



Security in ambiguity

Towards a radical security politics

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Abstract

In this article we offer a reconceptualization of security that attempts to reconcile a post-critical and normative agenda. The article proceeds by unpacking features of the dominant security discourse and then resituating the question in a radical politics. We contend that moving forward on this question requires a rejection of the association between security, certainty and authority. Rather than following the classical realist view that security requires exceptions from politics, we choose to see security as dependent on political uncertainty. Borrowing from Hänninen's idea that politics is 'living with ambiguity' and taking from post-Foucauldian thought against the violence of tyranny, we advocate the ongoing *repoliticization* of the security field informed by harm reduction. We offer 'security in ambiguity' as a conceptualization of this synthesis.

Key Words

governmentality • policing • post-critical criminology • radical politics • security

Introduction

Over the past decade there has been a convergence of international relations and criminological literature on the security question. Under the rubric of concepts like 'human security' and in the context of post-Cold War, infowar and postmodern power considerations, security has been

reconfigured to meet challenges from the 'death of the social' to the 'collapse' of the nation state. Many analysts document the subordination of political process and practice to subpolitical, privatized and subcontracted bureaucratic elites. Emphasis is placed on local crime control and knowledge and minority participation in the grounding of security politics. The overwhelming focus of political thinking about security has been how to re-legitimate a public sphere of provision that is capable of accommodating the increasing plurality of demands for order. Network analyses and other techniques have addressed the problem within a broadly liberal political framework and theorists have created new models of democratized security production. Yet, it has been obvious to radical commentators that sovereign power is not waning despite 'governmentalization'. Emergency powers, executive fiat, secrecy and public relations are palpable features of governments from Washington to P'yŏngyang.

As Ole Wæver (1995) has written, the 'securitization' of social life is a condition in which issues are depoliticized and alternative ways of framing and responding to the problems of order are lost. In community safety and governance of crime literature, the term is understood and explored as an outcrop of the mechanisms or methods of network building (community safety strategies, policy making and participation). Criminologists have also noted that so powerful is the discourse of security that objections—arguments against security—are completely out of place (Neocleous, 2000b: 8). The command to 'think security' instead of full employment, public education or the good society illustrates the depoliticizing potential of crime prevention and community safety initiatives (see Neocleous, 2000b: 12; Halsey, 2001: 396; McLaughlin et al., 2001: 313; Virta, 2003).

A feature of post-critical understanding is that knowledge about security can foster political closure. In critical criminology there has not been equal examination of the root of 'security' (Neocleous, 2000b: 8) and 'politics', particularly their interaction.¹ In this article, we probe security by examining it as a product of a dominant discourse characterized by positivism, elitism and dualism. After then resituating security in the context of an open politics conceptualization, we advocate the ongoing *repoliticization* of the security field informed by the standpoint of radical resistance. We contend that this repoliticization must be informed not only by a rejection of the association between security, certainty and authority but also by a re-stimulation of the ambiguity of the political.

Security in international relations and post-critical criminology

In international relations the framing of security draws on political realism and the view that the state is the principal actor in an international system where the *raison d'être* is the preservation or expansion of self-interest.

According to Morgenthau (1954) the system of world politics is unalterably anarchic and the implacable—but not overreaching—pursuit of national interests is the crux of good statecraft.² It is also a long-standing truism of political realism that the weak must align with the strong to preserve themselves and that this demands a relinquishment of some autonomy and independence. This view also relies on a domestic architecture (see Carter, 2001), a Hobbesian state structure which consolidates order through the authority of sovereign rather than civil relations. Traditional security issues founded in realist doctrine include war and peace, balance of power, proliferation and international economic relations.

A variety of critical theorists, including Krause (1997), Buzan et al. (1998) and McSweeney (1999) have expanded the security continuum to play up the inter-linkages between varieties of actors. It is argued that ‘the emergent realities of material interdependence and patterns of interaction among peoples is no longer reconcilable with ‘the inherited legal/political structure of the nation-state system’ (Brown, 1998: 3). The exclusive focus on national laws and institutions (nation states and national governments) does not accommodate subnational, transnational and subpolitical developments in the international system. The realist delimitation also overestimates the role of coercive power in interstate and intrastate relations (see Brown, 1998). Additionally, realism, like structural functionalism in sociology, fails to capture actors and actions as the product of deliberative, recursive and interpretive construction.

Nearer to ground level, it is managerialism, professional expertise, operational autonomy and now ‘common business sense’ that structures discourse (and exclusions) on public security provision (Melossi, 1997; Young, 1999; Innes, 2001; Garland, 2002). In criminology informed by governmentality³ what is emphasized is the loosely coupled relationship between the ‘culmination’ of the state and discrete means, including pluralized delivery, partnerships, responsabilization and the intermediation of experts—or ‘government at a distance’ (Miller and Rose, 1990; Barry et al., 1996). Recent scholarship has explored the variety of sub- and supra-political authorities and investigated the many complex hybridizations of public and private domains (Loader, 2000; Johnston and Shearing, 2003). Variegated, overlapping ‘bubbles’ or ‘nodes’ of governance are better understood (Rigakos and Greener, 2000; Shearing and Wood, 2003), it is asserted, by giving attention to the specific and local disciplining or regulating mechanism in each ‘governable place’ (Smandych, 1999) in which the relation of subordination is effected (Garland, 1996; O’Malley and Palmer, 1996). Space, community and the identity and habitat of residents are reconfigured in the name of security (Rose, 1999: 245). Such practices of ‘blanket securitization’ (Neocleous, 2000b: 8) have explicitly political repercussions but they may not be easily contestable.

