post-Cold War world. This group is in crisis because everything seems to have changed except their assumptions. Old realists know that nothing has changed, while critical security theorists believe that the important changes in world affairs had long predated 1989.

## Self

But, for those who think that important changes had taken place, where had they taken place? In what follows I want to emphasize the complex inter-relationship between theory and the theorizer, and in so doing call into question the positivist assumption that changes in theory flow directly from new issues placing themselves under the security analyst's microscope, with the result that the analyst is led to reconsider approaches, agendas, referents and so on. They may happen. In 1945 the atomic bomb without doubt dropped itself under the microscope. However, I want to try to explain from my own experience that what goes under the microscope in the name of 'security' may be the result of changes within the theorist rather than any significant changes in the world 'out there'. This discussion involves some consideration of the self and the construction of the self as a 'security analyst', and the inter-relationship between security and self, and theory and theoriser.

There are two foundational quotations which underpin the rest of this argument. The first is from Anais Nin: 'We see things not as they are, but as we are'. The second is by Gandhi: 'We must be the change we wish to see in the world'. The words of Nin are a succinct summary of the differences between the spirit of positivism and the agenda of post-positivism, while those of Gandhi make us think about academic inquiry and political change.

Both foundational quotations raise crucial questions for students of security. What, for example, does Nin's phrase 'we are' imply? What *we are* is a fundamentally contested problem. Do *we* (women, men, humans) have unchanging 'natures'? Are we socially constructed beings ('women', 'men', 'humans')? Or are *we*—in a more complex characterisation—manifold beings, given changing meanings through time and space ("women", "men", "humans")? As well as inviting such question, Nin's words also suggest

a seamless web between the definition of the political and the definition of the personal. This links directly to Gandhi's words. Among other things, he invites us to consider whether, before we reinvent the study of security (and before that politics) do we first have to reinvent ourselves? If we decide that this is necessary, how do we reinvent ourselves (whoever 'we' are)? Furthermore—and this is a subversive question for academics—are universities, and indeed books, an efficient way to create and recreate the people who might offer some promise of meeting the challenges to global security in the next century? In order to help think about these matters, it is necessary to make several general points about identity. Whether or not we are specialists in the relevant literature, we are all now, to a degree, identity theorists.

In the sociological tradition of thinking about identity, especially that of the symbolic interactionists, we do not come into the world as formed individuals, but are constructed out of the interaction between our individual genetic makeup and the various social structures (maintained by the intentions of those within them) in which we develop. Thus communication and language are crucial for identity (Berger, 1966, pp.81-141; Schotter, 1984, pp.53-72, 195-217). These general remarks are relevant to the particular case of security specialists, and their individual relationship with their professional structures. These are the factors which shape their sense of identity. Identity—who *I* really think I am / who *one* actually believes one is / who *they* think they are / what makes *us* believe we are the same and *them* different—is basic to many aspects of the discussion of security.

Role theory or role playing is a crucial aspect of the sociological tradition of thinking about identity. A role is defined (by Berger) as 'a typified response to a typified expectation' (1966, p.123). In this formulation, society provides the script, individuals slip into assigned roles, and the 'social play' proceeds as planned as long as everybody plays their appropriate parts. Role playing consists of individuals adapting their behaviour and goals to the expectations others have of them. Then the role 'forms, shapes, patterns both action and actor' (1966, pp.112-4). Berger proceeds to argue that each role has a certain identity; some are trivial and temporary, others are not. (It is doubtful whether anybody would disagree with the proposition that during the Cold War the roles and identity of those Western academics who were strategic studies specialists or national security experts were very important to their sense of self). Berger summarises the significance of role theory by saying that 'identity is socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed' (1966, p.116). During the Cold War security specialists played particular roles, and these mattered both for the societies which bestowed them and the identities they gave.

The roles and identities just discussed are most relevant for adults. But George Herbert Mead emphasised the importance of such ideas in relation to children (1934, pp.135-226). The discovery of the self—the process of creating and being created—is simultaneous with the discovery of society. Children learn to play roles, both with respect to 'significant others' (mother etc.) and the 'generalised other' (society etc.). Identity is not

something 'given', but 'is bestowed in acts of social recognition' (Berger, 1966, p.117). Berger goes on to argue (p.119) that every act of social affiliation entails a choice of identity, and that, conversely, identity requires specific social affiliations for its survival. He sums up:

the individual locates himself in society within systems of social control, and every one of these contains an identity-generating apparatus. *Insofar as he is able* the individual will try to manipulate his affiliations...in such a way as to fortify the identifies that have given him satisfaction in the past...In many cases, of course, *such manipulation is not possible*. One must then do the best one can with *the identities one is thrown* (pp.119-20. Emphasis added).

In addition to noting Berger's identification of the individual with masculine pronouns, this passage is noteworthy for what he suggests about the scope for choice, and (as the emphasised words show) the lack of choice. For many people in many situations identities are simply thrown at one—'woman', 'Serb', 'Black'—they are not matters of choice. Before some of the implications of these remarks for security specialists are discussed and illustrated, it is necessary to discuss Mead's 'I' and 'me'.

