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# *National, Societal, and Human Security:* On the Transformation of Political Language

*Christopher Daase* \*

**Abstract:** »*Nationale, gesellschaftliche und menschliche Sicherheit: Zum Wandel politischer Sprache*«. The article traces the extension of the concept of security over roughly the last fifty years. It differentiates between four dimensions of conceptual change: the referent object, the issue dimension, the spatial dimension and the dimension of perceived danger. The process of conceptual extension is explained not only as securitization, i.e. the result of voluntary speech acts, but as a macro-social process of the dissociation of state and society and the prevalence of liberal values.

**Keywords:** Security, threat, vulnerability, risk, conceptual change.

## 1. Introduction

Security is the core value of our modern – or rather post-modern – society. This has not always been the case. For centuries, not security but spiritual and secular peace dominated theological, philosophical and even political thinking. At the beginning of the 20th century, however, peace and security started to compete with each other for primacy in strategic debates and political programs. Today, global security is an undisputed value and peace has become a concept widely regarded as only suited for political sermons. While the conceptual history of the complex relationship between peace and security has still to be written, it might be useful to concentrate here just on security and the transformation of the security discourse over the last fifty years.

It is rarely the case that political change can be captured by analyzing one single concept. But, as I will argue, the concept of security enables us not only to describe the change in a political discourse, but to explain the transformation of political practice of Western states and international society in general. This transformation goes beyond mere policy adaptation, and rather signals a fundamental change in the underlying security culture. Security culture can be defined as the sum of beliefs, values and practices of institutions and individuals that determine (1) what is considered to be a danger or insecurity in the widest sense and (2) how and by which means this danger should be handled.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daase 2009.

The concept of security is the most visible aspect of security culture, for depending on how insecurity and security are conceptualized, dangers are emphasized or de-emphasized and specific political and social issues come to the fore or are put in the rear.<sup>2</sup>

This is the reason why in order to analyze security culture it is necessary to concentrate on the conceptual change in security. According to historians of political thought such as Reinhard Koselleck or Quentin Skinner, the transformation of language signifies political transformation. However, it seems to be important to avoid the constructivist shortcut of believing that security has become today's core value through willful speech acts of securitization, i.e. the deliberate denomination of problems as security issues in order to procure higher significance for them in the political process.<sup>3</sup> While securitization might be part of the process, the change of security culture goes deeper and can be explained as the result of political and social de-nationalization and transnationalization, which in turn is the unintended effect of the emancipation of society from the state. The concept of security is thus cause *and* effect of political change.

The crucial point of this change is that the liberal state – and along with it the international liberal society – are becoming the victims of their own success. For the social process of emancipation depends on a relatively peaceful and secure environment. Societal security demands are only articulated if the fundamental security needs of the state – i.e. peace in the traditional sense – are fulfilled. As soon as this is the case, however, further-reaching security demands are made which tend to overburden the state and international organizations. Wilhelm von Humboldt was among the first who saw the latent tension between state and societal security when he wrote in his 1792 treatise “Ideas about an Attempt to Determine the Limits of Effectiveness of the State” the following: “Those whose security has to be preserved are on the one hand all citizens in perfect equality and on the other the state itself”.<sup>4</sup> My argument is that under the condition of globalization and de-nationalization this latent contradiction has become a manifest contradiction that is most visible, for example, in the fight against terrorism.

