The banalization of race in international security studies: From absolution to abolition

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Introduction
International relations in general, and international security studies in particular, has recently and very publicly been grappling with race and racism. We might even be tempted to claim international security studies was, for once, ahead of the curve, as this grappling predated the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, an event that jolted race into the consciousness of people and enterprises that had hitherto practised what Charles Mills (2007: 13) has referred to as an ‘epistemology of ignorance’. Unfortunately, only the ‘timing’ of this ‘debate’ may be deemed ‘progressive’, with most of international security studies clinging to its racialized worldview and some even threatening revanchism. Rather than rehash the arguments following the vituperative reaction to an academic journal article that critiqued securitization theory for being premised on racist political thought (Howell and Richter-Montpetit, 2020), this article reflects on why the grammars of race are still so prevalent in international security studies, whether an anti-racist (sub)discipline is possible, and what strategies might tackle, and ultimately overturn, the racialized logics at the core of security studies. It concludes that in lieu of narratives of redemption, and indeed absolution, security studies must agitate for reparations and the abolition of empire.

I start by adumbrating a short disciplinary history of international relations, and of the privileged location of international security studies within it, arguing that, as Alan Collins avers, ‘Security Studies is the sub-discipline of International Relations. It is the study of security that lies at the heart of International Relations. It was the carnage of World War I and the desire to avoid its horrors that gave birth to the discipline of International Relations in 1919 at Aberystwyth, United Kingdom’ (Collins, 2016: 1, emphasis in original). This is echoed by James Der Derian (1993: 95) when he claims that ‘no other concept in international relations packs the metaphysical punch, nor commands the disciplinary power of “security”’. I then analyse what Denise Ferreira da Silva (2017) has referred to as the ‘banalization of racial events’ in order to underscore and parse the normative whiteness of security studies,1 before concluding with a call to defund the contemporary (Western) imperial enterprise – a demand that I submit those working with and through notions of security are in a unique position to make, not least because they (we) have thus far aided and abetted its cause.

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Grand narratives and their pitfalls

In the past decade or so, international relations – at least in its scholia – has made notable strides in wrestling with its racialized lineage and its history of justifying, or at the very least, eliding European empire and white supremacy. Recent historiography has identified international relations’ official inception with the founding of Journal of Race Development in 1910 (later renamed Foreign Affairs) and its further institutionalization through the establishment of the Woodrow Wilson Chair in Aberystwyth in 1919, and has traced how race, racialization and racism remained central to disciplinary topography, despite international relations’ pretensions to ‘science’ (Anievas et al., 2015; Vitalis, 2016). There have been concerted attempts to retrieve what Robbie Shilliam (2020) calls a ‘scholarly inheritance’, tracing the work and legacies of international relations luminaries who have engaged with race and racism long before these issues were thrust violently into the limelight. There have been penetrating analyses of the ways in which concepts such as ‘anarchy’ and ‘sovereignty’ and lenses such as ‘militarization’ have occulted the machinations of race in the discipline (Henderson, 2013; Howell, 2018; Nisancioglu, 2020). A generous reading may suggest that we are seeing a rehabilitation of postcolonial thought and that international relations is recognizing (and slightly less systematically) rectifying its foundational erasures and omissions. And yet this (qualified, sidelined) acknowledgement hinges on keeping international relations’ pre-eminent subfield – international security studies – shielded from any such reckoning. Apart from a small handful of exceptions in critical journals, security studies has merely been – in Wendy Chun’s (2016) exacting formulation – ‘updated to remain the same’. We are met with deafening ‘silence and evasion’ (Morrison, 1992: 9) if we turn from theoretical acknowledgement of the racial nature of international security studies’ core precepts to investigation of the specifics. This lack of recognition – let alone amends – is not an oversight, but is in fact crucial to the coherence and cohesiveness of the field.

