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The 'value' of positive security

PAUL ROE*

Abstract. This article seeks to revise the concept of Positive Security. Although largely neglected by the existing Security Studies literature, Bill McSweeney's work otherwise represents a significant contribution in this regard. The author argues, however, that although of great value, McSweeney's positive security formulation is unduly restrictive in terms of the referent object and to the sectors of security it is applicable to, and cannot unproblematically be equated to ontological security, as McSweeney's work tends to do. Employing Graham Smith's notion of a 'generic' security conception, and placing positive security more firmly in the peace studies tradition, the author suggests rather that a revised concept be predicated on the defence of 'just' values.

Introduction

Writing shortly after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, Salman Rushdie outlined the response that the 'West' must take in order to defeat fundamentalist terror. Challenging the view expressed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that we should define ourselves not only by what we are for but by what we are against, Rushdie advocated the reverse proposition: calling what we are against in such circumstances to be a complete 'no-brainer'! He explains:

> Suicide bombers ram wide-bodied aircraft in the World Trade Centre and kill thousands of people: um, I'm against this. But what are we for? What will we risk our lives to defend? . . . The fundamentalist believes that we believe in nothing. In his world-view, he has absolute certainties, while we are sunk in sybaritic indulgences. To prove him wrong, we must first know that he is wrong. We must agree on what matters: kissing in public places . . . disagreement, cutting-edge fashion, literature, generosity, water . . . music, freedom of thought, beauty, love. These will be our weapons. Not by making war, but by the unafraid way we choose to live shall we defeat them . . . How to defeat terrorism? Don't be terrorized. Don't let fear rule your life. Even if you are scared.[1]

Rushdie's image of what we are for, of 'what matters', conjures up a *positive* image of security, and one which runs counter to its usual conception in International

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[1] Salman Rushdie, 'Let's Get Back to Life', *The Guardian*, 6 October 2001.

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Relations (IR): as Arnold Wolfers noted as far back as 1962, defined as the 'freedom from' threat, security is, in this sense, very much a *negative* concept.[2]

Within IR, the distinction between freedom from (negative) and freedom to (positive) is very much accepted. But, given the importance of this dichotomy for thinking about the very meaning of security, it is somewhat surprising, however, that more scholarly reflection has not been apparent. More recently, the notion of positive security has been alluded to by a number of writers. Jef Huysmans, for example, noting the possibility of changing the 'conservative bias of the security language' suggests that '[t]his would require a positive conception of security that defines liberation from oppression as a good that should be secured'.[3] Similarly, Gunhild Hoogensen and Svein Vigeland Rottem point out that '[i]n addition to reorienting the security referent from the state to the individual, human security embodies a positive image of security', one '[n]o longer focused on the negative 'absence of threat' approach . . .'.[4] That human security is relevant for thinking about security in positive terms is therefore apparent. Indeed, Bill McSweeney writes that positive security invokes the 'property of a relationship', and that such a conception is 'more human'.[5] However, with the notable exception of McSweeney, positive security remains mostly excluded from current thinking. In his 1999 book *Security, Identity and Interests*, McSweeney makes the case for its inclusion.

The foundation for McSweeney's thinking lies in the contrast between the nominative form of the word with its adjectival usage; while the noun 'security' invariably refers to an object that needs to be protected, the adjective 'secure' suggests 'enabling, making something possible'.[6] This, McSweeney explains, refers to a situation where security is not just something that one provides for another, but more so 'a property of a relationship, a quality making each secure in the other'.[7] Positive security thus relates to the securities and insecurities that individuals, and the communities in which individuals live, routinely create for one another; that is to say, the normal concerns of most people, most of the time. Elemental in this respect, McSweeney argues, is the (human) need for ontological security. Ontological security refers to the maintenance of the day-to-day routines that provide us with a sense of who we are and how we relate to others. It is about the confidence we have in managing our relations, where confidence in this sense derives from our common, shared identity as human.

Positive security is not in this way intended to replace the negative, state-centric and military-centric security of the traditionalists, as secure in the adjectival form may sometimes require security in the nominative. Rather, positive security is something additional:

> [O]ne view of security [the negative] dominates the academic discipline and is presented not as . . . a choice, but as the only one which is valid and relevant. . . . I want to show that

[2] Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 153.
[3] Jef Huysmans, 'Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: The Normative Dilemma of Writing Security', *Alternatives*, 27, Special Issue (2002), p. 59.
[4] Gunhild Hoogensen and Svein Vigeland Rottem, 'Gender Identity and the Subject of Security', *Security Dialogue*, 35:2 (2004), pp. 157–8.
[5] Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 14–15.
[6] Ibid, p. 14.
[7] Ibid, pp. 14–15.

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there is a choice; that the alternative image is indispensable to making sense of the [security] concept.[8]

However, most valuable though this alternative image is, in this article I argue that there are two problems with McSweeney's approach. The first is that a concern with human security, in particular a concern with human needs, creates an overly restrictive focus in terms of the referent object of security. My argument in this respect is that other entities, especially the state, can, and indeed *should*, pursue positive security. While I accept that it is problematic to conceive of the state as having 'needs' as such, utilising the work of Graham Smith[9] I instead propose that, like individuals, states are constituted by and promote 'values'. The second is that a focus on ontological security reveals that identities are often successfully secured through identification with enemies as well as with friends. Ontological security is, in this sense, both positive and negative, and it serves to question the very meaning of 'positive'. As such, I predicate the distinction between positive and negative on a normative judgement over the values that are pursued, suggesting that positive values be defined according to the promotion of 'justice'. While states, therefore, may well pursue foreign and security policy routines in order to secure their identities, not all such routines, I argue, will be consistent with positive security.