Contestation to secure the normative and material production and reproduction of government consistent with a neoliberal governmental rationality occurs in time and space. However, governmentality work is

ahistorical and non-normative (Rigakos, 2002) by design and thus carves away material interests and positions from analytical notice.⁴ Governmentality rejects 'critique' and tends to view politics as 'mentalities of rule' instead of as social relations (O'Malley et al., 1997). If the effort is to move towards the construction of a (more) democratic and open society, Foucault may be drawn on to comfort rather than contend those interested in managing high politics from positions of privilege.⁵ Indeed, it has been argued that the whole field of criminal justice and crime control ought to be restructured to support rationalized policy-making premised on 'best practice', 'what works' and a non-ideological and apolitical logic of cost-effective evaluation and audit (McLaughlin et al., 2001: 313). This may also inform local decision-making styles within policing partnerships, effectively displacing the political with the administrative (Virta, 2003).

To deter such security displacements may require, in addition to describing processes, acknowledging conflict over politics and embracing at least the value of democracy. Large-scale conflicts creating a *scarcity of security* may be better explained by reference to what Stephen Gill calls 'the disintegration of social hegemonies and the formation of counter-hegemony in the global political economy' (2003: 37). The (for some) outlawed term 'hegemony' refers to the conflict over values which produces tensions in the international system. In particular, these tensions are evident where liberal democratic ideas and interests clash with the 'embedded mercantilist and statist perspectives' (2003: 29) associated with the security complex. Key to Gill's thinking is the Gramscian differentiation between politics and the state. While Gramsci views the state as 'a class based apparatus of rule' politics is the 'search to establish conditions for the good society' (2003: 19).

For Foucault and many following him, Hobbes fails because security is also if not mainly an accomplishment of governance beyond the state. But for Gramscians like Gill, the Hobbesian state structure fails because it 'lacks ethical credibility' and because its political system is 'not embedded in a strong civil society' (Gill, 2003: 33; see also Lustgarten and Leigh, 1996). It is not extra-sovereign or extra-state security but extra-state goods other than security which are important even for hegemony. State-civil society complexes like the states of the EU and the Anglo-Saxon countries may be hegemonic because they follow not the Hobbesian but the Lockean model of vigorous and largely self-regulating civil society emphasis, providing the possibility that an apparatus based on social inequality may yet develop into an ethical public sphere.⁶ To put this in Claude Lefort's words, it is the 'balance of ambiguity' in democracies that has thus far prevented the 'agencies of power, law and knowledge from fusing into a single leading organ' (in Scheureman, 1994: 229).

Ambiguity is indeed the proper stay against those tendencies of consolidation destructive both of democracy *and* security. Today the balance of ambiguity is under pressure as a neophyte international state works to

order relations of subordination (see Tilly, 1985). There is a further consolidation of material interests in a politics which objectifies ‘security’ as a scarce commodity. In the next section, we probe the discursive delimitation of ‘security’ according to the realist narrative. We follow this by looking at how ‘security’ may be contrasted to politics in a process that has come to be known as ‘securitization’. We are most interested in further unpacking this relation, particularly, as both ‘political’ and ‘security’ is constructed to discredit the ambiguous and uncertain with the lack of government.

Elements of the dominant security discourse

As a field of knowledge, security presents us with privileged or dominant constructions.⁷ These emerge from constitutive tensions and disciplinary contests played out in historical contexts. Accordingly, we may perceive security by typifying its grounding. Standpoint is also a significant consideration, given our interest in security as an object of politics. Last, we note one substantive feature of the dominant construction, namely, its non-transitivity.

First, what is the episteme of the dominant realist security narrative? As Walzer (1977) demonstrates, it takes its genealogy from Thucydides, in particular his observations about the Athenian decision to attack Melos. Interpretation of this historical incident has been converted into an ahistorical truism about the mandatory properties of a secure order. In Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, and Machiavelli’s *Prince*, realist constructions are elaborated as the *necessary* conditions between authority and security (Walzer, 1977). This realism is succored by Cartesian doubt and anxiety. It belongs with what Edwards (1997) more recently has described as a ‘closed world’ epistemology in which the quest is the final measurement—and thereby control—of all objective threats. With the presumed necessity of the fixing of interpretation offered by the heurism of the Leviathan, security discourse is oriented towards the *closure* of the textual and contextual antecedents. This makes the dominant security discourse ahistorical and positivistic.

What of the standpoint of security analysis? Following the default epistemology, this lies with the privilege of leadership. It is from the viewpoint of leadership that technocratic and managerialist aims are documented (Gill, 2003). The dominant strain in the liberal tradition has incorporated the notion that the norm emerges in the wake of the innovation of leadership (see Corrigan and Sayer, 1985; Tilly, 1985; Scheureman, 1994). In addition to Machiavelli this takes from Nietzsche in abstracting pure leadership and accountability as antithetical; accountability is a form of subordination. The leader and the order are sequentially distinguished in

terms of the requisite normativity that inheres. The G.W. Bush administration, for instance, takes from the political philosophy of Carl Schmitt, who argued that ‘classical legal norms are to make way for (normless) executive and administrative decrees’ (Scheureman, 1994: 79). In the book, *Bush at War*, Bob Woodward quotes Bush as saying, ‘that’s the interesting thing about being the President. Maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something, but I don’t feel like I owe anybody an explanation’ (Woodward, 2002: A01). Only by such executive precedence or fiat can governmental administration be consolidated and national security guaranteed. Accountability, as transparency to the norm, marks the termination or end of leadership.