If international security studies lends itself more to navel-gazing than to soul-searching on race and racism, this can be imputed to the self-generative, autopoietic nature of ‘security’. Security is a never-ending and always unfulfilled project: never fully attainable, it is essentially a pretext for its own pursuit. This circular logic often embroils critical interventions in a self-perpetuating interrogation of security that precludes the consideration of abolition and indeed the admission that reparations, rather than repentance, are the only way to move the conversation forward beyond tweaking it at its edges. In what follows, I trace how, throughout international relations’ three ‘Great Debates’, security studies has obscured the structural and systemic import of race. The discussion that follows is necessarily schematic. My claim is not so much that debates in international security studies map temporally to the ones that were reputedly raging in international relations, but rather that (i) analogous valences of race and racialization can be discerned and (ii) even prominent ‘correctives’ to traditional security studies have merely integrated non-Western voices into extant frameworks instead of fundamentally rethinking the field of security studies and its role in the reinforcement of raced Eurocentric thought (Bilgin, 2010; Hönke and Müller, 2012; see also Barkawi and Laffey, 2006).

In the origin story repeated by the discipline in its classrooms and journals, international relations has been conventionally organised around three ‘Great Debates’. The first of these was ostensibly a clash between two dominant theories of international relations, ‘realism’ and ‘liberalism’ (the latter sometimes referred to as ‘idealism’ or occasionally ‘utopianism’), in the lead-up to World War II. Historical evidence now suggests that the debate itself was largely a fiction, constructed (or staged) retrospectively in the 1980s (Ashworth, 2002; Osiander, 1998; Schmidt, 2013). As a myth, however, the clash between realism and liberalism continues to frame how international
relations apprehends the question of security. And, contrariwise, the concept of security reproduces and reinstates the foundational myths of international relations.

This ‘legendary’ First Great Debate unfurled against the backdrop of the growing brutality of European empire between World War I and World War II, and in particular the (second) Italian–Ethiopian War, an anti-colonial war waged directly against racism and fascism. At the time, the so-called Third World was ravaged by the violence of colonialism and manufactured famine. And when the imperial states went to war in 1914, they did not (contrary to international relations orthodoxy) start a European war but a war that depended on the sacrifice of colonial subjects and the extraction of colonial resources. Mainstream security studies nevertheless analyses this global war through the sanitized, putatively objective lenses of ‘unipolarity/bipolarity/multipolarity’, ‘status competition’ and ‘distribution of capabilities’ (Wohlforth, 2009), resting on a racialized bedrock of suppositions about the ‘balance of power’ and the ‘security dilemma’ in its realist guise, and on the ‘democratic peace thesis’ in its liberal variants. These pillars of international security studies are often critiqued for being too specific and not generalizable enough, and even for being ‘Eurocentric’ in their definitions of ‘war’ and ‘peace’ (Barkawi, 2001), but are rarely assayed as building blocks in an edifice of knowledge production that is unabashedly racialized.

The evacuation of security studies from these debates results in a strangely insulated subdiscipline. At a time when colonial powers were inordinately anxious about collusion between anti-colonial movements and groups around the world, and devised their foreign and security policies accordingly, security studies’ elliptical examination of material security relations as they were enacted on the ground is particularly stark (Satia, 2008). In these projects and strategies, ‘security’ emerges as a euphemism for maintaining a racialized global order and the means for enforcing it. At the same time, the bracketing off of international security studies and strategic studies from international relations in scholarly discourse hinges on the lie, or at least the presumption, that the politics of race and racism were somehow more relevant to international relations than to international security studies.3

