Project Title

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Speakers:

Dr Matt McDonald

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Introduction

Thank you everybody for coming. We thought we were going to give a few minutes until more people come so now I think it's time we start. It is my great honour and great opportunity to welcome an old colleague of the department back, Matt McDonald, from the University of Queensland for his presentation today. A very short bio on what Matt has been doing, he's a Reader in IR as many of you know, he used to work here with us at the University of Birmingham and then at Warwick and his area of research focus is International Security IR and Foreign Policy. Matt is impressively the author and co-author and co-editor of several books – one is the 'Security Environment and Emancipation'. He's co-author of the 'Ethics and Global Security', co-editor of the 'Critical Security in the Asian Pacific' and also for those of us who are doing research in the field, he's co-editing the 'Australian Journal of Politics and History'. So the title of Matt's presentation today is 'Security, Ecology and Climate Change' and I'm just going to stop here, give the floor to him and let him tell you the rest.

Dr Matt McDonald

Project Title

Thanks very much for that, Theresa, and thanks everyone for coming along. Thanks to Nick for helping to facilitate my presentation today. I had lots of mixed feelings coming back. I've been on study leave in Lyon and so actually brought the family over to France from the UK and our boys, we started our family when I was living in Birmingham so it's been our first opportunity to come back and see the city of their birth. I've been trying to take them around some of the dodgier industrial parts to try to wheedle out this tendency they have to randomly support England at points on the sporting field but so far that's been undermined by the beauty of some of the Autumnal colours and the fact that some parts of Birmingham are actually quite pleasant. So it's been nice to come back and aside from all that, my nerves were totally shot by an almost disastrous in the Rugby Union last night. But I won't go into any more detail about that.

This project is really one of those times, I was just saying to Nick, where I'm really grateful for the opportunity to get some feedback because often we're rushed when we're presenting or we're asked to present and we often go with the easiest common practices to essentially go and present something that's more or less written or even in some cases basically published by the time you're actually presenting it and getting feedback on it. Whereas this project is really at the start and I'm hoping that it's a book project and certainly for that reason getting some feedback on it now is particularly important to me.

So this project, the origins of this project, there's kind of two really. One is a set or research I've done up to this point on the construction of security and the relationship between security and environmental change. So essentially, and this is kind of best represented in that book, 'Security, the Environment and Emancipation', that essentially it tries to make a case that contestation over environmental change can in many cases be viewed as contestation over the meaning of security. And this is in part a response to a tendency either to fix particular meanings of security and international relations when you have academics basically saying 'well, security is about preservation of territorial integrity of the nation state from external threat' or where you have

academics saying ‘security is about the emancipation of individuals’. For whatever the normative reason, it seemed to me that at an analytical level this didn’t really capture the way that political communities go about engaging and the way that different communities at different times understand the security changes and actually it seems strange in that context necessarily for academics to say ‘well, this is actually what security means and all these political actors are kind of getting it wrong’. The other part of that – and really the central component of that – is that security is political. So a lot of the insights that you see from theorists in the so-called securitisation frame of the Copenhagen [School - 0:04:32] for making the case that issues come to be defined as security issues at different points and in different ways by different sets of actors. It’s not just that security is constructed in that sense and given meaning by different political communities at different times, but perhaps most important that that is important politically and consequently it defines core values of communities, it defines issues that are in need of urgent action. For the Copenhagen School of course it takes things out of the realm of normal politics and makes them exceptional. For whatever you think about those types of claims specifically, there is certainly something in this idea that security is politically important, that it does seem to have this high politics dimension and so it’s not just the case for me that security is politically constructed but that actually that process of negotiation of contestation over the meaning of security in particular in empirical contexts is politically really important and consequential and that we need to pay attention to the ways in which different political communities do understand security. Again, related to this, this sense that there are ethical assumptions that underpin different ideas about whose security is in need of being protected and from what threats. And that even if we can’t sort of say here are the clear ethical assumptions upon which different discourses are based always, that certainly political leaders will often try to present discourses of security as kind of apolitical or as abstract as just common sense rather than as ethical normative choices. They certainly have in terms of practice ethical implications. So this idea of being really conscious of the ethical and political implications of security and

recognising that security is sort of a site of contestation between different groups.

Now a lot of this would be a framework that's shared by, as I've said, the Copenhagen School theorists, but in the book and in other work the case that I've tried to make is not that necessarily what matters is whether issues are defined as security issues or not, but rather what matters for me is how security is conceived in broader terms in terms of sets of discourses. Now designations of threat are part of that but for me a discourse of security is made up not just of designations of what constitutes a threat to security but also whose security is under consideration, what sets of agents are responsible for providing the security through what sets of means, and those different components are absolutely crucial it seems to me to the broader understanding of security and to the political effects of securitisation. And so in the project in a moment I'll work through briefly how different discourses of climate security that answer those questions differently have radically different conceptions of what appropriate responses to climate change actually are and this is central in the book. I've sort of made the case that actually what matters are these different discourses of security and the book tries to map the ways in which these different discourses have political effects or purchase at different times, that the political and ethical implications of security and securitisation are a product of the ways in which security is understood in broad terms. So that was the first book.

