IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
Review of Philippe Bourbeau, ed. (2016) *Security. Dialogue Across Disciplines*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Security is the continuously present topic in several academic disciplines, though in some of them it is more dominant than in others. The communication between disciplines is also quite sparse, therefore the book edited by Philippe Bourbeau is a timely contribution to the broadening of understanding of security for all the academics working on the issue. The possibility of creating a dialogue between the disciplines is taken seriously by all the authors of the book's chapters, and thus presents a great map of understanding of security across nine disciplines: such "natural" ones for studies of security as international relations (further – IR), to philosophy, anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology, international political economy, criminology and international law. The four questions that were raised regarding security are quite well answered in each of the chapters. These questions look into the concept, dominant theories, questions orienting research on security and strengths and weaknesses of the discipline when it comes to studying security. (p.xi)

The book indeed presents a great resource for anyone engaged in studying the subject to understand the diversity and pluralism as well as the similarity in the themes addressed by these different and diverse disciplines. Each of them brings in something

particular to the study of the topic, while following the same general tendencies. These general tendencies could be divided into 'positivist' and critical approaches in terms of epistemology and 'human' versus 'state' security thinking in terms of object of analysis. These divisions permeate most of disciplines and if nothing more, can serve as an easy transition into thinking on the issue of security from a more interdisciplinary point of view. Thus, while the book is divided into sections addressing understanding and use of security from the perspective of different disciplines, it manages to retain cohesion through both the authors addressing questions provided by the editor and through following these two general threads.

The book's second chapter (first is the introduction) deals with the understanding of security in philosophy. This chapter presents the understanding of the concept since Greco-Roman times, through the Medieval ages to the philosophical investigations of contemporary scholars. In the pre-modern times, as it is explained, security was understood as primarily a personal state of mind, with the Greek word *ataraxia* bringing in the connotation of 'freedom from fear' to the concept. A major shift comes with the publication of Hobbes' *Leviathan* in which security is understood as the 'mechanism by which citizens get "themselves out from that miserable condition of war."' (p.26) The state becomes a major referent of security as it is only through the strength and stability of the state that the security of its people can be guaranteed. In contemporary thinking, it is argued in the chapter, security is understood as: 1) a social and political practice; 2) a particular mode of enjoying a good; 3) as a state of being, the latter further divided into national and human security types. (pp.30-31) The philosophical debates, in addition to these conceptual issues, also centre on three other distinctions – division between those who focus on all potential harms and those who only are concerned about the harms coming from other human beings; division

between subjective and objective security, also portrayed as a division between security and fear; and security as a good or a right. Going down to applied philosophy, the author, Johnathan Herington, introduces debates that saw strong participation of philosophers, such as the torture debate, the liberty versus security debate, the privacy and security debate and the moral legitimation of securitization, i.e. identification of conditions in which the use of emergency measures is justified.

Chapter 3 of the book deals with understanding of security from perspective of anthropology. The specificity of this discipline is well presented in the article, while it revolves around the concept of culture and is methodologically unified around ethnography, it borrows from other disciplines many of the theoretical perspectives and thus follows the bifurcating paths of critical/'positivist' studies with a heavy lean towards the first. On the 'critical' side, as culture is the central concept of anthropology, its contribution is also in addressing the issues of security culture or the culture of terror, and focuses on the cultural construction of security and insecurity and on the changing, culturally specific understanding of security in general. On the 'positivist' side, the 'security anthropologists 'engage security largely in terms established by the state' (p.51)

The chapter focusing on geography is also organized around the division between 'positivist' and 'critical' branches. It is emphasized that geography as a discipline was created to wage wars more effectively, on military control of the space and many of the traditional tasks of geography have been currently taken over by the intelligence agencies of the state. The critical geographers, on the other hand, look into carceral spaces, spaces and landscapes of defence or scripted geopolitical spaces of (in)security and look how spatial representations affect security discourses. The one issue that a reader may have with the chapter is that it is very much skewed towards the critical perspective. The chapter's conclusion

contains acknowledgement of the 'positivist' perspective's contribution to the discipline, but one hardly finds its contribution in the chapter itself.

