

Book Reviews

The Evolution of International Security Studies

By Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen

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At first sight it might be tempting to dismiss this book as being another purist, International Relations textbook that has little wider appeal to those not directly involved in academic pursuit within that particular discipline. But to do so would not only do this remarkably readable book a disservice, but fail to encourage a wider audience to read it, and hence start to appreciate the critical role that International Security Studies plays in the employment of military force to resolve political disputes. Since we, as professional air and space power exponents, are at the sharp end of such employment, it behoves us to have a wider understanding of our profession: this book will contribute most positively to that widening.

International Security Studies has its origins in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and has variously been considered a sub-set of, or entirely different discipline to, International Relations. This in-the-camp, out-of-the-camp, adjunct to International Relations is a constant theme throughout this book, which is the first serious attempt at tracing this academic tradition through its various twists and turns, its rival camps and factions, from its inception to the present day. Above all, it traces the rise of the notion of "Security" over that of "Defence", a theme of

particular resonance as we enter a Strategic Defence Review that is likely to pay as much attention to the former as it does to the latter. This book, commendably, does not try to argue in favour of any one approach to studying International Security Studies, despite the (sometimes a little too discernable) authors' own biases; rather it lays out the path, with a minimum of fuss, that the discipline has followed.

The first three chapters set out the defining features of International Security Studies as we presently understand the term. Concepts such as the wider meaning of Security, the dangers of Western bias in studying the subject, and five key drivers (of which Great Power Politics, Technology and Events/History will resonate in particular) are explored and detailed in an accessible and sensible style. The following five chapters trace not only the development of International Security Studies but in many ways the changing nature of Defence and Security in the Western World. Early thinking was, inevitably, dominated by the Cold War, deterrence and the threat of nuclear Armageddon; the discipline – as the authors highlight – being dominated by America and American Game Theorists. But even before the end of the Cold War some thinkers were looking at new security

paradigms, a path that broadened rapidly with the fall of the Berlin Wall. This led, in the views of this book's writers, to two broad churches of traditionalists (associated, broadly, with the US and the UK) and wider approaches to Security, driven in the main European thinking on topics such as post-colonialism, new meanings of "human security" (including the impacts of climate change) and feminism. There follows a topical and thought-provoking chapter on the impact of 9/11, and whether that has changed our understanding of Security at every level, from the individual to the State, before the book concludes by considering the future and (of particular note) whether we will see a return to Great Power Politics, and the possible impacts of the continuing advances in technology.

In sum, this book, while aimed at an academic audience, deserves to be not only read but carefully considered by air and space power thinkers. It considers a period that represents over half the history of air power and all of that of space power, and in its consideration of the future and the impact of technology, offers some new insights that can help us in our present debates. While at first sight this may not seem like an obvious book to recommend, as part of a wider education and to offer new ways of examining security from an air and space perspective this book has much to offer and deserves serious consideration.

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