

CRITICAL THEORY AND SECURITY STUDIES

The Research Programme of 'Critical Security Studies'

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ABSTRACT

Security studies has been slow to accept critical challenges to its problematic, and these have often been met with hostility and deliberately marginalized. This article responds to some of the critiques, and outlines the main elements of a critical engagement with security studies. It discusses the intellectual and 'disciplining' power of rationalist and neorealist security studies scholarship, and highlights some of the practices that marginalize critical scholarship. It then overviews the rich and diverse threads of current research within 'critical security studies', and emphasizes the central themes of its research agenda: how threats and appropriate responses are constructed; how the 'objects' of security are constructed; and what the possibilities are for the transformation of 'security dilemmas'. It summarizes the six central claims (concerning the constitution of the actors of world politics, its dynamic and constructed nature, the concomitant epistemological claims and methodological tools, and the purpose of theorizing) that are the hallmark of a critical approach to security studies. Finally, it clarifies what these claims do and do not entail for research and practice in international security studies.

Introduction

Security studies has been among the last bastions of neorealist orthodoxy in International Relations to accept critical challenges to its problematic. Recent polemical exchanges have, however, linked the term 'critical theory' with security studies, and although they have not resolved the debate, they have at least raised the question: what *is* a

critical approach to security studies? My goal in this article is not to invoke a new orthodoxy of 'critical security studies' or to participate in polemical turf battles, but to illustrate what a critical engagement with issues and questions that have been taken as the subject-matter of security studies involves. I do this in basically three steps. I begin with a discussion of the intellectual and disciplining power of mainstream security studies scholarship (I use 'mainstream', 'traditional', 'orthodox' and 'neorealist' approaches interchangeably in this article) that highlights some of the reasons for the occlusion of critical scholarship. I then overview current research within 'critical security studies' in order to highlight its ability to generate a challenging and productive research agenda. Finally, I summarize the principal shared elements of critical approaches to security studies (and International Relations more broadly).

What I will *not* do is present a detailed critique of either traditional or critical research and theory in security studies (but see Krause and Williams, 1996, 1997). Instead, since one of the main accusations levelled against critical approaches to International Relations is that 'critical theorists have yet to provide evidence that their theory can explain very much ... the distinguishing feature of the critical theory literature ... is its lack of empirical content', I intend to demonstrate both that one can find lurking in the interstices of the discipline a wide range of critical scholarship and research that is about security and its core subject-matter, and that the discipline (or at least its mainstream representatives) actively adopts strategies that marginalize such scholarship (Mearsheimer, 1995: 92). Simply bringing together the different critical perspectives on security studies makes the challenges to orthodoxy more clear, and signals that 'critical security studies' are more than a passing fad or the idiosyncratic obsession of a few scholars.

I should, however, register a preliminary caveat and a clarification. First, the use of the term 'critical' as an umbrella to describe all work that falls outside the rationalist (neoliberal and neorealist) paradigm does some violence to the intellectual origins of the term, in the German tradition of critique associated with contemporary thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas. This tradition does *not* include the radically different ideas that emerge from post-structuralist or post-modernist projects (and, in fact, it is resolutely modernist in its rejection of them), but does present an alternative to rationalist social science. On the other hand, other currently used terms, most prominently 'constructivism', 'social constructivism', or 'sociological approaches' draw

upon a narrower range of perspectives than I intend to capture in this article (Adler, 1997). Perhaps the biggest problem, however, is that the term *critical* unfortunately connotes a negative, not a positive, reconstructive (or even potentially policy-relevant) project that can thus be dismissed without further reflection. This is certainly not what critical scholarship is all about.

Second, my audience for this article is *not* the scholars working in a broadly critical tradition, but rather those schooled in other traditions who are willing to engage in a discussion of the scope and nature of international security studies. Hence, in what follows I do not attempt to arbitrate the divergent claims that are made by critical scholars, I simplify some aspects of their project, omit others, and lump still others together in ways that might not be acceptable to all concerned. Needless to say, I have not asked the permission of scholars to categorize their work as 'critical', and perhaps not all would accept being treated under this label. But since critics are actively engaged in labelling of their own, I do hope at least to demonstrate that there is much high quality research that can be broadly termed 'critical', that it is capable of expanding our understanding of world politics, and that it needs to be understood on its own terms as presenting a serious alternative or complement to rationalist, neorealist scholarship in security studies.

Ultimately, this is healthy for security studies, which continues to be treated by many scholars as a theoretically impoverished cousin to the sturdy children of International Relations (Baldwin, 1995, 1997). Debate among competing approaches, and a greater conceptual clarity, can only strengthen the claims of security studies scholars for intellectual respect. Moreover, it is possible to argue that far from falling into desuetude with the end of the Cold War, many of the most interesting theoretical issues in International Relations — concerning, for example, identity politics and communal conflict, multilateral security institutions, the development of norms and practices, and so-called new issues (such as the environment) — can be most usefully studied through a prism labelled 'security studies'.

The Disciplining Practices of Traditional Security Studies

The advent of the Cold War placed security studies at the centre of the political and intellectual challenges of our time. Its mission,

paradigmatically presented in the guise of rational deterrence theory and analyses of nuclear strategy, was to safeguard the modern state, and its password was 'survival'. From their moral and political high ground, modern strategists could look at other scholars in International Relations as mere scribblers, devoid of political influence and power and unable to face the facts of the modern predicament. Threats to this self-definition could be treated as politically naive or idealistic, and as representing 'counterproductive tangents that have seduced other areas of international studies' (Walt, 1991: 223), but which should not distract security studies from its mission. As Ken Booth points out in a recent autobiographical essay, this stance came with significant personal and professional rewards, and its attractiveness as a way of thinking about the world during the Cold War cannot be denied (Booth, 1997).

The post-Cold War world is a different, although not wholly unfamiliar, place. Borders still need to be patrolled, and although the material and psychological rewards of security studies have diminished, there is still turf to be defended. The most forthright speaker for the neorealist position has been Mearsheimer, and his presentation of 'critical theory' (in the context of his discussion of the 'false promise of international institutions') is an excellent starting-point. His 'who's who' of critical theorists in International Relations includes Richard Ashley, Robert Cox, Friedrich Kratochwil, John Ruggie, Yosef Lapid, Alexander Wendt, and perhaps Emanuel Adler, Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen (Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 37–47). This list is far from exhaustive, and, as Wendt points out, it blurs important distinctions between post-modernist, constructivist, neo-Marxist and feminist scholars (Wendt, 1995: 71). (In fact it ignores scholarship in most of these camps.) Perhaps the shared assumptions of these scholars are greater than their differences, but these shared assumptions are not necessarily what Mearsheimer thinks they are, and his choice of exemplars serves a different purpose, one shared by many critics of unorthodox scholarship.

