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Keith Krause; Michael C. Williams

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Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies: Politics and Methods[1]

KEITH KRAUSE

Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva

MICHAEL C. WILLIAMS

Department of Political Science, University of Southern Maine

The field of security studies has been the subject of considerable debate in recent years. Attempts to broaden and deepen the scope of the field beyond its traditional focus on states and military conflict have raised fundamental theoretical and practical issues. Yet, adherents to the prevailing neorealist approach to security studies have often reacted to these challenges in ways that preclude a recognition of the issues raised by alternative understandings. An examination of the debates over "rethinking security" in particular reveals an unfortunate tendency to foreclose debate between scholars taking critical and neorealist approaches. Coming to terms more fully with the foundations of these debates allows both a better view of the positions within the field and a clearer assessment of their relevance for understanding the dynamics of contemporary security.

Debates over the nature and meaning of "security" and the future of security studies have become a staple of the field's post–Cold War agenda (Buzan 1991:14; Crawford 1991; Haftendorn 1991:15; Kolodziej 1992a, 1992b; Baldwin 1995). These debates have three roots: a discontent among some scholars with the neorealist foundations that have characterized the field, a need to respond to the challenges posed by the emergence of a post–Cold War security order, and a continuing desire to make the discipline relevant to contemporary concerns. But despite much discussion, scholars have not arrived at a consensus on what a more broadly constructed conception of security should look like.

The diverse contributions to the debates on "new thinking on security" can be classified along several axes. One—associated inter alia with such authors as Richard Ullman (1983), Jessica Tuchman Mathews (1989), Theodore Moran

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(1990/91), Brad Roberts (1990), Myron Weiner (1992/93), and Beverly Crawford (1994)—attempts to *broaden* the neorealist conception of security to include a wider range of potential threats, ranging from economic and environmental issues to human rights and migration. This challenge has been accompanied by discussions intended to *deepen* the agenda of security studies by moving either down to the level of individual or human security or up to the level of international or global security, with regional and societal security as possible intermediate points (Rubenstein 1988; Buzan 1991; Grant 1992; Tickner 1992; Waever et al. 1993). Others have remained within a state-centric approach but have deployed diverse terms (common, cooperative, collective, comprehensive) as modifiers to "security" to advocate different multilateral forms of interstate security cooperation that could ameliorate, if not transcend, the security dilemma (Palme Commission 1982; Kupchan and Kupchan 1991; Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner 1992; Dewitt 1994).[2] This essay review concentrates on the efforts to broaden and deepen our conceptions of security.

What unites these efforts is a conviction that the neorealist focus on safeguarding the "core values" of a state from military threats emanating from outside its borders is no longer adequate (if it ever was) as a means of understanding what (or who) is to be secured, from what threats, and by what means. The theoretical *targets* being debated are the conceptualizations of security (state security) and threat (military force) and the assumption of anarchy (the security dilemma) that have characterized neorealist scholarship in security studies (Walt 1991:212; Posen 1993a:82; Schultz, Godson, and Greenwood 1993:2; Mearsheimer 1995).[3] By the neorealist account, as Stephen Walt (1991:212) defines it, security studies is "*the study of the threat, use, and control of military force* . . . [that is] the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war" (emphasis in the original).

Not surprisingly, attempts to broaden and deepen the neorealist agenda of security studies have been met by a spirited defense. Calls to expand the field, although they may appear compelling and even seek laudable ends, are viewed from the neorealist perspective as taking security studies away from its traditional focus and methods and making the field intellectually incoherent and practically irrelevant (Dorff 1994; Mearsheimer 1994/95; Gray 1995). Even though it is considered responsible scholarship to permit additions and amendments to the core of security studies, to throw away its foundation is deemed intellectually unsupportable. According to neorealists (Mearsheimer 1995:92), alternative approaches have provided neither a clear explanatory framework for analyzing security nor demonstrated their value in concrete research. Moreover, some neorealists (Walt 1991:213) have argued that the adoption of alternative conceptions is not only analytically mistaken but politically irresponsible.

Rather than presenting another polemical overview of the contrasting positions in these debates (see Mearsheimer 1994/95, 1995; Keohane and Martin 1995; Kupchan and Kupchan 1995; Wendt 1995), this essay review takes seriously Walt's (1987b:146) claim that "critical evaluation is . . . the key to scientific progress." The

[2]Scholars who do not fit neatly into these categories include Edward Azar and Chung-in Moon (1988) and Mohammed Ayoob (1995).

[3]Insofar as debate has focused on neorealist security studies, it has curiously ignored a large nonrealist literature—including cognitive, organizational, and cybernetic approaches, as well as the literature on domestic sources of strategy (see, for example, Jervis, Lebow, and Stein 1985; Barnett and Levy 1991; Barnett 1992; Rosecrance and Stein 1993; Sagan 1994; Smoke 1996). A willingness to look beyond neorealist security studies might strengthen the arguments of the critics.

review proceeds in three stages. It starts by evaluating, on their own terms, neorealist claims regarding the scope and nature of contemporary security problems. This initial section discusses the way in which the usually implicit foundational claims or assumptions of neorealism underlie its vision of security and security studies. It suggests how these claims shape neorealism's stance toward debates over whether (and how) the concept of security should be "broadened" to incorporate nonstate and nonmilitary dimensions, concluding that these commitments have tended to close debate prematurely and thus constrain our understanding of current issues and dilemmas. The section takes the debates surrounding "environmental security" as an exemplar to highlight the exclusionary and inclusionary strategies at work (Lapid and Kratochwil 1996:109).

The second section examines whether neorealist security studies lives up to the promises of its foundational claims, and how controversies within recent research illuminate critical tensions in its methodological claims. It argues that, judged by the standards of rationalist science that its own authors use to assess other work, current research within the neorealist paradigm fails to measure up. The section focuses on debates concerning alliance formation, offense/defense theory, and the attempts to incorporate nationalism and national identity into security studies. The goal is to show that a recognition of the methodological and epistemological issues at stake creates openings for alternative research strategies and formulations that cannot be foreclosed by appeals to standards of "science" that neorealist scholarship itself is unable to meet.

The third section scrutinizes some of the alternative formulations to security studies by examining recent scholarship that focuses on how security is "constructed" and "practiced." The discussion parallels that in the first section, unwrapping the core claims and assumptions of alternative approaches to determine what is involved in accepting a different research agenda in studying security studies. The section shows that the issues raised in this review pose significant challenges to these alternative approaches as well. The conclusion asks whether (and in what way) different approaches to security studies are incommensurable or reconcilable in some fashion. Although this review does not "compare and contrast" different approaches (because the question of whether they are dealing with the same "subject" is a key issue of dispute), the intent is to spark a dialogue among scholars about the foundations of security studies, the different directions future research might take, and the implications of these issues for political practice.

The Disciplinary Authority of the Neorealist Conception of Security

Stephen Walt's (1991) "Renaissance of Security Studies" represents a typical and influential formulation of the neorealist conception of security that constitutes the core of much of the field. For him, the field has gradually evolved into an objective, scientific discipline in which the "laws" governing the realm of security are discovered or, at least, the correct method for their discovery has been identified. Walt's (1991:222) view that "security studies seeks *cumulative knowledge* about the role of military force" requiring scholars to "follow the standard canons of scientific research" is echoed by others, such as Helga Haftendorn (1991:12), who stress the need "to construct an empirically testable paradigm" that involves a "set of observational hypotheses," a "hard core of irrefutable assumptions," and a "set of scope conditions." For Walt (1991:222), the "increased sophistication of the security studies field and its growing prominence within the scholarly community is due in large part to the endorsement of these principles by most members of the field" (see also Walt 1987b; Nye and Lynn-Jones 1988).

