8 Military Security

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Reader's Guide

This chapter begins with a discussion of the scope of the military security agenda, in order to communicate an awareness of some of its salient characteristics. It then examines the evolution of the traditional approach to military security, with its emphasis on the use of organized political violence by states and a new consideration of the dangers of war caused by the arrival of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems. After that, the securitization perspective is outlined in order to put military security in the context of other sectors of security and to consider how issues get put on and are removed from the military security agenda. Such questions are very much the focus of a variety of constructivist approaches considered in the next section of the chapter. The chapter moves on to a more extended examination of the current armed conflict in Colombia in order to bring together some of the main themes which have been considered in the earlier sections. It concludes with a discussion of what is at stake when one decides how to go about studying military security.

Introduction: the scope of the military security agenda

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The most frequently used conception of military security is perceived or actual freedom from the threat or use of organized violence for political purposes. It is worth going through the various elements of this definition. It is possible to believe oneself or one's state to be secure from military threat but actually to be in great danger. In 1941, Stalin assumed that Hitler would not invade the Soviet Union and that assumption proved to be false, at huge cost to the Soviet Union. Similarly, as Yugoslavia began to fall apart in the early 1990s, the United Nations at first based itself in Sarajevo in the belief that, of all the parts of the country, this ethnically diverse and integrated city would be unlikely to be involved in the escalating war. Instead, it was the location of a long and bloody siege. It is also possible to perceive a military threat where there is none or less of a threat. Such perceptions cannot be resolved unambiguously, as it is always possible that the threat was there even if no attack was threatened or launched (the classic study, and still a key resource, is Jervis 1976). Using military threats, avoiding being perceived as a military threat and interpreting the nature of possible military threats are all very challenging and enormously consequential. Not surprisingly, these issues are the subject of a great deal of controversy, and aspects of that controversy are surveyed in this chapter. Military security focuses on organized violence as opposed to the violence of individuals and it usually excludes violence for purposes which are not explicitly political (for a broader analysis of collective violence see Tilly 2003). Hence criminal violence—violence for private purposes such as personal hostility or material gain through robbery—is left out. Large numbers of people are shot dead each year in such acts. Also omitted are domestic violence (that is, within families or relationships), industrial death and injury, and road traffic casualties. Avoidable deaths and suffering caused by poverty, hunger, disease or economic sanctions are also excluded: some within the field of peace studies have sought to draw attention to such deaths and suffering by referring to this as 'structural' violence (see Chapter 3). Perhaps the exclusion of these forms of physical insecurity from the category of military security is one that we might choose to endorse, but it is not natural or inevitable. It has its roots in the privileging of concern with the armed threats to and by states, which have the resources to make that privileging appear natural and appropriate. Military security actors can be states or aspirants or challengers to state power such as insurgent groups, and a wide range of actors such as the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Oxfam and the United Nations attempt to influence military security policy. In order to emphasize legitimacy, there is a tendency to use the words 'force' or 'coercion' rather than violence for the physical destruction inflicted by states rather than non-state actors such as rebels, usually to imply that their actions are more legitimate. Alternatively, force and coercion are sometimes used as euphemisms, to make violence sound less horrible and more acceptable.

Another basic choice to be made in deciding the scope of military security relates to means and ends. The darkest cell of Figure 8.1 is most clearly within the scope of military security, where military means are used for military goals. More ambiguous are the two lighter shaded cells, where military means are used for non-military goals, or non-military means are used for military goals. The unshaded cell—non-military means for non-military goals—logically

Figure 8.1 The scope of the military security agenda

Military means, military goals e.g. use of missiles to destroy tanks, or threat of such use to deter attack	Military means, non-military goals e.g. use of military personnel to deliver humanitarian aid
Non-military means, military goals e.g. use of economic sanctions to weaken an opponent's military capabilities	Non-military means, non-military goals e.g. use of economic sanctions to force the target to make debt repayments

falls outside the scope of the military security agenda.

Military security as defined at the beginning of this chapter has been associated with a whole raft of concepts, theories and debates, generally linked to the efforts of states and empires to protect and extend their control of territory, resources, populations and ideological adherents. There are debates about whether it is better to rely on offence or on defence, and whether these can even be distinguished. Military security has been pursued in myriad ways—through deterrence (making military threats to prevent an action), defence (developing the ability to successfully fight off an armed attack), offence (initiating armed conflict), balancing (internal mobilization of resources or making alliances to offset the power of an opponent), bandwagoning (actively supporting a dominant actor), promotion of particular norms and ideologies and social systems (such as anti-militarism, liberal democracy, socialism and capitalism), creation of positive peace (conflict resolution), treaties, imperial and neo-imperial dominance and even ethnic cleansing and genocide. These concepts and debates are associated with widely differing framings of the military security agenda. In discussing any subject, one must decide what to include and exclude, how to organize the material one includes, and whether or how to justify those decisions. This is what is meant in this chapter by framing. Such decisions are unavoidably pervaded by normative factors (a sense of right and wrong) and power relations (the success with which one can get that agenda accepted or even seen to be the only reasonable one). Who frames the military security agenda? Who should frame it? How is it framed? How should it be framed? These four questions underlie the content of this chapter. Traditional security studies sees military security as its home turf and so it represents a good challenge for those seeking to offer alternative approaches.

KEY POINTS

- Military security usually refers to perceived or actual freedom from the threat or use of organized violence for political purposes.

- Some advocate broadening the definition so that increased attention is given to other forms of violence.

- The topic of military security is associated with an extremely wide-ranging set of concepts and debates which are themselves framed within wider understandings of the nature of world politics.

- As the positions one takes on these issues have a powerful effect on one's analysis, it makes the position that the facts can speak for themselves very difficult to sustain.

Military strategy and military security: traditional security studies

As noted above, the traditional approach to military security starts from a commonsensical approach in which the perspective adopted is presented as objective, normal and natural. It is objectivist in the sense that it assumes that one can know what the real threats are to identifiable real interests and how best to deal with them. It is most strongly associated with realism and to a lesser extent also liberalism. War has shaped the evolution of states and states have shaped the evolution of war (Tilly 1990; Barkawi 2005; Shaw 2005). Traditional security studies developed in the service of the state. Its origins lay in the study of military strategy and the conduct of war by the military rather than civilians. The horrors of World War One—vast number of soldiers' lives thrown away in seemingly futile offensives as men struggled unprotected across muddy ground through barbed wire and in the face of a hail of machine gun bullets and artillery shells—contributed to an urge to think through how to avoid wars rather than how to fight them. It was in large part a war of attrition, in which winning would come about primarily by chewing through the men and resources of the other side to bring the other side to the brink of collapse first. Revulsion at this process fed into the early beginnings of the study of military security by civilians and academics in particular. However, the culture of militarist nationalism—in which war and military things are glorified as good and noble in themselves in the life of a nation—was by no means exhausted (for more on war as good and noble see Chapter 5). This militarist nationalism was central to the origins of the Second World War. Thinking about war and strategy remained at a premium and thinking about security remained at the margin. The trend towards thinking about security in terms of avoiding wars as well as fighting them and civilians playing a role in thinking about both of those things was reinforced strongly by the advent

of the atomic bomb in 1945 (Kaplan 1991). However, this was a trend which tended to be concentrated in the more industrialized capitalist states and especially the United States. This thinking was funded mainly by the state in order to serve the interests of the state. Prominent amongst the bodies which sprung up to institutionalize this thinking was the Research and Development (RAND) Corporation funded by the US Air Force in Santa Monica, California, where civilians mingled with the military and sometimes came to see themselves as understanding better than the military the new situation facing the United States and its allies. The perceived need to find ways of ensuring that the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union did not become a hot war (i.e. one involving direct armed combat), due to the potential for catastrophic nuclear escalation, was underlined by the development of the hydrogen bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles as reliable means of delivering them in the 1950s and 1960s. The hot war aspects of their competition were conducted via regional allies such as North and South Vietnam. The power of atomic bombs is generally equivalent to thousands of tons of the conventional explosive TNT (kilotons). Hydrogen bombs tend to have the power of millions of tons of TNT (megatons). For the first time ever the United States faced the potential for it to suffer enormous damage without losing a conventional war first: it could be destroyed without being defeated.

Within traditional security thinking, there have always been two divergent responses to the advent of nuclear vulnerability. The first has been to conventionalize them, that is, to treat them as if they were simply bigger bombs which could be used to fight and win wars, or the use of which by an opponent could be survived in the way that conventional bombs could. After all, more people

died in the firebombing of Tokyo by the United States in 1945 than by the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Once the United States became involved in the Korean War in 1950, Mao Zedong, leader of the new Communist government of mainland China, decided that China was going to have to enter the war on the side of North Korea. He also concluded that the Chinese state could survive US atomic bomb attack on its major cities and would not be deterred by this possible outcome because he saw a US armed presence in Korea as intolerably dangerous. As it turned out, China entered the war, the United States did not use its atomic bombs on China, and China was able to live with a divided Korea and with US forces in South Korea. During the Cold War, nuclear weapons were deployed into all branches of the US and Soviet armed forces and integrated into war planning. There was a profusion of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the two superpowers eventually totalling around 50,000 missile warheads, artillery shells, demolition munitions and even depth charges. Much effort went into reducing the explosive power of nuclear weapons in order to make them more usable and bridge the gap between them and conventional weapons. Conventional thinking about nuclear weapons led to efforts to make nuclear war fightable and winnable or at least survivable. The planning of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)—composed during the Cold War of most of the West European states plus the United States and Canada—presumed that a major challenge for the alliance was convincing the Soviet Union and its East European client states in the Warsaw Treaty Organisation of the credibility of its threat to initiate the use of nuclear weapons should it be losing a conventional war in Europe. The United States also sometimes sought ways of convincing opponents that it might initiate the use of nuclear weapons during conventional crises and conflicts in Korea, Vietnam and the Taiwan Straits between Communist China and Taiwan. In the post Cold War world, there is still a substantial amount of conventionalized thinking about nuclear weapons,

especially in the United States, in relation to war planning and miniaturization of them in the hope that they would then be more usable. From this perspective, nuclear deterrence of nuclear attack is difficult and requires constant attention.

