

Security and Emancipation

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# Security and emancipation\*

KEN BOOTH

## Word problems and world problems

Our work is our words, but our words do not work any more. They have not worked for some time. We can obviously start with the misleading label—‘International Politics’—which is given to our subject. As a result of this problem, I have wanted to use increasing numbers of inverted commas; but most have never seen the light of day because copy-editors have regarded them as an over-indulgence. Even so, the very temptation of these little scratches indicates that words at the heart of the subject are in trouble:

- We talk about ‘sovereignty’ but today it often comes down to arguing over symbols (like whether to keep the pint, or whether the queen’s head should be on the Ecu). Sovereignty is a token of its former self. It is the colour of the flag people wear on their post-Fordist-produced boxer shorts.
- We talk about ‘states’. But many only exist juridically, not as ‘social facts’.<sup>1</sup> Many ‘states’ resemble mafia neighbourhoods—protection rackets— rather than the national societies of our text-books.
- We still talk about ‘the superpowers’. But the United States cannot presently threaten a medium-sized war and keep open the national zoo, while the Soviet Union can still wreck the world in some circumstances, but cannot attract a single immigrant.
- And what about important words such as ‘war’, ‘strategy’ and ‘weapon’? They each ring Clausewitzian bells of reasonable instrumentality, but when the adjective ‘nuclear’ is put in front of them, as it often is, Clausewitz marches out of the window.

These, and other key concepts, are not trusty words with which to go theoretical tiger shooting.

Sharp subjects like international politics, and particularly the sub-field of strategic studies, want sharp-edged language. For realists even the software must be hardware. But word problems proliferate. There is the difficulty of inventing new words to replace those becoming obsolescent; the virtual impossibility of reinventing the meaning of old words for new circumstances; the conservatism of most people in the face of well-established concepts; and there is the desire of copy-editors for tidy pages. Other word problems do not help: the familiar ‘semantic debasement’<sup>2</sup> of concepts by

\* This is an edited version of the Plenary Address given at the Annual Conference of BISA, Newcastle University, 17 December 1990.

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Jackson and C. G. Rosenberg, ‘Why Africa’s Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood’, *World Politics*, 35 (1983), pp. 1–24.

<sup>2</sup> As happened, for example, to ‘collective security’: see Inis J. Claude, *Swords Into Ploughshares* (London, 1966), p. 224.

politicians; the notorious euphemisms used by strategists to mask reality; and the almost criminal obscurity of some international theorists. We are the creatures of words, as well as their creators, and in the study of international relations the medium often becomes the message.

Words are all we have. Consequently we want the key ones to be tough enough for generalization and sharp enough to cut through the blizzard of information. In the seminar room it is usually possible to convince ourselves, and even more so our students, that the basic concepts are sound. Outside the seminar room, however, the language trends describing what is happening have been moving away from the neat and orderly world of mainstream theory.

The dominant traditional language of the subject remains sharp-edged, and is mostly a language of division and exclusion. Yet the dominant processes now shaping world politics require words which imply a more porous, inclusive and interpenetrating world. Outside the seminar room the trends are towards *interdependence*, *decomposing* sovereignty, *transparency*, *spreading* capitalism, *overlapping* identities and so on. These words, it should be said, do not necessarily imply a future of international cooperation. For one thing, we cannot expect to deal successfully with world problems if we cannot sort out our word problems.

### The interregnum

One of the interesting word problems at the moment involves the difficulty of giving a satisfactory name to the present stage of world affairs. The phrase 'post-Cold War world' is widely used, but it is not apposite. The end of the Cold War obviously partly defines when we are living, but there is, and has been for years, much more to this turbulent era: the growth of complex interdependence, the erosion of sovereignty, amazing advances in communications, the declining utility of force, the degradation of nature, huge population growth, the internationalization of the world economy, the spread of global life styles, constant technological innovation, the dissemination of modern weaponry, the growing scope for non-state actors and so on. All these trends, and more, are changing the context of international studies, and too few books capture it. James Rosenau's latest, *Turbulence in World Politics*, is a rich exception.<sup>3</sup> Those processes described by Rosenau and just listed, are interacting and changing the context of the lives of people as individuals and groups. Rosenau describes our times as 'post-international politics'. This is meant to suggest the decline of long-standing patterns, as more and more of the interactions that sustain world politics do not directly involve states.