According to Mead, the human self is a reflexive being, made up of an 'I' and a 'me' (1934, pp.173-8). The latter is socially constructed whereas the former is more the product of subjective choice, though this subjective choice is also in part the product of social circumstances. The 'me' is known through social interaction, but the 'I' might be unknowable. To relate this to Berger, it is 'me' who is allotted the role (by micro/macro society) but it is 'I' who choose how to play it. In Mead's words: 'The "I" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the "me" is the organised set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organised "me", and then one reacts toward that as an "I"' (1934, p.175). In terms of the development of individuals as specialists in strategic or security studies, the "me" is the identity ascribed by the profession to an individual (and therefore the identity taken on through seeing oneself in relation to those of the same profession); the "I" is the inner self, which, to a lesser or greater degree may subjectively want to play the role differently. One's identity as a security specialist evolves through the interplay of I and me, psychology and culture, the individual and social structures.

This sociological interpretation of the making of the self has been echoed by some postmodern accounts of social change (Scholte, 1993, pp.113; see also 107). The interrelations between cultural and psychological forces also figure here. The importance of feeling, instinct, personality 'and other conditions of the self' are emphasised in the way that texts are read and deconstructed. Scholte talks about this in relation to Michel Foucault and his account of the history of ideas. Writers from other schools within post-positivist approaches have written along similar lines. Jurgen Habermas's theory of 'lifeworlds' and communicative action involves the interplay between self-identity and the construction of meaning. In addition to Jan Aart Scholte, Alexander Wendt is one of the few international

relations scholars who have addressed the inside of which everything else is the outside (1992, especially pp.394 ff.).

This brief survey of some standard sociological literature yields several concepts which are useful for thinking about the critical turn in security studies: self, roles, socialisation, I, me. One might also add Erikson's notion of 'identity crisis', dating from World War II, by which he meant a 'lost sense of personal sameness and historical continuity' (1968, pp.15-19). Such crises are said to characterise some life stages—particularly for youths—where there is confusion about identity until a new social ideology is found which provides 'a convincing world image' (1968, pp.30-31). It is significant for our present discussion that Erikson believed that such problems were more acute at times of great historical change (p.30).

There are, of course, many so far unmentioned variables which in practice affect the evolution of I/me, including gender, race, national group, upbringing and so on. These are questions which students of international relations and international security have generally ignored, but cannot continue to do so without seriously impoverishing the quality of their analysis (Zalewski and Enloe, 1994). Humans are a meaning-creating species, and the creation and recreation of identity is an important part of the (international) politics of meaning. Security and insecurity themselves play an important role in the making of meaning.

The point of these introductory remarks is that if Nin and Gandhi are correct, and that we see things as *we* are, and that *we* need be the change, then it is necessary for security specialists to become much more self-conscious about such questions as: Who do we think we are? What is the relationship between our identity and our interests? What do we think we are doing? Who do we represent? What values are we promoting? And why? Why do we give priority to certain issues, and ignore others? What are our grounds for claiming special competence? To what extent is the profession prone to 'group think'? What are the major pressures creating the profession's 'conventional convictions'? Do we need to reinvent ourselves, before reinventing the profession? If we do, can we? And how can we? What is or should be the relationship between study in a university, and the political world? How powerful are cultural and social pressures in determining the construction of the social identity of the security specialist? And if 'me' significantly determines what I think security is, how it should be studied, and what policies should be pursued, should I not spend more time (re)thinking who I am? And why? Security studies is ultimately what we make it; it is the historical outcome of the interplay between a socially constructed profession and the (part social, part biochemical) individuals who are employed to do it. In the working out of the relationship between the many me's and I's, security studies will be replicated or revised, as specialists in security studies talk and act what they think they play.

'Me'



As security specialists—graduates or junior faculty—we begin with the 'me' in the ascendant. We know relatively little, and we are, to a large extent, what our teachers make us. Put at its simplest, if we did not pass *their* examinations, our career as security specialists would be short indeed. We must therefore consider the making of me-the-security-analyst. Here begins the personal experience.

Almost all those who were students of international relations (in Britain) in the 1960s lived on a diet of realism. For the most part it was not the high cuisine realism (the actual works) of the founders of this school, but a form of fast-food realism. It showed rather little of the complexity, sophistication and moral anguish of Reinhold Niebuhr and others—as Nicholas Wheeler insists—but was instead a body of ideas neatly packaged for teaching purposed in order to make them easily palatable to students. It was made into a very persuasive story.

Realism, and particularly its off-shoot strategic studies, was very much a creation of the Cold War. It is difficult for junior academics today to image the mood and experience of students of the subject over thirty years ago—just as difficult as it was for students of the early 1960s to empathise with those in the Great Depression. The important point is that for students in the early 1960s World War II was only yesterday. For those of us whose first school-yard jokes were about Hitler, Mussolini and Churchill (learning that the world was run by strong leaders), who played after school around the neighbourhood air-raid shelter, whose first experience of 'important' films (marked by a ticket and a half-day holiday from school) was to watch major war movies about Dunkirk or D-Day (in which our teachers and relatives had participated), and whose first awareness of newspapers and TV was of global crises such as those over Berlin in the late 1950s—for those of us who effortlessly learned global politics through our skins in this way, the realist account of the world which we were given as students seemed exactly to fit the images we already had in our heads.

