

Conceptualizing Security and Development: An Analysis of a Matrix for Security Studies

Paige Percy

Conceptualizing security and development has been a challenge for academics in international relations since the end of the Cold War. In the face of seemingly endless possibilities, many have concluded that we must categorize different types of security in order to achieve an increased understanding of them. This is why Roland Paris created a “matrix of security studies.”¹ However, this categorization leads to a disconnect between security studies and what happens in real life. I will first define Paris’s goal, discuss what he attempts to achieve with his matrix, and then analyze the extent to which he does so. Next, I will discuss whether a matrix is the best way to categorize security and whether it is necessary to categorize it at all. I will then suggest ways to re-imagine security studies in order to appease its critics and improve its compatibility with developmental considerations. I will analyze how this discussion fits into a broader conversation about security studies in relation to the context of human insecurity.

Paris constructed his matrix in response to a widespread push to broaden discussions in security studies.² He suggests using a matrix due to its ability to “classify different types of scholarship” and to help diversify and deepen discussions.³ Traditionally, security studies theorists have used definitions by theorists such as Stephen Walt, who understands security as “the threat, use and control of military force.”⁴ Paris, however, wanted to broaden the scope of security studies to include threats beyond the military and impacts on the state. Paris challenged the traditional assumptions of security studies by developing a matrix that addressed two, previously unanswered questions: What is the source of the security threat? And who is the security for?⁵

Paris’s matrix proposes a reconceptualization of security threats according to their source and intended targets. Paris labels the top left cell in the table “national security,” that is, security for and from the state and its military. This is the traditional understanding of security

FIGURE 1: A Matrix of Security Studies (Adapted from Paris, “Human Security,” 98)

		<i>What is the source of the security threat?</i>	
		Military	Military, nonmilitary, or both
<i>Security for whom?</i>	States	Cell 1: National security (conventional realist approach to security studies)	Cell 2: Redefined security (e.g. environmental and economic security)
	Societies, groups, and individuals	Cell 3: Intrastate security (e.g. civil war, ethnic conflict, and democide)	Cell 4: Human security (e.g. environmental and economic threats to the survival of societies, groups, and individuals)

studies, which dominates most academic articles today. Having this cell is integral, as it recognizes the roots of security studies prior to the Cold War. Realist scholars would place their work in the first cell. This definition of security is also extremely hard to deny; it is generally accepted, and it is at the root of our understanding of military conflicts as security issues. This cell is limited insofar as it fails to account for the impacts of such conflicts on individuals. Furthermore, this definition and its prominent location in Cell 1 could suggest that the national security of the state should come before the security of people. However, it is especially significant because when any of the other three types of conflicts escalate, they may turn into Cell 1-type conflicts. In short, this cell is unambitious and unrevolutionary in its conceptualization of security.

Unlike Cell 1, Cell 2 is a newer conceptualization of security as a combination of threats to the state from non-military actors. Paris calls this cell “redefined security” after the 1989 article by Jessica Tuchman Matthews of the same name.⁶ Matthews’s article has been heavily cited since it was published, and has created its own sub-field of security studies.⁷ Cell 2 specifically examines non-military threats to the state, such as environmental destruction and economic challenges. This cell is valuable insofar as it broadens the scope of security threats in recognition of the fact that contemporary global conflicts will not be fought solely with military force. For example, Cell 2 is equipped to analyze the cyber warfare and environmental conflict that could ensue from the threat of nuclear weapons.

For Paris, Cell 2 poses a host of concerns that begin with making the economy and the environment a security concern. Because the state is still the subject of this cell, it also fails to properly address how individuals are impacted by security threats. Moreover, this cell is far too general and contains far too many issues. Without a clear definition of redefined security, issues like poverty, gender-based violence, and ethnic cleansing could be conceived as posing a threat to all states. Security, thus defined, runs the risk of becoming a political tool for states wishing to violate the principle of non-interference. Redefined security’s lack of clear definition is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

Cell 3, which Paris calls “intrastate security,” focuses on the conflicts that affect sub-state groups.⁸ Intrastate security would cover conflicts such as civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and democide.⁹ Cell 3 recognizes that the military may pose a threat towards people within its own country.

However, this cell does not recognize that intrastate conflict also poses a threat toward the state itself. When analyzing ethnic conflicts or civil wars, the matrix refers to both the state and the society. This reinforces the fact that civil conflict does not impact society or the state exclusively. The state’s security also becomes vulnera-

ble if it appears that it cannot handle the civil conflict. Without including the state in the conversation of intrastate security, whose responsibility is it to deal with civil conflicts? This is an oversight on Paris’s part—ignoring that some sort of institution will need to be involved in rebuilding a state after an ethnic or civil conflict.