The second strand of thinking about nuclear weapons within traditional strategic studies is that they are fundamentally different and revolutionary in their implications for military security due to their potential for escalation to catastrophic levels of destruction. This was present from the very earliest days but has usually not dominated in terms of policy. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev rejected the conventionalization of nuclear weapons as he believed that it was the possibility of nuclear arms competition getting out of control that was the real threat to military security rather than the risk of deliberate initiation of nuclear use. Hence he led the way in initiating dramatic reductions in nuclear warheads and in ending the Cold War, but the political forces he unleashed brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. From this perspective, nuclear deterrence is relatively easy. Some see it as underpinned by a guaranteed ability to absorb a surprise attack and inflict unacceptable damage in retaliation (when shared by both sides, this situation is known as Mutually Assured Destruction or MAD). Others think that nuclear attack against vulnerable nuclear arsenals is very unlikely, either due to the potential for retaliation should the disarming attack fail even partially or due to the huge political costs which might result from launching an attack. Another relevant view here is that there is a nuclear taboo, that is, a strategic cultural prohibition against the use of nuclear weapons which involves the assumption that they should not be used rather than a conscious cost-benefit calculation of the consequences of their use. The fear has always been that a fanatical or irrational decision-maker or a non-state terrorist would not be restrained by the nuclear taboo, and this had fed into concern about the spread of nuclear weapons to more states. Ironically, strategic history thus far points to the United States as the state which has tried hardest to undermine the

nuclear taboo and make nuclear weapons usable. Chemical and biological weapons have increasingly been categorized with nuclear weapons as weapons of mass destruction. However, thus far it has proven difficult to produce chemical and biological weapons which would need only small numbers of them to cause vast amounts of destruction in any targetable way and with high reliability, as is the case with nuclear weapons (for more on WMD see Chapter 15).

Securitization

The themes discussed above—the conduct of major conventional wars, political-diplomatic crisis management, the use of threats, and their interaction with nuclear weapons—have been central to traditional security studies. Major debates have occurred about the implications for military security of two relatively recent events. The first was the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s combined with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The second was the al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 and the US announcement of its 'war on terror' (see Chapter 16). The most comprehensive and systematic is the securitization approach. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 7: the intention here is to focus on and contextualize its military aspect. Building on Barry Buzan's earlier work (1983, 1991a), Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998) represented security as having military, economic, environmental, societal and political sectors; and global, non-regional subsystemic, regional and local levels of analysis (see Figure 8.2).

The dark shaded left-hand column in Figure 8.2 indicates the scope of military security, indicating graphically how much is omitted by focusing on it. This column, combined with the lighter shaded columns, represents the much greater scope of a broader notion of security in securitization studies. Buzan et al conclude that military security has become primarily regional since the end of the Cold War, sometimes with positive consequences and sometimes negative ones. They also argue that weak states can produce a very local focus for military security as actors fight for control within a state's borders, usually with some form of outside involvement. This has clearly been the case in Iraq since the US-led invasion in March 2003 (Herring, Rangwala 2006). Furthermore, in addition to the threats posed by insurgents and terrorists, Iraqi citizens in the centre of the country also worry about the possibility of being killed by US airstrikes and ground offensives or by jumpy soldiers at checkpoints. Throughout the country they fear torture and arbitrary imprisonment by members of the state's 'security' forces. The third dimension of the securitization framework proposes three issue categories—security, political and non-political (illustrated by the third dimension of Figure 8.2). For Buzan et al to categorize something as a security issue, it should threaten survival and requires urgent and exceptional political action. This is a much more restrictive definition than is often the case. Less intensely, a political issue is one which is on state or other policy agendas for resource

Figure 8.2 Locating military security in securitization studies
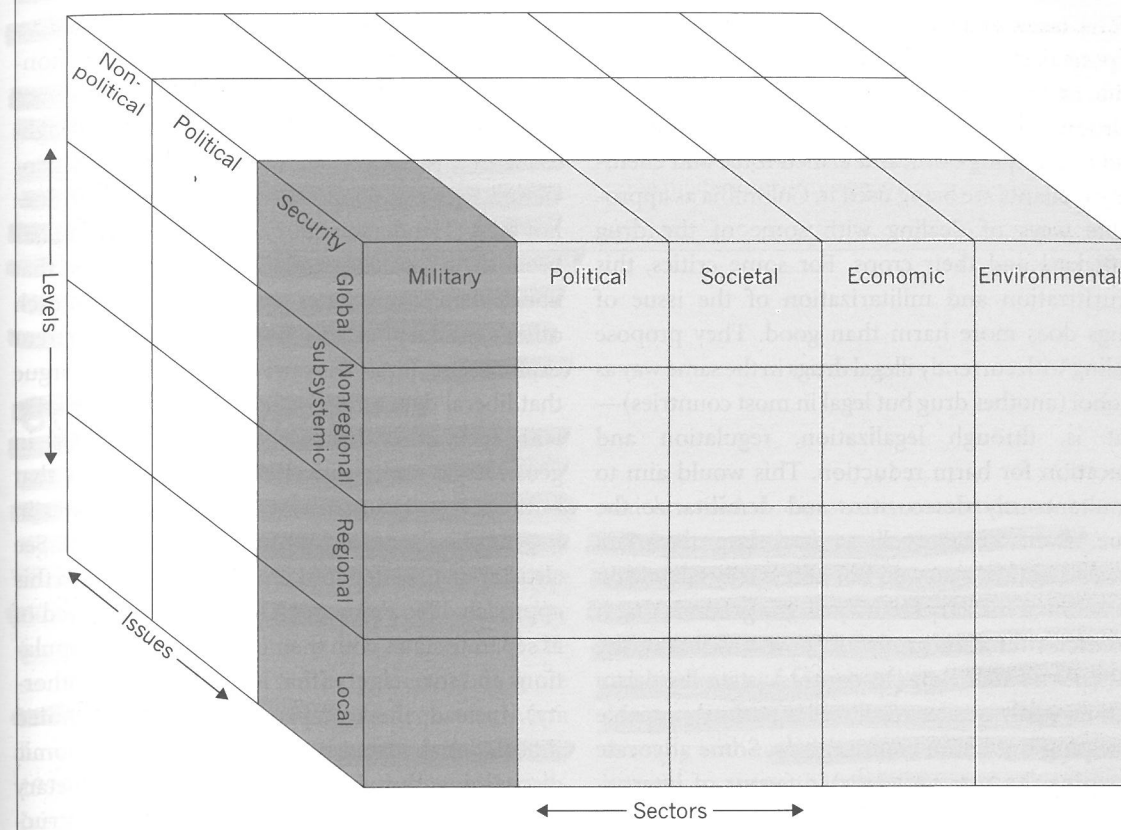
allocation, and a non-political issue is one which does not require public debate, resource allocation and action. In the view of Buzan et al, the referent object—that which is being secured—of military security is usually the state, although it can be other political actors, and the armed forces can even see themselves as the referent object and rebel against the state or launch a coup. Military issues can move up or down the security, political and non-political issue ladder.

Traditional approaches tend to focus on the security aspects of military issues. In contrast, Buzan et al argue that advanced industrial states are mostly free from threats which threaten their survival and require exceptional and urgent political action. In their framework, the use of the armed forces by such states for purposes such as peacekeeping or humanitarian intervention is a political rather than a

security issue. Realists tend to worry that such an attitude will undermine the need to invest heavily in armed forces to ensure that military security threats do not arise in the first place. Such a concern is at the heart of the national security strategy of the United States published in 2002 (a document well worth reading). States are the main actors in deciding what does and does not go on the military security agenda, and have been the most successful actors at accumulating the capability for organized political violence, though there are major exceptions such as weak states. Organized violence is useful not only for destroying and threatening opponents, but also for taking and holding territory, which in traditional terms is a defining characteristic of states (along with population and political authority over that territory and population). Equally, capturing territory is not sufficient to produce desired political

outcomes, as the United States found out when it invaded and occupied Iraq.

The issue of drugs is one over which there is dispute as to whether it is a political or a security issue, and whether or not it should fall within the military sector. The phrase 'war on drugs' could be read as implying both, and armed force and chemical defoliants are being used in Colombia as appropriate ways of dealing with some of the drug traffickers and their crops. For some critics, this securitization and militarization of the issue of drugs does more harm than good. They propose dealing with currently illegal drugs in the same way as alcohol (another drug but legal in most countries)—that is, through legalization, regulation and education for harm reduction. This would aim to simultaneously desecuritize and demilitarize the issue. Even issues such as non-state terrorism directed against states do not necessarily fall within the realm of military security on the grounds that it is difficult for such groups to pose a threat to the existence of that state. In contrast, state terrorism with its vastly greater resources is perfectly capable of wiping out entire communities. Some advocate dropping the 'war on terror' in favour of international policing cooperation. At the other end of the spectrum, some on the right are of the view that the issue has not been sufficiently securitized or militarized by the administration of George W. Bush. These neoconservatives, as they are known, argue for campaigns to remove the governments of Syria, Saudi Arabia and especially Iran and replace them with liberal democracies. Their reasoning is that these states are behind anti-US terrorism and can only be stopped by removing them.

According to liberal democratic peace theory, the more that states are liberal democratic, the less they threaten each other's military security (Maoz, Russett 1983: Russett, O'Neal 1991). This is seen to be due to what Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, among others, portray as their liberal norms of tolerance and compromise and their democratic procedures of public accountability which they argue make it more difficult for leaders to begin wars. They also portray their use of force against non-liberal states as essentially defensively

orientated and reactive. If true, this is potentially of enormous significance because it suggests that, if all states were liberal democratic, there would be no more interstate war, which would be, to non-militarists, a tremendous gain. This view has been challenged in a number of ways. Some have sought to refute it directly, claiming that this positive association between liberal democracy and peace does not exist (Henderson 2002). Another approach has been to accept the underlying proposition that liberal democratic states tend not to threaten each other's military security but to provide a different explanation. Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey argue that liberal democratic states tend not to go to war with each other 'because they are embedded in geostrategic and political economic relations that buttress international state and capitalist power in hegemonic, i.e., non-violent ways' (1999: 419. See also Barkawi, Laffey 2001 and Barkawi 2005). In this approach, liberal democracies are not conceived of as separate states with their own territories, populations and sovereignty (that is, final political authority). Instead, they are part of a set of integrated international state practices—such as economic disciplining through the International Monetary Fund or US-led Coalition invasion and reconstruction—which are increasingly integrating them in an informal imperial hierarchy. The use of force is within this system licensed against non-liberal states in order to integrate them into a global system characterized, they argue, by extreme economic inequality.

The benefit of the securitization approach is that it offers the possibility of comparing the importance of other sectors without privileging the military one above all the others. The possible costs are that, by using the word 'security' in relation to non-military things, it could end up militarizing those other sectors, for example, by unintentionally encouraging the idea that armed threats and force should be considered in relation to dealing with actors who are causing environmental problems (for more on this see Chapter 11). Although in the securitization framework, the concepts 'military' and 'security' are independent categories, in most people's minds they are still strongly associated.

KEY POINTS

- The securitization approach offers a comprehensive framework within which to situate military security, relating it to other sectors, a variety of levels, and types of issue.

- It also offers tools for thinking about how issues become part or cease to be part of the military security agenda.

- Like any other analytical approach, it has built into it implicit and explicit normative and conceptual positions which are inevitably controversial.

- Issues such as drugs, terrorism and democratization are not necessarily part of, or separate from, the military security agenda.