In the following – after a short note on conceptual history as a method of political science – I will describe the conceptual change in security by analyzing the extension of its meaning over roughly the last fifty years. I do so by differentiating between four conceptual dimensions. The first dimension refers to the referent object, i.e. the question of whose security is to be guaranteed. In the last fifty years a dramatic shift of meaning has taken place insofar as the state was first superseded by society and then society by the individual as the main

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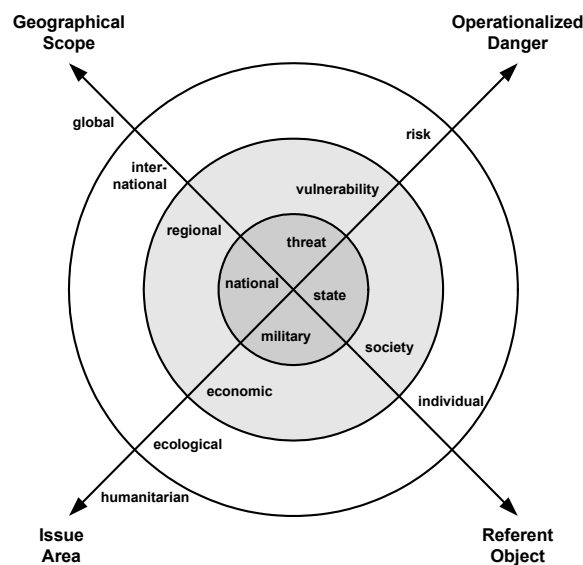
<sup>2</sup> Wolfers 1962; Daase 1993.

<sup>3</sup> See Weaver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Humboldt 1967, 118.

referent object of security. The second dimension is the issue area, i.e. the question: In which policy field are insecurities perceived? Again an extension has taken place by gradually adding to military dangers economic, environmental and humanitarian concerns. The third dimension refers to the spatial application of the term. Here a conceptual broadening can be seen in the gradual extension from national to regional, international and global security. The fourth dimension finally refers to the conceptualization of danger itself. Here I argue that an extension has taken place insofar as the purpose of security policy has shifted from the defense against threats via the reduction of vulnerabilities to the management of risks. Figure 1 tries to capture these dimensions graphically.

Figure 1: Four Dimension of Extended Security



## 2. Conceptual History as a Method of Political Science

Conceptual history is not a standard method of political science. Political scientists either concentrate on what they see as “brute facts” by defining, operationalizing and measuring political phenomena in order to explain their causal relationship or interpret the meaning of concepts and discourses in order to understand political articulation and communication. Rarely, however, is the difficult interplay between language and action analyzed. This is the reason why political scientists can learn a lot from the different approaches to conceptual history – most importantly from the German school of *Begriffsgeschichte*

(‘history of concepts’) and the so-called Cambridge School of conceptual history – which have developed in more or less (willful) ignorance of each other.<sup>5</sup>

*Begriffsgeschichte* “designates the study of concepts in the texts of individual thinkers and bodies of thought in the past”.<sup>6</sup> The central idea is to cautiously connect conceptual to social and political history. Concepts are taken as contested intellectual constructions “which both register and shape what changes and what persists in the structures of society”.<sup>7</sup> This approach sharply departs from the earlier German tradition of *Geistes-* or *Ideengeschichte* (‘intellectual history/history of ideas’) which Reinhard Koselleck criticized for “treating ideas as constants, which although articulated in different historical forms, do not themselves change”.<sup>8</sup> The underlying hypothesis of Koselleck’s work and of much of the collaborative venture of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (‘historical basic concepts’) is that in a relatively short timespan between about 1750 and 1850, what Koselleck termed *Sattelzeit* (‘saddle period’), the political and social vocabulary in Germany changed fundamentally and specific modern political and social concepts were created or reformulated. Thus, *Begriffsgeschichte* assumes that concepts determine and affect the transformation of social, political and economic structures.

Quentin Skinner, John Pocock and others developed a similar approach at Cambridge University. Pocock, for example, speaks of concepts as building conceptual worlds that affect social worlds. “These conceptual and social worlds act as contexts to each other”.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in order to understand political change, it is important to understand conceptual change by reconstructing the vocabulary – or what Pocock now calls “discourses” – of the time in order to restore the true meaning of a text or the actual intention of a speaker. Arguing on a more systematic level, Quentin Skinner linked this basic idea to the philosophy of Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle and developed a theory of language games. Such language games, he argues, have to be reconstructed historically to find out what particular authors in particular situations had intended to say and to do.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, while *Begriffsgeschichte* emphasizes structural social and political changes and their relation to conceptual change, the Cambridge School links conceptual change with historical agency not only by stressing the importance of major political philosophers but by pointing to the performative function of language in general. Whatever the differences between the two approaches<sup>11</sup>, what political scientists can learn from both of them is that there is no true

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<sup>5</sup> Palonen 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Richter 1990, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Richter 1990, 41.