These scholars have in general responded to the challenge posed by the different threads of critical scholarship (which I will outline below) through a series of 'disciplining practices', which I label 'cooptation', 'exclusion', 'character assassination', and 'definitional fiat'. I am *not* claiming that these practices are part of a malicious or conspiratorial programme to keep the 'critical' from contaminating security studies. I am, however, arguing that the consequence of these practices is a

severe constriction of what we can study and how we can study it that serves neither scholarship nor practical politics. Until the effects of these practices are made clear, any presentation of the scope and underpinnings of critical scholarship is largely pointless.

The first disciplining move, *cooptation*, has been manifest most clearly within security studies in the rapid slide from 'strategic studies' to 'security studies' as the label for the field. Most critical scholars would accept Barry Buzan's position in this debate, which argues that strategic and security studies are distinct, and that the latter encompasses categories and areas of analysis considerably beyond the purview of the former. Strategic studies should, on this account, retain its more narrow purpose and scope — a body of expertise on the military aspects of international relations — while being embedded within the broader ambit of security studies. But, as Buzan (1991: 23–5) admits, this position is the minority one. Rather, the majority position (and the one adopted by neorealist scholars) has argued that the proper umbrella title should be 'security studies', but that it should retain a relatively narrow (or only slightly enlarged) understanding of its scope and purpose. This position is staked out by scholars such as Stephen Walt, Joseph Nye, and Sean Lynn-Jones (Walt, 1991; Nye and Lynn-Jones, 1988; Schultz et al., 1993). Nye and Lynn-Jones (1988: 7) draw the line clearly: 'a subject that is only remotely related to central political problems of threat perception and management among sovereign states would be regarded as peripheral'. Their argument for eschewing the previous label is that 'the name strategic studies ... might exclude some of the more basic theoretical questions about the causes of war or the relationship between international economics and international security'. The implication, however, is that the methods, focus and orientation of 'strategic studies' should be carried over into this new realm, effectively defining away broader conceptions of 'security studies'. As Buzan (1991: 23) puts it, this 'would be like giving responsibility for designing a national transportation system to the makers of automobiles'.

A more complex form of cooptation is methodological. Although this article will not dive into the thicket of methodological and epistemological debates it is worth noting that some scholars attempt to judge the critical project by how well it meets (or does not) neorealist and rationalist canons of science, the foremost of which is probably the belief 'that there is an objective and knowable world, which is separate from the observing individual' (Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 41; see also

Keohane, 1988). Stephen Walt (1991: 222) echoes this, arguing that 'security studies seeks *cumulative knowledge* about the role of military force', which requires that scholars 'follow the standard canons of scientific research', as does Helga Haftendorn (1991: 12), who stresses 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 that ... are required for a "progressive" research program'. But although the world may be in some sense 'objectively knowable', it is not immediately comprehensible: we (including rationalists!) still need to construct theories to organize and explain the phenomena that present themselves. And different theories 'see' different worlds. Hence, for example, when Mearsheimer (1994/95: 44) asserts that 'realism was the dominant discourse from about the start of the late medieval period in 1300 to at least 1989', and that critical approaches must be judged by how well they account for these 700 years of ceaseless competition between states (according to him, they fail), he misses the point that many critical scholars would dispute this characterization of international relations (Hall and Kratochwil, 1993; Schroeder, 1994, 1995). It is possible that critical and rationalist approaches represent *incommensurable* positions towards international relations (or security studies), and hence that there is no 'neutral' point from which disagreements can be arbitrated.¹

Exclusionary practices are the flip side of the coin of cooptation. Marc Levy, for example, in his review of the environment and security literature, characterizes most of this work as 'existential' visions of the link between environment and security. He concedes the importance of ecological hazards to human well-being, but argues that most scholarship is marked more by a desire to heighten the political profile of environmental issues by placing them within the rhetoric of security than by any sustainable status as 'security issues' (Levy, 1995a, b). Likewise, Robert Dorff argues 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 and the range of possible policy approaches to addressing those problems' (Dorff, 1994: 27; see also Gray, 1995).

But by treating the broadening of the concept of security as a 'political' rather than analytical move, the traditional view is positioned as

an apolitical analytic stance that is not equally driven by (or established upon) a set of value commitments. As a result, alternative conceptions of security are judged by how well they fit within and contribute to the (purportedly objective) prevailing categories of the field — a concern with interstate violent conflict. Not surprisingly, the answer turns out to be that they are not really security issues at all. Although Levy admits it is possible to conceive of ‘global security’, he defines security as a situation where threats to a ‘nation’s most important values’ come from the actions of ‘foreigners’ (Levy, 1995b: 40–1). Obviously, adopting the taken-for-granted political resolutions of orthodox security studies is not a neutral point against which alternative conceptions can be judged.

On occasion, exclusion slides into *character assassination*. This charge is, unfortunately, difficult to pin down without descending into polemics. As Wendt points out, however, Mearsheimer’s ‘discussion of [critical theorists’] research program [is] full of conflation, half-truths, and misunderstandings’ (Wendt, 1995: 71). The goal of critical security studies is not to make ‘states or, more precisely, their inhabitants and leaders . . . care about concepts like “rectitude,” “rights,” and “obligations” ’; its scholars are not naively committed to ‘replac[ing] realism with a discourse that emphasizes harmony and peace’; they are not ‘intolerant of other discourses about international politics’ (except perhaps when they themselves are not taken seriously as scholars); and the phrase ‘intersubjective understandings and expectations’ is not ‘jargon’ (any more than any conceptual language) (all from Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 39, 41, 43).² Of course, individual scholars may be guilty of turgid prose, or can be committed to one or another vision of a desirable future world — just as Mearsheimer doubtless is — but this is not the core of the project. Finally, as I will demonstrate below, the distinguishing feature of the critical security studies literature is *not* its lack of empirical content, although most of the scholars working in a ‘critical security studies’ vein are not cited by Mearsheimer.