Constructivism

The securitization framework of Buzan et al is significantly constructivist in that it looks at how social reality is produced through human interaction rather than taking the content of social reality for granted. However, the attention it gives to the social construction of military security is quite limited, and numerous versions of constructivism have been applied to this subject (e.g. Katzenstein 1996; Weldes et al 1999). A much deeper constructivism can be seen in the work of Jutta Weldes on a classic case of a crisis in military security, namely, the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. In order to force the Soviet Union to remove nuclear-armed missiles which it had secretly deployed in Cuba, the United States went on conventional and nuclear military alert and set up a naval blockade to prevent the delivery of the remaining missiles which were on their way by ship. In the end, the Soviet Union turned its ships around and agreed to remove its missiles and nuclear weapons from Cuba, much to the fury of Cuban leader Fidel Castro. In Western scholarship, this is usually treated as a victory for rational, well-managed US coercive diplomacy (on coercive diplomacy, see Chapter 13). Some revisionist scholarship argues that the outcome was more of a compromise and that reassurance of the Soviet Union was more important in the outcome than is generally acknowledged (Lebow 1995). Others see it as one of the most dangerous incidents in human history

which avoided disastrous escalation at least as much through luck as through good judgement (Sagan 1995).

Those working within the realist approach to military security argue that the national interest can be discerned for what it really is. Some of their critics use the point that realists often disagree strongly with each other in identifying the national interest to argue that the concept of the national interest is so vague and flexible as to be useless. Instead, Weldes argues that one can discern patterns in the understandings of the national interest among decision-makers, that those understandings are not objective and that analysing them in terms of the subjective psychological perception of individuals is not a very effective mode of analysis. She argues that those patterns are most usefully seen as inter-subjective, that is, they are arrived at through a process of mutual interpretation and representation of the world. To arrive at some understanding of what the interests of the state are, officials use or adapt existing cultural and linguistic resources to create an inter-subjective world of particular actors with identities and relationships attributed to them. The construction of the national interest at stake on any specific issue is very heavily conditioned by this prior inter-subjective process: there is more to the creation of meaning than the accumulation of facts. One can deduce a step-by-step constructivist analytical method with

potentially wide applicability. This involves describing how a particular military security (or indeed other) issue has been characterized, specifying the cultural and linguistic resources mobilized in that characterization, mapping out how these elements have been linked to each other to create apparently but not actually natural meaning, and going through the same steps with competing inter-subjective constructions which have been marginalized. Case Study 8.1 provides an overview of the application of this method by Weldes (1999) to the Cuban missile crisis.

This kind of constructivist method might be applied to other issues and cases. It might be used to shed significant light on, for example, the current debate on the nature and implications of Iran's nuclear programme. The dominant narrative in the United States is that Iran is trying to use its civil nuclear programme to acquire nuclear weapons, and that statements such as that by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that 'Israel must be wiped off the map' (the usual translation of his comments—for example in al-Jazeera 2005—originally made in Persian) show that it is too risky to allow Iran to become a nuclear weapon state. This narrative also assumes that US officials have the right to make this assessment and act on it militarily

and unilaterally. An alternative narrative is that Iran is hedging its power generation needs against the decline of oil reserves and is not actually pursuing nuclear weapons. Another is that Iran feels the need to become a nuclear state to provide a deterrent to and symbolic equality with US and Israeli nuclear weapons, and that Ahmadinejad's statement is rhetoric rather than an indicator of an Iranian intention to try to destroy Israel. This last point is underlined by the claim that his words in Persian—'een rezhim-e ishghalgar-e qods bayad az safheh-ye ruzgar mahv shavad'—translate more accurately as 'The Imam [former Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini] said that this regime occupying Jerusalem must be erased from the page of time', supposedly indicating a desire to end a particular political situation rather than to eliminate the state of Israel. The limitation of the constructivist approach provided by Weldes and others is that it does not offer a method for choosing between or moving beyond the competing interpretations outlined. Furthermore, one might arrive at the impression that the counter-narratives set out by constructivists are the ones that they actually find more persuasive, and this reluctance to endorse particular overall narratives while still endorsing many specific narrative elements along the way is

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CASE STUDY 8.1

Constructivism and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962

In their response in October 1962 to the secret Soviet deployment in Cuba of medium-range nuclear weapons capable of hitting the eastern United States, US officials saw themselves as essentially defensive, reactive and good, and the Soviet Union as aggressive, on the offensive and immoral. These constructions were taken for granted and assumed to be self-evidently true, natural, not constructed and therefore beyond question. Such constructions strongly predisposed US decision-makers to simply assume that the Soviet Union had to be forced to withdraw the missiles or that the United States would have to destroy the missiles, even at high risk of a nuclear war. The debate within the administration of

President John F. Kennedy focused almost exclusively on the various options—naval blockade, bombing and invasion—to produce those outcomes.

Alternative narratives regarding the crisis—that the missile deployment was defensively motivated to stop repeated US attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro's government and as a short-cut to reducing the huge US lead in long-range nuclear weapons; that this was basically the same as the US deployment of nuclear weapons in Turkey; or that the missiles would have little strategic impact—were possible but were marginalized by the prior inter-subjective constructions among US officials about the identities of and relationships between the actors involved.

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one which could be criticized by those of a more objectivist persuasion. It may be that constructivist discourse can be combined with a more social scientific approach as sub-sets of rational inquiry. Hence a discourse analysis of Iran's nuclear programme might be integrated with a discussion of Scott Sagan's (1996/97) classic essay on three models of why some states acquire nuclear weapons (for security, domestic politics and to symbolize norms such as modernity and equality) and Etel Solingen's (1994) argument that some states do not acquire nuclear weapons due to the dominance of some sectors in those states wishing to prioritize integration into the global economy.

In a more post-structuralist version, in which even greater emphasis is put on mapping out discourses, constructivism has been applied by David Campbell to understanding the nature of US foreign and security policy overall, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and its aftermath, and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s (Campbell 1993, 1998a, 1998b). By taking on such substantial and contemporary military security issues, Campbell was endeavouring to show the relevance of discourse analysis on ground which more traditional military security analysts see as their usual remit. The securitization work of Buzan et al (1998: 205) argues that constructions can be so settled, depoliticized and appear so natural that they can be analysed as if they are 'inert', 'sedimented' or effectively objective. More thoroughgoing constructivists and especially post-structuralists such as Campbell challenge this head on. They argue that even those supposedly settled, depoliticized and natural constructions only appear to be so through major and, crucially, ongoing discursive practices (for an excellent review of literature on constructivism, identity and violence, see Fearon, Laitin 2000). For example, it is widely though not universally assumed that the war in Bosnia was between Serbs, Croats and Muslims, and that such identity markers were so powerful as to be settled (see, for example, Kaufman 1996). In contrast, Campbell (1998b) argues that their settled appearance was made possible only by a powerful set of discursive

practices—including the murder in the name of ethnic purity of those who argued that identities are always overlapping and mixed (for an objectivist version of the argument—that 'ethnic' wars are often carried out by small groups with most of the population unwilling and fearful bystanders, see Mueller 2000). Indeed, for post-structuralists, identity is always 'transgressive' or 'transversal', that is, never neatly in separate categories with separate essential elements.

The political ethic which follows from post-structuralism in the field of military security studies is to embrace this insecurity of identity rather than seek to secure what can never exist, that is, wholly separate identity. The humanitarian military intervention debate was framed at the time as 'Should there be military intervention to protect the Muslims from the Serbs and the Croats, or are they basically all as bad as each other and so one should not pick sides?'. The post-structuralist approach might seem to suggest that the question should have been reframed to: 'Should there be military intervention to protect those who acknowledge the inescapable diversity of identity?'. The Bosnian government claimed to hold that position and objected vigorously to being labelled, as it usually was in the West, as the 'Muslim' government of Bosnia. However, for post-structuralists the problem is an even bigger one, namely, that the potential humanitarian interveners are part of the problem too in that they share the same essentialist notions of identity—be they of Britishness, American-ness—as the ethnic cleansers they would be intervening against. It is the notion of any kind of pure identity that post-structuralists maintain must be challenged. This also extends to wider discourses of the essential goodness and defensiveness of one group and essential evil and aggressiveness of another, as discussed, for example, by Weldes (1999) in relation to the Cuban missile crisis. Such debates are getting under way in relation to the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and in relation to the claim that Iraq is fundamentally divided between Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shi'a Arabs (Feldman 2004; Davis 2005; Herring, Rangwala 2006).

- Constructivism explores how meaning in the realm of military security is constructed through discursive practices so that those meanings appear to be natural (and hence not constructed).

- According to constructivists, decisions about how to act with regard to specific military security issues (such as the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons by a particular state) are heavily conditioned or even more or less determined by the meaning that is given to those specifics through those discursive practices.

Debating Colombia

All the themes discussed in this chapter thus far could be explored in relation to the conflict in Colombia. In the last fifteen years as the Cold War drew to a close, the civil war in Colombia escalated significantly: in that period nearly three million people have been displaced and tens of thousands killed. Since 1998, the United States has backed the Colombian government through Plan Colombia and its successor the Andean Regional Initiative and there have been various peace negotiations and military offensives. In understanding the reasons for this death and suffering, competing understandings have been generated of the key actors, their relationships and the nature and meaning of the facts. The roles of the US and Colombian governments, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and smaller National Liberation Army (ELN) left-wing guerrilla groups, and the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) right-wing paramilitary group have been debated by Russell Crandall, a US academic who is an adviser to the US Department of Defence, and Doug Stokes, a British academic who is a member of the Colombia Solidarity Campaign (Stokes–Crandall correspondence 2002; Crandall 2002; Stokes 2004). The diverging perspectives of the two protagonists are summarized in Key Ideas 8.1.

Viewed from a traditional military security studies perspective, the way forward in assessing the relative validity of these positions is to gain a deeper understanding of the empirical aspects of the Case Study (see the 'Important Websites' in this chapter for information about the highly informative International Crisis Group, and also Green 2005). The empirical questions are certainly not trivial. If it is the case that the AUC is far more heavily involved in drug trafficking than the FARC or ELN, then it is the AUC that would need to be tackled first and foremost to carry out a war on drugs in Colombia. With regard to the US 'war on terror', until recently, the Colombian military used to be responsible for 80% of the killings in Colombia: now the AUC paramilitaries are responsible for that proportion of them. Delving further into the facts would help in working out whether this shows that reform of the Colombia military is working and so US assistance to it should be continued or increased. Alternatively, that additional information may lead one to conclude that the Colombian military is closely allied to the paramilitaries and has delegated the killings to them. In this case, US assistance to the Colombian military is doing, at best, nothing to help the Colombian people and could even intentionally be indirect support for the paramilitaries. Fundamentally, the United States is either contributing to or undermining the military security of the population of Colombia depending on whether one agrees with Crandall or Stokes, and major policy consequences flow from that assessment.

Colombia: a war on drugs and terror or a war of terror?

Russell Crandall's perspective

The role of the United States in world politics in general and Colombia in particular is basically benign even if it makes mistakes. The end of the Cold War represented a fundamental change in world politics due to the end of the East–West rivalry. It allows the US to exercise power to promote liberal democracy and market economies without hindrance by the Soviet Union.

