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Rethinking the Agenda for Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era: Debates and Expositions

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Abstract

The basic thrust of this paper is to examine the debates and expositions on the scope of security studies in the Post-Cold War era. The complexities of a rapidly globalizing world, attendant security threats and technological sophistication have made discussions on security studies quite polemical. The paper interrogated the liberal and realistic perspectives, highlighting the non-universality of the components of security and the attainment of peace as the focus of security studies. The need for interdependence was identified, while noting that a restrictive scope of security studies ensures that the field has defined focus and fosters analytical coherence. The evolution of human security studies as a distinct field of enquiry offers the necessary bulwark against undue broadening of this field. The fluidity of discourse on the themes of this paper and the theoretical anchor on democratic peace theory underline the significance of this paper and contribution to scholarship in this emerging discipline.

Key Words: Security, Security Studies, Post- Cold War Era, Strategy, Strategic Studies.

Introduction

In contemporary International Relations, the concept of security is a highly debated one. Several questions have been raised on the concept, while some issues were raised on its definition, and techniques for identification. However, the poser for this paper is: should the agenda for security studies be broadened or restricted (to meet the intellectual and practical challenges of the post cold war era)?

Baldwin (1997:9) suggests that there was a perceived "neglect" of the concept of security prior to the Cold War owing to the fact that various attempts were made by scholars to 'redefine' security since the end of the Cold War. He further argued that security studies during the Cold War era was done mostly by the scholars who found interest in military statecraft; that is, an issue was considered a security issue when military force was relevant to that issue. He considers this a puzzle as the central concept of security studies seemed to ignore the fact that military force, not security has been the main thrust of security studies.

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The evolution of security studies has mostly been attached to the development of nuclear weaponry and the Cold War. Baldwin (1995:119) however, takes a different stance to this argument. He argues:

If security studies is defined as the study of the nature, causes, effects, and prevention of war, the period between the First and Second World Wars was not the intellectual vacuum it is often thought to be. During this period, international relations scholars believed that democracy, international understanding, arbitration, national self-determination. disarmament, and collective security were the most important ways to promote international peace and security... Quincy Wright's Study of War, published in 1942, was far more than a single book by a single author. It was the culmination of a major research project dating from 1926, a project that spawned numerous studies by such scholars as William T. R. Fox, Bernard Brodie, Harold Lasswell, Eugene Staley, Jacob Viner, Vernon Van Dyke, and many others...Fifty years later, Study of War still stands as the most thorough and comprehensive treatise on war in any language...For Wright, war was primarily a problem to be solved, a disease to be cured, rather than an instrument of statecraft...This was the crucial difference between security studies before and after 1940 (Baldwin 1995:119-120).

In Baldwin's analysis, the academic interests in securities studies in the 1950s was triggered by the doctrines of massive retaliation, military instruments of statecraft and were not preoccupied with issues pertaining to nuclear weaponry and deterrence as the case would be later on. This was because, at the time, focus was not on security "as the primary goal of states at all times but rather as one among several values". The period of 1955-1965 has been described as the period of the "golden age" of security studies and it is characterized by dominant issues relating to nuclear weaponry and other related concerns like arms control and limited war (Baldwin 1995:121-123). The process of narrowing down the concept of security studies had begun and focus was on the use of a set of weapons.

The breakdown of détente and the renewal of cold war tensions in the late 1970s and 1980s stimulated a new set of interests in security studies known as "International Security Studies" (Baldwin 1995:125). His argument therefore, seeks to prove that the origins of security studies predated the cold war, nuclear weaponry and the "golden age" (Lynn-Jones 1991:3).

Issues have been raised over time to assess the concept of security. Newer threats are evolving which re-defined traditional security and security studies. The following statement validates this assertion:

Recent terrorist attacks...give us good reason to reassess the meaning of the concept of security...The subject of transnational terrorism is commonly perceived as one of these new challenges that cannot be countered effectively at the level of the nation-state alone, as its roots, causes and effects are cross-bordering (TTSRL Research Program 2007:3).

Conceptual Clarification

The end of the Cold War and the events that followed has brought about the reconceptualization of security (Brauch, 2011:61). The concept of security will be explained before delving into the concept of security studies and the post cold war era.

The Concept of Security:

Brauch (2011:61) asserts that "today, 'security' as a political value, at least in Western thinking has no independent meaning and is related to societal value systems". Despite the fact that Brauch's opinion may be correct, there have been some definitions given by several scholars on this concept that will serve as a good platform in the discussion of concepts that would follow in this paper.

