CHAPTER 1: INTERPRETING GLOBAL SECURITY

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This book aims to make sense of the transformations our theories and practices of global security have undergone in the past quarter century. Global security could once be described in terms of the actions and interactions of sovereign states with hierarchical and authoritative political institutions directing police forces and organized militaries to deal with internal and external threats (Buzan and Hanson 2009: 66-100). The security of the state was assumed to imply the security of citizens and communities. The state was presumed to act in the 'national interest' and to seek to maximize its economic and military power to secure that interest (Morgenthau 1951). Global security was often understood in terms of the 'balance of power' between states and alliances of states (Waltz 1979). International organizations and international law were sometimes thought to restrain political and military elites, but only within limits (Claude 1962). The world of global security, in other words, was one of power-seeking states keeping the peace at home and fighting wars – or threatening to fight – abroad.

This understanding of global security is now widely seen as obsolete by both theorists and practitioners. Most now believe that all states are now subject to new transnational challenges – human and environmental – that are not easily addressed by old, statist responses. Established, Western states now address security challenges in new ways, employing new modes of governance and even engaging private actors to deal with particular problems (Krahmann 2003). We now recognize many non-Western states lack

authoritative political institutions, police forces or organized militaries (Bates 2008).

Most theorists and practitioners now acknowledge that the security of the state does not

always imply the security of citizens and communities (Buzan 1991). States are often

predators rather than protectors, acting not in the 'national interest', but in that of

sectional interests. Strengthening the power of the state can – and frequently does – mean

increasing the insecurity of individuals and groups. In this context, global security can no

longer be understood just in terms of states, balances, or institutions, but requires new

frameworks of analysis and new political practices (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998).

This book is one response to that demand for new frameworks of analysis. Collectively

the essays engage with the various theories of global security that have emerged since the

end of the Cold War and the practices with which they are associated. To introduce this

account of global security, we must first describe the interpretive approach to social

science, for the account of global security found in this book arose out of an experiment

with interpretive theory (see Bevir, Daddow and Hall 2013). Next we consider the way

this interpretive theory transforms our understanding of global security and the complex

picture of global security that emerges from the essays in this book. Finally, we conclude

by considering the lessons learnt for the future of an interpretive theory of international

relations especially in the study of global security.

INTERPRETIVE THEORY

Although the essays in this book cover a range of cases of global security, they all adopt

an interpretive approach. Following interpretive theory, they ask these questions:

1. What elite *beliefs* informed security policies and practices? How did national

   and local elites conceive, for example, of the balance of power, the national

   interest, economic development, and global security?

2. What *traditions* underpinned these beliefs? Are there rival traditions inspiring

   competing policies and conflicting actions?

3. Did the relevant beliefs, policies, and practices change over time. If so, what

   dilemmas led people to change their beliefs and how did the relevant actors

   conceive those dilemmas?

Our interpretive theory can thus be introduced through its use of the three key concepts

found in these questions: beliefs, traditions, and dilemmas.

Why beliefs?

As early as the 1950s, philosophers were forcefully criticizing positivism and its concept

of pure experience (Quine 1961: 20-46). Yet international relations scholars have often

failed to take seriously the consequences of rejecting a positivist notion of pure

experience. Many cling tenaciously to the positivist idea that we can understand or

explain human behaviour by objective social facts about people rather than by reference

to their beliefs. They thus exclude the interpretation of beliefs from the ambit of the discipline on positivist grounds. Other international relations scholars reject positivism, distancing themselves from the idea of pure experience, but still abstain from interpreting beliefs. Often, they try to avoid direct appeals to beliefs by reducing beliefs to intervening variables between actions and social facts (see especially Goldstein and Keohane 1993).

Interpretive theorists argue, however, that once we accept that there are no pure experiences, we undermine the positivist case against interpreting beliefs. A rejection of pure experience implies that we cannot reduce beliefs to intervening variables. When we say that a state has particular interests for which it will go to war, we rely on a particular theory to derive its interests from its global role and position. Someone with a different set of theories might believe that the state is in a different global position or that it has different interests. The important point here is that how the people we study see their position and interests inevitably depends on *their* theories, which might differ significantly from *our* theories.