In this first part of the article, I discuss the main aspects of McSweeney's positive security formulation: first, its relation to human security and human 'needs'; second, its equation to ontological security; and third, thereby, also its distinction to so-called 'traditional' security. In the second part of the article I then move on to look closer at the potential problems mentioned; the restriction of the referent to the individual level, and the relationship between positive security and ontological security. In the third part I introduce Smith's work with a view to providing a revised positive security concept. While finally, in the conclusion, I offer some tentative thoughts on the compatibility of this revised concept with the use of force in world politics; in particular, set against the so-called 'war on terror'.

Positive security for the individual

The meaning of security, McSweeney contends, is dependent on a judgement about human needs. However, over and above the claim that they are more than just threats to physical survival, objectively 'their [human needs] ranking in an abstract hierarchy', McSweeney notes, 'is notoriously contentious'.[10] Rather, any such hierarchy, he argues, is normatively determined. The reason for this is that many human needs are culturally and/or ideologically dependent, and some societies thereby provide for some needs better than others. Nevertheless, for McSweeney human needs 'raise the question of the positive dimension of security and security policy'.[11] This is shown by analogy to health. Many states make significant provision for health policy, but

[8] Ibid.
[9] Graham M. Smith, 'Into Ceberus' Lair: Bringing the Idea of Security to Light', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 7:4 (2005).
[10] McSweeney, p. 153.
[11] Ibid, p. 92.

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where health is conceived in terms of combating disease, often through the use of high technology. However, McSweeney goes on:

> [T]here are other, more positive and arguably better ways of conceiving of health, with corresponding differences in health policy and the organization of medicine as a profession. Disease is to health what material threat is to security: a significant hazard which cannot be ignored, but not its defining characteristic. Health is not just about disease and the threat of disease; neither can it be claimed that 'security is about survival' and security policy 'the pursuit of freedom from threat'.[12]

Its corollary, McSweeney explains, is that a negative concept of health downplays other, positive factors, such a nutrition, physical fitness, public hygiene, and health education. This is where so-called 'health professionals' 'promote the recourse to curative medicine without adequately balancing their significance to the overall quality of life'.[13] The analogy demonstrates ably how a negative conception of health (security) may unduly limit both the range of policy options and the number of individuals or groups empowered to make decisions and carry out actions.[14]

The problem, though, as McSweeney duly acknowledges, is how to impose limits on a positive security concept:

> If we widen the definition of health to encompass the welfare of the individual in all its dimensions . . . we weaken our ability to allocate resources to a coherent and manageable health policy. Similarly an exhaustive concept of security embracing all that contributes to human well-being, as well as the perceived threats to it, would indeed be comprehensive, but useless.[15]

Although in this way there are 'no easy answers to the problem of what to include or exclude', McSweeney nonetheless urges a rejection of the notion that locating the meaning of security at the level of the individual makes the 'study and practice of international security impossible'.[16]

In this regard, McSweeney's concerns reflect the current debate between proponents of so-called 'narrow' and 'broad' formulations of human security. Proponents of the narrow conceptualisation favour 'freedom from fear', or 'death by politics', as a guiding principle. Threats to human security are ones of political violence: how governments murder, imprison, and discriminate against individuals and groups within the state. Proponents of the broad formulation, however, favour 'freedom from want', or 'death by economics', and contend that human security relates to something more than just defence against physical threats. These writers point to a much wider range of issues that include environmental catastrophes, disease and poverty. For those promoting a narrow conception, human security relates to a 'coherent practical and intellectual agenda',[17] while broadening the concept simply

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] A similar point is made by Didier Bigo. He talks of so-called 'security professionals'; national and local police organisations, military police, border guards, custom guards, armies, and so forth, who manage risk and fear. Such security professionals 'transfer the legitimacy they gain from struggles against terrorists, criminals, spies, and counterfeiters' towards other targets in order to support their own interest; competition for budgets and for competencies. Bigo, 'Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease', *Alternatives*, 27, Special Edition (2002), pp. 63–4.
[15] McSweeney, p. 93.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Keith Krause, 'The Key to a Powerful Agenda, if Properly Delimited', *Security Dialogue*, 35:3 (2004), p. 368.

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'makes the establishment of priorities in human security policy difficult'.[18] However, supporters of a broad formulation maintain that the narrow definition 'falsifies the policy process',[19] and that although the broad conception of human security certainly brings with it analytical difficulties, these are 'unavoidable consequences of broadening the security paradigm beyond the threats to the state'.[20]

At first glance, McSweeney's approach to positive security seems to place him very much alongside those proposing a broad human security concept (moving away from just the defence against physical threats that characterises the negative formulation). On a second look, however, his work can be situated more accurately in between the two approaches. This is because some of the threats included as part of death by economics are necessarily excluded from consideration. McSweeney explains it thus:

> Those threats which are grounded in the purposive behaviour of other actors – social threats – are distinguishable in terms of the policy required to address them from those which arise from the chance occurrences of the natural order and require different measures.[21]

In short, natural threats are 'unintended'. Environmental disasters, for example, are not the result of the purposive behaviour of others;[22] they require the 'mobilization of quite different resources', and cannot, therefore, 'fall under the category of security'.[23] More than this, though, McSweeney also notes that the definition of human security threats is 'anchored in the judgment that they arise from, and relate to, the quality of relationships between communities, collectivities, states'.[24] As such, the sources of security and insecurity focus on the relationship between referents, and thus 'excludes natural threats to human welfare, including threats to health and the environment . . .'.[25]

McSweeney argues that the ranking of human needs is a normative judgement which may be informed by 'the attempt to locate the meaning of security in the common experience of individuals'.[26] However, it is evident that although physical threats to the human subject are too narrow upon which to do so, the expansion of threats, in which a rendering of security brings with it natural dangers, is itself too broad. The limits, therefore, are set by the securities and insecurities of social relations: how human interactions produce safety and danger for the individual subject and for human communities.[27] In short, security is a property of the social world.