A more subtle version of this is presented by Stephen Walt, who argues that although it is important to permit additions or amendments to the orthodox core of security studies, to challenge fundamentally its foundations is intellectually self-indulgent and even perhaps politically irresponsible. As he says, ‘issues of war and peace are too important for the field to be diverted into a prolix and self-indulgent discourse that is divorced from the real world’ (Walt, 1991: 223, also 213). Obviously, such a judgement should be made on the

merits of the works in question, and one response from the critical camp is that the charge of political irresponsibility rests more strongly on those who place scholarship at the service of the state, or who attempt to uncover transhistorical generalizations at such a high level of abstraction that they eschew engagements with practical political problems (or which, if true, deny any scope for human agency).³

The final disciplining practice, argument by *definitional fiat*, attempts to establish the nature of the object of study, or the 'ground rules' for researching particular issues. This practice is evident, for example, in the nearly tautological assertions that interstate relations over the past several centuries must be captured by simple models of self-interested balancing or bandwagoning behaviour, or that deductive logic can be used to 'prove' that states pursue relative over absolute gains (Walt, 1992; Kaufman, 1992a, b; Schroeder, 1994, 1995; Elman and Elman, 1995; Grieco, 1988). A contemporary variant of this appears in recent attempts to incorporate nationalism and identity into neorealist security studies, either by treating identity groups as 'given' unitary rational actors, or by explaining the rise of nationalism as a tactical choice for political entrepreneurs (Posen, 1993a, b; van Evera, 1994). Neither approach actually 'theorizes' nationalism or identity. But by defining in this way what it means to study nationalism and identity within security studies, one leaves aside all questions about how (under what circumstances, with what consequences) identity groups emerge and differentiate themselves, or ignores the consequences of this rhetorical choice for the construction of threats (who or what is threatened, by whom, and in what manner). Nationalism is projected solely through the prism of interstate relations, and one has to step outside of the neorealist paradigm of security studies in order to pose these sorts of questions (Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996; Crawford and Lipschutz, 1997).

Critical Security Studies

In the face of this sort of resistance, the challenge faced by proponents of critical security studies is to present a coherent and intellectually robust research agenda that generates interesting insights into the complexities and potentials of contemporary (and past) security issues. Space prevents a comprehensive review of the literature that could be included; instead, I highlight a wide variety of critical

scholarship in order to illustrate the range and scope of this research community (although none of the authors I cite has been asked to wear this label).⁴

The review is organized under three headings: examinations of the construction of threats and appropriate responses; studies of the construction of 'objects' of security; and evaluations of the possibilities for transformation of security dilemmas. These three headings do *not* map cleanly onto the intellectual concerns of critical scholars. Rather, they have been selected because they correspond to central claims of the neorealist security studies agenda: that threats arise 'naturally' from the material capabilities of possible opponents in a self-help world of sovereign states, that the object of security is the state, and that the security dilemma can be ameliorated but not transcended. My goals are to illustrate how critical scholarship addresses the first set of issues (which includes most classical Cold War themes) differently from neorealist or mainstream scholarship; to show how it tackles, in the second set of issues, topics that are ignored by mainstream scholarship; and to show how critical scholarship challenges neorealist claims with respect to the third set. As a result, however, the classification of critical works is somewhat arbitrary, since various authors cited often deal simultaneously with more than one of these themes.

Constructing Threats, Constructing Responses

The first point of departure for critical scholarship inquires into how *threats* are defined and constructed. A structural realist would find this question odd, for threats in a self-help system arise from the material capabilities of possible opponents. An amended version of this, as presented by Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat theory', does, however, concede that states balance not just against capabilities, but 'against the states that pose the greatest threat', with threats arising not just from capabilities, but from offensive intentions (Walt, 1985: 9; 1987). For a critical scholar, however, the world of threats and intentions is supremely a constructed one, involving history, culture, communication, ideologies and related factors, and Walt's analysis does not tell one how or where threats (or their absence) arise, but takes for granted that they can (or should) be unproblematically *perceived* by decision-makers or scholars (see, in particular, Walt's (1992) disagreement with Robert Kaufman (1992a, b) over the nature of the Nazi threat in the 1930s). By contrast, a critical approach would see this as

the issue to be researched: how, from the welter of information and interaction passing among states and their representatives, are threats constructed and mobilized against?

Most work here has focused on classical Cold War themes, and in particular on the American construction of the 'Soviet threat'. Bradley Klein's argument, based on an analysis of major documents of the early Cold War and the creation of NATO, is that *capabilities* played hardly any role in the assessment of the Soviet threat: 'what 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; see also Nathanson, 1988). Jennifer Milliken's (1998) work on the Korean War highlights the effort that was involved, both within American policy circles and in the multilateral arena, 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 post-revisionist scholarship on the origins of the Cold War (Gaddis, 1982; Leffler, 1992) that emphasize the effort involved in creating an American consensus over its international role. Simon Dalby's book (1990) deals with the advent of the Second Cold War, and challenges the inevitability of the 'end of detente' in the late 1970s. It analyses 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 build-up and European nuclear deployments that characterized the Reagan presidency.

The post-Cold War threat environment has also provided fertile ground for critical analysis, since the rhetorical nature of many threat discourses is evident. David Mutimer (1997; forthcoming), for example, has examined in detail the metaphorical and linguistic construction of a 'proliferation threat' for the United States (and its alliance partners). The elements of this have ranged from the efforts to dismantle the Iraqi nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes, to the conflict with North Korea over its possible nuclear weapons programme, to the creation of a 'counter-proliferation' policy within the Clinton Administration, and the resources devoted to such things as ballistic missile defence. One strand of feminist scholarship also falls under this umbrella. Cynthia Weber (1994, 1995), for example, uses psychoanalytic theory to uncover the masculinized

categories within which American intervention practices in Panama (and elsewhere) were organized and justified.