The ‘Second Great Debate’ throws this tendency in sharper relief. Constrained as a fight between ‘traditionalists’, who championed a ‘classical’ approach, and ‘behaviouralists’, who favoured a ‘scientific’ one, the ‘security’ context of this debate has been occluded in both orthodoxy and revisionist narratives (Kratochwil, 2006; Li, 2019). The 1950s and 1960s were witness to the decolonization of vast swathes of Africa and Asia, to proxy wars fought in the Third World by the USA and the USSR, and to growing Black power and anti-racist movements in the USA, the UK and much of Europe. In this context, the concern with ‘security’ of those holding on to the last vestiges of colonialism (France, the UK and Belgium) or fashioning their own imperial systems (the USA and the Soviet Union) was perhaps more accurately formulated as ‘anti-security’ by those in attendance at the Bandung Conference of 1955 (Manchanda, 2018; Phạm and Shilliam, 2016). However, anti-racist, decolonial and socialist alternate visions like those articulated at Bandung and others at the forefront of anticolonial resistance, which took security as a starting point if only to abolish it, have mostly been effaced within security studies. Or, if engaged, they have been constructed as ‘threats’ to the ‘normalized order of things’ – that is, to ‘security’. Which is as much as to say that, not only in conventional strategic studies narratives but also in critical security studies – whether the Aberystwyth School, the Frankfurt School–inspired vision of ‘emancipatory security’, or later articulations such as the Copenhagen and Paris Schools – ‘security’ as a conceit functions to preserve the status quo and to contain ‘threats’. Only the hermeneutics of threat perception and the normative system invested in vary slightly: throughout the shift from maintaining the system of states (conventional security and strategic studies) to the progressive politics of a liberal white post-Continental theory (critical security studies), these schools of thought are unified by their failure to attend to the operations of racialization and white supremacy.4
Finally, the ‘Third Great Debate’ allegedly unfolded in the twilight of the Cold War, between adherents of ‘rationalism’ and ‘reflectivism’.\(^5\) While international relations occupied itself with the minutiae of ‘objective’ and ‘intersubjective’ approaches as the primary fault-lines in the discipline (Keohane, 1988; Wæver, 1996), European and American intervention became the norm, as evinced in Bosnia, Kuwait, Somalia and Haiti, to name a few examples. Not only did these interventions continue to perpetuate colonial logics in a decolonizing world, they also helped solidify the distinction between outside and inside, so crucial to international relations (Walker, 1993). What happened within these states was rendered unimportant, and, where considered, these interventions were couched in the language of the *mission civilisatrice* (Paris, 2002) or, more implicitly, labelled the ‘white man’s burden’ and placed outside the remit of disciplinary international relations. This tussle between international relations’ mainstream and its critical detractors was replicated in security studies.\(^6\) However, while we see, in some quarters of international relations, an acceptance (if not apology) that race was at the heart of these battles, in international security studies the buck stopped at ‘critical security studies’, such as the Paris School and the Copenhagen School (Bigo and McCluskey, 2018).\(^7\)

Critical security studies – including feminist and post-structural approaches – did much to expose the reified and increasingly disconnected field of mainstream security studies (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2020). Notions of environmental, human and gendered security widened and deepened our understanding of what ‘security’ might encapsulate and who the referent object of security was, as well as illuminating the pitfalls of preemptive security policy, especially in the USA. However, the politics of race remained (deliberately) undertheorized in both critical and traditional security studies (see Howell and Richter-Montpetit, 2020). More importantly, to a considerable extent, critical incursions established common ground between themselves and their more mainstream interlocutors by tacitly accepting the pursuit of security as central to feminist and other forms of emancipation, rather than dissecting it as a device for maintaining a racialized global order. Security studies, in both its orthodox and heterodox iterations, therefore continued to perpetuate the subjugation, or ‘banalization’, of racial events outside the scope of ‘proper’ political theory.