This interpretation of the evolution of strategic studies sets up the assumptions and methods of neorealist security studies as the standards against which alternative claims are judged. Such is hardly a new argumentative tactic in the history of strategic thought. The search for the "laws of war" goes back at least to the Enlightenment (Gat 1989:29, 25–53, 1992:1–45) and, as John Shy (1986:184–185) argues, this vision of truth and method "has become, during almost two centuries, so deeply embedded in Western consciousness that many adherents refuse to accept it as a 'mode' of thinking at all." Viewed historically "contemporary strategists echo Jomini (in his defense against Clausewitz) by insisting that [their] critics fail to meet the urgent demand of strategy for clarity, rigor, and utility" (Shy 1986:84).

The claim to scientific knowledge underlying neorealist security studies is supported by a series of foundational claims that are presented as "facts" about the world. The most important of these claims concerns the centrality of the state as the subject of security. Paradoxically, this vision emerges neither from a theory of the state nor of the international "structure" but from an implicit theory of the "subject" seen in terms of an individual person. The subject is presented as an autonomous, rational actor confronted by an environment filled with similar actors. These others are a source of insecurity—hence, the classic security dilemma and the popularity of "state of nature" analogies supposedly drawn from Hobbes or Rousseau (Waltz 1959; Williams 1989, 1996). Whether this situation arises from the nature of the actors or from the context in which they find themselves (the traditional debate between first-, second-, and third-image explanations) is less important here than the recognition of the common foundation from which both possibilities spring: an assumption of methodological individualism in which all social action (cooperation and conflict) is strictly the product of the interaction of wholly self-contained, instrumentally rational subjects (Ordeshook 1986:1; Waltz 1986b:90–91, 115; Luke 1987; Grieco 1988:487–488; Wendt 1992:392).

From this starting point, there can be no security in the absence of authority. The state, accordingly, becomes the primary locus of security, authority, and obligation. Contractual obligations between citizens represent the limit (underwritten by the authority of the state) of effective coordination for collective action (or of "community"). The security of "citizens" is identified with (and guaranteed by) that of the state; and, by definition, those who stand outside it represent potential or actual threats. Relations between states are thereby rendered purely "strategic" (or contractual) in the instrumental sense of the word. This foundation provides the basis for claims about international anarchy. A particular state, as a "rational subject," looks to its own interests and security (and those of its constituents) first and foremost. Despite the fact that in the long term its interests might be better served through cooperation, a state cannot rationally assume that other states will act in a cooperative fashion. Therefore, it acts solely in its own interest, and all others do the same. The problem is *not* the lack of central agency to enforce promises but the absence of a central authority to prevent the use of violence to destroy or enslave (Grieco 1988:497–498; Milner 1993; Mearsheimer 1994/95:9–13).

The declaration that the state is the subject of security and anarchy the eternal condition of international relations is, thus, premised not on objective facts or structural determinants but is grounded in a deeper set of claims about the nature of political subjects and their relationship to sovereignty. The "fact" of anarchy is based on an a priori claim about autonomous individual human subjects and the kind of contractarian political order that these subjects necessarily require. At the international level the essence of this conceptualization is not simply a world of self-regarding states operating under the "security dilemma," but the assumption that there is a particular form of individual rationality in state action as both the source and outcome of that anarchy. The above are, however, more than

simplifying theoretical assumptions adopted for analytical convenience as some have argued (Achen and Snidal 1989:150; Powell 1993:117). They are inextricably tied to a particular set of epistemological claims and related methods (Walker forthcoming).

The neorealist conception of security studies claims to be founded on an objective representation of reality. This claim to *know* objectively means that the discipline must treat the phenomena under consideration as given, unproblematic *objects*. This instrumental-rational conception of human and state action has consistently created difficulties in security studies (Steinbruner 1974; Jervis et al. 1985; Levy 1989:272–289; Sagan 1994) and in international relations more generally (Hollis and Smith 1991). In neorealism, the concept of rational self-interest provides the bridge that allows one to treat state actions as the externally observable "objective phenomena" that are required by a rationalist epistemology. The reduction of states to instrumentally rational actors, embedded in a contractual theory of sovereignty and tied up within a specific claim about scientific knowledge and its progress, is a powerful theoretical move. Grounded in a series of assumptions deeply ingrained in the culture from which it emerges, neorealist security studies can confidently declare what is and is not a "security" issue, or what threats are, and to whom they refer. The reader should note, however, that these claims to objectivity and science rely on a prior definition of the political object and the conditions of its (in)security. These foundations are at the heart of the neorealist appraisal and rejection of attempts to bring "new issues" onto the security agenda. The debates surrounding efforts to link "environment" and "security" provide an excellent illustration of this process.

Broadening the Agenda to Include New "Threats": Security and the Environment

Perhaps the most widespread call to redefine security has emerged from the claim that environmental degradation poses a threat to the ecosystem or to human well-being that transcends particular states and conceptions of national security. The severe consequences of continued environmental degradation are viewed as more urgent than external threats that could lead to organized violence. Moreover, national interest and sovereignty are considered less important than the well-being of the individual or the species. Such a recognition has led to a demand for "a redefinition of what constitutes national security" because "the assumptions and institutions that have governed international relations in the postwar era are a poor fit with these new realities" (Tuchman Mathews 1989:162). Scholars making these arguments accept the neorealist claim that "security" is reducible to an objective referent and set of threats. They seek to reorient security studies (and policies), however, by calling on the authority of the natural sciences to demonstrate that environmental change "in fact" represents a threat to human well-being, and by asserting that what is *really threatened* is not an abstraction like "the state" but the material well-being of individuals (Myers 1993:31; see also Dabelko and Dabelko 1995). According to these researchers, the constraints imposed by traditional categories of thought have limited our grasp of this reality; our conceptions of security and our policies and institutions for providing security need to change to meet the new challenges (Ullman 1983; Mische 1989).

But these calls to redefine security meet resistance because they do not conform to the a priori political and methodological foundations underlying the neorealist view of security. Those interested in broadening the agenda of security studies fail to see that the field is not premised on the straightforward observation of objective phenomena that threaten human life, and that rejection of the individual as the

locus of security is not an oversight. The concept of national security does not simply represent a reaction to objective conditions; it is built on a series of political and epistemological choices that *define* what is considered security. To appeal to the reality of environmental threats, or to the security of individuals, runs up against the sovereignist resolutions that form the basis of neorealist thinking.

Illustrations of this resistance are found in Marc Levy's and Robert Dorff's exclusionary responses to the environment and security literature. Levy (1995a, 1995b) concedes the existence of potential environmental hazards to human well-being, but he argues that their place as security issues cannot be sustained. The attempt to make the environment a security issue is marked more by a desire to heighten the political profile of environmental concerns by placing them within the rhetoric of security than by any sustainable status as security issues. Likewise, Dorff (1994:27) asserts that although a broader definition of security highlights significant contemporary problems, these do not constitute security issues because " 'problems' is not a concept . . . [it] provides us with no ordering of reality that we can use to create a common understanding of what it is that we are talking about . . . [nor a] range of possible policy approaches to address those problems."

These arguments rely on two analytic moves that have significant consequences. First, by describing the broadening of the concept of security as a *political* rather than an analytical act, neorealists implicitly position their view as an apolitical stance that is not equally driven by (or established upon) a set of value commitments. Second, by thus positioning themselves, neorealists implicitly establish their view as the yardstick against which alternative conceptions of security are to be judged: how well do these alternative views fit within and contribute to the purportedly objective neorealist categories, in particular the concern with violent interstate conflict? Not surprisingly, as a result, environmental threats are not deemed security issues. Although Levy (1995a:40–41) admits that it is possible to conceive of "global security," he proceeds to define security as "national security"—a situation in which threats to a "nation's most important values" come from the actions of "foreigners."

