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**The Environment and Security:  
an examination of proposals to redefine security**

**BY**

**KAREN WITTMAN**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Department of Political Studies  
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**Karen Wittman 1997 (c)**

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**The Environment and Security:  
an examination of proposals to redefine security**

by Karen Wittman

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## Introduction

'We seek,' said George Bush, 'new ways of working with other nations to deter aggression and to achieve stability, prosperity and above all peace.' He was talking of the New World Order - an epic made possible by Mikhail Gorbachev, realized by Saddam Hussein, starring the United States and shortly to be showing in a conflict near you.<sup>1</sup>

So ran, in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, an article in *The Economist*. It went on to note that "the world has been shaken up momentarily by the collapse of communism, and its politics have yet to be set into their next mold."<sup>2</sup> That a New World Order of some sort will emerge is clear. Less readily visible is the form that this New World Order will take. This is not to suggest that there is a lack of vision or alternatives. On the contrary, the years since the demise of the Cold War and President Bush's declaration have witnessed a veritable watershed of ideas, alternatives, predictions and predilections. Various pundits, riding the crest of paradigmatic flux, have revised past perceptions and focussed their attention on selling a vision of the future.

Accompanying these efforts to establish the foundations for the future international system has been a proliferation of literature on security. While much of this literature centres on the formulation of new national security policies and the search for new visions

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<sup>1</sup> "The World Order Changeth," *The Economist* (June 22, 1991), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

to guide foreign policy establishments in the post-Cold War West, it also encompasses debates over the concept of security itself. A growing number of scholars and practitioners have begun to voice concern that the conventional understanding of security, and perforce the accompanying national security policies based on that understanding, are ill-suited to the contemporary world. Among the many criticisms unleashed against traditional practice is the contention that the conventional approach to security is riddled with contradiction and paradox rendering it largely irrelevant to the contemporary world. Premised on an overly narrow, militaristic and state-centric framework, the traditional practice is said to produce a “view of humanity and politics which ignores (and perhaps even constitutes) the insecurity of many people who live in violently insecure situations.”<sup>3</sup>

Critics argue that the growing discrepancy in wealth between North and South, increasing debt burdens, the plummeting economies of many developing countries, and impending global ecological disasters threaten to entrench huge segments of the world’s population into vicious cycles of poverty, conflict, and death. These developments, note the critics, endanger the security of individuals, states, and the stability of the international system as much as war itself. Yet such issues are regularly omitted from discussions of security and national security policies. They also rarely merit careful consideration by analysts and academe for they are equally absent from standard academic journals and discussion. Critics charge that virtually all conventional discourse on security is arbitrarily restricted to the security of the state against violence and the freedom from war. Given the

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<sup>3</sup> Spike V. Peterson, “Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender and International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21 (Summer 1992), p. 187.

profusion of dangers outlined above, interstate violence hardly seems the only or even the most pressing threat. If the concept of security is to avoid being rendered archaic, it is then concluded, it will need to be rethought; the concept must be reviewed, re-evaluated, redefined, and broadened in order to maintain validity and be applicable to the contemporary world.

To date, the proposals to rethink, redefine and revise the concept of security have been met with hesitation, if not outright resistance, in analytical and policy-making circles. Some dismiss the critics as mere malcontents who are seizing a moment of uncertainty in international politics to shift the political agenda in their favour, displacing the hegemony of Cold War thinking and peddling their own visions of the future and 'new and improved' security policies. Others have expressed concern regarding both the feasibility as well as the validity of these new ideas. For the most part, however, the debate has remained on the periphery and is rarely accorded more than rhetorical acknowledgment from mainstream theorists.

Perhaps most interesting in all of this is the fact that while the unravelling of the Cold War may have opened space for 'new thinking,' its demise only reveals the extent to which the field and many of its key concepts are plagued with controversy, ambiguity and confusion. Security is widely prevalent within international relations discourse yet the term has rarely been submitted to careful scrutiny. The apparent neglect of the concept led R.B.J. Walker to declare that, "[to] explore the contemporary meaning of the concept of

security is to encounter both noise and silence. Both are intellectually and politically intimidating.”<sup>4</sup> The noise, he argues, arises from the overload of meanings of security and the extensive “outpouring of books on military strategy, arms control and militarization.”<sup>5</sup> The silence, in turn, stems from considerations of security “less in terms of the quantity of books, institutions and debates devoted to it, than the substantive context of the term itself, [which] seems to have almost no meaning at all,”<sup>6</sup> Conceptual analyses, in fact, are few and far between and the inconsistent use of the term, the difficulties inherent within it, and the implications of those inconsistencies are regularly acknowledged, yet rarely explored. The inevitable consequence of this neglect has been the abandonment of the term to the ideologues and the propagandists. Security is said to have “has become less a concept with any analytical precision, than an instrument of mystifying rhetoric.”<sup>7</sup> And hence, the ‘noise’ and the ‘silence’ have been permitted to endure.

Security is nonetheless a critically important issue and to abandon it to the propagandists and the ideologues or the margins of debate does little to help rid the term of lingering inconsistencies and ambiguity. Clearly, there is a need for the opening of much needed debate over the concept, on what the term does and should mean. There is less a question of whether this issue is worth examination, than just how such an examination and possible redefinition of the term should proceed. Unfortunately, many of the attempts

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<sup>4</sup> R.B.J. Walker, “Security, Sovereignty, and the Challenge of World Politics,” paper prepared for inclusion in Michael Klare and Daniel Thomas eds., *World Security at Century's End* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990/1991).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

to redefine the term and propose alternatives are beset with difficulties. Proponents of such an endeavour often attempt to do so while permitting the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the conventional use of the term to persist. It is the argument here that these lingering inconsistencies will need to be addressed before further tinkering and change is undertaken, or the proposed alternatives will present little or no improvement over past practice. Efforts to examine these proposals against the backdrop of the past conception of security are conspicuously absent from the academic literature. Consequently, despite the outpouring of literature on the subject, most amounts to little more than a cacophony of discordant voices, some of which are limited to a critique of conventional practice while others advocate alternatives with little or no reflection on how the proposals for change might disentangle themselves from inherited contradiction.

This, then, serves as the point of departure for this thesis. It is worth noting at the outset that the purpose here is not necessarily to resolve the many of the conundrums raised by the critical literature. Nor is it to select one alternative among the many as the best. Rather, it is to improve or enhance the discussions of security, to facilitate the communication between the margins and the centre of international relations discourse, and to engage the disparate groups in purposeful conversation. Without such an undertaking, the 'noise,' the 'silence,' and the conceptual unclarity are bound to persist. Meanwhile, the proposals will be hampered in their adoption.

Discussion will begin with an attempt to outline security as it has been conventionally understood in international relations discourse, its general meaning and how it has been used and employed within the literature in the past. The first chapter will show how the general, standard approach to security has traditionally adopted a state-centric, military-dominated understanding of the term. Although this perception of security has varied throughout the decades, this nonetheless has been the dominant and most common approach, largely as a result, as this chapter concludes, from the dominance of a single theoretical viewpoint - realism - in international relations discourse.

With the conventional understanding of security thus outlined, the purpose of the next chapter will be to present an overview of the various criticisms currently unleashed against conventional practice and the orthodox understanding of the term. Some of these focus their attention on identifying many of the contradictions inherent within the search for security - specifically, the security and defence dilemmas. Others emphasize the difficulties of the search for security in light of the introduction of nuclear weapons into the security equation. Still others have taken issue with the standard selection for the referent of security. 'Whose security' after all, they ask, is really at issue: the individual, the state or the international system? An approach that is focussed exclusively, or even largely on, the state is alleged to be misguided, clouding the overall issue, and obscuring the tensions between state security and the security of the individual, the international system or both. Moreover, an approach to security that rests primarily or even predominantly on the state risks being rendered archaic in light of changing global

configurations and the declining significance of the state in international relations. Increasing interdependence, technology, the growth of NGOs and multinational corporations have all come to assume far more prominence in global affairs, rendering states much less important than they once were. Other critics purport to question the conventional sources of threat - security *from what*, exactly? If it is the threat to human survival that is at issue, then restricting discussion to military threats alone blinds analysts to the many and varied non-military phenomenon that can be equally hazardous. Finally, there are some who aim their attack more broadly, using a challenge to security discourse as a lever or extension of their crusade against modernity. Believing much of current strategic thought to be premised on the falsely universalizing, biased and even dangerous assumptions stemming from the Enlightenment period, they advocate a complete rethinking of traditional practices.

In addition to the criticisms, a number of alternatives have been proposed. Of particular relevance for this thesis, and the central issue of the third chapter, are arguments of those who propose a redefinition of security to include the environment. The environmental issue was selected in part because of the frequency with which it is being raised and because of the potential enormity of the danger posed by humanity to the global environment. The current damage is proceeding at an unprecedented and gravely alarming rate. Acknowledging the significance of the earth's biosphere for the human race, it is argued that humanity has reached a new zenith in its ability to cause irreversible damage to human life. Technology has also given us the ability to halt and possibly reverse much of

the damage, thereby dramatically improving the future. The environment is thus said to be an inherent factor in discussions of security as there can be no security without security of the environment. It is on this basis that arguments are culled advocating that this inter-relationship be reflected in the understanding of security and security policies.

The discourse on this subject is jumbled and unclear as a result of the numerous, varied and at times contradictory approaches to the subject. In an attempt to come to terms with these proposals and to present an orderly evaluation and critique, part of the purpose of this chapter will be to bring some order to the discussion by categorizing these proposals. It is the contention here that these different approaches may be classified into four general groups on the basis of what individual proponents perceive as the nature of the problem and their recommended solutions. For some, for example, it is the search for security through military means which is damaging to the environment. As such, it is this search and the expenditures on the military which must be curtailed if the environment is to escape unscathed. Others, in contrast, see the military not as the source of damage to the environment, but the solution to environmental problems. The military, proponents of this second group argue, may be used effectively to help repair damage already underway through such activities as catching poachers, patrolling parks and reforesting cleared land. A third group sees the relationship between security and the environment from a completely different perspective and consequently presents different proposals. It is not the threat to the environment caused by military activity and conflict with which analysts and world leaders should be concerned, but with the growing environmental damage, and

particularly environmental scarcity. Scarcity is, they argue, the real threat for this is very soon likely to become a source of conflict and military clashes the world over. Consequently, if governments are anxious to prevent wars in the future, they will need to begin to take environmental conservation and protection much more seriously. A fourth and final approach to the subject discernible within the literature are those eager to advance a more holistic understanding of security that is not restricted to a state-centric or military dominated approach, but is cognizant of the multiplicity of varied threats to individuals as well as states and understands that the survival of most states in the future will be heavily reliant upon the availability of natural resources.

Having thus outlined the various approaches to the subject, the fourth and final chapter will offer a critique of the relative merit of the proposals. These will be evaluated both on the basis of the validity of the proposal on its own, as well as in terms of the larger backdrop against which this discussion is taking place. In other words, these proposals are measured against the extent to which they are capable of amending and or resolving the many contradictions and dilemmas which currently adhere to the concept of security. It is the argument of this chapter that an inability to address the concerns of the critical literature and to prove an improvement over past practice seriously undermines the validity and utility of these proposals.

It is the argument of this thesis that despite the recent outpouring of literature on the subject of security and the virtual avalanche of calls to have the term rethought,

redefined, renegotiated and enlarged, very little of this presents an improvement over past practice. This is particularly the case with demands to have security re-written to include the environment. When cast against the backdrop of the critical literature, it becomes clear that these proposals will do little to ameliorate past problems. Instead, they remain as riddled with difficulty as the original concept itself. As fundamentally important as it is to maintain an open dialogue between mainstream analysts, those who critique the hegemonic discourse and those who attempt to craft alternatives, it is equally significant to realize that not every alternative is necessarily preferable. Thus, efforts toward redefining security should proceed with caution. Considering the pressing gravity of both environmental and security issues, the dialogue should nonetheless be maintained and conscientious efforts to continue to improve both spheres upheld. This thesis is intended to do just that.

## Chapter 1

### Re-Reading the Preface

The concept of security is widely prevalent in international relations discourse and bandied about with great frequency in academic and policy-making circles alike. Despite this ubiquity, security remains a particularly vague and ill-defined term. Characterized decades ago by Arnold Wolfers as an 'ambiguous symbol' that may or may not have any precise meaning,<sup>1</sup> scholars and analysts continue to refer to the concept as imprecise, fuzzy, elusive and even meaningless.<sup>2</sup> Hugh MacDonald rejects it as inadequate, Curt Gasteyger as 'an indefinable notion,' and Barry Buzan, in one of the most comprehensive examinations of the concept to date, labels it 'underdeveloped,' 'weakly conceptualized,' and 'ambiguously defined.'<sup>3</sup> For the most part, analysts have simply dismissed it as an 'essentially contested concept,' duly footnoted W.B. Gallie or William Connolly along the way, and moved on.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Wolfers, "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol," *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962) p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Dalby, "Security, Modernity, Ecology: The Dilemmas of Post-Cold War Security Discourse," *Alternatives* (vol. 17, no 1, Winter 1992), p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh MacDonald, "The Place of Strategy and the Idea of Security," *Millennium* (vol. 10, no 3, 1981); Curt Gasteyger, "New Dimensions of International Security" *The Washington Quarterly*, (Winter 1985), p. 35; Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), ch. 1.

<sup>4</sup> For more on 'essentially contested concepts' see W.B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts," in Max Black, ed., *The Importance of Language* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962) pp. 121-146; and William Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

To have come across a clearly controversial and convoluted term in political discourse is perhaps not all that surprising. What is intriguing, however, is the fact that despite regular acknowledgment of the concept as ambiguous and 'essentially contested,' and despite the frequency with which it appears and reappears in the discourse on international relations, debate over the meaning of the concept, or an actual outburst of 'contestedness,' is conspicuously absent from the literature. Conceptual analyses are few and far between; save for the work of a few rare specialists, little effort is made to explore the conceptual terrain of the term, its ambiguities and inherent contradictions. Considering the prominence of the concept in the field, and in light of the volumes devoted to comparably significant notions such as power and justice, the fact that debates over the 'meaning' and 'essence' of the term security have not occurred are particularly curious.

All of this would seem to suggest that despite the regularity with which the label 'essentially contested' is applied, such a label is misleading. Rather than being an essentially contested concept, security has instead been merely a neglected and essentially *uncontested* one.<sup>5</sup> Closer examination of the literature, in fact, supports this conclusion, revealing what would appear to be a generally accepted and largely unchallenged understanding of the term; an understanding rarely subject to specific scrutiny and even more rarely explicitly delineated. It is as if an unwritten and unspoken preface to discussions of security exists; a preface which informs the discourse, outlines the

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<sup>5</sup> R.B.J. Walker, "Realism, Change and International Political Theory," *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 31, 1987), p. 69.

parameters of the debate and establishes the foundations upon which further discussion may build.

The significance of the persistence of an unwritten preface on security should not go unnoticed. It is the contention here that the failure to make the preface explicit has permitted the discourse on security to continue and to expand, while overlooking many of the shaky precepts and precariously balanced assumptions upon which it is founded. This becomes particularly significant in light of the dramatic changes on the international front and the fairly recent emergence of proposals advocating a redefinition and expansion of the concept. While many of the proposals to this end are not necessarily without merit, they are nonetheless precipitous. Before embarking on an effort to expand and broaden the concept of security, it is worth first pausing to explore the meaning and significance of the concept. In other words, before a move is made to stretch the concept further, it is arguably first necessary to understand what it is that is being challenged and reformed.

To that end, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the unwritten preface on security. Specifically, the goal is to explore how the concept has been treated within the discourse, to trace the general evolution of the term over the decades from the time when it first began to appear regularly in the discourse in the mid-1940s to the present, to outline the broad parameters of the term and identify its general understanding, and to explore some of the reasons for, and significance of, the fact that it has been a generally uncontested concept, at least until recently. The goal, therefore, is to map the conceptual

terrain of the term and, to borrow a phrase from T.S. Eliot, to 'begin at the beginning and know the place for the first time.'

### **Defining the Concept of Security**

At its most fundamental level, security is understood to be about survival and freedom from threat. Standard dictionary definitions make references to safety, certainty, and the absence of fear and doubt. The *Webster College Edition*, for example, offers this:

1. The state of feeling or being free from fear, care, danger, etc.; safety or a sense of safety.
2. Freedom from doubt; certainty.
3. overconfidence; carelessness.
4. something that gives or assures safety; protection; safeguard...<sup>6</sup>

To this initial definition, the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* adds an additional element. It defines 'secure' as "... sage against attack; impregnable; reliable; certain not to fail or give way; in safe keeping, firmly fastened."<sup>7</sup> Thus, security may also be viewed as implying an element of physical restraint, the prevention of motion, escape, and change, and invoking an image of assurance that a particular set of arrangements will continue into the future. Stated slightly differently, it infers the perpetuation of the status quo.

Mediating between these two understandings of security runs a third meaning, as suggested by James Der Derian: "In the face of a danger, a debt, or an obligation of some

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<sup>6</sup> *Webster's New World Dictionary, College Edition* (Toronto: Nelson, Foster and Scott LTD, 1968), p. 1318.

<sup>7</sup> *The Oxford Concise Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 959.

kind, one seeks a security, in the form of a pledge, a bond, a surety.”<sup>8</sup> Or, to continue with the definition of security from *Webster's*,

5. something given as a pledge of repayment, fulfillment of a promise, etc.; guarantee. 6. a person who agrees to make good the failure of another to pay, perform a duty, etc.; surety. 7. any evidence of debt or ownership of property, especially a bond or stock certificate.”<sup>9</sup>

The concept of security is often explained in terms of absences. Similar to peace, which is often defined as the absence of war, security is nothing but the “absence of the evil of insecurity.”<sup>10</sup> The term is also usually employed in a negative sense, referring more to security *from* than security *for*. Thus, despite the generally accepted positive connotations of the term, its use is limited and defined in reaction to threats rather than outlining desirable political situations.<sup>11</sup> It is also, according to Richard Ullmann, not merely a goal, but a consequence, meaning that “we may not realize what it is or how important it is until we are threatened with losing it.”<sup>12</sup> Security is also both subjective and relative. It is subjective in the sense that the feeling of being ‘secure’ or ‘safe’ has little or “no necessary connection with actually being safe.”<sup>13</sup> It is relative in the sense that it is attainable only as a matter of degree; true security, or a state of absolute security and complete freedom from threat, does not actually exist since the persistence of threats is inescapable.

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<sup>8</sup> James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Webster's New World Dictionary*, op. cite., note 6, p. 1318.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfers, op. cite. note 1, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Dalby, op. cite. note 2, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Ullmann, “Redefining Security,” *International Security* (vol. 18, no. 1, Summer 1983), p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> Buzan, op. cite. note 3, p. 19.

While there is some debate over whether it is preferable to view security as referring to a condition or a value, most analysts accept the classical conception of security that perceives the term as a 'condition' in much the same way that health and status are often conceived.<sup>14</sup> Others, however, such as Grant Littke, contend that security is most usefully understood as a value, but a value unlike others since it is generally a precondition for the enjoyment of other values.<sup>15</sup>

When viewed as a value, security becomes a contestant in the competition with other equally prized values for priority in society. Freedom and liberty, for example, have long been at odds with security: on the one hand, the search for increased or absolute security may entail the inhibition of certain rights, liberties and freedoms, while on the other, the increase in freedom is frequently in conflict with security. Thus, absolute freedom, as Isaiah Berlin noted, "... would entail a state in which all men could boundlessly interfere with all other men... [leading] to social chaos in which men's minimum needs would be satisfied; or else the liberties of the weak would be suppressed by the liberties of the strong."<sup>16</sup> Societies are thus required to perform a balancing act to ease the tension between these competing values.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick Morgan, "Safeguarding Security Studies," *Arms Control* (vol. 13, no. 3, December 1992), p. 466.

<sup>15</sup> Grant Littke, "Subjects of Security: Community, Identity, and the Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict," Paper presented at *The Enterprises of the Americas 34th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association*, Acapulco, Mexico, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Ullman, *op. cite.* note 12, p. 133.

This brief outline of the term and the references in the above cited definitions to such vague notions as 'freedom from fear, danger and doubt,' provide hints of the ambiguity and lack of clarity that encumber the term and provide a glimpse into how contrasting and contradictory understandings of the concept could have emerged. These ambiguities and contradictions are aggravated by the fact that the term is often used in reference to a variety of objects in ways that are not always entirely compatible with one another. This is a point stressed by Barry Buzan in what is widely regarded to be one of the most useful and extensive analyses of the concept of security to date, and a standard source for current discussions on the subject. In his book, *People, States and Fear*, Buzan attempts to clarify the contested nature of security by exploring the varied meanings and applications of security and the inter-relationships among them. Buzan builds on the now classic tripartite levels of analysis framework laid out by Kenneth Waltz to explore the concept of security as it applies to the individual, the state, and the international system, and the nature of the connections of security between each of these levels.<sup>18</sup> He makes the case, and fairly convincingly, that each of the three levels is interconnected and therefore attempts to understand security at a single level are misleading. Much of the merit of such an approach lies in the fact that a number of useful comparisons and parallels may be drawn between security at each of these levels which assist in the overall understanding of the concept.

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: a theoretical analysis* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1954 ).

Accordingly, when applied at an individual level, security is most significantly threatened by what Buzan labels 'social threats,' or "those arising from the fact that people find themselves embedded in a human environment with unavoidable social, economic, and political consequences."<sup>19</sup> These social threats, he continues, come in a variety of forms, "but there are four basic types: physical threats (pain, injury, death), economic threats (seizure or destruction of property, denial of access to work or resources), threats to rights (imprisonment, denial of normal civil liberties), and threats to position or status (demotion, public humiliation)."<sup>20</sup> In many ways, these threats are inescapable. Their unshakable presence, either alone or in combination and to some degree or another, speaks to the impossibility of complete security. There is, consequently, an unshakable and profound insecurity which plagues human consciousness; an insecurity born from the recognition of the human ability to inflict suffering, and death on others.

This was a point stressed previous to Buzan's book by John Herz who presented this as 'the security dilemma.' Commenting on the centrality of this problem, he wrote that "...there arises a fundamental social constellation, a mutual suspicion and a mutual dilemma: the dilemma of 'kill or perish,' or attacking first or running the risk of being destroyed. There is apparently no escape from this vicious circle."<sup>21</sup> The security of each individual, in other words, is threatened by the existence of others. As long as others exist, so too will the threat to existence. The paradox in this equation is that although individuals

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<sup>19</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.* note 3, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 2.

are the source of the threat to one another, they are equally the source of security against the threat - individuals are dependent on each other for survival, and hence security. Herz added:

Feeling himself exposed to dangers which threaten his very life, man begins to be concerned about finding some security against this menace. But in looking for safeguards he runs into another dilemma: even if he wanted to, he cannot destroy all those who might become a menace to his existence. For, in addition to the physical impossibility of eliminating every potential enemy, there is the other basic fact of social life, namely, that of man's dependence on other men in producing and obtaining the necessities of life, a dependence which creates the paradoxical situation that man is at the same time foe and friend to his fellow man, and that social cooperation and social struggle seem to go hand in hand, to be equally necessary.<sup>22</sup>

While the existence of other humans raises the specter of insecurity, it is only in cooperation with them, or with the Other, in the form of a cooperative collective or community of some sort, that relief from this insecurity may be found. Thus, the existence of others is at one and the same time the source of both insecurity and security.

Unravelling the dilemma of security, however, does not begin and end with recognition of the contradictions between the human need for security from and with other humans, for beneath this lies a more fundamental dilemma. The ultimate paradox, notes James Der Derian, is that in security, there will always be insecurity.

Originating in the contingency of life and the certainty of mortality, the history of security reads as a denial, a resentment, and finally a transcendence of this paradox. In brief, the history is one of individuals seeking an impossible security from the most radical 'other' of life, the terror of death, which, once generalized and nationalized triggers a futile cycle of collective identities seeking security from alien others - who are

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

seeking similarly impossible guarantees. It is a story of differences taking on the otherness of death, and identities calcifying into a fearful sameness.<sup>23</sup>

The inescapable fact of human mortality ultimately and permanently prohibits individuals from ever achieving security in any complete sense. While the search may lead to the formation of communities within which a measure or perception of security may be achieved, this is deceptive and temporary at best; death will invariably prevail. This, then, presents a trap from which no true escape exists, and thus no absolute security may be affirmed, adding bitter irony to one definition of the term secure as 'firmly fastened' or 'unable to escape.'<sup>24</sup>

The unattainability of true and absolute security aside, the conviction persists that elements of security may be found through community and cooperation. The individual, alone and in competition with others, will have a minimum of security; as a collective and in cooperation with others, that security will be enhanced. This is a common theme running through much political philosophy and one that Thomas Hobbes is often credited with having captured with great clarity.<sup>25</sup> In his most celebrated oeuvre, *Leviathan*, Hobbes presents a depiction of individuals in a primordial existence, or 'state of nature,' characterized by anarchy, chaos, and disorder.<sup>26</sup> It is a system in which the individual units are perceived to be more or less equal, are in competition for limited resources, and are plagued by unacceptably high levels of social threat.<sup>27</sup> In the absence of a 'common power

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<sup>23</sup> James Der Derian *op. cite.*, note 8, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> Buzan, *op.cite.*, note 3, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> R.B.J. Walker, *op. cite.*, note 5, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Great Britain: Pelican Books, reprinted 1987), p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

to keep them in awe,' individuals are pitted in a struggle of 'all against all,' where life is necessarily 'nasty, brutish and short.'<sup>28</sup> It is only through the establishment of an over-riding authority, or a 'Leviathan,' accordingly, that the state of nature might be overcome and that stability and order between individuals might be achieved. People therefore establish states, "to defend them from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sorts as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, John Locke wrote: "The great and chief end ... of men's... putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property (meaning their 'lives,' 'liberties' and 'estates') which in the state of nature is 'very unsafe, very insecure.'"<sup>30</sup>

Combining in political community, or the state, is thus considered the standard response to the existence of a plethora of social and natural threats. The formation of states is hence the inevitable outgrowth of the individual search for security, or so runs standard contract theory. In the Preface to the *Leviathan*, Hobbes wrote that "This great Leviathan which is called the state is a work of art; it is an artificial man made for the protection and the salvation of the natural man."<sup>31</sup> It follows, Michael Dillon adds, that the state "could not protect or perfect man unless it could first preserve its own security. From this modern conception of the state rises the related conception of 'national security:' the challenge to the state, more properly its agents, to specify and to realize

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, reprinted in Carl Cohen ed., *Communism, Fascism and Democracy: The Theoretical Foundations* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 275.

