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DEFENCE AS SECURITY

Hannah E. Dönges and
Stephanie C. Hofmann

Introduction

Actors safeguard themselves from instabilities to guarantee freedom from vulnerabilities. And they defend against the direct threat to their existence. Traditionally, actors within the international system are states and to this day they are the main holders of military capabilities. Yet what they determine to be an existential threat to defend against is subjective. In the United Nations Charter, self-defence and security are regulated through different articles. Art. 51 grants every member state the right to use force for the purpose of ensuring its physical integrity. Matters of international peace and security need to be either regulated through the United Nations Security Council (if the use of force seems necessary, Art. 42) or through regional arrangements (if political means are seen to bring about security, Art. 41).

This understanding of the difference between defence and security is also reflected in security and strategic studies. These academic fields have traditionally understood defence as the act of shielding against an existential threat with military means. Security, on the other hand, has been understood in broader terms and encompasses actions against uncertainties and risks that could endanger or question various actors, in particular states. With time, what is perceived as a threat or risk has changed. In particular, security has evolved as a concept and extends far beyond its traditional state-centric notion.

While the UN Charter suggests that there is a clear distinction between security and defence so as to be able to regulate the use of force, de facto, states have always defended more than just the physical borders of their territory. If we understand a state’s existence not purely in physical but also in ideational terms, the conceptual boundary between defence and security becomes blurry. Then threats not only originate if a state’s physical borders are under attack, but also if actors threaten what states value in more general terms.

The different ideational concepts over which states have fought over have varied across time and space (Rodogno, 2011). Since the end of the Cold War, which is the period that this chapter will focus on, the values and norms that strike actors as worthwhile defending on the global level have become more focused on the individual level; that is, they have defined state responsibilities not in terms of territory but instead of the survival of its citizens. With normative
developments that have found their expression in the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) or the Protection of Civilians (POC), it is not only state borders that are the subject of defending. This trend is juxtaposed with a globalization of perceived threats to security, which have come to include economic and environmental risks and threats as well, e.g. economic crises and climate change. As a result, security and defence (as well as justifications for military intervention) are not as distinguishable as the UN Charter leads one to assume.

In this chapter, we demonstrate the conceptual linkages between security and defence as well as their boundaries and similarities across time, and show the empirical implications of either insisting on their distinctions or not. We then discuss future tendencies before concluding.

Key themes and debates

We present three main debates on the evolving nature of the relationship between security and defence. The first focuses on a characterization of security studies across time and schools, and in particular a broadening to include a diversity of issues. The second and third sections present a deepening of security studies by describing different normative developments (human security, RtoP and POC) that focus on individuals on the one hand, and intertwined legal and political notions of collective security and collective defence at the global and regional level on the other.

Defence and security: broadening the debate

The understanding of security and defence, in particular discussed in the fields of security and defence studies, has evolved across time and across schools of thought. Traditional defence studies, often equated with political realism (in its classical and structural or neorealist variants), ‘is usually seen to emphasize the state as the main object of security, and war as the main threat to it’ (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 4). The emphasis is on how a state can ensure defending itself and safeguarding its national sovereignty. However, state centrism and the focus on military threats have never remained unquestioned, and scholars increasingly emphasized security as ‘an ambiguous symbol’ (Wolfers, 1952) and an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Baldwin, 1997) that extends beyond territorial integrity and military powers.

Realist or neorealist (structural) defence studies see the state as the main actor in the international arena and focus on how to defend against threats by out-powering any opponents, mainly through superior military capabilities. In this sense, a central issue in how to respond to threats becomes whether ‘states seek allies in order to balance a threatening power or are they more likely to bandwagon with the most threatening state’ (Walt, 1990, p. 3). Both defending and threatening actors are states that act in a self-interested manner to grant their survival. State security is safeguarded by military means and power alone. In its strictest (and often cynically sounding) versions, norms and ideas or ‘supposedly absolute and universal principles’ do not matter but rather are ‘unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time’ and ‘transparent disguises of selfish vested interests’ (Carr, 1946, pp. 87–88). Against a view of all-encompassing anarchy in the international system and power politics, a liberal and constructivist argument finds that institutions may be able to produce more than a self-help anarchical system and are able to shape or ‘transform state identities and interests’ (Wendt, 1992, p. 394). This distinction between realism and liberalism and their many respective variances and further developments can be described as a rather binary characterization of the field.
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Yet such distinctions remain simplifying models, and despite, for example, a Cold War focus on ‘American national security in excessively narrow and excessively military terms’ (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 8), scholars argued early on that this misrepresented reality and led ‘states to concentrate on military threats and to ignore perhaps even more harmful dangers’ (Ullman, 1983, p. 129). In the midst of the Cold War in the early 1980s, the view of a broader security agenda put forward by European peace researchers was not taken up by the rest of the field. With the Cold War ending, the ‘intellectual climate’ changed and researchers began articulating different views on what security encompasses, on a spectrum from a narrow definition focused ‘on material capabilities and the use and control of military force by states’ (Katzenstein, 1996, pp. 8–9), to a broader vision focusing on several dimensions (explained below). A second approach to structuring the security studies field therefore refers to a temporal characterization, which proposes major events in history as key indicators for the development of the field, with a focus on the end of the Cold War and also the events of 11 September 2001. The Cold War distinction often refers to the shift from a bipolar state-centric world (Soviet Union vs. USA) to a unipolar world in which scholars observe a changing threat nature (i.e. asymmetric warfare) and the introduction of a more diverse set of actors.