Having been brought up on the state-centric and militarised news media and popular culture of the Cold War, my generation of international relations students was primed to believe that a theory of what, in Aron's phase 'diplomats and soldiers' did, explained world affairs. Just as children are primed to expect the mince-pies eaten and the brandy drunk on Christmas morning, so students of international relations in the 1960s were primed to expect an account of ministers rushing between conference halls and missiles at the ready. So, just as the Father Christmas story 'explains' the crumbs on the plate by the chimney, which in turn satisfies wide-eyed and believing children, so realism helps constitute the behaviour in world politics which it then purports to 'explain' to wide-eyed and primed students. Instead of positivism's 'seeing is believing', the social world is in important ways constructed by the phenomenon of believing is seeing.

There is another comparison between the phenomenon of Father Christmas and the phenomenon of academic realism. Both are deeply masculinised. Within departments of

international relations in the 1960s the concept of gender was neither seen nor believed. The subject was not friendly to women, in any sense of the word.

Those who were good students of realism, and passed their teachers' examinations, were offered places in the academy, and became teachers themselves. To be accepted it was necessary to take on what Charles Manning used to call the 'conventional convictions' of the profession. Thus the junior faculty 'me' was one largely created by the teaching and expectations of a generation of realists/positivists. Like many students of that time I was attracted to the growing sub-field of strategic studies. This seemed to be where the action was, literally and academically.

In order to be a teacher at the heart of power politics it was necessary to become adept at, and share in the assumptions of, what the profession identified as the fundamental theories of peace and security. These were nuclear deterrence, arms control, limited war and crisis management (Garnett, 1970). Peace research or world society thinking and other 'radical' ways of conceiving politics on a global scale were ignored completely or dismissed as irrelevant or idiosyncratic or lacking in realism or the ideas of crazy radicals. It now seems astonishingly anti-intellectual. And, like junior faculty everywhere, what one had been taught only a short time before, one tended to teach to one's own students. Last-minute lecture preparation makes corner-cutters of us all. Other professional pressures also exercised an influence. To be one of the boys—with all that entailed—it was necessary to share the same assumptions. Significantly—and what I now think of with some shame—my student criticism of the war in Vietnam in 1965-67 evolved in 1968-69 into the explanatory language of realpolitik. Pursuing the goal of 'stability' now seemed more important than criticising the 'arrogance of power'. It was not the war in Vietnam that had changed, or my knowledge of it; what had changed was that I had become a 'defence intellectual'. It was not a difficult script to follow, for it involved powerful stories and heroic images, and the role was not lacking in a certain glamour.

While the professionally constructed "me" continued to enjoy the challenges thrown up by the attempt to understand some of the great issues of peace and war, I began to have serious disquiets about some aspects of the subject. In particular, when I began to teach strategic studies in 1967, it came as a stunning surprise that almost all those strategists whose professional lives were involved with 'the Soviet threat' and all its implications knew little or nothing about the Soviet Union itself. What is more, they did not seem to think it mattered. All they appeared interested in was the certainty that 'we' were faced by a (super) powerful enemy. This was my first academic shock. I had entered a branch of 'international politics' in which those who were paid to study it were curiously incurious about the world. What is more, repeated experiences convinced me that many of them did not care. Looking back, this discovery of the profound realist incuriosity about the world's 'realities' was a critical turning point.

As a teacher of such topics as nuclear strategy and US-Soviet relations I tried to develop an understanding of Soviet military policy in particular and foreign policy in general. It was an enormous boon having Michael MccGwire for a short time as a student, and always as an original teach. Subsequently, the series of seminars he organised at Dalhousie University in the early 1970s on Soviet naval developments brought together some of the best Soviet specialists available, and encouraged a range of significant research, from how to think about shipbuilding programmes to discussions of the semantic differences between the Russian and Anglo-American words for 'deterrence' and 'defence'. These meetings generally confirmed the conclusion that I had reached in the late 1960s that the West should be relaxed about 'the Soviet threat'. The Soviet Union seemed more threatened than threatening. Trying to understand the Soviet Union, and the variety of Western thinking about it, led to concern about the ethnocentric character of Anglo-American strategic studies in particular and international relations in general. What gradually dawned was that what purported to be rational and objective strategic theory was often a rationalisation of national prejudice, and that we should regard strategy not simply as the fascinating technical and psychological game as it was portrayed, but, ultimately, as a continuation of moral philosophy with an admixture of firepower. Strategic theory helped to constitute the strategic world, and then strategic studies helped to 'explain' it—self-reverentially and tautologically. Later, I learned that the term 'explanation' in this context should be rejected, since what is taking place is simply an account of a (theoretically constituted) situation by a (similarly theoretically constituted) theorist in and of that situation.

The realisation that we live within structures which are theories, that the material circumstances of strategy are the manifestations of theories, that theories about security deliver our strategic facts, and that there is more than one strategic logic, led to a growing disquiet with realism and its familiar positivist methods. But what did it mean to believe that 'reality' is in the eye of the beholder? That there is more than one version of the (strategic) logic of anarchy? That social truth is a product of history rather than a given of nature? And that human nature is not natural? I had no clear idea, but in 1974-75 started collecting material and ideas about the ethnocentric character of strategic theorising and practice. This effort was encouraged by James E. King, the Director of Research at the US Naval War College in the 1970s, and he made it possible that I spend some time writing up the material at Newport, RI, in 1977. Jim King, one of the very few true scholars in postwar strategic studies, was a great and unselfish supporter of younger colleagues. The changing (collapsing) relationship between the professional strategist ('me') and the uncertain self ("I"), was summed up in the dedication of the book that eventually was published, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*.

