

# Security Studies: Priorities and Future Directions

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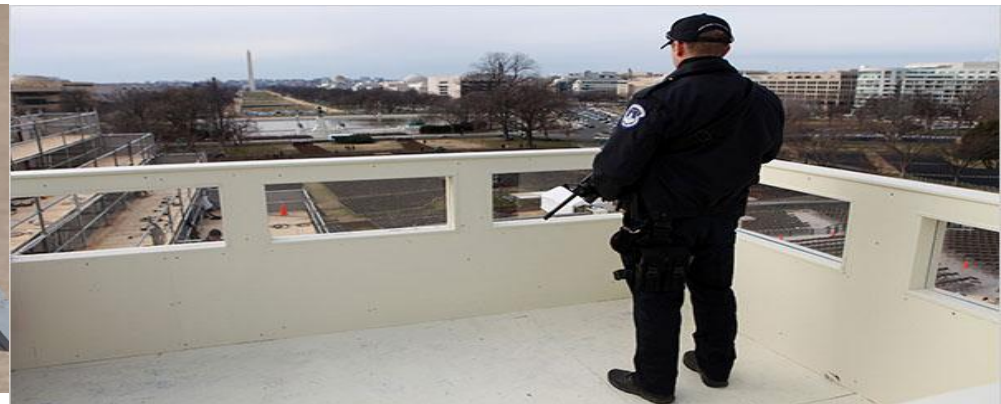
# Theme of the presentation

- **What is Security?**
- **Security Studies:  
A very short overview**
- **Priorities**
- **Future Directions**



# What is Security?

- Security matters.
- Every day, people somewhere in the world are killed, starved, tortured, raped, impoverished, imprisoned, displaced, or denied education in the name of security.



# Security (contd.)

- In the more technical language of social science, security is often referred to as an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Gallie 1956).
- Most scholars within International Relations work with a definition of security that involves the alleviation of threats to cherished values.





# Security (contd.)

- **Security is unavoidably political. Security studies can thus never be solely an intellectual pursuit because it is stimulated in large part by the impulse to achieve security for ‘real people in real places’ (Ken Booth 2007).**



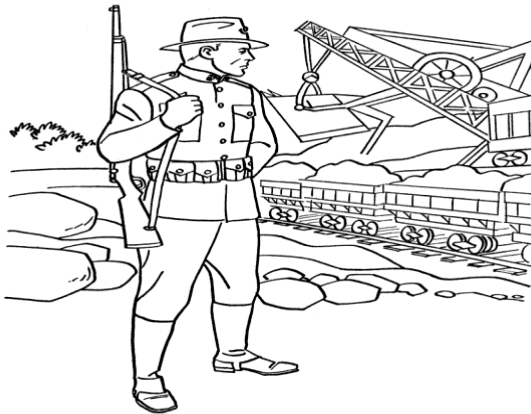
# Security (contd.)

- Security is 'a powerful political tool in claiming attention for priority items in the competition for government attention. It also helps establish a consciousness of the importance of the issues so labelled in the minds of the population at large' (Buzan 1991)

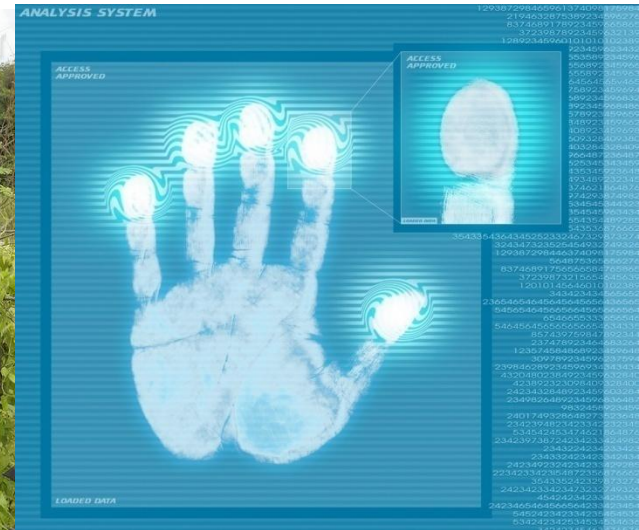


# Security (contd.)

- This involves interpreting the past, understanding the present, and trying to influence the future.