The next chapter addresses the understanding of security from a sociological perspective and compares two understandings of security there – political security versus social (in)securities and suggests that sociology offers a unique way to combine the two. The authors suggest that in order to achieve such a useful fusion 'sociologists need to leverage their understandings of insecurity as a subjective perception to study how it is made real by institutions and practices' (p.104) and offer some intriguing examples of how this could be done. Examples in the chapter are captivating and truly invite one to expand one's library. It also very usefully provides linkages with other disciplines on security, linking the discussion to political science theories on the one side and criminology on another.

The Chapter 6 deals with the 'usual suspect' – IR and its approach to security. The authors have a daunting task to cover the discipline which has security at its core in 25 pages and they deal with this task not by trying to create a Procrustean bed for this plethora of works and theories, but by addressing three misconceptions that are common in the field: that security studies only have the state as a referent; that there is a great chasm between Northern American and European works on security; and that critical approaches are incompatible with the 'positivist' ones. The authors challenge these misconceptions with numerous examples to the contrary and emphasize the fluid and evolving, fast growing nature of the field. They note that currently the scholars in the field are celebrating diversity as well as focusing on what unites them instead of on what pulls them apart.

The chapter on psychology, as can be expected, focuses more on human security. It starts from a premise that insecurity is

undesirable from the psychological point of view. The psychological analysis deals not only with the individuals, but addresses the issues of groups as well and analyses what factors influence feelings of security and insecurity among groups. It presents theories that explain the intergroup dynamics and examines the theories of how responses to these feelings influence intergroup relations and how these later can be affected. The authors emphasize that psychology is uniquely placed to 'explain and predict how subjective perceptions of insecurity create actual insecurity' (p.153), though they argue that psychology also has space to grow in this area and would especially benefit from more interdisciplinary interaction with, for example, political science.

The chapter on International political economy gives a theoretical overview of the discipline and focuses readers' attention on three 'surprising' conclusions: that realism in IR is, at its core, an economic theory, that security itself is much less at the core of IR than previously thought and that security studies and IPE are two sides of the same coin. Though the chapter manages to convince on all three counts, it leaves some questions unanswered. The largest of these is – why IPE deserved a special place in this collection of disciplinary approaches to security and could not be integrated into that talking about IR in general, especially given that the authors themselves admit that 'security remains something slightly outside the realm of actual IPE studies' (p.176).

The chapter on criminology is much more integrated in this collection. It presents the history of criminology, explaining its origins as focusing on crime rather than 'safety'. In this sense, the chapter again follows the lines of distinction between the 'positivist' and 'critical' strands. In this chapter the authors argue for the need to go beyond the criminology's usual focus on the criminal and crime and to the safety and security of societies and the principles of governance designed to ensure this. In this respect, a lot of attention is given to the concept of risk and the

complexities of contemporary societies that led to what Ulrich Beck describes as *The Risk society*. In this type of society, harm management and its prevention takes the centre stage and we see the same developing with the current criminology (prevention of terrorism programs are probably prime examples).

Going back to the more top-down approach in investigation, the chapter on international law discusses the impact of securitization on this discipline (in both its practical and theoretical variants). The chapter deeply describes the internal logic of the (international) legal profession and then delves into the explanation of the different logics of legalism and of securitization. It is observed that security is sometimes used as a trump card in the debates about legal issues, supposedly overriding the 'usual' legal arguments. Yet, it is argued, one cannot simply dismiss the legal arguments as a hoax or a fig leaf, but to engage in it with the deep understanding of what is offered and what is at stake, 'to engage with the way the field of security is construed through the constant production and contestation of legal arguments.' (p.218) It thus cautions against the attempts to 'define away' the normative side of international law and the lament that when it is used in an 'interdisciplinary context' international law is often hijacked by other disciplines, such as political science, economics or sociology (p.216-217).

A major question for the collection is why political science did not deserve a place in it. Even though it could be argued that it is reached through IR, the two have a different focus and the lack of a political science perspective, which is actually mentioned in at least three chapters, is unfortunate. This and some other, smaller criticisms notwithstanding, the collection of articles can easily be read as a coherent whole and the editor has surely done a great job in both collecting the essays and keeping their authors in line with the essence of the project. Everyone who has ever done such a job knows what an ordeal this task can be. Therefore, this book is

definitely a recommended read for anyone dealing with security issues from whichever discipline's perspective, and is surely inspiring in creating new, interdisciplinary approaches to its research.