<sup>8</sup> Koselleck 1985, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Richter 1990, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Skinner 1969, 37.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Palonen 2004; Richter 1995.

original meaning of concepts that has to be defended as, for example, Carl Schmitt believed when he maintained: “The theorist cannot do more than preserve the concepts and call the things by their names”.<sup>12</sup> Equally problematical might be a positivist approach to concept analysis that tries, in the words of Felix Oppenheim, “to reconstruct” conceptual meaning in order to gain clear and unambiguous technical terms for empirical research.<sup>13</sup> Rather, historical concept analysis takes the contentedness of concepts as given and unavoidable.<sup>14</sup> It therefore does not reconstruct concepts but rather conceptual change.

Conceptual change, however, is not the result of individual action (as insinuated by securitization theory) but the cumulative effect of many linguistic actions.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, language change does not come out of the blue. Rather it is a reaction to new political and social circumstances that are linked to power, interests and values of human beings and social groups. Thus, the micro-perspective of the Cambridge School and the macro-perspective of *Begriffsgeschichte* have finally to be integrated if conceptual and political change are to be understood as co-constitutive. Far from having succeeded in doing so, I would like to present some preliminary ideas on the following pages as to how this could be done with regard to the concept of security.

### 3. The Conceptual Extension of Security

Above, I mentioned four dimensions in which the meaning of security has expanded over the last fifty years: the reference dimension, the issue dimension, the spatial dimension and the dimension of operationalized danger. These dimensions, however, are interrelated. While in the 1950s and 60s a narrow concept of security referred mainly to military threats to national territory, today an extended concept of security also captures the individual risk of global human rights violations. However, at the same time the four dimensions can be freely combined so that, for example, regional vulnerability through environmental catastrophes (e.g. in the Gulf of Mexico) or the risk of global financial crises for the stability of states (e.g. Greece) can come into view. This suggests that the dimensions I am referring to are relatively independent from each other so that it is justifiable to treat them separately for analytical purposes.

The analysis starts from a very narrow understanding of security as it had established itself after the Second World War in strategic debates and public discourse. However, the concept of security has a much longer history in European thought and can be related to the diverging spheres of internal public

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<sup>12</sup> Schmitt 1963, 96.

<sup>13</sup> Oppenheim 1981.

<sup>14</sup> Gallie 1956; Connolly 1981.

<sup>15</sup> Keller 2003.

safety and external state security in the process of European nation building.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the 1950s suggest themselves as a starting point since they represent a time in which the meaning of security narrowed to the greatest possible degree, focusing on the national survival of states and communities in the face of existential threats such as world wars and nuclear annihilation. No wonder, then, that external security became the key concept of international politics throughout the second half of the twentieth century and remained separated from social notions of security for quite some time.<sup>17</sup> This separation has gradually disappeared and meanings of internal and external, national and human, military and economic, territorial and global security have merged into an extended concept of security over the last fifty years.