Haftendorn (1991: 15) also argues, but in partial contrast to Brauch that, the field of security studies "suffers from the absence of a common understanding of what security is, how it can be conceptualized, and what its most relevant research questions are". This can be explained because there are elements of subjectivity in the concept of security which underscores the interpretations by various scholars.

Wendt (1995 in Brauch 2011:61) stated that 'security' is conceived as an outcome of a process of social and political interaction where social values and norms, cultural traditions are essential. From this view, it can be deduced that security is subjective to what actors make of it, meaning that, what security is to a homogenous state differs from what it is to a heterogeneous state. This is not a very clear definition of security however, it iterates the fact that in reality, the concept of security is what actors in the system make of it, it does not give the 'correct' definition of the term security. The subjective nature of this view does not exactly accord it necessary credibility. In support of this, McSweeney (1999) posited that security is an elusive term which resists definition. It is employed in a wide range of contexts and to multiple purposes by individuals, corporations, governments and academics. This gave rise to classifications such as economic security, health security, financial security, territorial security, environmental security and many more.

Wolfers (1952 in Brauch 2011:61) on the other hand views security as "an absence of objective dangers such as: security threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks; and of subjective fears or concerns, and to the perception thereof". Wolfer's assertion is limited on the basis of inclusion of terms like 'objective', 'subjective' and 'perception', which narrows the scope of security to the views, traditions and cultures of the analysts or policy-makers involved.

Baldwin (1997:13), building on Wolfers' view on security, defines security as "a low probability damage to acquired values". His conceptualization of security is much more encompassing as it does not border only on the 'presence and absence of threats', but on the preservation of acquired values. The openness of the 'acquired values' allows one to be flexible with the nature of these 'values'.

The Meaning of Security Studies

The emergence of security studies as a subfield of International Relations was very closely related to the Cold War. The tensions of the Cold War affected interests in the concept of security studies, but at the time, Baldwin (1996:125, 139) submits that Security Studies connotes the "study of the threat, use and control of military force". At the time of the cold war, this definition would have been most appropriate, but the question is: what does the concept of security studies mean? How can Security Studies be defined?

"The subject matter of international security studies includes general theoretical issues such as the causes of war and alliances, as well as more policy-oriented research on problems of military policy confronting particular countries" (Lynn-Jones 1991:2). The concept of security studies is more cold war oriented. There have been some alterations however to the scope of security. This broadened scope is what is being debated currently in the field of contemporary security studies. He goes further to submit that:

Some observers have argued that the security studies field should be broader than a narrow focus on military questions...They have argued, for example, that the threat to the earth posed by global warming, ozone depletion, and other potential catastrophes is at least as grave as the dangers of potential wars...Although environmental, demographic and economic problems can be said to "threaten" security if that term is used in a broad sense, the type of threat, the most useful analytical approach, and the strategy to respond differs markedly from the problems that have formed the central focus of security studies. These differences are revealed by looking at the contrast between environmental issues and security issues (Lynn-Jones 1991:2-3).

Walt (1991: 212) defines security studies, as "the study of the threat, use and control of military force', especially of 'the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war". From the definitions above, it can be deduced that security studies focused on war and military warfare. It is a sub-field of international relations and often taken to mean strategic studies, because it deals with strategies of dealing with military conflict. Security studies did not really receive much attention until after the Second World War because, the liberal approach to peace, in form of international law and institutions, was in use during the inter-war years of the First and Second World War. However, the failure of the liberal approach, specifically the League of Nations to prevent another world war gave rise to a shift from liberal approaches to the realist approach of national security after the Second World War (Walt, 1991).

The period between 1955 and 1965 has been described as the "Golden Age" of security studies and it was dominated by the study of nuclear weaponry, arms control and related issues. It also saw the development of the deterrence theory (Walt, 1991). Buzan and Hansen (2009:11-12 in Brauch 2011:63) argued that "international security studies...have been increasingly blurred by globalization, on the widening beyond military dimensions and the use of force and its close link to a dynamic of threats, dangers and urgency". The contention of these scholars (Buzan and Hansen) on the blurring of security studies implied that it is not essentially defined to fit specific qualifications that can be generic in nature.

