



"Security's Metamorphosis: The Copenhagen School's Transformative Influence"

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Abstract

This paper is structured into three main sections. The first part examines the concept of security, the traditional understanding of security, and the critique of this traditional perspective by scholars such as Charles Tilly, Iris Marion Young, Susan Rae Petersen, and Wyn Jones. These scholars address the issue of the state's excessive emphasis in traditional security studies.

Moving on to the second part, the discussion delves into the 'Copenhagen school' and its fundamental principles, including securitization. This section also explores Barry Buzan's insights from his work 'People, States, and Fear' and emphasizes the significance of the Copenhagen school's contributions.

The third and final part comprises the conclusion. Here, not only are certain criticisms of the Copenhagen school acknowledged, but also its enduring relevance in contemporary security discourse, despite its limitations. This underscores how the Copenhagen school has effectively broadened the conventional understanding of security, shaping its continued significance within contemporary academic and practical discussions on security.

Realist Notion of State centric Security

At this juncture, it is posited that states inherently exhibit a lack of trust in one another, leading them to prioritize self-interest by extending their influence to bolster their power, thereby ensuring their security.

By adopting the state as the primary unit of analysis within security studies, realist perspectives emphasize the safeguarding of state integrity and the physical welfare of its populace. This orientation towards state security consequently accentuates the military dimension of security. However, this raises

the pertinent question: does the source of threat invariably originate from external states, or can states themselves become the very sources of peril to their own citizens?

In his work titled 'People, States, and Fear,' Barry Buzan elucidates how a state can metamorphose into a source of menace. Buzan contends that struggles for control over state institutions can engender a state of insecurity among citizens. The faction that gains ascendancy within these institutions often resorts to extrajudicial executions targeting dissenters. Historical instances such as Spain in the 1930s, Turkey in the 1970s, and China in the 1930s are cited as examples. State-sponsored terrorism further underscores this phenomenon, illustrated by instances like the genocidal acts against Kosovan Albanians in Yugoslavia during the 1990s, the Rwandan genocide of 1994, and extrajudicial executions in Nazi Germany. Moreover, the aftermath of the September 11 attacks prompted the enactment of the USA Patriot Act in 2001, enabling the American government to detain numerous individuals without due adherence to established legal procedures.

An additional predicament inherent in the realist conception of security lies in its exclusive focus on the well-being of inhabitants confined within specific state borders. However, certain threats to individual security transcend territorial boundaries. Evident examples of this transcendence include the complexities of climate change and global warming. In the face of these environmental cataclysms, no individual state can singularly shield its citizens from the far-reaching impacts.

In instances where state authority is either acknowledged or contested, the state either abandons those who reject its authority or subjects them to punitive measures. This underscores the intricate dynamics of state-power relationships.



Copenhagen School

The work of the Copenhagen School, exemplified by Berry Buzan's seminal book "People, States, and Fear," broadens the traditional conception of security by incorporating dimensions beyond material concerns. Buzan underscores this by juxtaposing the applicability of security to objects versus individuals. For instance, the safeguarding of tangible assets like money in a bank can be quantified and insured based on calculable risks. In contrast, the security of individuals, encompassing life, health, wealth, freedom, and their intricate interplay, defies straightforward definition due to inherent complexities and the subjective nature of evaluation.

Buzan's inclusion of health and freedom as security components challenges conventional notions. This is particularly relevant in historical instances where state actors, invoking fear, have curtailed citizens' freedom, as exemplified by the McCarthyism era in the United States during the 1950s. The conventional belief that states protect citizens from external threats often facilitated restrictions on individual liberties.

Buzan introduces the notion of "social threats" to individual security, encompassing physical threats, economic risks, violations of rights, and challenges to status. He then leverages the concepts of the "State of Nature," Hobbesian maximal state, and Lockean minimal state to analyze which state structure effectively guards against these social threats. Remarkably, Buzan asserts that individuals can be dependent on the state for general security while simultaneously recognizing the state as a potential source of personal insecurity.

Buzan further elaborates on scenarios where the state itself becomes a threat to citizens' security. He outlines instances such as struggles for control over state institutions, political terrorism resulting from disputes over state policies, and foreign policy decisions leading to citizens' harm, as seen in the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War.