The political assumptions underlying neorealist security studies, however, do not represent a neutral point against which alternative conceptions can be judged. Levy's vision of security brings with it the sovereignist conception of politics (and epistemology) outlined above. Moreover, it effectively makes security synonymous with "citizenship": security comes from being a citizen, "threats" are directed toward people qua citizens (that is, toward their states), and the theory and practice of "security" strive to mitigate these threats through concerted action by the citizens' representatives (Gray 1992). Levy's (1995b:44) subsequent claim that the "existential visions" of environmental security have little chance of influencing the "conventional security agenda" simply restates this foregone conclusion. The debate over whether "security" should be broadened, therefore, takes on a circular character. Each side appeals to "security" as something with an objective referent and source without acknowledging that its position rests on prior commitments that are rarely discussed. Disagreement is only explained as a result of empirical ignorance or the intervention of subjective value commitments that skew understanding. As a result, each side can endlessly accuse the other of politically motivated myopia, and charges of ecological opportunism confront charges of statist conservatism in an unresolvable cycle.

There is an important alternative position within this debate that is more *inclusionary*. Even though it distances itself from a broad conception of "security as individual well-being" and remains within the neorealist framework of interstate security, this position still allows for a new conception of threat. Researchers involved in projects on Environmental Change and Acute Conflict and Environment,

Population, and Security have attempted to assess the role of environmental scarcities in the outbreak of violent conflict (Homer-Dixon 1991, 1994). Gleick (1993) and Lowi (1993), for example, have placed access to, and control over, water within an expanded conception of "geopolitical" conflict. Likewise, studies of the communal conflict in Rwanda (Percival and Homer-Dixon 1995a), the relationship between urban growth or migration and violence (Gizewski and Homer-Dixon 1995; Howard and Homer-Dixon 1995), and the post-apartheid transition in South Africa (Percival and Homer-Dixon 1995b) have sought to determine the extent to which scarcity and varying forms of violent conflict are linked.

These studies move closer to the traditional concerns of security studies, while reorienting analysis away from relations among the military forces of states (and classical security dilemmas) to the underlying dynamics that can serve as the *sources* of interstate conflict. Even though some (Levy 1995b:46) have suggested that sophisticated analysts have been aware of these issues all along, the innovations support Baldwin's (1995:119, 125; see also Chipman 1992) argument for a broader agenda on the grounds that the "the study of national security grew more narrow and rigid during the Cold War than it had been before," and that Cold War security studies "militarized the study of security" in ways that occluded a rich tradition of thought on "the nature, causes, effects and prevention of war." Yet, the results of this research have been varied and inconclusive. In Rwanda, great scarcities did not seem significant in the outbreak of conflict; in Chiapas, land maldistribution and weakly enforced property rights were more important than environmental scarcity per se. In other cases, the primary conflict was not between states but within them. Even where environmental factors appeared causal (as in broader patterns of migration and the emergence of conflicts), such factors seemed linked to larger questions of political identity and regime legitimacy that challenge the state as the orthodox object of security (Homer-Dixon 1994; Ayoob 1995). Claims closest to neorealist concerns—that scarcity dynamics can lead to the rise of "hard-core" authoritarian states more likely to attack their neighbors—have become embroiled in theoretical disputes regarding causality and method (Homer-Dixon 1994:36–37). Although such research shows that international and environmental factors can play a role in violent conflict, the links between environmental scarcity and interstate violence are far from clear. Moreover, the question of the correct "object" of study (states or peoples) remains contested even within this narrower agenda.

The debate over "environment and security" illustrates how the neorealist conception of security studies rests on a claim regarding the appropriate referent object of security that both insulates it from seriously engaging alternative formulations and forces the latter to be judged on neorealism's terms. Unfortunately, alternative formulations are seldom explicit about the need to come to terms with the important political assumptions that are at the heart of neorealism. As a result, the debate remains pitched at a frustratingly superficial level.

The Quest for Scientific Objectivity in Neorealist Security Studies

The aspiration to objective, scientific knowledge is crucial to neorealist security studies. Indeed, it is the foundation for many neorealist critiques of alternative approaches. According to John Mearsheimer (1994/95:37–39, 41), for example, neorealist security studies can be distinguished from "idealistic" approaches by the fact that "realists maintain that there is an objective and knowable world, which is separate from the observing individual." More critical approaches, Mearsheimer (1994/95:37–39, 41) argues, adopt an "anything goes" attitude toward social science that can be seen as stemming from the general tendency of nonrealist ap-

proaches (including institutional, critical, and other theories) to slide into pure idealism: the belief that ideas are the driving force of history and easily malleable. Obviously, if neorealist scholarship can claim the mantle of science, it has a powerful preemptive response to calls for reformulating the research agenda of security studies. But does research within the neorealist paradigm conform to this "scientific" picture?

This section highlights some tensions (and contradictions) within the neorealist literature that render rather problematic its foundational claim to scientific objectivity. The section examines research on alliance formation, "offense-defense theory" (and related works), and recent attempts to theorize about nationalism and identity. Of particular interest are the problem of interpretation as a validation strategy; the treatment of beliefs, intentions, and perceptions; and the problematic status of identity groups as an "object" of security.

The Problem of Interpretation

Recent work on alliance formation represents a fruitful starting point for analyzing the "scientific objectivity" of security studies, particularly because the scholars engaged in this work are explicitly committed to the development of parsimonious sets of deductive hypotheses that will provide "cumulative knowledge," lead to "clear and more powerful theories, along with careful attempts to test their validity" (Walt 1992:448–473), and permit "determinate predictions at the foreign policy level" (Christensen and Snyder 1990:138). Yet, these goals have proven controversial, even among scholars sharing similar perspectives.

Debate essentially revolves around whether or not a strict focus on the distribution of capabilities can capture the behavior of policymakers (Walt 1985, 1987a, 1992), whether bandwagoning or balancing behavior is more prominent among states (and when) (Kaufman 1992; Labs 1992; Schweller 1994), and whether or not the research on alliance formation ignores internal dimensions of threat that apply especially to Third World states (David 1991). A precise stipulation of the content of these debates is not crucial here; what is important is how well the empirical research meets the neorealist postulated canons of science.

For example, how successful are scholars at classifying state actions as either bandwagoning or balancing behavior in response to particular threats? Walt (1992:452) criticizes Kaufman (1992) for assuming "that the Nazi threat was unambiguous and unmistakable as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933," arguing that "the threat from Nazi Germany was anything but obvious." A more complex answer to this question is presented by Schweller (1994:79), who proposes that Walt's definition of "bandwagoning" ("a form of capitulation") is too narrow and status-quo oriented. This definition led Walt to ignore alliance choices based on opportunities for gain and to understate the occurrence of bandwagoning behavior. To support this claim, Schweller constructs a classification of state behaviors that includes lions, lambs, jackals, and wolves to describe differences in the willingness of states to bear costs as they protect or extend their "possessions."[4] He uses these categories to classify state behavior across a wide historical period ranging from Alexander the Great to Hitler, his allies, and his victims.

[4]Lions are "states that will pay high costs to protect what they possess but only a small price to increase what they value"; lambs "will pay only low costs to defend or extend their values"; jackals "will pay high costs to defend their possessions but even greater costs to extend their values"; and wolves "are predatory states [that] value what they covet far more than what they possess" (Schweller 1994:101–103).