<sup>31</sup> Hobbes, *op. cite.*, p xiv.

national security goals.”<sup>32</sup> As such, security at the level of the individual and the state become inextricably linked: threats to the survival and security of the individuals that make up civil society are the equivalent of threats to the state since they are effectively one and the same. But not only is the security of the individual and the security of the state interconnected, it is also an irreversible connection, for as Buzan has argued, the state itself is irreversible: once in place, the option of returning to a ‘state-less state’ is virtually eliminated.<sup>33</sup>

Applying the concept of security at the level of the state is arguably more difficult than is the application of the concept at the level of the individual as a result of the much more amorphous and intangible nature of the state itself. The centrality of the ‘state’ in international relations discourse aside, it is not an object which is easily defined. As noted by Kenneth Dyson among others, it is “neither simply an empirically identifiable object that can be comprehended in terms of particular buildings or people, nor just a pattern of power relations that can be detected and described.”<sup>34</sup> It cannot be reduced simply to a specific territory, nor to mere institutions, but also involves the presence of the ‘idea’ of the state in the minds of the population. It represents, “... not only a particular manner of arranging political and administrative affairs and regulating relationships of authority, but also a cultural phenomenon which binds people together in terms of a common model of interpreting the world.”<sup>35</sup> All of this makes the application of a concept as elusive as

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<sup>32</sup> G.M. Dillon, “Modernity, Discourse and Deterrence,” *Current Research on Peace and Conflict* (vol. 11, no. 3, 1988), p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Dyson, *The State Tradition in Western Europe* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1980), p. 205.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

'security' to the 'state' even more precarious. But while debates persist concerning the true 'meaning' or 'essence' of the state, what is of relevance to this discussion is that the state is conventionally understood to be a sovereign and political entity composed of a physical base, an institutional expression, and an idea in the minds of its people, and is formed at least in part out of the desire among individuals for greater security.<sup>36</sup>

Having recognized the elusive nature of the state, and acknowledging the conceptual differences between the state, an amorphous and intangible abstract object, and the individual, a much more concrete, tangible and mortal entity, a number of useful parallels may be drawn between security at the level of the individual and security at the level of the state. For example, just as individuals threaten the existence of other states, so too do states threaten the existence of other states and the security of each is rendered insecure by the existence of others. As Joel Migdal points out: "When the state entered into the tumble of history's events, it did not do so in splendid isolation."<sup>37</sup> Rather, he continues,

It appeared with a handful of other similar political entities that together constituted a new state system... From the time that states began to appear in northwestern Europe 400 to 500 years ago, they gravely threatened not only one another but also other existing political forms ...<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, the security of the state, as with the individual, is relative and cannot be absolute; as long as other states exist, so too will the threat to the state. Even if all other states could be eliminated, either through the universal hegemony of a single state, or

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<sup>36</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

through the establishment of a supreme world government, the threat to the state would not necessarily be eliminated. Instead, threats that had existed prior to the absorption of individual state units into a single whole would persist; their source simply having been transformed from external source of threat to an internal one. Finally, as with the individual, the threats to the state are neither uniform nor easily categorized. They come in diverse forms, vary in range and intensity, and are contingent upon time and space for their definition.<sup>39</sup> While some suggest that it is the territorial integrity of the state that must be protected, others point variously to the protection of freedom, institutions, economic and political interests, or the control of interests for the benefit of other states.<sup>40</sup> Finally, as at the level of the individual, the security of the state is conditioned and influenced by the environment within which it exists and operates; the third level in Waltz' tripartite division and what is generally referred to as the international system.

The international system is fundamental for an understanding of the concept of security at the state level. It forms the backdrop against which states operate, providing both the context and the forum for their behaviour towards one another, and heavily influences the entire national security problem. It is this system, in fact, which both generates threats to states, thus defining their national security problem, while at the same time also constitutes a target of national security policy.<sup>41</sup> As such, the international

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<sup>39</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> For a sampling of some of the varied definitions of threats to security over the decades see Joseph Romm, *Defining National Security: The Non-Military Aspects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), pp. 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 93.

system represents a third level to which the concept of security may be and often is applied.

Security at the level of the international system is intricately tied to the security of the states within that system. Just as the security of the individual and that of the state are interlinked, so too is there a connection between the security of the state and the security of the international system. In fact, to speak of the international system and states as two separate entities is fairly misleading since any attempt to disassemble the state from the international environment within which it operates runs the risk of creating distortion. The state and the international system are fundamentally connected in much the same way that the individual and the state are found to be linked with the line of demarcation between the two levels premised on the possession of sovereignty.<sup>42</sup>

Often deemed the 'hallmark of statehood,' sovereignty is the distinguishing factor between 'states' and other forms of political community. States are not states without the possession of sovereignty. When used internally, the concept denotes "supremacy over all other authorities within that territory and population;" when used externally, it refers to independence from outside authorities.<sup>43</sup> As Francis Harry Hinsley has succinctly put it:

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<sup>42</sup> Ruth Lapidoth, "Sovereignty in Transition," *Journal of International Affairs* (Vol. 45, no. 2; Winter 1992), p. 325.

<sup>43</sup> According to this definition of states, the states of current Europe may be considered 'states,' as may the city-states of ancient Greece and renaissance Italy, whereas other examples of political community such as the kingdoms and principalities of Western Christendom in the Middle Ages, may not. These, according to Bull, were not considered states for "they did not possess internal sovereignty because they were not supreme over authorities within their territory and population; and at the same time, they did not possess external sovereignty since they were not independent of the Pope or, in some cases, the Holy Roman Emperor." Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1977), p. 8-9.

In the context of the internal structure of a political society, the concept of sovereignty has involved the belief that there is an absolute political power within the community. Applied to problems which arise in the relations between political communities, its function has been to express the antithesis of this argument - the principle that internationally, over and above the collection of communities, no supreme authority exists... these two assertions are complementary. They are inward and outward expressions... of the same idea.<sup>44</sup>

Sovereignty may therefore be understood as the ordering principle that distinguishes between that which is 'internal' to the state and that which is 'external,' a demarcation between inside/outside, order and disorder, life within the state and beyond its borders. In so doing, the notion of sovereignty also draws the line of delineation within which peace, order, justice, prosperity, and security are attainable, and those areas in which they are not. As Walker notes,

The principle of state sovereignty suggests a spatial demarcation between those places in which the attainment of universal principles might be possible and those in which they are not. That is, it suggests a spatial demarcation between authentic politics and mere relations. Within states, it is assumed to be possible to pursue justice and virtue, to aspire to universal standards of reason. Outside, however, there are merely relations."<sup>45</sup>

The sense of community, stability and security that may be achievable within the state under a sovereign authority, in other words, is not duplicated at the international level. If states are sovereign, or "the sole judge of their own behaviour and subject to no higher authority,"<sup>46</sup> then, by definition, the background or environment against which they exist is

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<sup>44</sup> F.H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 158.

<sup>45</sup> R.B.J. Walker, "Security, Sovereignty, and the Challenge of World Politics," Paper prepared for inclusion in Michael Klare and Daniel Thomas, editors, *World Security at Century's End*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990/1991), p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Jerry A. Frieden and David A. Lake, *International Political Economy: Perspectives on Global Power and Wealth* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 10.

anarchic, or 'without overarching government or ruling authority.' In this way, as Buzan notes, "the essential character of states defines the nature of the international political systems and the essential character of the political system reflects the nature of states."<sup>47</sup>

This characterization of the international system as anarchic, it is important to note, does not necessarily imply the chaos and violence that might be found at the level of the individual living in the absence of a higher authority. States are much larger, more durable, and fewer in number than a system of individuals and therefore less likely to be reduced to an atmosphere of disorder and incessant struggle. Consequently, the fact that the distinguishing feature of the international system is anarchic does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the system is one of chaos. The state system is, in fact, permeated with a number of subsystems and underlying structures which emerge periodically to influence the operation and character of the system. Further, as Buzan usefully points out, the notion of 'anarchy' at the international level refers simply to the *structure* of the international system; a notion which should be distinguished from the *character* of the system. This structure of the system defines the basic framework of the security problem only generally; it is the character of the system which provides the details. While the structure remains static, the character often fluctuates considerably, pendulating between extremes which Buzan dubs 'mature' and 'immature.'

At one end is 'immature anarchy,' a state of affairs in which states fail to recognize the legitimacy and sovereignty of other states, leading to a continuous struggle

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<sup>47</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 94.

among actors for power and dominance. In this scenario, insecurity would be rampant and instability in the system virtually guaranteed. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Buzan's mature anarchy, the utopian counterpart to the immature system, where struggle and instability have been minimized, an agreed upon set of norms, rules and conventions are accepted and observed, and an international society of sorts emerges.<sup>48</sup> Whether a system will tend towards the mature or immature ground or some variation in between depends on a combination of factors. The number of members, for example, may range from two to several hundred. The distribution of power, meanwhile, may be divided evenly amongst all, or skewed in favour of some over others, producing both strong and weak states. Both of these factors will affect the character of the system and hence its level of both maturity and security. Thus, while the structure of the system defines the basic parameters of the security problem (in that there is no supreme authority or overriding rule of law), the character of the system provides many of the details of the security problem.<sup>49</sup>

**Security in International Relations Discourse:  
A Tale of Two (Maybe Three) Theories**

The concept of security may apply at each of these three levels - the individual, the state and the international system. It is fundamental to note, however, that within

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<sup>48</sup> For an extended discussion of mature and immature anarchies, see Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, pp. 96-98.

<sup>49</sup> In addition to an estimation of the implication of mature and immature anarchies on the security problem at the international level, there have also been attempts to identify patterns in the structure which will influence security. The favourite among these would appear to be an evaluation of the influence of the distribution of power in the international system. Unfortunately, as Buzan notes, " while the overall balance and distribution of power in the system plays an important role in the security environment, yet it is difficult to predict with any certainty how this will impinge on the security of states." Buzan, *op cite.*, note 3, p. 119.

international relations discourse, security has generally and almost uniquely been used in reference to the 'state,' to the point where discussions of 'security' in contemporary international relations are dominated by a concern over 'national' security and the protection and survival of the state - its institutions, its borders, and its values - from internal and external threat.<sup>50</sup> The selection of the state as standard referent object for discussions of security stems in part from the fact that international relations, as a field, is popularly believed to be about *relations between states*.<sup>51</sup> While there may indeed be other actors, such as multinational corporations, international organizations, even classes, the significance and influence of these other actors are interpreted as complementary and subservient at best.<sup>52</sup> States maintain centre stage.

The classic conception of security thus posits the state as the item of central concern and it is generally the threat to the state from encroachment from other states that is at issue. This conventional, state-based conception is culled at least in part, if somewhat erroneously, from the Hobbesian conception of the state of nature among individuals and a transposition of Hobbes' depiction of relations among individuals to the state level.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, states, like individuals, are considered unitary actors imbued with rational

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<sup>50</sup> Little, *op. cite.*, note 15, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Wight, "Why Is There No International Theory?" in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> William Bloom, *Personal identity, national identity and international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Despite the identification of a 'Hobbesian Tradition' in international relations discourse, Hobbes himself wrote very little specifically on the subject, but focussed on the nature of relations between individuals. Since analogies between individuals and states are precarious at best, and often misleading, if not completely misconstrued, many object to the transposition of the Hobbesian state of nature to the realm of inter-state relations and international relations generally. For more on this, please see Bull, *op. cite.*, note 42; Walker, *op. cite.*, note 5; Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3.

decision-making powers and pitted against one another in a struggle for survival. Existing within a world of finite resources and competition, but in the absence of a security-establishing 'Leviathan,' states are faced with a perpetual security problem. The Hobbesian analogy further suggests that states are swept into war because of competition for material possession, mistrust, fear, and the pursuit of glory. Thus, as Walker comments, "In this 'international state of nature,' there is, therefore, only the natural right of self preservation among equals."<sup>54</sup>

This view generally considers security to hinge directly, even almost exclusively, on the ability of the state to remain sovereign and impervious to the whims, influences and pressures of other states. Thus, despite the existence of numerous threats, whether social, economic, ideological, or otherwise, military threats are usually accorded the highest priority and war is interpreted as the ultimate threat.<sup>55</sup> The predominance of this view, according to Buzan, stems at least in part from the fact that military means may so rapidly and decisively dominate outcomes in all other sectors.<sup>56</sup> The effect of this view, meanwhile, is that security often comes to be seen as tied directly to the ability of the state to repel foreign invaders. Thus, the extent to which a nation feels secure becomes contingent on the military might of the state and the security of the state in this way is rendered synonymous with military strength of the state.

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<sup>54</sup> Walker, *op. cite.*, note 5, p. 73.

<sup>55</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

Security and military strength are also often equated with power. This is evident in a remark made by Hans Morgenthau: "... armed strength, as a threat of potentiality is the most important material factor making for the political power [and hence the security] of the nation."<sup>57</sup> In other words, the security of the state is also believed to depend directly on its relative power. Similar equations between security, military strength and power are present in the work of Raymond Aron, another prominent strategist and political thinker, who argued: "To want the maximum of security is to want the maximum of power, which in turn means the greatest number of allies, the fewest possible enemies."<sup>58</sup> These views are not uncommon within the domain of security studies. Their effect, whether intended or not, is twofold. On the one hand, the mental pairing of the concepts of security, military strength and power tends to produce national security policies that are indistinguishable from defence policies. At the same time, it leads states to the conclusion that the maintenance of national security requires the maintenance of huge military forces and an array of weapons systems.<sup>59</sup>

It is worth noting that although this is the prevailing conception of security within international relations, this is not the only understanding of security within the field, nor has it been universally accepted despite its dominance. Against this interpretation, often dubbed 'realist,' has arisen an alternate conceptualization of the international system and

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<sup>57</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 156.

<sup>58</sup> Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A theory of international relations* (New York, 1966), p. 48.

<sup>59</sup> Helga Haftendorn, "The Security Puzzle: Theory-Building and Discipline-Building in International Security," *International Studies Quarterly* (1991), p. 8

state security.<sup>60</sup> This paradigm, generally referred to as the 'idealist' tradition in international relations, emerged as a direct outgrowth of the Enlightenment period, "... that grand intellectual and cultural movement in eighteenth-century Europe and America marked by celebration and defence of reason and 'science' against tradition and 'prejudice.'"<sup>61</sup> Of particular inspiration here was Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*. Acknowledging the tension between morality and history (or reason and war), Kant was persuaded in the belief of the possibility for the former to triumph over the latter as individuals became better educated, more rational, and more willing to submit to moral norms or laws.<sup>62</sup> Succumbing to a teleological view of human development and a belief in the unswerving march of human progress on the path to some higher ideal, this school of thought was convinced of the ultimate dominance of reason over emotion, and rationality over passion. As far as the international system and security were concerned, proponents of this theory were imbued with the conviction that "... the system of nation states and of dominating national interests can be restructured by an enlightened political order - a republican constitution, a federal state system and a global citizenship - to forge a community of mankind."<sup>63</sup> It was simply a matter of time and education and a small measure of determined effort before global peace would sweep the world.

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<sup>60</sup> There is of course a danger of over simplification in any attempt to discuss 'theories' of international relations and to lump these into contending groups and to draw broad generalizations from these.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice," *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* (vol. 20, no. 3, 1991), p. 22.

<sup>62</sup> Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 607.

<sup>63</sup> Haftendorn, *op. cite.*, note 58, p. 6.

Interposed between these two contending views of security, the realist and idealist understandings, runs a third reading of the international system and the nature of state security stemming in large measure from the work of Hugo Grotius. In direct contrast to the realist construction outlined in the shadow of Hobbes, Grotius attempted to assert, according to Haftendorn, that “states are not engaged in a simple struggle, like gladiators in an arena, but are limited in their conflicts with one another by common rules and institutions.”<sup>64</sup> And against Kant and the idealist design, Grotius accepts the initial premise that states, not individuals, are the dominant actors on the stage of world politics. As such, “what these imperatives enjoin is not the overthrow of the system of states and its replacement by a universal community of mankind but rather the acceptance of the requirements of coexistence and cooperation in a society of states.”<sup>65</sup> Recognition of the absence of a supranational authority to ensure the enforcement of laws and code of conduct necessitates an alternate approach to curbing the actions of nascent or insecure states. The prescription for security which then ensues is the development of political incentives for state restraint. This, then, gives rise to the institutionalist approach to security, and the belief in the ability of the rule of law to help guide and if need be quell the actions of individual states.<sup>66</sup>

Each of these three themes, the Hobbesian, Kantian and Grotian tradition, stems from a distinct set of presuppositions, and each has been subject to sporadic engagement within the discipline of international relations throughout its brief history, reflecting the

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

periodic rise and fall of differing schools of thought. Nineteenth century European security efforts, for example, were marked by the predominance of realist and institutionalist beliefs, particularly in efforts directed toward establishing and maintaining a balance-of-power system based on diplomatic efforts, judicious calculation of national interest, and state-restraint, epitomized in the Vienna Convention. The Interwar Years, in contrast, were witness to the adoption of a new approach to security, inspired in large measure by the Wilsonian Idealism regnant during this period. In an attempt to come to terms with the unfathomed, cavernous destruction of the Great War, an effort was made to break with the previous pattern and impose a system of order on wayward, warring states through the establishment of a system of collective security eventually embodied in the League of Nations. Believing the international system to be interdependent and holistic, and peace to be indivisible, the approach was to form a collective and to pledge to come to the aid, in unison, of any nation attacked by another. In the words of the architect of the system himself, Woodrow Wilson:

The concept of collective security involves the creation of an international system in which the danger of aggressive warfare by any state is to be met by the avowed determination of virtually all other states to exert pressure of every necessary variety - moral, diplomatic, economic and military - to frustrate attack upon any state."<sup>67</sup>

The approach aimed to achieve international peace through an appeal to the rationality of state leaders, and was premised on the deterrent value of a preponderance of power. It was also an attempt to dissolve the distinction between national and international security, or at least to forge clear links between the two.

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<sup>67</sup> Inis Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 110.

Efforts at collective security and the Wilsonian school of international relations, however, were short-lived and by the time of the conclusion of World War Two, these efforts largely had been abandoned. Significantly, it was at this point, and despite the discussions that had taken place previously concerning collective international security, that the concept of security came to acquire widespread currency.<sup>68</sup> Somewhat indicative of this shift to increased prevalency is Joseph Romm's observation that while the phrase 'national security' "may have needed explanation in 1945, it had become so widely used by 1947 that the National Security Act, which established, among other things, the National Security Council, did not bother to define the term..."<sup>69</sup>

This increased saliency may be attributed in part, notes Dalby, to the fundamental changes in global politics caused by World War Two, and particularly to the fact that the US "emerged as the pre-eminent power presiding over a new world order."<sup>70</sup> In attempting to come to terms with its new role, "[l]essons from World War II were incorporated into the new political situation. Isolation was no longer feasible as a foreign policy, Pearl Harbor had ensured that military preparedness and extensive intelligence efforts would be emphasized."<sup>71</sup> This new period witnessed a rapid expansion of both US interests and potential threats to those interests, with the result that "the term 'national

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<sup>68</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 2, p. 99.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Romm, *op. cite.*, note 39, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 2, p. 99.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

security' quickly came to encompass most of the external environment faced by the United States."<sup>72</sup>

The increased prevalency of the use of term 'security,' particularly 'national security,' during this period, it is also worth noting, coincided with the rise of the 'realist' approach within the academy. The overall disillusionment of the 1930s had sparked sharp reaction within policy and academic circles. Pioneered by well-known figures such as Hans Morgenthau, a series of analysts delivered withering critiques against the earlier thinkers and, in direct contrast with the earlier preoccupation with the way in which the world 'should' and 'ought' to function, the focus for them was the 'is' and 'was' of external state behaviour.<sup>73</sup> Discussions of 'collective security,' based on Kantian and Wilsonian idealism were relegated to the sidelines and summarily dismissed. Extrapolations of the nature of human behaviour as inherently flawed and unchanging to the level of the state formed the basis for a number of generalizations about the behaviour of these political units and particularly the idea that states are driven in their relations with one another by interest defined in terms of power. As Herz put it, political realism "... characterizes that type of political thought which in one form or another... recognizes and takes into consideration the implications for political life of those security and power factors which... are inherent in human society."<sup>74</sup> This, in fact, was a point stressed in much of the work

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Wolfers, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 234.

<sup>74</sup> Herz, *op. cite.*, note 20, p. 18.

of Morgenthau, especially *Politics among Nations*, an author and work often considered to epitomize realism in academe.<sup>75</sup>

This period was also witness to the birth of 'security studies' as a field.<sup>76</sup> Prior to outbreak of World War Two, interest in security, strategy and military affairs was largely confined to the military itself and civilian contributions were often discouraged. The horrifying costs of World War One, however, suggested, at least to some, that war was simply too important to be left to the generals.<sup>77</sup> Membership in the security-studying club was thus broadened, setting the stage for what variously been labelled the 'first wave' and the 'Golden Age' of security studies.<sup>78</sup>

The implications of the coinciding of these two trends, the rise in use of the concept, especially in US discourse, and the rise of the realist approach to international relations should not be underestimated. International relations and particularly international security studies, is a relatively young field and generally regarded largely as an American discipline.<sup>79</sup> Hence discussions of security in the US have heavily influenced the discussion of security in general in international relations theory.<sup>80</sup> As a result of the fact that the rise in importance of 'national security' occurred in tandem with the dominance of the realist approach to the field, the concept has come to be imbued with a

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<sup>75</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 2, p. 99.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 35, 1991), p. 213.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr. and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "International Security Studies: A Report of a Conference on the State of the Field," *International Security* (vol. 12, no. 4, Spring 1988), p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 2, p. 99.

realist flavour. Further, at the same time that 'security studies' as a field rose to the fore, "American thinking about international politics was transformed by the almost universal acceptance of the realist paradigm, which held that idealism and isolation of the inter-war period must be replaced by a rigorous appreciation of power politics and the importance of the national interest."<sup>81</sup>

The effect of these factors, taken together, was to heighten awareness of security and security problems on the international front. This period of increased attention to security studies was also dominated, significantly, by the introduction of nuclear weapons. Analysts of this 'golden era' thus devoted much of their efforts to understanding the nuclear revolution and its implications for strategy and security. As such, the role of nuclear weapons became the central preoccupation. The pivotal question revolved around the issue of use: how states might employ these weapons as instruments of policy in the face of the dramatic repercussions of a nuclear exchange.

This first wave of analysts examining strategy and security consequently produced a number of seminal pieces on deterrence, coercion, escalation, alternative strategies, stability, arms control, and the role of conventional forces in this new era.<sup>82</sup> Their work also led, however, to a state-centric, conflict and power preoccupied approach to security in international relations; an approach which had come to dominate the field during this period and which narrowed even further during the 1960s as analysts, argues Kolodziej,

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<sup>81</sup> Nye and Lynn-Jones, *op. cite.*, note 78, p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Walt, *op. cite.*, note 75, p. 214.

