SELECTED READINGS

Critical Explorations and the Highway of Critical Security Theory

KEN BOOTH

OVERVIEW

Booth assaults realism. To him, the realism that informs so much of the discourse in IR is itself the problem—the culprit pretending to offer remedies to the victim. Influenced by the Frankfurt School and the critical-theory tradition with which he identifies, the author seeks emancipation from dangerous ideas that put the collective health of human society in jeopardy. Considering all knowledge as part of a social process, Booth departs from traditional theory, which he sees as flawed by its reductionism, its grounding in naturalism (as if the state, other institutions and what they do were part of the natural order of things), and its regressive claims that have dominated politics among nations. The state and other institutions must be "denaturalized" or revealed as essentially human creations that serve powerful interests. This unmasking not only liberates or emancipates us, but also opens us to advancing values central to achieving a more progressive world order that enhances world security. To make this happen, critical theory needs to identify what is real (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), and what can be done about it (praxis).

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. When we are confronted by a factual or theoretical claim, how likely are we to think critically about it? Are we prone to dive beneath the surface to explore what underpins these claims?
2. Are theories—often elegantly presented—sometimes used knowingly or unknowingly to cover or camouflage realities more difficult to defend?
3. Can we engage in critical thinking by making it a routine to challenge both the factual basis and logic of argumentation in support of one or another theory or theoretical proposition?
4. What does Booth mean by the emancipation he advocates?

The Highway of Critical Security Theory

The framework of ideas developed below might be visualized in the Kantian metaphor of a highway. In my adaptation of it, the image to keep in mind is of two major roads, themselves the product of a series of feeder roads, converging and widening into a single highway.[1] The two major roads are the *critical theory tradition in social theory,* and the *radical tradition in international relations theory.* The highway that is produced is *critical security theory.*

The Critical Theory Tradition

The critical theory tradition goes back to Kant.[2] Of most immediate relevance for current purposes, however, is the work of the Frankfurt School, whose origins lay in the establishment of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in 1923. During the Nazi period and World War II, the school was exiled in the United States before being reestablished in Germany in 1950.[3] Key scholars in the school's work over some eighty-plus years have been Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas.

The most thorough exposition to date bringing together the work of the Frankfurt School and the problematique of security is Richard Wyn Jones's book *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory.*[4] He describes his approach to thinking about security as developing "in the light" of the Frankfurt School,[5] and I am happy to endorse this formulation. I also share his view that not all critical theories are equally useful when thinking about security and that the use of the word "critical" in the label CSS should signal the special helpfulness of the Frankfurt School. Not all critics of realist-derived security studies would share this view, of course, particularly postmodernists and poststructuralists hostile to meta-narratives (other than their own), or those peace researchers committed to positivism.

In addition to the Frankfurt School, there are three other feeder roads into the critical theory tradition:

- The body of ideas identified with Antonio Gramsci, together with those of his interpreters in international studies (the neo-Gramscians). They have contributed with considerable insight to thinking about hegemony, civil society, and the different roles of intellectuals in politics.
- The Marxian tradition offers a deep mine of ideas that are especially useful for thinking about ideology, class, and structural power.
- An embryonic school of critical international relations theory has developed. It has begun to examine cosmopolitan ideas and practices relating to community, democracy, force, and law.[6]

In what follows, seeking to bring together the main themes of the critical theory tradition, I am conscious of synthesizing an enormous amount of sometimes complex theorizing. Purists might squeal, but the risk is worth taking in the interests of shaping a coherent and accessible body of ideas relevant to a critical theory of security. Four core themes emerge.[7]

Theme One: All Knowledge is a Social Process

Knowledge does not simply exist, waiting to be discovered like a glacier. Social and political theories, and the concepts and conceptualizations that derive from them, are the products of social processes. To a greater or lesser degree, theorists both write and are written by the theories of their time and circumstances. In this sense, all knowledge about human society is historical knowledge, emerging as it does from concrete contexts. Social and political theories are not therefore neutral or objective; they contain "nontheoretical interests." They exist in real worlds, not some imagined world of decontextualized theory; their findings, concerns, and implications are not those that might be understood by a disinterested and omniscient god (if she existed), standing apart from earthly context. Theories are, to repeat Robert Cox's famous formulation,"*for* some one or *for* some purpose." One aim of critical theory, then, is to seek to reveal the "interests of knowledge" as a factor in social and political enquiry. Knowledge here includes what is often described as "common sense." From a Gramscian perspective, common sense is equally "*for* some one or *for* some purpose." All political theorizing has some ethical dimensions, whether it is at the level of sophisticated programmatic planning or down-to-earth common sense. The political realm is necessarily a realm of ethics and morality. If all positions, including the claim to have none, have some nontheoretical (normative) implications, objectivity is a false idol in the study of human society. The most that can be attained is

a degree of (subjective) critical distance from the object of enquiry.

Theme Two: Traditional Theory Promotes the Flaws of Naturalism and Reductionism In a famous essay published in 1937, Max Horkheimer, a key figure in the Frankfurt School, gave the label "traditional theory" to the flawed theorizing that his critical theory would seek to overcome.[8] In particular, he criticized the way traditional theory's commitment to the scientific method had spread uncritically and powerfully into all fields. The fallacy of naturalism is the idea that human beings and societies belong to the same world of nature as everything else and so should be capable of being explained by the same scientific method. In particular, when it comes to explaining human society, the characteristic reductionism of the scientific method is flawed and needs to be replaced by a more holistic perspective. Theorists can therefore be divided between those who see themselves primarily as *scientists* seeking objective truth about society and Frankfurt School critical theorists who accept they are part of a social process (seeking to promote emancipation). The former (falsely) consider that they are working apart from the world they seek to explain, whereas the latter understand they are embedded in society, and that theorizing is a social act. Gramsci made the important distinction, respectively, between *traditional* and *organic* intellectuals.

Theme Three: Critical Theory Offers a Basis for Political and Social Progress Critical theory stands outside and questions the social and political phenomena it is examining. . . . It avoids, as far as possible, the negative consequences of *problem-solving* theories, particularly the legitimizing and replicating of the regressive aspects of prevailing situations. Problem-solving theories such as political realism leave power where it is, whereas critical theory attempts to bring about structural changes in the human interest, that is, reordering power in emancipatory ways. Power, in its manifold varieties, cannot be escaped, but it can be reordered in a more benign direction. In the strategic action undertaken to attempt to bring change about, there is no sounder basis than *immanent critique*—the discovery of the latent potentials in situations on which to build political and social progress. This means building with one's feet firmly on the ground, not constructing castles in the air.