Economic and loyalty patterns are becoming more complex. A recent book asks: 'Are Korean stocks purchased in London by a Turk part of the Korean, British or Turkish economy?' The answer it gives breaks out of the state framework and concludes that they are clearly part of a more complicated global economy.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, there is the simultaneous development of both more local and more

<sup>3</sup> James R. Rosenau, *Turbulence In World Politics, A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Hemel Hempstead, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000. Ten New Directions for the 1990s* (New York, 1990), p. 19.

global identities, as people want meaning and authenticity in their lives, as well as economic well-being. The local/global sense of identification is not mutually exclusive; it is part of the development of the more complex and overlapping identities which will characterize the future. The result will be the breaking down of the statist Tebbit-*prinzip*: *ein* passport, *ein* leader, *ein* cricket team.

If we must name things correctly before we can 'live in truth', as Vaclav Havel has put it, we need to name when we are living.<sup>5</sup> *Marxism Today's* label, 'New Times', is the most helpful so far. But if an entirely satisfactory label is still to be conceived, there is at least one neat form of words, from 60 years ago, which speaks exactly to the present. 'The old is dying,' Gramsci wrote, 'and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.'<sup>6</sup> An 'interregnum' is a useful way to think about the present. Thucydides would not find himself at a loss in an international relations seminar, as we talk about the role of power and the prevalence of mistrust between states; but his mind would be completely blown by such forces shaping the context of world politics as the terrible destructiveness of modern weapons, the 3 million people a day who zigzag the world by air, the frightening destruction of natural life, and the working fax machine, which knows no country.

'We are as we are because we got that way' is a typical Kenneth Boulding aphorism. How we get to become what we become (beyond the interregnum) will partly depend on our images and vision. There is always a dynamic interplay between image and reality in human relationships. If we insist upon old images, the future will naturally tend to replicate the past.

### A turning point for inter-state war

The forces shaping the new context for world politics, as ever, offer both dangers and opportunities. What demands our pressing attention is the unprecedented destruction threatened by modern military technology and environmental damage. Since the direct and indirect costs of failure in what might be termed global management are now so high, conscious cultural evolution is imperative.<sup>7</sup> One area where this has become increasingly apparent is security, which has been the first obligation of governments and is the transcendent value of strategic studies, a dominant sub-field of international politics since the mid-1950s.

Until recently the security problematic was well-focused. A group of people like us, turning up at a conference like this, could predict what a speaker would talk about if 'security' was in the title of a talk. It is not long ago when issues such as Cruise, Pershing, SDI and the SS-20 made strategists out of all of us, and gave President Reagan sleepless afternoons. The dominating security questions were: Is the Soviet threat growing? What is the strategic balance? And would the deployment of a particular weapon help stability? In that period of looking at world politics through

<sup>5</sup> Vaclav Havel, *Living in Truth* (London, 1986), especially ch. 2, 'The Power of the Powerless'.

<sup>6</sup> Nadine Gordimer took this quotation as the starting point for a novel on black-white relations in South Africa: see her *July's People* (London, 1981). I took it as the starting point for thinking about the present era in international politics: see *New Thinking About Strategy and International Security* (London, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> This is the theme of Robert Ornstein and Paul Ehrlich, *New World, New Mind* (London, 1989).

a missile-tube and gun-sight, weapons provided most of the questions, and they provided most of the answers—whatever the weapon, whatever the context, and whatever the cost. This is brought out in a typical story about Richard Perle.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1980s Perle based some of his arguments against the Nuclear Freeze movement on the proposition that nuclear weapons ‘are good if they promote stability and contribute to deterrence of war, and bad if they diminish stability and weaken deterrence’. This is a proposition all except outright nuclear pacifists might accept. But then Perle characteristically proceeded to argue in favour of all the components of the Reagan administration’s extravagant nuclear build up, some of which was very difficult to justify in terms of ‘stability’.

We live in what has been called a ‘weapons culture’. Clausewitz does not always rule: Freud is sometimes a better guide. At the press conference which Henry Kissinger gave on the *Mayaguez* incident, just after the humiliating fall of Saigon, the Secretary of State declared: ‘We are not going around looking for opportunities to prove our manhood’. A sharp-eared woman reporter later wrote that Kissinger’s comment was curious, for nobody up to that point had suggested that what he was denying might have been the case; and so, she added, ‘at a level very close to his consciousness, Secretary Kissinger knew that this was precisely what America’s reaction had been all about’.<sup>9</sup>

Reading between the lines is one of the enlivening aspects of the post-modern tendency in the study of international politics.<sup>10</sup> Any approach which makes us more self-aware of the scratches we (or increasingly our machines) put on paper is to be welcomed. But trying to explain the meaning of everything can obscure that meaning is not everything. Politics is about deciding, but the subtext is proving a disengaged standpoint for decisions. Post-modernism without praxis (or even with), advanced by legends in their own logogames, offers no escape from might is right.

