How Has the Study of International Security Changed since the Cold War's End?

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The failure of traditional approaches of International Relations to predict or explain the collapse of the USSR in 1991 ignited debate about the legitimacy of the discipline broadly dominated by a neorealist paradigmatic perspective (Roe, 2016, p 232), and the hegemony of "traditional security studies" (TSS); that is theories grounded in a statist ontological outlook and materialist, positivist epistemology. This has been intellectually undercut by a world seemingly shaped by ideas, economics and transnational movements, not just by "power and interests" (Roberts, 2008, p 335) as in the cold war era. This essay will argue that the end of the Cold war (and the "new reality" of international relations) has justified a radical overhaul in the foundations of "security studies"; allowing for new ontology and epistemology to critique the orthodoxy through creative new methods and considering the impact of colonialism. This essay will broadly follow the line of argument taken by Buzan, that security has "widened" and "deepened" (Buzan 2009 p 187), critiquing the orthodoxy which is ill-equipped and too parochially (ontologically and epistemologically) confined to capture the reality of security studies in the contemporary era defined *not* by great power competition (where non state actors and states in the global south were marginalized to be a periphery to the conflict of the USA and the USSR), but an era defined by a multiplicity of actors, threats and conceptions of what a referent object constitutes.

The ontological position of Traditional Security Studies has been necessarily and logically challenged by the collapse of the USSR, giving rise to positions not grounded in the doctrine of Statism which defined the discipline in the Cold War. Stephen Walt, who can be taken as a follower of "traditional security studies" (i.e. operating under a positivist epistemology closely related to a neo-realist doctrine) defined security in the Cold War as "the way the use of force effects states and societies" (Walt, 1991, p 212). Ontologically, this confines security studies as a discipline which has the normative position of taking the state as the primary agent of security. To confine the discipline to this though is both empirically outdated and illogical in the context of a globalised and interconnected international system (this can broadly be taken as a definition of the post cold war structure of IR). Treating states as "black boxes" (Mearsheimer, 2010, p 72) is an illogical starting point for security studies in an era defined by non-state actors as the primary causes of conflict (considering wars in Rwanda, Yugoslavia and rebellions such as the Arab Spring). In a globalized world in which a multiplicity of actors exist both beneath and transcendent of the states (ranging from individuals to international organisations) it is more credible to attempt to place inter and intra state conflict in the context of such a world, rather than the statist parsimony which traditional security studies reveres as a redeeming ontological quality. If one examines for example the 9/11 attacks, undeniably the largest security issue in contemporary Western politics, the insufficiency of TSS are exposed. An attack by a non-state actor which precipitated a "global" war on terror (implying an attack on a referent object transcendent of the state provoking a transcendent response), reveals the extent to which non state actors and interconnectedness invalidate the "billiard ball" model of IR. Barkawi and Laffey eloquently observe that "Al-Qaida is neither a state, nor a great power" (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006, p 329). As such, a new ontological starting position, which acknowledges the "deepening" (Buzan, 2009, p 187) of security (to accept a multiplicity of actors) and less oriented toward parochial Statism is required. In this sense, security studies has ontologically widened to accommodate the change in the nature of (in)security: no longer is the international system defined by great power competition and the threat of mutually assured destruction, and the degradation of the starting position that the state is not only the central actor in international relations but also the exclusive referent object in security is a logical reflection of this.

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Following the ontological deepening of international security (recognizing the reality of international relations is not accurately reflected in the statist normative outlook), the Post Cold war era of academia has allowed for a creative "widening" of security, in which the range of issues considered to be under the rubric of "security" is extended beyond military issues and the materialistic epistemology of the traditional school is questioned. Recent scholarship has studied a larger range of threats (i.e. variables which are considered a threat to "security") and a much larger range of referent objects (Booth and Wheeler, 2008, p 134). Following the failures of military force as a method to achieve political goals in the Cold War era, neorealist assumptions regarding the primacy of military security have been throw into question, and the evolution of security studies is to divide issues considered to be significant to security to "sectors"; of particular contemporary significance are the economic, political, societal and environmental (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998). At a most basic level, insecurity is the "risk of something bad happening to a thing that is valued" (Barnett, 2016, p 230), and in the absence of the existential threat of mutually assured destruction the international community had to reconsider what it considered to be a "threat", and how to react to that. In this sense, the collapse of the Cold-War academic hegemony (that is to singularly focus on the threat of military force to the state) has allowed for a widening of the orthodoxy to accommodate sub-disciplines of international security *not* obsessing with overtly militaristic ontology. For example, the collapse of the prevailing order in security studies and the way has fostered the study of "environmental security" (one of Buzan's "sectors"), in which the global biosphere is considered to be a referent object to be protected (Barnett, 2016, p 230). Similarly, societal values have been "securitized" as a referent object, in which values which are transcendent of the state can be seen as under threat, such as what is considered to be European identity (Roe, 2016, p 220). At a rudimentary level, this merely represents an expansion of the rubric of security, but more significantly, this type of scholarship represents a widening epistemology of security, redefining the discipline to not only be concerned with war but to allow for "what people value" (Barnett, 2016, 230) to be a security issue, rather than a manifestation of materialist capabilities. The societal sector is an explicit manifestation of the change in the way in which security is studied contemporarily; societal identity is transcendent of the positivist epistemology of traditional security studies, as there is an implication of an unobservable conception of "identity" which is to be studied under the rubric of "security", rather than the materialistic obsession of the neorealist paradigm. In this regard, security has changed conceptually since the end of the Cold war, that is to expand ontologically to include a wider range of referent objects, and in doing this has precipitated the accommodation of anti-positivist epistemology in security, that is to consider the study of "values" and "identity" which are not directly observable.