Theme Four: The Test of Theory is Emancipation Human society in global perspective is shaped by ideas that are dangerous to its collective health. The evidence for the latter is widespread. It is revealed in the extent of structural oppression suffered on account of gender, class, or race; it is apparent in the threats to the very environment that sustains all life; it is seen in the risks arising out of the unintended consequences from developments in technology; and, as ever, it is experienced in the regular recourse to violence to settle political differences. A more just society in global perspective would be one that progressively limits the power of regressive structures and processes, steadily squeezing the space for violent behavior in all its direct and indirect manifestations; in this process, new opportunities would open up for the exploration of what it might mean to be human. This exploration, in the spirit of emancipation, begins with critique. A radical rethinking of the theories and practices that have shaped political life is an essential foundation for the reinvention of human society. Such rethinking, to be true to the spirit of emancipation, requires students to embrace a global perspective. The smaller social units of universal human society will not be predictably secure until the whole is systematically secured; this is one reason why what is called political studies (or even science) should be logically regarded as a subfield of the study of world politics or international relations (broadly defined) and not the other way around. Emancipation for critical theorists is both a critical device for judging theory and the continuing goal of practice; its politics seeks to denaturalize and overcome oppressive social divisions in human society at all levels. The only transhistorical and permanent fixture in human society is the individual physical being, and so this must naturally be the ultimate referent in the security problematique. Such reverence for the person—the singular body—should be understood as synonymous with the idea that people exist collectively, in some social context or other. A notion of community remains the best way of expressing how this can be translated into living a good life. The search for multilevel emancipatory communities, locally and globally, is the biggest institutional challenge faced by a critical theory of security. In the pursuit

of this objective, *discourse ethics*—wherein communication (the basis for community) rather than traditional politico-military strategizing (the medium of conflict)—must therefore be a priority. . . .

The Radical International Relations Tradition

The critical theory tradition is mainly (though not wholly) important in relation to how we might think about what is reliable knowledge (epistemology), and what should be done (emancipatory praxis). What I am calling the radical international relations tradition relates more to what is real in world politics (ontology), and what values might inform the praxis of global politics in the human interest.[9]

All social and political theories have normative implications, to a lesser or greater extent, either implicitly or explicity. The feeder roads of the radical international theory tradition are explicitly value-laden, and the normative thrust is *progressive*. The latter is a word I use deliberately, fully aware of its problems and reputation. The concept of progress is unfashionable in some circles. To postmodernists, for example, the idea of progress is almost synonymous with all that has gone wrong with the world in the past 200 years; it is part of the modernity that, according to some, led to the Holocaust.[10] Such views underline the need to reconsider the concept of progress. This will become easier as progress ceases to be identified as strongly as it has been with the hubris of nineteenth-century liberalism or twentieth-century totalitarianism (hardly the complete story of the idea of progress), and as the wave of postmodernism and poststructuralism weakens in Western intellectual life. In any case, an idea of progress informs postructuralist arguments more so than is generally recognized. . . .

Despite all the assaults on the idea of progress, it remains necessary, globally manifested, and (now) is almost universally hard-wired. By "progressive" I mean simply a belief in the importance of having ideals in society and trying to shape law, politics, and institutions accordingly. The idea of progress derives from the laudable refusal of some people to believe that this is the best of all possible worlds. Without rational ideals to challenge power, it remains where it is, to be countered only by countervailing power or unreason.

Five main schools of thought in the radical international relations tradition are relevant to the development of a critical theory of security:

- The philosophical tradition of social idealism, in which human society is conceived as self-constituted and international politics regarded as just another aspect of human-made reality.
- The Peace Research and Peace Studies School, which since the 1950s has explicitly promoted the value of peace. In the 1960s this project expanded from concentrating on the problem of war into addressing the study of all forms of violence, from direct to structural.
- The World Society or World Order School, which offers inspiration because of the way its proponents developed an explicitly value-framed and progressive approach to the study of global issues.
- Feminist theorizing, whose contribution has been the uncovering of the gender interests served by political and social theories, as well as the exposure of the role(s) played by gender in the workings of world politics in practice.
- Historical sociology, which has a place in this body of ideas because its starting point opens up the state and so challenges the ahistorical biases and inherent conservatism and statism of political realism. Historical sociology therefore interrogates what realism takes as given and so has radical implications for students of international politics.[11]

Together, these feeder roads add the following core themes to those identified earlier:

Theme Five: Human Society is its Own Invention

If this is true in part, it must be so in whole. What we call "international relations," therefore, is one aspect of human-made reality—"facts by human agreement" on a global scale, in other words. The social idealism represented by Philip Allott's writing about the role of law, and of the "self-forged chains" that exist nowhere but in the mind, is of a similar inspiration to that in peace research arguing that political violence is a learned behavior, not an inevitable feature of human social interaction.[12] Social learning can and does take place, but what has been learned historically has often not been

benign. To the contrary, regressive attitudes have been internalized. Central to what Allott calls these "deformed ideas" has been the way humans have internalized conflict as a foundational myth. This has been nowhere stronger than on what he calls the "grandest stage of all," the "tragi-comedy of the state-system." According to this line of thought about the openness of history, human society became what it need not have been. Humans could have chosen different directions and could yet choose a different future. This injunction refers not only to reinventing international politics but also to the need for a new international political economy. This is a dimension of world politics usually ignored or taken for granted by realist security studies. . . .

Theme Six: Regressive Theories Have Dominated Politics Among Nations Theory constitutes behavior, and some of the key theories that have formed human society on a global scale have not been calculated to produce a more civilized, peaceful, or just system of international relations. Examples of such thinking include ethnocentric and masculinist ideas, as well as the negative images of humanity cultivated by prevailing notions about human nature or the human condition.[13]. . . Ethnocentrism is a particular obstacle to creating a just global society and so must be challenged by more systematic knowledge about the ideas and feelings, and the hopes and fears, of people(s) with different thoughtways. One feature of regressive (noninclusive) theories about humanity is the way they make important sections of society invisible. As a result, gender, race, and class, for example, are frequently downplayed as categorical structures of humanity. The gendered character of how societies and economies work was invisible in the academic study of international relations until feminist theorizing opened the eyes of those who were prepared to see. Above all, the ideology of statism corrupts all it touches. The concept of *human security,* for example, which originally encouraged the idea of a different and more important referent than the sovereign state, has been co-opted and incorporated into statist discourses, reviving old ideas about high and low politics.