Military questions will obviously continue to have an important part in the concerns of all students of international politics. However, it is doubtful whether they will be as central a preoccupation, except for some obvious regional conflicts. This is because the institution of inter-state war is in historic decline. History shows man to have been a truly inventive animal when it comes to war, always thinking of new things to fight about. But most of those reasons now appear quite bizarre. Who today would kill and be killed in large numbers in order to procure a bride for a royal prince? Or to ensure foreign ships dipped their flags in salute? In the past intelligent people were willing to accept heavy costs for such ‘benefits’. Today states will only fight, with the odd deviant, if they or their allies and associates are actually attacked. Otherwise states are running out of motives for war. Within states it is a different matter; there is no diminution of internal violence.

Given the changing costs and benefits of inter-state war, it is too soon in history to describe the international system and the logic of anarchy as immutably a ‘war system’. Indeed, there are accumulating signs that world politics is fitfully coming to the end of a 350-year span of history, which was dominated by the military competition between the technologically advanced states of the north, with realist outlooks, Machiavellian ethics and a Clausewitzian philosophy of war.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, 7 September 1982, quoted in *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, February 1983, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by William Safire, *Safire’s Political Dictionary* (New York, 1978), p. 394.

<sup>10</sup> The first self-consciously ‘post-modern’ book is James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations, Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington, 1990).

The period of history just described—the ‘Westphalian system’—produced a game, in Raymond Aron’s noted formulation, played by diplomats and soldiers on behalf of statesmen. Through these centuries the security game states learned to play was ‘power politics’, with threats producing counterthreats, alliances counteralliances and so on. This has been the basic raw material of strategic studies for the past thirty years. The question we now face is: what security game should be played in the ‘New Times’ which do not yet have a suitable name?

### Security in our New Times

The elements of the new security game I want to propose should not be unfamiliar. The ingredients include ideas from such diverse sources as the World Society School, alternative security thinking, classical international relations, critical theory, peace research, strategic studies, and neo-realism. If these different approaches are conceived as tramlines, some are to be extended, some bent and others turned back on themselves, until they all reach a common point. I call this point of convergence utopian realism. It is a mixture of what William T. R. Fox called ‘empirical realism’<sup>11</sup> with some notion of what others would call global ethics, or world order principles.

The most obvious difference between security from a utopian realist perspective and traditional security thinking lies in the former’s holistic character and non-statist approach. The last decade or so has seen a growing unease with the traditional concept of security, which privileges the state and emphasizes military power. This unease was expressed by a variety of alternative security thinkers in the West and by many Third World writers about security (though not by those Third World regimes for whom the idea of ‘national security’ was actually a cloak for state oppression). It was also evident in the political realm in the work of Palme, Brandt and some South-East Asian states, and of course in the historic role of the now beleaguered President of the Soviet Union (two more words that do not work together these days).<sup>12</sup>

The unease with traditional security thinking has expressed itself in a frequent call for a ‘broadening’ or ‘updating’ of the concept of security. In practice little actual new thinking has taken place. A notable exception, of course, was Barry Buzan’s *People, States and Fear*, first published in 1983. This remains the most comprehensive theoretical analysis of the concept in international relations literature to date, and since its publication the rest of us have been writing footnotes to it. But even that book, excellent as it is, can primarily be read as an explanation of the difficulties surrounding the concept. The book not only argues that security is an ‘essentially contested concept’ defying pursuit of an agreed definition, but it asserts that there is not much point struggling to make it uncontested. Such a conclusion is unsatisfying. If we cannot name it, can we ever hope to achieve it?

<sup>11</sup> W. T. R. Fox, ‘E. H. Carr and Political Realism: Vision and Revision’, *Review of International Studies*, 11 (1985), pp. 1–16.

<sup>12</sup> See *Common Security: A Programme For Disarmament. The Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues under the Chairmanship of Olof Palme* (London, 1982); *North–South: A Programme For Survival. The Report of the Commission on International Development Issues under the Chairmanship of Willy Brandt* (London, 1980); Multhiah Alagappa, ‘Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN countries’, *Research Papers and Policy Studies*, 26 (University of California, Berkeley, n.d.); Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika. New Thinking For Our Country And The World* (London, 1987).