“moved from what Hans Morgenthau called *Politics among Nations*, to analyses of deterrence as the key strategic concept rationalizing cold war and regional conflicts. Borrowing from micro-economics, systems analysis, and game theory, deterrence was explored as a strategic concept particularly susceptible to rigorous logical analysis.”<sup>83</sup>

The preoccupation with the nuclear issue, along with the dominance of realism, served to narrow and limit the field and to separate it from the broader and more general issues of war and peace. Debates over deterrence dominated much of the literature with the result that discussions of security were rarely focussed on security *per se*, but, rather, on the means to achieve the ends. It was a discourse preoccupied by,

...elaborate debates between rival schools of nuclear deterrence and hair-splitting, abstruse exchanges between analysts over the relative merits of competing nuclear weapons systems to maintain the balance of terror dominated strategic studies and policy making... What is of interest for the analysis here, however, is that a focus on threat manipulation and force projections became the central, almost exclusive concerns of security studies.<sup>84</sup>

The overall effect, as Joseph Nye has noted in a recent survey of the field of strategic studies, was that military and nuclear issues came to the fore at the exclusion of all others. “The nuclear revolution in international politics,” he writes, “may have given international security studies one of its *raison d’etre*, but it has led to a preoccupation with

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<sup>83</sup> Edward A. Kolodziej, “What is Security and Security Studies?: Lessons from the Cold War,” *Arms Control* (vol. 13, no. 1, April 1992), p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

contemporary issues and a neglect of pre-nuclear problems of war and peace and of the broader economic and social context of security.”<sup>85</sup>

Following on the heels of this golden age was the second wave, or ‘renaissance’ of security studies which emerged in the 1970s. This new wave differed from the previous one in a number of ways, including the increased attention scholars devoted to history and comparative case studies and their critique of some of the assumptions of deterrence theory.<sup>86</sup> While some have lauded this era as having produced less ahistorical and more policy-relevant theory premised on sounder and more refined empirical studies,<sup>87</sup> others have characterized this same period as having either little or no impact at all on the field. Kolodziej decries the period for having foreshortened and restricted security analysis even further, declaring: “The broad normative concerns of traditional realist thinking [were] de-emphasized in an attempt to place the realist perspective on a scientific foundation. By conscious design, security studies were directed away from an explanation of the behaviour of what states actually did in the name of security to an analysis of their behaviour which, based on deductive analysis, purported to be systematically applicable across time and historical circumstance.”<sup>88</sup> Buzan, meanwhile, in response to both Walt and Kolodziej’s characterization of the impact of the resurgence of security studies, contends that the impact was negligible, if evident at all. The shape and perspective of security studies, he argues, were consolidated during the ‘golden age’ of the 1950s and

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<sup>85</sup> Nye and Lynn-Jones, *op. cite.*, note 78, p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> Walt, *op. cite.*, note 75, p 217.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p 217-218.

<sup>88</sup> Kolodziej, *op. cite.*, note 81, p 2.

1960s, and the “narrowness of strategic thinking can be fully explained by the novelty of nuclear armed confrontation, by the political centrality of deterrence policy, and by the awesome prospect of humankind committing species suicide if the nuclear game went wrong. If neorealism has any impact on this line of thinking, it was merely to reinforce a well-established practice.”<sup>89</sup>

The preoccupation with nuclear issues in discussions of security and nuclear strategies, coupled with the dominance of realism within the academy, served to narrow and limit the field and to separate it from the broader and more general issues of war and peace. Thus, despite the dramatically increased currency of the concept of security, a central effect of all of this was the circumscribing of concerted attention to the meaning and nature of the concept itself. As Ann Tickner has observed: “Although national security has been one of the fundamental preoccupations of traditional diplomatic practice, security is a concept which did not receive a great deal of attention in conventional international relations theory as it developed after World War Two.”<sup>90</sup> Tickner is not alone in lamenting the absence of concerted discussion of the term and the absence of a clear definition. Rob Walker adds: “Unlike reason or democracy, security is a neglected category of political analysis, where reason and democracy have been the subject of sharply contested interpretations and even political struggles, the concept of security has had a relatively quiet history.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Barry Buzan, “A Response to Edward Kolodziej,” *Arms Control* (vol. 13, no. 3, December 1992), p. 481.

<sup>90</sup> J. Ann Tickner, “Redefining Security,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Political Science and Northeast International Studies Associations, Philadelphia, November 1989, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> R.B.J. Walker, “Culture, Discourse, Insecurity,” *Alternatives XI* (1986), p. 54.

The apparent neglect of the concept is accounted for in part by the fact that security, as mentioned earlier and as previously illustrated, is a relatively intractable term fraught with ambiguity and paradox. It is equally elusive when applied to the level of the state and clearly a factor in the difficulty so many analysts have had in attempting to formulate precise definitions of the term. Romm's citation of a comment from a member of the US House subcommittee that considered the Freedom of Information Act is illustrative here. According to Romm, Representative Ross, Chair of the subcommittee reputedly complained in 1973 that: "National security [is] such an ill-defined phrase that no one can give you a definition... In 16 years of chairing the committee... I could never find anyone who could give me a definition."<sup>92</sup> *The Yale Law Review*, in turn, concluded in 1976: "'National Security' has long been recognized by courts... as a notoriously ambiguous and ill-defined phrase."<sup>93</sup>

In part too, the ambiguity which surrounds the term is a result of the fact that a vague, ambiguous, and loosely defined term is often more useful to policy-makers, as suggested in the work of Arnold Wolfers, affording them the ability to interpret 'security policy' in whatever way they may see fit and to stretch the term to cover a broad range of policy options that they would like to see implemented. "When political formulas such as 'national interest' or 'national security' gain popularity," wrote Wolfers,

... they need to be scrutinized with particular care. They may not mean the same thing to different people. They may not have any precise meaning at

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<sup>92</sup> Romm, *op. cite.*, note 39, p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

all. Thus, while appearing to offer guidance and a basis for broad consensus, they may be permitting everyone to label whatever policy he favors with an attractive and possibly deceptive name.<sup>94</sup>

Adds Buzan:

The appeal to national security as a justification for actions and policies which would otherwise have to be explained is a political tool of immense convenience for a large variety of sectional interests. An undefined notion of security offers scope for power-maximizing strategies to political and military elites, because of the considerable leverage over domestic affairs which can be obtained by invoking it.<sup>95</sup>

Policy-makers, therefore, tempted for their own reasons to gloss over the intricacies of the concept, also contributed to the neglect of the term.

The undeniably ambiguous nature of security as a concept, coupled with the fact that an unclarified concept is often more useful to policy makers, are factors which have undoubtedly played a role in terms of the neglect of the term in the field of international relations. This, however, cannot be the whole of the explanation for the concept's virtual disregard, for these are factors which have not inhibited the discussion of say power, freedom, justice, and other similarly thorny terms and there is little reason to conclude that it is only in discussions of security that these issues play a debilitating role. Consequently, it is plausible to suggest that other factors, such as the role of theory, are significant here.

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<sup>94</sup> Wolfers, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 147.

<sup>95</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 9.

M.J. Peterson recently pointed out that, “[a]ll inquiry proceeds under some more or less comprehensive initial theory that posits basic assumptions, identifies questions worthy of investigation, and suggests what constitutes important features of the phenomenon under study.” Theories, in this way, he continues, “provide heuristic ‘rules of thumb’ that guide inquiry by defining what merits attention and why.”<sup>96</sup> Security, never accorded priority status within any of the contending theories, was consequently relegated to the sidelines in international relations discourse, not examined in any great detail on its own but infused with the assumptions of the prevailing theory of the day.

This point is discussed at length by Buzan, who, in addition to advocating a more holistic understanding of security, also makes an attempt to account for the neglect of the concept of security in the field.<sup>97</sup> He makes the case that security, as a concept, is both neglected and underdeveloped. The reasons for this, aside from the multifarious nature of the term, may be attributed to the fact that the concept has long been caught within the complex web of interplay between the two dominant, contending approaches to the field of international relations, ‘realism’ and ‘idealism.’<sup>98</sup> As such, security has rarely been the concept through which conventional approaches to the national security problem have been made; this, rather, has traditionally been addressed through the concepts of power and peace. Those who favoured an approach based on the first of these concepts, power, derive their thinking, according to Buzan, from the realist tradition in international

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<sup>96</sup> M.J. Peterson, “Transnational Activity, International Society and World Politics,” *Millenium* (21:3, Winter 1992), p. 373.

<sup>97</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 3, pp 1-9 *passim*.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

relations. The selection of the concept of power as their focus stems from a belief that this “leads them not only to the basic pattern of capabilities in the international system, but also to a prime motive for the behaviour of actors. They gain, in addition, the wealth of insights associated with the long-standing study of power in the discipline of politics.”<sup>99</sup> Those who are more inclined to approach the security problem through the concept of peace, often labelled the ‘idealist tradition,’ in turn, and continues Buzan,

...can argue that their concept leads them not only to see the problem in holistic terms, as opposed to the necessarily fragmented view of the Realists, but also that it focusses attention directly on the essential matter of war. Since war is the major threat arising from the national security problem, a solution to it would largely eliminate the problem from the international agenda.<sup>100</sup>

Security, entangled within these strains, has consistently been relegated to secondary and subsidiary roles, and therefore generally seen, Buzan concludes, “either as a derivative of power, in the sense that the actor with enough power to reach a dominating position will acquire security as a result, or as a consequence of peace, in the sense that a lasting peace would provide security for all.”<sup>101</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Security, as a term in and of itself, is relatively unclear and fraught with ambiguity as apparent in dictionary references and political philosophical treatments of the term. It is equally so when examined in the context of its application to various referents, be that any

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

one of the standard objects: the individual, the state or the international system. Adding to the difficulties that attend the concept is the fact that it has rarely, if ever, been the subject of concerted debate, but has instead been subsumed under the rubric of the prevailing orthodoxy of the day. As such, understandings of the term have been tied to the rise and fall of contending theories of international relations. Consequently, an examination of the concept of security within the discipline over time reveals subtle shifts in connotation and interpretation; shifts that arose in tandem with transformation in the international political arena as well as changes within the academy, with the result that today, more than one interpretation of the term may be found circulating within the discourse. The dominant or prevailing interpretation, however, has been that of the realist perspective, largely because the field has been dominated by realism for most of its history.

The neglect of the concept of security and the fact that it was thereby allowed by default to be subsumed under the rubric of varying theoretical approaches to the study of international relations, particularly that of realism holds significant implications for how it has been understood and employed in the postwar period. While an economic component to the term was arguably evident prior to World War Two, the postwar period reveals a shift in emphasis from the economic to the military dominance in understanding of the term; a shift which reflects the US role in world affairs, its perception of its role in the context of the overwhelming threat posed by the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Cold War.<sup>102</sup> The prevalence of the realist tradition in the field, and the subsequent dominance of issues of power, resulted in a tendency to equate security with power such

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<sup>102</sup> Romm, *op. cite.*, note 39, p. 69.

that the two concepts *appeared* interchangeable; an appearance that prevailed regardless of whether or not it was warranted or accurate. If an appeal to concepts were to be made then, security, tainted as it was by its association with realism, was an unlikely candidate around which to orchestrate a challenge, while ideals of alternative security, prevalent among which was collective security, had been seriously weakened by the outbreak of World War II and largely abandoned.<sup>103</sup> The effect, therefore, was to abandon the study of the concept of security by the wayside in favour of less sullied notions such as peace or, later, interdependence.<sup>104</sup>

Taken all together this goes a long way in accounting not only for the neglect of the concept in the field, but also helps to explain one of the central paradoxes noted earlier in the use of the term: namely that security could be widely acknowledged to be ambiguous, elusive and 'essentially contested', yet at the same time, used and interpreted in the literature as though its meaning were perfectly straightforward. It is because security was rarely accorded concerted attention on its own and used interchangeably with other important concepts that it could therefore be so taken for granted. Subsumed under the rubric of the prevailing orthodoxy as it was, the term came to be infused with the assumptions of prevailing schools of thought, in this case, realism and rarely subject to challenge or alternative interpretation. Because it was not thoroughly explored as a concept in and of itself, however, it remains riddled with difficulties and contradictions, the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>103</sup> Buzan, *op cite.*, note 3, p. 8.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

## Chapter Two

### A Critique of the Preface

For most of its relatively brief career, 'security' has been a case of almost benign neglect; a term used widely and with great frequency, yet rarely subject to detailed analysis. Recent years, however, have witnessed an unprecedented surge of attention devoted to the topic and the meaning and understanding of the term have been placed under unaccustomed scrutiny. In part, this is the inevitable result of profound changes on the international scene: the waning of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc, the spiralling debt of many developing countries and the heightened awareness of grave global ecological damage have compelled analysts and policy-makers to reconsider fundamentally many of the theories and concepts which guided them in the past. In part too, however, it is the logical outgrowth of the resurgence of debate over theory in the field social sciences as a whole, and from which political science and international relations have not been permitted to remain immune. Referred to by some as the 'Third Debate,'<sup>1</sup> this reflects a spill-over of debate from other disciplines over the nature and role of theory in the social sciences. The effect has been to prompt some to launch challenges against traditional and established paradigms and cast doubt over the validity of central, well-accepted concepts.

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<sup>1</sup> Yosef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 33, 1989), p. 235.

Whatever the impetus, the result has been a fairly radical questioning of the prevailing orthodoxy. A growing number of scholars and practitioners have voiced concern that the conventional understanding of security and the accompanying national security policies are ill-suited to the contemporary world. Among the many criticisms unleashed against traditional practice is the contention that the conventional approach to security is riddled with contradictions and has become largely irrelevant to modern politics. Most conventional discourse on the subject, for example, arbitrarily restricts security to the level of the state and is preoccupied with military threats. But in light of the profusion of dangers which plague policy-makers the world over, particularly environmental disasters and economic threats, interstate violence hardly seems the only, or even the most pressing challenge. The result is a chorus of critics bellowing calls to 'rethink,' 'redefine' and expand the term beyond current parameters. 'Security' needs to be reviewed, re-evaluated, redefined, and broadened, so argue the critics, in order to maintain its validity and to be applicable to the contemporary world.

The criticisms unleashed against current practice are far from uniform. While some land comfortably within the parameters of the traditional refrain, others appear bent on disrupting not only the conventional approach to security, but the entire field of international relations. Yet although the challenges are diverse, each of the avenues of attack raise a myriad of relevant points for security discourse. This is particularly the case for advocates of a redefinition or abandonment of the conventional approach to security. If the ultimate objective is to present alternatives, the challenges and criticisms of the

conventional approach will have to be addressed if the proposed 'new' or 'refined' version of security is to present an improvement over past practice. In other words, assuming that these criticisms are valid and that the conventional understanding of security is rife with conceptual difficulty, these difficulties, flaws, quandaries and loopholes will have to be acknowledged, if not rectified, if the new proposals are to carry any weight and are to avoid the risk of stumbling headlong into similar traps. The purpose of this chapter is therefore straightforward: to examine the various veins of criticism as a means of assessing the validity of past conceptions of security as well as proposed alternatives. To this end, six of the more prominent criticisms will be explored.

As a prelude to an examination of the various challenges and criticisms lodged against traditional practice, it is worth first asking why this flurry to articulate an old notion has emerged now. Arguably, the movement is not all that new: efforts to this end have appeared and reappeared sporadically throughout the past century. One of the most notable of these occurred in the mid-1970s; a period heavily influenced by the US failure in Vietnam, the first oil shock, growing inflation and the increasing economic strength of Europe and Japan.<sup>2</sup> A seminal piece during this period was produced by Lester Brown. Entitled *Redefining National Security*, it advocated the need for a discussion of security in terms of economic threats, the world energy crisis and global food shortages.<sup>3</sup> The debate has resumed today. What distinguishes the current debate from those of the past, however, is the intensity of the calls for reform and the varied nature of the sources. The overall

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Romm, *Defining National Security: The Non-Military Aspects* (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Lester R. Brown, *Redefining National Security*, (Worldwatch Paper 14, October 1977).

effect of the more intense challenge has been to permit these criticisms extended airtime and on some occasions, the opportunity for implementation.

Of these varied critiques, one of the most common to emerge is that which is focused on exploring the ambiguities and inescapable paradoxes intrinsic to the notion of security as it is traditionally conceived. Specifically, these revolve around the tensions that exist between the search for security by one state on the one hand, and the sense of insecurity this search creates in other states on the other. The pursuit of explicitly *national* security, for example, often only amplifies collective insecurity.<sup>4</sup> Referred to as the 'security dilemma' by Herz, he argued that it was the nature of the international system itself which provoked security problems and the debilitating action-reaction phenomenon among states that underpins so many of the problems associated with the search for security. "Wherever an anarchic society has existed," wrote Herz,

... there has arisen what may be called the 'security dilemma' of men, or groups, or their leaders. Groups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such an attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely security in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.<sup>5</sup>

In the search for security, each state, perhaps unwittingly, procures armaments which, although they may have been intended for purely defensive purposes, are interpreted as

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<sup>4</sup> R.B.J. Walker, "Culture, Discourse, Insecurity," *Alternatives* XI (1986), p. 485.

<sup>5</sup> John Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* (vol. 2, 1950), p. 157.

threatening by other states. The effect is to prompt other states to up the ante, and expand their arsenals; a move which is often interpreted as threatening by others. Thus, any attempt to acquire complete security on behalf of a single actor will stimulate reactions among other states, thereby raising the level of awareness of the threat to an excessive pitch. In other words, "... the more states pursue security by military means, the less secure they become because their military ambitions induce fear in others."<sup>6</sup> The acquisition of more armaments in the search for increased security, therefore, may result in the reverse effect, producing greater insecurity for all.

Linked to the problem of the security dilemma, but operating according to a logic of its own, is the defence dilemma. The 'defence dilemma,' as it is described by Buzan, "arises not from the dynamics of relations among states, although these contribute to it, but from the nature of the dynamics of military means as they are developed and deployed by states."<sup>7</sup> It emerges from inconsistencies and contradictions that exist between military defence and national security. It is generally assumed that military strength and national security are positively correlated. In an effort to ensure security, states find themselves compelled to acquire newer and ever-more powerful weapons and weapons systems. The difficulty emerges, however, when the acquisition of weapons, intended though these may be for defence, undermines the assumed goal and detracts, rather than adds, to a state's ability to provide for its own defence.

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<sup>6</sup> G.M. Dillon, "Modernity, Discourse and Deterrence," *Current Research on Peace and Conflict* (vol. 11, no. 3, 1988), p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (Sussex, England: Harvester Press Ltd., 1983), p. 158.

The defence dilemma may assume various forms.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, defence measures are simply inappropriate, perhaps even irrelevant, to security. The example Buzan provides is that of economic interdependence and the inability of military means to protect against economic vulnerability. A more alarming case arises, he notes, “when defence by military means becomes impossible because offensive weapons have a marked advantage of some sort over the defensive weapons available to them.”<sup>9</sup> He makes the case that this has been a prominent feature of international relations since the end of the First World War. The dramatic advancements in weaponry, missiles and nuclear technology, have seriously undermined the ability of a state to protect itself against attack and the strategic advantage now lies with the offense, rather than the defence.<sup>10</sup>

Possibly the most acute case of the defence dilemma arises in situations where military efforts become an actual contradiction to the goal of security. The possession of nuclear weapons, for example, has greatly complicated the ability of states to generate security and ensure their own defence, leading to situations where they detract, rather than enhance, security.<sup>11</sup> Where the presence of these weapons leads to the unfolding of additional dilemmas lies in the nature of the policies which have emerged in response to the existence of these weapons; namely, policies of assured retaliation to generate a condition of mutually assured destruction (MAD). Rather than providing the defence of state territory, these are predicated upon the threat of universal and complete destruction

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

as the means through which a military 'defence' may be achieved. Survival is not guaranteed, but more likely impossible, and thus the logic of these policies has been decried by critics for failing to ensure a defence of the state that does not involve its obliteration. "The logic of deterrence," wrote the authors of the Palme Commission's report on the subject, "suggests that states are protecting themselves by offering their citizens as hostages."<sup>12</sup> In other words, these policies lead to what has been referred to as the 'nuclear paradox,' or the fact that the security of the state is premised on the insecurity of its citizens, who are the very individuals the state is tasked with protecting.

The introduction of nuclear weapons, therefore, has severely exacerbated the pre-existing security and defence dilemmas, further inhibiting the ability of states to achieve security in any substantive sense. The full extent of the impact of nuclear weapons on the security equation, however, remains in dispute. For some, these are seen as endowing a state with enhanced power and influence. They represent, in other words, the ultimate source of coercion and power and the supreme guarantee of independence and power; any diplomat's dream.<sup>13</sup> For others, the effect of nuclear weapons is far less benign. Not only are they perceived to have done little to enhance the security of any single state, nor further the aims of power and influence, but may very well have led to have led to the increased insecurity and vulnerability of all. "Theoretically, in terms of raw destructive power," writes Paul, "nuclear weapons should increase the possessors' putative military

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<sup>12</sup> Ann J. Tickner, "Redefining Security: A Feminist Perspective," Paper presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April, 1992, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Grant Little, "Subjects of Security: Community, Identity, and the Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict," Paper presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the International Studies Association, Acapulco, Mexico, March 1993.

capability, since a nuclear armed state can destroy an opponent's population and industrial sites if it wishes to do so. But if influence is the goal of possessing power capability, the wanton destruction of an enemy may not achieve that objective."<sup>14</sup> Frederick Kratochwil adds that while the virtually unmatched destructive power of these weapons may imbue states with a sense of security, it is one that is largely illusory. "For the first time," he asserts, "nuclear and delivery technology would allow security against virtually any classical threat to the territorial integrity of the United States, as long as it possesses a secure second strike." However, he qualifies this statement by adding that,

... it is not quite clear what this security would amount to if everything short of a direct attack on US territory itself was eliminated from the picture. Since nuclear weapons are incredible against less than existential threats, it is unintelligible how such a withdrawal from the international game could help the United States to retain or regain its strength and to pursue its interests more effectively.<sup>15</sup>

The destructiveness of these weapons, contends Buzan, "has reduced the idea of national defence to an absurdity, since the state would be destroyed by the measures required for its defence."<sup>16</sup> Consequently, he concludes: "Given the uncertainties involved in the possession and control of such weapons, many individuals conclude that the weapons themselves, and the system of relations they create, detract from, rather more than they offer to, the pursuit of security."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Kratochwil, "The Challenge of Security in a Changing World," *Journal of International Affairs*, (1989), p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 7, p. 164.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Recognition of the difficulty of achieving security in the face of nuclear weapons was acknowledged decades ago upon the close of World War Two by such notable thinkers as Bernard Brodie. He wrote “[it] is our major dilemma in thinking about war and peace today that we do so with an intellectual and emotional framework largely molded in the past.”<sup>18</sup> Since then, it has continuously been recognized that nuclear weapons have profoundly altered, even undermined, the way in which analysts and policy-makers have been able to approach the issue of war. Writes R.B.J. Walker:

A nuclear war, it is often said, simply cannot be - at least not in any sense in which the concept of war still carries any meaning for us. Nuclear weapons undermine our conception of what war is and under what conditions it might be legitimate. These limits are already at play in the early formulations of nuclear deterrence theory... nuclear weapons ... introduce a major disproportionality between ends and means. Only the *threat* to use, not the actual use of nuclear weapons was assumed to be understandable - and then only marginally - as the continuation of politics by other means.<sup>19</sup>

The undeniable destructive potential of war that has been brought about by the introduction of nuclear weapons throws the legitimacy and rationality of using war as a resolution to conflict and a means to increase security into doubt. Even efforts towards collective security prove futile in the face of the formidable destructiveness and global reach of nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup> In light of the existence of these weapons therefore, any attempt to suggest that states are in a position to provide security for their citizens has become increasingly tenuous.

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<sup>18</sup> Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 391.

<sup>19</sup> R.B.J. Walker, *One World, Many Worlds: Struggles for a Just World Peace* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988), p. 52.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Dalby, “Security, Modernity, Ecology: The Dilemmas of Post-Cold War Security Discourse,” *Alternatives* (vol. 17, no. 1, Winter 1992), p. 103.

The introduction of nuclear weapons technology, it is therefore argued, has greatly aggravated the ability of states to provide for their own defence and security and to continue to speak and prepare for war as they had in the past. Particularly problematic in light of the existence of these weapons is the logic inherent in the pursuit of explicitly *national* security policies which revolve around the state. Since an effective defence against these weapons remains near impossible, national security policies premised strictly on the traditional goals of maximizing power through increased nuclear arsenals is seen as potentially counterproductive.<sup>21</sup> Comments Michael Dillon:

Since the existence of nuclear weapons, war between the major powers has become a threat to their own and everyone else's survival. Thus the national security problem of the modern state has become a global security issue. Yet we continue to deal with that issue predominantly through a political discourse about peace, war and the state (that highest political accomplishment of modern times) which is derived from modernity itself - namely *national security discourse*.<sup>22</sup>

The addition of a nuclear component into traditional defence equations, therefore, re-emphasizes the importance of cooperation for the future. It has also helped lead to the proposition that security can no longer be premised exclusively on the security of a single state alone, but must involve global efforts; a theme taken up by the United Nations Commission chaired by Olaf Palme.<sup>23</sup> The ensuing report, released in 1982 under the title *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival*, was based on an overriding conviction that in

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<sup>21</sup> Tickner, *op. cite.*, note 12, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Dillon, *op. cite.*, note 6, p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> The Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

the nuclear era, nations are incapable of successfully achieving security on their own, and that technological advances in the post-war world had rendered the traditional concept of national security virtually obsolete.<sup>24</sup> The doctrine to emerge from the report was known as 'Common Security' and was based on the belief that security cannot be attained through military means alone. Rather, it requires a renunciation of threatening military postures and a restructuring of forces to the absolute minimal levels, a reduction in dependence on nuclear weapons for security, and a serious commitment to arms control negotiations and confidence building measures.

Along with the security dilemma, defence dilemma and problems associated with nuclear weapons, contradictions also emerge from the search for *state* security, and the tendency in international relations discourse to focus on the state as the standard referent for security discussions. The state-centric approach, allege the critics, is misguided and begs the question of 'whose security' is really at stake. Who, in other words, is the 'we' in conventional security debates? Against whom, against what, and for what ultimate end are security policies really focussed?