Under the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, US policy towards Colombia and the Andean region more generally has been focused excessively on reducing the cultivation and export of drugs, regarding them as a threat to US national security, while not involving itself in Colombia's civil war through counter-insurgency operations against the FARC and ELN left-wing guerrillas. The United States is supporting the Colombian state to help it deal with the guerrillas, who increasingly use terrorism and traffic in drugs. With the 9/11 attacks, the United States began to label the actions of the guerrillas as terrorist and showed more interest in counter-insurgency. The United States should give counter-insurgency support to the Colombia government only if the latter has a credible political strategy for ending the civil war. The strategy should include reform of the state and pressure on the Colombian military to cut their links to the right-wing AUC paramilitaries, who are basically independent of the Colombian government. After 9/11, the United States finally declared the AUC a terrorist organisation and is right to support the Colombian government which is attempting to rebuild a Colombian army free from paramilitary influence.

Doug Stokes' perspective

Given the structural role of the US state within the global political economy, the role of the United States in world politics in general and Colombia in particular tends to be malign. There has been fundamental continuity in world politics despite the end of the Cold War because US interests continue to be the defence of the liberal international order and the preservation of US primacy. As such, global conflict is still between the United States as leader and protector of global capitalism and the global South—in other words, between those whose interests are the preservation of wealth and privilege and those who are marginalized, subordinated and policed.

The United States and the Colombian state, military and right-wing paramilitaries are all broadly cooperating with each other and share a common interest in the destruction of the insurgency and roll-back of broadly progressive social forces. They are conducting a war of terror using state-sponsored AUC narco-paramilitaries who are responsible for around 80% of the civilian deaths. The aim is to crush dissent, including democratic civil society, in order to insulate the Colombian state from reformist pressures and maintain an important source of non-Middle Eastern oil. The primary strategy of the United States is not a war on drugs. It has concentrated on trying to weaken the left-wing guerrillas who tax the drug trade (rather than participate in it directly) instead of targeting the main drug traffickers, namely, the right-wing paramilitaries.

See Stokes–Crandall correspondence 2002; Crandall 2002; Stokes 2004.

The fact that the Crandall–Stokes debate was premised on the assumption that one can prove or disprove arguments with reference to facts indicates that they share a broad commitment to objectivism. However, testing in relation to facts is made more difficult or even impossible, some would argue, without a common frame of reference. This is only partly shared by Crandall and Stokes, as the former works within the traditions of realism and liberalism whereas the latter's work has more in common with historical materialism. Important normative differences are related to these differing commitments. For Crandall, the United States has the right both in terms of protecting and promoting US national security interests and in terms of the universal applicability of liberalism to be deeply involved in military security issues in Colombia. For Stokes, the United States does not have this right because it is protecting and promoting only the illegitimate interests of US and Colombian elites

against the interests of ordinary people in both countries. A constructivist perspective on this debate would involve unpacking how Crandall and Stokes go about presenting their portrayals of the facts, the actors and their relationships, and mapping how widely those portrayals are shared and amongst whom. Crandall paints a picture of a triangular relationship of political struggle between the Colombian government; the FARC and ELN guerrillas; and the AUC paramilitaries and their backers

in the Colombian military. In contrast, Stokes argues that Colombian government and military and the AUC paramilitaries are quite closely allied against the FARC and ELN. There seems to be a two-way process here, with narratives about specific facts being used to draw conclusions about the character of the actors involved and their relationships, and the claims about the character of the actors involved and their relationships shaping the interpretation of narratives about more specific facts.

central debates in the nature of data and the nature of meaning in the study of military security as well as to give an overview of some important cases. The choices you make from here will reflect your intellectual training, context, values and indeed political commitments. You cannot study military security without it shaping some aspect of your self, and the subject and you are not simply separate from world politics but are deeply implicated with it (on security and self, see Booth 1997).

KEY POINTS

- The subject of military security can be analysed in terms of major empirical patterns and trends.

- The study of military security, your identity and the practices of world politics are all mutually constitutive (i.e. they shape each other in fundamental ways).

KEY POINTS

- There is fundamental dispute over which actors are causing military insecurity for the people of Colombia, and the nature of and relationships between those actors.

- One way to develop a view on such disputes is through in-depth analysis of the facts: another is to explore the fundamental assumptions which give meaning to those facts.

Conclusion: military security, self and world politics

In deciding how to study military security, major choices must be made, either explicitly or tacitly. One of the most obvious points of entry is to focus on the empirical aspects of the established military security agenda, looking for patterns and trends. The resources spent directly on the military worldwide are huge—$975 billion in 2004, only 6% lower than the high point of Cold War military spending in 1987–88 (data from SIPRI—see 'Important Websites'). This equates to $162 per person and 2.6% of world economic activity. The United States alone accounts for 47% of the world total of military spending. One could also survey the principal arms trading states (see Chapter 17). This would show that the trade is heavily dominated by a small number of supplier states—the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France and Germany—and a larger number of purchasing states in NATO or in areas of tension and conflict

(primarily the Middle East and South Asia). In contrast to the popular misconception that the end of the Cold War resulted in an increase in the number of major armed conflicts (and civil wars in particular—that is, wars primarily within individual states), there was a steadily downward trend from 32 in 1990 to 19 in 1997, a rise to 27 in 1998 followed another steadily downward trend to 19 again in 2003.

One can treat these as data to be explained in social scientific terms, or discursive constructions to be examined to see how they were arrived at and to see what they have left out. It is also possible to see the objectivist and discursive approaches as part of an overall toolkit of rational analysis to be deployed at different times or to be combined rather than seeing them as fixed and separate perspectives to which one must commit consistently. The intention of this chapter has been to introduce you to some of the

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? QUESTIONS

Are civilians better at understanding military security than the military?

Why have non-nuclear states not been attacked with nuclear weapons since 1945?

Is military security best achieved through non-military means?

Is the United States conducting a war on drugs and terror or a war of terror in Colombia?

When are states a threat to the military security of their own population?

Do liberal democracies tend not to threaten each other's military security?

Is there a liberal imperial order which uses military means to protect and extend its global scope?

Can one choose between the competing narratives regarding the military security implications of Iran's nuclear programme?

To what extent is the Iraqi state militarily secure?

How have discourses of military insecurity been implicated in constructions of Iraqi identities since the invasion in 2003?

≋ FURTHER READING

■ Nye, Jr, Joseph S. (2005), *Understanding International Conflicts. An Introduction to Theory and History*, 5th edn, London: Pearson Longman. Of all the further reading suggested here, this is easily the most wide-ranging of those within a **social scientific** approach and is a good, broad starting point. It explores whether there is an enduring logic of conflict in world politics and considers the origins of the First and Second World Wars and Cold War. It then surveys intervention, institutions and regional and ethnic conflicts (including a heroically brief 12-page overview of conflicts in the Middle East); globalization and interdependence; the information revolution and transnational politics. Written as a textbook, it has useful chronologies, study questions, maps, diagrams and a glossary of key terms.

■ Barkawi, Tarak (2005), *Globalization and War*, London: Rowman & Littlefield. Some scholars argue that globalization is producing military security and peace while others argue that it is causing military insecurity and war. In contrast to both, Barkawi suggests that war should not be

seen as a separate thing caused or prevented by globalization. Instead, his view is that war is a major aspect of globalization itself (in terms of bringing about the movement of people, goods and ideas around the world) and has been so for longer than is usually thought.

■ **Baylis, John, Cohen, Elliot, Gray, Colin, and Wirtz, James (eds.) (2002),** *Strategy in the Contemporary World: Introduction to Strategic Studies,* **Oxford: Oxford University Press.** This volume provides an excellent introduction to traditional perspectives on military security. It covers strategic theory; the history of war; the role of law; origins of war and peace; land, sea and air power; deterrence, arms control and disarmament; terrorism and irregular warfare; weapons of mass destruction; technology and war; and humanitarian intervention and peace operations.

■ **Herring, Eric and Rangwala, Glen (2006),** *Iraq in Fragments: The Occupation and its Legacy,* **London: Hurst and Cornell University Press.** The invasion of Iraq was presented by its advocates as an important means of dealing with Iraq as a military security threat and by some of them as a means of creating a wave of reform that would usher in an unprecedented positive era of military security in the Middle East more widely. Instead, the weapons of mass destruction Iraq was supposed to have did not exist and much of Iraq has plunged into military insecurity. This study provides an in-depth assessment of events in Iraq in the three years since the US-led invasion. Military security issues are analysed in the broader context of the argument that political authority in Iraq has fragmented.

■ **Buzan, Barry and Herring, Eric (1998),** *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics,* **Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.** This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of military security from the perspective of revolutions in and the global spread of modern military technology. It explains those patterns in relation to arms racing, action-reaction and domestic structures. It considers the use of force, threats and symbolic politics and the meaning and implications of arms control, non-offensive defence and disarmament.

■ **Weldes, Jutta, Laffey, Mark, Gusterson, Hugh, and Duvall, Raymond (eds.) (1999),** *Cultures of Insecurity. States, Communities and the Production of Danger,* **London: University of Minneapolis Press.** This challenging constructivist volume brings together scholars of sociocultural anthropology and international relations to explore discourses of insecurity among states and other communities. Although the themes are deeply theorized, the chapters also explore them in relation to diverse cases and places such as Korea, the Middle East, the genocide in Rwanda, US-Indian relations, post-Mao China and the politics of the internet. Whereas traditional security studies assumes the identities of political groups and asks how those groups can be made militarily secure, this study looks at how the construction of discourses of insecurity produce the identities of political actors and vice versa.

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

● **http://www.sipri.org/** Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. SIPRI conducts research on conflict and cooperation in order to promote understanding of how international conflicts can be resolved peacefully and how stable peace can be established. It has very extensive empirical and conceptual research programmes on many aspects of military security and especially in relation to military spending and arms transfers and attempts to control the transfer of militarily significant technologies. A massive amount of data is provided free on this site.

● **http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/** National Security Archive. Studying military security usually involves reading material like this chapter—someone's else's interpretation of someone else's interpretation of important events. The internet is a wonderful resource to allow students now to spend at least some time looking at original documents and raw data for themselves, and can trigger the desire to do original research. The National Security Archive at George Washington University in Washington D.C. uses the US Freedom of Information Act to declassify and make available vast numbers of documents on US military security policy, and selections can be accessed for free. By this indirect means, one also has access to intimate details of military security policy-making of many other countries as well.

● **http://www.crisisgroup.org/** International Crisis Group. The ICG is an NGO with over one hundred staff located worldwide. It seeks to prevent and resolve armed conflict across the world by means of field-based analysis and high-level advocacy. Its many reports on Iraq, Indonesia, Nepal, Colombia, Kosovo, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Darfur and other actual or potential crisis and conflict locations are free. Its in-depth yet up-to-date, locally researched reports are superb at putting military security issues into political context.

● **http://www.statecraft.org/** Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft.* This website is a free online version of McClintock's book of the same name published in 2002 and subtitled *U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940–1990.* This valuable critical overview of this extensive military involvement worldwide can be usefully supplemented by more recent insider studies such as Nagl (2002) and Hammes (2004) and by wider understandings of the nature of contemporary war such as Kaldor (1999) and Shaw (2005).