### The banalization of race

Having located the study of security within the mythic ‘Great Debates’ of international relations and tracked the mutual implication of international relations and international security studies in the co-constitutive reproduction of their own racist foundations, this section asks: what explains this curious absence of race-critique in the face of an overwhelming presence of race-thinking? To help unpack the normative whiteness of international security studies and the wilful ignorance that continues to mushroom in the wake of this whiteness, we can invoke Denise Ferreira da Silva’s (2017: 61) conceptualization of the ‘banalization of racial events’. Da Silva’s object of critique is political theory, but it is eminently worth thinking with her to wrestle with (but not for a moment defend) the constitutive erasures at the heart of international security studies, an onto-epistemological excision that structures the subdiscipline and beyond. On Da Silva’s account, political theory rests on the employment of a ‘double distinction’ that relies on racialized thought while simultaneously denying and eluding the importance of race in, and for, political theory. On the one hand, race is considered too ‘everyday’, too ‘banal’, to be the stuff of proper theorizing. On the other hand, however, ‘raciality functions among the conditions of possibility for articulating the proper subject of the Political as a self-determined (self-regulated or self-transparent) existent, while affectability is attributed to everything (bodies, minds, places, and more-than-humans) that is not white/European’ (Da Silva, 2017: 62). The former claim is explicit – race and racialism are relegated to
the realm of the ‘moral’, ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ rather than the properly ‘political’ – and the second is implicit – a distinction made between ‘self-determined’ or ‘rational subjects’ versus ‘affectable’ or ‘emotional ones’.8

Da Silva’s commentary is directed specifically at Wendy Brown’s failure to accord the beating of Rodney King, and the protests it set in motion after the acquittal of the police officers in charge, the status of an event worthy of saying something useful for political theory. For Brown, Rodney King’s beating (and its aftermath) has no political purchase, no ‘analytical import’, because racial subjects and their subjectivities are not in and of themselves political. Indeed, in Brown’s rendition, they become political ‘only when presented in the recognizable forms such as the Civil Rights Movement rather than in “banal” events’ (Da Silva, 2017: 64). Writing about Isaiah Berlin’s famous ‘two concepts of liberty’, Barnor Hesse (2014: 289) makes a homologous critique, arguing that ‘modern political theory has remained resolutely inoculated against the exposure of colonial aporias, liberal antinomies and racial atrocities in the formative constitutions of Western polities and concepts of liberty’. As we shall see, ‘security’ is indexed by these same ‘colonial aporias, liberal antinomies and racial atrocities’. The work of both Da Silva and Hesse is strikingly evocative of Sylvia Wynter’s (1994) piece ‘No Humans Involved’. Composed after the Rodney King beating, in the light of the revelation that officials of the judicial system of Los Angeles ‘routinely used the acronym N.H.I. to refer to any case involving a breach of the rights of young Black males’, Wynter (1994: 42) takes aim at the classificatory schema that makes racist violence and material deprivation possible, drawing on her extensive work on the exclusions produced by the category of ‘the human’ in the humanities. By ascribing ‘humanity’ to ‘whiteness’, ‘colour’ in general – and ‘Blackness’ in particular – is cast outside the realm of the worthy, and certainly of the proper provision of ‘knowledge’. Wynter (1994: 69) ends by proposing a ‘new frontier of knowledge able to move us toward a new, correlated human species, and eco-systemic, ethic’.

Almost 30 years later, this call remains largely unheeded in international security studies, which continues to build on and sediment the very ‘colonial aporias, liberal antinomies and racial atrocities’ that political theory has perpetuated (and perpetrated), but without the same level of scrutiny. International security studies continues to discount ‘mundane’ forms of racial domination: through what Sankaran Krishna (2001: 401) terms its ‘fetishization’ of abstraction, it acts out ‘a desire to escape history, to efface the violence, genocide and theft that marked the encounter between the rest and the West’ at the birth of the discipline of international relations. International security studies’ valorization of abstraction runs parallel to that of international relations and is most palpable in its proclivity to universalization – first through statist accounts of security and then through its more ‘human’-focused versions.

This abstraction, as well as the smug complacency of Western knowledge, is evinced in anodyne rehearsals of the ‘Great Debates’. Opaque articulations of ‘peace’, ‘war’, ‘security’ and their associated dilemmas, theories and hypotheses continue to dominate both the annals of the discipline and illocutionary practices in pedagogical spaces. Refutations of these debates that gloss over their racialized nub in effect serve to reinscribe its very essence. International security studies effectuates its banal racism in ways that make it hard to discern, while simultaneously weaving it into the fabric of everyday life. During the Cold War, devastation wreaked in the majority world by the two ‘superpowers’ was dismissed through the idiom of ‘proxy wars’, while the so-called War on Terror similarly derogated the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as a commonsense response to attacks on the ‘West’. The emphasis on the ‘international’ (colour-blind) scale of these events normalizes an inattention to the pedestrian (racialized) destruction of lives, lifeways and livelihoods.