To explain peoples' actions, we implicitly or explicitly invoke their beliefs and desires. When we reject positivism, we cannot identify their beliefs by appealing to the allegedly objective social facts about them. Instead, we must explore the beliefs through which they construct their world, including the ways they understand their position, the norms affecting them, and their interests. Because people cannot have pure experiences, their beliefs and desires are inextricably enmeshed with theories. Thus, international relations

scholars cannot 'read-off' beliefs and desires from objective social facts about people. Instead they have to interpret beliefs by relating them to other beliefs, traditions, and dilemmas.

Of course, international relations scholars have grappled with the issues arising from a rejection of positivism (see, for example, Booth, Smith and Zalewski 1996). Today the leading theories of global security are realism, institutionalism (in which category we include most forms of constructivism) and rational choice. But even advocates of these theories have begun to question their positivist inheritance – and as they have disentangled themselves from positivism, so they have placed greater stress on interpreting beliefs. New theories, including critical, feminist and postmodern theories, have also emphasised beliefs but commonly tend to appeal to material or ideational structures to explain actions (Buzan and Hanson 2009: 187-225). Although we welcome this semi-interpretive turn, we think it is still worthwhile drawing on interpretive theory to highlight the ambiguities that thus characterize these theories.

Realists are generally the most steadfast in rejecting beliefs as explanations. Classical realists commonly argue that theorists and policymakers must look to material capabilities to assess threat and set aside any consideration of the declared intentions of others (Morgenthau 1948). Structural realists seek to explain actions by reference to the distribution of power between states in international systems (Waltz 1979). Although so-called neo-classical realists depart from both of these positions, looking to the perceptions of state elites about their relative power in order to explain state behaviour,

they still treat beliefs as intervening variables (Rose 1998). Realism can thus only take us part way towards an interpretive account of contemporary global security.

Institutionalists are often unclear about the nature of institutions. On the one hand, institutions are said to take a concrete and fixed form. They are often defined, for example, as operating rules or procedures that govern the actions of the individuals who fall under them (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). If institutionalists think of institutions in this way, they lapse back into positivism. They do not interpret what institutions mean to the people who work within them. They elide the contingency, inner conflicts, and several constructions of actors in an institution. They assume that allegedly objective rules prescribe or cause behaviour. Yet, as we have just argued, international relations scholars cannot legitimately 'read off' peoples' beliefs from their social location. Rules are always open to interpretation.

On the other hand, institutions are sometimes said to include cultural factors or beliefs, which may seem to suggest that institutions do not fix the beliefs or actions of the subjects within them. If international relations scholars open institutions in this way, however, they cannot treat institutions as given. Rather they must ask how beliefs, and so actions, are created, recreated, and changed in ways that constantly reproduce and modify institutions. Although we would welcome this decentring of institutions, we would suggest that the theory would no longer be institutionalist in any significant sense. Explanations would no longer cast as if behaviour were the result of rules but, rather, in a way that presented actions and outcomes as the contingent and contested results of the

varying way in which people understood and reacted to conventions. Appeals to institutions would thus be misleading shorthand.

This commentary on institutionalism suggests that, if we reject positivism, our notion of an institution desperately needs a micro-theory. Institutionalists could avoid engaging with beliefs and preferences only when they believed that they could reduce actions to social facts. But positivism undermines just that belief, making a theory of individual action necessary. It thus seems plausible to suggest that rational choice theory has had a significant impact on the new institutionalism precisely because it is a theory about individual preferences and rational action.

Because rational choice theory views actions as rational strategies for realizing the preferences of the actor, it has sometimes reduced the motives of political actors to self-interest (Downs 1957). Yet, as most rational choice theorists now recognize, there are no valid grounds for privileging self-interest as a motive. Rational choice theorists have thus enlarged their notion of preference, moving toward a 'thin' analysis of that requires only that motives be consistent. The problem for rational choice theorists has thus become how to fill out this 'thin' notion of preference on specific occasions. At times, they do so by suggesting that preferences are more or less self-evident or that preferences can be assumed from the positions people occupy. Obviously, however, this way of filling out the idea of preference falls prey to our earlier criticism of positivism. At other times, therefore, rational choice theorists have suggested conceiving of people's actions as products of their beliefs and desires without saying anything substantive about

what these beliefs and desires might be (Vicchaeri 1993: 221-4). Here too although we would welcome this decentring gesture, we would suggest that the theory would no longer be rational choice theory in any significant sense. Explanations would be based not on deductions drawn from assumptions of self-interest and utility-maximization, but on appeals to people's multiple, varying, and diverse beliefs and desires.