The question, 'whose security,' almost deceptive in its simplicity, carries potentially profound implications. On one hand, for example, it has permitted Buzan lengthy explorations into the tensions which exist between the various levels he has identified to which the term security may be applied: namely, the individual, the state and

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas Roche, *Building Global Security: Agenda for the 1990's* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1989), p. 61.

the international system. Having noted the fact that security has long been a neglected, much maligned and underdeveloped concept, he explores the means by which the application of this confused notion to each level compounds the problem. At the individual level, for example, it is generally accepted that the security of the individual is tied eradically to that of the state. There is, however, considerable conflict between these two levels. More to the point, although in theory the state is generally viewed as providing enhanced security to its citizens, the state's ability to do so is first dependent upon its ability to guarantee its own survival. In the struggle to ensure its own security against internal and external disorder, the state often becomes a source of insecurity to the individual. Since the sources of threat to the state are not restricted exclusively to those that exist external to the state, but also include internal threats, the security and survival of the state may be threatened by the individuals within the state. Under these circumstances, the state, in seeking to preserve its security, may take actions that threaten the very individuals the state is claiming to protect. In cases such as these where the security of the state and the security of the individual are in conflict, the state may often prevail.<sup>25</sup>

This, of course, is but one of the means by which the state and individual security may find themselves in conflict. As Buzan notes: "The individual citizen faces many threats which emanate either directly or indirectly from the state, and which not uncommonly may occupy an important place in the person's life."<sup>26</sup> These threats, he continues, may be grouped into four general categories:

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<sup>25</sup> Buzan, *op. cite.*, note 7, *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

those arising from domestic law-making and enforcement; those arising from direct political action by the state against individuals or groups; those arising from struggles over control of the state machinery; and those arising from the state's external security policies.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, just as states are a source of security for individuals, they are also a source of their insecurity, a fact which points to yet another knot in the string of paradoxes tied to security.

But just as the security of states and individuals may at times be in conflict, so too is the security of the state both connected and occasionally in conflict with the security of the international system, so much so, in fact, that Buzan argues that "the political connection between states and systems is so intimate that one is at risk of introducing serious distortion even by speaking of states *and* the international system as if they were distinct entities."<sup>28</sup> Since the international system is made up individual states, should security between these individual units be disrupted and conflict erupt, the security of the international system will also be affected; a belief well noted by those who advocate the construction of a collective security system. Peace and security, it has been argued, are indivisible. In this respect, analogies are often made to a human body plagued by illness: just as disease anywhere in the body affects the health, well-being, and security of the entire organism, violent conflict in any single location is likely to affect the entire planet. Consequently, efforts aimed at preserving the security of a single state must by force operate in tandem with ventures designed to preserve the security of the system as a

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p 24-25.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

whole. The difficulty arises, however, in the fact that policies designed for the enhancement of the security of the international system often amount to little more than a bid for the preservation of the status quo. But as has been repeatedly pointed out, the status quo is not necessarily representative of a neutral position, but is rather usually a reflection of particular interests of those states which have acquired and are seeking to preserve a position of enhanced power and status in the system.<sup>29</sup> A security policy, therefore, that is centred on the maintenance of the status quo is not necessarily in the interests of all states, and may even be in the interests of only some states while against the interests of others. As such, attempts to preserve the security of the system, although beneficial to some select states may be detrimental to others and thus for states already at a disadvantage, the prevailing system becomes a threat not a source of security revealing another means by which security interests at different levels may be in conflict.<sup>30</sup>

'Security,' therefore, cannot be reasonably understood as relating but to a single level, nor fall under the influence of a single theoretical framework. Buzan concludes by arguing in favour of collapsing the various levels into one. "Instead of alternating between state and system in an endless cycle of frustration," he proposes, "a more appealing logic is to combine and expand the two approaches by operating security policy on all three levels simultaneously."<sup>31</sup> He advocates efforts to move beyond the realist and idealist paradigms and the transcendence of any approach based exclusively on a single level of

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

security in favour of a more comprehensive and honest understanding which would involve the reintegration of these competing segments into a more holistic framework.

As insightful as Buzan's analysis may be, it nonetheless remains vulnerable in at least a couple of respects. First, it falls victim to the criticism that the analysis is devoid of historical context with respect to the emergence of the modern state. "His choice between a state of nature," notes Dalby, "and the state is no historical choice at all. States are simply taken for granted as the inevitable and sole providers of security arrangements for humanity."<sup>32</sup> As such, other potential sources of security such as non-governmental actors, social movements and individuals, are downplayed or given no role at all. Further, despite some discussion of environmental issues, "nowhere does Buzan investigate the crucial theme of planetary limitations to the expansion of the Western liberal capitalist economic model of 'development.' Given his assumption of the continued expansion of this economic mode as essential to establishing a mature anarchy on a global scale, this omission undermines much of this argument."<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, Buzan's argument, however poignant, fails to provide an escape from the very divisions he rails against. Discussions of a 'society of states' and varying measures of maturity in anarchy is no panacea to the problems associated with the tripartite divisions and, despite its call for holism, the analysis remains preoccupied with states and their security.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 20, p. 102.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Walker, *One World, Many Worlds, op. cite.* note 19, p. 139.

For many, not only does a focus on conflicts between levels of security fail to present a means around many of the current contradictions in security discussions, but the persistent focus on the state is of limited value in an ever of changing global configurations. Thus, assuming the mantle where Buzan leaves off, an additional series of critics have emerged to attempt to circumvent traditional debate and the 'state security' trap by refusing to discuss security in terms of the state at all. Arising, perhaps, as an extension of the crusade against modernity and the Enlightenment tradition underway in other disciplines, the challenge presented by this line of critics begins with the assertion that the conventional approach to security is premised on a dubious understanding of the nature of the state, the international system and the connections between the two. Specifically, the conventional 'social contract' interpretation of the state, which holds the establishment of the state derives partially from the need among groups of individuals for greater security, is premised upon the belief that rational individuals trade some freedom of action to the supra state in exchange for a promise of protection and security from external threats and the regulation of internecine struggles.<sup>35</sup> This interpretation holds that individuals have voluntarily and willingly opted into a contract for the arrangement of their communities as states, and in so doing, people have endowed some central organ a monopoly of political authority and power.<sup>36</sup> It is on the basis of this contract theory and the belief that states really do provide security and render their citizens more secure that

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<sup>35</sup> Simon Dalby, "Geopolitical Discourse: The Soviet Union As Other," *Alternatives XIII* (1988), p 420.

<sup>36</sup> William Bloom, *Personal identity, national identity and international relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 118-120.

the state and governing body may rest a claim to legitimacy.<sup>37</sup> This is an assumption about the state, however, that is increasingly considered ripe with flaws.<sup>38</sup> The people did not 'will' the state, argues Bloom and, "any ideas of a mass opting into a social contract to create the state is mythical and not based in any historical realities."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, this is but one of many contending theories concerning the establishment of the state. In contrast, the structuralist perspective of the state, also referred to as the Marxist or maximal view, stipulates class, not states, to be the most useful unit of analysis in understanding the global structure. Here it is contended that "the nation-state arose in Western Europe as a power political superstructure to protect and bolster feudal, and then bourgeois, class interests... [thus] the state is a temporary political arrangement manifested by the power needs of the ruling bourgeois class."<sup>40</sup>

Of course, one need not be a critic of social contract theory or a disciple of Marx to recognize that states are historical constructs significantly influenced by time and place, that they have quite possibly been diminishing in significance in recent years in light of the growing interdependence of nations around the globe and that they are, some even deign to suggest, less immediately relevant on the global stage. It is undeniably accurate to suggest that the sovereign political entities which emerged from the decaying feudal hierarchies of the late sixteenth century and which are so familiar today are by no means necessarily permanent; they have not and need not always be a fixture of the international

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<sup>37</sup> Dalby, "Security, Modernity, Ecology..." *op. cite.*, note 20, p. 102.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Bloom, *op. cite.*, note 36, p. 118.

<sup>40</sup> For more on this, see Bloom, above, pp. 118-120.

system. This is a fact which is often overlooked by theories of international relations. But by de-historicizing states, these theories render them permanent, and in so doing tie the analysis, as Dalby notes, "to the structuralist presumptions of an unchanging anarchy and the permanence of the state security problem."<sup>41</sup> Yet, the wisdom of an analysis that renders states permanent and unchanging becomes doubly dubious in the face of widely acknowledged increasing global interdependence. It was long ago noted that states were not the autonomous and independent forces they had once been considered to be, but were "powerfully affected by economic policies of other countries."<sup>42</sup> Inklings of at least an unconscious awareness of the interdependent nature of the economies of states is evident as far back as the deliberations at Bretton Woods in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Perhaps in response to the OPEC crisis, the early 1970s witnessed a growing concern over the significance of the transnational activity among societal actors, leading a new generation of scholars to take "... a new look at how the state, defined as the institutionalized apparatus of rule, operated."<sup>43</sup> Theories and discourse concerning global economic interdependence has since been widely recognized and developed, at least in international political economy circles, and particularly in the work of Keohane and Nye.<sup>44</sup> Some of the literature also examined the implications of increasing economic interdependence among nations for security, but with dichotomous results. The emerging arguments, as Beverly Crawford has written, "can be simply stated: interdependence reduces threats because it weakens incentives for military conquest. But interdependence

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<sup>41</sup> Dalby, "Security, Modernity, Ecology..." *op. cite*, note 20, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> Jessica Tuchman Matthews, "Redefining Security," *Foreign Affairs*, (vol. 68, no. 2, 1989), p. 162.

<sup>43</sup> MJ Peterson, "Transnational Activity, International Society and World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (21:3, Winter 1992), p. 373.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977).

increases vulnerabilities and threatens to weaken the state because military resources are increasingly found in global commercial markets over which states have little control.”<sup>45</sup>

Acknowledgment of the military aspect of interdependence was prompted in considerable measure by the unfolding of events during and immediately after the Cuban Missile Crisis; an event which Haftendorn credits as a crucial catalyst to forcing recognition “that the ‘security dilemma,’ - that an increase in one state’s security decreases the security of others - was not necessarily a zero-sum game but could be overcome by cooperative strategies.”<sup>46</sup> It led to the recognition that states, in the shadow of a nuclear holocaust, have mutual interests in survival. Under the skewed conditions of nuclear vulnerability, the security of all states is directly linked with one another.<sup>47</sup>

Tied to the issue of increasing interdependence and the diminishing relevance of states on the global stage is the decreasing significance of the state as a source of identity for citizens, yet another classic legitimizing function of the modern state which has come under fire. The conventional interpretation of the state as the indispensable source of identity for members of a community asserts that:

... the state is the official centre of self-conscious collective action. It is the institution of last recourse and highest appeal, the one that symbolizes what *we* are, for better or for worse, and the one that enacts what we seek to be through its institutions of accountability and effectivity. It is the sovereign

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<sup>45</sup> Beverly Crawford, “The New Security Dilemma Under International Economic Interdependence,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (vol. 23, no. 1, 1994), p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Helga Haftendorn, “The Security Puzzle: Theory-Building and Discipline-Building in International Security,” *International Studies Quarterly* (1991), p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

place within which the highest internal laws and policies are enacted and from which strategies toward external and nonstate peoples proceed.<sup>48</sup>

While there may be other sites of identity - the family, religious entities, corporations, and the like - much political philosophy and theorizing about international relations is dependent upon acceptance of the fact that states are the agent of identity for the individual.

Identity formation also has implications for security. The establishment of the state often embodies systems of spatial exclusion tied ineluctably to notions of identity, of Self and Other, and sameness/difference. Thus, security, especially 'national security,' is understood in terms of protection against the outsider, and framed in terms of the binary metaphysics found in Western culture, such as: inside/outside, us/them, and community/anarchy.<sup>49</sup> In this way, security may be understood as an act of spatial exclusion; outside a territorially demarcated space, or state, is the Other inhabiting some other territory, and against which the Self, or the State, must be made secure.<sup>50</sup>

This resolution of the problems of perception, however, is limited in a number of important respects. The state, arguably, is no longer the dominant source of identity among individuals on the planet and recent changes on the global front have profoundly altered the ability of citizens anywhere to speak coherently of an identity with a particular

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<sup>48</sup> William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 201.

<sup>49</sup> Simon Dalby, "American security discourse: the persistence of geopolitics," *Political Geography Quarterly* (vol. 9, no. 2, April 1990), p. 107.

<sup>50</sup> Simon Dalby, "Geopolitical Discourse: The Soviet Union as Other," *Alternatives XIII* (1988), p. 420.

state developed against a clearly defined 'other.' In the event of a nuclear war, for example, critics ask who is the 'we' and who would be the 'other' to be defended against?<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the challenge to the assumption of the centrality of states within international relations and security discourse, there are also those who take issue with the idea that the background against which the state operates is necessarily the arena of anarchy and competitive self-help that so much of the literature would appear to suggest, or that it is somehow akin to the state of nature among individuals described by Hobbes. Despite the regular identification of a Hobbesian tradition in the field, Hobbes himself wrote very little explicitly on the subject himself and the analogy between individuals and state is one which Walker suggests Hobbes himself would have denied.<sup>52</sup> It is also one that other international relations theorists have disputed. Buzan, for example, has declared that while it is possible to acknowledge that states exist within a system of anarchy, this "does not necessarily, or even probably merit the Hobbesian implications of disorder and chaos that attach to the concept of anarchy as applied to the relations among individual human beings."<sup>53</sup> Walker further adds: "Given that states are not as vulnerable as individuals, prudence and fear suggest not the necessity of a global Leviathan but the need for some rules of coexistence; principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, for example, or

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<sup>51</sup> Bradley Klein, "How the West Was One: Representational Politics of NATO," *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 34, no.3, September 1991), p. 321.

<sup>52</sup> R.B.J. Walker, "Realism, Change and International Political Theory," *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 31, 1987), p. 78.

<sup>53</sup> Barry Buzan, "Is International Security Possible?" in Ken Booth, ed., *New Thinking About Strategy and International Security* (London: Harper and Collins, 1991), p. 32.

mechanisms like the balance of power.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, Buzan, Bull and others are optimistic about the ability of order and a measure of cooperation to develop within the system depending on the level of maturity of the states.

Doubt is also cast upon the assumption that the international system is inherently war-prone and that peace and security are attainable only *within* states. Critics suggest the belief that conflict is endemic to the system to be misleading, even erroneous. Ken Booth, for example, contends that war is a cultural phenomenon, varying according to time and societal influences. In *New Thinking about Strategy and International Security*, he states that the ‘nature’ of war has been determined “by how we have conceived it, and how we have conceived it largely determines the way we are prepared (or not) to fight it.”<sup>55</sup> Alfred Stoesinger, in *The Causes of Wars*, argues along similar lines claiming that war is not only a learned phenomenon, but one that may be unlearned.<sup>56</sup> Carolyn Stephanson, in turn, points out that contrary evidence to the belief that violent conflict is inevitable in relations between societies was procured years ago in the work of Margaret Mead, who observed: “War was not a feature of all societies and thus did not necessarily have to be a feature of ours by some biological tenet of human nature.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Walker, *op. cite.*, note 52, p. 73.

<sup>55</sup> Ken Booth, *New Thinking about Strategy and International Security* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), p. 355.

<sup>56</sup> John D. Stoesinger, *Why Nations go to War*, (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1985).

<sup>57</sup> Carolyn Stephanson, “The Need for Alternative Forms of Security: Crisis and Opportunities,” *Alternatives* (vol. XIII, 1988), p. 66.

A final, and related, challenge to the conventional approach to security within international relations discourse lies with the question 'security from what?' In other words, aside from raising questions about 'whose security,' or 'security of what,' it is also possible to challenge prevailing conceptions concerning the nature of the threat to the state. Although classic security discourse posits the threat of military aggression and violence as the chief concern, it has been widely recognized that "...military power is not the only source of national security, and military threats are not the only dangers that states face."<sup>58</sup> Traditionally, notes Tickner, "security threats have been defined as threats to national boundaries but, since the end of the process of decolonization, there have been relatively few changes in international boundaries in spite of the large number of military conflicts."<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, it has been noted by a diversity of scholars that interstate violence has been on the wane in the post-war period, at least in the Northern hemisphere. In the past half century, in fact, not a single war has broken out between the major powers. While some attribute this to the possession of nuclear weapons by these nations, or alternately to the spread of democracy and the belief that democratic states do not war with one another it is worth noting that inter-state violence between non-nuclear states has been diminishing at a similar pace.<sup>60</sup> This is not to deny the existence of conflict, only to note that there has largely been internal insurgencies and rebellions as opposed to wars between states. "Despite popular belief to the contrary," notes Carolyn Thomas, "internal

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 35, 1991), p. 213.

<sup>59</sup> Tickner, *op. cite.*, note 21, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> John Mueller, "The Obsolescence of Major War," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* (vol. 21, no. 3, 1990), pp. 321-328.

challenges to political authority are a more frequent cause of military conflict in the Third World than border disputes.”<sup>61</sup>

This being the case, many have been led to conclude that despite the traditional emphasis on inter-state military threats, the real threat to individuals, states and the international system stems from more numerous and diverse sources than conventionally conceived. “It is social injustice, economic malaise and environmental decline that lead independently and interdependently, to frustration, conflict and often-times violence.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the persistence of a focus on military issues may blind analysts to the many and varied non-military issues that threaten the lives of individuals and often function to divert resources from these more pressing areas. Comments Walker: “To compare statistics on military spending with those on the fate of the world’s children is to become acutely aware that something is seriously wrong with a concept of security predicated upon the needs of states alone.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, while the necessity to protect against an outside threat still looms large, current understandings of the nature of that threat must reflect the varied nature of the source of these threats.

Of increasingly growing significance in recent years are environmental threats. It has become glaringly apparent over the last decade that the lives of individuals and states

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<sup>61</sup> Caroline Thomas, “ “ in Ken Booth, ed. *New Thinking About Security and International Security* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), p. 268 or 213.

<sup>62</sup> Burns H. Weston, ed., *Towards Nuclear Disarmament and Global Security: A Search for Alternatives* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), p. 97.

<sup>63</sup> R.B.J. Walker, “Security, Sovereignty and the Challenge of World Politics,” Paper prepared for inclusion in Michael Klare and Daniel Thomas, editors, *World Security at Century’s End* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990/1991), p. 2.

are being gravely threatened by environmental changes. Humans are extremely dependent upon a healthy physical environment for their survival. Clean air and water, uncontaminated food supplies, an ozone layer to shield damaging ultraviolet radiation and ecosystem that has not been transformed into desert by ill-guided harvesting and land-clearing techniques are but a few of the necessities for human life. Environmental degradation, ozone depletion, global warming, the destruction of rain forests, and increasing pollution threaten individuals as much as would war.

States, too, are threatened by environmental changes. Rapid depletion of scarce resources, particularly for the many states in the Third World that rely on primary products for export, threatens to undermine economic performance. Even Western industrialized states are not immune from the changes. Notes Simon Dalby, "The very survival of the United States, and to a lesser extent all industrial economies, depends on the availability of both renewable and non-renewable resources."<sup>64</sup> Moreover, environmental decline and economic problems run the very dire risk of leading directly to conflict, especially when such scarce resources as water must be shared.<sup>65</sup>

States can not afford to ignore these threats. Nor are they able to grapple with them individually. Environmental decline does not adhere to geopolitical boundaries or national borders. The devastation of the rain forest in South America, a major source of the world's oxygen, affects everyone. Under these circumstances, obstinate emphasis on

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<sup>64</sup> Simon Dalby, "Modernity, Ecology and the Dilemmas of Security," Paper presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1992.

<sup>65</sup> Matthews, *op. cite*, note 42, p. 166.

sovereignty, national integrity and the security of the *state*, is thrown into disrepute. As Jessica Tuchman Mathews declared,

Put bluntly, our accepted definition of the limits of national sovereignty as coinciding with national borders is obsolete. The government of Bangladesh, no matter how hard it tries, cannot prevent the tragic floods... Preventing them requires active cooperation from Nepal and India. The government of Canada cannot protect its water resources from acid rain without collaboration with the United States. Eighteen diverse nations share the heavily polluted Mediterranean Sea. Even the Caribbean Islands, as physically isolated as they are, find themselves affected by others' resource management policies as locusts, inadvertently bred through generations of exposure to pesticides and now strong enough to fly all the way from Africa, infest their shores.<sup>66</sup>

The vast majority of environmental and economic problems require joint, regional cooperation.

### **Conclusion**

The criticisms of the conventional understanding of security which surfaced briefly in the 1970s, have re-emerged in the past decade with renewed vigour. Challenges are being launched against the traditional conception from a variety of directions and the intended combined effect of all of which is to cast doubt upon a conceptual schema long held to be indubitable. The overall result is that these critiques operate on a number of parallel planes, all of which represent an attempt to revisit some of the fundamental assumptions of the prevailing orthodoxy. Aside from noting inherent paradoxes in the search for security and the search for an effective defence, there are those who question the ability of the state to achieve security in any substantive sense in light of the advent of

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<sup>66</sup> Mathews, *op. cite.*, note 44, p. 174.

nuclear weapons and the extent to which these weapons only function to exacerbate pre-existing security problems, particularly the security and defence dilemmas. Still others aim their attack more broadly and use the challenge to security discourse as an extension of their crusade against modernity. As such, they refuse to restrict their critique to an investigation of the contradictions inherent within the traditional framework, but instead question the very framework itself. The questions of 'whose security' and 'security from what,' for example, are intended to strike at the very heart of the prevailing orthodoxy, and take aim at both the state-centric nature of the prevailing orthodoxy and the traditional preoccupation with military threats.

Together, these criticisms present a multiple and varied challenge; one that carries the potential to disrupt profoundly the conventional discourse on security. If a novel alternative is to be adopted, however, and a 'new and improved' understanding of security put in the place of the old, this new approach will also have to acknowledge this critique and its proposals for reform will necessarily have to incorporate some of these challenges if an improvement over past practice is to be achieved. These critiques, therefore, represent the backdrop against which both the past and future conceptions of security must be evaluated.

### Chapter 3

#### Re-Writing the Preface

In a recent issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Robert Kaplan came to the following conclusion: "It is time to understand 'the environment' for what it is: *the* national security issue of the 21st Century."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the environment is often heralded as the major issue on the global agenda and one of the most potent and pressing issues facing humanity. "The world today," it has been argued, "is either in the early stages of an Environmental Revolution or on the verge of environmental collapse and economic decline."<sup>2</sup> Reports, documents, commissioned papers, articles and books portray a planet at risk. The ozone layer is perforated, the human population burgeoning, plant and animal species rapidly disappearing, forests shrinking and deserts spreading. Accounts of industrial accidents, chemical spills and mass disasters command newspaper headlines around the globe. All readily available indicators would seem to suggest that, in the absence of remarkable global change or technological progress, humanity is veering dangerously close to the brink of ecological disaster.

Recognition of the gravity of environmental damage and the implications this holds for humanity in the future, coupled with the oft-held perception that the current approach to national security is misguided and no longer applicable to the present international

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly*, (February 1994), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Lester Brown, *State of the World: A World Watch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991).

environment, has prompted a number of analysts and practitioners to attempt to rethink conventional approaches to security. In some cases, attempts have been made to establish a link between security and the environment, and many, like Kaplan, have concluded that a fundamental re-evaluation of the conventional approach to both security and the environment is in order; a conclusion espoused with ever increasing frequency in recent years. Jessica Tuchman Mathews, for example, declared in 1989: "The 1990s will demand a redefinition of what constitutes security."<sup>3</sup> Echoing this sentiment, Boyce Richardson commented: "In the last few years, people almost everywhere have begun to realize that long-term changes to the basic elements on which all life depends may prove as threatening to human security as nuclear war and military aggression..."<sup>4</sup> "No longer the domain of fringe interests," chimed in yet another, "the environment has become the national security issue of the 20th Century. Our future will depend on our response to increasing environmental scarcity, crime, over-population and tribal conflict."<sup>5</sup> Even the US Administration under Clinton has jumped on the bandwagon, adopting 'environmental security' as part of the American national security doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

But while advocates of a redefinition of security in favour of the environment abound, it has yet to be resolved whether this is a wise, or even appropriate resolution, to

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<sup>3</sup> Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security," *Foreign Affairs*, (vol. 68, no. 2, 1989), p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Boyce Richardson, "Time to Change: Canada's Place in World Crisis," *Peace and Security* (vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1990), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel Roome, "Facts of Life," *Acumen* (January/ February 1995), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> According to Gareth Porter, "the Bush Administration was the first to acknowledge environmental security as part of overall US security. A 1991 Presidential document summarizing US national security policy defined US national security objectives to include 'assuring the sustainability and environmental security of the planet...' The Clinton Administration has integrated environmental security even further into its national security policy." in Gareth Porter, "Environmental Security as a National Security Issue," *Current History*, (May 1995), p. 218.

the problems associated with the conventional approach to environmental concerns and those with the conventional approach to security. Not surprisingly, much of the controversy surrounding the debate concerning links between the environment and security hails from a lack of conceptual clarity within the discussion; paradoxically, the same problem that has haunted past dominant approaches to the concept of security itself. The purpose here, therefore, is to outline some of the arguments put forward by proponents of linking the environment and security with a view to categorizing the various approaches such that they may be more easily evaluated.

### **The Rise of the Environment as an Issue on the Global Agenda**

Before embarking on an examination of the various proposals for reform currently being floated in policy and academic circles, it is worth briefly reviewing some of the reasons behind the recent rise in saliency of the environment on the international agenda as well as outlining the significance and implications that environmental degradation and change hold for humanity.

Recognition of the damage wreaked by human development on a fragile ecosystem is not unique to this decade, nor even to this century. Indeed, the establishment of Yellowstone Park in the United States in 1878, the first national park ever to be ordained as such, is indicative of the awareness of the need for environmental conservation that

dates back well over a century.<sup>7</sup> A series of similar efforts dot the history books since then, each of which contributed to a creeping awareness of global environmental deterioration.