The problem is that these scholars are committed to a version of science in which acts or policies have to be unambiguously and objectively identified and classified (see King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). In Schweller's case, this process would require a clear specification of the rules of classification and evidence for how he arrives at his four zoological categories of state action. Likewise, Walt and Kaufman should be able to agree on what they will look for to know whether a particular act represents a threat or not and whether states are engaged in balancing or bandwagoning behavior. These scholars could argue that greater precision and objective specification will be achieved with time, but such is not the route that is generally taken. Instead, they concede that *even in principle* their disagreement cannot be resolved in an objective fashion; classification criteria are arbitrated within a community of scholars who share common understandings that are not "objective." Thus, Walt (1992:452) argues that even though Kaufman's view may be "consistent with the popular mythology of the interwar period, the scholarly literature does not support it."

If *interpretations* are ultimately the foundation of proper classification, then the *participants'* understandings of whether or not they were "bandwagoning" or "balancing," were "initiators" or "respondents," or had issued threats or not (and of what kind) become critically important to the social scientific task at hand. Schweller's transhistorical categories, for example, would need to be grounded in the understandings actors have of how their social world is organized lest they conceal ways of organizing that world that cut across his four categories (or that would not be captured by them). As Peter Winch (1957:87) puts it:

> whereas in the case of the natural scientist we have to deal with only one set of rules, namely those governing the scientist's investigation itself, here *what the sociologist is studying*. . . is a human activity and is therefore carried on according to rules. And it is these rules, rather than those which govern the sociologist's investigation, which specify what is to count as "doing the same kind of thing." (emphasis in the original)

Studies of the ways in which policies are constructed, explained, and justified are thus needed to validate the interpretations that scholars in neorealist security studies advance (Milliken 1995a). This use of interpretation to validate theoretical propositions raises questions about the quest for transhistorical, acontextual, generalizable theory.

Beliefs, Intentions, and Perceptions

The second issue—how we study beliefs, intentions, and perceptions—can be illuminated by examining research on offense-defense theory, which claims general applicability to situations ranging from ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (Posen 1993b) to war in sixteenth-century Europe (Hopf 1991). Recent proponents assert that "the offense-defense balance can . . . be incorporated into structural-realist theories of international politics," that its central explanatory variable (as a theory of foreign policy) can be *perceptions* (Lynn-Jones 1995:664, 681), and that "domestic and perceptual forces can be cleanly plugged into parsimonious international system theories" (Christensen and Snyder 1990:144) as explanatory variables to account for different alliance strategies. These scholars also argue (or accept) that the actual offense-defense balance can be objectively specified (Hopf 1991; Lynn-Jones 1995:665, 667). Leaving aside this question, the focus here is on the parallel hypothesis that *decision makers' subjective perceptions and beliefs* about the balance between offensive and defensive capabilities are accessible to scholars and can be specified in a precise and objective fashion. There are at least three problems with this proposal.

An initial problem is that perceptions, beliefs, and intentions are complex *individual and social attributes,* not qualities possessed by a personified construct called "the state" (see, for example, Sagan 1994). Yet, this introduces a unit-level factor that violates Waltzian structuralism. This problem is not obviated by the response "that no Realist maintains that unit-level factors exert no influence at all" (Walt 1992:473). But if unit-level factors matter, if structures only "shape and shove," if "the shaping and shoving of structures may be successfully resisted," and if "states affect the system's structure even as it affects them" (Waltz 1986b:343, 331), then the scope for agency is wide and the explanatory power of structural accounts is severely compromised. Indeed, the possibility that agents can change the structures themselves (that is, transcend anarchy or the security dilemma) seems to be excluded only by definitional fiat. More precisely, the assumption that interests are exogenously determined excludes the chance that "through interaction, states might form collective identities and interests, redefining the terms" of the security dilemma altogether (Wendt 1994:384). As Alexander Wendt points out, we cannot determine a priori whether or not this assumption is appropriate. We need to *research it.*

A second problem centers on the claim that beliefs and perceptions can be treated as objectively specifiable variables. Despite including "intentions" in his theory, Walt (1987a:263), for example, still argues that his goal is to provide "greater explanatory power with equal parsimony"—as long as intentions can be measured (and aggregated) through rationalist methods. One way of accomplishing such a result is by using "meaning-oriented behavioralism" (Neufeld 1993a), which treats beliefs, perceptions, and intentions as intervening variables to be precisely specified in causal explanations. As Mark Neufeld points out, however, such an enterprise requires careful techniques and methodological innovations in areas such as content analysis, survey design, and case-study strategies. Unfortunately, little of this concern appears in security studies, even in areas linking psychology and deterrence, in which arguments about individual beliefs and motivations have been prominent (Levy 1989; for an exception see DeNardo 1995).

What is actually being studied here, however, is *not* individual beliefs and intentions but *collective meaning structures*—shared understandings concerning the nature of warfare, the goals of foreign policy, the potentials of existing military technologies, and the limits of the politically and institutionally possible. Consider the evidence and analyses presented in discussions of the "cult of the offensive." Neorealist scholars argue that the cult of the offensive (or military doctrine in general) emerges from the organizational/institutional interests of professional military organizations that are not under civilian control (Snyder 1984a, 1984b; Posen 1984); it derives from "the political objectives and alliance commitments of the great powers" (Sagan 1986:153); and it has roots in the social stratification of European societies and social orders (Van Evera 1986:95, 99–100). The evidence adduced for these claims comes from the writings of major political and military figures, the contents of military training manuals, examinations of general attitudes toward warfare and the military profession, and discussions of the role of nationalist and imperial myths in perpetuating social control.

"Meaning-oriented behaviorism," however, is not an appropriate method for the study of the kinds of collective meanings invoked above. The role that perceptions play in discussions of the offense/defense balance bears a closer resemblance to sociological and anthropological "thick descriptions" of the practices, socialization, and "culture" of actors within social institutions—whether narrowly military or more broadly political and societal. "Thick description" is an interpretive research strategy (Geertz 1973), not an empiricist/rationalist one intended

to reduce beliefs and perceptions to measurable "units." Its goal is to offer an account of particular historical circumstances and choices that is faithful to the understandings of participants and captures the nuances in their positions and acts. Walt's (1992:474–475) dissection of Kaufman's (1992) rendition of interwar history—criticizing it for including questionable characterizations of particular leaders' actions, sweeping statements about domestic politics, and misreadings of policy choices and options—points toward a commonsense use of thick description. Only rarely, however, do we find scholars who recognize how the need to make judgments of this sort might affect the research strategy needed to validate their theoretical claims. One exception in the offense-defense literature is Elizabeth Kier's (1995) study, which explicitly situates her "culturalist" approach within broader methodological debates—a rare admission of epistemological and methodological pluralism.

A third set of problems focuses on the twin propositions that (1) beliefs and perceptions only matter when we want to make determinate predictions of foreign policies, and (2) the only issue of importance, therefore, is how well the subjective perceptions of actors fit or clash with the underlying *reality* of the situations. According to neorealists, for all intents and purposes perceptions can be ignored by assuming that "states weigh options and make policy decisions in a more-or-less rational fashion" (Walt 1992:473) because an "ecological natural selection" process punishes those states and leaders who deviate from this norm over the long run (Waltz 1986a:66–67; Christensen and Snyder 1990:140, 142–143; Posen 1993a:82).