Theme Seven: The State and Other Institutions Must Be Denaturalized Human institutions like the state are historical phenomena, not biological necessities. Inquiry into the growth of state formations in different parts of the world will help the process of problematizing all institutional identifiers that divide humanity and that get in the way of recognizing and implementing the view that every person, in principle, has equal moral worth. The temporality of all institutions should lead us to focus on the individual as the ultimate referent for security; the corollary of this is that we should also consider as central to our concerns the ultimate collectivity of individuals, common humanity. Hedley Bull, best known for being one of the leading exponents of the "international society" approach, described "world order" as being "more fundamental and primordial" than international order, because the "ultimate units" of human society are not states or other sociopolitical groupings but individual human beings. The latter are "permanent and indestructible in a sense in which groupings of them of this or that sort are not.". . .[14]

Theme Eight: Progressive World Order Values Should Inform the Means and Ends of an International Politics Committed to Enhancing World Security In today's circumstances, when the world is not working for the vast majority of its inhabitants, the agenda for progressive change is huge. For students of security, the exploration of conflict resolution and conflict management is a major departure from realism's fatalistic assumption of violence in human affairs and, hence, the belief that force can only be met by force. The neatest and most comprehensive formulation of the ideas that should inform progressive global change grew out of the work of the World Order School, with its advocacy of values such as the delegitimation of violence, the promotion of economic justice, the pursuit of human rights, the spread of humane governance, and the development of environmental sustainability.[15] It is my belief that these normative goals should be pursued in a non-dualistic fashion in order to avoid the dangers of *instrumental reason,* that is, the threat of bringing about a perversion of humanity, society, or nature by concentrating entirely on functional processes even in the rational pursuit of a desirable goal.[16] Nuclear strategy is an illustration of the danger of instrumental reason. Its evolution shows how a belief in the absolute priority of national defense, and the subsequent immersion in its processes and goals, perverts intuitions and ideas about humanity,

society, and nature and so opens up the possibility of war crimes, environmental disaster, genetic damage, and untold human catastrophe. Instrumental reason is a dimension in what Robert Lifton and E. Markusen have called "the genocidal mentality,[17] the instrumentalist dynamic shows how even good men (and women) can rationalize their activities and become the instruments of profound human wrongs. One counter to the dualistic ends-justify-the-means rationality, as was discussed earlier, is the Gandhian conception of conceiving ends and means as amounting to the same thing: a concrete end might be out of reach, but the means that are its equivalent are not.[18]

The eight core themes just identified point in the direction of the intellectual highway of a critical theory of security. In summary:

- All knowledge is a social process.
- Traditional theory promotes the flaws of naturalism and reductionism.
- Critical theory offers a basis for political and social progress.
- The test of theory is emancipation.
- Human society is its own invention.
- Regressive theories have dominated politics among nations.
- The state and other institutions must be denaturalized.
- Progressive world order values should inform the means and ends of an international politics committed to enhancing world security.

From this sense of direction, I now propose a definition of a distinct theory of security from a Frankfurt School critical theory perspective: *Critical security theory is both a theoretical commitment and a political orientation. As a theoretical commitment it embraces a set of ideas engaging in a critical and permanent exploration of the ontology, epistemology, and praxis of security, community, and emancipation in world politics. As a political orientation it is informed by the aim of enhancing security through emancipatory politics and networks of community at all levels, including the potential community of communities—common humanity.*

This [article] began by distinguishing CSS as a body of knowledge from a *theory* of security with a critical perspective. It then offered a framework and definition of a particular critical theory of security. This particular framework and definition can guide us in our explorations in relation to three fundamental (philosophical-theoretical-political) questions.

- What is real? A critical theory of security seeks to denaturalize and historicize all human-made political referents, recognizing only the primordial entity of the socially embedded individual. The exploration of referents is seen through the lens of emancipatory interests, not predefined ideas about the nature of the political world. Whereas other theories of security narrow the agenda because of their singular, privileged referents, critical theory is open to the exploration of all referents, historical and future-imagined, and therefore must consider the range of different threats associated with them. Imagined referents, the potential of new identities, are particularly significant for critical theory, because herein lies the possibility of the future reality of security, community and emancipation in world politics.
- What is knowledge? Critical security theory questions the reliability of much of what passes for knowledge about world politics. The reliability of this traditional knowledge is under question because of the political and epistemological assumptions of those who have the status of fact makers in contemporary society. In particular, critical theory challenges the ideal of objectivity in traditional theory and instead settles for the more realistic goal of critical distance between theorist and subject. In this way, the presumptions and assumptions of structurally powerful contemporary knowledge are interrogated, while critical theory pursues its own "knowledge-interests" against the test of an inclusive conception of human emancipation. Given the different starting point of critical theory from other theories, the conceptualization of security is different, and this informs what is thought to be relevant and reliable knowledge.
- What might be done? While the spirit of critical theory is forward-looking, guided by emancipatory interests, the understanding of knowledge as a historical process involves rethinking the past as a basis for inventing a better future. History, after all, is not what happened but how it has been interpreted; historiography is partly about discovery, but more about invention. Consequently, what

has been done, and might be done, looks very different depending on how one tells the story of the past. It can be done with regressive assumptions or an emancipatory interest. Similarly, one's conception of practice and problem-solving will vary. On the one side is the traditional theorist who sees practice as separate from theory and conceives problem-solving within a predefined world. On the other side is the Frankfurt School critical theorist who conceives a constitutive relationship between theorizing and practice and who prioritizes solving the (macro) problem of the existing situation rather than the (micro) problems within that situation. For the traditional theorist, what might be done takes place within the parameters of replicating the world; for the Frankfurt School critical theorist what might be done is inspired by the hope of changing the world, not for theory's sake but for improving the lives of real people in real places. . . .

Toward a Critical Theory of Security

The most clearly constructivist school of international relations today is the curiously labeled English School, with its emphasis on norms and rules within a supposed society of states.[19] Although constructivism offers important insights into the dynamics of world politics,[20] it does not in itself constitute a *theory* of international relations, comparable with realism, for example, with its distinctive set of ideas about the centrality of states, the causal significance of the distribution of power, and the logic of balance-of-power policies. Constructivism is a metatheoretical orientation, seeking to offer richer explanations of how the world works[21]; it does not in itself give us a politically relevant ontology or praxiological orientation. It offers little or no guidance as to whether globalization is desirable or whether the U.S.-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003 was sensible. Constructivism is not a theory of security; what it does is act as a counter to those theories claiming that life, including politics among nations, is determined (by biology, for example). It reinforces the idea, to paraphrase Alexander Wendt, that security is what we make it.[22]

While criticizing various contending theories, and outlining the case for a specific critical theory of security, I want to emphasize the desirability of *pluralism*. Any project aimed at rethinking security from the bottom up must not be closed to the ideas and questions raised by different theoretical perspectives. That being said, the drawing of theoretical lines is essential for an effective research strategy, not to mention any political orientation. At the same time, whatever one's theoretical preference, regular engagement with other theoretical perspectives, including political realism, will help keep everybody honest. There should be no synthesis of critical approaches around the lowest common denominator or any misinformed ignoring of the tradition of political realism.