The thematic areas that could pose threats to security were broadened beyond the military landscape and have increasingly encompassed environmental, economic, societal and political dimensions (Buzan, de Wilde and Wæver, 1998). This also implied that a much broader set of means became relevant for defending security in these dimensions. Newer developments within the European field of scholarship have been summed up under the names of schools such as Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris. Scholarship associated with the Aberystwyth (or Welsh), Copenhagen or Paris schools in security studies can also be distinguished in what (and how) they portray risks and threats to security. The Aberystwyth School questions the primacy of state security and instead focuses on the security of the individual. Threats individuals face may include poverty, environmental degradation, as well as violence and political oppression (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 5), which may not be caused by interstate war. Such broader visions of security or of what deserves defending emphasize that ‘military power does not guarantee well-being’, while proponents of a narrow view of security warn that defining the field in such a way as to include issues like environmental pollution, diseases, human rights violations or economic factors as threats to security ‘would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solutions to any of these important problems’ (Walt, 1991, p. 213).

The debate over what poses a threat or what deserves defending may also have further practical consequences. According to the Copenhagen School, making an issue a matter of security also determines the response to the threat it poses and removes it from the weighing of opportunity costs. Instead, it becomes crucial to defend a threat at all costs, as it may be decisive for survival:

[The] special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. The invocation of security has been the key to legitimizing the use of force, but more generally it has opened the way for the state to mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle existential threats.

(Buzan, de Wilde and Wæver, 1998, p. 21)

Examples of this process of securitization include the ‘war on terror’, or ‘Ebola as a global health security threat’. 
Deepening the concepts of security and defence: human security, RtoP and POC

Central in the development of security studies – alongside a broadening to include other issue areas – has been a ‘deepening’ of the level of analysis to include individuals. Since mass atrocities in the Balkans and Rwanda during the 1990s, one of the most prominent global debates has centred on the question of state sovereignty and fundamental human rights, most notably advocated through the concept of human security, the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) and Protection of Civilians (POC). While the three differ in their interpretations and meanings, they share their conceptual roots in International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the increasing emphasis on human rights, as well as on the notion that if a state fails to protect individuals residing on its territory from mass atrocities, or subjects its civilians to them itself, there should be a response (ideally collective). In addition to this normative development, the concepts also reflect the changed nature of conflict and threats states and individuals face.

Human security is one of the concepts that broadens traditional notions of security. It stands in tension with state-centric conceptions and proposes a people-centred security concept, in the sense that it is societal groups and individuals who face risks and threats, including threats from a state against its own citizens. According to the Human Security Commission (2003, p. 4), human security means to protect people from severe and widespread threats, and ‘creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity’. Human security therefore links security with development, and most conceptualizations argue ‘that security is a pre-condition (or co-condition) for successful social, economic, and political development’ (Krause, 2014, p. 79; also compare the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report). With its seven elements (economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security), human security significantly increases the set of risks that should be the focus of international attention.

The RtoP is a more narrowly defined concept that emphasizes the prevention of mass atrocities and is often closely associated with the concept of humanitarian (military) intervention. In the aftermath of the atrocities in the Balkans and Rwanda, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) released its RtoP report in 2001. Instead of looking at collective security and collective defence (as described below), the report focuses on a collective responsibility. It postulates that state ‘sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself’. An international RtoP is triggered where ‘a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it’ (ICISS, 2011, p. xi) and then trumps state sovereignty. Yet the political reality of cases of intervention (Libya) or non-intervention (Syria) and criticism of both instances show that RtoP remains in a political grey zone and is an inherently political concept.