Paris called the fourth and final cell “human security.”¹⁰ Cell 4 is concerned with the security of societies, groups, and individuals that are vulnerable to military threats, non-military threats, or both. Paris writes that “this section includes environmental and economic threats to the survival of societies, groups and individuals.”¹¹ Cell 4 can be applied to issues such as poverty, urbanization, and access to medical care.¹² Importantly, the cell recognizes that development is necessary to deal with the security issues at hand. For example, when analyzing whether poverty increases violence in a society, one must understand that economic development is part of the solution. However, this cell does not recognize the consequences of securitization, which include societal issues like poverty. In particular, Cell 4 does not include the risk that human insecurity poses to the state and its institutions. By excluding the state in this analysis of security, Paris overlooks the ways in which the state can be involved in human security and its development. Furthermore, this cell neglects to define what qualifies as a human security issue. It creates an opportunity for involvement from other states and non-state actors. Finally, this cell also leaves the choice of recognizing the conflict to the state itself.

In order to effectively analyze Paris’s matrix, it is useful to examine it from the perspective of two theorists, James Dobbins and Mohammad Ayooob. Both are involved in security studies but have different focuses. James Dobbins, who worked for both the Bush and Clinton Administrations, would be critical of Paris’s security matrix. First, Dobbins would find issue with the matrix’s attempt to categorize the conflict rather than prioritize issues. Dobbins argues that security and security reform both require a comprehensive understanding and design to address the problems of the state.¹³ Since Paris’s matrix forces a categorization of a threat aimed at *either* the state *or* society, we cannot obtain such a comprehensive understanding. By contrast, Dobbins prefers to explore all aspects of a conflict and then prioritize certain security aspects over others.¹⁴ He also promotes institution building, which only two of the matrix’s cells recognize.¹⁵ Dobbins would appreciate Paris’s attempts to include more terminology as a way of influencing priorities; however, he would argue that Paris fails to acknowledge certain aspects of the role that other state actors play in security situations.¹⁶ For example, Paris specifically excludes commitments to the right to protect, humanitarian aid, and so forth. As Dobbins notes, peacekeepers do not enter conflict zones to make them prosperous, but rather to make them peaceful.¹⁷ Hu-

man security, for Dobbins, is a fruitless aspect of security studies when there are other, more urgent priorities that need attention. Thus, Dobbins writes that “this is not to suggest that these tasks should be approached sequentially, but rather that available resources should be distributed among them based on the recognition that if higher order objectives are not met, lower order achievements will ultimately prove transitory.”¹⁸ Because human security and development will not be successful without first focusing on state security, Dobbins suggests that it is pointless for security theorists to attend to Cell 4-type threats.

It is also useful to examine Paris’s matrix through the lens of Mohammad Ayoob, a theorist who focuses on security in the Global South. Specifically, Ayoob focuses on how traditional security studies are incompatible with the Global South.¹⁹ Ayoob and Paris both agree that security studies theorists must move beyond their traditional focus on state and militant actors.²⁰ Ayoob would specifically appreciate the mention of intrastate security, given that it is generally overlooked despite its frequency in the Global South, and particularly in Asia.²¹ However, beyond internal conflicts, Ayoob and Paris’s security ideals diverge when it comes to the categorization of the matrix. Ayoob argues that the security problem of the Global South is that Western states have dominated security studies. Although Paris’s matrix tries to include internal state threats, the matrix does not recognize that internal security threats often become external security conflicts with neighbours.²² Furthermore, Ayoob would be critical of the fact that Paris’s matrix does not recognize or account for the history of colonialism in the Global South. For Ayoob, this is another reason to be wary of narrowly categorizing a state’s security issues. Instead, security studies must be nuanced and variable in order to include the Global South.

Although Paris rightly demonstrates the necessity of including diverse types of scholarship within security studies, his matrix is one-dimensional. There is no reflection of the fact that a conflict can affect *both* the state and society. Conflicts do not happen in isolation—they will always impact both the state and the individuals who live in that state, albeit indirectly. This is especially true when studying post-Cold War conflicts. The implications of security are not a zero-sum game for the state or society, as Paris’s matrix suggests. Because of these shortcomings, Paris’s categorization does not change, aid, or develop our understanding of security studies. When conceptualizing security studies, we cannot keep aiming at a single, comprehensive categorization of security. Ayoob and Dobbins demonstrate that the imposition of narrow categories results in the neglect or oversight of integral aspects of the topic at hand. Security studies must be intersectional—to place it within a box for the sake of labelling it is an injustice to the varied experiences of those being impacted by security conflicts.