Among the more significant of these was the 1964 publication, *The Silent Spring*, by an American journalist, Rachel Carson.<sup>8</sup> Intended to alert the Western world to the deleterious effects on the environment of many efforts, well-intentioned though they may be, to control and dominate nature, the book surveyed the damage caused by the use of chemical pesticides and other contaminants on the water, soil and air. The book augured Carson the label 'the morning star of environmentalism,' marked a watershed in environmental literature, and acted as the print precursor to the environmental movement which was to emerge later in the United States.<sup>9</sup> As the first successful effort to alert the general public to environmental degradation, it also transformed what had long been a largely reactive and 'conservationist' approach to the environment into the more proactive, 'protection' oriented approach prominent today.<sup>10</sup>

Recognition within international governmental circles was slower to follow. Global institutional acknowledgment first appeared in 1972 with the United Nations sponsored Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm. Organized to discuss ways in

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<sup>7</sup> See Karin Scapple, "Do International Environmental Policies Really Protect the Environment? A Framework for Analyzing Treaties," Paper presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the International Studies Association, Acapulco, Mexico, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Neville Brown, "Climate, ecology and international security," (1995), p. 525

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 525.

<sup>10</sup> Sheldon Kamienecki, *Environmental Politics in the International Arena* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 30.

that members states might cooperate to protect the environment, the eventual outcome from the conference was the establishment of the United Nations Environmental Protection Agency. This was followed in 1983 with the establishment of the World Commission on the Environment and Development that was created to examine the relationship between the environment and the economic development.

Still, the environmental movement was slow to gather momentum. Despite official UN recognition and the OPEC oil crisis of the mid-1970s, ecological issues were generally unsuccessful in garnering public attention until the latter half of the 1980s. This reorientation in perception stemmed in part as a result of the scorching heat and drought that plagued much of the US mid-West during the summer of 1988; the dry spell and heat wave lent credence to reports emanating from the scientific community regarding global climate change and in so doing captured media headlines. This was coupled significantly, and almost simultaneously, with the demise of the Cold War the following year. The waning of the ideological and military confrontation that had gripped the two Superpowers and much of the West for so many decades permitted space on the international agenda to be opened for discussions of the environment.<sup>11</sup>

These two developments alone, however intrinsic though they may have been, were not sufficient in terms of explaining the rise of environmental awareness. As one analyst notes: “these were largely circumstantial and increased awareness and saliency was

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Homer-Dixon, “On the Threshold, Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict,” *International Security* (vol. 16, no. 2, Fall 1991), p. 79.

in fact dependent on a third factor, notably the shift over the last decade in the scientific community's perception of the global environment."<sup>12</sup> Acknowledgment of the significance of a number of scientific discoveries over the past couple of decades forced deepened cognizance of the potentially dangerous changes underway in the global biosphere.

Chief among the discoveries catapulting environmental issues onto centre stage and forcing a shift in perception was the discovery of a hole in the ozone layer surrounding the earth. In the early 1970s, two scientists at the University of California at Berkeley, Sherwood Rowland and Mario Molina, began to express concern over the effects of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) on the earth's atmosphere. CFCs, inadvertently discovered in 1928 and found to be extremely versatile and inexpensive to produce, came to be indispensable, particularly in the West, in the production of such commonly used goods as Styrofoam cups, spray cans, refrigerators, air conditioners, and soft seat cushions.<sup>13</sup> Within a decade of this initial expression of concern, British scientists studying the region over Antarctica confirmed the damage wreaked by CFCs on the atmosphere. By 1987, air samples gathered from the stratosphere revealed alarmingly high levels of chlorine, the ozone-destroying component of CFCs. In some cases, as much as 95% of the ozone had disappeared.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Cynthia Pollock Shea, "Mending the Earth's Shield," in Lester Brown, ed., *The World Watch reader on Global Environmental Issues* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Concern over ozone depletion led over 20 nations in 1987 to gather in Montreal for the Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone layer. Although the Protocol signed upon conclusion of that meeting was regarded, at the time, as a remarkable diplomatic achievement, being rapidly prepared and signed by 24 of the nations in attendance, "... the ink had hardly dried when new studies revealed that the erosion of this vital shield [was] occurring far more rapidly and [was] more widespread than had been anticipated. Indeed, more depletion has already taken place than negotiators assumed would happen in the next 100 years."<sup>15</sup>

This alarming evidence prompted subsequent meetings and more stringent protocols. Despite these, however, the prospects look grim. Because CFC gases have life-spans ranging from 75 to 380 years, their effects, like nuclear waste, remain on-going.<sup>16</sup>

Writes Shea,

Under normal conditions, chemical reactions triggered by sunlight continuously destroy and replenish ozone. But humanity has upset that balance with the introduction of chlorine - and bromine - containing chemicals that can survive intact in the atmosphere for a century. When these compounds do breakdown, each chlorine and bromine atom can destroy tens of thousands of ozone molecules.<sup>17</sup>

The repercussions of a thinning ozone layer for humanity are significant. On the one hand, it would lead to much hotter temperatures and a dramatic increase in the intensity of the sun's rays. "Exposure resulting from an ozone loss of 10%," notes one observer, "would correspond to moving 30 degrees closer in latitude to the equator - like

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Caldicott, *If you love this planet: a plan to heal the earth* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Shea, *op. cite.*, note 13, p. 62.

moving New York City to Caracas, Venezuela.”<sup>18</sup> But mere alteration in temperatures is but one potential occurrence stemming from a thinning ozone. Precipitation patterns are also likely to undergo change and sea levels may rise. Further, human health is expected to suffer since the ozone layer, acting similarly to a chemical shield over the earth’s surface, “has the singular facility to absorb much of the potentially dangerous ultraviolet B radiation so that a thinning of the ozone layer allows more UV-B radiation to reach the earth’s surface.”<sup>19</sup> Greater exposure to ultraviolet light is believed to depress the immune system and to increase rates of skin cancer and cataracts.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the US Environmental Protection Agency predicted 200,000 additional deaths from skin cancer in the US alone over the next decade.<sup>21</sup> Since ultraviolet light kills living cells, including all multicellular life, from plants to animals to humans, greater exposure, in a worst case scenario, could translate into the end of life on earth.

Serious as the thinning of the ozone layer may be in and of itself, it is equally significant in the fact that it “illustrates a worrisome feature of man’s newfound ability to cause global change. It is almost impossible to predict accurately the long term impact of new chemicals or processes on the environment.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, CFCs had been thoroughly tested when first discovered and found to be benign. Their effect, however, on the earth’s stratosphere never entered into consideration.<sup>23</sup> Also disconcerting is the fact that the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Caldicott, *op. cite.*, note 19, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Matthews, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 171.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

technology currently exists to eliminate CFC and halon emissions almost entirely; the challenge is in manufacturing the political will to do so.<sup>24</sup> As leaders in developing countries continue to assuage their populations with promises of tokens of modernization, especially such CFC producing commodities as refrigerators and air conditioning, hopes of convincing either the developed nations - happily accustomed to many of these conveniences - or developing nations - anxious to acquire them - to limit the use CFCs does not look promising.

Following closely upon the heels of the discovery of a hole in the ozone layer, and closely linked to this problem, is the possibility of global climactic change, or global warming. The earth's atmosphere is a result of a tenuous balance between energy, chemicals and physical phenomena.<sup>25</sup> The possibility that humans might upset this balance was proposed as early as 1896 by a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius. Observing that some substances such as coal, oil and natural gas, release carbon dioxide as a result of combustion, Arrhenius theorised that "the rapid increase in the use of coal in Europe during the Industrial Revolution would increase carbon dioxide concentrations and cause a gradual rise in global temperatures."<sup>26</sup> Research conducted in the 1970s began to confirm Arrhenius' fears. It was not until November, 1985, however, in a meeting in Villach, Austria, that it was determined that "climatic warming, as a result of emissions caused by

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<sup>24</sup> Shea, *op. cite.*, note 13, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Flavin, "The Heat is On," in Lester Brown ed., *op. cite.*, note 13, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

human activity, was in all probability, a reality and that its effects were potentially threatening for many parts of the Earth.”<sup>27</sup>

Sometimes called the ‘greenhouse effect,’ global warming refers to the potential for global temperature change induced from an excess of emissions and gases trapped in the air surrounding the planet. One of the culprits contributing to global warming are CFCs, which, aside from eating holes in the ozone, account for 15 to 20% of potential changes in the earth’s atmosphere.<sup>28</sup> CFCs, however, comprise but a small percentage of the heat-trapping gases. Far more common than CFC in the earth’s atmosphere is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>); a compound released into the air by the burning of fossil fuels - coal, oil, and natural gas - the burning of trees, the decay of organic matter, and the exhale of animals and mammals. The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased dramatically over the last few decades. According to one source, “Since the late nineteenth century, the content of carbon dioxide in the air has increased by 25%. Although this gas makes up less than 1% of the earth’s atmosphere, it promises to have devastating effects on the global climate over the next 25-50 years.”<sup>29</sup>

The effects of global warming remain controversial. Some predict that “within fifty years, the ‘effective carbon dioxide concentration’ (CO<sub>2</sub> and trace gases) will probably be twice that of pre-industrial levels, raising global temperatures 1.5 to 5.5° C.”<sup>30</sup> Others

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<sup>27</sup> Kamienecki, *op. cite.*, note 10, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Flavin, *op. cite.*, note 25, p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> Caldicott, *op. cite.*, note 19, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

argue that the rise in temperature will be closer to 10 C. Still others believe the temperature is more likely to fall several degrees. The difficulty in prediction stems from the assortment of scientific variables involved, many of which are not well understood.<sup>31</sup> But even if only the most conservative forecast came to pass, the effect promises to be dramatic. Notes Caldicott, "If global heating were at the lower predicted level, it would match the 5 C warming associated with the end of the last ice age, 18,000 years ago. But this change would take place ten to a hundred times faster."<sup>32</sup> The accompanying changes in climate are likely to induce extensive damage in tropical forests, causing the extinction of any number of tropical plants and animals, and to transform mass farming areas in the United States, Canada, Russia and Ukraine into dust bowls. Sea levels are predicted to rise as polar ice caps melt, submerging cities around the world. Because close to one third of the world's population is currently situated within sixty kilometers of the sea, rising sea levels promise to cause severe dislocation in urban and rural populations.<sup>33</sup> For countries such as the United States, the effect could be to inundate low-lying coastal plains, erode shorelines, increase salinity of drinking water aquifers and submerge coastal wetlands.<sup>34</sup> In other parts of the globe, such as Bangladesh, "a three foot rise would inundate 11.5% of the country's land area, displace 9% of the 112.3 million people in this densely populated country and threaten 8% of the annual GNP."<sup>35</sup> Some countries, such as the Maldives, might disappear entirely, while semi-arid regions, such as much of sub-Saharan Africa,

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> David A. Wirth, "Climate Chaos," *Foreign Policy* (No. 74, Spring 1989), p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

would suffer from lower rainfall.<sup>36</sup> Natural disasters, such as floods and storms, could easily become the norm, and the net effect of all of this would likely be the displacement of huge sections of the population, unleashing the potential for migrant and refugee problems. Some even suggest that climate disruption of this kind is already evident. “Global temperatures in 1988 were at or near the record for the period of instrumental data,” Wirth documents, “with temperatures elevated by 0.7 F relative to the average for the 30 year period beginning in 1950.”<sup>37</sup> Further, the warmest five years on record this century have all occurred during the 1980s.<sup>38</sup>

Aggravating the problems of both global warming and ozone depletion is the felling and burning of trees. Forests, particularly tropical forests, hold enormous stores of carbon. As these are cleared and burned, the carbon is released into the air in the form of carbon dioxide, thereby adding to the gases contributing to global warming. Scientists and ecologists estimate this deforestation rate to contribute between 7 and 31 percent of the carbon dioxide released by humanity each year.<sup>39</sup>

Exacerbating global warming, however, is but part of the environmental problems unleashed by deforestation. This process also leads directly to the destruction of soil and desertification. Historic examples of this abound. Northern Africa, for example,

... was once the fertile granary of the Roman Empire and now is largely a desert or near-desert whose people are fed with the aid of food imports

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Alan Durning, “Cradles of Life,” in Brown ed., *op. cite.*, note 13, p. 169-170.

from the US. Land once productive was eroded by continuous cropping and over-grazing until much of it would no longer sustain agriculture.<sup>40</sup>

Similar scenarios are being played out all over the globe, from the fragmented ecosystems in British Columbia and the clear cut plots in Oregon to the burnt stubble ruins of tropical rainforests in Brazil and Southern Asia to the diminished biological diversity in Germany. Forests are rapidly dwindling and tropical forests, in particular, are estimated to be disappearing at the rate of sixty acres per minute; forests which are home to 50 to 80 percent of the worlds species of plants and animals.<sup>41</sup> As of the mid-1980s, "15 million acres of tropical rainforest were lost annually to the chain saw and torch, with another 9 million disturbed or degraded by careless logging."<sup>42</sup> In the Ivory Coast and Madagascar over 80% of forest has been irreversibly destroyed.<sup>43</sup> The Philippines which, at the turn of the century, boasted 16 million hectares of virgin and new forest, now has less than a million hectares remaining.<sup>44</sup> Even in more temperate zones, similar devastation is occurring. The coastal forest of British Columbia "is given 15 years before it is wiped out from logging, and the less than 5 percent of the United States' ancient groves that still exist face rapid fragmentation and extinction."<sup>45</sup> Fifty percent of Germany's Black Forest has been destroyed.<sup>46</sup> Timber companies in Canada and Russia have been forced into the

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<sup>40</sup> Neville Brown, *The Future Global Challenge: A Predictive Study of World Security, 1977-1990* (New York, NY: Crane Russak & Company, Inc., 1977), p. 100-101.

<sup>41</sup> Calidcott, *op. cite.*, note 19, p. 51.

<sup>42</sup> Durning, *op. cite.*, note 39, p. 151.

<sup>43</sup> Weiszacker, *op. cite.*, note 27, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Change and Human Security," *Behind the Headlines*. (vol. 48, no. 3, Spring 1991), p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> John C. Ryan, "Sustainable Forestry," in Brown ed., *op. cite.*, note 13, p. 191.

<sup>46</sup> Caldicott, *op. cite.*, note 19, p. 53.

more remote reaches of their forests, while US loggers have had to relocate from the Northwest to the Southeast of the country.<sup>47</sup>

The causes of this deforestation are diverse. Cattle ranchers and desperate peasants engage in slash and burn techniques in South America's rainforests in a pitiful attempt to eke a meager living from the land; a practice which currently ranks as the primary cause of deforestation in the world.<sup>48</sup> Commercial logging cashes in as the second most serious cause. Also included in the list of culprit activities is the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals, used in an effort to expand agricultural production. The run-off from these contaminants kills forests, lakes and rivers. Acid rain is an additional, if far more indirect, contributor to deforestation. This 'acid rain' is the result of a combining of atmospheric water vapor with sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide released into the air on a regular basis as a result of industrialization. This combination leads to the production of an acid that is returned to the earth in the form of snow, rain, and fog, and in the process, destroys trees and lakes.

Destruction of the forests and rainforest carry serious ramifications. Not only does it represent the destruction of the earth's second biggest air-renewing lung, but it disrupts entire ecosystems in huge sections of the world. As Mathews notes:

Tropical forests are fragile ecosystems, extremely vulnerable to human disruption. Once disturbed, the entire ecosystem can unravel. The loss of the trees causes the interruption of nutrient cycling above and below the soil, the soil loses fertility, plant and animal species lose their inhabitants and become extinct, and acute fuel wood shortages appear... Trace through

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<sup>47</sup> Ryan, *op. cite.*, note 45, p. 191.

<sup>48</sup> Caldicott, *op. cite.*, note 19, p. 49.

its effects on agriculture, energy supply and water resources, tropical deforestation impoverishes about a billion people.<sup>49</sup>

These forests are home to over half of all species on earth, many of which lay undiscovered, unstudied and unnamed. They are also an important source of food, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and industry. Notes Porter: "Biological diversity is one of humankind's chief resources for coping with diseases and other unexpected natural changes; its loss would dramatically reduce the chances of discovering natural substances that might hold the cure for existing and future diseases."<sup>50</sup> The implications of the destruction of these as of yet undiscovered medicinal plants, animal species and potential resources is virtually impossible to estimate. Consequently, destruction of forest in the remote regions of Brazil or anywhere else affects not only Brazilians, but all of humanity.<sup>51</sup>

Equally significant to all of these developments are problems associated with a growing global population. Dire warnings as to the limits of human growth were first sounded more than 2,000 years ago by the Chinese philosopher Han Fei. "Nowadays," he observed, "people don't consider five children to be too many. But if each of those five children goes on to have five more, the grandfather will be blessed with 25 grandchildren before he dies. The result will be more people with less goods to use, and more labour with less food to share."<sup>52</sup> Fei's predictions found an echo in the West several centuries later with the publication in 1789 of a gloomy treatise by Thomas Malthus. Observing the

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<sup>49</sup> Matthews, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 165.

<sup>50</sup> Porter, *op. cite.*, note 6, p. 219.

<sup>51</sup> Kamienecki, *op. cite.*, note 10, p. 46.

<sup>52</sup> Vaclav Smil, "Energy and the Environment: Challenges for the Pacific Rim," *Issues for APEC*, (Series No. 1, APEC Study Centre in Canada, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada), p. 2.

population to be reproducing exponentially against the backdrop of a food supply which remained constant, Malthus predicted severe food shortages, famine, disease and death at some point in the future.

The predictions of Fei, Malthus, and others of a similar bent were widely perceived to have been proven wrong in many countries in the West. As industrialization advanced in European countries and North America, the process was accompanied by both a decline in death and birth rate that subsequently afforded a stabilization of the population. A repeat performance of this demographic transition was expected in poorer countries as they embarked on a similar path of development. Improved sanitation and the benefits associated with the introduction of western medicine, particularly widespread inoculations against disease, went a long way in lowering the death rate and averting predicted mass famines. The accompanying reduction in birth rates, however, has yet to materialize with the result that the population of most Third World countries continues its unprecedented rate of expansion.

While a combination of advances in technology and the agrifood industry, improved education, and a rise in wealth helped to reduce average family size and total population growth in some countries, other countries have not been nearly as successful. In fact, population growth in some of the world's most populous countries has only been marginally affected. India and China, for example, two countries which account for

roughly 40% of world population, have population totals that are rising, not diminishing, despite the Draconian birth control measures occasionally imposed.<sup>53</sup>

A rapidly expanding population is one of the more urgent global problems of the 20th century, and the inability to curb population growth in huge sections of the globe presents a difficult quandary for today's world. Aside from a clear drain on the world's food supply, an expansionist population is a danger in other ways. In rural areas, increasing population translates into greater strain on the land and the extension of agricultural practices to marginally fertile regions. Meanwhile, in urban centres, the growing number of inhabitants places a burden on city infrastructure and the local government's ability to provide adequate housing, education, and health care. As the Brundtland Commission has noted:

Present rates of population growth cannot continue. They already compromise many governments' abilities to provide education, health care, and food security for people, much less their abilities to raise living standards. This gap between numbers and resources is all the more compelling because so much of the population growth is concentrated in low-income countries, ecologically disadvantaged regions and poor households.<sup>54</sup>

An expanding population growth is equally a hindrance for world conservation efforts, in both the North and South. In less developed countries, it leads to encouragement to over-stress land and natural resource, while in developed nations, it means an increase in wasteful consumption patterns. "An additional person in an industrial country," notes the

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 65.

Brundtland Commission, "consumes far more and places far greater pressure on natural resources than an additional person in the Third World. Consumption patterns and preferences are as important as numbers of consumers in the conservation of resources."<sup>55</sup>

If the global biosphere is to be preserved, then, population growth in both the developing and developed world will need to be curbed, or even reduced, to levels lower than current ones.

### **Linking the Environment and Security**

The utility of the preceding discussion lies in its ability to illustrate the depth of the threat to the global environment and the implications for humanity. Humanity, clearly, is no foreigner to catastrophe; famine, flood, earthquakes and violent storms have wracked communities everywhere for millennia. The difference today, however, is in the dimensions of the problem, in its pervasiveness, or 'excess,' a term used here in keeping with a similar argument made by David Campbell, to signify that which exceeds proper limits and to "highlight the condition in which the many and varied realities of world politics go beyond and overflow the conventional interpretive schemas of International Relations."<sup>56</sup> It refers both to the creation of excess - the excesses of humanity, of industrialization, of human waste - but also the excess of the problem in the sense of exceeding preconceived limits: exceeding national boundaries, exceeding claims to sovereignty, exceeding human

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95.

<sup>56</sup> David Campbell, "Political Excess and the Limit of Imagination," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (vol. 23, no. 2, 1994), p. 366.

demarcation, and exceeding analytical compartmentalization. It has long been recognized that the environment is indifferent to sovereignty and that pollution cares little for national boundaries. It is also clear that these issues are not easily cudged off into a single area for study. It is only because of the traditions of Western thought and for reasons of analytical convenience that environmental issues are examined separately. Yet environmental damage carries ramifications economically, politically and socially, and thus must be understood and examined far more broadly than current tradition allows.

One need not look far for evidence of the excess. The global atmosphere is shared by all; global warming affects the entire planet. Meanwhile, the "mass extinction of species affects all countries through agriculture, medicine, and industry, all of which depend to varying degrees on the genetic resources inherent in wild plants and animals."<sup>57</sup> Equally important is the fact that, as Myers further notes:

As cropland soil erodes, water supplies fail and forests and grasslands are depleted, Third World economies start to falter or stagnate, even to decline. This process can have serious adverse consequences for the United States. Already, more than 40% of American exports go to the Third World, a figure that is projected to reach 50% by the year 2000, provided developing economies achieve sustainable economic growth. In addition, repayment of the approximately \$400 billion in outstanding loans made to the Third World by American banks depends on improved economic performance in the debtor countries.<sup>58</sup>

The implications of these facts are not easily digested: no nation can deal with environmental issues alone and the decision of any one nation to turn a blind eye to environmental destruction will have implications for others.

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<sup>57</sup> Norman Myers, "Environment and Security," *Foreign Policy*, (No. 74, Spring 1989), p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

The current widespread destruction and the 'excess' of environmental damage is both a symptom and a result of unsustainable economic systems adopted with apparent ubiquity the world over. Halting the damage will require, on one hand, "a concerted international agenda and a re-orientation of energy and development priorities in virtually all countries of the world."<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, it will require a simultaneous re-evaluation of dominant modes of thought and a fundamental shift in paradigms. Both of these changes must occur in tandem, for one will not be successful unless accompanied by the other. Both are generally perceived as absolutely fundamental to the future of humanity.

What is unclear, though, is how such a paradigmatic shift might be orchestrated. The general intractability of the problem, however, has in no way inhibited many observers, analysts and scholars from proposing various approaches to this end. A number of different approaches may be observed within the literature, not all of which perceive the nature of the connections between the environment and security in identical ways, and each of which stems from a specific set of concerns, and proposes distinct solutions to the issues viewed as problems. These may be lumped into four general categories, or approaches to the problem that are germane to the orthodox discourse: the military as a cause of environmental problems; the military as the solution to environmental problems; environmental problems as a cause of security concerns traditionally defined; and finally, the environment as a cause of security problems more broadly defined.

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<sup>59</sup> Wirth, *op. cite.*, note 34, p. 4.

The first of these four identifiable strains within the literature remains principally concerned with the effect of military establishments and violent conflict on the biosphere. Warfare has long been observed within environmental circles to be damaging to the environment; not only does it destroy natural vegetation and disturb wildlife, but it is also often responsible for transforming valuable land into wastelands pockmarked with craters, littered with mines, and contaminated with lead and other toxic substances. This damage, serious as it may be, pales in comparison, of course, to the potential for utter devastation unleashed in the event of nuclear war.