Traditional security thinking, which has dominated the subject for half a century, has been associated with the intellectual hegemony of realism. This traditional approach has been characterized by three elements: it has emphasized military threats and the need for strong counters; it has been status quo oriented; and it has centered on states. The epitome of this approach was a book published some years ago by Edward Luttwak, in which he said that 'strategy is not a neutral pursuit and its only purpose is to strengthen one's own side in the contention of the nations'.<sup>13</sup> These words represent the perfect expression of strategy as ethnocentrism writ large: the argument which follows is diametrically opposed to such an outlook. While no security concept should dismiss the danger of war, the importance of military power or the roles of states, the Luttwak Simplifier is neither appropriate for academics nor is it a rational way to see the world community through the interregnum.

The pressures to broaden and update the concept of security have come from two sources. First, the problems with the traditionally narrow military focus of security have become increasingly apparent. It is only necessary here to mention the greater awareness of the pressures of the security dilemma, the growing appreciation of security interdependence, the widespread recognition that the arms race has produced higher levels of destructive power but not a commensurate growth of security, and the realization of the heavy burden on economies of extravagant defence spending. The second set of pressures has come from the strengthening claim of other issue areas for inclusion on the security agenda. The daily threat to the lives and well-being of most people and most nations is different from that suggested by the traditional military perspective. Old-fashioned territorial threats still exist in some parts of the world. Obviously much on the minds of everybody is Kuwait, which in August 1990 was occupied and then annexed by Saddam Hussein's forces. For the most part, however, the threats to the well-being of individuals and the interests of nations across the world derive primarily not from a neighbour's army but from other challenges, such as economic collapse, political oppression, scarcity, overpopulation, ethnic rivalry, the destruction of nature, terrorism, crime and disease. In most of the respects just mentioned people are more threatened by the policies and inadequacies of their own government than by the Napoleonic ambitions of their neighbour's. To countless millions of people in the world it is their own state, and not 'The Enemy' that is the primary security threat. In addition, the security threat to the regimes running states is often internal rather than external. It is almost certainly true that more governments around the world at this moment are more likely to be toppled by their own armed forces than by those of their neighbours. In the last few weeks alone there have been problems from the military in Argentina, and there are constant rumours of the military challenge even to the traditionally civilian-dominated Kremlin.

The broader security problems just mentioned are obviously not as cosmically threatening as was the Cold War. But they are problems of profound significance. They already cost many lives and they could have grave consequences if left untreated. The repression of human rights, ethnic and religious rivalry, economic breakdown and so on can create dangerous instability at the domestic level which in turn can exacerbate the tensions that lead to violence, refugees and possibly inter-state conflict. The Lebanon and Kashmir are only two examples of 'domestic' problems with international implications which have been attracting attention through 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Luttwak, *Strategy and History. Collected Essays, Volume Two* (New Brunswick, 1985), p. xiii.

Communities which are wealthy and have a significant level of social justice do not seem to fight each other. There has not been a war since 1945 between the 44 richest countries.<sup>14</sup> ‘Security communities’—islands of what Kenneth Boulding called ‘stable peace’<sup>15</sup>—have developed in several parts of the world. For whatever reason there does seem to be a correlation between democracy and freedom on the one hand and warlessness (within security communities) on the other. As a result even relatively conservative thinkers about international politics seem increasingly to accept that order in world affairs depends on at least minimal levels of political and social justice. This is where, finally, emancipation comes in.

### Emancipation versus power and order

Emancipation should logically be given precedence in our thinking about security over the mainstream themes of power and order. The trouble with privileging power and order is that they are at somebody else’s expense (and are therefore potentially unstable). This was illustrated by the Sonnenfeldt doctrine for Eastern Europe. During the Cold War of the 1960s and 1970s there was military stability in Europe (hot war would not pay for either side) but there was no political stability (because millions were oppressed). In the end the vaunted ‘order’ created by dividing Europe into the two most heavily armed camps in history proved so unstable that it collapsed like a house of cards (and miraculously almost without violence). True (stable) security can only be achieved by people and groups if they do not deprive others of it.

‘Security’ means the absence of threats.<sup>16</sup> Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security.

Implicit in the preceding argument is the Kantian idea that we should treat people as ends and not means. States, however, should be treated as means and not ends. It is on the position of the state where the conception of security as a process of emancipation parts company with the neo-realist conception as elaborated in *People, States and Fear*. The litmus test concerns the primary referent object: is it states, or is it people? Whose security comes first? I want to argue, following the World Society School, buttressed on this point by Hedley Bull, that individual humans are the ultimate referent. Given all the attention he paid to order between states, it is often overlooked that Bull considered ‘world order’—between people—to be ‘more fundamental and primordial’ than international order: ‘the ultimate units of the great society of all mankind’, he wrote ‘are not states . . . but individual human beings, which are permanent and indestructible in a sense in which groupings of them of this or that sort are not’.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Naisbitt and Aburdene, *Megatrends 200*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Boulding, *Stable Peace* (Austin, 1979), passim.