Following a similar temporal development as RtoP, POC is a concept encompassing a variety of norms used by humanitarians, in UN peacekeeping and by military alliances. While many organizations refer to a mandate of civilian protection, their understanding and associated practices may vary. With its origins in IHL, however, the different understandings share the notion that violence should not be indiscriminate and that defending against a threat or an enemy should spare non-combatants. Since 1999, POC mandates have been included in peacekeeping operations, making the task to defend civilians within the host population an integral component of UN-led missions. In some instances, when a peacekeeping operation
is deployed ‘to prevent or respond to mass atrocities, the distinction between POC and RtoP breaks down’ (Francis and Popovski, 2012, p. 91). The results of POC remain mixed: at times humanitarian access and protection may improve when peacekeepers focus on hot-spot areas of the conflict, but ‘continued massacres and massive sexual abuse of women in several eastern regions’ (Egeland, 2013, p. 10) in the Democratic Republic of Congo show the stark limitations of such efforts.

Institutional solutions to risks and threats: collective security and collective defence

States have long sought to minimize threats and risks they face individually and collectively. To that end, they have established collective security or collective defence institutions. Collective security encompasses the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security – armed attack is not a conditional precedent (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1995). States are then supposed to ‘act collectively to guarantee one another’s security’ (Wilson, 2014, p. 5). The most well-known collective security institutions are the League of Nations and the United Nations. Collective defence is triggered when a country has been attacked militarily – it is then that other states have the right, not the duty, to use force against the aggressor. NATO but also the alliances that the USA maintain with countries such as Japan or South Korea are understood to fall under the collective defence principle.

As the preceding sections have shown, what constitutes a threat and a risk has changed over time. This has also affected the practice of collective security and defence (O’Connell, 2009). Considered as distinct activities during the Cold War, this dividing line has been more and more contested with additional issues and actors taking centre stage in security and defence considerations. In other words, with the broadening and deepening of issues relevant to security, the scope of threats relevant to the collective security systems has also increased. Interpretations of the ‘flexible language used allows for the implementation of a form of collective security going beyond simply responding to external aggression to embrace concern for human security’ (Wilson, 2014, p. 6).

In the face of the changing nature of security concerns to encompass the concept of human security, achieving an ideal of collective security has become even more reliant on collective defence alliances and states. The UN has indeed relied on existing collective defence organizations to act in the name of collective security, which may lead to an execution (or overstretching) of the mandate that also targets outcomes that are collectively less beneficial. UN peace operations always rely on state contributions, and states determine where they send their troops and can also withdraw them if their conditions are not met.

Illustrations

We demonstrate the different operationalizations and interpretations of defence and security by looking at three international organizations (IOs) and how they have understood their security and defence mandates (over time): the European Union (EU), NATO and the African Union (AU). While most organizations have started out either as primarily defence and security oriented, with time their mandates have started to become more intertwined so that we can now speak of defence as security. While many IOs encompass elements of security and defence, the mix still varies significantly.
The European Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy:
first security, then defence?

A common European military (defence) policy was on the radar of many politicians in the 1950s, but it only materialized at the end of the 1990s. At this point, it was not defence but security issues that would take centre stage in the institutionalization process. The EU initiated the European Security and Defence Policy (since the Lisbon Treaty known as the Common Security and Defence Policy) in 1999 and included it in the EU treaties with the Nice Treaty.

With NATO as the go-to organization for defence issues, security became part of the EU’s remit. Its mandate focuses on crisis management, which comprises humanitarian and rescue operations, peacekeeping, combat forces, joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks, post-conflict stabilization, and ‘the fight against terrorism’ (EU, 2007, Art. 28 B (1)). None of these tasks serve to defend the EU’s borders, strictly speaking. That is, just because the EU has become a military actor with national forces earmarked for EU purposes, national headquarters ready to be multi-nationalized, an EU military staff and a military committee, this does not automatically make the EU a defence actor.

However, the EU and its member states intend not only to save those in need but also to stabilize EU borders and defend so-called European values. One indication of this is that the EU intervened in crisis management operations primarily in its geographic neighbourhood. Whether the EU is active in demining, weapons collection and searches, support of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR ALTHEA) (Gross, 2009), training police forces (e.g. EUPOL Afghanistan) or assisting in border control (e.g. EUBAM; Kurowska and Tallis, 2009), the EU pushes for its interpretation of rule of law and human rights – it thus defends, so to speak, the vision of social ordering (Merlingen and Ostraukaite, 2005; Kurowska, 2008) it sees as important to its existence. This existence is not understood in terms of the invulnerability of its external borders, but instead in terms of the values and practices it stands for – admittedly not always consistently and coherently.