The process of "securitization," as defined by Buzan, Weaver, and De Wilde, entails transcending conventional political boundaries by framing issues as matters of security. This involves labeling a concern as a security threat, proposing responses, and seeking audience validation. Such validation transforms the issue from the realm of regular politics to one warranting immediate action. The

Iraq War serves as a notable example of securitization.

The authors also categorize security into five sectors: economic, societal, military, political, and environmental. Each sector identifies specific threats that endanger a referent object. Identity assumes this role in the societal sector, while the military sector retains the state as the referent object. Through this categorization, the contextual nature of security and its dependence on distinct referent objects is emphasized, offering a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in security analysis.

In their seminal work "Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security," Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver introduce the concept of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). This theory posits that security concerns tend to congregate in geographically defined regions. According to RSCT, security issues do not easily transcend geographical distances, and threats are more likely to manifest within the confines of a specific region. The security of each actor within a region is intricately interlinked with the security of other actors in the same region. Consequently, regions often exhibit a high degree of security interdependence, which distinguishes them from one another and renders the study of regional security particularly intriguing.

In this context, certain states, known as insulators, serve to isolate regions. A classic example is Afghanistan, strategically positioned between the Middle East and South Asia. Insulator states effectively mark boundaries of indifference, where distinct security dynamics operate independently. This concept challenges the traditional notion of "buffer states," which are typically located at points of heightened security intensity, such as Belgium situated between Germany and France.

Regions, as defined by RSCT, should be regarded as miniature international systems where various established international relations theories, including Balance of Power, polarity, interdependence, and alliance systems, can be applied. This theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of security dynamics at both regional and international levels.

Conclusion: When evaluating the relevance of a particular school of thought or theory, it is crucial to comprehensively grasp the core concepts that



underpin that theory. Without a firm understanding of these concepts, it becomes challenging to argue whether the theory holds contemporary relevance. Therefore, I will initially emphasize the concepts of the "Copenhagen School" without delving into its criticisms.

The "Copenhagen School" remains pertinent in contemporary security discourse for several reasons. First and foremost, it has played a pivotal role in broadening the scope of security considerations beyond traditional military issues. This expansion encompasses non-military concerns, even those lacking a direct military dimension, as long as they are deemed "existential threats." This perspective asserts that threats and vulnerabilities can manifest in diverse domains, encompassing both military and non-military aspects. To qualify as security issues, these concerns must meet specific criteria that differentiate them from typical political matters. They must be framed as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor. By doing so, they garner support for emergency measures that surpass the ordinary constraints of political rules.

The relevance of a theory hinges on its capacity to interpret the contemporary era and provide solutions to existing challenges. For instance, the "Copenhagen School" has addressed the evolving security landscape by introducing the Regional Security Complex Theory, offering a new framework to comprehend security-related issues. This adaptability is exemplified by the crisis faced by Marxist theory, which failed to explain the absence of revolutions, the role of the state in averting revolution, and the state's mediation of conflicts between elites and workers. Marxist theory struggled to keep pace with the changing dynamics of the contemporary security environment.

Nevertheless, it's important to acknowledge certain critiques of the "Copenhagen School." Scholars like Lene Hansen have argued that it inadequately incorporates gender perspectives into its security scholarship. While the "Copenhagen School" does not explicitly address gender in its theorization, it does not necessarily exclude it. It's vital to recognize that the absence of explicit gender discourse does not equate to exclusion.

Additionally, Filip Ejdus has suggested that the "Copenhagen School" could benefit from further exploration and clarification of the term 'political,' and it should adopt a more defined and coherent stance in relation to the political-security dichotomy.

The "Copenhagen School" takes a broad approach to theorizing and avoids confining itself within traditional dichotomies.

In summary, the "Copenhagen School" remains relevant due to its capacity to adapt to contemporary challenges, as exemplified by the introduction of the Regional Security Complex Theory. However, it also faces valid criticisms regarding gender inclusivity and its stance on the political-security divide, which scholars have called for further examination and refinement.

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