The purpose of our theoretical reflections is not to undermine all appeals to institutions and rules as explanations of action. Our arguments do not prevent appeals to self-interest or the use of deductive models. We do not deny that quantitative techniques have a role in the study of global security. To reject any of these concepts or tools outright would be hasty and ill-considered. Our theoretical reflections imply only that international relations scholars need to tailor their appeals to institutions, rationality, models, and statistics to recognize that their discipline is an interpretative one focused on the beliefs of relevant actors.

Why traditions?

The forms of explanation we should adopt for beliefs, actions, and practices revolve around two sets of concepts (Bevir 1999: 187-218 and 223-51). The first set includes concepts such as tradition, structure, and paradigm. These concepts explore the social context in which individuals think and act. They vary in how much weight they suggest should be given to the social context in explanations of thought and action. The second

set includes concepts such as dilemma, anomaly, and agency. These concepts explore how beliefs and practices change and the role individual agency plays in such change.

We define a tradition as a set of understandings someone receives during socialization. Although tradition is unavoidable, it is so as a starting point, not as something that governs later performances. We should be cautious, therefore, of representing tradition as an unavoidable presence in everything people do in case we leave too slight a role for agency. In particular, we should not imply that tradition is constitutive of the beliefs people later come to hold or the actions they then perform. Instead, we should see tradition mainly as a first influence on people. The content of the tradition will appear in their later actions only if their agency has led them not to change it, where every part of it is in principle open to change.

Positivists sometimes hold that individuals are autonomous and avoid the influence of tradition. They argue that people can arrive at beliefs through pure experiences, so we can explain why people held their beliefs by referring to those experiences. But once we reject positivism, we need a concept such as tradition to explain why people come to believe what they do. Because people cannot have pure experiences, they necessarily construe their experiences using theories they inherited. Their experiences can lead them to beliefs only because they already have access to the traditions of their community.

A social heritage is the necessary background to the beliefs people adopt and the actions they perform. Some international relations scholars, including some critical theorists and

postmodernists, adopt a strong version of this conclusion. They argue that a social structure, paradigm, episteme, identity or discourse governs not only the actions people can perform successfully but also people's beliefs and desires. Strong structuralists argue that meanings and beliefs are the products of the internal relations of self-sufficient languages or paradigms. They thus leave little, if any, room for human agency. They suggest that traditions, structures, or paradigms determine or limit the beliefs people might adopt and so the actions they might attempt.

Surely, however, social contexts only ever influence – as distinct from define – the nature of individuals. Traditions are products of individual agency. This insistence on agency may seem incompatible with our earlier insistence on the unavoidable nature of tradition. However, our reasons for appealing to tradition allow for individuals to change the beliefs and practices they inherit. Just because individuals start out from an inherited tradition does not imply that they cannot adjust it. On the contrary, the ability to develop traditions is an essential part of people's being in the world. People constantly confront at least slightly novel circumstances that require them to apply inherited traditions anew, and a tradition cannot fix the nature of its application. Again, when people confront the unfamiliar, they have to extend or change their heritage to encompass it, and as they do so, they develop that heritage. Every time they try to apply a tradition, they reflect on it (whether consciously or not) to bring it to bear on their circumstances, and by reflecting on it, they open it to innovation. Thus, human agency can produce change even when people think they are sticking fast to a tradition they regard as sacrosanct.