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for lots of interesting additional material: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/collins/

✓ **Reader's Guide**

This chapter examines the unique security dilemma facing developing countries. It begins with an explanation of the security threats facing states with weak institutional and coercive capacity and lack of national cohesion—what are called weak states—before going on to look at the kinds of security strategies that weak state elites typically adopt to try and manage their predicament. Referred to as an 'insecurity dilemma', and in contrast to the security dilemma facing strong, developed states, weak states face a security environment in which the primary threats to security originate from internal rather than external sources. The chapter goes on to examine a number of competing theoretical explanations for how the weak state predicament arose and why it persists. It concludes with a brief discussion of international attempts to build security in weak states, and the long-term prospects of transforming weak states into strong states.

Introduction

By any measure of security, the disparity between the wealthy, developed countries of the global North and the rest of the world could not be greater. Citizens of the small group of highly developed nations face no real threat of major war and enjoy abundant food supplies, economic prosperity, comparatively low levels of crime and enduring political and social stability. Even the threat of terrorism is extremely minor compared to the everyday risks of accident or disease. Contrary to the 'culture of fear' that exists in many Western societies, at no time in history have individuals in these countries enjoyed such high levels of safety, prosperity and stability.

By contrast, the majority of people living in developing countries face profound security challenges, including perennial threats of intrastate war and communal violence, poverty and famine, weapons proliferation and crime, political instability, social breakdown, economic failure and, at its most extreme, complete state collapse. At the most basic level of physical security, between twenty and thirty million people have lost their lives in more than one hundred intrastate wars in developing regions since 1945. Around 90% of the victims were civilians, and tens of millions of people were displaced by the fighting, many of whom have remained refugees for decades after. Depending upon what measure is used, there are twenty to forty intrastate wars ongoing in any given year, all of them in developing countries. In a great many more developing nations serious internal political violence, such as military coups or rebellions, ethnic or religious violence, campaigns of terrorism or riots and disorder, is a constant threat.

In addition, half a million people are killed every year by light weapons, frequently during criminal violence and almost all in developing countries. Added to these military threats, an estimated 40,000 people die every day from hunger and tens of millions of others die annually from diseases such as influenza, HIV-AIDS, diarrhoea and tuberculosis. Tens of millions more suffer from chronic poverty, lack of employment opportunities, inadequate health, declining education standards and environmental ruin. There is, in other words, a profound disjuncture between the kinds of security enjoyed by the small group of developed nations and the kind of security environment inhabited by the majority of the world's population. From a global perspective, insecurity is actually more the norm than security is.

This situation provides us with important reasons for trying to understand the nature and consequences of insecurity in the developing world. Empirically, we need to understand why virtually all war and major political violence since 1945 continues to take place in the developing world, and why most of it originates from internal rather than external sources. Conceptually, there is an urgent need to find appropriate theories and concepts that can accommodate the unique character of the security situation in these countries. Such approaches are a necessary starting point for devising more appropriate and more effective international security policies. From a normative perspective, there are clear humanitarian imperatives to try and deal with the immense suffering caused by the lack of basic security in the world's 'zones of instability'. Finally, enlightened self-interest dictates that we make a real effort to resolve the fundamental inequality in security between the developed and developing worlds. Globalization means that insecurity in any part of the world cannot be contained within increasingly porous national borders; security is, to a large extent, interdependent. In many ways, terrorism, gun crime, illegal migration, the drugs trade and environmental damage are all spill-over effects of persistent insecurity in the developing world.

In this chapter we shall try to make sense of the profound security challenges facing developing

countries and the unique security dilemma they find themselves trapped in. We shall examine the nature of the main security threats facing developing nations, the key security strategies that they have adopted to deal with these threats and the domestic and international causes of their security predicament. The argument we wish to advance in this chapter is that unlike the developed nations of the global North, the primary security threats facing weak states are potentially catastrophic and originate primarily from internal, domestic sources. They include, among others: the threat of violent transfers of power, insurgency, secession, rebellion, genocide, warlordism and ultimately, state collapse and anarchy.

Moreover, these internal threats are rooted in the fundamental conditions of statehood and governance, thereby creating an enduring 'insecurity dilemma' (Job 1992) for ruling elites: the more elites try to establish effective state rule, the more they provoke challenges to their authority from powerful groups in society. In this context, regime security—the condition where governing elites are secure from violent challenges to their rule—becomes indistinguishable from state security—the condition where the institutions, processes and structures of the state are able to continue functioning effectively, regardless of the make-up of the ruling elite. For weak states, the domestic sphere is actually far more dangerous and threatening than the international sphere.

Given this inversion of the accepted conception of the classical security dilemma (in which military threats originate primarily from other unitary states in an anarchic international system), it is not surprising that the weak state 'insecurity dilemma' has received little attention in the orthodox

Security Studies literature. By focusing on a limited number of states (the great powers and developed countries), a limited set of military threats (Soviet expansionism, foreign invasion, nuclear proliferation, rogue states, international terrorism), a limited array of security strategies (national defence, deterrence, arms control, alliances), and employing a restricted conception of security (externally directed 'national security'), the security challenges facing the majority of the world's population have been largely sidelined in academic studies. Consequently, there are real limits as to what traditional or orthodox Security Studies approaches can tell us about the nature and causes of insecurity in weak states today. Widening and deepening our understanding of security therefore necessitates a new set of diagnostic tools that allow us to more fully get to grips with the security challenges facing the vast majority of the world's people and the unique kind of states they inhabit.

KEY POINTS

- There is a profound disjuncture between the security challenges facing developed and developing countries.

- There are important empirical, conceptual, normative and self-interested reasons to attend to the security of developing regions.

- Weak states face a unique set of security challenges that originate primarily from internal sources.

- Orthodox approaches to national security are severely limited in what they can tell us about the conditions of security in weak states.

The weak state insecurity dilemma

The unique insecurity dilemma facing weak states is largely a function of the structural conditions of their existence. Weak states lack the most fundamental of state attributes, namely, effective institutions, a monopoly on the instruments of violence and consensus on the idea of the state. Consequently, as incomplete or 'quasi-states' (Jackson 1990), they face numerous challenges to their authority from powerful domestic actors. In order to understand how this condition of insecurity arises in the first place, we need to examine the primary structural characteristics of weak states and the nature of the internal security threats they face.

Weak states

Assessing state strength can be a difficult and controversial exercise; scholars tend to apply different measures. Thomas (1989) associates state strength/weakness with institutional capacity and distinguishes between two forms of state power: despotic power and infrastructural power. Despotic power refers to the state's coercive abilities and the exercise of force to impose its rule on civilians. By contrast, infrastructural power refers to the effectiveness and legitimacy of the state's institutions and its ability to rule through consensus. States may be 'weak' or deficient in one or both of these capacities, but as a general rule, strong states have less need to exercise coercive power because their infrastructural power makes it unnecessary. Paradoxically, the more a weak state exercises coercive power, the more it reinforces its 'weakness' and corresponding lack of infrastructural power.

In contrast, Buzan (1991a) argues that states consist of three primary components: a physical base, institutional capacity and the 'idea of the state'. For Buzan, state strength/weakness rests primarily in the less tangible realm of the 'idea of

the state' and the extent to which society forms a consensus on, and identifies with, the state. Weak states, therefore, 'either do not have, or have failed to create, a domestic political and social consensus of sufficient strength to eliminate the large-scale use of force as a major and continuing element in the domestic political life of the nation' (1983: 67).

Migdal (1988) provides a counterpoint to both these formulations. He defines state strength in terms of state capacity, or 'the ability of state leaders to use the agencies of the state to get people in the state to do what they want them to do' (1988: xvii). But then he reverses attention to how society and groups within it tolerate, permit or resist the development of the state. He argues that most developing societies end up in a state/society standoff where the state confronts powerful social forces with substantial coercive force, which in turn provokes violent resistance. In Migdal's view, weak states are less the issue than strong societies. This internal balance of power between state and society militates against the emergence of prototypical Western-style nation-states.

In summary, three dimensions of state strength appear to be important: (1) infrastructural capacity in terms of the ability of state institutions to perform essential tasks and enact policy; (2) coercive capacity in terms of the state's ability and willingness to employ force against challenges to its authority; and (3) national identity and social cohesion in terms of the degree to which the population identifies with the nation-state and accepts its legitimate role in their lives.

Empirically, it can be seen that most developing nations are weak or deficient in most if not all of these dimensions. Or, they have over-developed coercive capacities but lack infrastructural capacity and social consensus. As a consequence of these fundamental deficiencies, weak states typically display all or many of the following characteristics: institutional weakness and an

inability to enact national policy or perform basic state functions such as tax collection and providing law and order; political instability, as evidenced by coups, plots, rebellions and frequent violent changes of government; the centralization of political power in a single individual or small elite who command the machinery of government to run the state in their own interest; unconsolidated or non-existent democracies; ongoing economic crisis and structural weakness; external vulnerability to international actors and forces; intense societal divisions along class, religious, regional, urban-rural and/or ethnic lines; lack of a cohesive or strong sense of national identity; and an ongoing crisis of legitimacy for both the government of the day and the institutions of state in general.

The most important characteristic of weak states is their frequent inability to establish and maintain a monopoly on the instruments of violence. Even in states with well-developed coercive power, civilian governments do not always retain the absolute loyalty of the armed forces and face a constant threat of military intervention. For most weak states, however, the armed forces are ill-equipped, poorly managed and prone to factional divisions. At the same time, a range of social actors—rival politicians with their own private armies, warlords, criminal gangs, locally organized militias, armed and organized ethnic or religious groups and private security companies or mercenaries—are powerful enough to resist the state's attempt to enforce compliance. In such a situation, even the most minimal requirement of statehood—the monopoly on the instruments of violence—is largely out of reach.

At the other end of the scale, and in complete contrast, it is suggested that *strong states* have the willingness and ability to: 'maintain social control, ensure societal compliance with official laws, act decisively, make effective policies, preserve stability and cohesion, encourage societal participation in state institutions, provide basic services, manage and control the national economy, and retain legitimacy' (Dauvergne 1998: 2). Strong states also possess high levels of socio-political cohesion that is

directly correlated with consolidated participatory democracies, strong national identities, and productive and highly developed economies. Most importantly, strong states exist as a 'hegemonic idea', accepted and naturalized in the minds of ordinary citizens such that they 'consider the state as natural as the landscape around them; they cannot imagine their lives without it' (Migdal 1998: 12).

Crucially, the notion of weak and strong states is not a binary measure but rather a continuum along which states in the real world fall. Moreover, it is a dynamic condition. States can move back and forth along the continuum over time given sufficient changes to key factors: weak states can become strong by building a strong sense of national identity, for example; and strong states could potentially weaken through increased social conflict brought on by immigration, for example. Most states in developing regions fall towards the weak end of the state-strength continuum.

