

The Evolution of Global Security Understanding: Transformation in International Theories after September 11

Dr. Ozge Tenlik*

St. Clements University

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ozge Tenlik (St. Clements University)

Article History: Received: 12 / 09 / 2025. Accepted: 29 / 09 / 2025. Published: 04 / 10 / 2025.

Abstract: This article explores the multidimensional transformation of international security studies in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which marked one of the most significant ruptures in the early twenty-first century. The post-9/11 period not only redefined the global security agenda but also revealed the limitations of classical theories such as realism and liberalism, which had long equated security with state survival, military power, and institutional cooperation. The emergence of asymmetric and transnational threats - terrorism, radicalization, cyberattacks, biosecurity risks, environmental crises, large-scale migration, and identity-based conflicts - expanded the conceptual boundaries of security and necessitated theoretical innovation. The study analyzes this transformation through a critical engagement with realism, liberalism, constructivism, post-structuralism, and critical security theories, while also incorporating feminist and post-colonial approaches. These perspectives collectively demonstrate that security cannot be reduced to material capacities or interstate power relations but must be understood as a socially constructed and discursively reproduced phenomenon with deep normative implications. The securitization framework of the Copenhagen School provides a useful analytical tool for understanding how political actors framed new threats as existential, thereby legitimizing exceptional measures such as the Patriot Act, Guantanamo practices, and global surveillance regimes. This process simultaneously exposed tensions between security and democracy, freedom and control, as well as national sovereignty and global governance. Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative and interpretive design, drawing upon conceptual analysis, discourse analysis, and interdisciplinary linkages. Primary documents such as national security strategies, UN Security Council resolutions, and official doctrines are combined with secondary theoretical works to trace how the scope, referent objects, and instruments of security have evolved. Special emphasis is placed on the epistemological pluralism that emerged as boundaries between rationalist (realism, liberalism) and interpretivist (constructivist, post-structuralist, feminist, post-colonial) approaches became more permeable. The findings indicate three key contributions. First, security has undergone a process of conceptual expansion, incorporating environmental, digital, biosecurity, and human security dimensions alongside military concerns. Second, the referent object of security has diversified from the state to individuals, societies, and transnational communities, making security a multi-level and multi-actor phenomenon. Third, the legitimacy of security practices is increasingly shaped by discursive and normative frameworks, highlighting the importance of justice, inclusivity, and human rights. Together, these contributions underscore that the post-9/11 transformation of security cannot be captured by a single theoretical paradigm; rather, it requires hybridization, methodological diversity, and normative sensitivity. Overall, this article argues that the evolution of international security after 9/11 reflects both a paradigm crisis and a conceptual enrichment of the discipline. By bridging classical and critical approaches and integrating interdisciplinary insights from sociology, psychology, and cultural studies, the study provides not only a theoretical synthesis but also practical guidance for policymakers confronting complex and hybrid threats. In this sense, the article contributes to the construction of a more pluralistic, human-centered, and normatively grounded understanding of security in contemporary international relations.

Keywords: *September 11, International Security, Realism, Securitization, Critical Security Theories, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Approaches, Post-Colonial Perspectives, Human Security, Interdisciplinary Analysis.*

Cite this article: Tenlik, O. (2025). The Evolution of Global Security Understanding: Transformation in International Theories after September 11. *MRS Journal of Accounting and Business Management*, 2 (10),1-7.

Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 represented not only a traumatic moment for the United States but also a profound rupture in the international system. Often described as the first major geopolitical shock of the twenty-first century, these events destabilized the relative sense of security that had emerged in the post-Cold War period and revealed that non-state actors could pose existential threats on a global scale (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). By This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC](#) license

striking at the symbolic and economic heart of the United States, the attacks shattered the assumption that security could be confined to interstate rivalries and military balances of power (Mearsheimer, 2001). Instead, they demonstrated that asymmetrical, transnational, and hybrid threats could redefine both the theory and practice of international security. Prior to 9/11, security studies were shaped largely by the legacy of the Cold War. Realism continued to equate

