

## **CRITICAL SECURITY STUDIES: EMANCIPATORY CHALLENGES**

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Nobody discounts the fact that the concept of security has been much contested today. With human induced climate change warranting US Congress to ask for a National Intelligence Estimate on its security impact, with terrorism, people movements and infectious diseases and with various conceptualization of human security informing national policy and global nuances, the focus of national security starts shifting towards a broadening of security. With this revolutionary thinking of national security the state centric security remains peremptorily glued to policy makers not wholly impervious to the global patterns of insecurity, violence and conflict plaguing the entire humanity. This is based on incorporating some insights from the Copenhagen school and emancipatory approaches of Welsh school in the gamut of critical security studies that will provide grist to the arguments for a critique of conventionally understood security's ontological claims and for rethinking state responses to the threats emanating from diverse sources: environment, terrorism, displacement and migration of people, secessionism, military and diseases like HIV etc.

Plagued by deepening crises in terms of environmental catastrophe, climate change, global warming, increasing number of people below poverty line, spread of infectious diseases, death of children, women and poor people out of malnutrition and lack of environmental sustained condition, food insecurity, migration and ever flattening military budget at the cost of other human needs, terrorism and alarming drug and women trafficking, the world has now felt the justifiability of moving many strides away from adhering to the realist paradigm of security defined on Westphalia thematic some centuries ago that security revolves round the state and its military apparatus. The inadequacy of realist or neorealist paradigm of security to meet the multifaceted threats to individual human beings and non human beings has impelled one to move beyond even the most influential arguments of Stephen Walt in 1991 that security studies "should focus on the threat, use and control of

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military force”<sup>1</sup> The multifarious nature of security threats and their diverse sources and severity signaled a broadening and deepening phase of conceptualizing security in non-statist terms.

### **The Welsch School**

The Welsch School of critical security studies promoted by scholars such as Ken Booth, Richard Wyn Jones and Andrew Linklater and drawn on a tradition of political theory from Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx through to the Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas began one important alternative line of approach to broadening security in realist terms. “What is most distinctive and valuable about their approach is their desire to radically re-conceive security as the emancipation of individuals and communities from structural constraints”<sup>2</sup>. Considered as epochal Booth’s article in 1991 on security as emancipation nuanced on a holistic and non-statist approach to security discarding realist emphasis on use or threat of force. His approach aims at:

the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, [and] political oppression<sup>3</sup>.

In consonance with cosmopolitan ideals he argued that “the concept of emancipation shapes strategies and tactics of resistance, offers a theory of progress for society, and gives a politics of hope for a common humanity”<sup>4</sup>. These postulates seem to have struck a concordant note with feminists’ vision of a security founded upon the “the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations” and for a reformulation of international relations in terms of the “multiple insecurities” stemming from environmental degradation, poverty and structural violence, rather than the abstract threats to the integrity of

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Walt. “The renaissance of security studies”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 35(2), 1991, pp. 211-39.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Burke. *Beyond security, ethics and violence: War against the other*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Ken Booth. “Security as emancipation”, *Review of International Studies*, 17(4), 1991, p.319.

<sup>4</sup> Ken Booth. (ed). *Critical security studies and world politics*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005.

states, their interests and “core values”<sup>5</sup>. Both these critical theorists and feminists joined the same chorus with an inspirational note for reformulating security in more positive ways.

These pronouncements on reinventing security found a common chord with the idea of human security enunciated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994 arguing for a shift of the referent object of security from the state to the individual human being. In Booth’s view the state is simply a means not an end of security. More radical, revolutionary and significant than is available in most underpinnings of human security is their “insistence on understanding insecurity and achieving security as complex, holistic processes that require not merely the amelioration of particular needs, or the defence of humans against discreet threats contained by time and place, but ongoing structural transformation based on ideas of emancipation, social justice and human progress”<sup>6</sup>. While Booth stressed on security as a means for emancipation, Wyn Jones argued that “even if a more emancipated order is brought into existence, the process of emancipation remains incomplete. There is always room for improvement...”<sup>7</sup>. While setting the desideratum for emancipation in their intrinsically important conceptualization of security they launched a broadside against those proponents of human security who evince strong predilections for cooption of human security to statist agendas- such as those of Canada, which have reiterated their insistence on return of the state to the primacy of providing the metaphor for national identity and international citizenship, and a liberal governance intervention into the issues of intra-state conflict. At present the human beings remain vulnerable to a compendium of security threats, practices and processes-poor governance, political oppressive regimes, civil conflicts, terrorism, global economy, malnutrition, health hazards, corruption, human rights abuse, gender violence and discrimination, environmental degradation and natural calamities. If these be the referent security objects, “securing them requires work at all these levels including the most systemic and

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<sup>5</sup> J. Ann Tickner. *Gender in international relations: Feminist perspective on achieving global security*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Burke, n.2.p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Booth, n.4. p.182.