[18] S. Neil MacFarlane, 'A Useful Concept that Risks Losing its Political Salience', *Security Dialogue*, 35:3 (2004), p. 369.
[19] Ramesh Thakur, 'A Political Worldview', *Security Dialogue*, 35:3 (2004), pp. 347–8.
[20] Taylor Owen, 'Human Security – Conflict, Critique and Consensus: Colloquium Remarks and a Proposal for a Threshold-Based Definition', *Security Dialogue*, 35:3 (2004), p. 375.
[21] McSweeney, p. 89.
[22] Or environmental disasters are at least very rarely down to the purposive behaviour of others. Among the few possible exceptions might be the deliberate damming of rivers in order to cause environmental degradation further downstream in neighbouring countries.
[23] McSweeney, p. 89.
[24] Ibid, pp. 95–6.
[25] Ibid, p. 99.
[26] Ibid, p. 154.
[27] Here, McSweeney's position resembles that of Kanti Bajpai. Bajpai argues for an essentially broad human security concept, but also makes clear that this should include only threats deriving from human agents. Bajpai, 'Human Security: Concept and Measurement', Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Occasional Paper, no.19, 2000.

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Positive security as ontological security

McSweeney defines the security of social relations as 'the confidence in our capacities to understand, monitor and manage them in day-to-day activities'.[28] In other words, his concern lies with the condition of ontological security. Together with a concentration on the notion of 'risk', thinking about ontological security has more recently come to define a relatively distinct body of literature, sometimes referred to as Reflexive Security Studies.[29] Contributions in this regard have borrowed mostly from Anthony Giddens.[30] And it is to Giddens, therefore, that I briefly turn next.

According to Giddens, ontological security refers to the individual's ability to act, to exist with a stable identity; to 'go on' with everyday activities.[31] It concerns a 'person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety.'[32] Trust, in this sense, is confidence in the reliability of social interactions with others; that is to say, an expectation that others will treat you in a predictable way. Existential anxiety refers to the knowledge that within everyday life lies the 'chaos' of a plurality of potential dangers; that you might be attacked while walking home, a car might run you down, your husband/wife might leave you, or you might get sacked from your job. Awareness of all such possibilities all of the time generates tremendous anxiety, leaving the individual unable to act and thus 'be' himself/herself.

Jennifer Mitzen describes ontological insecurity as the 'incapacitating fear of not being able to organize the threat environment'.[33] Referring to the aftermath of 11 September attacks, she goes on to describe such a condition:

> [P]eople in the US found it difficult to do anything: go to work, cross a bridge, ride the subway. It was hard to leave the house, but it was also hard to stay at home, because the sense of uncertainty and threat was pervasive. No one knew where the threat was from or what might happen, whether you might be a target, your family, or your friends. People could not cognitively organize the threat environment, in that whatever you decided to do could cause harm. Or, at least, you could not prevent it.[34]

Anxiety, or uncertainty in this respect, is therefore an identity threat; it brings into question the individual's cognitive stability. Unable to answer questions about acting and being, he/she will feel ontologically insecure.

[28] McSweeney, p. 208.
[29] See, for example, Claudia Aradau & Rens Van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (un)Knowing the Future', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:1 (2007); Huysmans, 'Security! What do you Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier', *European Journal of International Relations*, 4:2(1998); Catarina Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security', *Political Psychology*, 25:4 (2004); Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, ''A Parallel Globalization of Terror'; 9–11, Security and Globalization', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 37:3 (2002); Rasmussen, 'It Sounds Like a Riddle: Security Studies, the War on Terror and Risk', *Millennium*, 33:4 (2004).
[30] Although foundational work on ontological security can also be attributed to the Scottish psychiatrist, R. D. Laing. See Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Penguin, 1960).
[31] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 35–6.
[32] Giddens, quoted in Kinvall, p. 746.
[33] Jennifer Mitzen, 'Anchoring Europe's Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2 (2006), p. 273.
[34] Ibid.

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The answer to ontological insecurity is 'routinization'. When a person develops routines, the cognitive stability of his/her environment is established. Routinsation 'regularizes social life making it, and the self, knowable'.[35] With a basic trust in others, the individual can go about his/her day-to-day business with a reasonable expectation that many of the dangers in life can simply be put to one side.[36] This does not mean that car crashes, divorces, and the like will simply cease to occur; that is to say, it is not about the objective level of uncertainty. Rather, subjectively feeling certain about social life shields the individual from constant thinking about such dangers.

Set against this particular formulation of ontological security, Salman Rushdie's comments at the beginning of this article appear to make some sense: 'agreeing on what matters', and the 'unafraid way we choose to live' certainly seem to indicate the reassertion of daily lives; the re-establishment of existing routines. And this is also what Mitzen seems to have in mind:

> That is why in the days after 11 September, government and the media urged us to go back to our routines: go to work, fly, spend money. The message was that getting back to normal, much less getting over the tragedy, was to re-establish routines.[37]

As the title of Rushdie's piece makes it quite clear: 'Let's get back to life'!

Similarly, McSweeney writes that ontological security relates to the 'sense that the social order as practically conceived is normal, consistent with one's expectations, and skills to go on in it. It is a security of social relationship, that is to say a sense of being safely in cognitive control of the situation'.[38] Ontological security thus equates to the trusting relationships, which are themselves also derivative from other human needs.

Ontological and physical security

As previously discussed, a concern with human needs involves more than just physical survival. Although the physical security of the individual through military defence may sometimes 'constitute the only sensible strategy', this, however, can only be part of a security policy designed to ensure the needs of individuals.[39] The other part must satisfy security in the sense of 'being'; that is to say, security policy must refer to identity as well as to physicality.

Brent Steele similarly makes the distinction between 'traditional' security and ontological security; characterising traditional security as 'security as survival', and

[35] Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:3 (2006), p. 346.

[36] Here, my emphasis on a basic trust in others buys largely into the same 'socially dependent' formulation of ontological security as that employed by Mitzen. Others, however, such as Catarina Kinnvall, seek also to emphasise a more psychoanalytical approach. Kinnvall argues that 'too strong an emphasis on social context tends to ignore the emotional dimension of subjectivity'. Kinnvall, p. 752. Laing's work, moreover, stresses more the securing of self-identity through time, where the pursuit of ontological security does not presuppose any identification with an 'Other'. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing my attention to these points.