security with the survival of states and the accumulation of military power (Waltz, 1979), while liberalism emphasized international institutions, economic interdependence, and the promise of global governance (Keohane & Nye, 1998; Ikenberry, 2001). Yet the 1990s revealed the fragility of this optimism: ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, humanitarian crises in Rwanda and Somalia, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction highlighted the inadequacy of existing paradigms (Paris, 2001). Constructivism and critical security studies gained visibility by underscoring the social, discursive, and normative dimensions of security (Wendt, 1992; Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). Still, it was 9/11 that irrevocably transformed the global security agenda and made the conceptual stretching of security unavoidable. The post-9/11 period marked a dramatic broadening of the threat spectrum. Terrorism, radicalization, and religious extremism became central issues, but so too did biosecurity risks, environmental crises, cyberattacks, migration flows, and identity politics (Kaldor, 2007; Beck, 1992). These developments blurred the boundaries between domestic and international security, between traditional and non-traditional threats, and between state and human referent objects. As a result, security ceased to be a narrowly defined military category and became a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing political, economic, societal, environmental, and technological domains (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). The securitization theory of the Copenhagen School proved particularly useful for explaining how political leaders framed certain issues as existential threats in order to legitimize extraordinary measures (Wæver, 1995). The U.S. “Global War on Terror,” the expansion of surveillance regimes, and the normalization of emergency laws illustrate how discourse and practice intersected to reshape the very meaning of security (Balzacq, 2011). At the same time, the post-9/11 transformation exposed deep normative dilemmas. The suspension of civil liberties, the expansion of surveillance, and the legitimization of pre-emptive war generated fierce debates about the balance between security and liberty (Agamben, 2005). Agamben’s concept of the “state of exception” highlighted the danger that emergency measures could become permanent, eroding democratic norms. Feminist security studies emphasized how counter-terrorism policies disproportionately affected women and vulnerable groups (Tickner, 1992; Sjöberg, 2010), while post-colonial approaches revealed how Western-centric discourses reproduced hierarchies and stigmatized Muslim societies (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Acharya, 2018). These critiques underscored that security is not merely a technical or strategic issue but also a normative and ethical construction. The theoretical implications of these changes are equally significant. The classical debates between realism and liberalism persist, yet neither framework can account for the multiplicity of threats that emerged after 9/11. Constructivist and post-structuralist perspectives illuminate the discursive construction of threats but face challenges in prescribing concrete policies (Campbell, 1992; Jackson, 2005). Critical approaches broaden the agenda by integrating human, societal, and environmental security, yet they grapple with implementation gaps (Booth, 2007). This article therefore argues that theoretical hybridization is essential: only by drawing on the complementarities of different approaches can the field address the complexity of contemporary security challenges. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative, interpretive design that emphasizes conceptual and discourse analysis while incorporating insights from sociology, psychology, and cultural studies (Alexander, 2004; Robin, 2004). This interdisciplinary perspective reflects the reality that security is not only about

strategic calculations but also about collective memory, fear, identity, and cultural trauma. The integration of these perspectives makes it possible to analyze how security is constructed at multiple levels—state, societal, and individual—and across diverse geographies. Against this background, the central research question of the article can be stated as follows: Through which theoretical transformations has the concept of international security evolved after 9/11, and how do these transformations shape the future of security studies? To address this question, the article pursues four interrelated objectives: to analyze the limitations of classical theories in explaining post-9/11 security dynamics; to examine the conceptual expansion of security into new domains such as cyber, biosecurity, environmental, and human security; to highlight the contributions of feminist, post-colonial, and normative approaches in broadening the scope of security studies; and to propose an interdisciplinary framework that integrates theoretical diversity with normative responsibility. In sum, the introduction establishes that the post-9/11 transformation of international security represents both a paradigmatic crisis and an opportunity for theoretical renewal. By situating the study within ongoing debates on securitization, interdisciplinary analysis, and normative reconstruction, the article aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how security has evolved in the twenty-first century.