Another line of research that tackles a core subject of traditional security studies examines the way in which security policies constructed appropriate *responses* to the threats. The construction of the threat and the response to it often go together, but in principle research can be conducted on the latter without the former. Most attention here has focused on deterrence and arms control policies. For example, Emanuel Adler (1992b) has shown 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' that had characterized previous thinking, and which generated cooperative security policies between the superpowers. Perhaps the most attention, however, has been devoted to the elaboration and implementation of nuclear deterrence policies, a frequent target for critical analysis. At the most straightforward level, this literature has drawn attention to 'nukespeak' — 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 (Chilton, 1985, 1987; Cohn, 1987; Luke, 1989; Gregory, 1989; Falk, 1989). At a more conceptual level, scholars such as Michael Williams have attempted to uncover the paradoxical operation of the 'logic of deterrence', locked into an oscillation between the twin poles of counter-force and counter-value strategies, the contradictions and tensions of each which generate the movement between the two (Williams, 1992; see also Dillon, 1989; Klein, 1994; Mehan et al., 1990). This analysis situates deterrence theory (and policy) precisely as an attempt to formulate a rationalist response to what classical realists such as Hans Morgenthau recognized as a 'qualitative transformation of the meaning of our existence' (Morgenthau, 1960: 24–5).

All of these authors are concerned with *how* questions: *how* was an American or Western interest in opposing what was characterized as 'Soviet expansionism' created and what forces did it mobilize, *how* did the language of nuclear deterrence operate as a powerful form to tame these weapons, and exclude particular options for dealing with them, or *how* do gendered (or more generally metaphoric) formulations construct 'others' or sources of threats? The most common objection raised to this work is that these constructions operate as simple glosses on the interaction of the real interests that lie behind 'the veil of facts'.

The response to this is a complex one, but all of these authors recognize that they must challenge the orthodox argument that a confrontation between East and West was inevitable, that the construction of the Soviet threat was the public face of the operation of real interests in great power clashes, or that the particular form that this confrontation took was unimportant to an understanding of its causes and consequences. Hence, most of them 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 choices were made.

The Obscure Object of Security

Critical scholarship does not, however, stop at the 'critique' of existing understandings of classic problems of security studies, such as those of the Cold War. For critical scholars, the question of how the *object* of security itself is constructed is inextricable from the discourse of threats (a point to which I will return below). But a neorealist would find this line of questioning odd, for the *object* of security is the state, and national security (understood as the safeguarding of core values from forceful threats) the core concept. This is not purely a definitional move; casting the state as the guardian or custodian of values is a powerful resolution to central problems of modern politics. It begins with a 'state of nature' account in which the individual subject is presented as an autonomous instrumentally rational actor confronted by an environment filled with other like actors who represent a source of insecurity: hence the classic security dilemma. From this starting-point, there can be no security in the absence of authority, the state becomes the primary locus of security, authority and obligation, and the security of 'citizens' is identified with (and guaranteed by) that of the state. Those who stand outside the state represent potential or actual threats, and relations between states are rendered purely 'strategic' (or contractual), which provides the basis for claims about international 'anarchy' (Grieco, 1988: 497–8; Milner, 1993; Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 9–13). This account has its philosophical roots in 'state of nature' analogies supposedly drawn from Hobbes or Rousseau, and in a contractarian vision of social life drawn from thinkers such as Locke (Waltz, 1959; Williams, 1989, 1996).

Perhaps the most straightforward challenge to this vision of the referent object of traditional security studies has been the effort to

broaden its agenda to incorporate 'new issues' such as environmental degradation, economic well-being, or migration and population (Thomas, 1987; Moran, 1990/91; Tuchman Mathews, 1989; Roberts, 1990; Weiner, 1992/93; Ullman, 1983). This effort is not 'critical' in any self-conscious sense; it simply asserts that (for example), environmental challenges 'demand 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' (Mathews, 1989: 162). On these accounts, the *object* of security should not remain the state, since what is 'really' threatened is the material well-being of individuals, or the ecosystem itself (Myers, 1993; Mische, 1989; Tennberg; 1995). Only the constraints imposed by traditional categories of thought have limited our grasp of this reality, and hence our conceptions of security must change to meet new challenges. This argument also assumes (usually implicitly, sometimes explicitly) that the choice of which issues fall under the sign of security is in part a political one, and that one of the goals is to contest the definition of what counts as a security threat to the nation-state (for a critique of this thinking from the environmentalist's side, see Deudney, 1990).

Most of the research conducted into issues of environmental security, however, has been concerned with the potential for rapid environmental change or degradation to catalyse violent conflicts between states (or communal groups), and hence has not challenged directly the construction of the referent object of security. For example, 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). Peter Gleick and Miriam Lowi have placed access to and control of water as an aspect of 'strategic rivalry' within an expanded conception of geopolitical conflict (in particular in the Middle East), while studies of the civil conflict in Rwanda and of the relationship between urban growth and violence have sought to determine the extent of links between scarcity and varying forms of violent conflict (Gleick, 1993; Lowi, 1993; Percival and Homer-Dixon, 1995; Gizewski and Homer-Dixon, 1995). Even so, by reorienting analysis away from relations between the military forces of states (and classical security dilemmas) to the underlying dynamics that can serve as the *sources* of interstate conflict, this research responds to David Baldwin's observation that 'the study of

national security grew more narrow and rigid during the Cold War than it had been before', and that it 'militarized the study of security' in ways that occluded a rich tradition of thought on 'the nature, causes, effects and prevention of war' (Baldwin, 1995: 119, 125).

A more complex (and self-consciously critical) challenge that implicitly or explicitly takes *women* as the 'object' of study (if not of security) has been posed by scholars such as Cynthia Enloe or J. Ann Tickner. Without resorting to essentialist arguments about differences between men and women, Enloe (1989, 1993) draws attention to the ways in which security policies and practices have had a specific impact on women, enmeshing them in a web of violence, subordination and insecurity; and to the way in which women's definitions of security may be more multidimensional or may challenge the notions of identity at the core of the state-centric vision. For Enloe, as for many feminist International Relations scholars, the study of security is subordinated to an overall assessment of the practices of world politics. One response from orthodox scholarship is that this work does not challenge the central problematic of security studies — the causes of war and conditions of peace — but focuses on its *consequences*. But in a critical or constructivist logic, causes, conditions and consequences are not so easily separable. Enloe, for example, does not simply discuss the impact of American military bases on Philippine women, but makes a stronger claim about how such an organization of social relations is a crucial part of what makes the projection of American military might possible. Likewise, as Tickner (1992) points out, a gendered analysis is also intended to challenge the orthodox construction of the 'object' of security (the state) by examining the ontological underpinnings of neorealist International Relations. Attempts to redefine the object of security from a gendered perspective do, however, have to confront the ways in which women (and men) have historically identified themselves also (perhaps even primarily) as 'citizens' and have participated in the state-centric discourses of security, sacrifice and war to which a gendered analysis draws attention (Elshtain, 1992, 1987; Grant, 1992). As Rebecca Grant points out, the experience of women is not a sufficient foundation on which to construct a feminist epistemology (of security), and the primary research goal of a feminist perspective should be 'a better understanding of aspects of human behaviour that have been marginalized in theories of security' (Grant, 1992: 94–5, 84, 87).