During the building of the Panama Canal, Marines were stationed there.



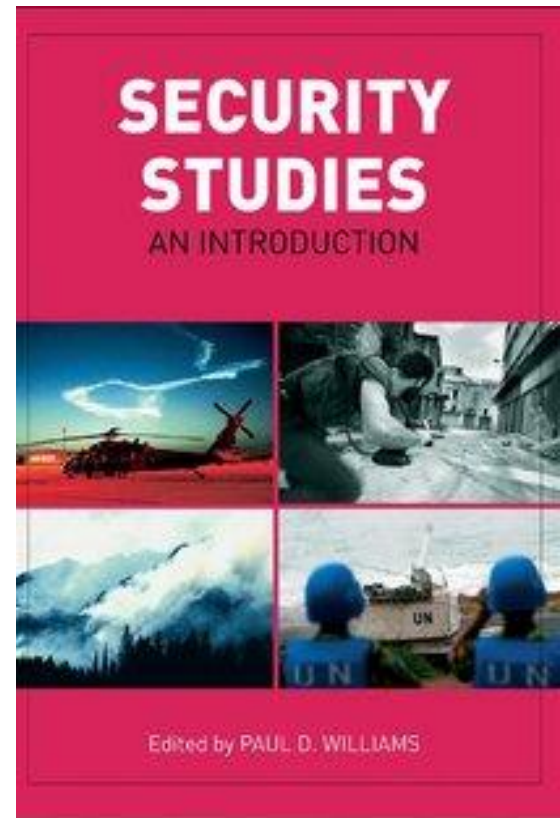
# SECURITY STUDIES: A VERY SHORT OVERVIEW

- Security studies is understood as an area of inquiry focused around a set of basic but fundamental questions; the answers to which have changed, and will continue to change over time.
- The subject of professional academic inquiry security studies is usually thought of as a relatively recent and largely Anglo-American invention that came to prominence after the Second World War (Booth 1997).



# Overview (contd.)

- Security studies is understood as one of the most important subfields of academic IR, the other areas usually being defined as international history, international theory, international law, international political economy and area studies.



# Overview (contd.)

- It was given different labels in different places e.g. National Security Studies was preferred in the USA while Strategic Studies was common epithet in the UK.
- The field enjoyed its 'golden age' during the 1950s and 1960s when civilian strategists enjoyed relatively close connections with Western governments and their foreign and security policies (Garnett 1970).

## Overview (contd.)

- As Sir Lawrence Freedman (1998) noted “During this golden age Western governments found that they could rely on academic institutions for conceptual innovation, hard research, practical proposals and, eventually, willing recruits for the bureaucracy.”