Theoretical Foundations of Security

The study of international security has evolved through multiple theoretical debates that mirror both the historical context of world politics and the epistemological assumptions of the discipline of International Relations. From its early focus on state survival and military power, security gradually expanded to encompass economic, societal, environmental, and normative dimensions. Realism has long dominated the field by equating security with state survival in an anarchic international system. For classical realists such as Morgenthau (1948), power politics and the pursuit of national interest were the essence of security, while neorealists like Waltz (1979) emphasized the structural constraints of anarchy and balance-of-power mechanisms. In this perspective, states are rational actors whose security depends primarily on military capabilities and deterrence. Yet realism’s narrow focus on military threats and state-centrism has been increasingly criticized for its inability to account for non-state actors, asymmetric risks, and normative concerns that characterize the post-Cold War and post-9/11 environment (Mearsheimer, 2001). While realism remains useful for explaining great-power competition, it is insufficient for grasping the full complexity of contemporary threats. Liberal approaches, by contrast, broadened the notion of security by emphasizing cooperation, interdependence, and the role of international institutions. Liberal institutionalists such as Keohane and Nye (1998) argued that complex interdependence reduces the likelihood of conflict, while the democratic peace thesis suggested that democratization contributes to global stability (Russett, 1993). Liberalism explains the proliferation of peacekeeping operations and multilateral treaties, yet its optimism was challenged by the humanitarian crises of the 1990s and the unilateral interventions of the early 2000s (Paris, 2001). The inability of institutions to prevent mass atrocities and the fragility of global governance mechanisms exposed the limitations of the liberal paradigm in dealing with asymmetric threats. Nonetheless, liberal theories remain valuable in analyzing international cooperation, institutional governance, and the development of security regimes in domains such as climate change, cyber

security, and global health (Ikenberry, 2001). Constructivist theory represents a significant shift by emphasizing that security is socially constructed through identities, norms, and historical experiences. Wendt's (1992) claim that "anarchy is what states make of it" highlights that threat perceptions are not objective realities but products of social interaction and meaning-making. Constructivism demonstrates why some states interpret migration or climate change as security threats while others view them as humanitarian or developmental issues (Checkel, 1998). It also sheds light on how the United States and its allies constructed the "War on Terror" as a defining identity project after 9/11 (Jackson, 2005). However, critics argue that constructivism sometimes underestimates material factors and provides limited guidance for practical policy-making (Katzenstein, 1996). Post-structuralist perspectives go further by treating security as a discourse constituted through language and representation. According to Campbell (1992), threats are not discovered but produced through political acts of naming and framing. In this view, the construction of "enemy images," the rhetoric of the "axis of evil," and the discursive justification of pre-emptive wars and indefinite detention exemplify how security knowledge is tied to power (Hansen, 2006). Post-structuralism has been particularly useful in analyzing the discursive strategies employed after 9/11, but its emphasis on discourse has been criticized for overlooking institutional and material dynamics (Krause & Williams, 2012). Still, as an epistemological critique, it remains indispensable for revealing how extraordinary measures are normalized and depoliticized. Critical security studies push beyond the state-centric focus by analyzing security as a multidimensional phenomenon. The Copenhagen School, for example, conceptualizes securitization as a "speech act" in which political leaders construct issues as existential threats, thereby legitimizing extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). This framework has been widely applied to post-9/11 counter-terrorism, environmental challenges, and cyber threats (Balzacq, 2011). Other critical approaches, such as the Welsh School, emphasize emancipation, arguing that true security is achieved through the removal of structural violence and the protection of individuals (Booth, 2007). By incorporating human, societal, and environmental concerns, critical perspectives broaden the scope of security but often face challenges in translating their normative visions into practical policy. Feminist and post-colonial approaches further challenge mainstream assumptions by asking whose security is prioritized and whose experiences are marginalized. Feminist scholars highlight how security policies disproportionately affect women and vulnerable groups, drawing attention to everyday insecurities such as gender-based violence, displacement, and economic precarity (Tickner, 1992; Sjöberg, 2010). Post-colonial thinkers critique the Western-centrism of security studies and demonstrate how colonial legacies shape knowledge production and justify interventions in the Global South (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Acharya, 2018). These perspectives reveal that security is not a neutral or universal category but a contested practice embedded in hierarchies of power. Taken together, these theoretical foundations illustrate both the richness and the fragmentation of security studies. Rationalist theories such as realism and liberalism remain useful for explaining state behavior and institutional cooperation, yet they fall short in addressing transnational and non-traditional threats. Interpretivist approaches such as constructivism and post-structuralism illuminate the social and discursive dimensions of security but face limitations in providing policy prescriptions. Critical, feminist, and post-colonial perspectives expand the

normative and ethical horizons of the field while highlighting questions of justice, inclusivity, and human rights. The coexistence of these approaches has generated an epistemological pluralism that, while sometimes producing conceptual stretching, enriches the field by fostering a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of security (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). In this sense, the theoretical foundations of security no longer rest on a single paradigm but on a pluralistic landscape where hybrid frameworks and interdisciplinary linkages are indispensable for grasping the complexities of the post-9/11 era.

