AN INTROSPECTION INTO THE *CRITICAL SECURITY STUDIES: AN INTRODUCTION*

(Columba Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, New York, Routledge, 2010, ISBN: 0-203-84747-4, 182 pages)

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During the Cold War, the international system was based on a traditional security studies approach that had taken for granted the world "as it is". Therefore, the tendency of this view, based entirely upon a Realist perspective of International Relations, assumes the state as the core actor, the anarchic feature of the international system and the idea that war between states are the innate characteristic of the international system. The inability of this paradigm to offer a theoretical basis for the end of Cold War and the events that have followed it has given rise to a number of criticisms comprised under the main umbrella of critical security studies.

The book *Critical Security Studies. An Introduction* aims at offering a broad and complete understanding about the emerging theories and practices through a detailed and up-to-date introduction to critical security studies, by presenting the sub-field within the wide context of political and social theory and by analyzing the essential perspectives in critical security studies in the realm of the new security challenges. Even though the authors are presenting the dominant narratives in mapping of critical security studies (from "traditional to "critical", from Cold War to War on Terror and from Aberystwyth, to Copenhagen, to Paris), they reiterate the fact that these categorizations limit the critical reflection. As they suggest: "*Maps are usually two-dimensional, whereas critical security studies is very much a layered body of work, with messy inter-connections as well as areas of divergence…*" (p. 11). Therefore, they adopt the idea of Richard Wyn Jones of "traveling without maps". Practically, this means that the structure of this book avoids the usual framing of its content in one of the three narratives. As an alternative, the textbook is separated into two major sections (Approaches and Issues) with the chapters arranged in an alphabetical order.

In the section I, "Approaches", the authors examine the various domain of critical approaches: Critical Theory and its application in security studies; Feminist and gender approaches to security; Postcolonial perspectives; Poststructuralism and international political sociology; and Securization theory. The unique structure of each chapter aims at offering a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the presented perspective. Throughout the theoretical depth, the writers are trying to give the readers new methods to conceptualize the different stages of convergence and divergence among the various critical perspectives examined in this book. In addition, every chapter contains an abstract, text boxes, conclusions,

key words and key points, discussion points and further reading suggestions that highlight the purpose of this book in offering a user-friendly, compact and convenient introduction to every single theoretical approach.

The Section II, "Issues", presents how the theoretical perspectives analyzed in the first part are offering numerous explanations to the realm of the contemporary security challenges. This part is debating the following topics: The Environmental security; The Homeland security and the "war against terror"; The Human security and development; Migration and border security; and Technology and warfare in the information age. It is noteworthy that the adoption of different critical perspectives has expanded the academic research beyond militaristic threats to a lot of the current security issues. These issues, through the way which they are developed, analyzed and explained by the theoretical approaches, can also provide a series of characteristics about that approaches and the concept of security.

Coming back to the first section, it is important to delimitate between Critical Security Studies/CSS (upper cases) and critical security studies (lower cases) as forms of critical security theory. If Critical Security Studies/CSS is indicating a "*Marxian tradition of theorizing that includes elements of Marx's philosophy*"(p. 18), the concept of critical security studies (lower cases) is identified with a variety of ideas and purposes which are not limited to Marxism and in some cases even is disputing it. The originality of this part of the book relies on the fact that it starts with an introductory background which continues with presenting the core ideas and proponents, followed by the presentation of the critics and concluded with a summary of the discussed chapter. Therefore, the richness of the ideas and exponents presented denotes the successful construction of authors' structures and arguments. For example, the authors start from Robert Cox's idea that "theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose". Having that in mind, Critical Security Theory or the "Welsh School" is focused on criticizing the state-centric approach to security (which tends to concentrate massively on the military threats) by suggesting that human beings are the most important referent object of security and by promoting the idea of "emancipation", thus the "*freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constrains which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do*" (p. 21) in order to achieve their security.

The second chapter, Feminist and gender approach is trying to address the issue of marginalization in the security domain but there are discrepancies about the method, focus and implications of the critique. Hence, there are more than one "feminist" and "gender" perspectives in international relations (liberal feminism, standpoint feminism and poststructural gender approaches). If the liberal feminism is sustaining the idea of women becoming more visible in the security studies, the standpoint approach focuses on empirical analysis of views and experiences of women in political life while the poststructural gender exponents wants to analyze the instability of gender categories and calls for "*politicization of all claims made in the name of gendered difference*" (p. 45).

The Postcolonial perspective chapter highlights that there is no single postcolonial approach to security but multiple interpretations of this concept which have different and sometimes opposing perspectives about security. Thus, we have terms such as "Third World Security", "Subaltern Realism", "postcolonial moment", "necropolitics". These ideas are noteworthy because they draw attention to parts of theory, parts of the world and approaches which are mostly scarcely considered or absent from the traditional or critical security studies.

As for the next chapter, Poststructuralism is a controversial concept unaccepted by some scholars as Keohane or Brown. Nevertheless, the importance of this paradigm is that it brings the structuralist theory of language (developed both by Saussure and Derrida) that suggests that the meaning of something depends among various static units and across time. Another fundamental exponent is Foucault which claims that "power is always *relational* and where there is power there is always *resistance*" (p. 73).

The last theoretical chapter, Securization theory, is one of the most innovative terms which have appeared in the security studies in the last decades. Defined by the Copenhagen School (with its main exponents: Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver), the concept suggests that securization is a speech act, more exactly by "*shifting an issue out of the realm of "normal" political debate into the realm of emergency politics by presenting it as an existential threat*" (p. 76).

The second section of the book is presenting some of the most important security issues from the contemporary debate by linking them with the theoretical approaches presented above. Since there is no single critical perspective which can apply universally, some of the developed security issues are analyzed through various theoretical lenses. Therefore, the environmental security is explained through Critical Security Studies but also securization theory; the Homeland security through poststructural approach; the human security through postcolonial perspective but also from a feminist and gender approach; migration and border security are perceived through securization theory and poststructural paradigm; and the technology and warfare in information age are defined by Critical Security Studies and securization theory. All of the second part's chapters are well exemplified with study cases. The authors succeed to present the rise and developments of these challenges, their main ideas and ideology within a clear, accurate and briefly message.

Considering all the notions presented above, we can affirm that the merit and importance of this book inhere not only in the abundance of information provided or in its original and unique approach but also in the way that arguments are constructed in order to help the reader to comprehend the presented topics. In conclusion, the book is recommendable to students from Political Sciences and International Relations programs, as a better start in understanding the sub-field of critical security studies and the theoretical and practical aspects of it, to experts coming from different historical, political, and social fields of study, and also to a wider audience interested in contemporary history, political and security issues.