As humans, people necessarily arrive at their beliefs, and perform their actions, against the background of a tradition that influences those beliefs and actions, but they are also creative agents who have the capacity to reason and act innovatively against the background of that tradition. We are here discussing something like the familiar problem of structure and agency. Like the structuralists, interpretive theory rejects the idea of the self-constituting person. But, unlike many structuralists, interpretive theory does not deny the possibility of agency. It is this commitment to the possibility of agency that makes tradition a more satisfactory concept than rivals such as structure, paradigm, and episteme. These later ideas suggest the presence of a social force that determines or at least limits the beliefs and actions of individuals. Tradition, in contrast, suggests that a social heritage comes to individuals who, through their agency, can adjust and transform this heritage even as they pass it on to others.

Recognition of agency requires international relations scholars to be wary of essentialists who equate traditions with fixed essences to which they credit variations. Interpretive theory here presents tradition as a starting point, not a destination. It thus implies that instances cannot be identified with a tradition based on a comparison of their apparently key features.

A particular relationship must exist between beliefs and practices if they are to make up a tradition. For a start, the relevant beliefs and practices must have passed from generation to generation. Traditions must be made up of beliefs and practices relayed from teacher to pupil to pupils' pupil and so on. Such socialization may be intentional or

unintentional. The continuity lies in the themes developed and passed on over time. As beliefs pass from teacher to pupil, so the pupil adapts and extends the themes linking the beliefs. Although there must a historical line from the start of a tradition to its current finish, the developments introduced by successive generations might result in beginning and end having nothing in common apart from the links over time. Nonetheless, an abstract set of beliefs and practices that were not passed on would be a summary at one point in time, not a tradition. It would not relate moments in time to one another by showing their historical continuity. A tradition must consist of a series of instances that resemble one another because they exercised a formative influence on one another.

In addition to suitable connections through time, traditions must embody suitable conceptual links. The beliefs and practices a teacher passes on to a pupil must display a minimal level of consistency. A tradition could not have provided someone with an initial starting point unless its parts formed a minimally coherent set. Traditions cannot be made up of purely random beliefs and actions that successive individuals happen to have held in common.

Although the beliefs in a tradition must be related to one another both temporally and conceptually, their substantive content is unimportant. As tradition is unavoidable, all beliefs and practices must have their roots in tradition, whether they are aesthetic or practical, sacred or secular, legendary or factual, pre-modern or scientific. Our idea of tradition differs, therefore, from that of people who associate the term with customary, unquestioned ways of behaving (Oakeshott 1962: 123 & 128-9). At the heart of our

notion of tradition are individuals using local reasoning consciously and subconsciously to reflect on and modify their contingent heritage.

Why dilemmas?

Dilemmas provide one way of thinking about the role of individual agency in changing traditions. People's capacity for agency implies that change originates in the responses or decisions of individuals. Whenever someone adopts a new belief or action they have to adjust their existing beliefs and practices to make way for the newcomer. To accept a new belief is thus to pose a dilemma that asks questions of one's existing beliefs. A dilemma here arises for an individual or institution when a new idea stands in opposition to existing beliefs or practices and so forces a reconsideration of these existing beliefs and associated tradition. Scholars of international relations can explain change in traditions, therefore, by referring to the relevant dilemmas. Traditions change as individuals make a series of variations to them in response to any number of specific dilemmas.

It is important to recognize that scholars cannot straightforwardly identify dilemmas with allegedly objective pressures in the world. People vary their beliefs or actions in response to any new idea they come to hold as true. They do so irrespective of whether the new idea reflects real pressures, or, to be precise, irrespective of whether it reflects pressures that scholars of international relations believe to be real. In explaining change,

we cannot privilege our academic accounts of the world. What matters is the subjective, or more usually, intersubjective, understandings of political actors, not our scholarly accounts of real pressures in the world. The task of the social scientist is to recover the shared intersubjective dilemmas of the relevant actors. The task is not to privilege scholarly accounts, although, of course, the pressures social scientists believe to be real may closely resemble the actors' views of the relevant dilemmas.

Dilemmas often arise from people's experiences. However, we must add immediately that this need not be the case. Dilemmas can arise from theoretical and moral reflection as well as experiences of worldly pressures. The new belief that poses a dilemma can lie anywhere on a spectrum from views with little theoretical content to complex theoretical constructs only remotely linked to views about the real world. A good example is the notion of globalization. Globalization is one dilemma that admits of many interpretations. Hay (2002) distinguishes between the economic outcomes of globalization and the effects of the discourse of globalization. The economic effects include the straightforward theory that high taxation drives capital away, a view for which there is little evidence. Nonetheless politicians act as if there is a link between taxation and capital mobility and reduce taxes. The social construction of globalization thus becomes crucial to explaining political actions.