This last point raises perhaps the strongest insight of critical

scholars, and one that is unfortunately occluded by the organization of this article, which splits the analysis of threats from the construction of political objects. For critical scholars, discourses of threat are in large measure *constitutive of* the object to be secured. Identities, whether these are of states, societies or individuals, are constituted by relationships of affinity and enmity in the social world, including the world of interstate relations. A radical separation between threat and object is what permits rationalist scholarship to treat the *object* of security as a pre-given autonomous rational actor with a fixed bundle of interests, and to derive a constellation of threats from this, *prior to social interaction*. But once one acknowledges that 'discourses of danger' have been (and are) part of the process by which a society 'secures' its collective identity, the analytic suspension of the question of how interests emerge from interactions is untenable. How is it, for example, that Soviet nuclear missiles are threatening in a way that British, French (and even Russian!) ones are not? How does 'international terrorism' (which takes a minuscule number of lives) become a threat to American national security, while domestic 'terrorism' does not, and what does this reveal about the geopolitical entity called 'America'?

Several critical research projects have tackled this issue. David Campbell's monograph on American security, for example, explores the way in which the 'self-other' dichotomy meets the need of the state for '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' (Campbell, 1992: 54). James Der Derian (1992; forthcoming) pushes these insights even further, and argues that a new sort of 'technostrategy' of military simulation, wargaming and strategic planning has generated both cyberwar and virtual security, 'in the sense of a technologically generated, televisually linked, and strategically gamed form of violence that dominated the formulation as well as the representation of US policy' in the Persian Gulf War.

Scholarship on Third World or newly independent states also has concentrated on this question of how discourses of threat are an integral part of state/nation-building or elite-legitimation processes (Khattak, 1996; Pasha, 1996; Muppidi, 1998). Similarly, Jutta Weldes (1996, 1998) challenges the neorealist idea that threats to the 'national interest' are self-evident and given from the capabilities of states. Her detailed research on the documentary record of the Cuban missile

crisis demonstrates clearly that the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba was *not* unproblematically understood as a threat to the United States; this threat had to be constructed through a process of discussion and debate that contained many significant points of choice for the relevant decision-makers. From a gendered perspective, Nancy Hartsock (1989) and Carol Cohn (1987) have also examined the way in which the 'making' of soldiers invokes a range of gendered and masculinized concepts to permit the creation and control of social institutions of organized violence, or the way in which nuclear policies familiarize and 'tame' the horror of nuclear weapons.

A related examination of the link between identity, threats and security has been mounted by the so-called 'Copenhagen school' (McSweeney, 1996), which takes as its starting-point the distinction between state and society. They argue that security studies needs to adopt an understanding of the 'duality' of security: a combination of state security concerned with *sovereignty* and societal security concerned with *identity* (Wæver et al., 1993; Wæver, 1995a, b, 1996). 'Societal security' places the origins, structures and dynamics of collective identity formation and the connection between identities and interests (and threats to them) at centre stage. As Ole Wæver notes, 'at its most basic, social identity is what enables the word "we" to be used' as a means by which to identify collectively the object to be secured (Wæver et al., 1993: 17; see also Wendt, 1994).

Drawing upon speech-act theory, Wæver's 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 ... what is essential is the designation of an existential threat ... and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience' (Wæver, 1995a: 54–7). Hence security is not an 'objective' condition but acquires different meanings in different societies, or in the same society at different times. Research under this rubric has concentrated on the dynamic of European integration, the creation of a European 'identity' by exclusion of the Russian or Turkish other, and the European response to 'threats' posed by migration (of guest workers, refugees or illegal immigrants) (Neumann and Welsh, 1991; Huysmans, 1995; Neumann, 1998; Wæver, 1995b). In the post-1945 period, for example, the crystallization of the welfare state as part of European 'identity' appears to have subtly changed the way in which migrants can be integrated into communities, and increased the perception of the threats they can pose to

them (Wæver et al., 1993: 153–62; Wæver 1996). This sort of analysis endogenizes the questions of identities and interests, and challenges the rationalist idea that although identities may change they do so over such a long timescale as to be irrelevant for most questions. By contrast, European identity can be shown to draw upon deeply held historical narratives, but to be adaptable and shifting in response to the concrete circumstances of the post-1945 (or even post-Cold War) period.

Society and Community under 'Anarchy'

A third axis of analysis, and one that is fundamentally different from the previous two, has focused on the potential for overcoming the security dilemma, and is more directly imbued with normative concerns. This approach is equally incomprehensible to neorealist scholarship, which posits the security dilemma as an axiomatic 'given' of world politics; a logical consequence of the premises of autonomous actors seeking to survive in anarchy. The precise scope and acuteness of the security dilemma is subject to such factors as the nature of the offence–defence balance, but the underlying condition itself cannot be transcended (Jervis, 1978; Lynn-Jones, 1995). Not surprisingly, scholarship that has challenged the unchanging nature of the security dilemma has not been met with open arms by the traditional literature.

Several lines of argument can be discerned here. The first, which is not 'critical' in the sense used in this article, has made various adjectival modifications to 'security', under the heading of 'collective', 'common', 'comprehensive' or 'cooperative' security (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1991; Hurrell, 1992; Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, 1992). With the possible exception of collective security, these analysts argue for ameliorating, not transcending, the security dilemma, and remain within the neorealist/neoliberal debate, instead of presenting a critical challenge to it. As David Dewitt has noted, 'the intent has been to replace the Cold War security structure ... with a multilateral process and framework with the following attributes: it must be geared toward reassurance, rather than deterrence; it must at best replace or at least co-exist with bilateral alliances; and it must promote both military and non-military security' (Dewitt, 1994: 2).