> **KEY POINTS**
>
> - The key dimensions of state strength/weakness are infrastructural capacity, coercive capacity and national identity and social cohesion.
>
> - Weak states are typically characterized by institutional weakness, political instability, centralization of power, unconsolidated democracy, economic crisis, external vulnerability, social divisions, lack of national identity and an ongoing crisis of legitimacy.
>
> - The most important characteristic of weak states is their lack of a monopoly on the instruments of violence.
>
> - State strength or weakness is a dynamic continuum along which states can move; it is possible for weak states to become strong states and vice versa.

Threats to weak states

Due to their debilitating structural characteristics, weak states face a number of internal and external security challenges. *Internally*, weak states face the

continual threat of violent intervention in politics by the armed forces. Such interventions can take the form of coup d'état, mutiny, rebellion or revolt over pay and conditions. There have been literally hundreds of coup attempts in Latin America, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, and nearly two-thirds of Africa's states have experienced military rule since independence. Military rulers still govern numerous developing countries.

Weak states also face serious threats from 'strong-men', individuals or groups who exercise a degree of coercive and/or infrastructural power in their own right and who challenge the authority of the state. They may be semi-legitimate actors such as politicians or traditional and religious leaders who nonetheless command large followings and private access to weaponry. Alternately, they may be criminal gangs or warlords—charismatic individuals who command private armies and enforce a kind of absolutist rule in areas under their control, primarily for the purposes of pursuing illegal commerce. Examples of such strongmen include the drug cartels in Colombia, Myanmar and Afghanistan, and some of the rebel leaders in Africa during the 1990s, such as Charles Taylor, Foday Sankoh and Jonas Savimbi. If the state fails to accommodate or placate such groups, they may launch a violent challenge to the regime.

In other cases, weak states face challenges from various social groups such as ethnic groups, religious movements, ideological factions or local militias who organize for self-defence. Due in large part to pre-existing divisions, the inability of the state to provide adequate welfare and the tendency to employ excessive coercion, a great many ethnic groups in weak states have organized politically and militarily to protect their interests. Gurr's (2000) *Minorities at Risk* project found more than ninety ethnic minorities either actively engaged in violent conflict with the state or at medium-to-serious risk of significant political violence. Similarly, in a number of Middle Eastern and Asian countries, such as Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and more recently, Thailand, religious groups have launched violent challenges to the state. Ideologically driven

groups also continue to threaten weak states, from the Maoist insurgency in Nepal to the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. It is a sad fact that virtually all armed groups in weak states—state armies, warlord factions and local, ethnic and religious militias—employ large numbers of child soldiers (for more on child soldiers see Chapter 20).

A final internal threat can come from the steady erosion of state institutions and processes. Increasing lawlessness and the eventual collapse of governmental institutions can create a power vacuum in which the ruling elite simply becomes one of several factions struggling to fill the void and claim the formal mantle of statehood. At various times during the conflicts in Liberia and Somalia, for example, several different factions claimed to be the legitimate government at the same time, despite lacking the necessary control of territory or governing institutions required for formal recognition. In the final analysis, any of these threats—military intervention in politics, warlords and strongmen, ethnic demands for secession or state collapse—may lead to sustained bouts of all-out intrastate war.

Due to their internal fragility, weak states also face a variety of *external* threats. Lacking the infrastructural or coercive capacity to resist outside interference, weak states are vulnerable to penetration and intervention by other states and groups. Powerful states may directly invade or may sponsor a coup or rebellion in order to overthrow a regime, such as the American invasions of Grenada, Panama, Afghanistan and Iraq and French intervention in numerous African states. Alternately, the provision of significant quantities of arms and military assistance to rebel movements, such as American support to UNITA in Angola and Soviet support for the Vietcong in Vietnam, can pose a serious threat to the ruling elite. Often, support for rebel factions or coup plotters can come from sources closer to home, such as rival neighbouring states. A great many regional rivals—such as India–Pakistan, Uganda–Sudan, Somalia–Ethiopia, Iran–Iraq—have threatened each other in this manner. In addition, very small weak states can be threatened by the tiniest of external groups: mercenary coups and invasions

have been launched against The Seychelles, The Maldives, The Comoros and, more recently, Guinea-Bissau, sometimes by no more than a few dozen men. In most cases, the coups were only thwarted through assistance from powerful allies such as France or India.

A related external threat comes from the spill-over or contagion of conflict and disorder from neighbouring regions. Lacking the necessary infra-structural capacity to effectively control their bor-ders, weak states can often do little to prevent the massive influx of refugees, fleeing rebels, arms smuggling or actual fighting. Major external shocks like this can seriously threaten the stability of the weak state. The Rwandan genocide in 1994 spilled over into Zaire, a weak and failing state; the shock eventually led to the overthrow of the Mobutu regime, invasion by several neighbouring states and large-scale factional fighting (see Case Study 9.2).

Related to this, weak states are threatened by the uncontrollable spread of small arms and light weapons. In the hands of warlords, criminals and pri-vate militias, these weapons pose a real challenge to the authority of the state and can intensify existing conflicts and seriously undermine peace efforts. Light, portable, durable and easy-to-use (even by children), small and light weapons are easily obtained through legal and illegal channels, and once in use, have a tendency to spread throughout the region. An estimated $5 billion worth of light weapons are traded illegally every year to the world's conflict zones, killing an estimated half a million people per year in criminal activity and civil violence.

KEY POINTS

- Internally, weak states are threatened by military factions, rival 'strongmen' such as warlords or criminals, rebellions from minorities, institu-tional collapse and disorder and ultimately, intrastate war.

- Externally, weak states are threatened by inter-ference from powerful international actors, con-tagion and spill-over from neighbouring states and the small arms trade.

The weak state 'insecurity dilemma'

The combination of state weakness and internal threats creates a security challenge unique to weak states. It is distinctive because it arises from meet-ing *internal* threats to the regime in power, rather than *external* threats to the existence of the nation-state. The inability of the state to provide peace and order creates a contentious environment where each component of society—including the ruling elite or regime—competes to preserve and protect its own well-being. This creates a domestic situ-ation similar to the neo-realist conception of struc-tural anarchy where groups create insecurity in the rest of the system when they try to improve their own security. To distinguish this internally ori-ented condition from the classical *security dilemma*, it is helpful to think of it as an insecurity dilemma. This condition of insecurity is self-perpetuating because every effort by the regime to secure its own security through force provokes greater resistance and further undermines the institutional basis of the state and the security of the society as a whole.

In a sense, the weak state insecurity dilemma is caused by an initial and profound lack of 'stateness', in particular, the inability to establish a monopoly on the instruments of violence. This failure can be both normative—in the sense that the state has failed to convince the population that armed resist-ance is wrong or counter-productive—and practi-cal—in that the state cannot physically disarm and control all of its rivals. Either way, the lack of a political and institutional centre with a monopoly of force creates an insecurity spiral—a semi-permanent situation of 'emergent anarchy'—where armed groups are forced to engage in self-help strategies.

Thus, within the weak state context, where ruling elites use the machinery of government primarily to secure the continuation of their rule, the concept of *national security*—the security of a whole socio-political entity, a nation-state with its own way of life and independent self-government—is wholly inapplicable. In practice, the idea of state security—the integrity and functioning of the institutions and idea of the state—and regime security—the secu-rity of the ruling elite from violent challenge—become indistinguishable. Due to the fusion of state and government, when a particular regime is over-thrown, as the Syad Barre regime was overthrown in Somalia in 1991, the entire apparatus of the state collapses too. In this sense, weak state security *is* regime security.

KEY POINTS

- The weak state insecurity dilemma is primarily an internal condition based on the contradiction between societal and state power.

- It is engendered by a lack of 'stateness', most importantly, the failure to establish a monopoly on the instruments of violence.

- The weak state insecurity dilemma transforms national or state security into regime security.

Security strategies in weak states

The structural characteristics of weak states and the unique insecurity dilemma in which they are trapped, severely constrains the range of policy options open to ruling elites. Essentially, the condi-tions of governance create a semi-permanent condition of 'crisis politics' or 'the politics of survival' (Migdal 1988) in which short-term strat-egies of regime security substitute for long-term state-building policies.

Elite security strategies

Weak state elites typically employ a mix of internal and external strategies aimed at regime survival. *Internally*, elites employ a mix of carrot and stick approaches to challengers. First, lacking both infra-structural capacity and wider social legitimacy, weak state elites are often forced to rely on coercive power and state intimidation to secure continued rule. This entails creating or expanding the security forces, spending large sums of the national income on military supplies and using violence and intim-idation against real and perceived opponents of the regime. This is perhaps the most common survival strategy of weak state elites, and it is reflected in the appalling human rights record seen in a great many developing countries. Typically, regimes try to suppress opposition through the widespread use of torture and imprisonment, assassination and extra-judicial killings, disappearances, the violent sup-pression of political expression, forced removals, destruction of food supplies and in extreme cases, genocide, mass rape and ethnic cleansing.

A key dilemma for elites is that the instruments of coercion—the armed forces—can themselves develop into a threat against the regime. For this reason, elites sometimes deliberately weaken the armed forces by creating divisions, establishing elite units such as presidential guards and fomenting rivalry between different services. Such divide and rule strategies are also used against other potential sources of opposition, such as state bureaucracies, religious groups, traditional authorities and opposi-tion politicians. From this perspective, the deliberate undermining or hollowing out of state institutions can be a rational and effective means of preventing the rise of potential centres of opposi-tion to the regime.

On the other side of the ledger, elites sometimes find it easier to try and create positive inducements for supporting the regime. Typically, this entails the establishment of elaborate patronage systems, whereby state elites and various social groups are joined in complex networks of mutual exchange. In this way, corruption acts as a form of redistribution and a means of integrating the state in an informal

power structure. Such systems may extend to strongmen in a form of 'elite accommodation' (Reno 1998). Warlords or political leaders with private armies may be permitted control over a particular area, have state resources diverted their way or be given exclusive control over a particular commercial activity for example, in exchange for an agreement not to try and overthrow the regime or encroach on its other activities. In the settlement ending the war in Sierra Leone, the warlord leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Foday Sankoh, became Minister for Mines in an attempt to buy his loyalty. Different kinds of accommodation have sometimes been found with the drug cartels in Colombia and Myanmar.

Ethnic manipulation or 'the politics of identity' is another typical strategy in weak states. In what is a form of divide and rule borrowed from colonialism, elites will sometimes deliberately foment inter-communal conflict as a means of preventing the emergence of united opposition to the regime. At other times, it is simply a method of rooting a regime's power base in what is seen to be a reliable source of support. Thus, elites will favour certain groups in the allocation of state resources, oppress minorities viewed as hostile, create minority scapegoat groups during times of unrest and appoint members of the elite's own ethnic group to positions of power. Such strategies are frequently successful, as ethnic consciousness is usually well developed and readily exploitable in many developing societies.