### Reference Dimension

The first dimension in which conceptual extension can be seen is the reference dimension that determines *whose* security should be safeguarded. Historically, the concept of security is closely linked to the consolidation of the nation state as the only legitimate actor in international politics. In early modern times, the state established itself as a guarantor for the safety of its citizens, as Thomas Hobbes has famously described. The security of the state, however, remained precarious in an interstate system without a strong central power. Thus, security in international relations meant first and foremost state security, i.e. the safeguarding of the nation's territory and the defense of national borders vis-à-vis other states. This is the understanding of *national security* advocated by so-called political realists such as Hans Morgenthau, John Herz and others after WW II and throughout the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> As long as no international monopoly of power exists, they claim, all states live in a self-help system and their first and foremost duty is to assure national survival. As Kenneth Waltz famously wrote: "In anarchy, security is the highest end".<sup>19</sup>

This idea of national security as the absence of threats to the sovereignty of a state did not go unchallenged, however. Historically, liberal theorists such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant had stressed that the state is only an instrument to provide safety for the public. Liberal theorists in the 1970s took up this idea and challenged state-centric Realist thinking by arguing that the main reference of security policy and the focus of international politics in general should be society.<sup>20</sup> *Societal security* was thus understood as a situation in which a collec-

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<sup>16</sup> Kaufmann 1973; Conze 1984.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Frei 1977; Krell 1980; Haftendorn 1983; Conze 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Morgenthau 1954; Herz 1950.

<sup>19</sup> Waltz 1979, 126.

<sup>20</sup> Keohane and Nye 1977; Doyle 1983.

tive of citizens lives in safety and freedom so that it can develop its productivity and wealth.<sup>21</sup>

This line of argument was taken another step further when the concept of *human security* became prominent after the end of the Cold War. In this view, not the state and not even social collectives are the referent object of security policy, but the individual human being. The human security approach challenges not only the traditional state-centric view, but also the focus on social groups. Championed by the United Nations and a number of expert commissions (among them the *Commission on Global Governance* and the *Commission on Human Security*), the concept is closely linked to a cosmopolitan understanding of international politics, i.e. the conviction that human beings, not states, have an intrinsic value and should be protected.<sup>22</sup> Wherever state rights and human rights come into conflict, human rights should be given priority. Thus human security does not only refer to the protection of individuals and communities from war and other forms of violence, but also to the protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that advance human freedoms and human fulfillment”.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, the extension of the reference dimension of security signals a desire to politically live up to changing social values and the prevalence of liberal ideas about human rights and state obligations. It drastically broadens the range of addressees of security policy and establishes a general moral “duty of care” and “responsibility to protect” in international politics. This in turn enables the empowerment and self-empowerment of actors (e.g. states, groups of states or international organizations) to act – even militarily – on behalf of the international community and for the benefit of others, and thus to extend the limits of international politics hitherto in place.

Humanitarian interventions have often been denounced as power politics in disguise. But they are much more, and precisely therefore even more troubling: They are a new practice of security policy that is based on an extended security concept and a new understanding of normative obligations in international politics. But critical questions remain: Who is entitled to claim to provide security for others? Who decides when military force is legitimate? Currently, the political promise of human security outstrips by far the willingness and ability of states and international organizations to actually deliver it.<sup>24</sup> Political discourse has outgrown political practice, and many problems that the international community faces today, be it in Congo, Darfur, Iraq or Afghanistan, are at least to some extent the result of conceptual extension.

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<sup>21</sup> Weaver 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Beitz 1979; Pogge 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Thakur and Newman 2004, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Paris 2001.



## Issue Dimension

The conceptual extension in terms of the referent objects has implications for the issue areas that security comprises. Traditional security threats were mainly perceived in military terms. The reason is that by far the greatest security concerns for states are military attacks and the danger of being conquered. Thus, traditional national security interests are military in nature. Military security, in turn, was expected to be threatened for the most part by hostile states. Particularly the focus on nuclear weapons underlined the Realist perspective on state-to-state threats and deterrents throughout the Cold War.<sup>25</sup> Non-state military threats only came into view when in the 1960s “national liberation movements” in the Third World were perceived as “communist” threats to US and Western interests and new strategies of “limited war” and “counter-insurgency” had to be developed.<sup>26</sup> As the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have shown, even small groups have gained the capacity to inflict disproportional damage and challenge states’ security. That is the reason why the concept of security nowadays does not only refer to hostile states, but also non-state actors as source of military threats.