The idea that perceptions either fit or clash with reality (which ultimately punishes errors) does not take into account the role of perceptions and beliefs in constructing the social world in which actors make choices and act. Consider Walt's (1987a:263) refinement of balance-of-power theory, which argues that policymakers "balance against the states that pose the greatest threat," whether or not these are the most powerful states in the system. Threats here are not objectively specifiable in the same sense that capabilities are because they include offensive *intentions* (Walt 1985:9). Once we deviate from a tight linkage to capabilities, however, we move into a constructed world. Indeed, the world of interests, threats, and intentions requires an understanding of history, culture, ideologies, and related factors (O'Tuathail 1993; Weldes 1993, forthcoming). In principle, the absence of threatening intentions could allow actors to override completely the suspicions that would be generated (in a pure Waltzian world) from capabilities, opening the way for a whole range of resolutions to the security dilemma. Such a proposition might explain why post-1945 Western Europe did not balance *against* the United States, or why the U.S. Pentagon is not concerned about British and French nuclear weapons. Here we become interested in the construction of the Western Alliance security community, for which competing accounts can be offered that run counter to neorealist arguments (Dalby 1988, 1990; Klein 1990; Adler and Barnett 1996).

The Obscure Object of Analysis: Nations, Nationalism, and Identity

The rise in ethnic and nationalist conflicts has put the question of what (or whom) is being secured (and from what) back on the agenda of security studies. Neorealist scholars propose that questions of identity (and interest) formation can be analytically suspended (Wendt 1992:392, 1994:384) because they change relatively slowly or become "solidified" during circumstances of conflict and war (Kaufmann 1996:153). As a result, the challenge posed by identity conflicts is resolved by integrating the issues raised by ethnicity and nationalism into neorealist foundations without reopening thorny epistemological or ontological questions.

Steven Van Evera's (1994) "hypotheses on nationalism and war" and Barry Posen's (1993b) work on ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia illustrate with clarity this process. Both face the challenge of explaining the *genesis* of nationalism within an approach that treats social actors as *given* and their ideational origins as exogenous. Dynamics of political identity are dealt with through an objectivist epistemology; identity groups are conceived of methodologically as individuals who simply replace states as the new objects of security analysis. These analytic constructs are then cast back into the neorealist dynamics of anarchy and the security dilemma vis-à-vis other "actors." The idea that taking questions of identity seriously may require a different understanding of group formation and interaction is never raised. Each author's treatment, however, suggests why such questions need to be considered.

Van Evera (1994:6) proposes to generate a series of testable hypotheses about nationalism by leaving aside the question of its origins, treating it as an empirical fact and defining it as a political movement in which members give their primary loyalty to their own ethnic or national community and desire an independent state. Despite his interest in treating nationalism as an existing fact, however, Van Evera is forced to account for how political movements *emerge* in order to explain the link between nationalism and war. Given that not all these emergent nationalisms exist yet, he has to discuss the conditions under which they will arise.

The basis of nationalism seems to be preexisting *linguistic* groups. As Van Evera (1994:11) notes, many of the more than six thousand such groups that have been identified "have dormant or manifest aspirations for statehood." The question of why some of these groups emerge as nationalist movements and others do not is answered in terms of the central state's ability to exercise its power and prevent their emergence. Thus, "if nationalism is unattainable it may not even appear: the captive nation will submerge the nationalist thought . . . [N]ationalism is in part simply a function of capability: it emerges where it can" (Van Evera 1994:16). Yet, this formulation raises significant dilemmas for understanding the relationship between nationalism and security, at least within an empiricist conception of knowledge. Simply put, if nationalism does not appear, then how do we know "it" is there and that "it" is only held in abeyance by other powers? If the "thought" has been submerged, how do we know it is still there to reemerge when circumstances allow, or, indeed, that it was ever there in the first place? Further, the idea of preexisting primordial ethnic or national communities appears to miss the point: nationalism is about the *creation* of these communities (or loyalty to them). Moreover, if one views all groups as latently nationalistic (and, hence, as sources of mutual insecurity), it is difficult to understand the dynamics of multiethnic states in which ethnic/linguistic groups do not see themselves in nationalistic terms and, instead, commit themselves to the legitimacy (and perpetuation) of the existing political order.

Posen's (1993a) analysis of the relationship between nationalism and war represents another attempt to address some of these problems. Nationalism, he argues, should be understood in the context of the historical development of mass armies and the necessity for states to be able to raise such armies to survive. The adoption of nationalism and nationalistic institutions is *caused* by the pressures of the international system: by the existence of other states that have adopted such ideas and institutions and can now (threateningly) use them to mobilize mass armies (Posen 1993a:82, 84, 122). As a result, states are forced to adopt similar policies or fall by the wayside. As Posen (1993a:81) argues, "It is not merely coincidental that nationalism seems to cause intense warfare; I argue that it is purveyed by states for the express purpose of improving their military capabilities" (see also Mearsheimer 1990:12, 25). To test this hypothesis, Posen exam-

ines the French-Prussian/German relationship between the end of the eighteenth century and World War I. Nationalistic educational, cultural, and political transformations were tied in significant ways to the need to raise mass armies in response to the abilities of other states to do so. "Elites" drew on nationalism to generate the military capabilities such an emotional climate made possible: mass armies of highly motivated soldiers backed by an entire social structure that could be mobilized for war. Posen's rich and nuanced analysis contains valuable insights, but it falls short on several counts as a compelling neorealist synthesis of the connections among nationalism, war, and society.

First, as Lapid and Kratochwil (1996) have argued, Posen's approach does not develop the concept nationalism (or ethnicity). Rather, nationalism is considered a consequence of state (or elite) choices and needs in their struggle for survival. It is reduced to a *function* of state power. Once again nationalism is treated as a preexisting "fact," as a social resource for entrepreneurs to draw on in consolidating state (or their own) power. But where did this "fact" come from? Even leaving aside the extreme instrumentalism of this view, Posen's historical analysis focuses on what Benedict Anderson (1983) has termed "official nationalism." For this political resource to be available for mobilization, however, a series of prior transformations has to have taken place. The role of these transformations (such as the rise of print culture) in creating the modern world is assumed rather than understood in Posen's analysis. Why, for example, did elites not appeal to concepts of civilization, empire, or religion, and what difference might such appeals have made? More important, how can we invoke notions of "hypernationalism" to explain contemporary conflict dynamics (Mearsheimer 1990:20–21) while leaving aside questions concerning identity formation and the emergence and continued vitality of nationalism?

Second, Posen's discussion of an interactive relationship between domestic and international politics does not demonstrate the validity of a "structural realist" explanation. A similar stress on the relational element in international politics is also at the core of analyses that stand outside the neorealist position. Eric Ringmar (1995), for example, puts relational dynamics at the heart of his understanding of Sweden's expansionist military policy in the seventeenth century. But the relationship he adduces is the Swedish desire for "recognition" (in the Hegelian sense) in the eyes of other states rather than in any neorealist structural imperative. Posen's historical rendition is also close to certain sociological perspectives (Giddens 1987; Shaw 1993). In short, taking account of relational dynamics in security policy does not commit one to a structuralist perspective; taking these dynamics seriously can lead to consideration of forms of analysis that neorealist security studies usually rejects.

Finally, Posen's vision of nationalism re-evokes long-standing issues of change and agency in neorealist analysis. Within his formulation, the possibility for change is obscured by the eternal recurrence of neorealist structuralism. Despite the massive social transformations surrounding the rise of nationalism, imperialism, mass armies, and the modern democratic state, things *in essence* remain the same. Interstate relations, and their propensity for conflict, are determined by structures *not* by any social or political changes within states or cultures, no matter how profound they may seem. This view cannot, *by definition,* conceive of shifting identities that could allow greater cooperation or broader structures of identification (such as "Europe") linking people and groups in ever-widening forms of political order (Mearsheimer 1994/95). The contemporary implications of this position become clear at the end of Posen's analysis. Because nationalism is a consequence of insecurity and insecurity is tied to the threat that other states pose, decreases in nationalism and conflict are attributable to decreases in the threat posed by mass

armies. The reduction in West European nationalism (and conflict) is, thus, attributable to the American nuclear umbrella. Hence, nuclear disarmament could have negative consequences, and nuclear proliferation could be beneficial (Posen 1993a:124). Other options for overcoming the security dilemma are viewed as hopelessly "idealistic."