Third, how is the analytic of security constructed? Consistent with positivism and Cartesian dualism in policy talk, the term is deployed as if it were an object that may be freed of constitutive relations and capable of standing as a clean, idealized signifier. It may then supplant ‘weaker’ policy agendas, such as the Aristotelian good. The utility of security for political expediencies has contributed to this purification. Leaders, after all, must fix the signifier, must privilege one value over another, and so prevent endless signification and indecision. Politics, in this construction, becomes *techné*: it is equated with techniques to simplify those significations and decisions. For example, in the United States, the Customer Assisted Passenger Profiling program known as CAPS II has been reviewed by the General Accounting Office on its ability to differentiate ‘between terrorists and innocent people’ (Blumenthal, 2003). Similarly, a book written by two prominent neoconservatives, David Frum and Richard Perle, is entitled *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*.⁸ This is not merely a simplistic rendering of the social world into subjects and objects, however, because it utilizes value dualism recursively as a constructive choice or tool in the service of power politics.

The ‘security wall’—a barrier separating Israel from the Palestinians—exemplifies the features of the dominant discourse: the episteme of positivism, the standpoint of leadership impunity and the analytic in which security is cast as an object or commodity free of historical social relations. Although the actual object may be renamed to fit public relations preferences, ‘security wall’ conveys this construction in which political transitivity is fixed for security from the standpoint of privileged leadership. The US Department of Homeland Security’s threat advisory system is also illustrative.⁹ The system—with colour-coded levels of threat from ‘low’, ‘guarded’, ‘elevated’, ‘high’ to ‘severe’—continuously injects into public policy and discourse the affirmation that security and political freedom are set against one another in a binary, zero-sum relation. The programme also enacts security as quantifiable and establishes the quantity by executive authority. This is attended by the suggestion that dangers are repelled through military or quasi-military strategy, even domestically. The stratified binary of security and freedom and the militarization of domestic security

are also seen in the recent innovation, the ‘designated free-speech zone’, in which protestors with placards unfavourable of the Bush administration are quarantined by the secret service and local police out of sight of the president and the attendant press while favourable speech may be offered in the presidential frame.

Realist security doctrine is also usefully pointed at in the proliferation of hard security technologies and for-profit weapons, intelligence and infrastructure providers. In the relative absence of a public security lobby and under the gaze of neoliberal privatizing and off-loading strategies, an international security market has emerged to promote the intersection of violence monopoly and private profit. Weapons manufacturers, infrastructure support providers, comprehensive ‘security’ companies, intelligence professionals and mercenaries¹⁰ have busily been competing for security relations *as* a market prize. Increasingly in aid of transnational corporate (TNC) interests, these private security specialists prepare the world’s ‘hot spots’ for TNC profit taking. The huge growth of the international security market¹¹ has furthered the association of insecurity with the absence or scarcity of military and corporate order.

Dominant security expertise is both disciplined and disciplining. It is produced in the material spaces disciplined by funding flows, which are dominated by private and conservative public funding institutions. The presumptive dominance of the super-ordinate position then also invites the collection of security knowledge according to the priority of the dominant order. Insecurity is then cast with uncertainty as an object that may be intermediated through experts and their tools. Security experts also discipline security, pointing to their own tools of intervention to ‘fix’ the problem. Security, like psychiatry and criminology, in this way produces the pathology it alone may cure. Under such securitization the value of individual self-determination and politics is subordinated. More problematically, the balance of ambiguity is tilted against the political in favour of dominant security crystallizations: governing slips into emergency management.¹² Where security politics is dominated by realist discipline, security orthodoxy displaces politics and heterodoxy, or knowledge of the very conditions of our life and existence (Bourdieu, 1977).

Much thinking on security today has taken up the necessity in liberal democracies of accommodating an increasing plurality of demands for order.¹³ Scholarship has also explored various means by which such pluralities may be accommodated. We are concerned, particularly, in getting behind how dominant security discourse shapes the contours of public policy. Having, hopefully, placed the elements of the dominant discourse in stark relief, we now want to follow others in proposing an alternative normative framework. We would like to offer some rough outlines of a radical political theory of security—a radical politics of resistance—and offer some thought on its implications for crime and its control.

Not falling for the security gap

The dominant realist discourse security, then, is understood as an object stripped of contextuality, frame or observer. Uncertainty is displaced with knowledge, particularly knowledge about security as an object. Security is then something made up with limits and boundaries. This is aided by a political philosophy that champions necessity and exceptionalism,¹⁴ secrecy, public relations and strong leadership. Security must be known through elite command of information. The authorized subject alone can properly know. As a discursive mobilization this involves the discovery and production of substantive dimensions of security knowledge deficits, known as 'security gaps'.¹⁵

The security gap is the space or 'dark figure' between the security measures and quantities. The security episteme is grown as the elements of security are objectified, quantified, commodified and interdicted against. These become a regular and predictable stream of threats to be sought and processed. Security economies come to depend on the regular identification of new risk markets (Rigakos, 2002) that may sustain the appetite for security production. In the meantime, as security policy is entwined with authority and sanctioned knowledge, vulnerabilities to irregular and systematically excluded sources of threat are ironically *enhanced*. The dominant security episteme produces the social fact of insecurities, especially in the endless quest for new markets.¹⁶

As has been well documented by sociologists, this appetite of the dominant security episteme steals from social and political life. It is a reading of cultural expression according to a superordinate view of instabilities. The mutual knowledge between experts and lay members of the polity or civil society is not understood according to the Lockean model as insurance against the larger corrections of power imbalances. Rather, it is politics or ambiguity that is increasingly closed out, except as a target of security mobilizations.¹⁷