However, the traditional focus on military threats changed in the early 1970s when *economic security* became an issue. The oil crises of 1973 and 1979 made people aware that their well-being was not just threatened by military threats, but also by economic vulnerabilities.<sup>27</sup> The concept of security was therefore broadened to include the access to so-called “vital resources”. The objective of resource security was said to be to mitigate or dominate vulnerabilities to supply disruptions.<sup>28</sup> States and societies are vulnerable in this sense by being embargoed (i.e. by intentional use of the resource weapon), or by being cut off unintentionally from resources by natural catastrophes, civil wars or pure shortage. Thus, the conclusion was drawn that in order so safeguard energy security, economic, political and military instruments had to be integrated into a single framework of comprehensive security.<sup>29</sup>

A further step towards extending the meaning of security was taken when the notion of *environmental security* was introduced. The Brundtland Report stated in 1987 that “environmental threats to security are now beginning to emerge on a global scale”.<sup>30</sup> Since then environmental degradation and climate change have been discussed as national and international security issues.<sup>31</sup> The key argument is that the increasing destruction of the natural habitat of human

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<sup>25</sup> Kissinger 1957; Brodie 1959.

<sup>26</sup> Deitchman 1962; Blaufarb 1977.

<sup>27</sup> Wolf 1977.

<sup>28</sup> Maull 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Nye 1982.

<sup>30</sup> Brundtland Report 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Renner 1989; Myers 1989.

beings can directly lead to conflict.<sup>32</sup> However, the empirical link between environmental degradation and the risk of violent conflict has remained controversial.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, advocates of environmental security defend the securitization of the environment by pointing to the magnitude of potential consequences and the urgent need to rally public support for more resolute environmental policies. Richard Ullman nicely redefined security in 1983 by specifying the newly perceived threats:

A threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state.<sup>34</sup>

In his view, and in the view of many of his colleagues at the time, environmental degradation and climate change can have exactly these effects and are therefore legitimate security issues.

A more recent development is the extension of security into the humanitarian field. With this move the last great issue area of international politics – namely human rights – comes under the influence of the security discourse. *Humanitarian security* refers not only to the human rights situation of groups and individuals (as the term human security does), but also to the security of development aid volunteers and disaster relief workers in crisis areas. However, the protection of so-called safe havens and humanitarian zones is also seen as the purpose of humanitarian security.<sup>35</sup> The conceptual affinity of humanitarian security and humanitarian intervention shows how easy it is to imagine “military humanism”<sup>36</sup> and even “humanitarian wars”<sup>37</sup> by linking human rights and security.

The consequence of the extension of the issue dimension of security is a de-differentiation of tasks and institutions. The subsumption of previously separated issue areas under the concept of security leads to the gradual suspension of traditional distinctions between internal and external security and consequently between institutional spheres of police and the military. This in turn has consequences for the operative implementation of security policy and the constitutional structure of national systems and international organizations. In Germany, for example, the recurring debate over whether to deploy the *Bundeswehr* to deal with internal security issues is a case in point. While the help of the military in disaster relief might be unproblematic, its use for dealing

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<sup>32</sup> Tuchman Mathews 1989, 166.

<sup>33</sup> Homer-Dixon 1999; Deudney and Matthew 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Ullman 1983, 133.

<sup>35</sup> Simon 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Chomsky 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Woodward 2001.

with internal terrorism or checking mass rallies raises constitutional concerns. Internationally as well, the de-differentiation of security issues causes problems, for example in peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding operations when security sector reform is undermined by the broad mandate that security forces enjoy. Thus, the de-differentiation of security concerns caused by an extended notion of security undermines the traditional division of tasks and possibly institutional legitimacy.