A related point to make here is that dilemmas do not have given, nor even correct, solutions. Because no set of beliefs can fix its own criteria of application, when people confront a new event or belief they necessarily change traditions creatively. It might

look as if a tradition can tell people how to act; how to respond to dilemmas. At most, however, the tradition provides a guide to what they might do. It does not provide rules fixing what they must do. A tradition can provide hints on how its adherents might respond to a dilemma. But the only way to check if an individual's actions are consistent with the beliefs of a tradition is to ask whether the individual and other adherents of the tradition are happy with the relevant actions. Because individuals respond creatively to dilemmas, it follows that change is ubiquitous. Even when people think they are merely continuing a settled tradition or practice, they are typically developing, adjusting, and changing it. Change can occur when people think they are sticking fast to a tradition. Traditions and practices could be fixed and static only if people never met and faced novel circumstances. But, of course, people are always meeting new circumstances. International relations are in perpetual motion.

Although dilemmas do not determine solutions, the scholar of international relations can explain the solutions at which people arrive by appealing to the character of both the dilemma and their existing beliefs. Consider first the influence of the character of the dilemma. To hold on to a new idea, people must develop their existing beliefs to make room for it. The new idea will open some ways of adjusting and close down others. People have to hook it on to their existing beliefs, and their existing beliefs will present some opportunities and not others. People can integrate a new belief into their existing beliefs only by relating themes in it to themes already present in their beliefs. Change thus involves a pushing and pulling of a dilemma and a tradition to bring them together.

INTERPRETIVE THEORY AND GLOBAL SECURITY

Interpretive theory has led us to concentrate on the meanings and beliefs of various policy actors, and, crucially, to explain these beliefs by locating them in historical traditions and as responses to dilemmas. The essays that follow examine how shifts in beliefs and traditions, as well as new dilemmas, explain changes in the ways problems of global security have been addressed by the representatives of states and non-state actors. They generally highlight, therefore, the contingency, diversity, and contestability of the narratives, expertise, and beliefs informing global security practices. For, following interpretive theory, they suggest that practices embody beliefs and these beliefs are laden with the inheritances of various traditions. This emphasis on contingency, diversity, and contestability distinguishes the picture of global security provided by this book from its rivals. In what follows, we suggest that this book thereby challenges the aspiration to comprehensive and formal explanations that often lurks within accounts of global security. In particular, although the chapters in this book echo themes from the literature on global governance, they also transform those themes, providing examples of the decentring of a governance account of global security. Finally, this book thereby opens novel research topics, including the study of ruling narratives, rationalities, and resistance.

Challenging comprehensive theories

Most existing pictures of global security typically aspire to a kind of comprehensiveness that is associated with more formal modes of explanation. That is to say, they tend to obscure the variety and contingency of present-day global security precisely because they reduce it to a formal pattern or cause that defines or explains its other leading features.

Structural realism, for example, aims to provide a general explanation for why certain outcomes occur in international relations. It appeals to the nature of the units (sovereign states) to account for the structure of the system (anarchical) and then to the structure of the system to account for the actions of the units (power-seeking) (Waltz 1979). Structural realists thus account for contemporary practices of global security by referring theorists and practitioners to the distribution of power in the present international system and the 'unipolar' order that it supposedly generates (Ikenberry, Mastanduno and Wohlforth 2009). Similarly, institutionalism and constructivism appeal to rules or norms within institutions to account for the actions of individual agents, non-state actors or states (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Wendt 1992). Establishing the key relevant rules or norms provides a general explanation for particular actions.

Finally, the literature on global governance generally characterizes the new governance in terms of being a response to globalization (Rosenau 1987). It suggests that globalization has caused a decline in the importance and capacity of state actors as they confront new transnational challenges and become increasingly dependent on one another and on non-state actors. The result has allegedly been the spread of networks involving civil society

actors at the expense of both states and international institutions. Likewise, the spread of networks allegedly explains the greater reliance of states and international institutions on 'trust' and 'cooperative' styles of management. From this perspective, global security under the new governance is more or less inherently about growing fragmentation, specialization, transnationalism, and the involvement of civil society.