It was fortunate that the opportunity to study at the US Naval War College had been firmly fixed by Jim King, for in the previous year there had been a sharp termination of personal naivety about the relationship between academics and policymakers, in this case in the shape of important players in the US Navy. For a number of years I had been writing

and lecturing regularly about navies and foreign policy, and this work had converged with that of some groups in the US Navy. During this period I got the chance to meet some impressive people and see up close some amazing technology. But I was abruptly 'dropped' by the US Navy, after what very senior personnel saw as a hostile attack, but which I (naively) simply considered an argument for discussion ('If the Sixth Fleet did not exist would you invent it?' Answer: no). I was never again asked to talk to the US Navy, and so felt directly what previously I had only read, namely that policymakers only see academics as more or less useful bureaucratic resources. My work, quite erroneously, became seen as 'anti-American'. It was better seen as critical commentary on the US government. Later, with the Reagan era, there was of course a great deal to criticize.

Together, the public policy concern over the issue of the Soviet threat, the theoretical concern over the ethnocentric character of the discipline, and the realisation that academics and policymakers make uncomfortable bedmates, led to growing confusion—a sort of professional identity crisis—about the subject matter (what it was and how it should be studied) and the subject (I/me as a university teacher). I knew what "I" was reacting against—the assumptions, presumptions, assertions and prescriptions of mainstream strategic studies—but did not know which direction this reaction would take.

'I'

I only attempted to become self-conscious about this process of ontological reinvention recently, when a student tagged me as a 'fallen realist'. It is worth briefly relating how this came about, since there is a tendency to assume that changed conceptions of the world are—for academics—either the result of being persuaded by a decisive book or being shocked by major events in world politics. People seem determined to make us either simply disciples or positivists. There are other accounts.

What follows is largely a story of the influence of three women outside mainstream international relations—not the usual stuff of Cold War strategic studies, but perhaps a story of increasing relevance for global security studies for the 21st century. Together, and almost at the same time, these three individuals led me to rethink what, how and why I thought about 'security' in international relations. It is interesting to discuss these points in relation to the Waltzian level of analysis problem, since for me, like many other students of the subject, Kenneth Waltz's work has been an important stimulus and provocation; and the three levels of analysis or 'images' which he discusses in his major work *Man, the State and War* were a formative influence. If, in the 1970s, I was conscious of moving away from the realist fatalism of that book and later the neo-realist 'logic of anarchy' position elaborated in his 1979 work, it took ideas and stimuli outside the literature of the subject and discussions with colleagues to give those discontents direction. I will deal with the three (re)analyses of levels in a chronological rather than Waltzian order.

**The state.** An Australian friend, Dale Trood, tried seriously in the mid-1970s to interest me in the work and spirit of Amnesty International. Interfering in the business of other states obviously ran against realist ideology, as did the implication that an NGO could be a serious player in world affairs. 'States are the most powerful actors' was (and remains) a basis of the realist litany. However, the more I thought about the individual cases which are the staple of AI's work, the more I thought about the significance of thinking about international relations from the perspective of individuals rather than states. My involvement in AI's activities has remained peripheral, but to my mind it is as worthy an organisation as one could hope for in an imperfect world. For me, writing the first letters to governments about perfect strangers—victims of those governments—was a real turning-point. Here were some of the hitherto unseen causalities of the structures of international relations. It is not only war that produces casualties. This turning point was almost as vivid as it was for Oskar Schindler, in Spielberg's film, when he focused, through all the carnage, on the solitary little girl in a red coat. At least this is how I read the moment in the film: the reality of human wrongs is visualised in a single stranger. One consequence of this was the exploration of previously ghettoised literature: Falk, Galtung, Boulding, Burton etc. were discovered, but more to reinforce than to reveal. Individual victims came to be seen not simply as a feature of 'domestic' politics, but as a part of an international system which through a mixture of rationality and historical happenstance, had come to play the game of power politics rather than the game of common humanity. The individual/bottom-up/victim perspective began to change what I thought about the state, state types, social power, other security problems than the military inventories of the superpowers, the state as the exclusive security referent, and states as a source of threat rather than as a source of security. The sovereign state came to be seen as an important part of the problem of insecurity, not the solution.

**War.** A Canadian peace campaigner, Peggy Hope-Simpson, refused to accept that somebody she took to be reasonably sane, and certainly knowledgeable about such matters, could actually believe what I was teaching students in such areas as nuclear deterrence and arms control. She insisted I talked to her and her group (Project Ploughshares) about such realist truisms as the 'inescapable' war system, the 'impossibility' of disarmament, the 'rational' relationship between military power and national security, the 'perpetual' nuclear peace, the 'just' nuclear deterrent and this being 'the best of all possible worlds'. It gradually became apparent that 'me' was mouthing a strategist's script—written by myself—rather than saying what "I" really thought, which was altogether much more uncertain. Strategists are not supposed to be Doubting Thomases. But doubts kept accumulating and led to the conclusion that anarchy in a multicultural world might not only deliver different logics of strategy, but also that the global (inter-state) predicament invites different logics of foreign policy and international relations. Alexander Wendt recently expressed this shift very neatly

with the title: 'Anarchy is what states make of it' (1992), though the final reference to 'states' concedes too much to these contested agents.