<sup>16</sup> The most thorough discussion is Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (Hemel Hempstead, 2nd edn 1991). For some definitions, see pp. 16–18.

<sup>17</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London, 1977), p. 22.



Those entities called 'states' are obviously important features of world politics, but they are unreliable, illogical and too diverse in their character to use as the primary referent objects for a comprehensive theory of security:

- States are unreliable as primary referents because whereas some are in the business of security (internal and external) some are not. It cannot serve the theory and practice of security to privilege Al Capone regimes. The traditional (national) security paradigm is invariably based upon a text-book notion of 'the state', but the evidence suggests that many do not even approximate it. Can 'security' be furthered by including the regimes of such as Hitler, Stalin or Saddam Hussein among the primary referents of theory or practice?
- It is illogical to place states at the centre of our thinking about security because even those which are producers of security (internal and external) represent the means and not the ends. It is illogical to privilege the security of the means as opposed to the security of the ends. An analogy can be drawn with a house and its inhabitants. A house requires upkeep, but it is illogical to spend excessive amounts of money and effort to protect the house against flood, dry rot and burglars if this is at the cost of the well-being of the inhabitants. There is obviously a relationship between the well-being of the sheltered and the state of the shelter, but can there be any question as to whose security is primary?
- States are too diverse in their character to serve as the basis for a comprehensive theory of security because, as many have argued over the years, the historical variety of states, and relations between them, force us to ask whether a theory of the state is misplaced.<sup>18</sup> Can a class of political entities from the United States to Tuvalu, and Ancient Rome to the Lebanon, be the foundation for a sturdy concept of security?

When we move from theory to practice, the difference between the neo-realist and the utopian realist perspective on the primary referent should become clearer. It was personified in the early 1980s by the confrontation between the women of Greenham Common and Margaret Thatcher on the issue of nuclear weapons. Thatcher demanded Cruise and Trident as guarantors of British sovereignty. In the opinion of the prime minister and her supporters the main threat was believed to be a Soviet occupation of Britain and the overthrow of the Westminster model of democracy. It was believed that British 'sovereignty' and its traditional institutions safeguarded the interests of the British people. Thatcher spoke for the state perspective. The Greenham women sought denuclearization. The main threat, they and anti-nuclear opinion believed, was not the Soviet Union, but the nuclear arms build-up. They pinned tokens of family life, such as photographs and teddy bears, on the perimeter fence of the Greenham missile base, to indicate what was ultimately being threatened by nuclear war. People could survive occupation by a foreign power, they argued, but could not survive a nuclear war, let alone nuclear winter. By criticizing nuclearism, and pointing to the dangers of proliferation and ecological disaster, the women of Greenham Common were acting as a home counties chapter of the world community.

The confrontation between the Greenham women and the Grantham woman sparked interesting arguments about principle and policy. I thought the Greenham

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, David Held, 'Central Perspectives on the Modern State', pp. 1–55 in David Held et al. (eds.), *States and Societies* (Oxford, 1983).

women right at the time, and still do. But the path to nuclear abolition cannot be quick or easy; nor is it guaranteed. The hope of some anti-nuclear opinion for a grand abolition treaty (a sort of Hobbes today, Kant tomorrow) is not feasible.<sup>19</sup> But it is rational to act as though abolition is possible. Indeed, to do otherwise is to perpetuate the belief that there is ultimately no stronger basis for human coexistence than genocidal fear. Over a long period such minimalist thinking seems to be a recipe for disaster. The search for nuclear abolition has value as part of a process of extending the idea of moral and political community (which even realists like Carr saw as the ultimate foundation of security). Kant would have seen the search for total global abolition as a 'guiding ideal'; he might have called it a 'practical impracticality'.

### The case for emancipation

It is appropriate to place emancipation at the centre of new security thinking in part because it is the spirit of our times. This does not refer simply to the turn of the 1980s/90s, with the breaking ice in Eastern Europe and South Africa; our times refers to the whole of the twentieth century. (The theme of this conference—The End of Empires—is one testimony to it.) This century has seen the struggle for freedom of the colonial world, women, youth, the proletariat, appetites of all sorts, homosexuals, consumers, and thought.<sup>20</sup> The struggle for emancipation goes on in many places. Some groups have done and are doing better than others. For the moment there is a spirit of liberty abroad. In the struggle against political oppression, one striking feature of recent years has been the remarkable success of non-violent 'people power' in many countries, ranging from Poland to the Philippines.