[37] Mitzen, 'Anchoring Europe's Civilizing Identity, p. 273.

[38] McSweeney, p. 156.

[39] Ibid.

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ontological security as 'security as being'.[40] With security as survival, the referent faces physical harm if it is unable to counter material (military) threats. For the individual, this can result in either bodily injury or death. For the state, military threats can cause damage to and the destruction of its territory. With security as being, harm to the referent is manifest as 'shame'. As Steele explains, this is caused by the difference between 'biographical narrative and actual behaviour'; that is to say, by the difference between how the referent thinks of itself and what the referent does.[41] And Steele argues that states as well as individuals can feel shame in this way. I will talk more about the state and ontological security in the following part. For the moment, it is suffice to reiterate that traditional security concerns threats to bodies (physicality), while ontological security concerns threats to identities.

Although in this way much in keeping with Steele, McSweeney sees the importance of the ontological security/physical security dichotomy not only in terms of identity as opposed to physicality but also 'normal' as opposed to 'abnormal' conditions. Normal conditions relate to most human needs; what most people need most of the time to make them feel secure. By contrast, abnormal conditions, as the very term suggests, do not relate to most people, not to most places, and not to most of the time. Abnormal conditions reflect 'threat to the territorial survival of a state and the physical survival of its people . . .'.[42]

In one sense, physical survival is primary:

> A car bomb or a Russian missile can destroy the fabric of our lives more comprehensively than a fall in share prices, an unwanted pregnancy, a street mugging, or any other of the countless threats visit us on a regular basis. If a street mugging worries us, the realist story implies, how much more will an ICBM twenty minutes after launch from its base. The logic is unassailable.[43]

In another sense, however, physical survival is not primary. The threat from ICBMs, for example, is not normal: 'most of us do not live our lives in the terror of the London Blitz, but in the presence of the network of risk attendant on ordinary life in an urban setting'.[44] Thus, although physical security is of course 'a logical precondition of doing anything [inasmuch] that we remain physically alive and capable of doing it', it is only important for us 'if we live in the jungle where this level of security is empirically the most pervasive and common concern'.[45]

For much of the time, human needs can thus be separated from traditional security concerns. For some of the time the state and the military will be relevant;

[40] Huysmans also makes the distinction between ontological security and what he calls 'daily security'. However, differently to Steele, for Huysmans ontological security relates more to an epistemological condition than a particular fixing of identity. Approaching ontological security not only through Giddens but also through the work of Zygmunt Bauman, Huysmans begins by arguing that security relations are constituted by a 'double fear': the first being the fear of physical death; the second being the fear of uncertainty, which is an epistemological fear. Physical fear (daily security) involves the identification and countering of unambiguous (material) threats; the maintenance of a particular order. In this way, daily security seeks to distinguish friends from enemies. Epistemological fear (ontological security) concerns rather 'how to order social relations while simultaneously guaranteeing the very activity of ordering itself'. Huysmans, 'Security! What Do You Mean', p. 242.

[41] Brent J. Steele, 'Ontological Security and the Power of Self Identity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War', *Review of International Studies*, 31:3 (2005), p. 527, table 1.

[42] McSweeney, p. 176.

[43] Ibid, p. 153.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

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after all, physical security is very much a human need. But physical security is not always the most salient. For McSweeney, although security as survival thus remains an essential (negative) element in our thinking about what security means, security as being (positive security) is equally, if not often more vital in informing security policy.

For McSweeney, two complimentary assumptions serve to relate ontological security to the individual referent: one, states are not humans and logically, therefore, cannot have human needs; and two, because states are not humans they cannot have psychologies either and, thereby, cannot be subject to ontological security concerns. However, as briefly alluded to, Steele argues that, like humans, states can indeed behave in accordance with feelings of shame. Likewise, Mitzen's work is also predicated on the applicability of ontological security at the state level. Thus, can the state really be seen as an ontological (positive) security seeker?

The state as an ontological (positive) security seeker

Mitzen offers three reasons why ontological security is applicable to states. The first is that IR scholars 'routinely assume that states seek physical security', and that physical security-seeking assumes that states have something like 'bodies'.[46] Although attributing physical security to states is also problematic, it is, in Mitzen's view, certainly no more so than the assumption that states have ontological security concerns. The matter, she goes on, is therefore not so much one specifically of physical security as opposed to ontological security, but one generally of state personhood. The second reason is that states provide for the ontological security requirements of their populations. Mitzen argues that the identities of individuals is secured through the cognitive stability of the society, and that such stability is often maintained through the routinisation of relations between societies, meaning, in this case, states. And the third reason is that ontological security seeking provides an alternative explanation for certain foreign and security policy outcomes.[47]

Taking Mitzen's second reason first, for sure the state can provide ontological security for the individual. Although it is questionable whether the individual's need for ontological security can be satisfied in the manner Mitzen describes, the very fact that the state ensures some measure of stability and predictability through, for instance, the application of the rule of law and various social welfare provisions, nevertheless clearly demonstrates its importance to ontological security. But the state as a provider of ontological security is not the same as the state as a referent object. The state as a referent object is both an analytical and a normative matter, and can be tackled through taking together Mitzen's first and third reasons.

In his discussion of 'the state as person', Alexander Wendt also notes that while scholars disagree about which particular human properties states can be ascribed, nevertheless 'discussion assumes that the idea of state personhood is meaningful and at some fundamental level make sense'.[48] He also acknowledges, however, that most IR scholars reject the notion that states are 'real' persons. The concept of state

[46] Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics', p. 351.
[47] Ibid, p. 352.
[48] Alexander Wendt, 'The State as Person in International Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 30:2 (2004), p. 289.