The Construction and Practice of "Securitization"

As observed in the previous discussion, a productive dialogue among students of security studies is only made possible by acknowledging the thorny problems of knowledge, interpretation, and historiography that are associated with all research efforts. The last task in this essay review is to examine and critique some recently proposed alternative approaches to security studies that engage these concerns directly. The goals are twofold. First, the review describes a literature in security studies that moves away from neorealist formulations in directions that could be called "critical" or "constructivist."[5] Rather than treating states, groups, or individuals as givens that relate objectively to an external world of threats created by the security dilemma, these approaches stress the processes through which individuals, collectivities, and threats become *constructed* as "social facts" and the influence of such constructions on security concerns. As Wendt (1995:81) observes, the goal is "to analyze how processes of interaction produce and reproduce the social structures—cooperative or conflictual—that shape actors' identities and interests and the significance of their material contexts." Second, the review shows that, contrary to claims that "the distinguishing feature of the critical theory literature . . . is its lack of empirical content" (Mearsheimer 1995:92), there is a rich and interesting research program under way, albeit in its early stages. Two exemplary literatures are discussed: (1) research on societal security, and (2) research on the social construction of threats.

In the process of doing research on new conceptions of who or what is being secured, from what threats, and by what means, many scholars have found themselves challenging the core foundations of the neorealist position. It is important to note, however, that not all these scholars oppose all elements of the neorealist position. Scholars such as Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little (1993), for example, have contributed greatly to advancing the logic of Waltzian structural realism, while others, specifically Wendt (1995:75) and Michael Barnett (1992), "fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence." Still others argue that a commitment to an interpretive method does not imply rejection of the idea that there are better or worse interpretations—only a rejection of the idea that these are arbitrated against some external "reality" rather than against social actors' understandings of their world.

The basic claims of the critical and constructivist approaches are that "security" is not an objective condition, that threats to it are not simply a matter of correctly perceiving a constellation of material forces, and that the object of security is not stable or unchanging. Instead, questions about *how* the object to be secured (nation, state, or other group) is constituted, and how particular issues (economic well-being, the risk of violence, environmental degradation)

[5]We use the labels "critical" and "constructivist" loosely in this review, acknowledging that the very term critical contains no connotations that link it extricably to either a positivist or reconstructive approach. Thus, it may allow both proponents and opponents to stop at the theoretical level, without reflecting on the practical implications of scholarship. It is also worth noting that few of the scholars mentioned in what follows appear in Mearsheimer's (1994/95) review of "critical theory" and international relations.

are placed under the "sign of security" become central. "Security" (especially, "national security") is understood as a particular set of historical discourses and practices that rest upon institutionally shared understandings. The research goal is to study the process by which threats are represented politically: to examine "who can 'do' or 'speak' security successfully, on what issues, under what conditions, and with what effects . . . [W]hat is essential is the designation of an existential threat . . . and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience" (Waever 1995a:4). The concept and usage of "national" (or state) security is *not* rejected as either outmoded or in need of transcendence; instead, it is taken seriously as an important historical resolution to central problems of political life (Weldes 1996).

From a methodological perspective, three propositions appear to form the core of these alternative approaches to security studies and to differentiate them from neorealism:

1. Our knowledge about the subjects, structures, and practices of world politics is not "objective" (in the materialist sense of neorealism) because no straightforwardly objective world exists separate from its collective construction by observers or actors.
2. Interpretive methods that examine actors' practical understandings of the organization of (and possibilities for changing) their social world are central to doing research.
3. The *purpose* of theory is not to search for prediction within the context of determinate, transhistorical, and generalizable causal claims but rather contextual understanding and practical knowledge.

These issues are addressed in different ways within these emerging bodies of research. But this lack of methodological unity should not be taken either as an easy excuse for dismissal or as evidence of the intrinsic strength of the neorealist enterprise. Obviously, scholarship in these new research programs will fail to stand up if measured against the standard of neorealist security studies. But once the scientific aspirations of neorealism are called into question, alternative approaches can be judged on their own terms, and the issues raised by (and between) these alternatives can be examined seriously as a stimulus to critical reflection in the field.

Identity, Society, and Societal Security

For Buzan, Ole Waever, and others involved with the "Copenhagen School" (McSweeney 1996), a crucial starting point for restructuring security studies is the distinction between state and society. They argue that security studies needs to adopt an understanding of the "duality" of security: that it combines *state security*, which is concerned with sovereignty, and *societal security*, which is concerned with *identity* (Waever et al. 1993:25). Societal security takes into account the origins, structures, and dynamics of collective identity formation (Neumann 1996a) and the connection between identities and interests (and threats to them) (Wendt 1994). "At its most basic, social identity is what enables the word 'we' to be used" as a means by which to identify collectively the "thing" to be secured (Waever et al. 1993:17). But "society," as used by these scholars, cannot be reduced to an aggregation of individuals nor made synonymous with the state because to do so would risk misunderstanding many of the most salient contemporary security dynamics. It is not simply the identities of *states* that are constructed, but the entire set of practices that designates the object to be secured, the threats it is to be secured from, and the appropriate responses to these threats.

In ethnonationalist conflicts, for example, competing claims to sovereignty, rather than the competition between existing sovereignties, often provide the source of conflict. What people are attempting to secure is an *idea.* Even though material elements are still important, such conflicts cannot be reduced to the competing interests among pre-given political objects. These conflicts are about the *creation* of these objects and the way in which different identities are developed (Anderson 1983). The case of Macedonian identity, as Håkan Wiberg explains it, is suggestive (from Waever et al. 1993:107):

> to the extent identity is anchored in language, Bulgaria is the main threat: it regards Macedonian as a Bulgarian dialect . . . To the extent it is anchored in religion, the Serbs are the main threat: the Macedonian church [is] still under the Serb patriarchate . . . To the extent it is anchored in statehood, the Albanian minority will not accept Macedonians defining themselves as *the* state carrying people. When it is defined by territory and history, the Greeks object strongly.

Likewise, Ukrainian nationalism takes some of its force from a denial of a shared origin with Russians in the original "Kievan *rus.*" "[F]or Ukrainian nationalists, the Russians are imposters and pretenders only . . . [Yet,] Russian nationalists tend not to recognize Ukrainians as a nation at all, but regard them as 'polonised'—corrupted—Russians" (Pierre Lemaitre in Waever et al. 1993:112). Russian-Ukrainian security relations are not just about economic relations, the Black Sea fleet, the status of the Crimea, nuclear weapons on Ukrainian soil, or the possibility of forceful reintegration with Russia. By reconstructing the identity relationship, we gain a different understanding about some of the sources of reciprocal threats and the possible avenues for (or difficulties in) overcoming them. Like the neorealist analyses discussed above (Mearsheimer 1990:56; Posen 1993b:44), this research stresses the importance of history in the construction of national identities, but it also holds that interests cannot be postulated as *prior* to identities and that identities themselves are *not* fixed in time but are *relationally* constructed (Neumann 1996a, 1996b).

A stress on identity and society as flexible constructs allows us to examine the *integrative* dynamics under way, for example, in Europe currently. Stress solely on states and the security dilemma makes such research unnecessary or incomprehensible (Mearsheimer 1990). The push of states for integration in the European Union may be seen as jeopardizing the security of significant parts of their societies (either economically or culturally). Thus, state action can be interpreted as creating societal insecurity. Conversely, societal resistance can threaten the authority of the state or its ability to carry out its policies. But as long as both state action and societal resistance are studied as political practices, they are *in principle* subject to evolution and change. This approach provides researchers with a way of understanding the possibility of changes in security relations among communal groups.