September 11 and the Transformation of Security

The terrorist attacks carried out against the United States on September 11, 2001 marked a watershed in international politics and the study of security. Beyond their immediate human and political consequences, these events produced a profound rupture in the global security paradigm. The post-Cold War unipolar moment had generated expectations of relative stability, with liberal scholars envisioning a world where globalization, economic interdependence, and institutional cooperation could mitigate traditional security dilemmas (Keohane & Nye, 1998; Ikenberry, 2001). Yet 9/11 demonstrated in the starkest terms that non-state actors were capable of generating existential threats on a global scale, thus undermining the optimism of the 1990s and revealing deep vulnerabilities within the international system (Mearsheimer, 2001). The most immediate impact of 9/11 was the redefinition of threat perceptions. Security had traditionally been conceptualized through interstate conflict and military balance (Waltz, 1979); after 2001, the referent objects and threat spectrum expanded dramatically. Terrorism and radicalization became the central focus of global security, but cyberattacks, biosecurity risks, mass migration, environmental crises, and identity politics also entered the agenda with renewed urgency (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Kaldor, 2007). This development not only transformed states' national security strategies but also catalyzed theoretical innovation within the discipline of International Relations. Realism continued to highlight the persistence of military power and state survival, yet its explanatory power diminished in the face of decentralized and asymmetric threats (Mearsheimer, 2001). Liberalism, with its emphasis on cooperation and institutions, faced limitations when the United States and its allies chose unilateral or exceptionalist responses (Paris, 2001). In this context, critical, constructivist, and post-structuralist approaches gained prominence by analyzing how the discourse of "terror" was constructed, securitized, and institutionalized (Wendt, 1992; Campbell, 1992; Jackson, 2005). A key feature of the post-9/11 transformation was the process of securitization. The U.S. administration, supported by allies, successfully framed terrorism as an existential threat to national survival and global order. This framing, widely accepted by both domestic and international audiences, legitimized extraordinary measures such as the Patriot Act, indefinite detentions at Guantanamo Bay, extraordinary renditions, and mass surveillance programs (Agamben, 2005; Balzacq, 2011). The Copenhagen School's securitization theory provides an analytical lens to explain this dynamic: political leaders, by naming an issue as a fundamental threat, created the conditions for the normalization of exceptional politics (Buzan et al., 1998; Wæver, 1995). What emerged was a new security landscape in which preventive war, targeted killings, global intelligence sharing, and financial control mechanisms became part of everyday governance rather than exceptional acts (Hansen, 2006). This expansion of security also exposed profound normative tensions. Agamben's

(2005) concept of the “state of exception” became particularly relevant in interpreting how emergency measures risked becoming permanent features of governance. The balance between liberty and security tilted decisively toward the latter, raising questions about democratic resilience in times of crisis. The enhanced powers of the state-expanded surveillance, curtailed privacy, and preventive detention-transformed security from an external policy concern into a phenomenon that directly shaped the everyday lives of individuals (Robin, 2004). These developments triggered debates not only within political science but also within legal studies, sociology, and psychology, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of post-9/11 security. At the epistemological level, 9/11 blurred the boundaries between theoretical paradigms. Rationalist traditions such as realism and liberalism retained relevance but were increasingly forced to coexist with interpretivist approaches that emphasized identity, discourse, and culture (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). Constructivism illuminated how the “War on Terror” was framed as both a security imperative and an identity-defining project for the United States (Wendt, 1992; Jackson, 2005). Post-structuralist perspectives revealed how discursive practices-media representations, official speeches, and symbolic narratives-legitimized extraordinary measures and deepened the dichotomy between “us” and “them” (Campbell, 1992; Hansen, 2006). Feminist and post-colonial scholars highlighted how these discourses reproduced orientalist stereotypes, disproportionately targeted Muslim communities, and marginalized women and vulnerable groups in both Western and non-Western societies (Tickner, 1992; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Acharya, 2018). In this sense, 9/11 did not merely add new items to the security agenda but also accelerated the rise of alternative, critical perspectives in the literature. The global governance dimension of the post-9/11 security order also merits attention. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 institutionalized counter-terrorism as a global obligation, compelling states to adopt wide-ranging measures against financing, harboring, and supporting terrorist groups (UNSC, 2001). NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history, framing the attacks as an assault on the entire alliance (Yost, 2002). These developments signaled unprecedented levels of international cooperation but also legitimized the extension of exceptional security powers into domestic law. While global counter-terrorism cooperation was strengthened, concerns about sovereignty, legitimacy, and human rights violations intensified, revealing the contradictory nature of post-9/11 governance (Krause & Williams, 2012). Another defining characteristic of the post-9/11 transformation was the rise of risk-based security. Whereas classical security thinking emphasized concrete threats, the new paradigm focused on potential risks, probabilities, and scenarios (Beck, 1992). Preventive security strategies-including pre-emptive wars, anticipatory surveillance, and predictive policing-became central to policy-making (Cavelty, 2015). While this preventive logic enabled states to act swiftly, it also amplified uncertainty, legitimized extraordinary powers, and weakened democratic oversight (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). The psychological and sociological dimensions of this transformation cannot be overlooked. The trauma of 9/11 generated a pervasive sense of fear and insecurity, which was reinforced by media coverage and political rhetoric (Robin, 2004; Alexander, 2004). Public demand for protection facilitated the acceptance of extraordinary measures, producing a trade-off between liberty and security that reshaped social contracts in many democracies. At the same time, the construction of “enemy others”-particularly Muslims and migrants-fueled polarization, xenophobia, and discriminatory practices