According to Graham and Newnham, (1998:40), security studies can be defined as a "sub-branch of international relations dealing with explanation of security concepts, their implementation when developing foreign policy and their consequential effect on structures and processes in world politics" (in Suchy, n.d.:8). This definition of security is more encompassing in nature. Based on the definition given earlier by Baldwin (1997), security studies can mean several things including the "new" concepts and adjoining issues being debated in the post-cold war era.

Security Studies tries to organize a country's military; power; cultural; political; economic relationships within a total strategy in order to prevent possible dangers (Ormeci, 2010:1). Ormeci's conception of security studies has so far been able to situate itself in the post cold war era and adequately take into consideration the need for building of relationships as a form of strategy. As would be seen in the next section of this paper, the nature of security studies in the post cold war era has evolved from "military studies" to a more encompassing discipline that takes into consideration the society and the individual.

Main Arguments: Broadening or Restricting Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era

The challenge of broadening or restriction of security studies has been argued since the Cold War ended. New issues began to emerge in the international system and focus was no longer restricted to issues relating to arms control, nuclear weapons, deterrence or balance of power. Security as a term began to attach more adjectives to form concepts like: human security, environmental security, demographic security, feminist security and many other terms. As opposed to the militarized nature of security studies that was strictly focused on state and international security, several other factors have begun to arise and illuminated concerns on the nature of post cold war security studies. Debates by scholars over its restriction or broadening began to emerge and stir up opinions in the international security studies field.

The pre-cold war/cold war periods dictated that the answer to the question of security was quite simple. State security was only made possible by military capabilities, threats came only from the external context, so, states merely responded to the matter by accumulating strong military arsenals that could enable them stand against aggressors and deter them from attacking; implying that, the more the military power, the more the security (Ustun, 2013:1).

Robert McNamara (1968:149-150) takes a different stance from the military conception of security, but views security as:

Security is development and without development there can be no security development means economic, social and political progress. It means a reasonable standard of living, and reasonable in this context requires continual redefinition; what is reasonable in an earlier stage of development will become unreasonable at a later stage.

The threats present in the international system today transcend the military and present dire consequences. For instance, the threat of global warming, ozone depletion and other environmental problems have looming consequences such as loss of lives, economic damage, food shortage, drought (as already being experienced in some countries) that are as grave as those of wars. Another example is epidemics such as HIV/AIDS that has the tendency to reduce the population of a state if not checked. Focusing only on military threats may lead to ignoring other threats that could undermine nation's stability.

Adopting a broader definition of security, Ullman (1983: 133) contends that:

a threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state.

These perspectives can be criticized for being limited to their domestic setting, which is basically western. Third world countries that experience a lot of physical violence will consider military security of high importance. In a bid to address the challenge of non-universality of security as it applies to various states, the concept of 'common security' for the global community of mankind was proposed by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues in 1982. Issues under common security include economic security, environmental security, drug threats and human rights.

Ustun (2013) and Ormeci (2010) took unique turns in their argument and brought a new dimension to the critical analysis of the evolution of security studies in the Cold War era. They viewed it theoretically and on the premises laid by the several theorists. Realist school of thought deals mainly with macro issues bordering on the political and militaristic angles and security is usually the main motive in their works. This school became very influential in the 20th Century especially after the World War II and the Cold War. It paid much (maybe too much attention) on models of deterrence and military powers. Realism took nation-states as their main units and did not pay attention to micro units such as culture (Ormeci, 2010:3) which today are the major sources of security concerns like irredentist terrorist activities, civil unrest, ethnic crisis that have led to global impacts in the contemporary International System.

During the Cold War years (1946-1991), institutions like Western European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe emerged and they were founded on Liberal Institutionalist ideas which stated that interdependency in a cobweb system will decrease the impact of anarchy on the states, thus contributing to international security (Ustun, 2013:1). Liberal scholars of security studies tried not to focus excessively on nation-states, but also to focus on supranational, international organizations, institutions, and on non-governmental organizations. They dealt with both macro and micro issues like culture, environment, economics, as elements in the equation, but did not neglect military power (Ormeci, 2010:3)

The end of the cold war ushered in new challengers to the already assumed traditional understanding of security by states. Democratic Peace Theory (influenced highly by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant) argues that democratization of all states and the international system will make the world a more secured place since democratic states do not fight each other. In their view, security would be achieved through a ripple effect anchored on economic integration leading to permanent peace and integration of liberal democracies. Neo-idealism proposes on the other hand that collective security and enforced democratization of states all over the world will translate into peace at the "end of history". The phrase – end of history is unclear here. It may imply a never ending situation, or a situation whereby there is an uncertainty whether democracy will indeed spread to states all over the world. Realism however accepts the importance of institutions in response to this challenge (Ustun, 2013:1; Ormeci 2010:3).