A further development in the way in which "traditional security studies" has been critiqued in the Post Cold War order is the allowance of new perspectives which are not grounded in Western centric theories of international relations, but view the world through the lens of the formerly colonised nations in the global south. Mohammed Ayoob aptly observes that traditional security studies are a derivative of Eurocentric experiences of their reality of international relations (Ayoob, 1997 p 121), and it logically follows that in the absence of the academic hegemony of "great power competition", the discipline must evaluate its ontological and epistemological position with regard to Eurocentrism. In the Cold War era, the so-called "third world" was taken as "part players in the larger drama of superpower conflict", (Krause, 1998, p 125), detaching the concept of agency from the Global South. In searching for theory which provides for new and diverse perspectives, Ayoob highlights the unjustifiable epistemology of traditional security studies; in that using a ubiquitous model for states across the globe is to totally disregard the dichotomy between the way that states in the Global South and global North Developed (that is the former being a product of colonialism). In this regard, the new post cold war era of security studies has revealed an issue in the traditional positivist approach, the search for a ubiquitous theory of international security may be one which is futile in a world which is defined by a plurality of experiences. In this vein, Ayoob proposes a remodelling of international security theory to accommodate "subaltern realism", differentiating between the security goals of states in the Global South and the Global North. This allows for security studies to examine the vulnerabilities of institutional state development (Ayoob brings to the foreground that for a third world state security issues are distributed between internal *and* external) (Ayoob, 1997, p 121) and the way in which that has implications for state security more broadly with the normative outcome of long term state stability, rather than survival from an external threat in the traditional school of thought. Similarly, Barkawi and Laffey advance a new agenda for security studies in which the "weak" and "strong" are analysed in the same framework as a mutually constituted entity, rather than the relegation of the "weak" to a position of irrelevancy by traditional security studies that only conceives conflict in the South "as peripheral to, and derived from, great power conflict" (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006, p 30). They highlight the way that obsession with "great powers" embedded in

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traditional security studies doesn't provide for a satisfactory framework for analysing North-South relations in a timeframe in which conflict is derived from non state actors (the example they use is Al-Qaeda). In this regard, the advent of the post cold war era has allowed for a reframing of the epistemological starting position of security studies, in which the structure of International relations is not taken to be hierarchical between the strong and weak, but mutually constituted. Summarily, the collapse of the great power system has permitted for post-colonial perspectives to diversify the discipline to one which reflects that Eurocentric, "one size fits all" theories of international relations do not reflect the security issues in the global south, and the way in which they impact security of the states in the north.

In conclusion, the collapse of the USSR and the denouement of the Cold War has radically (and necessarily) changed the way in which security is studied. In an ontological sense, the way in which the Cold War ended (considering the role of identities and transnational movements) ignited an evaluation of the statist outlook which is at best ill-equipped to deal with the security challenges of the present day in which state actors in the west are arguably of less significance than non state actors for the study of security; the comment "Al-Qaeda is neither a great power, nor a state" (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006, p 30) encapsulates the necessity of the new ontological grounding of security in the Post-Cold war era. From an epistemological perspective, the discipline is no longer consigned to a materialist outlook; the absence of atomic diplomacy and threat of extinction has changed the concept of security to not merely a derivative of state survival. Barnett's comment is particularly significant here, in that while extinction is not a direct threat, security issues become things "which people value" (Barnett, 2016, p 230), and as such one can now consider unobservable aspects of life such as "identity" under the umbrella of security. This change in epistemology is particularly useful for analysing aspects of security not directly attached to material capabilities, such as whether migration should be securitized as a threat to identity. This would not have been possible had the traditionalist school remained immutable. The ontological and epistemological in security highlighted by this essay has been contingent (and must be viewed in tandem with) the broader challenge to the "scientific truths" of the positivist traditional theories of IR which guided security studies during the Cold-War: due to the failure of traditional theories the discipline of security had to evaluate its positions on the fundamental questions of social science; "What is there to know?" and "How might we know?" (Booth and wheeler, 2008, p 146) and the diversity of security studies today is a reflection of the discipline attempting to answer those questions once again, but in a new and unprecedented timeframe.

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