In the study of world politics, emphasizing emancipation is one way to help loosen the grip of the neo-realist tradition. Neo-realism undoubtedly highlights important dynamics in relations between states, and these cannot be disregarded. But to make world politics more intelligible it is necessary to go beyond these important but limited insights. The tradition of critical theory is helpful in this regard; its most important potential contribution in the present state of the subject lies in recapturing the idea that politics is open-ended and based in ethics.<sup>21</sup> From this perspective strategy becomes not the study of the technological variable in inter-state politics, but a continuation of moral philosophy with an admixture of firepower. The next stage of thinking about security in world affairs should be marked by moving it out of its almost exclusively realist framework into the critical philosophical camp.

In parallel with such a move it is necessary to reconsider much traditional thinking about liberty, which has tended to place freedom before equality. This tradition was clearly expressed by Theodore Sumberg in an argument about foreign aid as a moral obligation. The central value for Americans, it was asserted, is liberty not the abolition of poverty.<sup>22</sup> Liberty is also the central value of emancipation, but

<sup>19</sup> As, for instance, in Jonathan Schell, *The Abolition* (London, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> See Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston, 1989), especially pp. xiii–xvi.

<sup>21</sup> See, by way of introduction, Mark Hoffman, 'Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate', *Millennium*, 16 (1987), pp. 231–49, and Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism. Critical Theory and International Relations* (London, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Theodore Sumberg, *Foreign Aid as Moral Obligation? The Washington Papers*, no. 10 (Beverly Hills, 1973) discussed in Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders* (Syracuse, 1981), p. 153.

emancipation implies an egalitarian concept of liberty. When the homeless are told, for example, that they now have more liberty, by people with hearts of pure polyester, because they can buy shares in privatized industries, that 'liberty' is meaningless. Whether the focus is Britain or the globe, liberty without economic status is propaganda.

The new security game for the interregnum requires a comprehensive approach and a long-term perspective if it is to begin to cope with the expanding security agenda. Mainstream strategic thinking, as embodied in Anglo-American nuclear deterrence theory, was notably static, and now, more clearly than ever, can be seen as timebound and ethnocentric. Over the years nuclear deterrence theory became increasingly esoteric, rococo and irrelevant. It led to a somewhat closed world, protected from politics and morality by 'mindguards' and 'nukespeak', and a belief in timeless success.

Integral to emancipation is the idea of the reciprocity of rights. The implication of this is the belief that 'I am not truly free until everyone is free'. This is a principle everyone can implement in everyday life, and it has implications for international relations. Since 'my freedom depends on your freedom', the process of emancipation implies the further breaking down of the barriers we perpetuate between foreign and domestic policy. In this world of turbulent change it is less and less tenable to see the 'external world'—the subject-matter of traditional international politics—as a 'domain of its own'. In the interpenetrating world of global politics, economics and cultures, we need better attend to the linkages between 'domestic' and 'foreign' politics. Frontiers these days do not hold back either 'internal' or 'external' affairs.

The continuing sharp distinction between what is 'domestic' and what is 'foreign' is one manifestation of the way the study of international politics has been bedevilled by unhelpful dichotomies. What are convenient labels for teaching can actually be misleading. It is only necessary to mention the polarization of order and justice, domestic and foreign policy, internal order and external anarchy, utopianism and realism, political and international theory, high and low politics, and peace research and strategic studies. Security conceived as a process of emancipation promises to integrate all these. It would encompass, for example, the 'top down' northern 'national security' view of security and the 'bottom up' southern view of 'comprehensive security' concerned with problems arising out of underdevelopment or oppression.<sup>23</sup> Overall, therefore, the concept of emancipation promises to bring together Martin Wight's 'theories of the good life', and 'theories of survival' into a comprehensive approach to security in world politics.

### **Teaching and practice: what is to be done?**

The strength of realism is always said to have been the way it dealt with the central problem of war. Those of us trained as students into the realist tradition had little scope for disagreement. By the 1970s, however, the problems with realism as the lens

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Caroline Thomas, 'New Directions in Thinking about Security in the Third World', pp. 267–89 in Ken Booth (ed.), *New Thinking About Strategy And International Security* (London, 1991), and Caroline Thomas and Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, eds., *Conflict And Consensus In South/North Security* (Cambridge, 1989).

through which to look at the world became obvious; and in Vietnam and elsewhere it could be seen that realism was not even an uncontroversial guide to action. Now it is apparent to a small but growing body of opinion in the subject that a strategy of emancipation is both empirically and theoretically the soundest response to the problem of war. And not just war. Students of international politics should remember that nonwar violence in this century has been on a numbing scale, as numerous governments have slaughtered populations for political, ethnic or religious reasons—or unreason. Within states, as well as between them, Richard Rummel's work supports the argument that freedom eradicates violence; he argues that there is an inverse correlation between the political rights and civil liberties in nations, and both internal violence and war.<sup>24</sup> Emancipation, empirically, is security.