Students of security these days seem to be condemned to a lifetime of theoretical dialectic, but the typical student will not be interested in theory for its own sake but rather for what it can do in helping us to understand what is happening around us ("theory explains the world"), then in engaging with world politics more effectively ("there is nothing more practical than a good theory"). In other words, most of us are interested in theory because we are interested in real people in real places. So, for example, the concept of emancipation should not be allowed to be characterized, as it sometimes is by critics, as abstract or unrelated to real conflicts. . . .

Being directly relevant to real situations—being a set of guidelines for action—has supposed to have been the particular strength of political realism. . . . Unlike most political realists, one of its founding figures, E. H. Carr, questioned what he called "pure realism" or "consistent realism." He argued that sound political thought and sound political life were synonymous with finding a place for both utopianism and realism. Although he struggled to bring together the planes of utopianism and realism, he was sure that it was an "unreal kind of realism" that ignored the element of morality in any world order. He therefore concluded that the "essential ingredients of all effective political thinking" were "a finite goal, an emotional appeal, a right of moral judgement and a ground for action."[23] I believe the framework for a critical theory of security mapped out earlier—albeit in a preliminary way—contains those essential ingredients and in doing so helps to point in the direction of a *utopian realist* theory of security. Carr would have rejected such a possibility (he thought it impossible to bring together the planes of realism and utopianism), but he would have been sympathetic with the attempt. Utopian

realism attempts to bring together the theoretical and the empirical, as well as the *where we are* (globally and locally) and the *where we want to go* (a harmonious human community with enhanced world security).[24] It attempts to do so in a nondualistic manner, fusing ends and means in a manner whereby one's ideals are evident in how one acts, not only in what one hopes to achieve.

Old thinking about world politics guarantees old practices; the means recommended by traditional theories will ensure that the end will be the same old world with the same old dangers—and perhaps worse, given the predictable tinderbox of the decades ahead. By this I mean that states with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will not persuade others to give them up (except by coercion) if those very WMD states themselves continue to develop the weapons and implicitly if not explicitly declare their possession to have political and strategic utility. Likewise, when powerful states use violence, even if it is claimed to be a last resort for humanitarian purposes, they are not acting in a manner calculated to make violence less likely; if they achieve success in their own terms, they do so only by proving to others that strategic violence can have political utility. Consistency requires that those who propose that world politics is run by laws behave lawfully themselves and that those powerful states that proclaim democracy should be willing themselves to live with being outvoted. The strategic challenge for emancipatory politics is to develop ideas for dealing with today's security threats (to whatever referents we are studying) in ways sensitive to the view expressed by Albert Camus that the means one uses today shapes the ends one might perhaps reach tomorrow.[25]

If a critical theory of security is to reverse the "escape from the real" that has characterized so much academic writing about international relations,[26] then it is essential to ask what it means for real people in real places. What, for example, does one's theorizing mean for the people(s) of the Balkans, women in east Africa, the prospects for the poorest classes in some region, the war on terror, the future of the Middle East, the likelihood of resource wars, or the possibility of nuclear weapons being used somewhere? It has only been constraints on space that have prevented more case studies being offered in this volume, to illustrate what critically informed empirical studies might look like. Such an engagement with the real should be the heart of the next stage in the growth of critically informed security studies.[27]

Another central task is that of trying to learn lessons, in the hope of contributing to the prevention of oppressive structures and situations developing in the first place. In this respect, the U.S. led war on Iraq in 2003 will provide fertile ground for lessons. While President George W. Bush and his allies, notably Prime Minister Tony Blair, argued that the war made the world a safer place, critics argue that U.S. and UK leaders and policies over the years contributed significantly to creating the dangerous regional situation in the first place, while their policies in 2002–2004 made the situation less rather than more secure. In light of this record, critics maintain that nobody could have confidence that U.S.-UK policies in Iraq would create postconflict harmony in the region. Critics point out that different attitudes to building up local strongmen, supplying arms to human rights abusers, pursuing nuclear disarmament, strengthening the UN, and the more vigorous (and less partisan) search for a just and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel—to mention only headline items—would have helped create a different relationship between Iraq and the West. The war against Iraq in 2003, according to this argument, has made the world a more dangerous place, not only by exacerbating the situation in the Middle East but also by replicating policies that legitimize violence and that reject multilateral international bodies. Meanwhile, as leaders of many states focus on the war on terror, more important long-term threats to human security and regional order—poverty, disease, environmental decay—remain marginal or ignored. Remembering Camus, we should understand that human society will never achieve tomorrow what its most powerful do not choose to begin to practice today.

There are, however, resources for benevolent change. *Immanent Critique* points to the growing voice of global civil society, for example, though the obstacles to benign change should not be underestimated.[28] Where one stands on these matters is a scholarly responsibility to be considered with utmost seriousness because somewhere, some people, as these very words are being read, are being starved, oppressed, threatened, or killed in the name of some theory of international politics or economics—or security.

The framework of critical security theory outlined above is policy-relevant, concerned with improving the conditions of political possibility in the issue area of security. One familiar difficulty from any critical perspective in this respect is the fact that current crises are the symptoms of particular structural wrongs and so are deeply embedded in the workings of society. In order to deal with such difficulties, as the old saying goes, one would not want to start from here. When one is already embroiled in a crisis, realistic options are massively reduced. The main contribution of critical approaches must therefore be precrisis, to help us think more constructively about ethical commitments, policies, agents, and sites of change, to help humankind, in whole and in part, to move away from the structural wrongs that ensure that crises, like earthquakes, will periodically rent the political landscape.

The critical theory project in security studies—committed to the development of scholarship relating to the in/security of real people in real places—can be translated into the two tasks of critique and reconstruction. Critique entails critical explorations of what is real (ontology), what is reliable knowledge (epistemology), and what can be done (praxis). Reconstruction requires engagement with concrete issues in world politics, with the aim of maximizing the opportunities for enhancing security, community, and emancipation in the human interest. . . .