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personhood has utility in terms of building theory, 'but does not refer to anything with ontological standing in its own right'; states may well behave 'as if' they were persons, but they themselves do not really exist.[49] Proceeding in accordance with this 'as if' sense of state personhood, Steele, for example, argues that ontological security concerns can account for (armed) humanitarian intervention:

> [L]iberal regimes may not feel *guilty* when they fail to act in a humanitarian crisis (because no rule existed requiring action), but they do feel *shame* because such inaction was inconsistent with their sense of integrity and self-identity, and because allowing humanitarian disasters to unfold threatens that regime's self-identity. . . . '[H]umanitarian acts' . . . [thus] fulfil a sense of self-identity and ensure a state's ontological security.[50]

Defined in this way as the securing of identity through foreign and security policy routines, there are many such examples of the state arguably pursuing ontological security. The building of pluralistic security communities readily comes to mind.[51] Indeed, Mitzen writes that the deepening of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) can be seen as a cooperative routine through which the EU stabilises its 'civilizing' identity.[52] There are, however, two problems here. The first, as Mitzen's work also makes apparent, is that because of the need for ontological security even an attachment to competitive/conflictual routines can provide states with the stable self-identity that they seek. This, she argues, can explain why states may be unable to escape their security dilemmas.[53]. This is a question of positive and negative identification with others, and I will deal with this in the following section. The second is a normative question, and one that I consider briefly here.

In both Steele and Mitzen's work, the state as a referent object is an *analytical* move. The application of ontological security provides an alternative (to the traditional concern with physical security) explanation for state behaviour. For McSweeney, however, the applicability of the state depends not on its analytical value but on a *normative* judgement.[54] The state, indeed, is functional for the protection of the individual and its needs; McSweeney mentions the so-called 'Petersberg Tasks' on the part of NATO and the Western European Union (WEU) as indicative. But without possessing of (human) needs, the protection of the state cannot be the ultimate purpose of (a positive) foreign and security policy. Wendt agrees that 'only if state persons are real do we need to worry about their normative

[49] Ibid, p. 316.
[50] Steele, p. 528.
[51] For the literature on pluralistic security communities, see especially Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For the literature more generally on self-identity and foreign and security policy, see Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
[52] Mitzen defines a 'civilizing' identity as entailing, amongst other things, a commitment to multilateralism and the pursuit of representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice, and human rights in its foreign policy. See Mitzen, 'Anchoring Europe's Civilizing Identity'.
[53] Mitzen suggests that potentially applicable cases in this regard are superpower competition between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the failure of the Oslo Accords. See Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics'.
[54] Referring to Poststructural and Social Constructivist approaches to security, McSweeney accepts that states can acquire identities; endogenously from domestic culture and exogenously from interactions in the international system. Although analogous to individuals in this way, he nevertheless firmly rejects the proposition that states are real persons. See especially Chapter Nine, 'Seeing a Different World: A Reflexive Sociology of Security'.

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status'. But he disagrees with McSweeney exactly over that status. Responding to the question '*should* states be persons', Wendt responds:

> I believe that a strong argument can be made that they should, notwithstanding its potential costs: states help bring order, and yes, even justice to the world, and if we want to have states then it is better they take the form of persons . . . because this will help make their effects more politically accountable.[55]

In a normative sense, whether ontological (positive) security is applicable at the state level thus seems to depend on a judgement over whether states are indeed real persons, whether states can have human needs. And this is a most difficult question to answer. For much of the same reason that Wendt gives, while on the one hand I want to agree with him that states should be persons, on the other hand I also, like McSweeney, tend to disagree over the attribution of certain human qualities; in particular, psychological requirements. As such, later in the article, I instead propose the utility of Graham Smith's work on security, orders, and values. In doing so, I argue that while perhaps not possessing of 'needs' as such, like humans, states and other entities are also constituted by 'values'. Next, however, I move on to the second problem; how ontological security can be secured through both positive and negative identification with others.

Positive and negative identification

As was previously discussed, routinisation is the counter to ontological insecurity. Routinisation establishes cognitive stability, thus regularising social life. But what of the routines that individuals/communities pursue? The important question here, borrowing from Felix Berenskoetter, is whether such routines entail a 'positive' or 'negative' identification with others.[56]

According to Mitzen, actors can develop one of two types of basic trust; either maladaptive/rigid or healthy/(flexible). Actors with flexible basic trust are able to maintain a critical distance from their routines. Because in this way routines are reflexively held, multiple identities can be enacted and interests thereby pursued. In a condition of uncertainty, flexible basic trust manifests itself as experimentation and learning. By contrast, actors with rigid basic trust try to avoid existential anxiety by 'clinging to routines'.[57] Because uncertainty threatens the sense of self, endangers the stability of one's identity, the answer to this is to reinforce that identity, to reassert the self. There is no experimentation. There is no learning. And, as Mitzen goes on, 'this is done especially by projecting negative aspects of the Self onto an Other . . .'.[58]

The Other as 'Anti-Self' is, as Berenskoetter points out, the dominant view among IR scholars working with the concept of identity. The Other is what the Self is not: different, foreign, an outsider. Indeed, as Berenskoetter correctly identifies, the role of the Other is invariably that of the enemy.[59] In other words, it is a 'negative'

[55] Wendt, p. 316.
[56] Felix Berenskoetter, ' "Survival" and "Friendship" in International Politics', Paper for the 47th ISA Convention, San Diego, USA, 22–26 March 2006.
[57] Mitzen, 'Anchoring Europe's Civilizing Identity', p. 274.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Berenskoetter, p. 10.