Another indication that the EU sees security and defence as intertwined is the ways in which it names its institutions. One primary example is the European Defence Agency. Since 2004, this institution’s main task is to foster military cooperation between EU states, or, as its name suggests, defence. The Council established the EDA ‘to support the Council and the Member States in their effort to improve the Union’s defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defence Policy’ (EU, 2011). The phrase ‘defence capabilities in the field of crisis management’ suggests that no matter where the EU intervenes militarily, it understands this action to be in the name of defence. And when the current president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker asked member states to invest in a European Army in 2015, he also suggested that defence and security go hand-in-hand in the EU. Traditional defence elements also exist within the EU, but they are often side-lined except in the case when French President Francois Hollande invoked Art. 42.7 after the terrorist attacks in Paris on 12 November 2015.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization: first defence, then security?

Many associate NATO with collective defence activities, in particular its mutual-defence clause (Art. 5). NATO was founded to deter a Soviet attack and defend the European continent in case of an attack. Strategies such as flexible response have been developed for this purpose. But NATO was never only a defence alliance. From its inception onwards, it was created to ‘keep
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the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down’. To keep the Germans down, NATO did not defend against the country but instead managed Germany’s security relationship with other NATO member states, in particular France. The same was done between Greece and Turkey (Krebs, 1999). Yet it is fair to say that traditional defence concerns dominated NATO during the Cold War years, if not exclusively so.

Security concerns became more pronounced, however, with the end of the Cold War. While the European continent would ‘no longer live under the shadow of a threat to its very survival’ (Hurd, 1994, p. 423), security and stability threats became apparent with the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. As NATO Secretary General at the time, Manfred Wörner observed,

The risk is in uncertainty – about the future political structure of the Soviet Union, the bad economic situation, and all its consequences, in a country which still has more than three million people under arms and tens of thousands of nuclear weapons.

(Wörner quoted in Whitney, 1991, p. 1)

And in 1990, former NATO Secretary General Lord Carrington observed, ‘The structures of NATO are flexible enough to accommodate almost anything. Whether the countries of NATO are flexible enough to adjust themselves to what is happening is another matter’ (quoted in Frankel, 1990, A1). NATO’s posture of deterrence seemed poorly adapted to tackling new security challenges, while its military structure rendered it poorly adapted to crisis management tasks, particularly around ethnic/civil conflicts that were increasingly on the agenda. Some governments therefore pushed for reforms that would add a political dimension to NATO’s longstanding military mandate. These reforms were premised on the notion that NATO had to transform not just its military structure but also its political outlook – especially to manage relations with Eastern European states. In the new international system, approaching states in pursuit of a purely military alliance would send the wrong signals. Instead, NATO had to develop political forums for discussion and consultation (Hofmann, 2013).

To this end, NATO set out to ‘help build the structures of a more united continent, supporting security and stability with the strength of our shared faith in democracy, the rights of the individual, and the peaceful resolution of disputes’ (London Declaration, para. 2). Not only did values become worth defending next to allied territory, but they instead became even more important than that. With time, NATO included more and more security tasks such as complex crisis management, comprehensive security and human security (Yost, 1998, pp. 1, 199–200; SIPRI, 2005). NATO conducted its first out-of-area operations in the Balkans (hotly debated in countries such as Germany that saw the defence mandate reinterpreted too liberally) and formally included crisis management tasks in 1999 – the same year that CSDP was created (NATO, 1999, pt. 10).

Ironically, after NATO established itself as one of the main crisis management organizations in the world, ‘9/11’ led to the first invocation of Article 5, stressing the traditional defence function of the alliance. When the US was attacked, NATO activated its mutual-defence clause the next day. The military response was understood as defending the US, but not only its territory, which was not really threatened, but the ideas and values that it stands for. Operation Enduring Freedom was launched. But defending against the threat that Al Qaeda poses to the US and its allies could not only be ensured with a US-led military operation. Instead, stabilization and reconstruction were understood as crucial to bringing security to the country and defending liberal values. NATO took over the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to train the Afghan army, police and judiciary, support the government in counter-narcotics
efforts, develop a market infrastructure, and suppress the Taliban (Morelli and Gallis, 2008). In other words, NATO took over tasks that are traditionally not conceived as defence tasks and not necessarily implemented by military organizations. Another example that shows the blurring of conceptual lines between defence and security for some actors is when NATO as a military organization engages in interventions justified by humanitarian purposes, be it before the articulation of RtoP (Kosovo) or after (Libya).

**African Union: security = defence**

The African Union presents yet another case of how the conceptual lines between defence and security can be blurred. The AU is not built to defend against a threat outside its membership but instead becomes active within it. As such, it has to tackle values and territorial integrity at the same time.