The one world in which we all live is getting smaller, more overheated, and increasingly overcrowded. Meanwhile, the realities of security are becoming more complex as politico-economic and technocultural globalization interacts with traditional conflicts arising out of international competition and mistrust. Runaway science, irrationalities and extremisms of one sort or another, and growing pressures on resources threaten to add more combustible fuel to the already dangerous global situation. Human society in the decades to come is threatened by a future of complex insecurity. The outcome for world society is as uncertain as it has ever been—perhaps even more so, given current and future destructive capabilities. Confronted by the threat of complex insecurity, human society needs a theory of world security that is ontologically inclusive, epistemologically sophisticated, and praxeologically varied. Old thinking is guaranteed to replicate: Can a critical theory move beyond this and help to emancipate? Security studies will contribute—however remotely or indirectly—to replicating or changing peoples' conditions of existence. As students of security, whether one is new to the subject or has been studying it for decades, we have a choice: we can decide to study in ways that replicate a world politics that does not work for countless millions of our fellow human beings; or we can decide to study in ways that seek to help to lift the strains of life determining insecurity from the bodies and minds of people in real villages and cities, regions and states. The stakes could not be higher.

Notes

1. This elaboration of the metaphor borrows from Hannah Arendt's borrowing. See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt,* 213.

2. For an accessible summary of the ideas of Kant as applied to international relations, see Williams and Booth, "Kant."

3. Overviews of the work of the Frankfurt School are Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory;* Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life;* Stirk, *Critical Theory, Politics, and Society;* and Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School and Its Critics.*

4. Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory.*

5. Ibid., ix.

6. For Gramsci's work see his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* and Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci.* For an introduction to Cox's work, see Cox, "Social Forces," and "Gramsci, Hegemony, and International Relations," and Cox and Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order.* For an introduction, with useful references, see Smith, "Marxism and International Relations Theory," in Groom and Light, *Contemporary International Relations,* and Linklater, "Marxism," in Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations.* Critical international relations theory was launched, in practice if not name, by Linklater: *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations; Beyond Realism and Marxism: Transformation of Political Community;* see also "The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory." On cosmopolitan democracy, see Held, *Democracy and Global Order,* and Held et al., *Global Transformations.* I would add the school of critical realism to this list, although it has not (so far) produced work directly on security. See Patomaki and Wight, "After Postpositivism." A useful collection of essays discussing most of the approaches above is Wyn Jones (ed.), *Critical Theory and World Politics.*

7. Helpful insights for students of security are Wyn Jones, *Security,* and Hofffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate"; and Linklater, "The Achievements of Critical Theory," in Smith et al., *International*

Theory. The indispensable starting point is Horkheimer's seminal essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*.

8. Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory."
9. Note Johansen,*The National Interest and the Human,* and Mel Gurtov, *Global Politics in the Human Interest*.
10. See in particular Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. A very different perspective on the Enlightenment is captured in Porter, *Enlightenment*.
11. Examples of a key work in each of the schools just mentioned are, respectively: Allott, *Eunomia;* Galtung, *There Are Alternatives;* Falk, *Human Rights Horizons;* Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases;* and Tilley, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*.
12. Falk and Kim (eds.), *The War System,* contains an important selection of relevant literature. Also, Allott, "The Future of the Human Past," in Booth (ed.), *Statecraft and Security*.
13. On these notions and human history, see Allott, "The Future of the Human Past."
14. Bull, *The Anarchical Society,* 22.
15. This school of thought has been preeminently represented in the work of Falk. See, inter alia, *A Study of Future Worlds, The Promise of World Order,* and *Human Rights Horizons*.
16. See Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason;* and Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.
17. Lifton and Markusen, *The Genocidal Mentality*.
18. This is briefly explained in Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi,* 31–32. See also Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy,* 142–170. I have elaborated the argument in "Two Terrors, One Problem."
19. For a recent set of essays on the English School, see the special issue of *International Relations* 17, 3 (December 2003).
20. Sympathetic overviews of constructivism are: Reus-Smit, "Constructivism," in Burchill et al., *Theories;* and Adler,"Constructivism and International Relations," in Carlsneas et al., *Handbook*.
21. The most prominent, but controversial text, is Wendt, *Social Theory*.
22. The reference is to Wendt's article, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," 391–425.
23. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939,* 10, 89.
24. I attempted to challenge the conventional interpretation of Carr as simply a realist in "Security and Anarchy," 527–545.
25. See Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders,* 197.
26. This is elaborated in Booth, "Human Wrongs"; the phrase is Clement Rosset's.
27. See the special issue of *International Relations* 18, 3 (September 2004). A range of articles looks at specific empirical cases through critical lenses.
28. For a selection of perspectives see Lechner and Boli (eds.), *The Globalization Reader,* 2nd ed., pts. 6–10.

Writing Security

DAVID CAMPBELL

OVERVIEW

David Campbell blends elements of critical theory and postmodernism drawn from continental European interpretive understandings. The term danger*—a core concept in security studies—is hardly a neutral term. We can unpack or deconstruct the meanings assigned to danger that serve the purposes of states and those in power*

positions within them. Danger in the form of threats gives the state its identity and justifies its existence. Campbell also takes issue with the "epistemic realism" he observes in security studies as if the world we see is purely material—one composed of objects that are separate somehow from the ideas or beliefs about them and the narratives to which such thinking gives rise.

Questions to Keep in Mind

1. To what extent are the threats that motivate national security concerns merely a function of how we see and interpret the world around us?
2. Is the state created to serve the security interests of the nation or is the latter itself a product of the state that bolsters its position by fostering a sense of common identity among the people within its territorial jurisdiction?
3. Do we tend to accept at face value the claims we hear or read? How prone are we to probe both the surface and subsurface meanings of narratives on security or, for that matter, on other issues on national and international agendas?

Danger is not an objective condition. It is not a thing that exists independently of those to whom it may become a threat. To illustrate this, consider the manner in which the insurance industry assesses risk. In François Ewald's formulation, insurance is a technology of risk the principal function of which is not compensation or reparation, but rather the operation of a schema of rationality distinguished by the calculus of probabilities. In insurance, according to this logic, danger (or, more accurately, risk) is "neither an event nor a general kind of event occurring in reality . . . but a specific mode of treatment of certain events capable of happening to a group of individuals." In other words, for the technology of risk in insurance, "Nothing is a risk in itself; there is no risk in reality. But on the other hand, anything *can* be a risk; it all depends on how one analyzes the danger, considers the event. As Kant might have put it, the category of risk is a category of the understanding; it cannot be given in sensibility or intuition."[1] In these terms, danger is an effect of interpretation. Danger bears no essential, necessary, or unproblematic relation to the action or event from which it is said to derive. Nothing is intrinsically more dangerous for insurance technology than anything else, except when interpreted as such.