The conceptual jump involved here was from thinking of war as a structural phenomenon to thinking of it as a cultural phenomenon, albeit a deeply entrenched one. War should be regarded as a cultural phenomenon (and hence a cultural problem) because human political groups have not always fought, which undermines the determinist arguments about human nature and the inter-state structure; certainly human political groups have often fought, but the meaning of that violence which we label 'war' has changed radically. If war is a cultural phenomenon, then it can be transcended. The theory of power politics and self-help got us into this security predicament; better theories—the theories and practice of global moral and political obligation—can get us out. This is obviously easier said than done, and it is always worth remembering Marx's cautioning words that 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves'. This changing view of the war system led to the need to rethink structures and agents and to reconsider the whole subject of international relations. I did not see it this way at the time, but was later told that I was struggling against what Roberto Unger came to call 'false necessities' (1987).

The quotation just given from Marx employed the sexist language of his time. 'Men make history', of course, but history also makes men. And women. One of the major breakthroughs of any social scientist is the discovery of the construction of gender and its power in politics (that is, in almost everything).

**Men.** Eurwen Booth—my daily reminder that there are other than English, strategic and masculine ways of thinking—got a job with Welsh Women's Aid, which deals with battered women. Her 1970s-primed feminist consciousness rocketed, and dragged me along in its slipstream. This did not come 'naturally' to a professional strategist and lad from the north of England. Nevertheless, the gendered character of the social and political world was then blindingly obvious once it was pointed out (though dealing with it appropriately was another matter). What with hindsight is now remarkable is how invisible this dominating fact of life had previously been. It is a perfect illustration of believing is seeing. When I was growing up I could not see my mother's life as anything other than 'natural'. Once I believed it was not, it looked very different. I could not see the marriage Eurwen and I had lived as other than 'natural' until I/we believed that we had been social sleep-walkers. What has this to do with international relations in general and security in particular? In time it has come to be seen to have everything to do with it: to talk about 'security' without thinking about gender is simply to account for the surface reflections without examining what is happening deep down below the surface. It is the equivalent of those who report on boxing matches or polo games and always refrain from asking the tough questions: why? who? how?

'Us'

'We are as we are because we got that way' is one of the many insightful Kenneth Bouldingisms for which we should be grateful. The world is as it is through historical construction, as the market-place and sometimes battlefield of competing theories. The corollary of this is that we (human society in whole or in part) might become what we hope to be: this places a totally different perspective on the 'timeless present' of realism and the necessitous nature of international relations as taught during the Cold War. This open-ended view of human potential is also important in thinking about the construction of the self in relation to being a security specialist. The important message here—especially for young colleagues, but also for others—is that the self is an unfinished journey: above all, one should not consider that the end of the history of one's own self comes in postgraduate/junior faculty years. But too often individuals are trapped and trap themselves in the subject areas and intellectual convictions of their early twenties. As academics our work is never finished. Our books and articles are explorations not destinations, and so should be our own individual lives. In a way never understood by those who saw and see the study of international relations and other social sciences as comparable with natural science, we are what we do and we do what we are. We are our work, at least as much as our books.

But we do not work alone. There are a variety of circumstantial factors, as indicated above, which affect one's explorations. The 'me' is constrained by place, time and community, but so is the exploring 'I'. Luck is a factor, as well as curiosity. To complete the brief autobiography, I want to suggest a number of influences which helped give direction in the 1980s to the fallen realist of the 1970s.

First, the matter of place is one graduate students and junior faculty in particular might ponder. In the decisive couple of years when some of these ideas discussed above were fermenting—particularly about nuclear weapons—I was not living in my country of citizenship (I was in Canada) and I was not working with my regular colleagues. This critical distance, relative freedom from loyalty tests and absence of familiar peer pressure undoubtedly made it easier to change one's mind. This seems to be a recipe for at least some academic mobility, and a confirmation of the old adage about the purpose of travel not being to discover new places but to return and see one's country for the first time. The same, it seems, might sometimes be said about one's profession. There are two other points to make about place. I grew up in Featherstone, a mining village in West Yorkshire, which was in England but in important ways not of 'England'; and then, after I was 18, I have lived most of the time in Aberystwyth, a small town on the West coast of Wales, which not only is the home of the oldest Department of International Politics in the world, but it also probably has the highest number of books per capita than anywhere else in the world. In terms of conceptualising identity, Featherstone was an experience of class and industry, and Aberystwyth is one of nationalism, remoteness and education. Taken together both mean,

in 'British' terms, living outside the margins of 'Englishness' and metropolitan mentalities; and for both these things I have been lucky.

We are all, in different ways, creatures rather than creators of our times, and in the story just related, another important contextual consideration was that the working out of some of these changes coincided with the INF debate which began in the late 1970s. This proved to be a convenient focus for thinking about issues such as the morality of nuclear weapons. It was a helpful coincidence rather than a provocation, though Erikson's point about identity crises and periods of historical change is worth bearing in mind. Without doubt, the process of trying to think through previously-held positions on peace and security was given a particular focus and clarity by the crude and similar views of Reagan, Thatcher, and Brezhnev. The earlier argument should not be read as implying that changes 'out there' are irrelevant to the way we think about security, only that they are not necessarily the most important or are even crucial. To believe this would be to embrace a pure positivist position.