### Spatial Dimension

A third dimension of extended security is its geographical scope. The question is: How far do security concerns reach geographically? Traditional security policy only applied to the national level. Realists held that it would be foolish to design security policies beyond the nation state and that even if global security problems existed, the international system would only allow national solutions: “World-shaking problems cry for global solutions, but there is no global agency to provide them”.<sup>38</sup> National security therefore strictly refers to the security of the territorial state and derives its ends and means from so-called national interests.

This limitation becomes problematic as soon as states develop common strategies to defend their common interests regionally. When NATO was founded in 1949, a process set in that led gradually to the development of a “security community”.<sup>39</sup> Security communities develop if states integrate politically by renouncing violence as a means of settling conflicts among each other and by developing common ideas of how to establish and maintain regional stability. In many regions of the world security communities have emerged, overcoming the narrow notion of national security.<sup>40</sup>

The term *international security* refers more broadly to inter-state cooperation in security issues. It departs from the Realist assumptions by arguing that cooperation among security-seeking states is possible even in the absence of an overarching framework that could coerce states to keep their promises.<sup>41</sup> International security thus redirects the focus from purely national and even regional concerns towards the stability of the international system as a common good. The question then is no longer how to maximize national security but how to create international conditions so that all states enjoy a reasonable degree of security. Institutions – conventions, regimes and organizations – are seen as the principal tools for the multilateral preservation of international security.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Waltz 1979, 109.

<sup>39</sup> Deutsch 1954.

<sup>40</sup> Adler and Barnett 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Axelrod and Keohane 1986.

<sup>42</sup> Martin 1992; Haftenform et al. 1999.

Finally, the concept of *global security* goes beyond even international security. While international security still refers primarily to states, global security refers to human beings all over the world. The Palme Commission argued as early as 1982 for a notion of “common security” that would transform the existing inter-state society into a world society. The concept of global security gave rise to strategies for enhancing living conditions for the world society, i.e. for all human beings. Thus, global security often goes hand in hand with human security and integrates measures to protect the environment and the climate, to secure access to food and clean water, and to end civil strife and violent conflict.

Again, the liberal intention to go beyond state-centric international politics and to empower international organizations to provide better life chances for human beings worldwide is evident. And yet, a consequence of this conceptual shift could be institutionalized irresponsibility. So far, security responsibility has grown hand in hand with institutional developments. National security was guaranteed by nation states. Regional security was dealt with by regional organizations (either sub-organizations of the UN such as the Organization of American States or the African Union, alliances of collective defense such as NATO, or regional dialogue fora such as ASEAN). International security was the task of international organizations and regimes (such as the UN and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime). Yet global security has no other institutional supporter than again the UN, which is more and more overstretched. The consequence is that although many international actors exist who claim responsibility in theory, often they shun the obligation in practice. The effect is what is sometimes called a “diffusion of responsibility”, a phenomenon that is explained by organization theory as the result of overlapping competencies and an incongruence between the role and task of organizations. Thus, the long inactivity of the international community during the Yugoslav crisis or in the case of the Rwanda genocide can be explained in terms of the so-called “bystander effect”, which was not only caused by inter-institutional competition but by the mismatch between institutional claims of competence and the acceptance of responsibility. If many actors are “in principle” competent for many security issues, the propensity is high that costly decisions will be passed over to others. As long as the relationship between national, regional, international and global security is not clarified, institutional irresponsibility is likely to remain a severe problem.

### Danger Dimension

The fourth, and arguably the most important dimension of conceptual change concerns the operationalization of danger. Traditionally, political challenges to the state had been operationalized as threats, which could be measured on the basis of what was known about the enemy actor, his hostile intentions and his

military capabilities.<sup>43</sup> This was the paradigmatic case during the Cold War when East and West stood heavily armed eyeball to eyeball. Defusing threats either by counter-threats and deterrence or by threat-reduction and détente became the crucial endeavor during the Cold War.<sup>44</sup>

This concept of insecurity as symmetrical threat became problematic, however, when more diffuse dangers to the well-being of societies were perceived. In times of great social and economic interdependence, dangers emanate not necessarily from hostile actors and through military capabilities, as the oil crises demonstrated. Thus, insecurity had to be measured in alternative ways, for example as the degree of vulnerability to externalities, whatever their sources might be.<sup>45</sup> Thus the security debate was re-focused from the enemy strength to one's own alleged weakness. The famous "window of vulnerability" was thus a byproduct of détente, since disarmament raised the fear that the good-will of cooperation could be exploited by the enemy.