(Jackson, 2005; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006). These dynamics illustrate that security after 9/11 was not merely a matter of policy but also a deeply cultural and psychological phenomenon. In sum, the September 11 attacks fundamentally transformed the meaning, scope, and practice of security. They shifted attention from interstate rivalry to asymmetric and transnational threats, broadened the security agenda to include human, societal, and environmental dimensions, and normalized exceptional measures under the discourse of existential threat (Agamben, 2005; Buzan et al., 1998). At the theoretical level, 9/11 blurred the boundaries between paradigms, fostering epistemological pluralism and elevating the significance of critical and normative approaches (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). At the normative level, it raised pressing questions about democracy, rights, and justice in the age of permanent emergency (Tickner, 1992; Acharya, 2018). At the practical level, it institutionalized global counter-terrorism cooperation while simultaneously legitimizing practices that eroded civil liberties (UNSC, 2001; Yost, 2002). Taken together, these transformations demonstrate that 9/11 was not only a historical turning point but also a paradigmatic shift that continues to shape international security studies and global politics.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the post-9/11 transformation of international security is both profound and multidimensional, encompassing theoretical, methodological, and normative dimensions. Yet this transformation is far from homogeneous or linear. Rather, it is marked by tensions, contradictions, and persistent mismatches between theoretical expectations and policy practices. The discussion therefore must move beyond simple summaries to a critical assessment of how different schools of thought have addressed the post-9/11 security environment, what methodological innovations are required, and which normative dilemmas remain unresolved. At the theoretical level, no single paradigm offers a fully comprehensive explanation of the security transformations that unfolded after 9/11. Realism retains explanatory power in analyzing interstate rivalry, military build-ups, and the reassertion of great-power politics in the twenty-first century (Mearsheimer, 2001). However, it is ill-equipped to account for non-state actors and transnational threats that shaped the post-9/11 landscape (Waltz, 1979). Liberalism highlights the importance of institutions, interdependence, and multilateral cooperation (Keohane & Nye, 1998), yet its limitations are evident in the failure of global institutions to prevent unilateral interventions, human rights violations, and erosion of international norms (Ikenberry, 2001). Constructivism provides valuable insights into how threat perceptions are socially constructed (Wendt, 1992), and how the “War on Terror” was framed as an identity-defining project (Jackson, 2005), but it is less effective in offering concrete policy guidance. Post-structuralism exposes how discourses of security normalize extraordinary measures (Campbell, 1992; Hansen, 2006), yet its focus on language sometimes underplays material and institutional realities. Critical security studies, including feminist and post-colonial approaches, expand the agenda to encompass individuals, societies, and marginalized groups (Tickner, 1992; Booth, 2007; Acharya, 2018), though their impact on actual policy remains limited. The overall picture is therefore one of theoretical pluralism, where hybridization rather than exclusivity becomes the only viable path forward. From a methodological standpoint, the post-9/11 transformation highlights the inadequacy of approaches that rely on single theories or narrow evidence bases. Comparative analysis