Ayoob, Dobbins, and Paris would agree that definitions are integral to security studies and its ideas. However, in light of the above discussion, we must also ask: what is the main object of security studies? Recall that Paris constructed his matrix in response to two questions: “security for whom?” and “what is the source of the security threat?”²³ Other security studies theorists must also reflect on these questions—not only to settle on answers, but also to push the discussion further. Moving forward, security studies theorists must not only debate definitions but also the very questions that drive them. The definition of economic security is only important insofar as it is relevant for how economic fluctuations impact people, states, and how they interact with each other. Defining human security only matters in the

FIGURE 2: Conceptualizing the Scholarship of Security Studies

<i>Type of scholarship</i>	<i>Focus of study, goals, and questions</i>
National security	This scholarship covers and explores the conventional realist approach to security studies. It includes questions such as: how is a states’ security challenged by outside actors? What types of threat result in insecurity for the state?
Redefined security	This type of scholarship examines threats to the state from non-military actors that affect it in new and developing ways. It includes questions such as: in what ways does the environment pose a security threat to states? How can the economy become a security threat?
Intrastate security	This scholarship focuses on the ways in which the military poses a threat to individuals, groups, and societies. The goals and questions of this study include: in what ways do civil conflicts affect the security of the individual? Where and why does democide occur?
Human security	Human security and its associated scholarship focus on the way societies, groups, and individuals are impacted by non-military threats. For example, it considers questions such as: who does the climate crisis impact most?

context of discussing how humans should be treated by other individuals and states.

Although Paris's matrix falls short of fully engaging with these questions, other theorists have provided good suggestions for improving security studies. For instance, Joanna Spear and Paul Williams developed a non-hierarchical table that outlines the different kinds of questions and goals in various forms of security studies scholarship.²⁴ Rather than constructing an inflexible matrix, they developed a list outlining the different types of potential goals and questions of security studies theorists. Spear and Williams draw inspiration from Paris, but their conceptualization is more inclusive, meaningful, and flexible than his matrix.

We may, of course, ask whether Paris selected the correct types of overarching questions to conceptualize security. Still, this table presents a re-imagination of Paris's questions for security studies in a way that could integrally improve future scholarship.

Because there was no fluidity between the cells, Paris's matrix imposed significant constraints. However, a more flexible depiction, like that above, would address the bulk of Ayooob's and Dobbins's critiques, for this type of conceptualization allows for region- and context-specific considerations. By re-imagining security stud-

ies in a manner that guides scholarship, there is more ability to combine and transform the scholarship itself. Re-imagining security studies this way could also favour its interplay with development studies. Paris's matrix only allowed for a limited consideration of development, but this re-imagination of his questions allows for a discussion about the intersection and possible hierarchy between security and development that Dobbins calls for.

Security studies must be malleable, lest it be disconnected from the real world. While theorists categorize security issues to simplify scholarship, doing so comes at a cost. On the other hand, these issues are so complicated that without some conceptual tools, security studies theorists run the risk of never arriving at meaningful conclusions. Rather than remaining stuck in this stalemate, the field must operate according to guiding questions that allow for each situation to be dealt with contextually, with an attention to the individuals and groups who are most affected. Paris's matrix tries to reconcile these extremes by using questions to categorize scholarship, but such inflexible structures preclude intersectionality and often sweep over important regional particularities. Instead of having strict categories, security studies theorists must pursue areas of scholarship with guiding questions, goals, and objectives.

Notes

1. Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?" *International Security* 26, no. 2 (2001): 98, doi:10.1162/016228801753191141.
2. Paris, 97.
3. Paris, 97.
4. Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1991): 212, doi:10.2307/2600471.
5. Paris, "Human Security," 98.
6. Paris, 99.
7. Paris, 99.
8. Paris, 99.
9. Paris, 98.
10. Paris, 98.
11. Paris, 98.
12. Paris, 100.
13. David Chandler, "The Security-Development Nexus and the Rise of 'Anti-Foreign Policy,'" *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10, (2007): 362, doi:10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800135.
14. Chandler, 364.
15. Chandler, 364.
16. Chandler, 364.
17. Chandler, 364.
18. Chandler, 365.
19. Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World," *World Politics* 43, (1991): 257, doi:10.2307/2010473.
20. Ayoob, 261.
21. Ayoob, 263.
22. Ayoob, 263.
23. Paris, "Human Security," 298.
24. Joanna Spear and Paul D. Williams, "Conceptualizing the Security-Development Relationship: An Overview of the Debate," in *Security and Development in Global Politics: A Critical Comparison*, ed. Joanna Spear and Paul D. Williams (Georgetown University Press, 2012), 21.