

What is the security politics essay



The first question we should ask before even trying to attempt about rethinking security is the meaning of security itself. Security is regarded as a fundamental basic need but what stands out when looking into security studies is how diverse it is ranging from the traditional concept of security in military terms which is the classical national security notion to the more contemporary ideas on comprehensive security.

New security discourses consider most aspects of the political, social, environmental and economic dimensions. Security certainly seems a very broad subject but at the same time security has become an enormous political model.

Security has turned into a concept we cannot do without but a concept that needs to be questioned.

It is difficult to even begin with this ever-expanding agenda, which seems to take on any argument and turn it into a security issue.

Broadening the agenda.

When discussing security and making claims, we have to answer the question about how security is engaged in politics, especially at the time we speak about.

Through time the political structures and practices have changed and so has the way we think about security, traditionally security is primarily concerned with ensuring the protection of the state from external threats.

Since the Cold War there has been a shift from the traditional security agenda, as there was a decline in military security issues, war was disappearing due to the lack of cost affectivity as well as the economic issues that the US was experiencing at the time.

In the 60s Carsen's silent spring created awareness of the problems of the environment and raised the question of should it be securitized?

By the 1970s the US felt threatened by dependence on their consumption of oil, which contributed to the trade deficit at the time, and this resulted in an increase of securitization of international economy.

Because of these changes there was a demand for a broader understanding of security, taking into account new sources of threats.

Scholars have criticized the traditional approach as too narrow, they do agree that traditional threats have not disappeared, but instead other non-military threats are more important, yet there has been no consensus, on the direction to take. The notion of other security agendas is not a new concept and as of today it is increasingly relevant in security studies.

The broader understanding of security and especially whose security is at stake has contributed to the concepts like human security as well as world security, which focus on the security of people as individuals and as a global collective rather than the state.

There are two views when looking to broaden security one being the traditional, which recognizes threats that relate to national security and the

other being the broader view that includes threats such as the environment and immigration.

The traditional sense saw the military playing a crucial role in ensuring security but this has been challenged, physical survival is not the primary concern anymore, as power comes from new sources, from complex systems both natural (ecosystem) and manmade (global economy).

The problem with this is that many have alarmed that such broadening of security will lead to a blur in the concept.

The main criticism for broadening the agenda is with the addition of more threats makes it difficult to keep up with the current issues, therefore a demand for broader understanding risk inducing epistemological overload, and by taking on a wide range of threats is making the concept of security incoherent.

For this argument we are going to focus on the debates referring to the subject of security and significance on the question of whose security is being assumed when rethinking security.

Scholars have suggested two types of extensions in regards to the subject of security.

An upward extension is moving from the security of the state and looking internationally or looking globally as a whole, and downwards argues that security should be extended from looking at the security of the state and moving to the security of small groups and individuals.

National security

The state is the main subject of security in the traditional sense of security. It bases its approach on the realist understanding of world politics.

We have seen that State-centrism is focused around the view of realism.

From this realist perspective, states behave in accordance to the influence of international conflict, and it is why the states continue to be the main actors on the global stage (Mearsheimer, 2005: 139-140).

Buzan has two main attitudes for adopting this state centric perspective, in his view the state oversees the security dynamics at international and sub state level and normatively states can in fact provide individuals with a degree of security.

This state centric view on security has been under question from several scholars of security studies arguing that any attempt to rethink security ' post Cold War' must move past the traditional approach acknowledging the state as the referent object for the subject of security (Wyn Jones 1996: 197-8), but extending the security agenda from that of the traditional sense to other forms of analysis.

Essentially Wyn says that if you are to broaden the agenda and add new referent objects, the danger is that the threats to the referent objects are also broader than the threats opposed to the states.

It has been argued (Brown 1998: 1)that the state centric view merely blurs many of the significant developments occurring across the policies of nation states, by creating a new threat

(Vicky..... New sources and threats through technology eco system and terrorism)

When looking into individual security there are a few concerns that arise from the idea, although the idea has good intent in practice it is unfeasible

Human security

The importance of the individual has been recognized, but the way the political systems deal with it is not sufficient, when determining the individual security needs the individuals in question have no input.

Individuals can be threatened by a diverse range of issues so how can we define the minimum that's enough to fulfill basic needs, although all of these issues have a significant importance in the everyday life of the individual, for us to even consider one of these as a security issue we need to implement a minimum for defining the level of urgency in regards to every single individual.