The idea of seeing security as a process of emancipation will sound radical only to 'doctrinal realists'. Already international society is to some extent signed up for it. As Bull noted, through the UN and its Specialized Agencies international society is formally committed to much more than the preservation of minimum order between states. Through the promotion of human rights and the transfer of resources, it also espouses ideas of world order and justice.<sup>25</sup> In the short term one is conscious of how little has been achieved: but if one takes the perspective of a century, then it is apparent that the changes have been significant.

The hopes invested in the UN at the time of its foundation quickly collapsed first time round. The events of the last few years have given the world and the UN a second chance. When the iron curtain was created it put us all behind the wire, psychologically speaking. It entrapped old ways of thinking about the games nations play. Now the iron curtain has been dismantled it has caused a certain amount of professional disorientation. Gangs of strategists, for example, appear like old lags who have served time in prison, and who are now finding the space outside unnerving. There is a wish to return to the familiar parameters of order and predictability. The idea that Europe has now thrown away its superpower security blanket has been argued with obsessive neorealism in John Mersheimer's much-quoted article, 'Back to the future'.<sup>26</sup>

When the French Revolution broke out, Hegel and his friends planted a tree of liberty. We, too, have been living through exciting times, but what did we in British international studies do in the last 15 months, in response to the ending of the potentially most catastrophic confrontation in history, and the actual freeing from tyranny of several hundred million people? Not much. The response was rather low key to say the least. The topics organized by various university departments in the September conference season did not reflect close engagement with the New Times. Southampton University held a conference on Mountbatten; at Keele there was one on the Falklands War; and Aberystwyth organized a meeting to discuss British strategic thinking in the 1950s. These were all subjects worthy of study, but they were indicative of the way we tended to turn our backs on a momentous moment. If as a community of scholars we could not become involved or excited about the historic events of the past 15 months, how can we expect to excite students in the subject?

What does all this mean, finally, for the teaching and practice of security.

<sup>24</sup> R. J. Rummel, *Understanding Conflict and War*, vols. 1–5, (Beverly Hills, 1975–81).

<sup>25</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. 87.

<sup>26</sup> John J. Mersheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War', *International Security*, 15 (1990), pp. 5–56.

In the teaching of international studies I would like to see a re-evaluation of the role of strategic studies, for so long a dominant subfield. People will argue that academic subjects, like fashion, have a cyclical life pattern, and that strategic studies will be back. This is possible, but there are stronger grounds for thinking that the 'Golden Age' package of strategic theory which has been taught since the early 1960s has had its day. This package, characterized by superpower nuclearism and epitomized by the writing of Kahn and the like, is a non returnable timebound curiosity, like purple flares. Nuclearism went into deep crisis in the 1980s. The Reagan administration was probably the last roundup for nuclear warfighters, and what Gorbachev calls nuclear 'superabundance' will surely continue to be seen as futile. Historically speaking, there is a steady but uneven recognition that the costs of using military force are rising, while the benefits are shrinking. In recent times, we have, witnessed the novel occurrence of arms reduction treaties being implemented before they were even signed (the CFE agreements) and the British government announcing sizeable cuts in the army at just the moment it was poised to fight a serious war in the Middle East.

Instead of traditional strategic studies, largely organized around US thinking about nuclear weapons and arms control, I would prefer to see the encouragement a new breed of students trained in Security Studies, broadly defined. An understanding of defence would be essential, but they would also be required to know the language and practice of human rights, environmental issues, problems of economic development, and the subtleties of comparative politics; they would become able to discuss these matters with all the enthusiasm and facility previously reserved for SLCMs, START, FOFA and ET. 'Security'—we are increasingly discovering—is all of a piece. This was well brought out by Cynthia Enloe in a recent article, in which she tied together, in an interesting discussion of the Gulf crisis, such apparently diverse issues as military conquest, international debt, male–female relations and even laundry.<sup>27</sup> Feminist perspectives are integral to any people-centred subject.