Finally, most academics need to belong to a community with a similar world view. Some in this community may be theorists, others activists; the contact may be direct or through writing; some will be like-minded strangers, while others close friends. But what matters will be the support of the treasured few rather than the criticism of the many. In the 1980s, as the world became increasingly wired, it became apparent that in many countries there existed a community of strangers who problematized the conventional strategic/security convictions of the elites in their different countries. But this community of strangers lacked the financial backing which enabled the proponents of established Cold War structures, attitudes and policies to meet frequently and develop military-Intellectual-industrial complexes. Given the large number of people I listened to and read—depended upon—in the 1980s, it might seem churlish to pick out individuals, but I do so to underline the point that while it might appear individualistic, academic work is invariably a team effort. For my own part, what helped put the critique of the 1970s together into a sense of direction in the 1980s was the encouragement, long-term perspectives and ferocious criticism of Michael MccGwire; the questioning by, curiosity of, and pressure to think in wider theoretical terms from Nicholas Wheeler; the alternative security networking made possible in eastern and western Europe and North America by Just Defence in Britain and the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies in Boston; the inspiration from those who in always difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances tried to behave like global citizens; and the numerous works of peace research and philosophy which previously had been out of the frame of what had been considered to be the 'archive' of 'IR'.

### **Critical Security Studies**



With hindsight, it is possible to see the story above as an uncertain struggle away from realist strategic studies towards what, as a result of the York workshop which gave birth to this book, we can now call 'critical security studies'. It was the inadequacies of realism rather than the positive attraction of any possible alternative that did all the early work, and indeed it took a considerable time before all the other strands came together in the notion of 'utopian realism', an idea whose theory and practice I am still working out but whose assumptions—believing that world politics does not have to be this way and that the human race has only recently started, but that we have to begin where we are—fit firmly within the notion of critical security studies.

The emergence of critical security studies was both to be expected and is to be celebrated at a time when world events are even more complex and confusing than ever, when old political and philosophical certainties are challenged, and when the study of international relations is rent by divisions over ontology, epistemology, agenda and method. When thinking about international political theory is at a cross-roads, so must be the way we think about security. Although it is rarely explicit—especially by those wedded to traditional security theory—the debate about 'security studies' is only one aspect of a more fundamental debate about 'politics', including the increasingly important context of 'world politics'. The contemporary debate about the meaning of 'security'—and how it should be studied—is only part (but a very important one because of the political salience of 'security' issues) of the macro-debate about what it means to be living, thinking and teaching at the end of the twentieth century. And thus, at least implicitly, it is part of the debate about what it will mean to be a human political and social agent in the twenty-first century.

At the heart of the personal account earlier was the move away from the narrow realist definition of what constitutes 'the political', and the ethnocentric subject of Cold War international relations, towards a critical perspective which gradually embraced a less top-down, Anglo-American definition of 'international politics' and a broader concept of the meaning of politics.

Critical security studies begin in a rejection of traditional security theory. It rejects, in particular: the definition of politics that places the state and its sovereignty at the centre of the subject; the moral authority of states; the belief that the state is and should be the key guardian of peoples' security; the relevance of strategic studies' descriptions of the 'reality' of world affairs; the assumptions and presumptions implicit in the simple binaries of mainstream international relations; the regressive view of human nature evident in the classical preachings of realism; the utter dominance of structure over agent evident in neo)realism; the unreflecting positivism implicit in much of the method of traditional international relations; and the 'false necessities' which restrict the vision, and weigh down the spirit of so many students of the subject.

'Security' is what we make it. It is an epiphenomenon, inter-subjectively created. Different world views and discourses about politics deliver different views and discourses

about security. New thinking about security is not simply a matter of 'broadening' the subject matter (widening the agenda of issues beyond the merely military). It is possible—as Barry Buzan has shown above all—to expand 'international security studies' both vertically and horizontally, and still remain within an asserted neo-realist framework and approach. Although it also broadens the agenda—vertically and horizontally—critical security studies is fundamentally different because the agenda derives from a radically different political philosophy, theory, and methodology.

A school of critical security studies that develops from what might be called 'global moral science' rather than the traditional security theory that derives from the 'dismal science' of international relations accepts the relationship between theory and historical/social/political context; it is more concerned with the search for meaning than the endless accumulation of knowledge; it believes that social and political science cannot be separated from life but are inseparable from social and political criticism/replication and social and political practice; it believes that theory is constitutive rather than explanatory; that the creation of the future is more crucial than the search for philosophical foundations; that the role of academics is not (and cannot be) that of a dispassionate observer but is rather that of Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' or Midgley's socially-engaged philosopher; and the belief that, since human potential is barely tapped, politics on a global scale must be regarded as open-ended rather than determined, and based in ethical choices rather than 'natural' instincts.