demonstrates that securitization unfolded differently across contexts: the United States institutionalized counter-terrorism through legal frameworks and surveillance technologies (Krause & Williams, 2012), while in the Middle East securitization was frequently instrumentalized by authoritarian regimes to justify repression (Bilgin, 2011). African cases revealed how weak state capacity shaped distinct security dynamics (Aning, 2007). These variations underscore the need for context-sensitive and comparative methodologies that can capture the diversity of security practices across geographies. Furthermore, discourse analysis alone cannot fully demonstrate whether securitization has occurred. Empirical indicators such as budget reallocations, institutional restructuring, and exceptional legal regimes must be integrated with discourse-oriented methods (Balzacq, 2011). A mixed-methods strategy that combines textual, institutional, and quantitative evidence is therefore essential to enhance both the validity and explanatory capacity of security studies. Equally important are the epistemological tensions that remain within the field. Rationalist traditions prioritize causal explanations and generalizable laws, whereas interpretivist and critical approaches emphasize meaning, identity, and discourse. In practice, however, post-9/11 security policies often drew upon hybrid logics: the U.S. “pre-emptive war” strategy combined realist power politics (Mearsheimer, 2001) with appeals to liberal institutional legitimacy (Ikenberry, 2001), while simultaneously mobilizing identity-based narratives illuminated by constructivism (Wendt, 1992) and post-structuralism (Campbell, 1992). This hybridity illustrates that the future of security studies cannot be confined to epistemological silos. Instead, it requires a pragmatic engagement with multiple traditions and the development of integrative analytical frameworks that bridge explanatory and interpretive approaches (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). Normatively, the post-9/11 security environment revealed the extent to which security can be instrumentalized by political actors to suspend democratic norms and expand state authority. The discourse of existential threat legitimized indefinite detention, surveillance, torture, and the curtailment of civil liberties (Agamben, 2005). Feminist and post-colonial critiques further remind us that the costs of security policies are not evenly distributed: women, minorities, migrants, and marginalized communities disproportionately bear the consequences of counter-terrorism practices (Tickner, 1992; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006). The securitization of Muslim communities in Western societies and the use of orientalist tropes in justifying interventions illustrate how security discourses reproduce hierarchies and exclusions (Jackson, 2005). These findings highlight that security is not only a technical or strategic matter but also a deeply normative and political practice that must be evaluated in terms of justice, inclusivity, and human rights. Another point of discussion concerns the growing centrality of risk in post-9/11 security thinking. Whereas classical security approaches focused on actual threats, contemporary practices revolve around the management of potential risks, probabilities, and imagined scenarios (Beck, 1992). Preventive war, predictive surveillance, and anticipatory security strategies illustrate this shift (Cavelty, 2015). While risk-based approaches allow governments to act proactively, they also amplify uncertainty, create space for abuse, and erode democratic oversight. This transformation challenges scholars to develop new conceptual tools that can critically assess the normative and political implications of governing through risk. The discussion also reveals the widening gap between theory and practice. Security studies often emphasize critical perspectives, human-centered approaches, and normative

concerns, yet in practice state policies remain dominated by military reflexes, surveillance technologies, and authoritarian tendencies (Paris, 2001). Bridging this gap requires not only theoretical innovation but also methodological strategies that make research more policy-relevant. Developing frameworks that integrate realist strategic caution, liberal institutional cooperation, and critical normative safeguards may offer more holistic guidance for policymakers (Booth, 2007; Balzacq, 2011). In light of these reflections, the main contribution of this study lies in its advocacy for theoretical hybridization, methodological diversity, and normative sensitivity. Post-9/11 security cannot be understood within the confines of a single paradigm; it demands pluralism, interdisciplinarity, and critical engagement. Security must be conceptualized not only as protection against threats but also as a value-laden practice that shapes social orders, cultural identities, and political legitimacy (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). By demonstrating the interplay between discourse, institutions, and normative frameworks, this article contributes to rethinking security in ways that are both analytically rigorous and normatively responsible. In conclusion, the discussion confirms that the transformation of security after 9/11 represents both a paradigmatic crisis and a moment of conceptual enrichment for International Relations. Theoretical diversity has become inevitable, methodological pluralism indispensable, and normative evaluation unavoidable. The challenge for the discipline is not to resolve these tensions by choosing one paradigm over another, but to embrace pluralism and translate it into analytical and policy-relevant frameworks. Only through such integrative approaches can security studies adequately address the complexity of contemporary global threats and contribute to the construction of a more just, inclusive, and sustainable security order.