It is only because all these existing accounts of global security aspire to comprehensiveness based on formal explanations that they appear to be in tension with one another. If present-day global security is entirely about unipolarity, it cannot be about rule-following or new transnational challenges. Likewise, if it is about norms or globalization, it cannot be about American 'hegemony'.

Interpretive theory does away with formal explanations and thus the aspiration to comprehensive accounts of global security. Here the aspiration to a comprehensive account of global security implies that we can define it by reference to one or more of its essential properties. The implications are that these properties are general ones that they characterise all present-day security arrangements. Several international relations scholars also imply that these essential properties can explain at least the most significant other features of contemporary global security. In contrast, our interpretive theory makes all these implications seem implausible. From an interpretive perspective, security practices are products of people's actions. People's actions are not fully determined by anarchical structures, institutional rules, or some logic of globalization, but rather reflect their agency and intentionality. Global security is thus constructed differently by

numerous actors grappling with different issues in different contexts against the background of different traditions. A better grasp of present-day global security might arise, therefore, from accepting that it does not have any essential properties.

In this book, we treat 'global security' as a loose phrase that refers to a number of theories and practices with overlapping features, none of which need always be present. These can include theories and practices associated with realism, institutionalism and constructivism, and global governance, since all of these can be located in the beliefs and actions of agents in the field. We can find them directing state ministries and militaries to try to fulfil certain tasks and we can find them working through international organizations or NGOs to try to establish patterns of rule or to steer other actors. Equally, however, accounts of the new global governance can reveal the myriad ways in which these actors are thwarted and their aspirations and policies subverted by other actors utilising other theories and practices. It is important to remember, in particular, that states and international institutions meet other policy actors who challenge, ignore, or simply misunderstand them. Below them they meet voluntary and private sector actors in civil society and transnational networks. Level with them or above them, they confront other states and transnational organizations. Global security involves contestation at the levels of both theory and practice.

Decentring global governance

There are obvious overlaps between our interpretive theory and its emphasis on a variegated picture of security and the account of security associated with the literature on global governance and security governance in particular (Krahmann 2003; Kirchner and Sperling 2007; Adler and Greve 2009). Both highlight the limited role, power, and effectiveness of states and international institutions. Both also draw attention to the role of transnational actors and networks. Despite these overlaps, however, interpretive theory transforms the concept of global governance. In particular, interpretive theory decentres global governance in a way that creates a new perspective on the topics that dominate much of the relevant literature.

Most discussions of 'global governance' combine attention to new topics with a formal theory that presents these topics as interlinked features of a new world order (e.g. Rosenau 1987). In the first place, the literature on global governance suggests that this new world has come about as a result of globalization and its more or less inexorable systemic effects. In the second place, global governance draws attention to the diverse processes and domains of global security. Global governance is often defined in terms of any activity that contributes to transnational and international patterns of rule (Rosenau 1995). Global governance includes not only the actions of states and international institutions, but also the actions of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Global governance thus shifts attention from sovereign states in an anarchic international society to the creation, enforcement, and change of global patterns of activity. Similarly, global governance and security governance broaden the research agenda from attempts to

prevent and limit war to also encompass attempts to manage failed states, civil wars, terrorism, and the global environment.

Interpretive theory promotes many of the same topics as does the literature on global governance. But it presents these topics less as arising from a new world of globalization and more as arising out of its theoretical break with the kind of formal theories that have come to dominate so much of the study of international relations. From the perspective of this interpretive theory, global security under global governance does not fit into a neat formal and monolithic pattern. On the contrary, the point of the term 'governance' is in part to provide a more diverse view of authority, political action, and ruling. The notion of states alone interacting in an anarchic international system was always a formal myth. The myth obscured the reality of diverse international practices that escaped the control of states and international institutions because they arose from the contingent actions of diverse actors at the boundaries of states and civil societies. The alleged 'new' features of global governance may have spread, but they have always been there. International regimes arise variously from the interactions of international institutions, states, and other policy actors in networks of organisations. Transnational flows and international links have always disrupted borders. Patterns of rule have always crossed the public, private, and voluntary sectors. The boundaries between states and civil societies have always been blurred. Global governance is (and always has been) a complex policy environment in which an increasing number of actors are forging various practices by deploying a growing range of strategies and instruments across multiple jurisdictions, territories, and levels of government.