From the concept of vulnerability it is only a small step to the paradigmatic shift of security policy after the Cold War.<sup>46</sup> Today, risks, not threats, dominate the discourse about international politics. The "clear and present danger" of the Cold War has been replaced by unclear and future "risks and challenges". The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, transnational terrorism, organized crime, environmental degradation and many other issues are discussed in terms of uncertainty and risk. What makes them similar is their relative indeterminableness.

Why is this conceptual change so significant? Because with the concept of risk, new existential dangers come into view that do not yet exist, but that have the potential to develop in the future. The incorporation of uncertainties is the ultimate extension of the perception of insecurity and it changes the demands for security policy fundamentally.<sup>47</sup> When the task of security policy is to deal with uncertainties and risk, it can no longer be reactive as during the Cold War, but must become proactive. A policy is proactive if it reduces possible dangers by anticipating future problems, developments and needs. In general, proactive security policy can be directed towards the causes or the effects of a risk, i.e. it can be preventive or precautionary. Political prevention aims at prohibiting a future loss from occurring, i.e. it affects the probability part of the risk equation. Political precaution aims at reducing the costs of a loss and at mitigating its consequences if prevention fails, i.e. it affects the loss part of the equation. Prevention and precaution in turn may be practiced either cooperatively or repressively, i.e. based on diplomatic means and political cooperation on the

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<sup>43</sup> Cohen 1979; Knorr 1976.

<sup>44</sup> Gaddis 1987.

<sup>45</sup> Keohane and Nye 1977.

<sup>46</sup> Daase 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Daase and Kessler 2007.

one hand or on military means and political coercion on the other. Given these options, the impression is that at least four proactive strategies exist to address international risks: cooperation, intervention, compensation, and preparation.<sup>48</sup> What is crucial is that all proactive strategies to reduce international risks are much more active and offensive than traditional security policies aimed at averting threats or mitigating vulnerabilities. The reason is that the state has to prevent a danger *before* it emerges, and thus to intrude – internally – into the civil rights of citizens and – externally – into the sovereign rights of states. Thus, the operationalization of security as the absence of risks contributes to the emergence of what has been called the Prevention State.<sup>49</sup>

The so called “war on terror” is a paradigmatic case, since its purpose is to lower the risk of future attacks. Domestically it compromises civil liberties for the sake of internal security, internationally it undermines the sovereignty of states by lowering the threshold for intervention and preventive war. Thus, proactive policies tend to undermine traditional normative orders and could lead back to traditional state-centric power politics.

## Conclusion

This is not the place to further expand on the benefits and costs of international risk policy. But it is important to stress that with the emergence of the concept of “international risk” the extension of the security concept has reached its peak – at least for the time being. With this concept the liberal definition of security has prevailed. For risks do not relate only to threats to territorial spaces or vulnerabilities of collective goods, but also to natural and social nexuses in which every individual is embedded. Thus, the secular dissociation of state and society culminates in a concept of security that is de-nationalized and at the same time globalized and individualized.

To explain today’s security policy, the military entanglement in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq, the humanitarian activity in some and inactivity in other places of the world, the overstretch of international organizations and the attempts at institutional reforms, one has to understand the change in security culture, nationally and internationally, in the values, ideas and practices of how insecurity is perceived and security is produced. The conceptual history of security provides a unique key to that understanding.

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<sup>48</sup> Daase 2002, 18-21.

<sup>49</sup> Denninger 2008.

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