In order to meet the challenges posed by such thinking of security and gaps, constructivists argue for expanding the security frame. Security expertise has, to use Paris's terms (2001: 97), broadened and deepened beyond statecraft to include disease, overpopulation, environmental scarcity and ecological degradation. The neorealistic school of Copenhagen, led by Barry Buzan (1983, 1991; Buzan et al., 1998) pays heed to the notion that security is a social construction and allows a more inclusive palette of forces. Given wide encouragement in the 1994 United Nations Human Development Report, 'human security' has also emerged as a broad category of research giving privilege to non-military and non-state threats.¹⁸ In general, international relations constructivists argue for a more holistic and ecological view of the security problem, one which sees external threats to states as a piece of a larger security ecology, which includes the claims of nations, groups, individuals, ecosystems, biodiversity and even the claim to self-determination of other species.¹⁹ The survival of

societies, groups and individuals is the ‘for whom’ where the source of the threat is redefined to include social, environmental and economic security (Paris, 2001: 98).

Radical or critical perspectives and governmentality conceptualizations also continue to look for a discursive context for the grounding of valuations: in the hegemony of political economy or in the practices of government under sovereign law, disciplinary normalization, or actuarial regulation. Accordingly, there can be no extrapolation of a security a priori in, for instance, the ‘state of nature’; governmentalities productive of security relations may arise in the liminal spaces. So with respect to the epistemic position, we know that, unlike natural or first-order phenomena, security is already a ‘pre-ordered social structure’ that has been informed by the ‘collective agency of human beings [to] produce regularities that are more or less institutionalized over time and space’ (Gill, 2003: 16).²⁰ Much work has decoupled the binary of subject and object and security like power is now commonly understood as a relation.

But what sort of regularities do we wish to engage in producing and according to which foundations? What if we begin with the notion of a gap rather than working towards it? It is the agency of the person that represents a gap, after all: a gap of chance. Rather than viewing the lack of authoritative knowledge with gaps as insecure, why not begin with the gap as the wellspring of politics. To put it another way, the alternative to expanding the security frame is to follow the logic of realism and narrow it according to the familiar axis of necessity—the necessity of politics rather than Leviathan. In the remainder of the article we conceptualize politics as the fulcrum on which the problem of security must be situated. We then address some substantive and normative features of a radical security politics.

Security from politics

Numerous writers have reviewed how the political ought to be perceived for late modern times. Many (e.g. Mouffe, 1993; Bauman, 1997; Beck, 1997) have challenged, as the Finnish political scientist Sakari Hänninen puts it, ‘undemocratic regimentality, governmentality or managementality’ (2000: 27). In his own conceptualization, Hänninen argues that politics may be usefully defined with the term ‘living with ambiguity’. This follows the Pocockian idea that politics ‘deals with the contingent event’ (in Hänninen, 2000: 27). It is also consistent with Theodore Adorno’s definition of the authoritarian personality: intolerance of ambiguity. Authoritarianism is an intolerance of relationships other than dominion or submission and for the ambiguity that equal standing implies. It is identified with a predilection for decisive judgement and premature closure. A radical security politics, then, is both a rejection of authoritarianism and an embracing of ambiguity.

It follows that the object of *playing* politics is relief from the indeterminacy and vulnerabilities of the political. Recourse to the dominant and familiar security discourse is one vehicle of sanctuary and authorization. This is what we mean to convey with the concept, 'security *from* politics'. Here, political realism appeals because it promises to reduce the ambiguities and contain the range and unpredictability of political action and prescription according to a dominant reading of order. Under a justificatory narrative for power consolidation it works to displace abstract principles (society, public, rights, justice) with concrete, finite relations (e.g. consumer–producer, leader–follower). Security is conceptualized in ways which privilege finitude, certainty, realism and executive authority so that potentially endless ambiguities may be cut short. Security talk offers a variety of closures when exercised to privilege the dominant discourse.

Squeezing security politics in this way is productive of a condition variously described along the lines of social and political control (Deleuze, 1990; Hänninen, 2000; Innes, 2001; Garland, 2002).²¹ According to Hänninen (2000), in a 'society of control' political action becomes an externality. This is to say, politics is continually conceived as separate from power and dangerous to order. The separations are aided by our inability to imagine politics as bounded in definite territorial and public space and by our thinking of 'pure political events as always something which has just happened or is about to happen' (Hänninen, 2000: 30). Seen as a contingent event or a moment of chance, politics is the object of governmentalization (Holquist, 1997). It is a target of specific control practices, including criminalization, by various institutional arrangements such as networks or markets. Recent criminology on securitization documents many of the depoliticizing strategies (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; O'Malley and Palmer, 1996; Simon, 1997; Loader, 2000; McLaughlin et al., 2001). In short, where politics is a contingent event or a moment of chance—unpredictable, unanticipated, incalculable, ambiguous and alterable—the society of control is a condition in which the political is contained, controlled or pre-empted.

While liberal democracies require political institutions that are maximally open to plural orders, the dominant discourse of thinking about security holds that order depends on strong leadership. Today especially, we see the development of exceptionalism in both American foreign and domestic security policy and in the policies of other governments following the American lead. Thus there is a great institutional dilemma where pluralism is incessantly countermanded by security protocols. This is reflected, for instance, in the movement towards the intelligencification of diplomacy—which has seen CIA director George Tenet brokering a peace accord and Iraq inviting the CIA to monitor it. It is also perceptible in the continual politicization of intelligence, including the latest example in which even the political product of the regular intelligence services may be purposely augmented to argue for a predetermined course.²² Intelligence, here, is already too subject to ambiguity and unpredictability: its politiciza-

tion really means the production of a governmental politics along the contours of a national security state (Holquist, 1997). Securitization, or security from politics, is then also a movement towards the fusing of knowledge, order and authority.