This understanding of the necessarily interpretive basis of risk has important implications for international relations. It does not deny that there are "real" dangers in the world: infectious diseases, accidents, and political violence (among others) have consequences that can literally be understood in terms of life and death. But not all risks are equal, and not all risks are interpreted as dangers. Modern society contains a veritable cornucopia of danger; indeed, there is such an abundance of risk that it is impossible to objectively know all that threatens us.[2] Those events or factors that we identify as dangerous come to be ascribed as such only through an interpretation of their various dimensions of dangerousness. Moreover, that process of interpretation does not depend on the incidence of "objective" factors for its veracity. For example, HIV infection has been considered by many to be America's major public health issue, yet pneumonia and influenza, diabetes, suicide, and chronic liver disease have all been individually responsible for many more deaths. Equally, an interpretation of danger has licensed a "war on (illegal) drugs" in the United States, despite the fact that the consumption level of (and the number of deaths that result from) licit drugs exceeds by a considerable order of magnitude that associated with illicit drugs. . . .

Furthermore, the role of interpretation in the articulation of danger is not restricted to the process by which some risks come to be considered more serious than others. An important function of interpretation is the way that certain modes of representation crystallize around referents marked as dangers. Given the often tenuous relationship

between an interpretation of danger and the "objective" incidence of behaviors and factors thought to constitute it, the capacity for a particular risk to be represented in terms of characteristics reviled in the community said to be threatened can be an important impetus to an interpretation of danger. . . . The ability to represent things as alien, subversive, dirty, or sick has been pivotal to the articulation of danger in the American experience.

In this context, it is also important to note that there need not be an action or event to provide the grounds for an interpretation of danger. The mere existence of an alternative mode of being, the presence of which exemplifies that different identities are possible and thus denaturalizes the claim of a particular identity to be *the* true identity, is sometimes enough to produce the understanding of a threat.[3] In consequence, only in these terms is it possible to understand how some acts of international power politics raise not a whit of concern, while something as seemingly unthreatening as the novels of a South American writer can be considered such a danger to national security that his exclusion from the country is warranted.[4] For both insurance and international relations, therefore, danger results from the calculation of a threat that objectifies events, disciplines relations, and sequesters an ideal of the identity of the people said to be at risk. . . . The invasion of Kuwait [serves] . . . as a useful touchstone by which to outline some of the assumptions under-girding this study. Consider, for example, this question: How did the Iraqi invasion become the greatest danger to the United States? Two answers to this question seem obvious and were common. Those indebted to a power-politics understanding of world politics, with its emphasis on the behavior of states calculated in rational terms according to the pursuit of power, understood the invasion to be an easily observable instance of naked aggression against an independent, sovereign state. To those indebted to an economistic understanding, in which the underlying forces of capital accumulation are determinative of state behavior, the U.S.-led response, like the Iraqi invasion, was explicable in terms of the power of oil, markets, and the military-industrial complex.

Each of these characterizations is surely a caricature. The range of views in the debate over this crisis was infinitely more complex than is suggested by these two positions; there were many whose analyses differed from those with whom they might normally be associated, and indebtedness to a tradition does not determine one's argument in every instance. But the purpose of overdrawing these positions (which we might call, in equally crude terms, realist and Marxist) is to make the point that although each is usually thought to be the antinomy of the other, they both equally efface the indispensability of interpretation in the articulation of danger. As such, they share a disposition from which this analysis differs. Committed to an *epistemic realism*—whereby the world comprises objects whose existence is independent of ideas or beliefs about them—both of these understandings maintain that there are material causes to which events and actions can be reduced. And occasioned by this epistemic realism, they sanction two other analytic forms: a *narrativizing historiography* in which things have a self-evident quality that allows them to speak for themselves, and a *logic of explanation* in which the purpose of analysis is to identify those self-evident things and material causes so that actors can accommodate themselves to the realm of necessity they engender.[5] Riven with various demands, insistences, and assertions that things "must" be either this or that, this disposition is the most common metatheoretical discourse among practitioners of the discipline of international relations.

But there are alternative ways to think. . . . Contrary to the claims of epistemic realism, I argue that as understanding involves rendering the unfamiliar in the terms of the familiar, there is always an ineluctable debt to interpretation such that there is nothing outside of discourse. Contrary to a narrativizing historiography, I employ a mode of historical representation that self-consciously adopts a perspective. And contrary to the logic of explanation, I embrace a logic of interpretation that acknowledges the improbability of cataloging, calculating, and specifying the "real causes," and concerns itself instead with considering the manifest political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another.

As such, my argument is part of an emerging dissident literature in international relations that draws sustenance from a series of modern thinkers who have focused on historically specific modes of discourse rather than the supposedly independent realms of subjects and objects.[6] Starting from the position that social and political life comprises a set of practices in which things are constituted in the process of dealing with them, this dissent does not (and does not desire to) constitute a discrete methodological school claiming to magically illuminate

the previously dark recesses of global politics. Nor is it the dissent of a self-confident and singular figure claiming to know the error of all previous ways and offering salvation from all theoretical sin. Rather, this form of dissent emerges from a disparate and sometimes divergent series of encounters between the traditions of international relations and theories increasingly prominent in other realms of social and political inquiry. It is a form of dissent that celebrates difference: the proliferation of perspectives, dimensions, and approaches to the very real dilemmas of global life. It is a form of dissent that celebrates the particularity and context-bound nature of judgements and assessments, not because it favors a (so-called) relativist retreat into the incommensurability of alternatives, but because it recognizes the universalist conceits of all attempts to force difference into the strait-jacket of identity.[7] It is a form of dissent skeptical—but not cynical—about the traditions of international relations and their claims of adequacy to reality. It is a form of dissent that is not concerned to seek a better fit between thought and the world, language and matter, proposition and fact. On the contrary, it is a form of dissent that questions the very way our problems have been posed in these terms and the constraints within which they have been considered, focusing instead on the way the world has been made historically possible.[8]

Consequently, in attempting to understand the ways in which United States foreign policy has interpreted danger and secured the boundaries of the identity in whose name it operates, this analysis adopts neither a purely theoretical nor a purely historical mode. It is perhaps best understood in terms of a history of the present, an interpretative attitude suggested by Michel Foucault.[9] A history of the present does not try to capture *the* meaning of the past, nor does it try to get *a* complete picture of the past as a bounded epoch, with underlying laws and teleology. Neither is a history of the present an instance of presentism—where the present is read back into the past—or an instance of finalism, that mode of analysis whereby the analyst maintains that a kernel of the present located in the past has inexorably progressed such that it now defines our condition. Rather, a history of the present exhibits an unequivocally contemporary orientation. Beginning with an incitement from the present—an acute manifestation of a ritual of power—this mode of analysis seeks to trace how such rituals of power arose, took shape, gained importance, and effected politics.[10] In short, this mode of analysis asks how certain terms and concepts have historically functioned within discourse.