A final internal strategy involves the careful manipulation of democratic political processes. Due to their external vulnerability, a great many weak states have been forced by international donors—developed states and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF and World Bank—to begin the process of democratic reform. A great many weak state rulers have successfully managed the transition to multiparty democracy and retained control of the state, primarily through careful manipulation of internal opponents and external perceptions. Typically, this involved monopolizing and controlling the media, the cooption of opponents, setting up fake parties to split the vote, gerrymandering, ballot-rigging, candidate and elector disqualification and manipulating the electoral rules. Constructing the outward appearance of democracy without any substantial concessions can actually function to bolster regime security by giving it a degree of international legitimacy.

In addition to these internal strategies, weak state elites also look to form alliances with powerful external actors as a means of bolstering regime security. An increasingly prevalent strategy has been to employ foreign mercenaries or private military or security companies as force multipliers. There are nearly a hundred private military companies (PMCs) operating in 110 states around the world (see Case Study 9.1). Often working closely with oil and mineral companies, the industry is thought to be worth as much as $100 billion per year. Weak states employ private security contractors because they see them as being more effective and reliable than many national militaries. With superior weapons and training, these private armies have often proved to be decisive in securing weak state survival against various internal threats. In Angola and Sierra Leone, the notorious PMC Executive Outcomes turned the tide against rebel forces, re-capturing diamond mining areas in the process.

More formally, weak states seek out alliances with powerful states who can help to guarantee regime survival. During the cold war, many weak states obtained military support from one or other of the superpowers in exchange for political and strategic assistance in the East–West confrontation. In Africa, at least twenty countries entered in to defence agreements with France; subsequent military intervention by French troops was decisive in keeping several West African regimes in power, including Zaire/DRC (see Case Study 9.2), Togo and Ivory Coast. At present, the war on terror is providing weak states with another opportunity to bolster their internal security: in exchange for cooperation in fighting terrorism, the United States provides countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Uzbekistan (see Case Study 9.3) with vital military and economic assistance. External intervention of this kind can be crucial for keeping internal rivals at bay and ensuring regime security.

CASE STUDY 9.1

Private military companies

'Private military companies, or PMCs as the new world order's mercenaries have come to be known, allow governments to pursue policies in tough corners of the world with the distance and comfort of plausible deniability. The ICIJ investigation uncovered the existence of at least 90 private military companies that have operated in 110 countries worldwide. These corporate armies, often providing services normally carried out by a national military force, offer specialized skills in high-tech warfare, including communications and signals intelligence and aerial surveillance, as well as pilots, logistical support, battlefield planning and training. They have been hired both by governments and multinational corporations to further their policies or protect their interests.

Some African governments are little more than criminal syndicates—warlords such as Charles Taylor, the president of Liberia, or more sophisticated elites, such as the rulers of Angola. But to sell diamonds and timber and oil onto the world market requires foreign partners.

The people doing the extracting, the bribing, the arms dealing, and the deal-making are South African, Belgian, American, Israeli, French, Ukrainian, Lebanese, Canadian, British, Russian, Malaysian, and Syrian. They are a class of entrepreneur that operates beyond borders, often unaccountable to shareholders and unfettered by the regulation they would encounter in their own countries. They have become influential political players in the countries in which they operate.'

Phillip van Niekerk, 'Making a Killing: The Business of War', *The Center for Public Integrity*, 28 October 2002)

Finally, weak state elites sometimes join together with other weak states in regional defence arrangements designed primarily to prop each other up. For example, under new multilateral security agreements, both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have in recent years intervened in member states to over-turn coups or secure governments from overthrow by rebel forces. Thus, the creation of regional security architecture, including regional peacekeeping forces, can function as a strategy of mutually reinforcing regime security.

KEY POINTS

- Internal security strategies include repression and military expansion, employing mercenaries and private military companies, divide and rule strategies, deliberately undermining state institutions, patronage politics and elite accommodation, identity politics and democratic manipulation.

- External security strategies include employing private military companies and mercenaries, external defence agreements with Great Powers and joining in regional defence organizations.

Security outcomes

The perennial conundrum facing weak state elites lies in the contradiction between ensuring the short-term security of the regime and the long-term goal of state-making. Many of the security strategies described above are, in the long-run, self-defeating, as they further undermine the foundations of the state, provoke even more serious opposition from social groups and delay genuine state consolidation. For most weak state elites, however, there is no way out of this dilemma; if they neglect regime security in favour of more genuine state-building activities such as strengthening state institutions and forging a sense of national identity, they are just as likely to be overthrown in a coup or toppled by a rebellion.

CASE STUDY 9.2

Anatomy of a weak state—the Democratic Republic of Congo

The central African state of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has always been a weak state. It has suffered from tremendous insecurity since its founding, and ruling elites have employed all the classic regime security strategies to avoid being toppled.

At independence in 1960, Congo was poorly prepared for full statehood, with irrational national boundaries, underdeveloped state institutions, poor infrastructure, a fragile economic base and only 100 university graduates to fill the civil service. In the first four years of independence, the country was plunged into civil war, with three main factions vying for power and the mineral-rich Shaba province attempting to secede. Order was only established with the help of a large-scale United Nations operation. In 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko took power in a military coup.

Throughout his rule, Mobutu faced numerous threats to his regime: military rebellions, dissident movements, attempts at secession, mercenary revolts, invasions and violent disputes and conflict spill-over from neighbouring states. Cobalt and copper-rich Shaba province was invaded by mercenaries and exiled dissidents on four occasions.

Following the pattern of weak state rulers, Mobutu employed a number of classic regime security strategies. He employed mercenaries to subdue the country in the first years of his rule, bribed opposition politicians to join the government, suppressed opposition movements, engaged in identity politics,

hollowed out state institutions to prevent the rise of potential opponents and split the armed forces into several factions to avoid coups and rebellions. Externally, he allied with the United States, providing a conduit for getting arms to Angola's UNITA rebels. In exchange, he received massive amounts of military and economic aid, which he then used to manage internal opposition. French paratroopers and American logistical support helped Mobutu to defeat an invasion of Shaba in 1978.

In 1996, a rebel alliance led by Laurent Kabila and backed by Rwanda emerged in the east of the country in the chaos engendered by the spill-over of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Within a few months, and despite employing a mercenary army, Mobutu's regime collapsed. The Kabila-led alliance soon fell apart, however, and full-scale civil war broke out in 1998. Rwanda and Uganda intervened on the side of different rebel factions, who control large swathes of the country, while Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe sent troops to support the Kabila government. The war continues today, despite the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping force. The UN estimates that up to three million people have lost their lives in the conflict. DRC now exists as a semi-collapsed state, with various warlords, criminal enterprises and foreign entrepreneurs engaged in large-scale looting, trade monopolization and the exploitation of minerals.

Thus, with few genuine alternatives, elites have to persist with policies that could eventually lead to complete state disintegration and collapse.

Ultimately, of course, a key outcome of these strategies is that the weak state, or rather the regime, becomes the greatest single threat to the security of its own people. In weak states, individual citizens often face a much more serious threat from their own governments than they do from the governments of other states. Instead of ensuring individual and social security, the continual use of coercion makes the state the primary threat to security. Moreover, the threat is affected on several levels: repression and identity politics threatens their

physical survival through the spread of violent conflict; and deliberately undermining state institutions and patronage politics threatens their welfare and livelihood.

KEY POINTS

- The long-term effect of elite security strategies is to reinforce insecurity for both the regime itself and the wider population.

- In extreme cases, elite security strategies can lead to complete state collapse.

CASE STUDY 9.3

Anatomy of a weak state—Uzbekistan

The Central Asian country of Uzbekistan gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. From 1924 to 1991, Uzbekistan had been governed as an outlying colony in the Soviet empire. Consequently, at independence it shared many of the weaknesses of other post-colonial and post-Soviet states, such as an externally oriented, dependent economy, weak national institutions, over-developed coercive capabilities, a legitimacy crisis and a history of authoritarianism.

President Islam Karimov, a former Communist Party boss, has ruled Uzbekistan since independence. Throughout this period, the Karimov regime has been under constant threat from dissidents and anti-government campaigners, crime syndicates and drug traders, a small-scale terrorist campaign, opposition Islamic groups and spill-over from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Tadjikistan.

Karimov has clung to power using a variety of regime security strategies, most commonly, severe repression against real and potential opponents. Despite nominal constitutional protections, the government has banned public meetings and demonstrations, restricted the independent media, arrested thousands of opposition political and religious supporters and used horrific torture and murder to suppress

dissent. Uzbekistan presently has the worst human rights record in the former Soviet Union. Other internal strategies used by Karimov to maintain power have included the clever manipulation of elections and referendums, re-writing the constitution to centralize all power in the president and endemic corruption among government officials.

Externally, Karimov's primary strategy was to ally the regime with the United States in the war on terror. In 2002, the two countries signed a Declaration of Strategic Partnership. In return for hundreds of millions of dollars of economic and military support, Uzbekistan provided the US with military bases from which to conduct missions in Afghanistan, coercive interrogation facilities for terrorist suspects in the controversial rendition programme and diplomatic support for US policies in the United Nations.

However, the US–Uzbek partnership has come under severe strain in recent times following the military crackdown against anti-government demonstrators in the city of Andijan in May 2005 when hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed and injured. Unable to ignore the appalling human rights situation in Uzbekistan, the US has begun to re-think its relationship with the regime. This will put pressure on Karimov to look elsewhere for regime support.

Explaining insecurity in weak states

There are different theories about the causes of weak state or regime insecurity. Taken together, they can tell us a great deal about how conditions of insecurity evolve and persist, despite international assistance. State-making theories explore the origins of the weak state insecurity dilemma in the initial state construction process. Warlord politics theories explore the impact of neo-liberal globalization and the end of the Cold War on the choices facing weak state elites. The combination of the inherited

structural features of statehood and the nature and processes of the international context explain much about why weak states find it so difficult to escape from their insecurity dilemma.

State-making theories

Observing weak state insecurity, scholars like Ayoob (1995) have suggested that these conditions represent a normal stage in the long-term state-building

process from which strong states will, in time, emerge. Taking a historical view, they argue that the European experience proves that state-building is a long and traumatic process, taking several centuries to complete and involving a great deal of bloodshed. Typically, it entailed sustained and bloody conflict between a centralizing state and powerful social forces before a monopoly on violence was achieved. It also took determined and sometimes violent efforts to weld disparate groups of people into a single national identity. Significantly, representative institutions emerged only gradually, after a powerful central state and a cohesive sense of national identity had been established.

The argument is that what is presently observed in developing countries is a similar process of state consolidation to that experienced by European states in past centuries, but with additional obstacles that were absent during the European experience. For example, unlike European states, today's weak states have to cope with the ongoing effects of colonial rule, which includes: the imposition of alien doctrines and institutions of statehood; irrational territorial boundaries and the lack of national identity; societies divided along class, religious and ethnic lines; stunted and dependent economies; and an entrenched culture of political violence. These factors make the state-building process even more difficult than it might have been.