The application of equality, participation, even politics itself, retreats in front of ‘security from politics’ mobilizations. The society of control has an elective affinity with this security talk. Whether in the expression of the leadership imperative, expertise or popular opinion, the political arena is a forum in which the institutional disposition towards regularity, predictability and routinization gives weight to fascist subjectivities. But the tendency is counter-hegemonic, that is, it *moves from* a balance of ambiguity and is therefore ultimately *more insecure*. In the remainder of the article, we will offer a sketch of what may be necessary to counter the current trend: in general, we support the contrary claim that ‘true’ security can only derive where multiple, shifting and plural orders are understood as constituent.

Towards a radical security politics

If security should not be understood as exclusive of politics, or a means of squeezing the range of the political, may it be conceived—radically—as *dependent* on ambiguity?

It is useful to begin with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983) point that, by definition, a radical politics will not seek the regimentation of individuals according to a totalitarian system of norms. Rather, it will de-normalize and de-individualize through a multiplicity of collective innovations against power. This is nicely summarized in Foucault’s preface of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*:

Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia, develop action and thought by juxtaposition and disjunction, and not by subdivision and hierarchization, prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action. Do not become enamoured of power.

(Foucault in Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: xiii)

De-normalization might begin by collapsing the dominant viewpoint. Here, it is useful—to borrow also from Foucault—to remember that power relations conceive reversibility. Instead of security = certainty we may perceive security = uncertainty. Uncertainty is the co-requisite of open or ‘green world’ epistemology (Edwards, 1997)—where green world suggests an indeterminate space receptive to magical (unknown) or transcendental forces and ‘closed world’ discourses represent the ordering and fixing of discipline. In the field of security relations, a centralized political power dominant of civil society is hegemonically insecure (Gill, 2003). In the

meantime, the organization of nation states far from offers protections against escalations of violence and death (Buzan, 1991). Where uncertainty or ambiguity is a pre- and co-requisite of open democracies and where fallibility is an antidote to tyranny, it is uncertainty that supports democracies *and their security* (see Lustgarten and Leigh, 1996). Support for green world discourse is also found in the biosphere. Biologists understand the importance of diversity to ecosystem survival and management considering the mutual interdependencies that pertain. In the field of cyber-security, too, open (green world) code is viewed by many as more robust than proprietary (closed world) code because it must withstand regular attack. Security is a process in which the field of risks are cultivated in the service of ongoing and potential operations. Thus, normatively and substantively, security = uncertainty.

Can criminology marshal support for the thesis that uncertainty and ambiguity is *productive* of security? John Braithwaite's (1997) elaboration of Charles Tittle's 'control-balance' (1995, 1997) offers a criminological referent for Lefort's contention that there must be a balance of ambiguity even for the modest purpose of avoiding hegemonic breakdown. In Braithwaite's conceptual simplification (1997: 86), predatory deviance may be associated both with surpluses and deficits of control, or control imbalances. Control deficits and surpluses are conducive to deviance because deviance results when motivation is triggered by provocation and enabled by the presence of opportunity and the absence of constraint. On the control surplus side, subordination feeds corruption by inviting abuses of power. When there is resistance to the control exercised, there is likely resort to deviance to ensure the maintenance of the control surplus. On the deficit side, when legitimate opportunities to exercise self-determination are structurally wanting, frustration-aggression and humiliation are easily converted into predatory deviance. At the societal level, societies with large control imbalances are expected to be more prone to deviance because they proliferate more humiliation.

As Braithwaite rightly argues, Tittle's theory supports a normative theory of criminology: the republican redistribution of control. Control balance is also consistent with our claims for a radical security politics finding security in ambiguity. Here, it might be extrapolated that where there is a surplus of ambiguity or where personal security is dependent on a context of relatively more dynamic contingency, the resultant condition is less likely to engender the sort of deviations that attend conditions of surplus or deficit. At the domestic level, there is a reduction of the frustrations and 'corrections' of economic and violent 'self-help' (Black and Baumgartner, 1980). Seen in terms of Hänninen's interpretation of politics, the maintenance of minor politics or a surfeit of ambiguity is the best check on depoliticizing movements that produce the insecurities associated not only with predatory state crimes, but also the crises that attend national security- and garrison-state formations (see Tapia-Valdes, 1982). Put simply, ambiguity is an antidote to insecurity.

We begin to see the outlines of a firmer position consistent with the anti-authoritarianism quoted earlier. We have highlighted the dominant constructions and suggested where reversal is fruitful. This is largely a defence of process that still leaves the substantive content of a widened politics in limbo. But therein lies the rub. To advance a substantive agenda—to say what normatively merits inclusion in a radical security politics—is to undercut ambiguity as a good in itself. Yet, not to advance a normative goal is to fall back into the quagmire identified with post-Foucauldian malaise: to undercut any reason for making the argument in the first place. The difficulty is deepened because criminology and international relations are expected to have policy utilities.

The problem, but perhaps also the solution, is telegraphed earlier in Foucault's advice 'not to become enamoured of power'. In his discussion with Maoists, Foucault (1980) discredits the 'people's court' as a *reinvestment* in power relations (the court) from which relief ought to be sought. Holloway (2002) similarly urges changing the world 'without taking power'. He suggests that the only way in which revolution can now be imagined is not as the conquest of power but as its dissolution. Refusal to accept oppression, exploitation and dehumanization implies a non-instrumental concept of revolution, one without the object of domination. Thus refusal and anti-power, rather than counter-power, because as Holloway argues 'once the logic of power is adopted, the struggle against power is already lost' (2002: 17). All of which is to suggest that offering to substitute power-knowledge for what has been discredited gets us nowhere. On the contrary, after offering deconstructive reversals of the dominant security position, it is necessary to step away from the urge for a new synthesis or hegemony.