In the current context of a global pandemic, as the argot of war and security permeates most spheres of human activity, international security studies itself feels oddly quaint, unequipped even to meet the task it has set for itself. Western leaders have repeatedly evoked war rhetoric – the virus
is an ‘enemy combatant’ – and metaphorized health staff as ‘soldiers’ in this battle (Benziman, 2020). The security of the body politic is the ultimate victory, with some explicitly summoning up international security studies discourse by likening the current situation to a ‘security dilemma’ (Wilson and Smitson, 2020) and pithily referring to the ‘war on COVID-19’ as ‘the 9/11 of health security’ (Daoudi, 2020). The material and social effects of the disease demand a different response, one that is centred around welfare provision and the physical and economic well-being of citizens and communities, and especially the disproportionate toll the virus has taken on people of colour in the USA, the UK and beyond (Bhala et al., 2020). Critical security studies and approaches that take the ‘human’ as their focal points ought to be able to provide insight into, if not answers to, current global ‘security’ predicaments. And yet, precisely by excluding much of humanity from the figure of the human (as both De Silva and Wynter outline), international security studies remains siloed – politically, epistemologically and ontologically redundant – propagating security in the name of what Aimé Césaire (1972) has incisively termed ‘pseudo-humanism’. To compound these issues, it is also worth noting that the banner of ‘security’ gives international security studies’ ‘pseudo-humanism’ and the violence that inheres within it a political legitimacy that it might otherwise have struggled to attain.

Is an anti-racist discipline possible?

It is not merely Covid-19 that has called into question the value of the discipline of international security studies even on its own (problematic) terms. The violent storming on 6 January 2021 of the Capitol Building in Washington, DC – that vaunted symbol of democracy and security – also, and rather dramatically, hurled security studies’ inadequacy into the spotlight. With the police and armed forces implicated in this far-right insurrection (Kaleem and Lee, 2021), and repeated warnings of racist violence having gone unheeded by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (Barrett and Zapotosky 2021), one may be forgiven for interpreting security studies’ ineptitude at accounting for these threats – by making white supremacy ‘banal’, as it were – as complicity. In the face of this litany of shortcomings, international security studies must jettison any impulse or inducement towards salvation and must instead embrace abolition. Abolition is not demolition, but is, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Kushner, 2019) gently reminds us, all about ‘presence’. This (re)new(ed) presence can be actualized by taking up Wynter’s plea for a new frontier.