The post cold war era brought about a twist in the turn of events as new issues began to arise. Issues moved from the traditional inter-state based security issues to those on nuclear and intra-state conflicts. The subject matter of security has moved from being strictly state based to encompass individual and societal concerns of security. The nature of threats moved from military threats from states to include environmental, terror, hunger, migration, natural disasters (Ustun, 2013:2).

Wolfers (1952: 483) has characterized national security as an 'ambiguous symbol' which if used without specifications, "leaves room for more confusion than sound political counsel or scientific usage can afford". Again, Garnett (1996a: 12) argues that 'security' has actually become an overdeveloped concept, "so wide in its scope that it is in danger of being emptied of meaning". The attempt to bring diverse phenomena under the rubric of security has resulted in the confusion of social issues and global management problems as security issues, watering down the substance of security.

Ormeci (2010:1) gave a more detailed analysis on security and the concept of security threats. Kolodziej (in Ormeci, 2010:1) defines security as "a special form of politics – species of the general genus of politics" and not all political issues are security issues, but all security issues are political issues. The challenge of security in politics comes into play therefore when "an actor or actors of political dispute threaten or use force to get what they want". Fundamentally, issues that do not contain threats via the use

of force are not within security issues. However, when there is use of power or threats, the problem automatically becomes a security one. Not all threats are included within the scope of security studies like petty offences and criminal offences; the discipline is one that deals with macro actors such as states, international organizations, corporations and associations. The demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the termination of the Cold War signaled that, security issues gained much more emphasis as the world became more complex because of the disappearance of the balance that was provided by the bipolar world order of the Cold War, thus ethnic, religious, sectarian disputes began to turn into wars and terrorist activities (Ormeci, 2010:1).

In this context, Deudney (1990: 465) warned against the risk of:

Creating a conceptual muddle rather than a paradigm or world view shift -a de-definition rather than a re-definition of security. If we begin to speak about all the forces and events that threaten life, property and well-being (on a large-scale) as threats to our national security, we shall soon drain them of any meaning. All large-scale evils will become threats to national security.

In a more contemporary form, Ormeci (2010) tries to explain that Security Studies may be considered too militaristic, but without the concept of security, it would almost be impossible to provide peace and develop human rights and economic welfare. He intimated that though security studies could not prevent all threats, by managing power and developing strategies, it can reduce threats and losses. Security Studies tries to organize a country's military power, cultural; political; economic relationships within a total strategy in order to prevent possible dangers (Ormeci, 2010:1). His analysis does not erase the importance of military, but goes further to suggest the need for security studies to help build cultural; political; economic relationships in strategy formulation.

The delimitation of security studies may be considered an excruciating challenge faced by many other disciplines, not just in security studies alone. Lynn-Jones (1991:2) noted that there are so many issues in the discipline's scope, because the field incorporates a multidisciplinary range of approaches that include those of political science, history, sociology, economics and the physical sciences among others. Some observers have argued that the security studies field should be broader than a narrow focus on military questions. The field does not and should not focus exclusively on war. Economic threats to a state's industrial base, for example, may ultimately affect that state's military capabilities as well as the well-being of its citizens. Assessing security policies may also require an examination of non-military alternatives (Lynn-Jones, 1991:2).

Another argument put forward is that the acceptance of all manner of variables into the broad umbrella of security studies will erode the boundary between security studies and foreign policy or international politics. All the issues being advocated as security issues are found in the domain of foreign policy and international politics.

Similar trade-offs will emerge in future, requiring the field to continue to consider broader questions of diplomacy and statecraft. If the field embraces the study of the causes and prevention of war and anchors itself on the broader field of international relations, it should be able to remain broad enough to address important security. questions without losing analytical coherence, even if the dividing line between the core of international security studies and other areas is sometimes unclear (Lynn-Jones 1991:3).