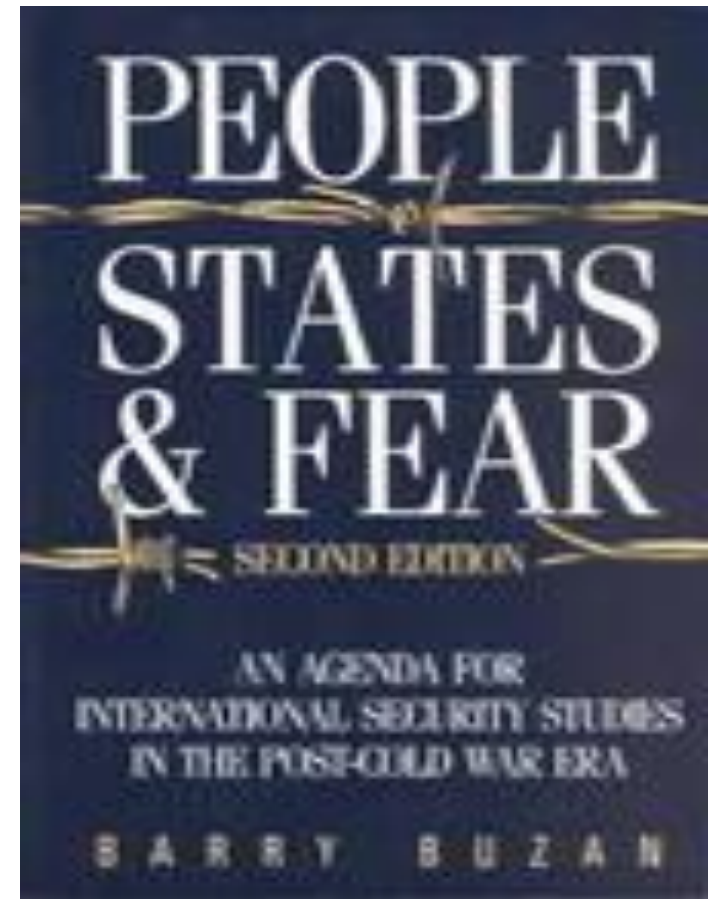
# Overview (contd.)

- During the Cold War, the dominant approach within security studies can be summarized as **4Ss**: states, strategy, science and the status quo.
  1. **States** as the most important agents and referents of security international politics.
  2. **Strategy** as the core of devising the best means of employing the threat and use of military force.
  3. **Science** as authentic, objective knowledge, as opposed to mere opinion.
  4. **Status quo** as preventing radical and revolutionary change within international society.



# Overview (contd.)

- A key development within academic mainstream of security studies occurred in 1983 with the publication of Barry Buzan's book *People, States and Fear*.



# Overview (contd.)

- This book fundamentally undermined at least two of the four Ss of traditional security studies. Buzan argued persuasively that security was not just about states but related to all human collectivities; nor could it be confined to an ‘inherently inadequate’ focus on military force.
- Buzan developed a framework and argued that the security of human collectivities (not just states) was affected by factors in five major sectors.

# Overview (contd.)

## ■ These five sectors are:

1. **Military:** Concerned with the interplay between the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states and state's perceptions of each other's intentions.
2. **Political:** focused on the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them their legitimacy.
3. **Economic:** Revolved around access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power.
4. **Societal:** Centered on the sustainability and evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religious and national identity and custom.
5. **Environmental:** concerned with the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend.

# Overview (contd.)

- In sum, while security studies has its professional roots in the discipline of IR, today's world poses challenges that will require students to engage with topics and sources of knowledge (e.g. scientific and technical knowledge on WMD, medicine and health, psychology and terrorism, biology and environmental history and criminology) traditionally considered well beyond the IR pale.
- The world is full of actors engaged in the politics of security provision. Understanding the environments in which these actors operate and how analysts should respond when their agendas conflict is the main theme of security studies.



# Priorities in the field

## *Uncertainty*

- The concept of security studies is evolving and spreads its wing to cover a broad spectrum of key concepts.
- The concept of security dilemma engages with the existential uncertainty that lies in all human relations, and especially in the arena of international politics.
- Security dilemma is a more fundamental concept for security studies than even war and strategy.

# Priorities (contd.)

- In the context of International Relations, the existential condition of uncertainty means that governments can never be 100 percent certain about the current and future motives and intentions of those able to harm them in a military sense.
- Understanding of the dynamics and potentialities involved in thinking about the security dilemma gets to the heart of the central questions of security studies.



# Priorities (contd.)

## *War*

- War has caused huge amounts of suffering but it has also prompted technological innovation and sometimes acted as a catalyst for social and political reforms.
- Some people study wars in order to help their side win them; others argue that one must study war in order to eradicate it.