A more interesting line of research, presented by scholars such as Daniel Deudney or Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, examines

the potential for overcoming anarchy through the creation of 'security communities'. Deudney, for example, argues that the 'Philadelphian system' of the American union between 1787 and 1861 was neither a 'real-state' (enjoying a monopoly of violence, for example), nor a competitive system of states. Instead, it was a conscious alternative: 'the designers of the Philadelphian system understood the dynamics of anarchy, but the interstate anarchy of Europe was a model of what they sought to avoid, not an inevitability to which they sought to adjust ... [hence] anarchy can be overcome under certain conditions' (Deudney, 1995: 225). Deudney recognizes that this implies a rethinking of security, especially in contemporary contexts such as the European Union. This theme is taken up by Adler (and Adler and Barnett), who draws attention to the way in which regionalization processes in the European Union, North America, the Southern Cone, the OSCE, and perhaps Southern Africa 'point in the direction of a change in the ways in which political, economic, and cultural elites conceptualize international relations' (Adler, 1994: 6-7; Adler and Barnett, 1996, 1998). This work explicitly revives Karl Deutsch's concept of 'pluralistic security communities', but moves beyond its functionalist focus on such things as transaction flows towards more cognitive (and evolutionary) elements such as learning, stable expectations, shared practices, or identification of common self-images (Deutsch et al., 1957; Adler, 1992a).

Parallel to this would be Bradley Klein's already-mentioned work on the creation of the Western Alliance, which emphasizes the way in which 'the West has constituted itself as a political and cultural identity' to be secured (Klein, 1990: 311). His work can be contrasted to both neorealist and neoliberal accounts of the post-Cold War period: a neorealist prediction (insofar as it is capable of offering one) for post-Cold War NATO would be of weakening and perhaps dissolution or disintegration; a neoliberal account would emphasize the possibility of institutional inertia and the continued utility of NATO for lowering transaction costs and easing collaboration problems between Western states (Mearsheimer, 1990; Hellmann and Wolf, 1993). By contrast, his critical analysis focuses on the possibilities for perpetuating a discursive 'community of interests' as the *sine qua non* for avoiding conflicts and maintaining a zone of peace. In a different 'zone of conflict', and from an explicitly feminist perspective, Simona Sharoni examines the role of Palestinian and Israeli women in that conflict, and draws attention to the ways in which discourses (and

practices) of 'citizenship' and 'nationalism' are constructed to become a primary identity that 'drowns out' (perhaps in the name of mobilizing the state for war) other identity relationships, and the practical implications of various attempts to overcome this (Sharoni, 1995).

A third, more methodologically oriented, analysis is presented by scholars such as Karin Fierke or Paul Chilton. Chilton's work examines the metaphoric underpinnings of the discourse of the Cold War, from the formulation and implications of the doctrine of 'containment' to the various conceptualizations of a 'common house' and 'architecture' for post-Cold War security in Europe (Chilton, 1996; Chilton and Llyin, 1993). His central claim is that 'metaphor' (as used by social actors) is not only an important part of cognition, but that 'an important consequence of the emphasis on language and communication in the construction of policies and realities is the fact, usually avoided, that political processes take place within political cultures and within particular languages' (Chilton, 1996: 6). These 'cultures and languages' are highly relevant to the framing of the interests and identities that traditional security studies takes for granted (Katzenstein, 1996; Krause, 1998). Fierke takes up a similar theme in her study of the 'grammar' of representation of the Western community (within Western Europe and NATO) and its relationship with the East (especially with Eastern European dissident movements) during the waning stages of the Cold War. Her goal is to examine the 'demise of a particular constellation of relationships and practices', as a means to uncover the reconstructive potential that will shape the future of the European security order (Fierke, 1997, 1998). In both cases, these scholars follow rigorous methodologies and detailed research strategies that counter the oft-heard charge that critical scholarship is inevitably sloppy or unsystematic.

Central Claims of Critical International Relations

Taking the literature reviewed above as a more-or-less coherent whole, one can tease out of it six claims that form the common core of critical approaches to International Relations:

- The principle *actors* in world politics — whether these are states or not — are *social constructs*, and products of complex historical processes that include social, political, material and ideational dimensions.

- These subjects are *constituted* (and reconstituted) through political *practices* that create shared social understandings; this process of constitution endows the subjects with identities and interests that are not given or unchanging, but contingent.
- World politics is not static and unchanging, and its structures are not determining, since they are also ultimately social constructs.
- Our *knowledge* of the subjects, structures and practices of world politics is not objective, since the organization and explanation of the 'facts' of the world is a collective (and social) process involving observers and/or social actors.
- The appropriate *methodology* for the social sciences is not that of the natural sciences. *Interpretive* methods that examine actors' understandings of the organization of their social world, as well as the relationship between these understandings and the social structures and practices in which they are embedded, are the central focus of research.
- The *purpose* of theory is not explanation and prediction within a framework of transhistorical and generalizable causal claims, but rather contextual understanding and practical knowledge.

These claims have deep philosophic roots, and behind each of them lies a set of arguments too large to explore here. Likewise, scholars in a critical tradition would accept them to different degrees, but taken together they pose a sharp contrast to neorealist or neoliberal scholarship in International Relations (for examples, see Keohane, 1986; Grieco, 1988; Waltz, 1979). One way to highlight this contrast is Roxanne Doty's distinction between 'how' and 'why' questions. The latter are concerned 'with explaining *why* particular decisions resulting in specific courses of action were made', the former with '*how* the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible' (Doty, 1993: 298, emphasis hers; and for a general discussion, Hollis and Smith, 1991). Most importantly, 'how' questions are logically prior to 'why' questions: before particular courses of action can be selected, the range of possible or plausible options has to be constructed, and scholars have to understand the way in which certain options (such as 'maintaining reputation', or 'gaining prestige') acquire meaning or value. In more formal terms, the two contrasting 'modes' of scholarship presented in this article — the rationalist/explanatory, and the critical/understanding — are related: 'there are not two methods, the

explanatory method and the method of understanding ... Understanding precedes, accompanies, closes and thus *envelops* explanation. In return, explanation *develops* understanding analytically' (Ricoeur, 1978: 165). For critical security studies, answering these 'how' questions involves constructing the nature (and source) of threats, the 'object' being secured, and the possibilities for ameliorating or even overcoming 'security dilemmas'. Traditional approaches take these issues as given.

Unfortunately, many counter-arguments mounted against critical scholarship (which some scholars occasionally play into) also link some or all of these claims to other, ancillary, propositions that are not a necessary part of the core of critical theoretical approaches. By demonstrating with a few examples what these claims do *not* imply, I can at least close off some common avenues of objection, and deflect or weaken the 'disciplining strategies' identified in the first section of the article.