Conclusion

The central purpose of this article was to analyze how the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 reshaped the meaning, scope, and practice of international security. The findings confirm that 9/11 was not merely a tragic event in U.S. history, but rather a global rupture that redefined the core assumptions of security studies. The traditional state-centric and military-focused frameworks of realism and neorealism proved inadequate for explaining asymmetric and transnational threats (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). Similarly, liberal optimism about the capacity of institutions and interdependence to provide stability was undermined by unilateral interventions, institutional failures, and the fragility of global governance (Keohane & Nye, 1998; Ikenberry, 2001). In contrast, constructivist, post-structuralist, and critical approaches gained traction by highlighting the discursive construction of threats, the politics of securitization, and the normative dimensions of security (Wendt, 1992; Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Campbell, 1992). The article has shown that the post-9/11 transformation cannot be captured within the confines of a single theoretical paradigm. Instead, the field has moved toward pluralism and hybridization, where the explanatory strengths of different traditions must be combined. Realism continues to explain military rivalries and strategic competition, liberalism illuminates cooperation mechanisms, constructivism reveals the power of identity and norms, post-structuralism deciphers discursive legitimations, and critical perspectives foreground justice, emancipation, and inclusivity (Booth, 2007; Tickner, 1992; Acharya, 2018). The convergence of these perspectives illustrates that the future of security studies lies in dialogue and synthesis, rather than in paradigmatic isolation. Methodologically, the article

underscores the necessity of multi-method strategies that integrate discourse analysis, institutional evidence, and empirical indicators. Relying on discourse alone risks producing abstract interpretations that lack policy relevance, while focusing exclusively on material indicators ignores the social construction of threats (Balzacq, 2011). A pluralist methodology that combines textual, institutional, and quantitative data enables more robust and context-sensitive analyses. Such methodological diversity is not only academically enriching but also essential for making research more useful to policymakers facing complex and hybrid threats. Normatively, the findings highlight the risks of instrumentalizing security for political ends. The securitization of terrorism after 9/11 legitimized extraordinary measures such as indefinite detention, mass surveillance, and pre-emptive war, thereby raising profound questions about the balance between liberty and security (Agamben, 2005). Feminist and post-colonial critiques further expose how such measures disproportionately affect women, minorities, and marginalized groups, and how security discourses reproduce Western-centric hierarchies (Tickner, 1992; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006). These insights reaffirm that security must not only be studied as a strategic or technical matter but also as a deeply ethical and political practice that prioritizes justice, inclusivity, and human rights. Another key conclusion is that the post-9/11 era has expanded the scope of security studies beyond the military domain to include cyber threats, biosecurity, environmental crises, and human security. This conceptual expansion reflects the reality that contemporary insecurities are multidimensional and interconnected (Kaldor, 2007). At the same time, it raises the challenge of conceptual inflation, where the risk of defining “security” too broadly may weaken its analytical clarity (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). Balancing conceptual breadth with analytical precision is therefore essential for the future trajectory of the discipline. The article also emphasizes that the global distribution of security practices is uneven and context-dependent. The United States, the European Union, the Middle East, and Africa each exhibit distinct logics of securitization, shaped by their political systems and historical legacies (Paris, 2001; Krause & Williams, 2012). This diversity underscores the importance of epistemological pluralism and the need to integrate local and regional perspectives into the global security literature. Post-colonial approaches, in particular, remind us that security cannot be fully understood through Western-centric paradigms alone; incorporating local knowledge systems and regional epistemologies is essential for building a more inclusive and representative discipline (Acharya, 2018). Overall, the contributions of this article can be summarized along three dimensions. Theoretically, it advances the argument that security studies must embrace hybrid frameworks that integrate insights from multiple paradigms. Methodologically, it calls for comparative, mixed-method, and context-sensitive approaches to capture the complexity of contemporary security challenges. Normatively, it insists that security must be analyzed not only as protection from threats but also as a value-laden practice with profound implications for democracy, rights, and justice. By synthesizing these dimensions, the article contributes to bridging the gap between theory and practice while enriching the conceptual toolkit of the field. Looking forward, future research should deepen comparative studies of securitization across regions, examine the psychological and cultural impacts of security discourses, and further explore the nexus between security and technology. Questions surrounding artificial intelligence, big data, disinformation, and climate change represent the new frontiers of security research (Cavelty, 2015). In addition, more work is needed