To be able to do this, in the first instance, international security studies needs to pivot towards the movements, the actors and the events that are shaping and challenging the contemporary security landscape – ‘banal’ as they may seem. The most obvious way to do this is to decentre notions of ‘security’ and to reconfigure the discipline around questions of violence. To take one prominent example, the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), of which the Black Lives Matter (BLM) network is a member, has scrambled the default ‘Western’ stances on security but is rooted in a struggle for the abolition of violence and a rejection of the logics of policing for the safety of Black and minoritized populations in the United States and beyond. Groups and movements such as Rhodes Must Fall and Idle No More, or the Combahee River Collective before them, have also gravitated towards direct action and nonviolent revolutionary change. These movements – which gesture towards the imbrication of security and violence – proffer a different vision of (anti)security that does not start from the premise that people of colour should be precluded from the figure of the human but instead insists that the ‘human’ as a category needs to be predicated on all of humanity, thereby immediately and irrevocably altering the trajectory of security studies and praxis. The exhortation to change the emphasis from security to violence can be distilled into the demand to ensure Black lives matter.
In the second instance, international security studies scholarship must situate itself at the helm of a campaign for reparations, including divestments from large military and nuclear projects, a withdrawal of support for (or ‘neutral’ analyses of) imperial intervention, and an unflinching conversation about both symbolic and material reparations for slavery, colonial exploitation and ongoing racial injustice in the West. These are lofty demands, but that does not make them any less urgent. BLM is a constitutively global movement, and its appeals for the abolition of policing should find their counterpart in international security studies, in a corresponding call for the abolition of empire. The defunding of the police at home can only ever be incomplete without an attendant reckoning with military intervention abroad, not only because the two are inextricably linked (Schrader, 2019) but also because the ‘colour line’ is always already simultaneously made and (re) made both at home and abroad. This also goes to the heart of the binaristic divide between the ‘domestic’ and the ‘foreign’ that continues to animate international security studies, and international relations at large (N. P. Singh, 2017). By espousing activism, we can see how these divides and boundaries are transgressed in global policing and also do political work. Moreover, through prefigurative politics, the limits of such a hollowed order of knowledge – that is, one based on abstract boundaries – reveal themselves. An episteme might be able to centre itself through principles of abstraction, but an engagement with popular struggle, with politics on the ground, inevitably implies a problematization of the taken-for-granted, ultimately leading to what Wynter (2006: 117) has called the ‘exoticization of Western thought’. This exoticization, which is not an ‘estrangement’, not only provincializes whiteness (and its corollary capitalism) by putting it in context but also highlights the importance of a truly intersectional solidarity.

In the third and final instance, and somewhat counter-intuitively, international security studies can turn to alternate modes of knowing that reject the foreclosure inherent in colonial and raced understandings of concepts such as ‘liberty’ and ‘security’. Barnor Hesse (2014: 288) ventures that the cherished notion of ‘liberty’ emerges through a ‘hegemony of Western formulation’ that denies its ‘indebtedness to Western colonialism’. This holds equally true for ‘security’ and for synthetic accounts of ‘ontological insecurity’, ‘securitization theory’ and ‘deterrence’ at the crux of the (sub) discipline. One way out of this impasse is for international security studies to be open to what Julieta Singh (2017: 21) has called a ‘vulnerable reading’. A vulnerable reading of international security studies’ own history and the challenges it faces both in its theory and in practice would go against its colonial impulse towards ‘mastery’ (J. Singh, 2017) and instead expand the conditions of possibility for the field. Pushing further, embracing ‘vulnerability’ as a strategy would mount a wholesale challenge to the conventional objectives of international security studies and its auxiliary concept ‘resilience’. Vulnerability necessarily engenders exposure, as opposed to foreclosure. In the context of a pandemic, it might entail pushing back against medical police (McQuade and Neocleous, 2020) and resisting greater border violence, even as they appear warranted. This ‘opening up’ of international security studies both politically and strategically is not a panacea, but can function as an important remedial step. Coupled with an engagement with the Black radical tradition’s notion of ‘fugitivity’ – a form of ‘political escape from the Western hegemony’ (Hesse, 2014: 302) and the colonial architecture of knowledge – vulnerability proffers a question if not an answer: what does it mean to escape from immurement by conventional (read: raced) notions of security?

Nonetheless, if de-raced notions of security offer only a contradiction, then to begin to answer the question one must once again turn to abolition. Abolition looks at connections – between policing and border violence, between the incarceration of indigenous populations, detainees and people of colour and their continued dispossession, expropriation and extraction. Robin Kelley (2020) succinctly captures its tenor thus: ‘Abolition works to dismantle systems that have caused harm, namely police and prisons, and reallocate funds to social and economic resources, and to develop new systems of community-controlled public safety and restorative justice’. This
purposeful diversion of funds, resources and other energies away from the structural violence of state-sponsored militarism, to alternate political projects, requires astute research and scholarly analysis. By continuing to uphold the tactical separation of ‘activism’ and ‘academia’ and sublimating ‘race’ as an exclusive concern of the former domain, in keeping with its political theory and international relations antecedents, international security studies ensures racial events remain forever ‘banalized’. Challenging this assumed incommensurability and putting activism, policy and scholarship back in their relational context would allow international security studies to also discard some of its ahistoricity, specifically with regard to its colonial roots.