When it comes to political practice, the foregoing arguments lead to a process dominated approach with the aim of community-building to break down the barriers between 'us' and 'them'. This is not primarily a matter of changing structures. With a distant objective like human emancipation, in a real sense the means become the ends. The actual endpoint of what is proposed might be categorized as 'utopian', but realistic processes towards the goal of greater emancipation can be implemented both comprehensively and at once. Indeed, such processes have been underway for two decades in Europe, as a result of the work of leaders like Brandt, Genscher and Gorbachev; on the part of those who, against the odds in the Cold War, created a healthy civil society in Eastern Europe; and by alternative security and environmental groups who helped change agendas.

An exact label for this philosophy of process is Joseph Nye's phrase 'process utopian'.<sup>28</sup> The aim here is not to become overburdened by distant ideal structures, but to concentrate on reformist steps to make a better world somewhat more likely. At each political crossroad, there is always one route that seems more rather than less progressive in terms of global community-building.

The process utopian approach is not confined to governments. There is growing

<sup>27</sup> Cynthia Enloe, 'The Gulf Crisis. Making Feminist Sense of It', *Pacific Research*, 3 (1990), pp. 3–5.

<sup>28</sup> See Joseph Nye, 'The Long-Term Future of Deterrence', pp. 245–7, in Roman Kolkowicz (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear Terror* (Boston, 1987).

scope for non-state actors, such as the 18,000 INGOs which are creating what Elise Boulding has called a 'global civic culture'.<sup>29</sup> This is encouraging evidence supporting the process utopian approach: it gives scope for what might be called a 'post-foreign policy' world politics.

It is in the area of practice where critical theory so far falls short. The literature to date does not tell its readers, for example, what to do about TAsMs, or how many frigates to buy, or what policy to adopt in the Lebanon. Getting critical gets us only so far. But so does realism. Realism itself has never been the clear guide to action its reputation would suggest, as is evident from the wrangles between realists over the years on the issues of the day. But whether we are thinking about critical theory or realism we should never expect a guide to action in all circumstances; there will always be disputes about applying principles in practice.

On such practical questions as TAsMs, frigates and the Lebanon, the earlier arguments about emancipation and community suggest that strategists should see military policy not simply in terms of serving the state (as demanded by Luttwak) but instead as serving a nascent world order. It will be thought outlandish by some, and impossible by others, but the operating principle being proposed is that governments be encouraged to act in the strategic arena, as in others, according to Bull's notable phrase, as 'local agents of the world common good'.<sup>30</sup> This is a particularly appropriate perspective for those who work in universities. It is not naive 'utopianism' which is being advanced; it is a matter of building on evolving theory and practice. Out of the 'reality' of the second Cold War came the ideas and influence of an alternative security school—new as opposed to old thinkers in most states. Here was an attempt to integrate ideals and actuality, to merge the interests of the particular with the interests of the universal, and to reconcile power, order and justice. The 1980s in Europe showed that what is politically possible can indeed expand.

## Conclusion as prologue

Reconciling ideas such as those just mentioned was one of the tasks John Vincent had been, and would be involved in. I was looking forward to what he might have said about an attempt to conceive security in terms of emancipation. I wanted (and still want) to claim his work as one of the pillars on which to build utopian realism. John Vincent's recent, shocking, premature death has left a hole in the academic study of international politics. He was one of a handful of highly respected colleagues who died much too young, like Hedley Bull in the mid-1980s and Wayne Wilcox in the mid-1970s. John, like them, was dealing with the great issues of war and peace, and power and justice. Like them he believed that if you are going to be academic about anything, it might as well be something important.

Today it is difficult to think of issues more important than those on the expanded security agenda mentioned earlier. Understanding such issues in the 1990s will be the equivalent of what the Great War was in the 1920s. It is already evident that in the

<sup>29</sup> Elise Boulding, *Building a Global Civic Culture* (Syracuse, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Hedley Bull, 'Order and Justice in International Relations', *Hague Lectures* (University of Waterloo, 1983), pp. 11–12 and 14.

1990s insecurity in one form or another will be all around. Fortunately, in this post-international politics/post-foreign policy world nobody has to wait for the Douglas Hurds. Some governments can exercise enormous power, but they are not the only agents, and they are not immune to influence. The implementation of an emancipatory strategy through process utopian steps is, to a greater or lesser extent, in the hands of all those who want it to be—the embryonic global civil society. In a world of global communications few should feel entirely helpless. Even in small and private decisions it is possible to make choices which help rather than hinder the building of a world community. Some developments depend on governments, but some do not. We can begin or continue pursuing emancipation in what we research, in how we teach, in what we put on conference agendas, in how much we support Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Oxfam and other groups identifying with a global community, and in how we deal with each other and with students. And in pursuing emancipation, the bases of real security are being established.