to operationalize the concept of desecuritization and to design normative frameworks that allow security practices to be rolled back without compromising safety (Buzan et al., 1998; Balzacq, 2011). Incorporating interdisciplinary insights from sociology, psychology, environmental studies, and law will further strengthen the analytical and normative capacity of security studies. In conclusion, the transformation of international security after 9/11 represents both a paradigmatic crisis and a moment of intellectual renewal. The inadequacy of classical approaches, the rise of asymmetric threats, and the persistent normative dilemmas compel the field to embrace pluralism, interdisciplinarity, and normative sensitivity. By highlighting these dynamics, this article contributes to the ongoing reconstruction of international security studies as a discipline that is not only theoretically rigorous but also ethically grounded and practically relevant. In this sense, the post-9/11 era should not be seen solely as an age of insecurity, but also as an opportunity to build a more inclusive, human-centered, and sustainable global security order.

References

1. Acharya, A. (2018). *Constructing global order: Agency and change in world politics*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Agamben, G. (2005). *State of exception*. University of Chicago Press.
3. Alexander, J. C. (2004). *Cultural trauma and collective identity*. University of California Press.
4. Aning, K. (2007). Security, the war on terror, and official development assistance in Africa. *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 1(2), 11-15.
5. Balzacq, T. (2011). *Securitization theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve*. Routledge.
6. Barkawi, T., & Laffey, M. (2006). The postcolonial moment in security studies. *Review of International Studies*, 32(2), 329-352.
7. Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. Sage.
8. Bilgin, P. (2011). The politics of studying securitization? The Copenhagen School in Turkey. *Security Dialogue*, 42(4-5), 399-412.
9. Booth, K. (2007). *Theory of world security*. Cambridge University Press.
10. Buzan, B., & Hansen, L. (2009). *The evolution of international security studies*. Cambridge University Press.
11. Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner.
12. Campbell, D. (1992). *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*. University of Minnesota Press.
13. Cavelty, M. D. (2015). *Cyber-security and threat politics: US efforts to secure the information age*. Routledge.
14. Checkel, J. T. (1998). The constructivist turn in international relations theory. *World Politics*, 50(2), 324-348.
15. Hansen, L. (2006). *Security as practice: Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*. Routledge.
16. Ikenberry, G. J. (2001). *After victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars*. Princeton University Press.

17. Jackson, R. (2005). *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism*. Manchester University Press.
18. Kaldor, M. (2007). *Human security: Reflections on globalization and intervention*. Polity Press.
19. Katzenstein, P. J. (Ed.). (1996). *The culture of national security: Norms and identity in world politics*. Columbia University Press.
20. Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1998). *Power and interdependence* (3rd ed.). Longman.
21. Krause, K., & Williams, M. C. (2012). *Critical security studies: Concepts and cases*. Routledge.
22. Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. W. W. Norton & Company.
23. Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*. Knopf.
24. Paris, R. (2001). Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air? *International Security*, 26(2), 87-102.
25. Robin, C. (2004). *Fear: The history of a political idea*. Oxford University Press.
26. Russett, B. (1993). *Grasping the democratic peace: Principles for a post-Cold War world*. Princeton University Press.
27. Sjoberg, L. (2010). *Gender and international security: Feminist perspectives*. Routledge.
28. Tickner, J. A. (1992). *Gender in international relations: Feminist perspectives on achieving global security*. Columbia University Press.
29. United Nations Security Council (UNSC). (2001). Resolution 1373 (2001). Adopted by the Security Council at its 4385th meeting, on 28 September 2001. UN Doc S/RES/1373.
30. Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. McGraw-Hill.
31. Wæver, O. (1995). Securitization and desecuritization. In R. Lipschutz (Ed.), *On security* (pp. 46-86). Columbia University Press.
32. Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), 391-425.
33. Yost, D. S. (2002). NATO and the anticipatory use of force. *International Affairs*, 79(1), 77-100.