The developments in the world and the expansion of security studies have brought about the new concept of 'human security'. The trend in the International System is to interrogate issues bordering on human security which have become the newest branch of security studies. Human security is about the security of the individual, not the state or governments. Regarded as the first step to the concept of human security, the Human Development Report of 1994 by the United Nations Development Programme (in Ustun 2013:2) operationalised human security to include seven areas: Economic Security, Food Security, Environmental Security, Personal Security, Community Security and Political Security. The concept of human security has gained new definitions as "freedom from fear" (reducing violence through militaristic measures) and "freedom from want" (stressing the necessity of individuals and societies being free from a broad range of threats like poverty, disease and environmental disaster).

Despite his support for the broadening of the concept of security studies, Lynn-Jones 1991:3-4 asserts that:

If the most pessimistic scenarios about the threat of large-scale global warming are realized, the resultant loss of life, economic damage, and social disruption may be orders of magnitude greater than the threat posed by most wars. But these issues, however important, should not be incorporated wholly into the domain of international security studies, except when they are linked to problems of international conflict and the potential use of force. Although environmental, demographic, and economic problems can be said to threaten "security" if that term is used in a broad sense, the type of threat, the most useful analytical approach, and the strategy to respond differs markedly from the problems that have formed the central focus of security studies. These differences are revealed by looking at the contrast between environmental issues and security issues.

He identified three reasons why threats to the global environment should be considered separately from security studies. First, the causes of environmental degradation differ from the causes of civil war; second, calls for broadening the agenda for security studies often deprive the field of any intellectual coherence by equating a security threat with anything that is bad; and third, it may be counterproductive to regard threats to the environment as security threats. Applying a national security framework to mobilize people to protect the environment may create a sense of urgency that cannot be sustained. Notwithstanding the foregoing, he gave instances whereby environmental issues should be considered as part of security studies. First, environmental degradation, as well as other new global problems, may be a cause of conflict; second, intentional environmental degradation may be used as a weapon of war, as Saddam Hussein demonstrated when Iraqi forces pumped oil into the Gulf and ignited Kuwaiti oil wells during the 1991 Gulf War and; finally, environmental damage can be an effect of war, even if it is not used deliberately as a weapon (Lynn-Jones 1991:4-5).

Anderson 2012:39 takes a stand by summarizing that:

A great number of...examples that are often raised, such as poverty, economic recession, drug abuse, declining natural resources, and rapid urbanization and population growth, simply *are what they are*, and are not definitively vital issues of international security. While each has the potential to lead to serious international problems, even security problems, they are simply too many steps removed from posing a direct security threat to states, governments, militaries, communities, and individuals in the international system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper analyzed quite critically the nature of security as a concept and security studies as a discipline. It took a journey through the evolution of security studies from the pre-cold war era till the (current) post cold war era, seeking robust discourse on the broadening or restriction of the scope of security studies to meet the intellectual and practical challenges of the post cold war world.

The central argument of this paper hinges on restriction of the scope of security studies. However, its restriction is not defocusing the concept of security studies to only "military studies", but limiting it to the analysis of threats that directly affect the state. As Ormeci (2010:1) put it, "not all political issues are security issues, but all security issues are political issues". It should be noted deductively that not all threats to individuals and society can be included in security studies, but when they serve ultimately as threats to the well-being of the state and its sovereignty, they could cause ripple effects globally.

A broadened scope of security studies may ultimately result in a loss of focus intellectually and a deviation from the main purpose of security studies which is; Security Studies tries to organize a country's military power, cultural-political-economic relationships within a total strategy in order to prevent possible dangers. In this age of globalization, information and communication explosion, many of the security threats today cannot be solved by military force. An instance is cyber-crime, in which people hack into personal information of others or carry out fraudulent transactions and many more. However, an over broadening of the agenda is not advisable, so as not to lose its main essence.

It is therefore advisable that the scope of security studies be restricted in order to create a sharp focus and avoid deviation from the focus or thrust of security studies. That is not to say however that, other concepts like human security should not be considered. A separate field of enquiry can be created to deal with issues bordering on concepts like human security and there may be situations of overlap whereby some issues will be treated under security studies, but only when they are considered as threat to the security of nation-states.

To be sure, one major recommendation of this paper is to create a discipline possibly known as Human Security Studies that may be a sub-discipline of Security Studies within the ambit of International Relations. That way, the unnecessary broadening challenge would have been solved adequately. There are overlaps between International Relations and Security Studies, but there has not been the need to merge International Relations with Security Studies. Lynn-Jones (1991:5) gave an example that, "individual well-being may be threatened by both economic poverty and mental depression, but this does not mean that the disciplines of economics and psychology should be merged".

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