Critical security studies as just described do not—should not—disregard 'the state' and the military dimensions of world politics. What is being challenged is not the material existence of the world of traditional realism, but of its moral and practical status, including its naturalisation of historically created theories and the belief in its ability to deliver the good life globally. There is, without doubt, a place in critical security studies for the study of the threat and use of military force, but the study of strategy should no longer be synonymous with 'security studies', as was the case in traditional international relations theory, and as some still want to maintain it (Walt). Strategic studies is the military dimension of international relations which itself is an aspect of world politics—meaning who gets what, where and how on a global scale (to extrapolate Harold Lasswell's famous definition of politics). Strategic studies fits within critical security studies but as only one aspect—though sometimes a crucial one—of a wide agenda and one with a variety of security referents. This can be illustrated by the example of the 'security dilemma', which in many respects has been seen as the quintessential dilemma of international relations. Pervasive 'Hobbesian fear' results in insecurity, even when no malevolence is intended. Rather than seeing it as the quintessential dilemma, however, critical security studies sees the security dilemma as a sometimes important phenomenon, but, more significantly, as an epiphenomenon of hegemonial reasoning and practices which need to be understood in order that reflexive human societies can mitigate and then transcend the dangerous traps of

security dilemmas. In order to transcend such problems, it is necessary to work at two levels: first, at a level of mitigating the symptoms of the epiphenomenon itself (by confidence building measures, non)provocative defence postures etc.); and second at the deeper level of the structures which give rise to the epiphenomenon, which, depending on one's political outlooks and strategic preferences, may be the grand schemes of structural idealists, such as world government or world communism, or the 'process utopian' schemes of the agents of global reform such as global civil society or world society thinkers. (Booth and Wheeler, forthcoming).

The debate within security studies over the past few years between the post-Cold War updates of the traditional strategic studies approach and the proponents of what now might be labelled critical security studies (representing the convergence of various theoretical strands) is not simply an 'academic' dispute over professional turf. It is only superficially about the boundaries of a sub-field and how it should be studied. Fundamentally, it is a struggle about the focus, direction, and meaning of the study of 'international relations' at the end of one era and the beginning of another. To the extent that this branch of academic life has influence, it is literally a struggle over the world views of Western opinion.

## Conclusion

What, then, does it mean to study security, and the means to achieve it, in the late twentieth century? To begin, I want to assert two things that it does not mean. First it should not involve the replication of the narrow statist/militarised version of security which characterised strategic studies from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s. This period of strategic studies, defined by the Cold War and the nuclear revolution, can now be seen in its entirety, as based around an ethnocentric and time-bound set of theories of 'peace' and 'security'. Second, this assertion in turn is not meant to imply that strategy and war are not important dimensions of the security problem. Far from it. War and therefore strategy are not going to disappear in the near future, and so they require due attention. However, the agenda, assumptions, and approaches of Cold War strategic studies cannot be left to define 'security' if we want to improve the prospects for human life at the level of individuals, societies, states, regions and globally in the next half-century and beyond. Strategic studies now labels the military dimension of the study of security.

The thrust of this paper has been that there is a critical relationship between the "me"/"I" as a theorist of security and what it *means* to study security. The argument has been that the meaning of studying security is not simply or necessarily created by the changes out there in the world, but by the changes—or lack of them—in here (who we think we are, and what we think we are doing). I was taught to think of security in statist/military/status quo terms, and to see my activity as that of a realist / positivist. I later came to think of security in cosmopolitan / comprehensive / emancipatory terms and my role that of a utopian

realist. To the extent it is possible to have the critical distance to make such judgements, I believe that the change was the result of the agency of 'I', in Mead's sense, as a result of the happenstance of place, time and micro social relationships, and structural changes (in world politics and academic life) at the level of 'me'.

There is an apparent irony in these last remarks: having in the 1970s seen my task in part as emphasising cultural particularities, I now want to identify universalist affiliations. With hindsight, the one seems to have been a necessary step for the other. The two are not incompatible, and are the crux of the debates about security, community and emancipation, which I believe will define what we may still anachronistically call 'international relations' in the next century. In the years ahead the academic study of international relations should rationally become a global moral science rather than simply the accumulation of knowledge about the inter-relations of governments. Before trying to define the proper role of academics in future security studies I would offer several pieces of advice for those beginning a career in this subject area:

1. It is desirable for students and teachers to have an area specialism (or specialisms), as well as theoretical interests. And this area specialism should not be restricted to the country in which one happened to be born. The study of real people in real places outside one's immediate interest (in all meanings of the term) is crucial in breaking down ethnocentric outlooks and opening up fresh perspectives on the human predicament. There is a material world which students of world politics should be aware. Theory and method, without area studies, is thinking in a vacuum.
2. Given that students are for the most part what they are taught, it is desirable that teachers—especially in these fractured and uncertain times—open up rather than set limits to inquiry. This might seem a truism, but in practice the study of international relations has been full of mindguards and gatekeepers. If, instead of teaching Sunday School—the tendency of the Christian pessimists who were so influential in establishing Cold War international relations—we played with de-defining our concepts and celebrating diversity and confusion, we would then really be in the business of teaching our students to think, as opposed to persuading them to replicate the world views of their teachers. Critical security studies should not make the same mistake as old strategic studies, and close down rather than open up thought. That would be contrary to the nature of critical theory. A critical turn must from the start turn critically also upon itself.
3. An understanding of international relations will not come from books or universities alone. One of the problems with Cold War international relations—and particularly that branch focusing on security and strategy—was its inbred character. It cut itself off from the water currents of political/philosophical thought. If feminist theorising is correct about the relationship between individual experience and theory, then students of security should think about the implications of this for their own lives and work.