Concern over the effects of the military on the environment for this group, however, is not limited to the ecological ramifications of war, conventional or otherwise. Even in the absence of outright conflict, damage to the environment at the hands of the armed forces persists in terms of severe pollution and the mass depletion of resources, and comparisons drawn between the military and civilian sectors reveal damning evidence as far as the armed forces are concerned. Proffering a bevy of recent statistics, Kristen Ostling, a scientist with the Science for Peace Institute, makes the case that even in peacetime the military sector in the West constitutes the single largest polluting group in the world and far outranks its civilian counterpart in terms of demand for scarce human and material resources. Whether measured in terms of energy, material, human resource consumption, land use, or pollution, the effect of the military is clearly devastating and the examples served up by Ostling are sobering. For instance, she notes that not only is the

Pentagon considered the single largest domestic consumer of oil, but in less than one hour, an F-16 can consume almost as much gas as the average American motorist during one year; West German armed forces jets accounted for 58% of air pollutants generated by air traffic over its territory; and 6-10% of global air pollution can be linked to armed forces operations.<sup>60</sup> The World Watch Institute, in turn, has noted that military activity may contribute as much as 10% of the total global release of carbon dioxide.<sup>61</sup>

The depletion of scarce resources, rampant pollution and the devastating ecological ramifications of actual conflict aside, the military is equally guilty, this group notes, for diverting much needed resources from other even more needy sectors. Here, of course, the environment figures prominently among the 'even more needy sectors.' Indeed, admonitions of a world teetering on the brink of environmental disaster went largely unheeded by governments and the public at large throughout most of the 1970s and early 1980s. In contrast, huge concentrations of public funding, scholarship and attention continued to be levied in the name of national security, a situation which became particularly acute during the Reagan era and what has been dubbed the 'Second Cold War.' Yet the destruction of land, sea, and air, through pollution, acid rain, global warming, and deforestation threaten to destroy life on the planet as readily as would war, were it to occur, and therefore appear as compelling a threat to states and humanity as international conflict. Alarmed by this government proclivity consistently to accord greater weight and legitimacy to issues of national security over those of the environment, this

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<sup>60</sup> Kristen Ostling, "The Impact of Militarism," *Peace Magazine* (May/June 1992), p. 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> Nicholas Lenssen, "Confronting Nuclear Waste," in Brown ed., *op. cite.*, note 2, p. 48.

group argues that a fundamental realignment of priorities is in order. Customarily accompanying the demand for a revision of priorities is a clamoring for a greater share of resources; calls which have become more vociferous in recent years with the demise of the Cold War and search for a share of the 'peace dividend' for the environment.<sup>62</sup>

Emerging, perhaps, in response to the condemnation of the military hinted in the earlier approach, and in an attempt to heal the divide between military establishments and environmental groups, is a second group advocating a re-configuration of the relationship between the environment and security. Concerned with similar issues as the first approach, namely the effect of the military on the environment, this perspective flows from a different vantage and is particularly concerned with presenting evidence of cases where the military rather than simply destroying the environment has also acted as 'protector' of the environment.

The example drummed up most frequently to illustrate this benevolence is the US military's management of Yellowstone National Park from 1886 to 1918.<sup>63</sup> Founded in 1872, the establishment of this park was not made without a fair deal of controversy and resistance, for the Park was surrounded by "hunters, trappers and miners who has no respect whatever for the rules and regulations established by the Secretary of the Interior."<sup>64</sup> As poaching increased and some species faced extinction, Congress transferred

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<sup>62</sup> See Caldicott, *op. cite.*, note 19 and Brown, *op. cite.* notes 2 and 13.

<sup>63</sup> Bruce Byers, "Can Armies Save Parks? Armed Forces and the Conservation of Biological Diversity," Paper presented at the 33rd Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Atlanta Georgia, April 1992, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

managerial authority of the Park to the US Army. The military patrolled the park, fought forest fires, and reintroduced bison to the Park, a species which had been disappearing at alarming rates. The Army's management of the Park was widely applauded, indicative of which was the fact that it was invited to control other parks in California, including Yosemite. It was even suggested by an eminent Harvard Professor at the time that 'that forestry should be taught at West Point.'<sup>65</sup>

In addition to conservation efforts in the United States, the military has also been used successfully in Brazil for environmental protection. Arguably, much of the environmental destruction in Brazil comes as a result of early Brazilian military practices. The decision by the government, in 1989, however, to have all branches of the armed forces pledge troops to environmental protection has had a significant impact on deforestation in the country and has meant that today, the Brazilian military is one of the environment's major defenders. Since the adoption of this policy, deforestation has been observed to have dropped to a fifth of what it was during its peak period in the mid-1980s.<sup>66</sup>

Stories concerning the ability of the military to protect the environment may also be found in Africa. In Kenya, thanks to the decision to supplement the number of park rangers with military officers, the elephant population has had, for the first time, an opportunity to recover from poachers. A similar scheme has recently been adopted in

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

Botswana. That country is now currently one of four southern African nations seeking to establish economic rewards for its people through wild life tourism and safaris under the auspices of a USAID program.<sup>67</sup>

A third group to express concern regarding the environment and the nature of its relationship to security does so not from the perspective of the military (or security) on the environment, but of the environment on security. The specific concern here revolves around the effect of environmental degradation and environmentally-induced scarcity on the potential for violent conflict. It is worth noting at the outset that the belief that a relationship exists between resources and international conflict is not new. Hanns Maull, a German political scientist notes that, "the resource dimension of international politics may be as old as international relations themselves."<sup>68</sup> He posits the Trojan War as an example, forwarding the theory that this war was fought over rich deposits of tin, an essential strategic mineral at the time which was used to produce bronze weapons.<sup>69</sup> Ronnie Lipschutz and John P. Holdren add that "a centrepiece among popular conceptions about the determinants of US foreign policy and military policy since World War II... is the notion that a great industrial nation must be prepared to use *military force* to defend its access to foreign sources of raw materials."<sup>70</sup> Further, the idea that great powers will go

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Hanns Maull, "Energy and Resources: the strategic dimensions," p. 500.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Ronnie Lipshutz and John Holdren, "Crossing Borders: Resource Flows, the Global Environment, and International Security," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals* (vol. 21, no. 2, 1990), p. 121.

to war to protect access to foreign resources "... has permeated the literature of foreign relations and international conflict, all the way back to Thucydides."<sup>71</sup>

Historically, the resources in question in these discussions have largely been non-renewable ones such as oil, iron, and other minerals. The extent of the consensus on whether the availability of these resources and a nation's direct access to them will be a motivating factor for the decision on the part of one state to go to war has been marginal, as even the above cited authors most willingly admit. Where the more recent literature may be seen to depart from the traditional vein and to add a new element to the debate is in their argument that *renewable* as opposed to *non-renewable* resources will likely be a factor in conflicts in the future. These authors begin by conceding that the eruption of conflict is unlikely to stem solely from a desire for control or access to non-renewable resources. Access to renewable resources, however, such as water, forests, and agricultural land, is perhaps more plausible and may well prompt state and sub-state level violence. Of significance here is the impact and effect of global environmental change, particularly ozone depletion, global warming, acid rain and deforestation on the supply of indispensable resources - food, water, fuel and forest products.<sup>72</sup> "The nature and magnitude of these [environmental] problems cannot yet be predicted in detail," continue Lipschutz and Holdren,

... what can be said, however, is that the impacts could easily be large enough to entail massive suffering in the countries most severely affected, that the associated stresses could contribute importantly to regional and

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

global tensions, and that the imaginable, if unpredictable actions of governments under such circumstances could lead to armed conflict.<sup>73</sup>

Consequently, they conclude, international relations scholars are well advised to rethink the nature of the relationship between the availability of renewable resources and security.

The concept of scarcity is crucial to most discussions in this category. The concept, according to Ted Gurr, may carry a number of meanings, the most common of which is an economic one, or “a relationship between supply and demand reflected in prices paid in the market place or cost assumed by government and paid for by taxes.”<sup>74</sup> In this sense, Gurr notes, every good is scarce to a certain extent, some being more or less so than others, and it only becomes an issue of political consequence when the availability of the good, or scarcity, results “in substantial and sustained increases in relevant costs.”<sup>75</sup> Equally significant is whether the scarcity translates into perceptions of *increased hardship*.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, societies have often been forced to contend with hardship; both the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s and the economic depression of the 1930s are classic examples. What differentiates these from impending ecological crises, however, is the length and extent of the scarcity. While both the Potato Famine and the Great Depression were generally viewed as temporary conditions, Gurr and most ecologists warn that:

The onset of resource scarcity in the future is more likely to mark a change of state to an enduring condition, one which therefore requires a different pattern of public and private response. Attempts to resume economic growth may have their local success, but the larger effects are likely to be

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>74</sup> Ted Gurr, “On the Consequences of Scarcity and Economic Decline,” *Current History* (May 1995), p. 55.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

malign because they are accomplished at the cost of increased scarcity elsewhere.<sup>77</sup>

If the predictions of ecologist prove correct, the political consequences may be insurmountable and conflict inevitable. In the past, political stability and peace arguably were preserved “by an expanding economy that offered a rising standard of living to most people.”<sup>78</sup> Whether peace and stability may be maintained under more austere conditions is debatable and Gurr is inclined to believe that it will not. “In this negative-sum-situation,” he muses, “there is every reason to think that group conflict over distribution will intensify. It is no longer possible for democratic politicians to broker demands by offering a greater portion of an expanding pie to challenging groups.”<sup>79</sup> Not only is this a potential recipe for protest and rebellion in developed societies, but even more so in Third and Fourth World societies. In these countries,

... further economic decline almost inevitably implies either migration or death for many people. Migration will mean large-scale refugee flow to neighbouring countries whose resources may be only slightly greater than the country from which the refugees are fleeing. Relief efforts can only be palliative, not an enduring solution.<sup>80</sup>

The possibility even exists, he concludes, for the eruption of conflict between the countries of the North and those of the South. The result, argues Gurr, may be that “many poor states may cease to exist as such because of resource wars initiated by domestic sources of

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

supply and uncertainty of foreign sources power to ensure safe and cheap sources of supply in the Third and Fourth Worlds.”<sup>81</sup>

Thomas Homer-Dixon builds on the definition of scarcity as laid out by Gurr to explore the implications of scarcity for violent conflict. In particular, Homer-Dixon is concerned with the effects of environmentally-induced scarcity, or ‘environmental scarcity’; a term he coined to encompass three main factors affecting resources. Predominant among these is ‘environmental change,’ or the “human induced decline in the quantity or quality of a renewable resource that occurs faster than it is renewed by natural processes.”<sup>82</sup> Equally important, he notes, despite its neglect in the literature, is population growth; a factor which reduces the per capita availability of a resource. A final aspect of environmental scarcity is unequal resource distribution; a factor which can, and often does, lead to the concentration of a resource in the hands of a few, thereby subjecting the remaining populace to levels of extreme scarcity.<sup>83</sup> “In other words,” writes Homer Dixon, “reduction in the quantity or quality of a resource shrinks the resource pie, while population growth divides the pie into smaller slices for each individual, and unequal resource distribution means that some groups get disproportionately large slices.”<sup>84</sup>

A number of possible scenarios ensue from growing environmental scarcity. One is ‘resource capture,’ or the situation which would arise when the population growth,

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Homer Dixon, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases,” *International Security* (vol. 19, no. 1, Summer 1994), pp. 8-9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

coupled with a decline in the quantity or quality of renewable resources, encourages certain groups within a society to shift resource distribution in their favour at the expense of poorer and weaker groups.<sup>85</sup> The political events in the Senegal River basin are a typical example of this type of outcome. A second possibility, termed 'eco-marginalization' by Homer Dixon, is exemplified by such countries as the Philippines, the Himalayas, Indonesia, Costa Rica, Brazil and the Sahel. In each case, unequal access to resources, combined with population growth, has led to "migrations to regions that are ecologically fragile, such as steep upland slopes, areas at risk of desertification, and tropical rainforests. High population densities in these areas, combined with a lack of knowledge and capital to protect local resources, cause severe environmental damage and chronic poverty."<sup>86</sup>

The effects of either scenario may be critical, ranging from declining food production and economic stagnation, to population displacement and social disruption. These problems, in the poorest countries, are likely to be catapulted to the extremes. The combined outcome of environmental scarcity, economic decline, and large population movements in these cases is likely to be a weakened government administration, disintegration of internal coherence and the erosion of state legitimacy, and hence, the increasing vulnerability of state authority to violent change.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

All of this carries implications for the developed and developing worlds alike. In developing countries in particular, the progressive enfeeblement of the state may lead to the disintegration of some nations into fragmented, competing renegade units governed by dictators, zealots and warlords, possibly spurring huge outflows of refugees and allowing tribal and ethnic conflict to flourish. The events in India and Bangladesh are a case in point, Homer Dixon argues, where migration has “altered land distribution, economic relations and the balance of political power between religions and ethnic groups and it has triggered inter-group conflict.”<sup>88</sup> In an attempt to avert impending disintegration and descent into chaos, a state might adopt authoritarian tactics, silence opposition and resort to the instigation of military attacks against neighbours in a desperate bid to divert attention from internal problems.<sup>89</sup> The potential for this outcome to emerge is dependent on at least a couple of factors, including the extent to which the state is well-organized and relatively wealthy. The state must be internally cohesive to enable successful mobilization of resources, and wealthy enough to support that authoritarian course once adopted.<sup>90</sup> Prime potential candidates, therefore, include countries such as India and Nigeria, both of which are large, relatively wealthy developing countries with a history of state strength and are dependent on a declining environmental base.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Migration, of course, does not necessarily lead to conflict and chaos, and Homer Dixon is quick to point that out. He notes that not only can it “act as a safety-valve by reducing conflict in the sending area, but some societies are in need of immigrant workers to ease labour shortages, such as Malaysia.” Other countries, meanwhile, have displayed surprisingly peaceful absorption of migrants, such as Canada, the United States, and Thailand. See Dixon, *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

As far as the developed world is concerned, the weakening and potential disintegration of some states carry implications as well. Homer Dixon argues that this may “have detrimental effects on the export markets of the developed world; and it will prevent the country from effectively negotiating and implementing international agreements on collective security, global environmental protection and other matters of concern.”<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, a state which launches attacks against neighbours to divert attention from internal grievances holds implications for developed nations, for if a number of developing countries evolve in this direction, they could potentially threaten the military and economic interests of rich countries.<sup>93</sup>

Any one of the outcomes outlined by Homer Dixon carries the potential to gravely threaten international security and stability. Kaplan adds that such an outcome is already readily visible in many parts of the globe, particularly West Africa; an area he contends to be *the* symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental and societal stress.<sup>94</sup> He cites the civil unrest and disturbance in Sierra Leone as an example, or ‘microcosm,’ of what is occurring in a more subdued version throughout the rest of Africa and the developing world. Governments are withering away in favour of tribal regimes, disease flourishes unchecked and war grows ever more pervasive.<sup>95</sup> Casting even greater pallor to the scenario, he adds that “West Africa’s future, eventually, will also be that of the rest of the world.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>94</sup> Kaplan, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 46.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

A final approach evident within the literature exploring the link between the environment and security are proponents of 'environmental security.' In keeping with the previous section, this approach is concerned with the implications of environmental damage and destruction on security. Unlike the previous approach, however, this group does not limit itself to a redefinition of the nature of the threat to security, but seeks to redefine the concept of security itself and to weave environmental strands into the revised definition.

The point of departure for advocates of this approach is a disenchantment with the standard definition of security. Considering the magnitude of the threat to human existence posed by environmental damage, destruction and decay, and noting the intrinsic link between the quality of the environment and the quality of life, this group argues in favour of expanding, broadening and redefining the concept to include the environment. It is their contention that although the strictly state-centric, military-focussed understanding of security may have been acceptable, perhaps even appropriate, to circumstances of the past, the dramatic changes in the international system, the increasing interdependence among nations, the immutable existence of nuclear weapons and the incessant destruction of the global biosphere in particular, have made that understanding of security obsolete.

At the heart of this approach is the argument that "the increasing stress on the earth's life support systems and renewable natural resources have profound implications

for human health and welfare that are at least as serious as traditional military threats.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the unprecedented pace and extent of present environmental destruction demands not only that conventional approaches to both security and the environment be re-evaluated, but further that the environment be elevated to the highest priority on government and policy agendas and that environmental issues be accorded the same weight and consideration as traditional military issues. Argues Michael Renner:

Countries are prepared to make considerable sacrifices in order to defend their national sovereignty and territory against foreign invaders. So far, however, they are not showing an equally determination to guard against environmental threats, whether they be a clear and present danger or a future one. Yet environmental degradation imperils nation's most fundamental aspect of security by undermining the natural support systems on which all human activity depends.<sup>98</sup>

One of the earliest proponents to articulate this from an environmental perspective was Lester Brown. Writing in 1977 in a piece prepared for the World Watch Institute, Brown argued that:

The concern for the national security of a nation is undoubtedly as old as the nation state itself, but since World War II the concept of 'national security' has acquired an overwhelming military character. Commonly veiled in secrecy, considerations of military threats have become so dominant that other threats to the security of nations have often been ignored. Accumulating evidence indicates that new threats are emerging, threats with which military forces cannot cope.<sup>99</sup>

The purpose of his paper was "...to identify and briefly describe several major new threats to national security, many of which are outside the purview of national security as

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<sup>97</sup> Porter, *op. cite.*, note 6, p. 218.

<sup>98</sup> Michale Renner, "National Security: The Economic and Environmental Dimensions," *WorldWatch Paper* 89 (May 1989), pp. 29-30.

<sup>99</sup> Lester Brown, "Redefining National Security," *Worldwatch Paper* 14 (October 1977), p. 5.

traditionally defined.”<sup>100</sup> The conventional approach to security, premised as it is on the belief that the principal threats to a nation’s security stem from other nations, is inadequate since it fails to acknowledge environmental threats.<sup>101</sup> Nations can no longer afford the luxury, he argued, of relegating these threats to the periphery of concern and casting them as the exclusive purview of environmentalists. The repercussions of these issues spill well beyond the confines of the human demarcated boundaries of ‘environmental issues,’ affecting with equal ardor other realms normally excluded from consideration such as ‘domestic’ politics and ‘international relations,’ traditionally defined. In other words, the effects of changes in the environment also affect, say, the availability of the food supply and domestic quietude. Brown cites the experiences in Ethiopia (1974) and Poland (1976) to illustrate how incidences of food shortages can lead directly to political turmoil.<sup>102</sup>

Continuing this theme in a subsequent piece, Brown concluded:

The overwhelming military approach to national security is based on the assumption that the principle threat to security comes from other nations. But the threats to security may arise less from the relationship of nation to nation and more from the relationship of man to nature.<sup>103</sup>

A similar line of reasoning may be found in the work of Michael Renner, who, arguably, takes these arguments a step further. For Renner, the traditional view of security, one based on a competitive, weapons-dominated and force-reliant approach, is outmoded. Rather than actually producing security, it often acts to reduce national security and yield international insecurity. Moreover, the traditional perspective is one

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

often blinded to the many threats that imperil the lives of individuals, and fails to acknowledge the significance of the environment for the health and wealth not only of individuals, but of states and the international system. He writes: "Governments preoccupied with security threats of military origin have ignored the perils of environmental degradation. But national security is a meaningless concept if it does not include the preservation of livable conditions within the country - or on the planet as a whole."<sup>104</sup>

Renner's attack is focussed on debunking the conventional approach to security as well as attempting to illustrate the irrelevance of security and its attendant concepts, sovereignty and statehood, in the contemporary world. For Renner, "absolute sovereignty is not a workable concept. Exclusively national policies are ill-suited for a world that faces border-transcending problems of an unprecedented scope."<sup>105</sup> As for strictly 'national' security, this too is problematic. "In many respects," he writes,

... nations are no longer the sole masters of their destinies. Production, trade, investment, modern communication and tourism are inherently global in scale, rapidly transforming this diverse planet into an interlinked unit... This interdependence in economic, military and environmental affairs has already begun to erode traditional notions of security and national sovereignty itself.<sup>106</sup>

In particular, he stresses that the standard approach to security, omnipresent in policy-making circles, has little effectiveness in the face of environmental threats, such as deforestation, global climate change and ozone depletion, that have the potential to erode

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<sup>104</sup> Renner, *op. cite.*, note 98, p. 6.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

the habitability of the planet. "Tanks and planes might fend off a military attack," writes Renner, "but no remedy exists to repel airborne and waterborne pollutants that cross borders with impunity."<sup>107</sup> He further adds: "Again there is the irony that the pursuit of military might is such a costly endeavour that it drains away the resources urgently needed to protect against the environmental perils that are most likely to jeopardize national security."<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the view of security dominated by power struggles and military issues has, in the end, worked to reduce national security and yield international insecurity.<sup>109</sup> Renner concludes by advocating the abandonment of traditional notions of security in favour of environmental security. This, he contends,

... offers a more fruitful basis for cooperation and security among nations than military security because it is both a positive and inclusive concept. Whereas military security offers at best the continuation of an uneasy status quo and, at worst, the prospect of annihilation, environmental security seeks to protect or restore. While military security rests firmly on the competitive strength of individual countries at the direct expense of other nations, environmental security cannot be achieved unilaterally: it both requires and nurtures more stable and cooperative relations among states.<sup>110</sup>

As the work of Brown, and especially Renner, illustrate, proposals for environmental security represent a significant departure from previous approaches discussed in this chapter: rather than simply incorporating the implications of changes in the environment into discussions of international conflict and security, or to attribute much of the destruction of the environment to the activities of the military, this group seeks to induce a complete conceptual overhaul of the concept itself. Thus, the call to expand,

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

broaden and redefine the concept of security represents the most fundamental challenge to conventional thinking since it marks an attempt to move beyond the traditional paradigm in the hopes of advancing a more holistic and all-encompassing view of security. As Gareth Porter has observed,

Proponents of environmental security emphasize that environmental degradation is the result of impersonal social and economic forces, and requires cooperative solutions. This focus on threats that do not involve an enemy or political entity disturbs many theorists and practitioners of national security for whom the only issues that should be viewed as security issues are those that revolve around conflict itself.<sup>111</sup>

Coming under fire alongside the conventional notion of security are other concurrent concepts such as the 'state' and 'state sovereignty.' Arguing in a similar vein as Renner, Mathews adds that: "environmental strains that transcend national borders are already beginning to break down the sacred boundaries of national sovereignty."<sup>112</sup> And, as Porter notes: "Environmental security is inherently global rather than national in character, since environmental threats affect all humanity and required coordinated action on a global scale."<sup>113</sup>

Interwoven within the arguments in favour of a diminution of the significance of the state and state sovereignty are arguments emphasizing the need for greater global cooperation. In light of the increased interdependent nature of international affairs, and as well as the fact that environmental problems transcend state borders, it is argued that strictly 'national' solutions are limited in their effectiveness unless bolstered by

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<sup>111</sup> Porter, *op. cite.*, note 6, p. 218.

<sup>112</sup> Mathews, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 78.

<sup>113</sup> Porter, *op. cite.*, note 6, p. 219.

cooperative global efforts currently conspicuously absent from the international arena. As the Brundtland Commission Report commented: "The Earth is one but the world is not. We are all dependent on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others."<sup>114</sup>

Just as strictly *national* responses are limited in their effectiveness, so too are those that are largely militarily focussed. Observes Brown: "The overwhelming military approach to security is based on the assumption that the principle threat to security comes from other nations. But the threat to security may arise less from the relationship of nation to nation and more from the relationship of man to nature."<sup>115</sup> The nature of the threat has changed. Therefore, so too must the nature of the response. National defence establishments, it is concluded, in contrast to the second approach outlined in this chapter, are relatively innocuous against these new threats.

Inherent in most of these arguments advocating a reinterpretation of security and the environment are suggestions for a redistribution of funds. The prevailing view would appear to hold that the focus of governments on military threats may come at the expense of attention to other threats and areas, thereby absorbing "budgetary resources, management skills and scientific talent that should be devoted to the new non-military threats."<sup>116</sup> Achieving environmental security, therefore, "cannot be accomplished without

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<sup>114</sup> *Our Common Future*, *op. cite.*, note 54, p. 39.

<sup>115</sup> Brown, *op. cite.*, note 99, p. 39.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

putting an end to the arms race which claims so much of a decision-makers' attention and so much of the resources needed to halt the danger to the planet."<sup>117</sup>

Many of the themes resounding within the literature on environmental security find echoes elsewhere. Just as a parallel may be drawn between this debate over the redefinition of security to include economic issues, too are similarities apparent between proponents of environmental security and advocates of disarmament and arms control, and those in favour of alternative defence and the importance of the role of the United Nations in international dispute arbitration and impartial conflict resolution. Held in common is a clear emphasis on the need to enhance global cooperation and the conviction that the barriers to peace and prosperity will prove insurmountable unless resources are redistributed.

The 16 member Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security led by Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme in 1982, for example, proposed "an extensive list of initiatives to reverse the spiralling arms race and halt the march of governments toward the brink of a new abyss."<sup>118</sup> It also popularized the concept of 'Common Security,' a concept which Douglas Roche notes stems from one over-riding conviction:

In the nuclear age, no nation can achieve true security by itself; technology has made the traditional concept of national security obsolete. All nations, rich and poor, peaceful and bellicose, socialist and capitalist, are bound by the vulnerability to attack with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

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<sup>117</sup> Renner, *op. cite.*, note 98, p. 47.

<sup>118</sup> Douglas Roche, *Building Global Security: Agenda for the 1990's* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1989), p. 60.

Nor are the effects of ecological disaster, economic shifts or information flows confined to any one nation.<sup>119</sup>

For the Palme Commission, the means to achieve true security in light of present day realities would be through the establishment of a global rule of law, the abolition of weapons of mass destruction and conventional disarmament.<sup>120</sup>

The UN Study on Disarmament and Development, in turn, headed by Inga Thorsson, declared that “the world has a choice. It can continue to pursue the arms race, or it can move with deliberate speed towards a more sustainable economic and political order. It cannot do both.”<sup>121</sup> This report led, in 1987, to a UN sponsored International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, a conference from which was issued a sweeping statement promoting a broader understanding of security and emphasized not simply military issues, but also potential economic, social, humanitarian and human rights, and ecological aspects.<sup>122</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The literature concerning the environment and security is rife with varied, at times even competing, perspectives. Four main approaches have been identified here, each of which is concerned with the nature of the relationship between the environment and

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

security and each of which present a unique resolution to what it identifies as the problem. Some perceive the military as exacerbating environmental problems leading to a suggestion that the military should be eliminated or, at the very least, restricted in its operations. Others cast the military as a potential solution to many of these ecological problems. Still others perceive this not as a problem concerning the effect of the military issues on the environment, but the effect of environmental concerns on the military and security issues. As such, it is the environment which may eventually lead to conflict and war. A final group acknowledges the threat posed by environmental concerns, but does so from an entirely different perspective. Rather than classifying environmental concerns and problems as one among many potential causes of armed conflict, this approach involves a restructuring of what constitutes 'security' such that it is no longer limited to threats of armed violence, but may include threats to individuals which emanate from toxin-ridden air and water, global warming, and flooding, to list but a few of the potential hazards which loom. This group is effectively advocating, in other words, that problems posed by environmental degradation warrant classification on a par with traditional military threats when discussing 'security.'