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conception of the Other. Accordingly, Catarina Kinnvall describes the search for a stable identity as an endeavour to 'securitize subjectivity'. 'Securitizing subjectivity always involves a stranger-other, because the self is not a static object but is part of a larger process of identity construction'.[60] Drawing on Huysmans, Kinnvall writes of how the stranger needs to be turned into an enemy: 'The 9/11 attacks, for instance, were made possible because of the perpetrators' ability to see the passengers on the planes and those working at the World Trade Center and Pentagon as enemies rather than strangers'.[61]

The alternative, however, Berenskoetter notes, is a 'positive' conception of the Other: the meaning of the role of 'friends' in international politics. 'The positive conception of the Other emphasizes that identity is not only about difference but also about sameness, about identifying with something/-one 'familiar'. In this respect, the Other takes on not the role of . . . enemy, but as a . . . *friend*'.[62]

In McSweeney's work, although the security of social relations is not necessarily one of friendship, it is indeed one of sameness; it is about a shared collective identity as 'human'. 'The sameness of human behaviour, its pattern, its regularity, its routines . . . capture the sense of 'order' in the concept of social order'.[63] In this way, ethno-national and religious divisions, for example, represent a fundamental identity divide. When such divisions produce senses of 'us' and 'them', a basic, human commonality has been broken. The social relationship is ruptured, and ontological insecurity is the result.[64]

For McSweeney, the response to ontological insecurity is management; the management of identities. Management in this sense is the reconstruction of particular identities. Identities are reconstructed in such a way that common, human identity markers are privileged over more divisive ones. And this shared identity brings with it 'the confidence of actors . . . to interact and sustain order or routine'.[65] Here, positive security is therefore a particular way of conceiving the relationship between communities; a conception predicated on the realisation of human commonalities.[66]

Although ontological security is perhaps most often pursued through a negative identification, a positive identification, the importance of friends and of sameness, is therefore also relevant; again, take the kind of cooperatives routines pursued by many European states in the building of a pluralistic security community. What this shows, however, is that in this sense ontological security is both positive and negative. For McSweeney, ethno-national and religious identity markers serve to rupture social relations. For Kinnvall, however, the very same markers provide ontological

[60] Kinnvall, p. 749.
[61] Ibid, p. 754.
[62] Berenskoetter, p. 11.
[63] McSweeney, p. 142.
[64] Ibid, pp. 157–8.
[65] Ibid, p. 209.
[66] Ontological security allows agency, and having such agency also enables the pursuit. As McSweeney points out, however, such a process is not only an 'identity first' one: 'What we want follows from who we are'. It can also be an 'interests first' one: 'Interests can play the decisive role in triggering the process of identity transformation. We are who we want to be'. Thus, he goes on: 'We misunderstand . . . ontological security . . . if we restrict analysis to the cognitive, cultural dimension, however. Material resources play a central role in both. . . . [W]ith the construction and management of collective identity . . . [m]aterial interests interact with cognitive options to influence the choice of identity'. McSweeney, pp. 127 and 209.

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security for many such groups faced with the chaos produced by globalisation processes. As she puts it: 'The combination of religion and nationalism is a particularly powerful response . . . in times of rapid change and uncertain futures, and is therefore more likely than other identity constructions to arise during crises of ontological insecurity'.[67]

The problem here is compounded by the sometimes erroneous assumption that friends, that sameness, is necessarily positive. I may, for example, have some friends of a rather disreputable character, which, of course, also says something about me. Similarly, some states may count among their friends other regimes that disrespect and abuse human and minority rights. The matter here, therefore, not only concerns positive/negative identification with others, but also the very meaning of 'positive'. In terms of its clearly ethical connotations, my suggestion in this respect is that the meaning of positive be returned more to the peace studies tradition, in that it refer to the promotion of 'justice' in world politics. Dictators can be 'friends' with other dictators, but it is unlikely that they will subscribe, to any great extent at least, to the kind of just values intersubjectively established by most states in the international system.

Security, orders and values

According to Smith, security cannot be seen as a value in itself. Rather, security is 'the reflection of, and an attitude towards other values and especially the core values of the order'. More specifically, it is a 'reflection of the relative success or failure to secure' these values.[68]

Smith defines an order as a political entity comprising of two related components: values, which define the order itself; plus a membership, who subscribe to the values of the order. The values of the order are intersubjectively established by its members and, in doing so, are 'privileged over other possible values that which might be subscribed to'; they become core values.[69] In turn, the members try to realise core values in their institutionalisation of particular relations, practices, and discourses. The existence of an order thus depends on the maintenance of its core values, and the maintenance of core values is achieved by protecting the institutions that 'best preserve and promote these values'.[70]

In this context, security policy relates to the actions of political entities in defence of particular conceptions of order. Or, put slightly differently, doing security is the identification and survival of the core values of the order. Here, Smith is drawing on Wolfers' assertion that security 'points to some degree of protection of values previously acquired', and that 'a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice its core values'.[71] The problem, Smith notes, is that with state-centric and human-centric approaches to security 'both suffer from the same category of limitations. They fail to adequately recognise that security threats can

[67] Kinnvall, p. 741.
[68] Smith, pp. 486–7.
[69] Ibid, p. 488.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Wolfers, quoted in ibid, p. 489.

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arise at multiple levels . . .'.[72] As such, and differently to Wolfers, 'political entities' is not just restricted to the national (state), but instead refers to a potential plurality of referent objects; from the individual, to ethnic groups, through the state, to humanity as a whole, as all are 'possessors and promoters of values'.[73] Smith calls this a 'generic security', as its meaning is not dependent on a particular referent object or sector of security as such, but on an assemblage of values.

As with McSweeney, however, the expansion of security in this way to include multiple levels raises the question of just where to draw the boundaries. The inclusion of all such orders necessarily brings with it a whole array of values to be declared, promoted and realised. The limits, although not entirely clear, seem to be determined by the very fact that the act is 'political'; that is to say, first 'it is connected to the realisation and preservation of previously acquired values, and second it is invoked as a political decision (or act) by members of an order'.[74] For Smith, it is the members of the order, or, more accurately, someone who speaks on behalf of the members, who define the threat. What is threatening is that which members of the order agree jeopardises their core values. Thus, while Smith's formulation allows for a relatively expansive notion of security threat, the concentration on 'core' values limits doing security to the protection of what is constitutive of the order itself.