The attempts by the Copenhagen School to incorporate "societal security" into the security studies agenda have generated some criticism. At the heart of the challenges is the claim that making society synonymous with identity risks reifying both society and identity and, in the process, losing a critical purchase on security as a political practice. Lapid and Kratochwil (1996:118-120), for example, argue that by equating identity with "society" Buzan, Waever, and their collaborators create the foundation for yet another variant of statism and the neorealist structuralism they want to transcend. Bill McSweeny (1996:85) has voiced a similar concern: that by asserting the link between society and identity, "identity" becomes, by definition, the security concern of a "society." The important questions of how a society comes to conceive of its identity and its security can be neither asked nor answered. Both society and identity become fixed objects, and, as a result, impervi-

ous to critical analysis and an understanding of their internal dynamics. "Identity describes the society, and society is constituted by identity . . . Societal identity just is. We are stuck with it. There is no way we can replace it, except by adopting multiple identities, each of which is, in principle, as inviolable as the next" (McSweeney 1996:87).

The practical implications of this criticism can be seen by considering research on new security issues such as migration (Heisbourg 1991; Larabee 1992; Weiner 1992/93; Waever et al. 1993). A central theme of this research concerns the security of a society's "cultural and national identity" in the face of large-scale population movements. What is threatened here is the very *cultural* identity that neorealist understandings take as primordial. Security is no longer an "objective" condition but "a social construct with different meanings in different societies"; a "security threat . . . is often a matter of perception" and "perceptions of risk change" (Weiner 1992/93:95, 110–111). Not surprisingly from this perspective, "different states and nations have different thresholds for defining threats: Finns are concerned about immigration at a level of 0.3% foreigners, where Switzerland functions with 14.7%" (Waever 1995a:3). A central task of security analysis becomes determining how these threat thresholds are defined as well as how they change as a result of different state policies and political practices. There is nothing mechanistic (or "causal") about this process. For example, in the post–1945 period, the crystallization of the welfare state as part of European "identity" appears to have subtly changed the way in which migrants are integrated into communities, and increased the perception of the threat they pose to these communities (Waever et al. 1993:153–162).

If identity is made a concern of security, then who judges "what counts as the parameters of collective identity, and by what criteria must judgments be made" (McSweeney 1996:88)? What, for example, can be said against LePen's declarations that migrants (or "foreigners") are threats to French (societal) security? An unease over these kinds of issues pervades discussions of migration and security. Despite noting the "socially constructed" nature of security, Weiner (1992/93:111), for example, warns that it is necessary to separate racist or xenophobic paranoia from legitimate concerns, implying that one can distinguish between a "perceived" security threat and a "genuine conflict of interest." Similarly, Waever (1995b:65–66) argues that "if this area is securitized in an unsophisticated way, its effect can easily be to legitimize reactionary arguments for defining migrants as security problems and presenting nations as threatened by Europeanization." Likewise, Jef Huysmans (1995) contends that treating security in terms of identity, and migrants as threats to it, risks concretizing identity, radicalizing the issue, and legitimizing violence against migrants. These concerns illustrate some of the ethical and practical questions raised by an alternative view of security. Even if we treat the realist raison d'état as only one possible discourse, it still needs to be weighed against alternatives that are not self-evidently more peaceful (Mearsheimer 1995). None of these concerns has an easy resolution; they deserve serious discussion by parties with a variety of perspectives.

Constructing Threats and Responses

How are *threats* defined and constructed? In other words, how, from the welter of information and interaction among states and their representatives, are threats constructed and mobilized against? Most research on this question has focused on the American construction of the "Soviet threat." Bradley Klein's (1990; see also Nathanson 1988) analysis of major documents surrounding the early Cold War and the creation of NATO shows that *capabilities* played hardly any role in the assess-

ment of the Soviet threat. "[W]hat carried the day, in the absence of reliable intelligence estimates, was a series of discursively constructed claims about the nature of the Soviet totalitarian state and about its implacable global purposes" (Klein 1990:313). Jennifer Milliken's (1995b) study of the Korean War highlights the effort involved within Western policy circles to construct the North Korean invasion of the South as part of a Moscow-led aggressive expansionism and not as an internecine struggle among Koreans. Both these works parallel some of the postrevisionist scholarship on the origins of the Cold War emphasizing the effort involved in creating an American consensus over its international role (Gaddis 1982; Leffler 1992). Simon Dalby's (1990) book focuses on the construction of the Second Cold War and analyzes the uses made by the American Committee on the Present Danger (and associated advocates) of geopolitical logic, historical determinism, and nuclear war-fighting logic to construct a series of interlocked arguments for the military buildup and European nuclear deployments that characterized the Reagan presidency. This analysis of threat construction directly challenges the argument that the "end of detente" was inevitable. The post–Cold War threat environment has also provided fertile ground for critical analysis, as in David Mutimer's (forthcoming) examination of the way in which the metaphorical and linguistic construction of a "proliferation threat" for the United States (and its alliance partners) has been used to mobilize resources aimed at dismantling the Iraqi nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs; to isolate North Korea over its possible nuclear weapons program; to create an activist "counterproliferation" policy within the Clinton administration; and to mobilize support for the development of ballistic missile defenses.

A second line of research tackles the way in which appropriate *responses* to the threats are constructed in security policymaking. Most attention in this area has been focused on deterrence and arms control policies. Emanuel Adler (1992) examined how the arms control "epistemic community" that emerged in the United States after the Cuban missile crisis charted a path out of the sterile debates over "disarmament" of the previous period and generated cooperative security policies between the superpowers. Others (Chilton 1985; Cohn 1987; Luke 1989; Mehan, Nathanson, and Skelly 1990) have studied the elaboration and implementation of nuclear deterrence policies, drawing attention to the linguistic construction of the nuclear debate and the ways in which weapons were "normalized" or opponents trivialized in order to promote particular nuclear deterrence policies.

Security policies also involve the securing of the stable identity of entities. David Campbell (1992), for example, argues that threats need to be understood in part as powerful elements in securing a society's collective identity in an essentially rootless modern world. According to Campbell (1992:54), "the state requires discourses of 'danger' to provide a new theology of truth about who and what 'we' are by highlighting who or what 'we' are not, and what 'we' have to fear." Likewise, Iver Neumann and Jennifer Welsh (1991; see also Neumann 1996b) have examined the way in which "Europe" was constituted in relation to a "Turkish other" from which it needed to be secured; Karin Fierke (forthcoming) has explored how the end of the Cold War provoked a rearticulation of the political categories through which identities and threats had been articulated within Europe.

All these authors are concerned with *how* questions. How was an American or Western interest in opposing so-called Soviet expansionism created and what forces did it mobilize? How did the language of nuclear deterrence operate to tame these weapons and exclude particular options for dealing with them? How do different discourses construct "others" as the source of threats? The most common objection raised to all this research is that constructions operate as simple glosses over the "real interests" that lie behind "the veil of facts." The response to this

complaint is a complex one. All these authors challenge, for example, the neorealist argument that the way in which the confrontation between East and West unfolded was inevitable, that the construction of the Soviet threat was merely the public gloss on the operation of real interests in great power clashes, and that the particular form this confrontation took was unimportant to an understanding of its causes and consequences. Hence, the researchers go beyond a demonstration of the constructed nature of threat discourses to show how these constructions *could have been different* given the concrete historical circumstances in which political choices were made. These arguments are not purely of the idealist "if only" kind; they evince a clear concern with the conditions of contemporary policy choices.