These distinctions aside, all of these approaches share some fundamental similarities, predominant among which is a belief in the pressing gravity of current environmental ills and the potentially dire consequences these hold for humanity if left unchecked. That the threats posed by global warming, perforations in the ozone layer, deforestation and a burgeoning global population, to list but a sampling of global

environmental problems, are potentially devastating is virtually undeniable. It is also clear that these threats are rarely accorded the attention and resources regularly garnered by conventional threats to security and military concerns. The question persists, however, whether the two areas *should* be linked. What remains unresolved, in other words, is how, if at all, any of the proposed changes would enhance and improve the traditional understanding of security and assist in the preservation of the environment, the at-times-unstated underlying goals of these approaches.

## Chapter 4

### Returning to the Preface

Debate within academic circles contesting the meaning of security is not entirely new, but has been an issue that has surfaced and resurfaced periodically throughout the decades. It has emerged once again in the 1990s. Given the sea-change in global political configurations in the last half decade including, for example, the demise of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, it is perhaps not all that surprising that the security rhetoric should once again be hauled out for inspection. As Daniel Deudney has noted: "Historically, conceptual ferment of this sort has often accompanied important changes in politics. New phrases are coined and old terms are appropriated for new purposes."<sup>1</sup>

In some ways, therefore, this may be cast as little more than a regurgitation of past debates. To do so, however, would be to overlook two fundamental factors which distinguish this discussion from those of the past and transform it into something other than a rehash of earlier political jabber. First, there is the fact that while previous periodic effusions of debate over security found themselves confined almost exclusively to academic circles, rarely managing more than a marginal influence on official thinking, the current

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Deudney, "The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (vol. 19, no. 3, Winter, 1990), p. 462.

discussion, and especially that concerning linking security and the environment, is purported to be having a much more significant impact.<sup>2</sup> The Kaplan article discussed at length in the last chapter, for example, has been identified by some as having had a considerable influence in Washington. President Clinton is reputed to “have scribbled marginal notes on his personal copy...” and citation of the article has become “... practically *de rigueur* for Cabinet members appearing before Congress.”<sup>3</sup> At the request of the Vice President Gore, Canadian academic Thomas Homer-Dixon has been summoned to the White House to conduct personal briefings to the American Executive on the implications of environmental degradation for security.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, US Senator Sam Nunn recently enacted the strategic environmental research program in the US under which US\$200 million will be earmarked for military efforts in environmental monitoring and research.<sup>5</sup> President Clinton and his cohorts aside, these arguments have also found hearing in Canadian, Australian and European legislatures.<sup>6</sup>

Second, and equally significant, is the fact that these proposals for change have attracted, as of yet, a relative dearth of critics, or at least visible and numerous expressions of dissent, of the core idea for change. “Critics,” proposes Marc Levy, “have voiced their opinion by way of silence rather than debate, perhaps hoping that discussion would fade away.”<sup>7</sup> This overall absence of any thought-out critique has permitted many of these ideas

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<sup>2</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, “Seeing Things? The Adornment of ‘Security’ in Australia and Canada,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (vol. 49, no. 1, May 1995), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Marc Levy, “Is the Environment a National Security Issue?” *International Security* (vol. 20, no. 2, Fall 1995), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Nigel Roome, “Facts of Life,” *Acumen* (January/February 1995), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 462.

<sup>6</sup> Nossal, *op. cite.*, note 2.

<sup>7</sup> Levy, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 35.

to flourish unchecked and slip their way into policy-making circles. This is particularly unfortunate, however, considering that much of the discussion to date displays scant attention to the inherent dangers of the move to link the environment and security and is plagued by a lack of conceptual clarity. Just *how*, for example, this is to be accomplished is an aspect often overlooked in most proposals for change. Similarly with the question concerning the risks involved. Is it, for example, the global military establishment and armed conflict, as some suggest, that is the source of environmental problems? Or is it, as others are prone to argue, environmental degradation which is a potential cause for conflict and insecurity? Moreover, which of the proposed solutions is the most likely to mean to achieve the desired ends: the promulgation of 'environmental security,' redefining security, redefining the role of the armed forces, or disbanding the military altogether?

While few have emerged to raise these questions and challenge the proposals for change, fewer still have made an effort to situate the proposals within the broader context of the debate over security itself in order to determine the utility of the proposals for linking the environment and security vis-à-vis what have been identified as the flaws in the conventional approach. Nor have serious attempts been made to explore the theoretical and normative implications of these proposals. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present a much-needed critique and evaluation of the move to redefine security and link it to the environment. It is the argument here that proposals for the reform of the concept must address what are perceived to be the flaws in the current approach; to do otherwise would offer little of value over current practice. Furthermore, the failure to address fully and

thoroughly many of these issues will only serve to confound rather than resolve the many problems current in the environmental sphere as well as those associated with the traditional understanding of security. Rather than present an escape from the present imbroglio, therefore, efforts to establish a link between the environment and security, and to join these two spheres, will only complicate matters.

### **Revisiting the Proposals for Reform**

When the proposals are taken up in greater detail, and each of the various streams within the literature on linking the environment and security is re-examined, it becomes clear that none of these efforts truly manages to address the problems associated with 'security' at all and none is entirely clear about what it is they wish to have changed or redefined. Furthermore, each carries its own set of problems, contradictions and dilemmas. Each is worth examining in detail to elaborate upon these and to illustrate some of the concerns and dangers associated with linking the environment and security.<sup>8</sup>

The first of the four approaches to redefining security in favour of the environment is directed at the damage to the environment at the hands of the global military establishment. Demands for change are premised largely on a redefinition of the object to be protected. In other words, this represents an effort to identify the environment as the

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<sup>8</sup> It is significant to note at the outset that there are many who dispute the efforts to link the environment and security on the basis that the existence of dramatic and dangerous changes in the environment remain without evidence. Evidence of global warming, ozone depletion, rising sea levels, to name but a few, is sketchy at best, categorically inaccurate and alarmist at worst, so some argue. This debate has not been put to rest in the academic and scientific literature and will certainly not be resolved here. It is, however, nonetheless worth mentioning.

referent of concern and the most pressing issue, or threat, to human survival and hence security, in lieu of the conventional referent, the State. Thus, although rarely made explicit, this approach would seem to imply that it is not the state, or even the people, which should be made secure but rather the environment. In this way, the protection of the environment and the protection of security are viewed as virtually one and the same issue.

With the environment construed as the object of security, the most devastating threat to the security of that object is then identified as the global military establishment. Rather than protecting human health, welfare, and hence security, the military acts to detract from it. War poses a clear and direct threat to the environment, with nuclear war being only the most acute example. Even in peacetime, military establishments are culpable of environmental damage. The global military establishment is also held responsible by these analysts for usurping vast quantities of resources, both financial and human, that might otherwise have been earmarked for the environment. Given this status of affairs, some, such as Helen Caldicott, have suggested that the solution lies in reducing both the size of the military and in limiting the amount and extent of military exercises. Resources subsequently 'freed' from the military could then be devoted to environmental protection and enhancement.<sup>9</sup>

By drawing attention to the effects of the global military establishment on the environment, this group has played a crucial role in raising awareness of the danger the

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<sup>9</sup> Helen Caldicott, *If you love this planet: a plan to heal the earth* (New York, NY; W.W. Norton & Company, 1992).

military poses to the environment, in mobilizing popular support for disarmament, and in de-legitimizing the use of nuclear weapons. These accomplishments aside, however, many of the arguments presented and efforts to seek recognition of a causal link between the growing global military establishment and biospheric destruction are unfounded.

One of the most troubling issues here is the delineation of strict lines of distinction between the two spheres - the military and the environment - and the tendency to interpret these as separate, parallel issues necessarily in competition with one another. The two sectors are generally presented as pitted in a struggle one against the other in an 'either/or' framework: either financial and human resources are devoted to the military and war preparation, *or* they are devoted to environmental protection and restoration programs; either the military establishments, war preparation and subsequent environmental damage is permitted to continue apace, *or* militaries are reduced, possibly disbanded, and the environment is allowed to thrive.

This, however, is a misrepresentation of the relationship between the military and the environment. The 'either/or' aspect of the argument, for example, is a difficult one to prove irrefutably while a causal link relationship is difficult to substantiate. In many ways, this mimics the 'guns vs. butter' debates of previous eras, this time with a 1990s 'green' twist tacked on. Just as increased military expenditures, or heightened spending on guns, for example, was argued to come at the expense of spending on the economy, or 'butter,' so too is increased military spending viewed as detracting directly from spending that might

otherwise be tagged for the environment. Unfortunately, however, just as there was no guarantee that finances rescued from the squandering of defence bureaus would necessarily be devoted to the economy, nor can anyone declare with certain conviction that funds freed from the defence budget would be allotted to the exclusive use of environmental programmes. Nor is there evidence which suggests that environmental restoration can be achieved only through sustained cuts in military spending and without which environmental restoration becomes impossible.

The 'guns vs. butter' aspect of the arguments of this group aside, it is equally unclear whether the proposed global disarmament and arms reductions will significantly influence the current and future pace of environmental degradation. As devastating to the environment as war and military exercises may be, militaries the world over are not the only sources of global pollution and wasteful consumption. Even if a complete halt to the destruction of the environment at the hands of the war system could be sustained, most environmental degradation would continue apace. Oceans would continue to be over-fished, land over-tilled and over used, trees would still be felled and Amazon forests would continue to burn. Automobile and refrigerant use, meanwhile, would continue to wreak their havoc on the ozone layer. Naturally, an end to global environmental destruction must begin somewhere, and the military establishments are as good a place as any in which to begin to initiate more environmentally friendly transitions. It would be a naive mistake, however, to conclude that this will provide any type of resolution to the problem. On the contrary, the effect would be marginal at best.

The criticisms of this group aside, what of the proposals to have military establishments turn concerted attention towards the protection and restoration of the environment? Proponents of this approach suggest that rather than being a detriment to the environment, the military might actually be used to enhance and protect the green corners of the world and they suggest a redefinition of the role of the armed forces to this end. The solution to environmental problems, in other words, resides in a redefinition of the role of the armed forces. Rather than being a threat to the environment, the military might be tasked with protecting the environment - both cleaning up damage and preventing encroachment by poachers, tree-burners and others of similar ilk.

While the aims of the proponents of such a reconfiguration are commendable and the examples they have put forward to support their arguments, such as Yellowstone Park, Brazil and Kenya, would seem to lend credence to the viability of this project and its potential for success, this proposal nonetheless raises some concerns. Specifically, if it is the environment that is to be protected, why use military establishments? These establishments have very little in common with environmental agencies and have been identified as one of the chief culprits in biosphere destruction. Military establishments, in fact, are unique institutions and their traditional response to threats share little in common with what has generally been required to solve international disputes over environmental issues. More to the point, there are blatant dissimilarities in the nature, type and scope of approach of the

organizations created to deal with the two phenomena in question - threats from violence and threats from environmental degradation.

This is a point stressed by Dan Deudney,<sup>10</sup> who contends that national security and protection from violence are traditionally undertaken by specific organizations characterized by three distinctive features, none of which have proven useful or effective in addressing environmental issues. First, "military organizations are secretive, extremely hierarchical, and centralized, and normally deploy vastly expensive, highly specialized and advanced technologies."<sup>11</sup> Environmental protection, however, does not necessarily require a secretive or high-tech approach to resolution, but rather, simply the reform of current patterns of consumption, resource use, and waste disposal. Second, the achievement of security is often delegated to what Deudney describes as "... remote and highly specialized organizations that are far removed from the experiences of civil society."<sup>12</sup> Environmental protection, in contrast, requires a more grassroots approach and almost universal involvement and compliance. Finally, whereas "the professional ethos of environmental restoration is husbandmanship" or a more respectful approach to the cultivation of land, "the specialized professional group staffing these national security organizations are trained in the arts of killing and destroying."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, note 1, pp. 461-475.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Added to this is the additional fear on behalf of some that any attempt to permit the military control over environmental restoration and protection is a simple recipe for disaster and 'eco-fascism.' For those who question the military's ability to be neutral, "the dispassionate, final arbiter of 'conflicts between people and resources,'" this appears an unlikely avenue down which to proceed.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, this proposal does little to address the root causes of many environmental problems, and is therefore limited in its ability to ameliorate the situation. This is summed up most pointedly by Bruce Byers who comments:

Is shooting poachers a good idea? No, in part because it doesn't address the root causes of poaching. The poachers will just keep coming, and in the long term, will be unsuccessful... To preserve biodiversity, 'carrot' rather than 'stick' approaches are preferable. Local people must have an economic incentive to protect local biodiversity.<sup>15</sup>

In the end, coercive approaches are unlikely to work as effectively as cooperative approaches, as far as environmental protection is concerned.

The third general stream within the literature examining the nature of the link between the environment and security is less concerned with the effect of security on the environment, but is instead focused on the significance of the environment on security, specifically national security. Because the threat of military invasion and war are generally perceived to have diminished in the post Cold War era, and because environmental problems have become so pronounced, the case is advanced that the 'threat' to 'security,'

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<sup>14</sup> Ken Conca, "In the name of sustainability: peace studies and environmental discourse," Paper presented at the 33rd Annual General Meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1992, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Byers, "Can Armies Save Parks? Armed Forces and the Conservation of Biological Diversity," Paper presented at the 33rd Annual General Meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1992, p. 14.

understood in the conventional sense as 'national security,' has changed. Environmental degradation may create, or at least exacerbate, conflict by aggravating problems associated with access to resources, migration and refugee flows.

It has been suggested in the work of Kaplan, Homer-Dixon and others that environmental degradation, particularly environmental scarcity, may lead directly or indirectly to inter and intra state conflict, traditionally defined. Environmental degradation in this way becomes a 'threat' to security. This interpretation of the nature of the link between security and environmental degradation and scarcity derives some plausibility by the historic record. Yet, although resource scarcity has indeed led to conflict, in the past, there are many who remain skeptical of its continuing role as a causal factor to interstate violence. Not only is the theoretical strength of these arguments suspect, but other attempts to find evidence which will corroborate the theory have been unavailing.

As far as the theory underlying these arguments is concerned, some analysts have advanced the argument that resource wars between and within states, rather than being on the rise, have actually diminished in recent years. A convincing case has been made that changing global economic configurations and increasing economic interdependency among states has made them less, rather than more, likely to experience resource dependency. Whereas states pursued autonomous and hazardous policies as a result of the economic depression of the 1930s and this, tied with the collapse of the world economic trading system, operated as a factor in the eventual outbreak of the Second World War, this is not a

plausible scenario in today's world. On the contrary, global economic interdependence has meant that the "... resource needs of contemporary states are routinely met without territorial control of the resource source..."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the prospects for securing a guaranteed access to resources through direct intervention and war are often ineffectual. Advances in technology have led to the increased spread of small arms and weapons, making it excessively difficult to subdue a resisting population and making it equally unlikely that nations will resort to wars to these ends. The experiences of France in Indonesia, the US in Vietnam, and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan may be cited as evidence of this change. These same technological advances have also made states less reliant on natural resources in the first place and have enhanced their ability to adapt and transform other resources into those needed.<sup>17</sup>

Added to all of this is the argument made by Simon Dalby that while military intervention may be successful, at least in the short run, of guaranteeing access to scarce resources, and the Gulf War is often drummed up as a clear example of success in this regard, such interventions are unlikely to prove useful in the long-run. International agreements, in fact, are far more likely to produce lasting success, and Dalby argues that if resource wars were actually to occur, these only serve to highlight the need for greater international cooperation in advance of 'crisis' situations.

Resource wars may (re) occur in a variety of setting, including possibly over water rather than oil in the Middle East. But this suggests the necessity of political settlements and agreements worked out in advance of drought disasters and cooperative planning to best use what limited resources are

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<sup>16</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, p. 470.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

available, rather than threatening upstream states with military intervention if they use the headwaters of a river that flows through the downstream state.<sup>18</sup>

Just as there is less reason to assume that the desire for access to resources will lead to conflict between countries, skeptics have also made the case that even conflict over the lack of availability of resources *within* countries is declining in significance. Chanted like a mantra in most environmental and sustainable development literature is the belief that the levels of wealth produced in the past cannot be sustained. In other words, there is a cap to the amount of wealth a country may expect to acquire and once reached, will eventually plateau. This, in turn, will lead to lower standards of living; a fact which might spark resistance between 'have' and 'have not' groups. While the Western experience during the Great Depression and World War II would appear to confirm the possibility of this scenario, Deudney argues that this hypothesis is based on unsound economic theory and he uses the example provided by Japan to illustrate his point. There, wealth formation is less a product of widely available cheap natural resources than it is greater per capita savings and more efficient methods of production.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, although environmental degradation in one country may become so severe that it jeopardizes the cohesiveness and the very fabric of the nation in question, it is dubious whether this would have any impact beyond the borders of the state in question. Notes Deudney, "If a particular country, even a large one like Brazil, were tragically to disintegrate, among the first casualties would be the capacity of the industrial and

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<sup>18</sup> Simon Dalby, "Security, Modernity, Ecology: The Dilemmas of Post-Cold War Security Discourse," *Alternatives XIII* (1988), p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 472.

governmental structures to wage and sustain interstate conflict and war.”<sup>20</sup> Increased poverty and environmental degradation are, in fact, more likely to prevent rather than induce, a country to turn to war, in part because this decreases the amount of resources available to the military. In part too as a result of the fact that although environmental degradation in a country may become so severe that it jeopardizes the cohesiveness and the very fabric of the nation in question, it is dubious whether this would have any impact beyond the borders of the state in question.<sup>21</sup> Despite the interconnectedness of today’s world, in fact, and talk of a global village *ad nauseam*, regional disasters occur fairly frequently without affecting other countries. Citizens in neighbouring states, in fact, often seem to not even take notice.

Not only is the logic of these arguments unsound, but efforts to find evidence to substantiate the theory have been barren. Levy, for example, in an attempt to find studies that would corroborate Homer-Dixon’s conclusions, is entirely unsuccessful and instead finds that although considerable evidence exists to suggest that migration may lead to violence and/or environmental degradation, there are no cases which prove the corollary: that environmental degradation leads to migration and violence.<sup>22</sup> He notes that:

The results of two years of study by some thirty scholars under the aegis of the Environmental Change and Acute Conflict Project have been summarized recently. While the evidence clearly refutes the null hypothesis that environmental degradation is irrelevant to political conflict it is less clear what the evidence might affirmatively show... the empirical results of this effort still amount only to a collection of illustrations of violent conflict in

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 473.

<sup>21</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 18, p. 111.

<sup>22</sup> Levy, *op. cite.*, note 3, p. 55.

which environmental resources played some important role. It offers more anecdotes, but not more understanding...<sup>23</sup>

Homer-Dixon is heavily criticized by Levy, in fact, for selecting cases for study in which environmental destruction and conflict was either present or imminent “in order to falsify most effectively the null hypothesis that the two factors are not causally related. But,” he adds, “it is difficult to imagine not being able to find conflicts in developing countries involving renewable resources.”<sup>24</sup> A more logical approach, he concludes, would be to compare and evaluate societies facing similar environmental problems but displaying varying levels of violent conflict. This would induce a greater measure of precision in identifying the conditions under which environmental degradation will or will not lead to violent conflict, as well as helping to formulate policy advice on the means to avoid violent outcomes.<sup>25</sup>

In his conclusion, Levy remarks that the value of this approach is that these scholars have successfully shown that the environment matters in political conflict. The value of both of these approaches lies in the attention they have managed to attract at the policy-making level to environmental issues and in outlining the potentially broad-reaching ramifications of biospheric devastation. It was proponents of this approach, in fact, that were summoned to the White House and drew headlines in Washington. Where they have been less successful, however, has been in their ability to smooth the logic in their proposals and make a sound case that environmental degradation is a national security threat, that these concerns warrant attention as a *national security* issue, and just how, precisely, security policy might

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

be altered to accommodate these concerns. There is very little to suggest that environmental degradation may cause inter-state conflict in the future. Put bluntly, the major flaw in this proposal is that neither environmental degradation nor environmental scarcity is likely to cause interstate wars.

The fourth and final approach in the literature on the environment and security may be subdivided into two components. On one hand are those who have attempted the argument that the environment, or at least aspects thereof, is an essential component of national, particularly American, national values. Since security is often defined as the protection of national values, the environment, by extension, must be considered a significant component of security, or so runs the logic of the argument. It has further been pointed out, and perhaps rightly so, that the survival of the United States and most countries for that matter, hinges on the availability of resources. It is then concluded that security should therefore be redefined to incorporate environmental issues into the equation. Representative of this approach are Jessica Tuchman Mathews and Norman Myers. On the other hand are those who focus on the fact that in the realities of the 1990s, it is not simply the threat of the scourge of war which places 'security' at risk, nor is it simply the 'security' of nation which must be addressed, but instead the security of individuals everywhere from a multiplicity of varied threats.

With respect to the first of the two components of this approach, a number of important points are raised. The environment is clearly significant and the future availability

of resources will be crucial for nations and individuals everywhere. As valid as these points may be, however, the conclusions drawn are achieved only by overlooking serious shortcomings in reasoning and this approach may be severely criticized for basing its arguments on emotive rather than logical appeal. It is also an approach that permits its defenders to succumb most readily to the accusation that all they are really after is a larger slice of the budgetary pie, allowing one analyst to dismiss the entire project as 'fundamentally flawed,' representing little more than a rhetorical device devised to attract greater support for environmental problems and a money-grabbing form of 'double counting.'<sup>26</sup>

Supporting evidence for the 'double counting' criticism may be found in an examination of the links alleged to exist between environmental degradation and national security. For any environmental threat to be considered a 'national security threat,' a clear connection must be made to some vital national interest; a connection which will justify specific remedial measures. But how, Levy asks, "can the analysis of the problem and remedy change if one clusters these phenomena [environmental problems] under the security label? ... it cannot, for that would be to count the interests affected twice, once in their own terms, and then a second time because they constitute a 'security interest.'"<sup>27</sup> The tie that binds many of these divergent analysts together, therefore, is the belief that an examination of individual environmental problems by themselves is insufficient and that these issues must also be classified as 'security problems' if they are to garner the attention

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

and support they reputedly deserve. Although such an effort is rarely made explicit in these works, it is implicit in their discussions.

These efforts at 'double counting' may be further derided for being little more than a thinly veiled attempt to have the environment, traditionally cast within the realm of 'low politics', upgraded to the category of 'high politics'; a domain traditionally restricted to issues of national security. The motivation which might lie behind this is patently obvious: matters managing their way into the realm of high politics receive ample attention and corresponding budgetary resources. Those matters which remain relegated to the realm of low politics must make do with limited resources and sparse media attention. But, as Levy further notes, "... if all these analysts are up to is trying to garner more support for environmental issues, then their entire project is anathema to any effort to link up thinking on environmental and security issues. Instead, it is an effort to raid the security issue in order to reap some of the deference that they believe politicians and publics pay to it."<sup>28</sup> Such maneuvering, however, adds little to the understanding of security issues.

Levy's criticism is difficult to refute. Equally troubling is the careless reasoning and theoretical underpinnings of the proponents of this approach. The calls for reform carry with them incessant appeals to 'rethink', 'revamp', and 'alter' current concepts. Despite the over-abundance of calls for definitional change, the approach to the redefining exercise is peculiarly selective. 'Security' and the 'environment,' for example, are rarely defined by the critics, thereby making it often unclear just what, exactly, they would like to see redefined.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

Further, although the occasional proposal may suggest a redefinition of the nature of the threat to security, the traditional, state-based and military-focussed understanding of security is left largely intact. In other words, this represents an attempt to enlarge the scope of threats to security without also enlarging the object to be protected. But in 'redefining' only one aspect of the security equation, the nature of the 'threat,' while failing to address the second half, the nature of the object to be protected, or the referent for security, they fail to provide sound theoretical improvement over past practice or address any of the criticisms raised earlier. Instead, they are simply adding one more item to the list of potential threats from which the state must be protected. What remains unclear is on what grounds environmental degradation is to be incorporated into the orbit of conventional security threats while economic decline or health care problems are not? On what basis is the line of demarcation to be drawn between these fields. Why is the threat of polluted rivers more devastating to the state security machinery than the threat of declining manufacturing ability, soaring deficits or a tuberculosis epidemic?

The second component in this final approach consists of those who advocate linking the environment and security through the promotion of 'human security,' 'environmental security,' and 'ecological security.' The focus here revolves around the argument that in modern day configurations, the concept of security can no longer be restricted to merely the threat of war. Nor is it simply the 'security' of nations which must be addressed. Rather, the security of individuals globally from a variety of threats must be taken into consideration and incorporated into the understanding of security. Arguably, this represents the most

radical challenge of all of the approaches in question since it proposes not simply a redistribution of budgetary resources, a redefinition of the role of the armed forces and a re-evaluation of the nature of the threat to state security, but also possibly the complete overhaul of the concept of security itself. From an intellectual perspective, this then is by far the most satisfying of all of the approaches. It is also, however, the most potentially unsettling and, like the proposals before it, subject to a number of flaws.