In this sense, Smith's thinking about doing security is similar to that of the Copenhagen School (CoS), in that as with the securitisation concept security threats are intersubjectively established through 'speech acts;[75] for the CoS, between the 'securitizing actor' and the audience, and for Smith between some members of or some group within the order and the rest of its members. However, Smith's thinking is also different inasmuch as the establishment of the security threat is, at the same time, constitutive of the nature of the order.[76] In normal circumstances, members of the order are mostly unconscious of the core values they hold; they tend not to think too much about them. However, in abnormal, in what the CoS call 'emergency' circumstances, the very articulation of security threat serves to identify, to make members conscious of, those very values. As Smith puts it:

> The ability to define a security threat to the core values of an order, and to implement or impose security measures to defend or perpetuate those core values, is simultaneously to enable certain . . . groups to take hold of the core values of an order, that is to define the order itself, and to attack . . . potential challenges to that order, or potential power rivals.[77]

That is to say, through the intersubjective establishment of threat to its conception of core values, one group establishes its dominant position in relation to another. Security, in this way, as Smith asserts, 'is the political move par excellence insofar as it is a move which declares, promotes and realises political values against alternative orders'.[78] This is not to say that prior to the identification of security threats orders,

[72] Ibid, p. 491.
[73] Ibid, p. 489.
[74] Ibid, p. 497.
[75] See Ole Waever, Barry Buzan and Jap de Wilde, *Security: A New Frame for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).
[76] Arguably, the Copenhagen School has an *a prior* conception of the nature of the referent, and therefore does not enquire into how objects are constituted.
[77] Smith, p. 500.
[78] Ibid, p. 494. Here, that the (re)production of order is a distinctly political move shares much in common with both Huysmans and Kinnvall's concentration on security as a 'thick signifier'. In this sense, security relations are a particular way of structuring life. And utilising security as a thick

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as such, do not exist, but that they do so in a relatively undefined, perhaps even different, form.

Smith's concentration on declaring, promoting and realising values shares much with ontological security inasmuch as it points to the securing of particular identities. And, in this way it can also be clearly distinguished from traditional (negative), physical security. But Smith's work makes no judgement as to positive values and negative ones. On what possible basis, therefore, can such a distinction be made?

Positive and negative values

As I mentioned towards the beginning of the article, McSweeney is reluctant to recognise an objective hierarchy of human needs. Rather, any such hierarchy, he argues, is normatively determined. The reason for this is that most human needs are culturally or ideologically dependent. Peter Lawler concurs. Referring to Abraham Maslow's well-known 'hierarchy of needs', beyond the need for physical security, Lawler notes, the privileging of some needs over others is clearly dependent on *a priori* conception of the preferred type of social order.[79]

Thinking in particular about the state level, values, although not biologically or psychologically determined,[80] are socially and culturally specific, and similarly, therefore, their establishment depends on a judgement about the nature of the order in which they exist; for states, the nature of the international order. Drawing both on Galtung's concept of 'positive peace'[81] and on the concept of 'common security',[82] I want to propose here that likewise positive refer to the pursuit of a more 'just' world order. Set against this, although judgement over all relevant values is difficult to make, enough states agree enough of the time about the maintenance and promotion of justice in world politics. The definition of justice I offer here is, therefore, neither new nor particularly surprising. And for the moment it need not be. Like Hedley Bull, my present intention is merely to point to the fact that there are certain beliefs as to what justice involves in world politics, and that many seem to agree that justice is demand for equal rights and privileges. In this respect, Bull notes, demands for justice are

> . . . demands for the removal of privileges or discrimination, for equality in the distribution or in the application of rights as between the strong and the weak, the large and the small,

signifier, Kinnvall notes, thus 'means unmasking those structural relations through which security discourses are framed', as such relations reflect the 'inequality of power between those involved and those affected by the discourse'. Kinnvall, p. 745; Huysmans, 'Security! What Do You Mean?'.

[79] Peter Lawler, *A Question of Values: Johan Galtung's Peace Research* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1995). See especially Chapter Six, 'From Human Needs to Global Values'.

[80] Arguably, states are constituted by values that refer to the requirement for physical security; for example, autonomy and territorial integrity that can be violated by military means. But the defence against physical harm in this way remains defined as negative security.

[81] In its original definition, negative peace was defined as the absence of war and actual physical violence, while positive peace was described as the 'integration of human society'. Since then, however, as Lawler points out, positive peace has been equated with a plurality of values including 'cooperation, freedom from fear or want, economic development, absence of exploitation, equality, justice, freedom of action, pluralism and dynamism'. In short, he goes on, 'it was synonymous with a specific understanding of the global good life'. Lawler, p. 54.

[82] See The Report of the Independent Commission on Security Issues under the Chairmanship of Olof Palme, *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament* (London: Pan, 1982).

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the rich and the poor, the black and the white, the nuclear and the non-nuclear, or the victors and the vanquished.[83]

These, Bull makes clear, are demands for 'formal justice'; that rules, be they legal or non-legal, are respected according to which individuals, groups of people, even states are treated in a like manner.