The contemporary state-building process is also constrained by a shortened time-frame. Unlike European states, weak states today are expected to become effective, fully functioning, democratic states within a few decades. Moreover, they are expected to do it without the violence, corruption and human rights abuses that accompanied the European state-building process. Established international norms and rules, such as the protection of minority and human rights and the right of self-determination (which often encourages ethnic rebellion), also complicates the state-building process. A particularly problematic norm is the inviolability of statehood. Once a state achieves independence and is admitted to the United Nations, its status cannot be revoked or its territory subsumed into another state, no matter how unviable it proves to be in practice. Thus, unlike European entities such as Burgundy and Aragon which could not complete the state-building process and were absorbed into larger, more viable units, today's weak states must struggle on indefinitely.

In short, according to this approach, we can expect weak states to experience a great deal more bloodshed and violence over an extended period until stronger, more representative states emerge. Until then, they will remain 'quasi-states'—states possessing the nominal features of statehood, such as international recognition, but lacking the infrastructural capacities to create and secure a sense of genuine national identity (Jackson 1990).

KEY POINTS

- Scholars like Ayoob suggest that the conditions of insecurity in weak states are an expression of the historical state-building process.

- The European state-building process was similarly bloody and long.

- Weak states face the state-building process in an environment constrained by the experience of colonialism, a shortened time-frame and problematic international norms.

Warlord politics

During the Cold War, many weak states maintained a semblance of stability and integration through various forms of elite and social accommodation. The primary means of accommodation was the construction of a patrimonial or *redistributive state*—a system of patronage where state resources were distributed to supporters through complex social and political networks. The redistributive state was frequently maintained by direct superpower assistance, loans and development assistance from international financial institutions and periods of high commodity prices which supplied its primary national income. Temporary disruptions to the stability of the weak state redistributive system came from sudden falls in commodity prices, wider economic shocks (such as the oil shocks) and the sudden loss of superpower support (which could be compensated for by switching to the other superpower, as Somalia did in the 1970s). In many cases, these shocks resulted in serious internal violence.

The end of the Cold War signalled a period of profound transformation in the international system. A major consequence of the end of superpower conflict was the decline of military and economic support for many weak states. At the same time, international financial institutions began to demand changes in the economic and political policies of weak states—what are called 'conditionalities'—in exchange for continuing loans and assistance. In keeping with the global trend of privatization and deregulation, weak states were forced by lenders and investors to sell off and downsize government bureaucracies. These developments severely disrupted the redistributive state and forced rulers to find new ways of accommodating rival strongmen and restless social groups.

Somewhat paradoxically, elite strategies have since involved the deliberate creation of state collapse and social disorder. This entails hollowing out state institutions, fragmenting the armed forces and creating parallel informal armed groups, thereby spreading the means of violence even further into society. The logic of 'disorder as a political instrument' is that within the context of a collapsing state, elites can pursue forms of commercial activity that are not possible under normal circumstances, such as trading in illegal commodities, looting, protection rackets, coercive monopolies and the like. Thus, exploiting the shadow markets engendered by neo-liberal globalization, and in alliance with local strongmen and multinational companies, weak state elites have created a new kind of political economy, what Reno (1998) has called '*warlord politics*'. Crucial in this enterprise is the ability to employ private companies to perform state roles, especially the task of providing regime security.

As an alternative political-economic system, warlord politics provides elites with several advantages. It permits commercial activity and accumulation in the grey or shadow regions of the global economy, tapping into resources that would otherwise be unavailable to weak state elites and which are desperately needed to buy protection from rivals. In this sense, warlord politics facilitates the process of elite accommodation needed to keep regimes safe from violent overthrow. It also prevents the emergence of mass social movements because civil society finds itself trapped between a rapacious state and well-armed networks of strongmen pursuing their own illiberal agendas.

In short, warlord politics represents an innovative response to rapid global change that permits the survival of the regime under harsh new conditions. From this perspective, state collapse and widespread disorder is not a temporary aberration in the normal functioning of the state, but a new form of regime security forced on weak state elites by changes in the wider international system. Warlord political systems have been in existence for several decades now, and have become a part of the political landscape from West and Central Africa to Colombia, Haiti, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Balkans—among others.

KEY POINTS

- The end of the Cold War and the adoption of conditionalities by IFIs severely disrupted the redistributive state.

- Weak state elites responded by developing new and innovative forms of political economy based on shadow and predatory commercial activities called 'warlord politics'.

- Warlord politics works to control internal threats from strongmen and mass movements.

Conclusion: prospects for the weak state

In this chapter we have examined the conditions of insecurity that affect the majority of the world's states. We have suggested that the insecurity dilemma facing developing countries is both profound and unique, and is rooted in the fundamental structures and processes of incomplete statehood. The conditions of insecurity in weak states are the result of three interrelated factors: the historical state-making process; the structures and processes of the present international system; and the security strategies employed by weak state elites. In the context of profound internal threats and constraining external conditions, national security becomes a matter of maintaining short-term regime security. The pursuit of regime security, however, is itself a profoundly contradictory process; short-term policies of regime security undermine the more important state-building project—and the security of the state and society.

From this perspective, weak state insecurity appears to be an inescapable condition. There have been very few clear-cut cases where weak states have made a successful transition to state consolidation and genuine national security. The fundamental security challenge facing weak states lies in achieving greater levels of stateness and moving towards improved levels of genuine state strength. The challenge, therefore, lies in the willingness and ability of weak state elites to substitute short-term regime security strategies for long-term state-building strategies.

Should regimes choose to take the state-building project seriously the process will undoubtedly be long and difficult, not least because a number of entrenched internal and external obstacles to effective statehood remain. These include: the continued distorting effects of colonialism; the processes of neo-liberal globalization and the imposition of external conditionalities; small arms proliferation; continuing external intervention by powerful actors; the existence of constraining international norms; and debilitating internal conditions such as poverty, social division, weak institutions, and the like. The global war on terror launched in the wake of 11 September 2001 has also had a negative effect on the state-building project, as the fight against terrorism has largely diverted international attention and resources from poverty eradication, democracy promotion and peace-building activities. Weak state elites have also been able to brand their internal enemies as terrorists, and just as during the Cold War, receive military support in exchange for cooperation in the fight against terrorism (see Case Study 9.3). In other words, the new war on terror has allowed weak state elites to re-prioritize regime security over state-building and receive vital international support for their efforts.

As during the Cold War, the problems of weak state insecurity take a low priority on international agendas compared to the interests of the Great Powers. So far, solutions to the weak state security dilemma have not moved far beyond the establishment of multiparty democracy and free markets. For neo-conservatives, it is sometimes argued that forceful 'regime change' and perhaps even a liberal or benign re-colonization such as occurred in Germany and Japan after Second World War, is the only effective long-term solution. Others stress the need for humanitarian intervention to protect the security of civilians and promote human rights. They argue that 'cosmopolitan peace-keeping' (Kaldor 1999) and so-called peace-building missions are required to transform violent domestic politics in weak states into long-term peace and stability. In practice, both approaches are based on a similar liberal perspective which envisages a minimal state devoted to protecting individual and market freedoms. The main problem is that thus far, despite decades of effort, no case of enforced neo-liberalization either through conditionalities, regime change or peace-building, has succeeded in transforming a weak state into a strong state.

Given the enormous challenges facing weak states, and recognizing the fundamental inequities of the state project itself and the failure thus far to reform illiberal weak states, some radical commentators have suggested that state-building should be abandoned in favour of alternative forms of political organization based on either smaller units—city states or ethnic groups, for example—or larger units—such as regional organizations like the European Union. The first option, sub-state political organizations, seems impractical in regions that are awash with weapons, criminal gangs and poverty; the case of Somalia, which has been without a functioning central government since 1991, is informative in this regard. The second option, regional organization, is similarly not without its limitations. While it has had a modicum of success in the European Union, in regions characterized by weak states, underdevelopment and instability such as Africa or Latin America, regional processes are severely constrained in what they can achieve.

In the end, overcoming the internal and external obstacles to state-building in the developing world will require tremendous political will and resources, and the elaboration of alternative and innovative approaches to state-building assistance. More importantly, it will require fundamental reform of international economic and political structures, including the international trade in weapons. Given the present preoccupation with international terrorism and the lack of enthusiasm by the world's developed states for debt relief, development and curbs on the small arms trade, the short-to-medium-term future of the weak state looks as bleak as it ever was (for more on the arms trade see Chapter 17).

? QUESTIONS

In what ways are orthodox approaches to security limited in their explanation of the weak state insecurity dilemma?

What are the primary differences between weak and strong states?

Outline the main internal and external security threats facing weak states.

What makes the security dilemma in weak states unique?

What are the differences, if any, between national security, state security and regime security in the weak state context?

What domestic and international strategies do weak state elites adopt to try to manage their security challenges?

What are the main internal and external obstacles to state-building for weak states?

What impact has the end of the Cold War and the onset of globalization had on the weak state security predicament?

Is abandoning the state-building project in favour of alternative forms of political organization a realistic solution to the weak state security dilemma?

What role should the international community play in the state consolidation process?

FURTHER READING

■ Ayoob, Mohammed (1995), *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Provides an informative analysis of the weak state security predicament in its internal, regional and international dimensions.

■ Buzan, Barry (1991), *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner (2nd edn). A seminal reformulation of security beyond its traditional focus to include the security predicament facing the majority of weak states in the world.

■ Kaldor, Mary (1999), *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Cambridge: Polity Press. A provocative and original statement on the changing nature of warfare and the need for new approaches to peacekeeping in weak states.

■ Holsti, Kalevi J. (1996), *The State, War, and the State of War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. An empirical analysis of contemporary warfare which demonstrates that internal war within weak states has been the primary form of international conflict since 1945.

■ Job, Brian (ed.) (1992), *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. A very useful collection of essays from leading experts on some of the key dimensions of security in developing states.

■ Musah, Abdel-Fatah and Kayode Fayemi, J. (eds.) (2000), *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*, London: Pluto. Provides a fascinating collection of essays on the security dilemma associated with the intervention of mercenaries in Africa's weak states.

■ Reno, William (1998), *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Provides a compelling analysis of how weak state elites have adapted governance strategies to the opportunities and constraints of neo-liberal globalization.

■ Rich, Paul B. (ed.) (1999), *Warlords in International Relations*, London: Macmillan. An insightful collection of essays by leading experts on the role of warlords, the small arms trade, private military contractors and other security challenges facing weak states.

■ Thomas, Caroline (1987), *In Search of Security: The Third World in International Relations*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. An original formulation of the weak state security predicament.

■ Zartman, I. William (ed.) (1995), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. An important collection of essays on the nature, causes and consequences of weak state decay and collapse.

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

● http://www.iansa.org/   The International Action Network on Small Arms is a global network of civil society organizations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The website contains resources on all aspects of small arms proliferation and international efforts to regulate the trade.

● http://www.iss.co.za/   The Institute for Security Studies is a leading research institution on all aspects of human security in Africa. The website contains news, analysis and special reports on all aspects of security in Africa.

● http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/   The Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR) programme at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management, the University of Maryland, coordinates major empirical research projects on armed conflict, genocide and politicide, minorities at risk, regime types and state failure. The website has links to all the major projects and datasets.

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for lots of interesting additional material: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/collins/