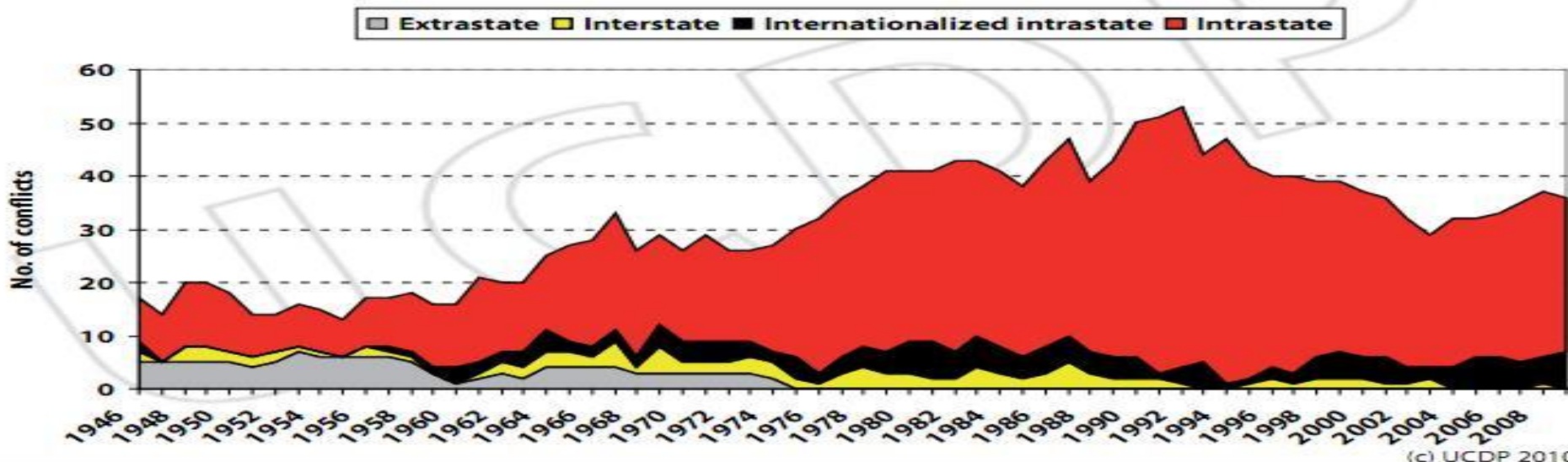


# Priorities (contd.)

- Uppsala Conflict Data Program identified four main trends in armed conflicts since 1945.

**Trend 1:** A significant decline in interstate armed conflict with internal conflicts accounting for the vast majority of organized violence.

**Armed conflicts by Type, 1946-2009**



(c) UCDP 2010



# Priorities (contd.)

**Trend 2:** Since reaching a peak of 52 state-based armed conflicts in 1991 to 1992, the number of these conflicts has dramatically declined, by some 40 percent between 1992 and 2005.

**Trend 3:** A significant decline in battle-deaths. The average number of battle-deaths per conflict, per year was 38,000 in 1950, by 2005 it has fallen to just 700—a 98% decrease.

**Trend 4:** The shifting regional spread of armed conflicts.

# Priorities (contd.)

## *Health*

- The lives and livelihood of the overwhelming majority of people on this planet are at greater risk from disease than from war, terrorism other forms of violent conflict.
- Two factors facilitated the emergence of health as a security issue. *First*, the broadened security agenda and *second*, human agency. Prominent individuals used their positions of power and influence to place health on the foreign and security policy agenda. Two such kind of individuals are Richard Holbrooke, President Clinton's ambassador to UN and Gro Harlem Brundtland, former head of World Health Organization.

# Priorities (contd.)



**Richard Holbrooke**



**Gro Harlem Brundtland**

# Priorities (contd.)

- Infectious disease has been regarded as a security issue because of three reasons. *First*, spread of these diseases pose a direct threat to the health well-being of the very people that states are there to protect. *Second*, a pandemic may cause social disruption and threaten the stability of state. Finally, a large-scale epidemic may also contribute to economic decline, forcing governments to spend more on health and less on productivity.
- The fear of bioterrorism looms large. The attack on the Tokyo subway using sarin by the Aum Shinrikyo cult in 1995 is a case in point.