The first often-cited objection is the argument that critical theorists understate, ignore or 'wish away' the importance of the state. But in no way does the claim that the principal institutions of world politics are socially constructed imply this. Many critical scholars recognize that the state (or at least the state system) has reached a historical high point, and that it presents a powerful object of loyalty and aspiration that needs perhaps to be taken more seriously (Walker, 1990; Ayoob, 1997). Others are interested in examining the way in which the substantive and normative content of the concept of 'state sovereignty' may have changed and be changing (Barkin and Cronin, 1994; Biersteker and Weber, 1996). Still others are interested in the transformation from the medieval to the modern, as a means of highlighting the ways in which the state was 'constructed' out of the political, economic and ideational matrix of that period (Hall and Kratochwil, 1993; Diebert, 1996; Ruggie, 1993).

Similarly, a focus on identities and identity formation does not mean that critical theorists believe identities (whether state or individual) are infinitely malleable, and can be changed like sets of clothing. As Mearsheimer puts the charge: 'the key ... is to alter state identity radically or more specifically, to transform how states think about themselves and their relationship with other states ... states must stop thinking of themselves as solitary egoists, and instead develop a powerful communitarian ethos' (Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 39, 41). The most extreme version of this is the accusation that critical approaches

represent pure 'idealism' — the belief that ideas are the driving force of history, and that if our ideas are simply changed, so too will be the world. This misinterprets the argument that the process of constituting political subjects (such as states) endows them with identities and interests that are not just 'given'. The only claim advanced is that interests must be 'endogenized' in our theories (Wendt's term): that the 'interests' of political subjects such as states are not given by structures, but are generated by social processes of interaction between them (Wendt, 1994). This is not as far from Waltzian structuralism as some might think, since even Waltz admits that structures only 'shape and shove', that 'the shaping and shoving of structures may be successfully resisted' and that 'states affect the system's structure even as it affects them' (Waltz, 1986: 323–31). Of course, this concession considerably weakens Waltz's theory.

More importantly, since the state is an 'abstraction' or construct (states don't choose, people do), the process of endowing states with interests is a social one, whereby particular sets of individuals advocate and develop common understandings of interests in order to motivate collective social action (under the heading of 'foreign policy', for example). Thus a study of the history of arms control, for example, focuses on the interaction between nascent communities of experts in the United States and the Soviet Union, and the process whereby the relevant elites (perhaps even larger groups of citizens) began to reconceptualize their interests in ways that permitted significant arms control measures, or that excluded the deployment of extensive missile defence systems (Adler, 1992b). No one, however, would claim that this was either a simple or an easy process — only that a realist acceptance of state interests as given excludes (by definition) an analysis of such issues, and in its more extreme versions, excludes the possibility of change entirely.

A third attack on critical methodology accuses it of 'subjectivism', colloquially presented as the 'anything goes' argument. Mearsheimer latches onto this when he quotes Richard Ashley to the effect that 'there are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits to history ... there is only interpretation' (Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 41). True, some variants (most often labelled post-structuralist or post-modern) of critical scholarship might adopt an 'anything goes' position (or argue that all interpretations are contestable) but most scholars do not, or argue, as James Der Derian does, that to acknowledge that 'meaning endlessly differs

and is deferred' does *not* lead one 'to claim that there is *no* truth, *no* values, *no* reality' (Der Derian, 1992: 6, emphasis his, see also Der Derian, 1994). The acceptance that our knowledge (as scholars) of the subjects, structures and practices of world politics is not 'objective', does not even lead all scholars to a rejection of naturalist models for science. Some, such as Wendt, Barnett and Katzenstein, 'fully endorse the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence', and argue that 'the research practices of scholars like Ruggie, Kratochwil and others identified with constructivist or interpretive approaches converge substantially with those advocated by mainstream scholars ... [and] methodological differences appear to be small' (Wendt, 1995: 75; Jepperson et al., 1996: 67–8).⁵ Others accept neither Ashley's nor Wendt's position, and argue that although social science should not emulate the methodology of the natural sciences, a critical methodology 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. Still others argue that even the 'scientific' claims of neorealist scholarship can also be shown to rest inescapably upon interpretations (Krause and Williams, 1996; Neufeld, 1993; Hollis and Smith, 1991).

The fourth point concerns the critical scholar's stance towards continuity and the possibility for change. A realist casts his or her eye over 700 years of history and sees a ceaseless repetition of state competition for power in a world of suspicion and insecurity. Some even interpret the medieval world, or the world of Greek city-states, in similar terms. But when these claims 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; Bagby, 1994; Hall and Kratochwil, 1993). The observation that neorealists are trying to construct transhistorical, generalizable causal claims in order to explain a small number of big things does not obviate these problems. First, it assumes the possibility of transhistorical generalization — of uncovering some sort of 'laws of history' — which historicist accounts deny, and which are in some disrepute in other fields of social science (for a brilliant account in paleontology, see Gould, 1989: especially 27–44, 277–91). Second, it opens the door for other (even critical) scholars to account for a large number of equally (or more) important 'smaller' things. A critical or constructivist scholar sees over the last few centuries of European history variation, change, evolution

and decline. The rise and decline of absolutism, the rise of modern nationalism, imperialism, the advent of self-determination and decolonization, and recent claims for democracy and human rights have all embedded interstate interactions in a complex web of ideas that gives practical (and shifting) content to understandings of interests, and to the identities of states themselves (Barkin and Cronin, 1994; Hall and Kratochwil, 1993; Ruggie, 1993; Biersteker and Weber, 1996).

This sort of contextual understanding and practical knowledge is what scholarship should aspire to. Since human agents and political actors are engaged in constructing their world and their future, scientific models of explain-predict-control are at best misguided, and at worst pernicious (Fay, 1975). Hence it is no accident that Robert Cox, for example, eschews prediction, since he believes it only possible within a framework of 'problem-solving theory' that takes the social and political order as fixed and works within this with a determinist 'if-then' logic that denies much scope for human agency (Cox, 1986). To claim then that his failure to make predictions is a weakness of critical theory is to miss the point entirely, and to evaluate Cox's work against the goals of others.