4. It is not shameful to change one's mind. Indeed, we should worry about those academics who preface remarks by the phrase 'I have always thought that...'. This is not a virtue. Ideas do not necessarily become 'truer' by holding on to those picked up as a student, adolescent or child. Nobody can be 'blamed' for their upbringing, their teachers, their time or their place. They can be criticized for not being open to different ideas and for the dogmatic (and usually ignorant) anti-intellectual dismissal of thoughts that come from outside the university ('activists'), from those critical of the hegemonial discourse ('radicals'), from those with different timescales ('utopians'), from those said not understand the real world ('feminists')... and so on. Those who adopt such attitudes are left with a subject defined by the agenda of policymakers and taught solely by those content to work within this framework. This would not only not be honourable (the phrase 'academic Eichmanns' comes to mind) it would also be boring.

5. We should not worry about the uncertainties, confusions and overload presently in the study of security. It is more justifiable at this time to be confused but receptive, and aware of one's lack of knowledge, rather than the opposite. This is especially so if thinking about security requires a more inter-disciplinary approach. Better an epistemologically overwhelmed security specialist than an ontologically dogmatic strategist.

6. Security is concerned with how people live. An interest in both theory and practice (policy relevance) would seem to be part of what is involved in being a security specialist. The study of security can benefit from a range of perspectives, but not from those who would refuse to engage with the problems of those, at this minute, who are being starved, oppressed or shot. It is therefore legitimate to ask what any theory which purports to belong within World Politics has to say about Bosnia or nuclear deterrence. Thinking about thinking is important, but so is thinking about doing. For those who believe that we live in a humanly-constituted world the distinction between 'theory' and 'practice' dissolves: theory is practice, and practice is theory. So, it is important what a significant body of academics think about 'security', and it is also important how they behave. Their self—their sense of self—which in turn will interact with their theories, will develop through their doing as well as their thinking. 'But what can we do in this huge if shrinking world?' is a familiar lament. 'Can we only talk and think, and snipe from the sidelines? Is there no space between being a disregarded critic or a comforter of policy makers?' These are important questions for critical security studies. I would argue that there is always something that can be done, and that it is a major task of critical security studies to try to open up space for thought and action. As individuals we do not have much power, but in our own lives we can do something, however little. Little should not be belittled. Something is better than nothing, and many mickles make a muckle. We can work harder. We can write a letter. We can send a donation. We can join. We can be counted. We can treat people differently. We can spread networks of community. We can change our lectures. We can speak up when it is

inconvenient for us to do so. We can encourage. There is always something which can be done.

For other generations the notion of what was 'heroic' was simple. It was equated with military valour or adventure. But it is possible, in the interests of global security, to be heroic today, and in little ways that do not attract medals or the plaudits of kings, queens, prime ministers and presidents. Such heroism—though not recognised as such—has traditionally been part of the daily lives of about half of humanity. They have been called 'women'. When security is globally defined in terms of feminism rather than heroism, students of critical security studies can move from mere hope to real optimism.

It was suggested earlier that the crisis in security studies over the past few years was only having a serious effect on those who want to reincarnate strategic studies for the post-Cold War world, that is, broaden the agenda but maintain the assumptions. Unfortunately, the debate is skewed before it begins, since the overwhelming number of 'security specialists' today are the products of their Cold War training. Academic oil tankers, like strategic studies, cannot be turned quickly. During the Cold War there were hundreds of 'security specialists' able to talk about nuclear deterrence, arms control, limited war and crisis management. There is nothing like the same body of expertise to deal with internal conflicts, ethnic disputes, conflict resolution, confidence-building, conventional war, regional security in the Third World and so on. The opening up of the security problematic after the Cold War has created an enormous research agenda; the disciplinary resources of international relations are not equipped to deal with it, nor are the inter-disciplinary structures in place.

What is the proper role of the academic in all this? During the Cold War Western security specialists were particularly deferential to the definitions and agendas of governments. Politicians, diplomats and military establishments have their own identities and interests which are not always shared by those for whom they supposedly speak. This is particularly the case where 'state' and 'society' do not coincide. This is why the growth of civil society is so important for security, cooperation and development, whether regionally or globally. Within civil society academics in many countries have a special and privileged role: they have knowledge and they are removed from the daily pressures of political life. With this in mind the role of academics in the 'intellectual enterprise of security studies' might be defined as follows: to provide new knowledge and more accurate accounts of real worlds and lives; to unsilence the silenced; to help give longer-term perspectives than decision-makers concerned with the next election; to expose the hypocrisies, inconsistencies and power plays in language, relationships and policies; to provide a more sophisticated language with which to analyse events and problems; to engage in dialogues with policymakers in order to try to open the latter's imaginations and minds about the ways in which concepts might be translated into better (more friendly to people and nature) policies; to expose false ideas, and reveal the unstated assumptions of policies; to develop new and

more rational theories about global security; and to speak for universal values and to speak up for those who do not have a voice. To attempt to do less is to commit ourselves to being the clerks of the powerful and fatalists about the geography of meaning.

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