But this also suggests a way out which is consistent with radical security politics. There is, in fact, a substantive agenda contained even in the call for de-normalization earlier. First, it calls for opening a space in which 'political practice may be an "intensifier of thought"'. The *productive* here is 'the nomadic'. This is a positive beseeching to make a project of opening up the space of ambiguity. Second, the backdrop or frame of this call to action is *already the violence of tyranny*. This is harm not only to the political or spaces of the political but also to persons occupying those spaces. Harm reduction, it logically follows, may serve as a substantive rationale for this defence of space. A positive yet critical agenda might take a long view of harm reduction at the same time that it watches closely the processes of knowledge production. Consequently, while there can be no completely satisfactory resolution to the conundrum of power-knowledge, zemiology,²³ or harm reduction, may guide the minimization of power 'deployment' urged by Foucault. Security knowledge and security policy, like drug policy and crime policy more generally, can and has done much harm, and this is why it is a reasonable object of deconstruction, inquiry and praxis.

To restate: a radical security politics must serve to make the spaces of politics from which security might emerge. It must then celebrate the dynamism of those spaces. Even doing only this still requires offering some minimal defence of such a project. We believe that since this is already implicitly consistent with the objective of harm minimization, particularly the reduction of harm that derives *from* the defence of ambiguity, the substantive objective and even a kind of normativity may be reconciled with the urgings to de-normalize and de-individualize. It may be possible to argue that both the broadening of the political and the vetting of security policy ought to be undertaken with the aim of harm reduction.

Security in ambiguity

In his work on 'superliberalism', Roberto Unger (1994) argued that the structure of political organization must be continually adaptive to minor politics. Political movements, to this way of thinking, represent the heart of the political. Holloway goes further than this and sees a shift from the 'politics of organization to a politics of events' (2002: 214). Recent demonstrations against neoliberal globalization are cited to exemplify this. These events are a literal and symbolic taking of ground for minor politics.

What might ensure that there is adequate politics in and for security? At the level of 'high security', for instance, many analysts (e.g. Herman, 2000) advocate the increased production and mobilization of what is called all-source intelligence by the usual security purveyors. These are encouraged to link up with other CIA-modelled agencies in building elite knowledge networks. From our point of view, this will merely generate more knowledge and policy from the same institutional standpoint. More spies means more spying. Security in ambiguity, on the contrary, structures the process of security discovery to afford a multiplicity of standpoints and conduits, maximizing the chances of chance.²⁴ Built on the politics of events rather than organization, it prioritizes the creation of contingent, open spaces and makes institutions continuously accountable for harm reductions, or the harm that may come from or be prevented by the large array of institutions serving or abusing the need for security. Security in ambiguity and for harm reduction means inserting security as a reason for opening up the political in the long-term aim of reducing catastrophic dangers. Practically, this may be accomplished by subjecting institutions to unpredictability and to minor, particular, yet common interests. Ultimately, interdependency dictates not the balkanization or privatization of benefits and risks in the protection of enclaves, but rather security risk and benefit socialization and redistribution in the re-stimulation of the social.

What concrete forms might this take? For example, security in ambiguity might be exercised in a security lottery audit. Audit teams drawn by lottery from a pool consisting of local citizens, political activists, extra-local

security professionals and academic experts might be struck at chance intervals or on demand from plebiscites. These would have access to the files of agencies and investigate according to an interpretation of plebiscite demand or on their own initiative. The onus would not be on individual wrongdoing but on assuring compliance with the equitable distribution of security resources for sustainable harm reduction. The teams might also evaluate agencies' compliance with the minimization of expenditures contributing to security objectification, commodification and privatization.

Such an expansion of minor politics requires meeting head-on the overriding defensive impulse of security agencies towards harmonization, consolidation and regularity.²⁵ Yet it also reaffirms a long tradition of republican governance that holds that nurturance of multiple orders, not to mention a more certain hegemony, requires vigorous intake from below and across the polity. Harm minimization consistent with republican politics might involve the piecemeal re-dispersion of public and local capacity (see Loader and Walker, 2001; Johnston and Shearing, 2003) across infrastructures from transportation to communication to voluntary, public initiatives. (Public safety is enhanced with more people using public transportation.) It might also strengthen the subordinated version of security by continually exposing the vulnerabilities of single-order systems and their suppressed or trivialized harms. Improvement of substantive and critical knowledge and participatory equality is a pivotal criterion for the delivery of security services for the common good of expanded harm reduction.

Security in ambiguity reverses the postulates of the dominant security discourse. Certainty is not identified with order; knowledge about security is not reduced in the discovery of and closure of gaps; vertical asymmetries in power flows do not stave off uncertainty. Contrary to the practice of scaling up comprehensive asymmetries between established power and political marginality and thus inviting paradigmatic tensions and vulnerabilities (like 11 September), radical security policy begins with the presumptive dependence of security politics on substantive democratic practice. In security in ambiguity the dependency and conditionality of existence is the acceptable source of human aspirations. In this we may follow Arendt's observation that political action by nature 'always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries' (1958: 190).

Where politics is understood not as denying but as living with ambiguity, it is the *balance* of ambiguity and control that becomes the preferred standpoint. Security in ambiguity is shorthand for the resultant agenda. This follows constructivist thinking in the human security school of international relations and some features of post-critical criminology consistent with a normative and democratizing purpose, particularly zemiology. Ambiguity is promoted with the hope of political process, and harm reduction is offered by way of normative ballast.