So how do we define the ways to achieve this minimum? Is it solely by the interested individuals/groups or incorporation and assistance of others.

As an example in 1994 UNDP identified 7 specific factors that human security should be concerned with, these are:

-Economic security

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-Food security

-Health

-Environmental security

-Personal security

-Community security

-Political security

Furthermore the UNDP emphasizes the significance of an even broader concept in human security, which refers to an even broader social issue 'freedom from fear and freedom from want',

This can be associated with the traditional aspect of security, military, political, internal conflicts and environmental.

It makes it a little easier to define as a concept but still not clear enough to put into political practices, which from the traditional perspective there are no act of cause of aggression or violence and subsequently do not come under the category of threats to security.

It may be concluded that the concept of human security is more of an ethical ideological political issue. So it could be argued that human security to some extent is defined by the understanding of human rights.

Societal security

Rethinking Buzan original concept of security, Waever has developed a concept of security which includes societal security as well as state security, both are concerned with survival but state security is focuses on the protection of sovereignty and societal security is based on the concerns of identity.

First of all if we accept the societal concept there is a chance that the security of the state and society maybe counter one and another (Waever et al.)(Buzan 1993).

Because of the conservative nature of identity, it is always possible to find new threats against identity.

For example immigration could be securitized depending on to what extent the holder of the collective identity take an open minded view, or not and how identity is constituted and maintained, for example different states and nations have different thresholds for defining a threat in terms of immigration.

Finland has a concern rate at 0. 3% foreigners whereas Switzerland functions at 14. 7% (Romero, 1990).

The ability to reproduce and maintain a language, culture and history can be classed in terms of survival (identity).

Mcsweeny, 1999 argues that Buzan and Waever have wrongly suggest that identity is the unique value that is vulnerable to threat but the individuals that form society would have suggested a differently maybe that of economic welfare.

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Buzan has at least created a practical attempt to widen the security agenda (Buzan 1991), by suggesting that the security of the nation is affected by the influences of these main sectors military, political, societal, environmental and finally economic, each dealing with certain aspects, the military's offensive and defensive strategy of the state from the environmental concerns to support and maintain the planetary biosphere. Buzan's concept has these 5 main sectors all integrated and affecting one another, and has the state and its sovereignty as the main referent object of security. Buzan's concept has characterized a diverse range of threats which require the attention of policy makers and have influenced academics, political thinkers and law enforcement agencies to develop a concept of security that connects a whole range of security issues for example terrorism, organized crime and illegal migration.

This has led to a blurring of distinction between internal (police) and external (military) security.

Bigo (1994: 2000) has characterized this as a 'security continuum', and is central to the redefinition of western security. Claims suggest that this merely connects very different issues and criminalizing illegal immigrants.

The Environment

At the end of the cold war, the environment was a new focus point for the security agenda both as a concept and a set of new policies.

New debate had emerged regarding the nature of the threat and the appropriate referent object, subsequently this triggered off a new set of discourses in danger, especially in the US.

The environment had become one of the central concerns in the new era of security studies, second to the war on terror.

For this example I will be arguing the significance for securitizing the climate and what it is that is making climate change a security issue.

As security is essentially a contested subject, (Waever peace and security) the concept changes with every tradition within security studies and this is more evident when talking about the environment, differing vastly in terms of who and what is to be secured, what is to be secured against and also the nature of the threat itself, this results in being a concept of much debate with a wide range of approaches to environmental security and contest with one another.

Many have argued the involvement of military and the environment suggesting that this will lead to the militarization of the environment, a concept which environmental security refers to the capacity of the military, (Kakonen green security) suggesting that institutions that provide safety from environmental deterioration (Environmental Protection Agency) and institutions that provide safety from violence (Military) are incompatible in the way they work and in complete contrast of each other, as one works to create awareness and to educate and the other works discreetly.

(Deudney, the case against linking environmental degradation and national security)

One thing all the critics of the environmental security agenda do agree on is that this concept of integration, blurs the fact that militaries are the leading cause of environmental deterioration.

There is one question that comes to mind and one that is questionable, whether something qualifies as a security issue simply based on the fact of being an interest to the policy makers (Finger the military, the nation state and the environment).

Conclusion

Broadening the concept of security makes regulatory measures (policy making actions) to general, moralistic and sometimes self evident - do not leave people to be hungry save the environment.