A fifth possible criticism of critical security studies does not emerge from the neorealist camp, but from those 'traditional' peace researchers who remain committed to a rationalist or positivist methodology, and who also see critical (or post-modern or post-structural) approaches as threatening, or in need of 'disciplining'. In the American context, the peace research orientation of such research enterprises as the Correlates of War project, or the general thrust of articles in such journals as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (or, less well known, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*) highlight this commitment to an empiricist methodology or to formal and mathematical modelling approaches, and to a 'social engineering' understanding of politics and social change that takes (often implicitly) the goal of research as the uncovering of manipulable mechanisms of social and political life that would allow conflicts to be avoided or 'resolved'. Such work is open to the same critiques that are levelled against all rationalist social science (Krause and Williams, 1996), and scholars working in these traditions would hardly accept the six claims elaborated above, or be interested in such questions as how political agents are constituted, or what the relationships between 'self' and 'other', or 'agent and structure', might be, or how intersubjective understandings are arrived at. The Scandinavian peace

research community (as evidenced by the pages of the *Journal of Peace Research*) is somewhat more open to alternative perspectives, but although some of the scholars cited above share some of the goals of peace research, virtually none of them have emerged from the intellectual tradition of peace research; nor would they see their work as a 'relaunch' of peace research, albeit with a methodological shift away from positivist social science.

Finally, and most importantly, the central assumptions of a critical approach do not commit any individual scholar to a particular political position, except insofar as the acceptance that world politics is not static, and that its structures and identities are constructed, implies the *possibility* of change. One can conclude that socially constructed structures are deeply entrenched and unlikely to change rapidly (the position of a 'critical realist' such as Cox). One can conclude that the state presents a compelling resolution to modern political problems that should not be 'transcended' or consigned to the dustbin of history (as Mohammed Ayoob, or perhaps R. B. J. Walker, would argue). One can disagree on the forces that construct the social world: neo-Marxists such as Stephen Gill often concentrate on material factors, while feminist scholars such as Carol Cohn (1987, 1996) or Sandra Whitworth (1994, 1996) would stress the gendered nature of social (including international) relations. These differences are analogous to the claim that neorealists and neoliberals differ on the importance of relative versus absolute gains, while remaining committed to a rationalist approach, and it does not mark critical scholarship with confusion and lack of clarity.

Powerful Problematics

The goals of this article have been threefold: to disprove the criticism that little empirical research has been done by critical security studies scholars, to demonstrate the diverse and rich threads of the critical security studies research agenda, and to uncover some of the practices that marginalize critical scholarship within the discipline. This is not, however, an unabashed defence or apologia of all of the scholarship in this area, some of which does not live up to the terms of its epistemological and ontological foundations. But critical security studies scholarship is no worse in this respect than the corpus of security studies as a whole.

A final task of any critical approach to security studies would be a 'sociology of security studies' itself that would explain the power and resilience of rationalist or neorealist conceptions of security in contemporary world politics. This will have to be deferred for another time, but such an account would follow in the tracks of scholars such as Azar Gat and John Shy, who have argued that the search for the 'laws of war' goes back at least to the Enlightenment, embracing a vision of truth and method that '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' (Shy, 1986: 184–5; see also Gat, 1989: 25–53; 1992: 1–45). The issue is not one of bad faith, false consciousness or power plays in the scholarly community (although all can and do exist), but rather of how rationalist accounts resonate within broader conceptions of theory and purpose for social sciences, and of how scholarly research agendas are critically shaped by state priorities and inducements (including financial and research), and by the temper of the times.

As Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein note, 'because states remain the predominant legitimated "actors" in the current world system, theories of national-security-in-international-anarchy remain dominant, building around world-cultural reifications of state sovereignty and actorhood' (Jepperson et al., 1996: 72). Likewise, the metaphorical force of the Hobbesian 'state of nature' and its contractarian account of world politics must be acknowledged, especially since it presents a powerful resolution to old and thorny questions of political life. The challenge for critical scholarship, however, is to ensure that our theoretical conceptions of what is possible and desirable are not bound within rigid intellectual straight-jackets that place us far behind policy-makers' and political actors' appreciation of the complexities and potential of the contemporary world, or that prevent us from thinking creatively and seriously about how to resolve complex contemporary problems of war and peace.

NOTES

This article has benefitted from the critical comments of Karin Fierke, Jef Huysmans, Jennifer Milliken and David Mutimer, and I am grateful for their help. Discussions with participants at the workshop on 'Gender and International

Security' (Old Dominion University, February 1996), also helped clarify my argument, parts of which also draw upon previous writing and research I have done with Michael C. Williams.

1. A related coercive move is the attempt to bridge the gap between so-called 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' methodologies by incorporating the former into the latter. This approach is adopted by King, Keohane and Verba (1994), but needless to say, for critical scholars this is completely mistaken (Taylor, 1985).
2. His most egregious example of character assassination is worth quoting in full:

Most critical theorists do not see ideas and discourses forming at the grass roots and then percolating up to the elites of society. Rather, theirs is a top-down theory, whereby elites play the key role in transforming language and discourse about international relations. Experts, especially scholars, determine the flow of ideas about world politics. It is especially useful, however, if this intellectual vanguard consists of individuals from different states. These transnational elites, which are sometimes referred to as 'epistemic communities', are well-suited for formulating and spreading the communitarian ideas that critical theorists hope will replace realism (Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 41).

The tone is unmistakable.

3. As Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder point out, structuralist explanations do not in themselves permit 'determinate predictions at the foreign policy level', without the addition of factors such as intentions, beliefs, and perceptions. Of course, these are precisely the sorts of issues that constructivists take up, and neorealist scholars run into deep methodological trouble when they assert that 'domestic and perceptual forces can be cleanly plugged into parsimonious international system theories' (Christensen and Snyder, 1990: 138, 144; and, for a critique, Krause and Williams, 1996).
4. I have also made two significant organizational choices. First, I have lumped together scholars that may not see themselves as part of a shared critical project. 'Thin constructivists', as exemplified by Katzenstein (1996) and Adler (1997), for example, tend to engage more directly with mainstream neorealist/neoliberal debates than those associated with more 'critical' projects. For my purposes, however, their differences are less important than their similarities. Second, I have not treated the principle themes of feminist or gender scholarship on security as a separate category. These are dealt with in detail by authors such as Carol Cohn (1987, 1996), J. Ann Tickner (1992, 1996), V. Spike Peterson (1996), Rebecca Grant (1992, 1996) and Marty Ramsburg (Ramsburg and Morgan, 1996).
5. For many, however, this methodological point is what separates critical from traditional scholarship, and might (depending on what 'falsifying theories

against evidence means') place weaker versions of 'constructivism' at the limits of the critical camp.

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