Conclusion: security beyond gaps and limits

Security knowledge is regularly deployed to stay the political. The dominant security discourse characterized by positivism, elitism and dualism is vaunted to break the uncertainty of multiple orders. Against the anarchy of the international system and a pessimistic essentialization of the 'natural' citizen-subject, commanding authority fixes otherwise perpetual doubt and indecision. Knowledge about security depends on the standpoint of elite ordering. Into the breach of this epistemic and institutional cavity, then, has poured the weight of monopolistic capital production. Security knowledge is a specialized enterprise that produces the very security scarcities which only it can properly serve. Instead of being perceived as process, security in this and other ways comes to be reified and commodified as product. Security absences are meaningful as security gaps to be discovered and filled—or depoliticized. The society of control is the juggernaut that results.

As criminologists turn from the 'problem of order' and 'social control' to the problem of security as an object of inquiry, there is a danger. Just as crime inquiry recursively fashioned criminology as a discipline which only belatedly noticed the multiplicity of the political (whose order?), so too is the political too frequently an assumption or afterthought in criminological inquiries into security. In the most familiar of these, politics is dismissed in its negative construction as always already for power. Alternatively, it is associated with popular justice as a space too dangerous to be left for 'the many' to occupy.

For us, the problem of security, like the problem of order, demands immediate reference to the political as a source of positive power. A politics of marginality depends on ever-changing action against the *terror* of the *unambiguous* order. It requires bringing the genuine idea of the political and politics into the discourse at the outset. We believe that criminology can continue to benefit from political theory in assisting needed replenishment. We have thus followed, and then reversed, the familiar line of thinking that justifies security exceptions in the protection of the political.

At the same time, we also believe that there must be a substantive counterweight that justifies the continual disclosure of democratic space. If criminology very often has ignored or discredited the question 'for whom?' it has also, and most recently, been dismissive of the question 'for what?' In post-critical work especially, discursive description for the most part is seen as sufficient and affirmative politics shunned. In this article, we have sought to approach the problem of security both critically and normatively. By way of providing a backstop to endless critique, we follow those who have argued that harm reduction is the most reasonable limitation to otherwise endless ambiguity.

It is our hope that we might stimulate further thinking and action that will undercut the persuasiveness of the dominant security discourse. Perhaps in no time in recent memory has it been clearer just how useful the

production of danger is as an antidote to political participation. These attempts to freeze the political are beginning to engender widespread resistances. We look forward to these resistances for the next lesson on how security and the political might again be reframed.

Notes

1. Some literature touches on various aspects of the relation between security and politics. This includes but is not limited to: Lustgarten and Leigh (1996); O'Malley and Palmer (1996); Young (1999); Loader (2000); Crawford (2002); Garland (2002); Hughes and Edwards (2002); Brodeur et al. (2003); Johnston and Shearing (2003); Shearing and Wood (2003).
2. According to the leading journal, *International Security* ('Foreword', *International Security* (1976) 1(1): 2), in security studies 'embrace all of those factors that have a direct bearing on the structure of the nation state system and the sovereignty of its members, with particular emphasis on the use, threat, and control of force' (in Miller, 2001).
3. In criminology, the concept of security has lately benefited from governmentality studies. Building on Foucault's 'On Governmentality' (1991) but also on his sexuality and ethics genealogies, work examines governmental rationalities that deploy a constellation of power practices to perform discipline and regulation. For Foucault, security is a specific principle of political method and practice, which may combine with law, sovereignty and discipline within various government structures. It is aimed at the 'ensemble of the population' and becomes the dominant component of modern government from the 18th century onwards (Foucault, 1991).
4. It offers a rich toolkit of concepts to probe the site of security work, but there is a normative non-disclosure underpinning Foucault and non-prescriptive approaches (see Taylor, 1986; Fraser, 1989). Foucauldian power differentiates itself from radical power by suggesting that truth belongs no more with the oppressed than the oppressor (see Digeser, 1992).
5. To put it more mildly, if the approach does not contribute to the development of an alternative praxis (O'Malley et al., 1997), it may indirectly endorse the status quo, even providing supporting legitimation. But the harder point is made by Fraser (1989) who argues that Foucault offers little rationale for the resistance to disciplinary power given the absorption of the individual into it. Work has just begun to conceptualize the interdependencies between governmentality, social liberal and Marxist research (Kerr, 1999; MacKinnon, 2000; Neocleous, 2000a; Rigakos, 2002).
6. As Spierenburg (1984) and Raz (1990) have also shown, a crisis of authority cannot be resolved simply through greater reliance on coercion or control. Hegemony is unachievable where authorities do not possess the capacity to claim authority with credibility.