Although conceived against the backdrop of superpower competition, and thus predominantly reflecting the desire for an international system free from the threat of nuclear weapons, the common security approach nonetheless draws attention to security seeking that goes beyond just 'stability' to a more just world order. More recently, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen has written about the responses to September 11th as constituting either a 'Hobbesian moment' or a 'Kantian moment'. Rasmussen argues that whereas the Hobbesian moment is reflected in the US' aim of securing the stability of the present (US dominated) world order through the application of American power, the Kantian moment refers more to the vision of the UK government: 'To [British Prime Minister] Tony Blair, this [the response to the terrorist attacks] was not merely a Hobbesian moment, but rather a 'Kantian moment' that provided the opportunity for creating a just, not merely a stable, world order'.[84] Regardless of whether the behaviour of the US and the UK can indeed be attributed to such moments, the crucial point is that some states formulate security policies according to the promotion of an international system constituted by justice-related values. In Blair's speech to the US Congress on 18 July 2003, the threat from fundamentalist terror brought into focus the core (state) values to be maintained, and thus also the nature of the order itself:

> There is a myth that . . . freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law are merican values, or Western values. . . . Members of Congress, ours are not Western values, they are the universal values of the human spirit. And anywhere, any time ordinary people are given the chance to choose, the choice is the same: freedom, not tyranny; democracy, not dictatorship; the rule of law, not the rule of the secret police. The spread of freedom is the best security for the free. It is our last line of defence and our last line of attack. And just as the terrorist seeks to divide humanity in hate, so we have to unify around an idea. And that idea is liberty.[85]

Fundamentalist terror is an attack against liberty; against freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. These (just) values are constitutive of the society of states, an order which, among others, British (and others') actions in Afghanistan and Iraq are arguably taken to defend.

Conclusion: positive security, Rushdie, and the War on Terror

I began this article by suggesting that Salman Rushdie's post-11 September comments potentially reflect a positive security seeking approach; that we define ourselves by what we are 'for' and not by what we are 'against'. Although Rushdie's words are indeed not incompatible with the positive security concept I have suggested here, they

[83] Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 79.
[84] Rasmussen, 'A Parallel Globalization of Terror', p. 340.
[85] *Guardian Online*, ⟨http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/O,,1000715,00html⟩.

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are but just a part of it: what we are for and what we are against both serve to identify core values. For example, that we are against suicide bombers ramming wide-bodied aircraft into the World Trade Centre means that we are for politics by the ballot box (and not by the bullet). Whether we are pursuing 'freedom to' or 'freedom from', whether we are concerned with 'security' or 'securing', we are, in doing so, necessarily making a judgment that certain values must be maintained; that this has to be protected, that this is core. And many orders, including the international order after the 11 September terrorist attacks, make such judgements. Positive security is, in this way, the maintenance of just, core values.

Like Rushdie, Bill McSweeney's formulation of positive security is also certainly not incompatible with mine. Indeed, McSweeney's concentration on the protection of the individual and of the community (the social order), brings very much into focus issue areas that arguably constitute the mainstay of positive security seeking; questions pertaining to the promotion of human and minority rights. To reiterate Huysmans: a positive conception of security defines 'liberation from oppression as a good that should be secured'. In assuming the primacy of the individual, McSweeney is making a normative judgement about value. But positive security is not only about human security, and nor should it be. Just values are constitutive of other orders too: states, communities of states such as the European Union, the international community as a whole. In such cases, there are not necessarily human needs to be protected, but needs, or rather values, nonetheless.

But how to protect these values? In McSweeney's individual-centred notion, positive security is achieved through the management of identities in accordance with a positive identification with others. It is, therefore, either a strategy for prevention or one for post-conflict reconstruction. In other words, it takes places either *before* the fighting breaks out or *after* the fighting has finished. For Rushdie, the means to fight fundamentalist terror is 'not by making war', but 'the unafraid way we choose to live'. But the war on terror has been, and is, also very much about doing the fighting.

My concern here is similar to that of Lawler. Lawler notes how in debates around the war on terror he was struck by 'the marked absence of a distinctive voice of peace research'. And that contemporary peace research, at least that Galtungian part largely preoccupied with the notion of positive peace, 'has much to say about the idea of peace, but it has much less to say these days about the problems that spawn such research: war'.[86] Important as the desire for a more just world order clearly is, among other contentions, Lawler signals (Galtungian) peace research's 'unclear standpoint' with regard to violence, 'particularly the use of violence in the pursuit of justice or other values'.[87] I share Lawler's sentiments in seeking a way of doing positive security that can accommodate questions over the use of armed force.

In cases of (armed) humanitarian intervention, on the one hand the protection of citizens from physical harm on the part of their own regime concerns an individual-centred negative security. On the other hand, however, the (military) protection of those persecuted by their own governments is also very much a positive value accepted by most, if not all states in the international system.[88] The order, the society

[86] Lawler, 'Peace Research, War, and the Problem of Focus', *Peace Review*, 14:1 (2002), p. 7.
[87] Ibid, p. 9.
[88] I am grateful to one of the anonymous referees for clarifying this particular line of thought.

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of states, ensures its own justness through by intervening in such instances. The tension here is evident, though; between a state-centred notion of positive security and individual-centred notions both positive and negative. The cases of Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated all too starkly how the pursuit of freedom, democracy and the rule of law have, for huge numbers of people in these countries, achieved anything but. Rather, armed intervention has seriously undermined the provision of a whole array of human needs. Lawler recognises the same problem:

> Even if on face value resorting to war seems morally defensible, recent history suggests that the longer-term consequences of using violence to resolve conflicts across communal lines, variously defined, can be such that hindsight is more likely to feed regret than satisfaction about the original decision to pursue a violent course.[89]

Nevertheless, although very much complicating the debate, Lawler questions whether such factors 'provide sufficient grounds for refusing altogether a debate about the relationship between violence and the pursuit of justice . . .'.[90] Similarly, Nicholas Wheeler notes that for the society of states the debate over humanitarian intervention should concern not so much the values that states subscribe to, as no government questions those relating to 'basic standards of humanity', but more so the 'means that can legitimately be employed to enforce these standards on governments that violate them'.[91]

In such cases, the security of individuals and communities, in its positive and negative forms, and the positive security of the international order can sometimes be only adequately addressed through the use of force. Although marked with many difficulties, military means should not, therefore, be excluded from thinking about positive security. Rather the use of force should be rethought in such a way that its inclusion is not only necessary but also appropriate. This not only concerns the matter of *how* force is employed, but also concerns *who* sanctions its use.

[89] Lawler, 'Peace Research, War, and the Problem of Focus', p. 11.
[90] Ibid, p. 12.
[91] Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 295.

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