To understand today's global governance and global security, international relations scholars might appeal not to systemic logics of anarchy or globalization but to new forms of knowledge and the traditions on which theorists and practitioners draw. In so far as security practices have changed, it is because policy actors have adopted new ideas that have led them to remake the world (Bevir and Hall 2011). Perhaps the most important of these ideas have been neoliberal economics, which inspired a greater use of markets and market mechanisms, and the planning and network theories that inspired the spread of 'whole-of-government' and 'joined-up' approaches to governance in many sectors, including that of security. In chapter 2, Mark Bevir and Ian Hall analyse the post-Cold War emergence of these ideas and associated practices in response to a series of dilemmas that provoked theorists and policymakers to question inherited traditions of thought and practice. As interpretive theory rejects appeals to a systemic logic inherent arising from anarchy or globalization, so it decentres the topics associated with global governance as a paradigm for thinking about global security. That is to say, the security practices associated with terrorism, failed states, and civil wars all appear now as products of contingent patterns of activity infused by beliefs that arose against the background of clashing traditions.

New research topics

To decentre global governance is to challenge any straightforward dichotomy between it as a 'new' mode of thinking about and practicing international relations and a supposedly older anarchical international system dominated by states. As we suggested earlier, many 'new' features of global governance may have spread to new actors and new areas, but many have longer histories than commonly acknowledged. Contemporary global governance, in the field of global security as in other fields, mixes the old and the new. Elite actors may be addressing new dilemmas with new practices using new forms of knowledge, but they may continue to do so in the belief that states remain the dominant actors on the international stage. Any account of global security must surely include an account of various states and to their fumbling efforts to realize their policy goals. In chapters 2 to 7, the authors explore a series of these attempts by actors in particular states to achieve their objectives, sometimes utilising old theories and practices, and sometimes utilising new ones.

In this way, interpretive theory decentres states and regional institutions. States no longer appear as black-boxes – formal entities that necessarily act in ways defined by their place in a system or their apparently fixed interests. State policies are, rather, products of struggles among actors inspired by different beliefs rooted in different traditions. Interpretive theory thus foregrounds a set of distinctive research topics, including ruling narratives, rationalities, and resistance. All these topics reflect a shift from formal and systemic modes of explanation to the recovery of the contingent and contested beliefs of policy actors, whether these actors are linked to civil associations, states, transnational organizations, or international institutions.

Ruling narratives are the beliefs and stories by which elite actors make sense of their world. These narratives provide a background against which elites construct their worldviews, including their views of their own interests. Ruling narratives thus inform the policy choices that elites and states make. So, when international relations scholars study ruling narratives, they might ask, for example: what elite beliefs inform national security policy-making? How and why have realist narratives been modified or replaced by other traditions? What changes in elite beliefs generated these new ruling narratives? What dilemmas prompted these changes in elite beliefs?

Rationalities are expert strategies – the technical forms of knowledge – on which policy actors rely to design policies to realize their goals. These rationalities often arise from the formal explanations associated with present-day social science. They purport to tell policy makers what effects markets, laws, networks, and specific policies will have. So, international relations scholars might explore the forms of expertise, especially from the social sciences, have influenced national security policy-making and other practices in global security. They might ask: How do these rationalities aim to address perceived dilemmas? What effects have been produced by the growth of civilian and military funding to academic disciplines like social anthropology and social network analysis? What influence have other rationalities had on policy-making and implementation, especially those generated in disciplines such as International Relations?

Finally, *resistance* occurs because other actors can thwart the intentions of elites. Subordinate actors can resist elites and transform policies by reacting to them in ways that draw on their local traditions and their local reasoning. They can react to policies in ways that are contrary to the models and predictions of social scientists with their social rationalities. Here, therefore, international relations scholars might pose questions such as: what beliefs and traditions have shaped changed modes of resistance to the ruling narratives and rationalities? How have realists thwarted newer traditions of thinking about national security? What other beliefs and traditions have driven movements within national security bureaucracies, universities, think-tanks and other locations that have tried to block the rise of new narratives and rationalities?