To suggest as much, however, is not to argue in terms of the discursive having priority over the nondiscursive. Of course, this is the criticism most often mounted by opponents to arguments such as this, understandings apparent in formulations like "if discourse is all there is," "if everything is language," or "if there is no reality."[11] In so doing they unquestioningly accept that there are distinct realms of the discursive and the nondiscursive. Yet such a claim, especially after the decades of debates about language, interpretation, and understanding in the natural and social sciences, is no longer innocently sustainable. It can be reiterated as an article of faith to rally the true believers and banish the heretics, but it cannot be put forward as a self-evident truth. As Richard Rorty has acknowledged, projects like philosophy's traditional desire to see "how language relates to the world" result in "the impossible attempts to step outside our skins—the traditions, linguistic and other, within which we do our thinking and self-criticism—and compare ourselves with something absolute."[12] The world exists independently of language, but we can never *know* that (beyond the fact of its assertion), because the existence of the world is literally inconceivable outside of language and our traditions of interpretation.[13] In Foucault's terms, "We must not resolve discourse into a play of pre-existing significations; we must not imagine that the world turns toward us a legible face which we would only have to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favour."[14]

Therefore, to talk in terms of an analysis that examines how concepts have historically functioned within discourse is to refuse the force of the distinction between discursive and nondiscursive. As Laclau and Mouffe have argued, "The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition . . . What is denied is not that . . . objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside of any discursive condition of emergence."[15] This formulation seeks neither to banish arguments that authorize their positions through

reference to "external reality," nor to suggest that any one representation is as powerful as another. On the contrary, if we think in terms of a discursive economy—whereby discourse (the representation and constitution of the "real") is a managed space in which some statements and depictions come to have greater value than others—the idea of "external reality" has a particular currency that is *internal* to discourse. For in a discursive economy, investments have been made in certain interpretations; dividends can be drawn by those parties that have made the investments; representations are taxed when they confront new and ambiguous circumstances; and participation in the discursive economy is through social relations that embody an unequal distribution of power. Most important, the effect of this understanding is to expand the domain of social and political inquiry: "The main consequence of a break with the discursive/extradiscursive dichotomy is the abandonment of the thought/reality opposition, and hence a major enlargement of the field of those categories which can account for social relations. Synonymy, metonymy, metaphor are not forms of thought that add a second sense to a primary, constitutive literality of social relations; instead, they are part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted."[16] The enlargement of the interpretive imagination along these lines is necessary in order to account for many of the recent developments in world politics, and to understand the texts of postwar United States foreign policy. . . .

Identity is an inescapable dimension of being. No body could be without it. Inescapable as it is, identity—whether personal or collective—is not fixed by nature, given by God, or planned by intentional behavior. Rather, identity is constituted in relation to difference. But neither is difference fixed by nature, given by God, or planned by intentional behavior. Difference is constituted in relation to identity.[17] The problematic of identity/difference contains, therefore, no foundations that are prior to, or outside of, its operation. Whether we are talking of "the body" or "the state," or of particular bodies and states, the identity of each is performatively constituted. Moreover, the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an "inside" from an "outside," a "self" from an "other," a "domestic" from a "foreign."

In the specific case of the body, Judith Butler has argued that its boundary, as well as the border between internal and external, is "tenuously maintained" by the transformation of elements that were originally part of identity into a "defiling otherness."[18] In this formulation, there is no originary or sovereign presence that inhabits a prediscursive domain and gives the body, its sex, or gender a naturalized and unproblematic quality. To be sure, many insist on understanding the body, sex, and gender as naturalized and unproblematic. But for their claim to be persuasive, we would have to overlook (among other issues) the multifarious normalizing codes that abound in our society for the constitution and disciplining of sexuality. In seeking to establish and police understandings of what constitutes the normal, the accepted, and the desirable, such codes effect an admission of their constructed nature and the contingent and problematic nature of the identity of the body.

Understanding the gendered identity of the body as performative means that we regard it as having "no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality." As such, the idea that gender is an interior essence definitive of the body's identity is a discursively constructed notion that is required for the purposes of disciplining sexuality. In this context, genders are neither "true" or "false," nor "normal" or "abnormal," but "are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity." Moreover, gender can be understood as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through *a stylized repetition of acts*" an identity achieved, "*not* [through] *a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition.*"[19]

Choosing the question of gender and the body as an exemplification of the theme of identity is not to suggest that as an "individual" instance of identity the performative constitution of gender and the body is prior to and determinative of instances of collective identity. In other words, I am not claiming that the state is analogous to an individual with a settled identity. To the contrary, I want to suggest that the performative constitution of gender and the body is analogous to the performative constitution of the state. Specifically, I want to suggest that we can understand the state as having "no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality"; that its status as the sovereign presence in world politics is produced by "a discourse of primary and stable identity" and that the identity of any particular state should be understood as

"tenuously constituted in time . . . through *a stylized repetition of acts,*" and achieved, "*not* [through] *a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition.*"