7. To recall the earlier Nietzschean Foucault (1972), a discourse has a will-to-truth, prohibitions and exclusions. It is argued by some political scientists that realism has become largely irrelevant or counterproductive to policy analysts (e.g. Brown, 1998: 3). But post-11 September conduct by the United States would appear to confirm that American foreign policy has much in common with Thucydides' description of Athenian thought regarding Melos.
8. This thinking is lampooned by the American essayist Gore Vidal in his book entitled *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (2002).
9. In March 2002, Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge unveiled a new color-coded threat advisory system for the United States to convey the risk of terrorist attacks to federal, state, local authorities and the American people. The coded warning system has five levels that are associated with a suggested protective measure and will trigger specific actions by federal agencies and local law enforcement.
10. As reported by Sam Vaknin (*Insight Magazine*, 5 August 2002), big money is involved. Before 11 September, it was estimated that the international security market would be at \$220 billion in 2010. This is up from \$56 billion in 1990 and a radical *underestimation*.
11. The list is long and growing, but includes Military Professional Resources, Sandline International, the now defunct Executive Operations, Haliburton and Pacific Architects and Engineering, Control Risk Group and Gray Security.
12. A phenomenon described by Scheureman (1994), among others.
13. As work continues to frame more democratic security discourse it will continue to be necessary to face squarely the particular assumption that democratic debate and security knowledge are antithetical to the mobilization of order.
14. In, for example, the political science of Karl Schmitt, Leo Strauss and Albert Wohlstetter and the sociology of elite theorists Robert Michels, Alfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca.
15. The Bush administration has trumpeted the dominant security narrative to reverse calls for more governmental openness under Clinton. In just two examples of governmental closure, it has privatized critical health and safety information including data on the quality and vulnerability of drinking-water supplies, potential chemical hazards in communities and the safety of airline travel and others forms of transportation. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission frequently withholds information that would allow public scrutiny of its product safety findings and product recall actions (*NOW*, 14 December 2003).
16. For instance, there is a 'public security gap' or gulf between the security knowledge and interests of the lay public and that of security specialists. At 'high policing' (Brodeur, 1983) registers, we also see a normalization of an 'intelligence gap' between security cleared officials and politicians and national security procedures and claims across vast sectors of state services, not to mention geopolitical regions. Such fencing and fixing (of

- subjects from objects) calls for increasingly preventive and pre-emptive measures (once it is understood that dangers may be teased out of coda rather than built structures).
17. A closed world approach to security policy *depends upon* the meaningfulness of the green world and its dangerous latencies. So close is the interdependency of security and insecurity that forward thinking security measures depend on the simulation and regular production of insecurity (see Bogard, 1996). There is a constant appetite for further indeterminacies or gaps.
 18. As Paris reports, the ‘first major statement concerning human security appeared in the 1994 Human Development Report’ (2001: 89) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This Report argued that human security means safety and protection from a wide range of chronic threats and hurtful disruptions. Canada, one of the countries that has established a ‘human security network’ with Norway, Austria, the Netherlands and several other countries, defines human security as ‘freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, safety or lives’ (in Paris, 2001: 90).
 19. The human security school stresses a fact well known from biology to chaos theory: the interdependence of life and respect for diversity as a deterrent to catastrophic system failures, including extinction. The Internet is a result, in part, of American military thought that command and control for the Cold War (and information wars) would be less vulnerable if decentralized or spread across physical and virtual space.
 20. Despite their useful corrections these efforts still maintain security as the nearest object of social policy. It is still a container into which is poured a liquid concoction consisting of everything including security realism. This is because this deconstruction preserves the distinction between critical and mainstream. As Fuchs and Ward (1994: 506–7) argue:

Minds can process limited complexities and deal with limited uncertainty. Eventually, all organizations have to decide on and assume something, then conceal these assumptions as blind spots and get on with their work . . . Even if they are critical and deconstructionist, organizations must, for example, assume that the distinction critical/mainstream is a good and productive one and bury this assumption in self-evident latencies.
 21. Displacement is a term that refers rather to different literary genres and texts than to politics and political theory. However, it has been used as a strategy (for instance by Derrida in gaming, with both Nietzsche’s ‘destruction’ and Freud’s ‘distortion’). This seeks to shake up the dominant textual structure and ‘make it tremble’. Displacement of politics can be characterized by certain specific features or problematizations. First, it interrogates spatial configurations which are heuristically constitutive of politics to imagine politics no longer taking place in a definite territorial, public, bounded space, but rather in a global space of flows or points-circuits of all kinds (Hänninen, 2000). Additionally, displacement strategy not only addresses political action, but also the political, the substance of

political events. It opens up political opportunities. In the domain of the politics of politics, or politics of knowledge, displacements of politics may refer to conceptual, narrative or epistemic transformations in how politics is being conceived in a political action. And since conceptions of politics condition the conduct of politics, conceptual, narrative and epistemic shifts are situationally effective. Modifications and transformations within the displacement of politics address chance rather than change.

22. Such was what happened in the establishment of the Office of Special Plans, a secretive Pentagon war planning unit set up to provide intelligence to support the 2003 Iraqi invasion on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) evidence. In the meantime, the USA insisted that it could act against Iraq on the strength of its own undisclosed findings of Iraqi WMD holdings, undermining the multilateral fact-finding mission. Despite the 'whitewash' of Lord Dutton's report on the 'sexing up' of the intelligence document, 'Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction', Prime Ministerial interference with the British intelligence community's assessment of Iraqi threat is also widely accepted as having occurred prior to the onset of the coalition invasion in March of 2003 (see R. Liddle, *The Spectator*, 31 January 2004).
23. Zemiology is a branch of study whose adherents contend that the reduction of social harm ought to be the larger aim of critical social policy. Attempts to create a new discipline on this orientation have come from the Centre for the Study of Poverty and Social Justice at the University of Bristol, England, among other places. The range of social harms includes but is not limited to war, state violence and terrorism as well as poverty, malnutrition, pollution and disease (Hillyard et al., forthcoming).
24. The dominant view finds this dangerous to the conditions of democracy, but that view makes democracy only always a distant end—and never a means (as Lustgarten and Leigh, 1996 demonstrate).
25. But when the UN Weapons Inspectors arrived in Iraq, they were to have no set programme of visits and unfettered access to any and all sites, documents and people they deemed relevant. We can see that when the powerful themselves demand accountability, anxiety about destabilizing disorder and chaos is nowhere to be seen.

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