The advantage of this approach is that by presenting a challenge which is so broad and wide-sweeping, it escapes many of the shortcomings found in previous proposals. Unlike others committed to no more than tinkering with deck chairs when the boat is sinking, this approach, arguably, is seeking abandonment of the boat altogether in favour of an airplane. At the same time, however, this approach remains the most vague and it is unclear exactly how such an approach is to proceed and how the world is to be transformed from an approach heavily premised on the understanding of security as the protection of the viability and territorial integrity of the state from violent interstate conflict. On what, for example, would an approach to security be premised and security policy be developed, if it were not to revolve around states? Richard Falk has been arguing for some time that “modern states are too large to satisfy human needs and too small to cope with the requirements of guidance for an increasingly interdependent planet.”<sup>29</sup> Despite whatever truth may be inherent in this remark and other criticisms of the state, the state and its various attendant

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<sup>29</sup> Ken Booth, ed. *New Thinking About Security and International Security* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), p. 541.

institutions are not noticeably withering away. Despite the growing interdependence of states and transience of borders, states and the state system persist.

Moreover, even if adopted by some states, it is most improbable that it will be adopted by all. Global environmental changes are not likely to be felt uniformly the world over. There is a far higher risk that these will be felt more and less strongly in different parts and that those less at risk will be less inclined to support global efforts. This approach, however, fails to take this into consideration and its success remains premised on the close coordination of efforts among all states and especially leading nations. While Brown suggests that the Gulf War may be representative of a new trend among the world's leading nations for closer cooperation and coordination on international issues, one need look no further than the continued divisive debates over NATO expansion in Central and Eastern Europe to recognize that this era of cooperation might be more elusive than Brown predicts.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, as Brown himself is willing to concede, the 'concert of powers,' or the cooperation evidenced between the five leading states of the United Nations during the Gulf Crisis, is unlikely to be repeated in the environmental sphere. Cooperation in coping with environmental and resource problems presumably would entail a pattern of regular dialogue and collaborative efforts among the various regions of the world, and Brown specifically identifies the United States and the former Soviet Union, the European Union, China and Japan.<sup>31</sup> Inducing these countries into a regular pattern of dialogue and cooperation will be exceedingly difficult. Each of these nations has historically approached

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<sup>30</sup> Brown, "Planetary Geopolitics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (vol. 19, no. 3, Winter 1990), p. 458.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

environmental issues from a different perspective.<sup>32</sup> And it will become increasingly difficult to persuade China, India and other countries struggling to achieve Western-style development, not to use CFAs or excessive coal consumption (especially in China), or even in convincing countries in South America not to burn the Amazonian forest.<sup>33</sup>

Aside from the criticisms associated directly with each of these individual approaches, there is also a broader and more fundamental critique which applies not simply to a single approach within the literature, but extends to any attempt to link the two fields - the environment and security - together under the rubric of a single discourse. Without denying the significance of the environment and the serious ramifications of continued neglect, and without wishing to dispute the existence of serious shortcomings, or at least conspicuous dilemmas, in the conventional understanding of the concept of security, the essence of the problem here is that linking the two fields together will do little to solve any of the current problems facing the environment or the conceptual difficulties noted previously and associated with security noted previously, but instead will only compound them. All of this becomes readily evident when the issue is examined not simply in terms of the individual approaches, but also more broadly and in terms of the ability of these efforts to relate successfully the ends to the means.

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<sup>32</sup> Vaclav Smil notes the argument that China continues to insist that pollution and greenhouse emissions should be on a per capita basis rather than per nation-state. See Smil, "Energy and the Environment: Challenges for the Pacific Rim," *Issues for APEC* (Series No. 1, APEC Study Centre in Canada, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada), p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Oran Young, "Global Environmental Change and International Governance," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (vol. 19, no. 3, Winter 1990), p. 338.

All of this aside, the effort to link the environment and security does very little to resolve the problem associated with either the conventional understanding of security or the environment identified earlier. As far as the environment is concerned, none of these proposals make much progress towards improving current conditions. While the military may act as guards against potential poachers, tree burners and others committing similar acts of violence against the environment, it is less easy to visualize how defence departments might address problems of over-consumption and overpopulation. With respect to the burning of fossil fuels and the prevention of further damage to the ozone layer, military establishments the world over have been identified as a major culprit to the problem. That being the case, if the military is to help abet rather than further aggravate the current situation, it would by necessity have to be through the reduction or even complete cessation of their activities and training exercises.

It is equally unclear how a link to the environment will help resolve many of the problems associated with the conventional interpretation of security, or will offer any clarification to the befuddled concept. How, specifically, will the addition of the environment to the security equation assist the defence and security dilemmas or alter the nuclear paradox? Short of outright disarmament, this is unlikely and considering the limited appeal and success complete disarmament had in the past, it is difficult to envision what great appeal the 'threat to the environment' will have over the conventional 'threat to human life'. As for arms control, while this may arguably improve, it is similarly difficult to

see how the environment will prove a more inspiring issue than the further existence of the human race in spurring negotiators to back down.

These proposals are found equally lacking when considered from the perspective of the tensions between levels of security or the growing irrelevance of the state in the face of changing global configurations. While a security policy centred upon the notion of protecting the state may very well be archaic and better suited to decades past, the state has not yet withered away and adding ecological issues to the security mix will do little to alter this. Nor will bringing the environment in serve to clarify misconceived notions of the international system. That the global arena is not the war-prone, zero-sum, power-grabbing conflict zone it is so often depicted to be may be a useful insight. This may also be achieved, however, without the environmental card.

The one area where the addition of the environment may be of value is in terms of an enlarged understanding of the nature of the threat to the security of state, individuals and the system proposed by such scholars as David Wirth and Thomas Homer-Dixon among others. The value of this is simply that environmental degradation and scarcity may play a role in inter-state violence. The problems mentioned earlier in this chapter with respect to this approach and subsequent proposals nonetheless persist. Moreover, 'environmental threats', if they may be phrased, and the traditional security threats - the protection from violence - share very little in common and harbour a whole host of dissimilarities. To begin with, the effort to establish an official link between the two areas, the environment and

security, would presumably make sense if there was a natural connection between the fields. Unfortunately, however, these are two phenomenon which share very little in common. It is true that ecological concerns are pressing and in desperate need of redress. They threaten the lives of individuals and are significant reminders that “non-military issues deserve sustained attention from scholars and policy-makers, and that military power does not guarantee well-being.”<sup>34</sup> But aside from the very obvious fact that both carry deadly implications for human life, it is not terribly useful to classify all threats to life and property as threats to security. The threat of violence and the threat of environmental degradation, for example, are distinct types of threats, inherently different in nature, scope and extent and to classify all threats to human well-being as threats to ‘national security’ runs the risk of stretching the term so widely that it loses virtually all meaning, becoming little more than “a loose synonym for bad.”<sup>35</sup> It is a strategy or prescription, adds Stephen Walt, that runs the risk of expanding ‘security’ exorbitantly. “By this logic, issues such as pollution, disease, child abuse, or economic recession could all be viewed as threats to ‘security.’ Defining the field in this way would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solutions to any of these important problems.”<sup>36</sup>

But not only are the two threats fundamentally different in nature, they are also dissimilar in scope. The conventional approach to security, as Chapter One noted, has been strictly *national* in character. Defence departments, in fact, are notorious for harbouring

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* (vol. 35, 1991), p. 213.

<sup>35</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 464.

<sup>36</sup> Walt, *op. cite.*, note 34, p. 213.

deep commitments to nationalism and the protection of the nation-state. Integral to the conventional approach to the protection of the 'state' or 'nation,' and clearly exhibited by defence departments everywhere, is an identification with the 'state' in question and the establishment of a sense of 'us vs. them,' inside/outside, friend/foe and compatriot/alien. The scope of environmental problems, meanwhile, is global; ozone depletion does not occur exclusively in areas above the guilty party and pollutants produced in one country rarely adhere to human-assigned geopolitical boundaries, but affect nations the world over. Very little about environmental problems, in fact, is national in scope. Consequently, efforts to achieve reductions in global pollution must be global in scope, as must be the organizations which are designed to address the problem. Overcoming many environmental problems will require a greater emphasis on international cooperation and a de-emphasis on sovereignty and notions of the nation-state. That being the case, the traditional penchant towards a predominantly nationalist approach and nationalist sentiment will prove a difficult obstacle to a globalist understanding of the fate of the earth.

The third dissimilarity revolves around the issue of intent. The conventional understanding of the 'threat to national security' has been understood in terms of an adversary's *ability* to cause harm as well as *intent* to do so. This explains why, until recent calls for change emerged, the environment had not been considered a threat to the national security of the state and why it makes little sense to classify it as such now. While environmental degradation fulfills some of the criteria in terms of the ability to cause harm to citizens and states, the issue of *intent* to do so remains impossible to classify as far as

environmental degradation is concerned. Wars are usually intentional; environmental degradation rarely so. Notes Deudney: "Violent threats involve a high degree of intentional behaviour. Organizations are mobilized, weapons procured and wars waged with relatively definite aims in mind. Environmental degradation, on the other hand, is largely unintentional, the side-effects of many other activities. No one really sets out with the aim of harming the environment."<sup>37</sup>

Fourth, the organizations devised to provide protection from violence and those created to address environmental problems harbour fundamental differences. In addition to those arguments raised earlier against proposals to convert the military into an environmental protector, additional problems arise. Predominant among these is the fact that national defence organizations display an almost unshakable zero-sum approach to problems. That is, a gain for one side is almost invariably interpreted as a loss for the other; an approach which generally cannot successfully be applied to the negotiation of ecological issues. Argues Deudney: "The prevailing assumption is that everyone is a potential enemy, and that agreements mean little unless congruent with immediate interests. If the Pentagon had been put in charge of negotiating an ozone layer protocol, we might still be stockpiling chlorofluorocarbons as a bargaining chip."<sup>38</sup> Further, in cases where disputes run foul, the response from defence establishments often involves the use of violence, with inter-state war as a possible outcome. If military establishments were requisitioned to address environmental problems, would this then lead, as Dalby suggests somewhat facetiously, to

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<sup>37</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 464.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

international military intervention to prevent the deforestation of the Amazon or a coalition attack against China in the event that it refuses to limit coal consumption and atmospheric pollution?<sup>39</sup> While these examples may run the edge of absurdity, the point may nonetheless be made that defence departments and environmental agencies differ fundamentally in scope and nature making any attempt to assign responsibility for the resolution of the two to a single organisation tenuous at best. Moreover, it leads to fundamentally muddled analysis. As Deudney concludes, "... it is analytically misleading to think of environmental degradation as a national security threat, because the traditional focus of national security - interstate violence - has little in common with either environmental problems or solutions."<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, not only are there fundamental dissimilarities between the nature, scope, and orientation of these two types of organizations, but there are also fundamental contradictions in goals; a fact which is made painfully obvious when the question 'security of what?' is raised. If the achievement of security is linked, as it often is, to a way of life, then contradiction cannot be denied or ignored. Although access to resources, and particularly supplies of cheap oil, are considered essential to the US way of life, and hence security (security being defined as a guarantee of a way of life), it is precisely this high-consumption life-style and continued use of global pollutants that is endangering the global biosphere. What is being made 'safe' therefore is not necessarily the community, nor the state, but "...at least in the short term, the economic profitability of the system and those

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<sup>39</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 18.

<sup>40</sup> Deudney, *op. cite.*, note 1.

who control it. But if its activities and way of life, precisely what security should be ensuring, are undermining the long-term viability of that way of life for humanity, the contradiction becomes painfully obvious.”<sup>41</sup>

The contradictions inherent in the effort to link the environment and security extend further. ‘Security,’ so often understood as the maintenance not only of the ‘state’ and a way of life, but also the status quo, does little to establish a mindset primed to address the problems of the environment. Maintaining the current system of resource flows, for example, essential as this may be to the continuing viability of the economies of various states, particularly Western ones, is useful for procuring a sort of international stability and ‘security’ of states only in the short run. In the long-run, as these resources become depleted, the utility and wisdom of such a move is less obvious strategically. From an environmental perspective, it is irrefutably counter-productive. This contradiction, moreover, is crucial to the overall question of how the environment and security might be linked.<sup>42</sup>

Aside from the fundamental differences in nature, scope and orientation of these threats, an additional problem lies in the fact that the redefinitional process does not necessarily remove the term of what Conca refers to as ‘embedded social meaning’ - the metaphorical, institutional and political associations which attend the terms - the implications of which often run counter to the aims of the architects of change. These

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<sup>41</sup> Dalby, *op. cite.*, note 18, p. 111.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

implications often become evident only when this embedded social meaning is unpacked.<sup>43</sup> More to the point, part of the goal of many proponents of ecological security and other efforts to link the environment and security is clearly to place environmental issues on a higher plane, to have political and public consciousness raised, and to have these issues accorded a higher priority. While the conjoining of images of scarcity and security may bring about an elevation of environmental concerns on the political agenda, it may be a tactic not worth the price. The crux of the dilemma, thus, is that by attempting to establish a connection, appealing to enlarged notions and linked conceptual metaphors, 'ecological security' and 'environmental security' will be far more likely to militarize the environment than to green either the concept or the practice of security.<sup>44</sup> Elevating ecology to the level of national-security may well be attainable only at the cost of its militarization. Prevailing understandings of the concept and practice of security, meanwhile, will remain untouched.<sup>45</sup>

All of this being the case, the question then becomes why are there currently so many efforts to 'redefine' security and why the rush to add non-traditional items such as the environment to the mix? What is driving the effort to link the environment and security? This was a question raised by Kim Richard Nossal in his article "Seeing Things? The Adornment of 'Security' in Australia and Canada."<sup>46</sup> Nossal begins by observing the propensity in the post-Cold War era to 'rethink' security and the subsequent tendency to 'adorn' the concept with new and sundry adjectives, among which 'ecological' and

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<sup>43</sup> Conca, *op. cite.*, note 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Nossal, *op. cite.*, note 2.

'environmental' figure prominently. Nossal, naturally, is not the first to observe this trend in the post-Cold War environment. He is, however, one of the few to have paid attention to the motivating factors behind the issue and why this effort is more prominent within some circles and some government departments than it is in others.

This question is relatively crucial, since the ease and rapidity with which some government officials and academics accept the move to rethink security, while others prove less than enthusiastic is instructive. An absence of enthusiasm, for example, is readily apparent in defence departments. Nossal's explanation for their resilience to tag security to the environment revolves at least in part around the fact that any extended meddling of traditional conceptions of security would reveal that in the 1990s there is no longer an easily identifiable 'enemy' in the traditional sense against which security must be protected and preserved. In the case of both Canada and Australia, for example, there is a previously unheard of absence of an 'enemy' - a threatening and hostile political community or 'other' threatening the state - a fact which makes it increasingly difficult to provide justifications for allocating \$10-12 billion annually to military activities. "On the contrary," he notes, "embracing an idea like cooperative security would be to admit that it would be more rational to transfer expenditures to non-military activities."<sup>47</sup>

This is an issue well-noted by many critics of the traditional understanding of security as Chapter Two pointed out, and the 'absence of an enemy' problem has been regularly raised in academic communities. As Nossal notes:

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

The day-to-day reality of security policy for Australians and Canadians is not to have to rebuff the challenges from some hostile 'other' to the very existence of the community; instead, it is to cope with a multiplicity of threats to the well-being of the community that emanate from a variety of sources. In short, a security perspective that fixes simply on 'securing' the community against a hostile takeover has little to commend it. By contrast, a conception of security that seeks to go beyond the narrow, historical definition is more appealing intellectually.<sup>48</sup>

The successful reception of many of these ideas therefore stems at least in part from the intellectual dissatisfaction some hold for conventional understandings of security. For many the concept is fuzzy and overly narrow when explored at any great depth and generally considered out of date to current realities.

Defence departments have responded to criticisms against the traditional understanding by noting that while there may indeed be an absence of an enemy *now*, the possibility exists for the emergence of a new enemy at some point in the future. Just as few could have (or did) predict the end of the Cold War and the dramatic political changes that have occurred in the last half decade, so too can few predict how events will unfold in the future and whether or not some new 'enemy' might emerge. Enemies can surface rapidly and without warning; one need only look at the "... speed and ease with which various 'enemies' of Australia and Canada emerged over the last century."<sup>49</sup> Consequently, although the traditional definition of security may appear old-fashioned and out of sync with present realities, it is quite possible that this traditional definition might become perfectly relevant once again.<sup>50</sup> Prudence, therefore, "demands that precipitous decisions not be

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

made; that dramatic and radical alterations to the existing defence structures not be embraced; that a 'balanced' multi-purpose, combat-capable force structure be maintained - even without an identifiable enemy for the present."<sup>51</sup>

But while defence establishments have been hesitant to reconfigure security, other departments, notably foreign ministries, have not. Proposals for reform, in fact, are regularly touted by the ministries of both countries. The question, however, is why? One suggestion has been that, "the elaboration of cooperative security can best be seen as an opportunistic hunt for the Great Diplomatic Initiative that might bring its author personal or political aggrandizement."<sup>52</sup> While this may in part be true, and ministers in both countries may be delivering speeches they believe will score personal political points, there are also broader, structural reasons underlying the efforts. Adorned notions of security, Nossal argues,

... are attractive to foreign ministries for precisely the same reason that they are so unattractive to defence ministries: because adorned concepts of security tend to diminish the importance of the military tools in the pursuit of national security. Adorned notions of security demand the deployment of diplomatic, not military, resources. And in a budgetary environment which is strictly zero-sum, foreign ministers have little to lose and much to gain from seeking to reshape how Cabinet Ministers see security: given the huge size of the defence budget, and the relatively small size of the foreign ministry budget, even a small diversion would dramatically affect the resources that can be made available to diplomats.<sup>53</sup>

Justifying expenditure outlays for a mythical enemy becomes an increasingly hard sell in the cash strapped 1990s where governments are hastily slashing budgets in an attempt to escape

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

from debt-laden existence and taxpayers' complaints about government spending.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, other departments, less immune to government cut-backs, have sought to justify their existence and to tap into resources heretofore unavailable, by suggesting alternative approaches to security.

Bureaucratic maximisation, in short, is a very plausible reason behind at least some of the efforts at redefining security and of linking environmental issues to the concept. If Nossal's analysis is correct and the effort to graft environmental issues onto the security agenda is merely a thinly disguised grab at a larger share of resources, this effort is short-sighted at best and dramatically foolish at worst. While the desire to see additional resources tagged for the environment and environmental protection is both understandable and even commendable, is linking the environment to security the most appropriate means by which this might be achieved? Moreover, even if resource considerations are not the primary motivating factor behind these efforts, and sheer frustration with the concept from an academic perspective is, it must also be noted that intellectually, 'environmental security' is no more satisfying than the traditional definition was in the first place, for it brings with it its own set of contradictions and dilemmas. If permitted a return to the problems identified in Chapter Two, it is difficult to see precisely how this 'new' approach to security will resolve many of the conundrums associated with the conventional approach, and therefore how it purports to be an improvement over past practice. In fact, despite numerous references to 'rethinking' and 'redefining' security to provide an enhanced understanding of the concept, definitional efforts are surprisingly rare. As Marc Levy has astutely pointed

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

out, almost all efforts to link the environment and security necessitate a redefinition of security, of the traditional understanding of the term. Yet most of the authors advocating a link fail to define, nevermind redefine, 'security' in the first place.<sup>55</sup> By failing to address the definitional issue, however, they also fail to demonstrate exactly how the 'new and improved' approach to security is indeed an improvement over past practice. The long term implications of all of this must be considered, yet, unfortunately these rarely are.

### **Conclusion**

It is undeniable that efforts to connect security and the environment are plagued by multiple difficulties and contradictions. Not only are each of the individual approaches beset with serious flaws, but the overall effort to link the two fields runs the risk of compounding, rather than simplifying, many of the problems previously present. Moreover, this effort is far more likely to run directly against the very goals of the proponents of 'redefining' security and of promoters of 'ecological security' than to assist them for the simple reason that merely redefining the term, or tagging it to other adjectives does not remove previous connotations. Rather than ridding the concept of security of its many complications, it merely adds to them. Aggravating the situation further is the fact that it is equally unsatisfying in terms of providing a means to achieve desired ends. If Nossal and others' analysis is correct, and the effort to graft environmental issues onto the security agenda is motivated not so much for academic and intellectual reasons, but is instead merely a thinly disguised grab at a larger share of resources, this effort is short-sighted at best and

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<sup>55</sup> Levy, *op. cite.*, note 1, p. 44.

dramatically foolish at worst. While the desire to see additional resources tagged for the environment and environmental protection is understandable, perhaps even commendable, linking the environment to security can hardly be the most appropriate means to achieve this. Likewise, linking security to the environment, and especially militaries to the environment, as much as this might be a short term public relations coup, will do little in the long run. In so doing, such an effort is bound to commit great damage rather than achieve a desirable result.

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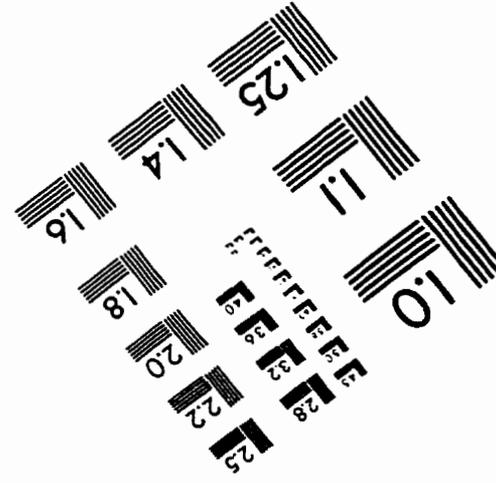
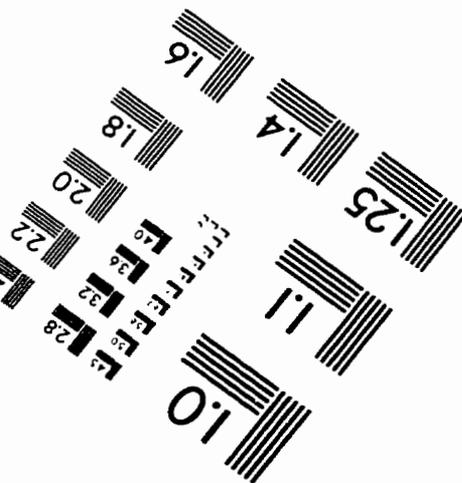
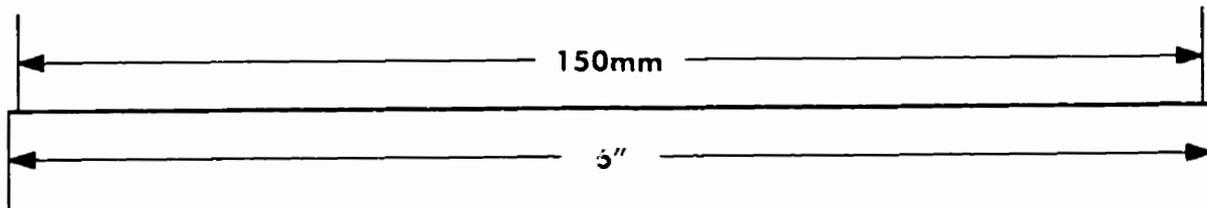
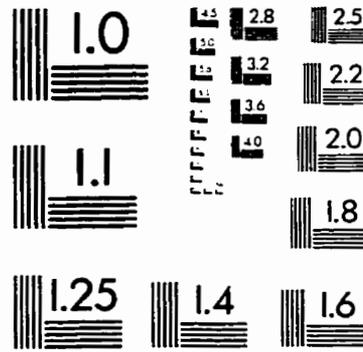
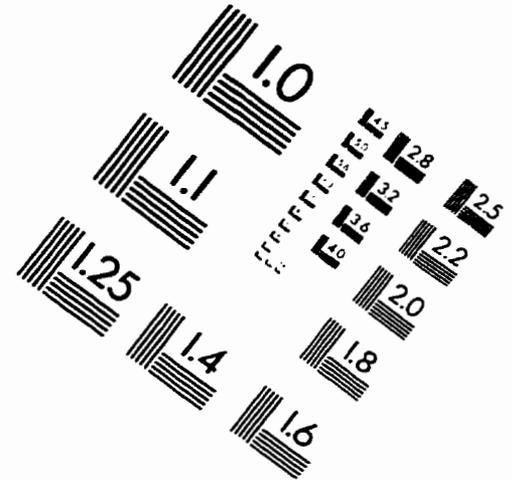
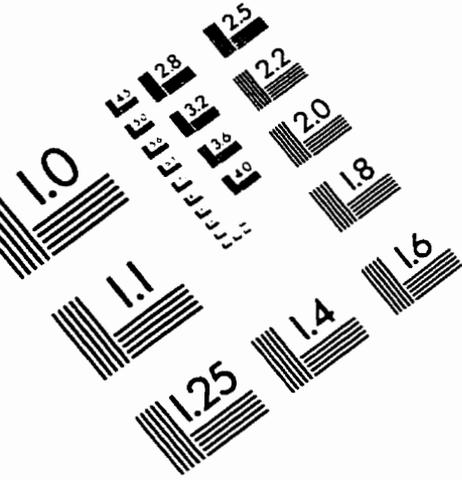
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