The AU’s Constitutive Act (Art. 3) declares that it will ‘defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States’ as well as ‘promote peace, security, and stability on the continent’. The AU regulates military interventions within its membership, and intervenes in defence of national constitutions, as well as the principles of non-intervention and respect for national sovereignty. At the same time (and limiting the sovereignty of member states), Art. 4(h) incorporates RtoP in the AU by establishing ‘the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity’.

It has militarily intervened in such places as Somalia and Sudan (Darfur), but was against the military intervention the UN authorized NATO to conduct in Libya. The AU had preferred mediation instead of military intervention to stabilize the country, reduce the risks for the neighbourhood and defend national sovereignty. Some commentators argued that the ‘African approach was based on a realistic appreciation of the perils of civil war in Libya and the shortcoming of forcible regime change’ (De Waal, 2012). Afraid of fallout, the AU saw the risk of military intervention as higher than political mediation, to defend against spillover into Chad and other countries. ‘Instead of applying its newly-developed doctrine of supporting democratic uprisings, the AU interpreted the Libyan conflict through its more familiar lens of responding to a civil war’ (De Waal, 2012).

**Future tendencies**

We have described moves away from the focus on state and military in two directions: a broadening and a deepening of the security agenda (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 5). The former relates to the expansion of the risks and threats relevant to security, and the latter to an incorporation of actors that are not only states, but may be international organizations (as evidenced in the illustrations), non-state armed actors, human individuals or groups. The institutional examples of the EU, NATO and the AU have demonstrated the linkages between the two themes, and the operations they engage in lend evidence to the claim that we have already witnessed an individualization of the norms and ideas actors may defend (human rights/security) and a globalization of asymmetric risk and threats (for example, the US issued a global travel warning in the aftermath of the Beirut and Paris terror attacks of November 2015).

Substantively, the broadening of relevant issues has led the adequacy of current actors and their interventions in dealing with a changed security landscape to be questioned. Formerly marginalized
issues have gained scholarly attention (environmental degradation, cyber security, diseases, etc.). In the environmental sector, the effects of climate change have led and will lead to an increased pressure on states to overcome the common goods problem (as highlighted by the Paris agreement), and emphasize the need for collaboration and coordination on long-term threats that have become imminent. Not only do (perceived) risks and threats increase, but also the actors engaging in issue areas as well as their prominence. Military operations led by alliances and states have long led to serious repercussions and called into question their effectiveness.

Who is acting within the security realm has come to include a broader range of players. The main actors in the security landscape have shifted from states threatening war to armed actors (including state forces but also armed groups or individuals engaging in a myriad of conflicts), which in turn has changed the main risks, threats and modus operandi. The human rights movement is not new and neither is International Humanitarian Law and attempts to mitigate the effects of armed conflict on civilians, but with an increase in internal armed conflict the interlocutors and modes of operations of members of this particular transnational advocacy network have changed and demand more micro-level engagement. Best practices include engaging with actors at the diplomatic, religious, civil society and security sector levels, over the long term. Crucial to any conflict mediation effort is an in-depth understanding of what actors may defend (values, resources, grounds, symbols). However, long-term strategies and known best strategies may often fall victim to more short-term-oriented funding cycles in the absence of a prominent sponsor state. While the actors in conflict resolution may have diversified and fulfil roles that may previously have been the turf of state personnel, a state order is again reproduced by funding structures.

Current international crises point to longstanding failures in applying RtoP principles. The ongoing refugee crisis points to a further dissolving of internal and external threats to states and the international community. With international (conflict management) and internal responsibility (acceptance and integration of refugees, internal management of conflicts arising within host populations, etc.), the line between international security and domestic politics blurs further. Inner-state crises in different parts of the world have moved closer and demand attention going beyond rhetorical engagement. Different parts and conflicts of the world directly affect European and American populations and may lead to the questioning of the principles of world order. International organizations (among them the EU), states and individuals are called upon to collectively respond to the situation.

Conclusion

The definitions of security and defence have undergone significant changes. While often treated as two separate spheres of action during the Cold War, defence and security are increasingly discussed in intertwined ways, as this chapter has shown. Hence it can speak of defence as security. A myriad of actors such as states, international organizations but also non-state actors have redefined what needs to be saved and defended. This chapter has shown that to take defence studies seriously, we need to understand what actors see as worthwhile defending and with what means. Traditional understandings have changed. While defence has been associated with defending national sovereignty and integrity with military means, and security signified the provision of stable environments – or even peaceful – environments, today some actors have chosen to defend the integrity of national territory without military means while others defend values such as the protection of human rights with the help of military means.
References


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