These strategies are not light-touch; they cannot be simply appropriated and tacked on in an attempt to shed the anachronism of international security studies, but require a fundamental – and relational – volte face that many would no doubt argue is impossible for a discipline so steeped in, and governed by, the logics of coloniality. Indeed, as we have seen, ‘security’ is a key node in the racialized theoretical apparatus of not only international relations but also political theory. Nevertheless, a sustained effort to undo and unlearn – to denaturalize – the categories of both the ‘lecture hall’ and the ‘professional journal’, to perform what Harney and Moten (2013: 36) call ‘the enactment of a security breach’ ad nauseam, can fashion a break from international security studies’ racial filiation. A ‘decolonial’ discipline may not be achievable, but an anti-racist one is not just possible but also essential. The politics of recognition and repentance is not enough. To paraphrase Ruth Wilson Gilmore (forthcoming): in order to change security studies, we have to change everything.

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Notes
1. It is worth noting that the category of ‘whiteness’ is gradually expanding. People of colour are occasionally interpellated into this structure of whiteness, what Cristina Beltrán (2021) has called the advent of ‘multi-racial whiteness’. But these Black and brown people are conditionally accepted, as junior partners – their ‘membership’ contingent and always in service of a white supremacist project. Latinx Trump supporters in the USA and the UK’s most ‘diverse’ cabinet are both a testament to this phenomenon of multiracial whiteness. Even in its multiracial mutations, whiteness continues to depend on the articulation of an Other to define itself, in what Morrison (1992: 57) calls the ‘parasitical nature of white freedom’.
2. See, for instance, Eastwood (2019) and Howell and Richter-Montpetit (2019, 2020).
3. This can be seen at work in Betts (1997), Biddle (2007), Huntington (2000) and Schelling (1980), among others.
4. Two clarifications are in order at this stage. In the first instance, my periodization is deliberately messy so as to show how the historiography pertaining to these debates has afterlives in that, although the debates did not ‘really’ take place at the time and ‘security studies’ as a field does not map exactly onto these debates, both these debates functioned in conjunction to elide race, which remained at the heart of their concerns. Second, I have collapsed some of the distinctions between different critical approaches, even though some deal with the ‘praxis’ turn, others are more interested in ‘speech acts’ and
the ‘speaking subject’, and still others foreground ‘embodiment’ and the dubious politics of migration, because even the most critical accounts of bordering and ‘Fortress Europe’ have maintained an obdurate silence on questions of racism and their structural significance to ‘security’.

5. There is some confusion about whether this should technically count as debate four or as an addendum to the Third Great Debate, but for our purposes the substance remains unchanged.

6. A good primer on the evolution of these debates and the turn from ‘strategic studies’ and more traditional problem-solving security studies towards an orientation towards critical investigations into security can be found in Keith Krause and Michael Williams’s (2002) landmark edited volume Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Strategies.

7. Admittedly, the Paris School, especially in the work of Didier Bigo, offers the most sophisticated critique of traditional security studies, rejecting the notion that security is either achievable or necessarily desirable. It also recognizes that the way in which racialized populations experience ‘security’ differs from how it is experienced by others. However, on this account, ‘race’ is a variable rather than the linchpin of the entire security enterprise.

8. Note, however, that this distinction is malleable and expedient in the service of whiteness and heteromasculinity. While it works at the level of ‘populations’ and ‘communities’, it often falls apart when it comes to specific instances of violence. For example, while mental instability, irrationality and emotional volatility are often attributed to ‘terrorist’ acts committed by white people (such as Anders Behring Breivik or, more recently, the Nashville bomber), ‘Islamic terrorism’ is made intelligible through recourse to a grammar of cold-blooded rationality combined with an inexplicable hatred for the ‘West’.

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