# Attack on the Tokyo Subway





# Priorities (contd.)

## *Terrorism*

- The 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington in 2001 brought the issue of terrorism to the forefront of Western security thinking.
- A definition used by the US government is ‘premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatants targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agent, usually intended to influence and audience’



# Priorities (contd.)

- It follows terrorism works through fear.
- Responding to terrorism involves three approaches.
  1. Traditional counter-terrorism
  2. Overtly military actions.
  3. Disruption of motivational bases.



# Priorities (contd.)

- **A number of trends in terrorism can be identified:**
  1. **Terrorism and insurgency.**
  2. **Internationalism**
  3. **Suicide terrorism**
  4. **Speed of learning**
  5. **Media developments**
  6. **Economic targeting**
  7. **Mass causality attacks and weapons of mass destruction.**

# Priorities (contd.)

## *Human security*

- Human security studies are attracting growing attention in the wider International Relations and social science literatures.
- The expanding UN agenda of human security concerns, coupled with former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's personal interest in and commitment to human security activism brings the issue of human security to the forefront of the scholarly and policy research agenda in the 1990s.
- 'The objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, and to do so without impeding long-term human flourishing (Alkire 2002).'

# Priorities (contd.)

- **‘Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms.....It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival.’(Report of the Commission on Human Security 2003)**
- **Human security is not just a concern with physical safety. It is a concern with human dignity.**



# Priorities (contd.)

## *Environmental Change*

- It seemed obvious to some commentators that matters of ozone holes, the destruction of the tropical rainforests, and the possibilities of climate change disruptions were serious enough that they needed to be treated as security threats by governments around the world.
- The 1987 report on *Our Common Future* had taken for granted that environmental degradation and shortage of resources would lead to political instability and conflict in many places as poor people struggled to find the means of subsistence.

# Priorities (contd.)

- Following the end of Cold War, numerous new dangers appeared on the geopolitical agenda. Drugs, migration, terrorism, population growth, globalization and the environment fed into discussions of risk and threat.
- In the 1990s Vice President Al Gore was influential in drawing attention to the matter of 'failed states' and the possible environmental causes of their political collapse.



# Priorities (contd.)

- Robert Kaplan

*Coming Anarchy (1994)*

- Thomas Homer-Dixon

*Environmental scarcities and violent conflict (1994),  
Environment, scarcity, and Violence(1999)*

- Depletion of resources and resource wars



# Future Directions

- The theory and practice of trust-building must be a priority on the future agenda of academics.
- The dynamics of the global arms trade have changed substantially from the end of the Cold War to the new era marked by the 9/11 terror attacks.
- Sales of major combat equipment continue to pose the greatest challenge in managing relations between states.

# Future Directions (Contd.)

- As the proportion of wars carried on within states rather than between states has accelerated, small arms and light weapons (SALW) have become the tools of choice in most of the world's conflicts.
- The post Cold War world has witnessed the emergence of **three challenges** related to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- **States within** the existing non-proliferation regime.
- **States outside** the present non-proliferation regime.
- **Non-state actors** including but not limited to terrorist groups.



# Future Directions (Contd.)

- Given the nature of regional and international power equations, the emphasis appears to have shifted from disarmament to non-proliferation.
- The resurgence of terrorism in each and every part of the world has again drawn the attention of academics as well as governments to devote more and more time and resources to counter-terrorism measures.

# Future Directions (Contd.)

- Countering terrorism has already occupied major place in most of the states' policy agenda.
- Analyzing the trends of current security studies discourse it appears that peace support operations, population movement, energy security, counterinsurgency and transnational organized crimes will dominate the study of security in future.

# *Question and Comments*





# Thank You

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