Scholars in the constructivist tradition often seek to shift the grounds of debate to a pragmatic political or discursive perspective in order to avoid determining what security "actually is" precisely because they view security as a convention (Dalby 1992, forthcoming; Waever 1995b). The thrust of their arguments concerning the "practice of security" presumes that the process of constructing a meaningful discourse of threats is not politically neutral. Thus, one ought to question whether or not the construction of a particular "problem" as a "threat" is desirable. As Daniel Deudney (1990) has observed, for example, making the environment a national security issue may subvert the goal that proponents of this change seek to achieve. Environmental issues pose significant and pressing dangers, but placing them on the security agenda means subsuming them within concepts and institutions of state security (that is, military responses against a particular "target") that are unlikely to further the agenda of "environmental security" (Deudney 1990; Matthew 1995:19). In a similar vein, Kaufmann (1996) indicates that identities (and threats to them) cannot be changed by a simple act of will or wishful thinking; under extreme circumstances (such as communal war), the boundaries of identities can be hardened and thickened in ways that exacerbate conflict and make creative resolutions difficult if not impossible. The question of the relationship of theory to practice in alternative approaches to security studies is central here, as is the issue of the political processes through which policies and practices can be modified or altered.

Conclusion

This review essay does not claim to cut the Gordian knot into which contemporary security studies has tied itself. The complex methodological and political issues raised above touch on every branch of security studies (and its current political relevance). Moreover, they reflect concerns that are not limited to this small outpost of social science. Nor can these issues be resolved simply by declaring that alternative approaches to security studies are little more than the expression of postmodern nihilism (Mearsheimer 1994/95:39–41) and withdrawing to the supposedly safer harbors of theoretical and political orthodoxy. This review has attempted to show that despite the analytic divides that appear to demarcate different approaches to security studies, the various approaches actually share a number of the same problems. Such a statement does not mean that different approaches are commensurable, but it does suggest a need for all scholars to consider seriously the issues central to approaches other than their own.

It cannot be underscored enough that neorealists and their challengers "see" a different world. The former see, over the past several centuries of world politics (and perhaps before), a ceaseless repetition of competition among political units for power in a world of suspicion and insecurity. As Steven Brams and Mark Kilgour (1988:viii) note, "[T]rue, the world is confusing, but considerable order and stability often can be found below the surface . . . This search for order is the

hallmark of scientific inquiry; without it . . . there could not be a coherent intellectual understanding of the regularities we observe." Unfortunately, when claims to transhistorical continuity and generalizability are examined closely, they often turn out to rest upon tendentious or implausible readings of history that are little better than Whig or Toynbee-esque (Schroeder 1994, 1995; Elman and Elman 1995). The latter scholars see in the tapestry of recent world history variation, change, and contingency. For them, the rise and decline of absolutism, the advent of modern nationalism and imperialism, the emergence of claims for self-determination and decolonization, and the more recent influence of ideas of democracy and human rights have all embedded the interaction of political units in a complex web that gives practical and shifting content to their understandings of interests. It is no accident that researchers within this more historicist tradition do not regard positivist methods and apodictic prediction as the hallmarks of social understanding.

There are, however, at least two reasons for stopping short of the implication of this argument and claiming that competing accounts are simply incommensurable and irreconcilable (Neufeld 1993b). The first is the "division of labor" argument, presented most straightforwardly in the distinction between "why" and "how" questions—"with explaining why particular decisions resulting in specific courses of action were made" versus with understanding "*how* the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible" (Doty 1993:298, emphasis hers; see also Hollis and Smith 1991). "How" questions are in some senses prior to "why" questions: before particular courses of action can be selected (and thus explained), the range of possible or plausible options has to be constructed and scholars have to understand the way in which certain options acquire meaning or value. In security studies, this process involves ascertaining how the nature (and source) of threats is constructed, the "object" being secured, and the possibilities for reinforcing, ameliorating, or even overcoming "security dilemmas." Neorealist approaches take all these issues as givens. An enlarged conception of security studies needs to make room for both sorts of research agendas. Without both "how" and "why" research, we are not adequately "explor[ing] the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war" (Walt 1991:212).

The inability of neorealist security studies to meet (even in principle) the standard of science to which it aspires should also moderate rejection of the more interpretive scholarship that informs approaches concerned with "how" questions. Of course, there are thorny methodological problems that bedevil interpretation as well (some interpretations are always more plausible, coherent, and convincing than others), but the "truth value" of the claims is arbitrated within a social context. The neglect by neorealist security studies scholars of the crucial role that interpretation plays in their own arguments and the implication this has for their claims to objectivity is difficult to explain, except, perhaps, by their eagerness to gain the disciplining power conveyed by the mantle of science. Ultimately security studies research would be enhanced by a more direct engagement with the difficult issues associated with historical interpretation. Such would certainly seem more preferable than claiming to be "wary of the counterproductive tangents that have seduced other areas of international studies" (Walt 1991:223) or preserving the coherence of neorealist theory by tautological and definitional fiat (Hall and Kratochwil 1993; Kratochwil 1993; Schroeder 1995). None of the positions in this debate has yet found the epistemological or methodological grail.

The second reason for not claiming that the various schools of thought in security studies are incommensurable and irreconcilable is that all security studies

scholars are engaged in intensely practical and political projects, whether these are defined as "policy relevant knowledge" or "praxis." On the one hand, it is not the case that alternative approaches, whether addressing new issues such as migration and nationalism or old issues such as deterrence and arms control, court political irrelevance or are "diverted into a prolix and self-indulgent discourse that is divorced from the real world" as some (Walt 1991:223) have argued. This statement would be true only if one holds a truncated view of politics that sees the relevant actors in the process of defining security as states and their policymakers (supported, of course, by appropriate academic experts) and believes that scholarship should "concentrate on *manipulable variables,* on relationships that can be altered by deliberate acts of policy" (Walt 1991:212, emphasis his). Even neorealist scholars like Mearsheimer, Van Evera, and Posen have noted that important aspects of conflictual relationships include the creation and perpetuation of national myths (through education, for example), symbolic gestures (threatening or otherwise), and political rhetoric. Such factors are manipulable variables in only a loose and indirect sense, yet they are the stuff of security in contemporary world politics. On the other hand, the concern that neorealist scholarship has with the central role of organized violence in shaping our political world is something that scholars using alternative approaches to security studies must address seriously. Institutions of, ideas about, and instruments of organized violence play a central role in domestic and international political life and cannot be wished away. Likewise, if the processes of "securitization" can have dark sides (as in the migration and security debate), then even scholars using critical analysis cannot escape the question: How should security studies be used in the world of political practice?

Coming full circle, should the agenda of security studies be "broadened" or "restricted" to meet the intellectual and practical challenges of the post–Cold War world? Critics could object that the arguments for methodological pluralism presented here will neither maintain disciplinary coherence nor generate a "progressive research program." This review actually suggests a paradoxical response: It may be necessary to broaden the agenda of security studies (theoretically and methodologically) in order to narrow the agenda of *security.* A more profound understanding of the forces that create political loyalties, give rise to threats, and designate appropriate collective responses could open the way to what Waever (1995b) has usefully termed "desecuritization"—the progressive removal of issues from the security agenda as they are dealt with via institutions and practices that do not implicate force, violence, or the "security dilemma." There is nothing inevitable or idealistic about this idea. Contemporary political debates over the enlargement and restructuring of NATO, the appropriate preventive responses to nascent communal conflicts, and the imperatives of dealing with rapid environmental change all suggest that policymakers engage daily with the complexities and possibilities of "security" in a broad sense. Rather than calling for a restriction of its theoretical agenda, the field of security studies needs to pursue these issues and debates with even more energy and with an openness that will, in turn, foster intellectual development and political engagement with the dynamics of contemporary world politics.

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