. . . Much of the conventional literature on the nation and the state implies that the essence of the former precedes the reality of the latter: that the identity of a "people" is the basis for the legitimacy of the state and its subsequent practices. However, much of the recent historical sociology on this topic has argued that the state more often than not precedes the nation: that nationalism is a construct of the state in pursuit of its legitimacy. Benedict Anderson, for example, has argued in compelling fashion that "the nation" should be understood as an "imagined political community" that exists only insofar as it is a cultural artifact that is represented textually.[20] Equally, Charles Tilly has argued that any coordinated, hierarchical, and territorial entity should be only understood as a "nation*al* state." He stresses that few of these national states have ever become or presently are "nation-states"—national states whose sovereign territorialization is perfectly aligned with a prior and primary form of identification, such as religion, language, or symbolic sense of self. Even modern-day Great Britain, France, and Germany (and, equally, the United States, Australia, and Canada) cannot be considered nation-states even though they are national states.[21] The importance of these perspectives is that they allow us to understand national states as unavoidably paradoxical entities that do not possess prediscursive, stable identities. As a consequence, all states are marked by an inherent tension between the various domains that need to be aligned for an "imagined political community" to come into being—such as territoriality and the many axes of identity—and the demand that such an alignment is a response to (rather than constitutive of) a prior and stable identity. In other words, states are never finished as entities; the tension between the demands of identity and the practices that constitute it can never be fully resolved, because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed. This paradox inherent to their being renders states in permanent need of reproduction: with no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that constitute their reality, states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming. For a state to end its practices of representation would be to expose its lack of prediscursive foundations; stasis would be death.[22] Moreover, the drive to fix the state's identity and contain challenges to the state's representation cannot finally or absolutely succeed. Aside from recognizing that there is always an excess of being over appearance that cannot be contained by disciplinary practices implicated in state formation, were it possible to reduce all being to appearance, and were it possible to bring about the absence of movement which in that reduction of being to appearance would characterize pure security, it would be at that moment that the state would wither away.[23] At that point all identities would have congealed, all challenges would have evaporated, and all need for disciplinary authorities and their fields of force would have vanished. Should the state project of security be successful in the terms in which it is articulated, the state would cease to exist. Security as the absence of movement would result in death via stasis. Ironically, then, the inability of the state project of security to succeed is the guarantor of the state's continued success as an impelling identity.

The constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is thus not a threat to a state's identity or existence: it is its condition of possibility. While the objects of concern change over time, the techniques and exclusions by which those objects are constituted as dangers persist. Such an argument, however, is occluded by the traditional representations of international politics through their debts to epistemic realism and its effacement of interpretation. . . .

Border Crossings

Where once . . . objections to the impoverished understanding of "postmodernism" in international relations would have been made in a defensive mode, now they are put forward with an air of resigned exasperation. Where once we were all caught in the headlights of the large North American car of international relations theory, now the continental sportster of critical theories has long since left behind the border guards and toll collectors of the mainstream—who can be observed in the rearview mirror waving their arms wildly still demanding papers and the price of admission—as the occupants go on their way in search of another political problem to explore. Time has moved on for most people, and with it has come a raft of exciting new research in international relations that is indebted, implicitly as well as explicitly, to the Enlightenment ethos articulated by Foucault.

Few things are more problematic and troublesome than the naming of intellectual trends. This has to be constantly borne in mind, because the research being considered here does not constitute a neatly demarcated "school" of thought, it does not often if ever embrace the label of "postmodernism," and many scholars who might be associated with it could easily be identified in other terms. But when considered as the whole it is not, multiple answers abound to the challenge that those who have gained inspiration from the critical themes of continental philosophy should embark on their own research agendas. Of note is work that deals with familiar issues in estranging ways, including research on the performative nature of state identity (particularly its gendered character) in the context of U.S. intervention; studies of the centrality of representation in North-South relations and immigration policies; a deconstructive account of famine and humanitarian crises; interpretive readings of diplomacy and European security; the radical rethinking of international order and the challenge of the refugee; critical analyses of international law and African sovereignties; a recasting of ecopolitics; the rearticulation of the refugee regime and sovereignty; a problematization of the UN and peacekeeping; a semiotic reading of militarism in Hawaii; and arguments concerning practices of contemporary warfare, strategic identities, and security landscapes in NATO, among many others.

For all the differences, nuances and subtleties, this work incorporates many of the key achievements of "poststructuralism" (meaning the interpretive analytic of "postmodernism"), especially the rethinking of questions of agency, power, and representation in modern political life. . . .

Notes

1. Francois Ewald, 'Insurance and risk,' in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmental Rationality,* edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, Hemel Hempstead, 1991, 199.

2. Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers,* Berkeley, 1982.

3. 'The threat is posed not merely by *actions* the other might take to injure or defeat the true identity but by the very visibility of its mode of *being* as other.' William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox,* Ithaca, 1991, 66.

4. I am referring here to the policies of the recently curtailed McCarran–Walter Act which excluded from the United States, on ideological grounds, writers like the Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

5. See Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation,* Baltimore, 1987, especially chapter one.

6. See 'Speaking the language of exile: dissidence in international studies,' edited by Richard K. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, *International Studies Quarterly,* XXXIV, 1990, 259–416.

7. The charge of 'relativism' has become a mantra-like repudiation employed by realists and others seeking to delegitimize an argument such as this. The logic behind this criticism is that any position concerning itself with the constructed nature of reality has to assume (implicitly or explicitly) that all positions are relative to a specific framework, paradigm, or culture, such that we can make no judgments about right and wrong, good or bad, etc. Furthermore, it is often maintained that such an assumption is contradictory, because the relativist is said to resort to a universal: i.e., that all things are relative. For two reasons, I think such a charge is mistaken and misleading. Firstly, the meaning of relativism is usually ascribed by the objectivist critic, but in a way that refuses to question the terms of the debate. Specifically, the charge of relativism, rests on the dubious assumption that there is indeed some overarching, universal framework to which one is relative. For all the efforts of philosophers and others over the centuries, I am not aware of any agreement on the existance or nature of such an Archimedean point. Indeed, those factors which are sometimes cited as 'universal'—such as tradition or culture—invoke the very intersubjective qualities that the so-called relativist is concerned with. Secondly, the characteristics subsumed under the term relativism by realist critics usually bear the hallmarks of subjectivism rather than relativism. The concern for the lack of standards and truths is usually said to derive from the alleged moral solipsism that results from so-called relativism; the idea that the abandonment of universals leads to an ethical anarchy in which anything goes. But the so-called relativist is concerned with the social and intersubjective nature of paradigms, practices, and standards, and thus rejects the idea that these are the property of individuals. My thinking on these issues has been most influenced by Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis,* Oxford, 1983.

8. See Jim George and David Campbell, 'Patterns of dissent and the celebration of difference: critical social theory and international relations,' *International Studies Quarterly,* XXXIV, 1990, 269–93.

9. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. by Alan Sheridan, New York, 1979, 31.

10. See Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* Brighton, 1983, 118–20.

11. For a good account of these formulations see Judith Butler, 'Contingent foundations: feminism and the question of "postmodernism",' in *Feminists Theorize the*