In the next chapter, Mark Bevir and Ian Hall show how new policy agendas arose from new security challenges in the post-Cold War period, as well as how policymakers in Western states generated new practices of 'security governance' from new theories of international relations and new theories of public administration. They examine the emergence of new narratives and new rationalities in security governance. In chapters 3 and 4, Sabine Selchow and Daniel Zoughbie explore other ruling narratives. They examine the different ways in which elite American practitioners confronted 9/11 and its aftermath by drawing upon inherited beliefs and practices, as well as applying new thinking to the problem of radical Islamist terrorism. Selchow concentrates on the 'newness' of radical Islamist terrorism and the challenge that it poses to the 'New World', as well as the return, as she puts it, of 'uncertainty' to American narratives about global security. Zoughbie, for his part, analyses the ways in which President George W.

Bush draw upon his religious beliefs and his understanding of the Christian tradition to underpin his foreign and security policies during his terms in office.

Chapter 5 to 7 examine the changing nature of ruling narratives in a series of European states. Oliver Daddow and Jamie Gaskarth chart the shift from what they call 'value protection' to 'value promotion' in British foreign and security policy, emphasising the ways in which post-Cold War practitioners have re-interpreted Britain's role as a 'global power'. Aglaya Snetkov explores the re-casting of Russia's security policy under Vladimir Putin, arguing that his government's approach to contemporary security architecture was grounded not simply in a critical assessment of the 1990s, but also in a new narrative about Russian history and the imperative to be an anti-Western power. Jocelyn Mawdsley, in her chapter, compares the approaches of Britain, France and Germany to the dilemmas posed by missile defence, tracing their differing responses to differing narratives of national roles and national histories.

In chapter 8, Adrian Gallagher analyses post-Cold War responses to the dilemmas generated by genocides and ethnic violence after 1991. He argues that both scholars and practitioners tended to couch these responses in terms of the United Nations Charter, curiously neglecting other possible starting points, including the Genocide Convention. His chapter both points to the ways in which ruling narratives emerge and the ways in which possible alternatives to those narratives are sidelined within elite debate. Christopher Baker-Beall explores similar themes in chapter 9, examining the emergence and development of different narratives about terrorism in the European context.

In the final chapter, Hartmut Behr turns to a past interpretivist approach – that of Hans J. Morgenthau. Behr argues that Morgenthau's insistence on the inescapability of '*standortgebunden*' (stand-points) for social and political theorists. Like other interpretivists, Behr suggests, Morgenthau appreciated the contingency of social and political knowledge, as well emphasising the need for what he calls 'epistemological anti-hubris'.

CONCLUSION

This book aims to address the need for new frameworks of analysis for contemporary practices of global security that go beyond inherited theories. It also aims to move beyond the positivist rejection of beliefs and the tendency of post-positivists, in International Relations at least, to neglect beliefs as a way of explaining actions. International theorists from E. H. Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau onwards have been very sceptical about explaining practices by reference to the beliefs of agents, arguing that we have few or no means of knowing what they belief and why (Carr 1939; Morgenthau 1948). This book suggests that this scepticism is unwarranted. We can gain reliable knowledge of the beliefs of others and we can assume that at least some professions of belief are sincere. Moreover, we have means of assessing the sincerity or otherwise of professed beliefs by subjecting them to well-worn means of analysis.

With all of this in mind, this book argues that beliefs are central to explanation in social science and that international theorists should not be so wary of interpreting beliefs and explaining actions by reference to beliefs. It opens up new topics for research and new approaches to those topics that cannot be utilised within conventional positivist and post-positivist modes of analysis prevalent in international relations. It aims to move the field beyond theories that aspire to comprehensiveness and thus fail to account for old and new practices that fall outside their purview. It aims to demonstrate that global security is best understood as a set of decentred practices responding to multiple dilemmas and grounded in overlapping theories derived from different traditions.

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