The second book, sorry it's coming across as a really shameless self-promotion of the two books I'm directly responsible for and while I'm on the, you know, I'm not usually one for self-promotion at all, but just directly bragging, both of these books – and this is a huge honour to me – both of these books are currently sitting in the top seven million of sellers on Amazon. So you know, I'm not saying JK Rowling is looking over her shoulder just yet but I got a cheque for £35 in 2012; I'm expecting another cheque any day really, so it's really kept me in the lucrative game that is lecturing and turning up to class! Anyway, 'Ethics and Global Security' was a book that I wrote with

Tony Burke and Kate [0:08:43] and I know Tony's got affiliations with the centre and he's going to be here later in the week. I also know his work on cosmopolitanism and security is really important. So this is the kind of second context. I'd done all this work on this idea of security as a site of contestation where discourses matter and I'd looked at the example of environmental change as a sort of empirical site for these sets of arguments around the theory of security and the way that security works. But the next step it seemed to me is if we can say the different discourses have better or worse implications in terms of how issues are actually addressed and the effectiveness of time and issues to security. Then arguably at some level it becomes important to say well what discourses are better than others? That's the obvious next step. If we think there are profound ethical limitations to a national security discourse with reference to climate change or nuclear efforts or whatever, then it becomes important to actually say well what are the contours of a progressive understanding of security, especially if we think security, you know, like Ken Booth and others, can be rehabilitated, that it's not just a negative zero of some militaristic game all the time, and that it's politically important to actually engage with redefinition. And what does it mean? So in this book we make a case for understanding security in cosmopolitan terms and outlining the contours of what it would mean to think of security orientated towards global security that really is founded on moral discrimination across humanity. And unsurprisingly perhaps we divided it according to chapters and then went through, as you do – I know every collaborative work is different but we had originally, individually we'd drafted two chapters each and then we sort of came together and did team work on the second drafts. But I was responsible for the first draft of the environment chapter, probably unsurprisingly, and this is a slightly weird thing to admit but within the twelve months that this book has actually been published, I've developed misgivings ultimately about the extent to which cosmopolitanism as a framework can really get us to where we need to go in terms of thinking about an issue like climate change, for a couple of different reasons. For some – and the previous work, I'd emphasised emancipation – there's been a lot of work on the limits of emancipation while endorsing it as a central set of

ethical principles. There's been work that has outlined some of the limits of thinking in critical theoretical terms about environmental change. It's been around for a while, you know, the problem of thinking about dialogue in the context of actors who by definition were the future generations of other living beings aren't in the capacity to articulate their own sets of interests for example.

And some of this applied to cosmopolitanism as well, at least as a framework for thinking about something about climate change, in the sense of obligations for future generations and obligations to other living beings. And also in the context of the changing nature of our relationship to the natural environment and here's some of the work around the Anthropocene this idea that, you know, the traditional distinctions that we make between the natural world and the human world aren't sustainable in the context of the contemporary realities of eco systems and the ways in which humanity affects it.

Really does sort of question the extent to which we can get to where we need to go in terms of an ethical and philosophical framework around ideas that are still predicated on currently existing human populations. Now none of this is to suggest, as will be clear from the rest of the presentation, that I have developed answers to these dilemmas and limitations, but that's the sort of context in which I started thinking well if the idea is to start talking about what constitutes progress in security terms. And if there's a sense that actually cosmopolitanism and human based articulations of philosophy and ethical commitments don't get us quite where we need to go in terms of understanding the nature and coming to terms with the nature of the challenge of climate change. And what does it mean to think in terms of ecological security when it comes to an issue like climate change and that's really where this project is.

So ultimately if security is politically important or consequential, if security is socially constructed, the politics and ethics of security are significantly determined by the contours of the discourse that underpins how issues are

conceptualised and addressed then this encourages I think the following key questions.

1. What constitutes a progressive approach to security in the context of an issue like climate change?
2. What prospects are there for such an approach to be articulated, embraced and even institutionalised?
3. How should we approach security with reference to particular sets of empirical issues?

And obviously climate change is the example I've used which does, which is for a range of reasons. But that's kind of the context ultimately of the project itself.

So why climate change? In part because I've done research on it in the past so it's a bit easier than picking a whole new issue. That's not an insignificant calculation for those of us who are relatively [14.17].

It is also the most significant or profound existential challenge facing the plant. I'm not going to spend time talking about the science of climate change or why it's a problem, I'm just going to work on the assumption that we all -, that it is a problem.

Climate change raises some of the most profound questions about the limits of our existing political and theoretical resources, especially in international relations and security terms. It's one of those global issues that really fundamentally challenges the extent to which we can get where we need to go, either with the set of political institutional resources we currently have at our disposal or indeed with the frameworks of meaning that we have within international relations as a broader discipline.

It's also been a key example in debates about the change in definition of security and scholarship over time, especially since about 2006, although I'd

make the case that even before that the environment more broadly was absolutely essential to redefinition debates about security. And it's been a key example in recent and consequential political interventions and debates, so it was discussed in the Security Council in 2007/2011. It's increasingly finding it way as scholars like Michael Brzoska have been identifying international security strategies. Think tanks discovered in 2006/7 it was hard to find a single American think tank that didn't have a sector that was dedicating itself towards establishing climate change for so-called [threat multiplier 15.52].

Here there are questions around whether ecological security, in using the example of climate change, which is in some ways an easy example to illustrate some of the limits of anthropocentrism in terms of international relations and some of the limits of more traditional approaches for security. There are broader questions here around the extent to which the discourse that I'm about to outline actually works beyond climate change as an example and that's a really I think tricky, interesting case study. There's certainly points of intersection with some of the work on nuclear issues I know but the extent to which this could apply across the board is a broader challenge.

One of the other interesting things about presenting, and I'm sure those of you who have done this in different places would know this, that every institution you're sort of struck by the fact that in some places the case you have to make for a research project kind of is different from others. So there's a point, I presented this at Copenhagen only a couple of weeks ago and I had this long discussion, as I'm about to sort of touch on why I'm addressing this as a security issue, why engage with questions or ethics and climate change through the lens of security and almost everyone in the audience was like, you know, at the centre for advanced security theory was like 'I don't know why you've spent this long talking about this in the paper or in person, yes this is fine to address the security issue, of course you could'.

But I presented this at my own institution, University of Queens, which is very strong, doesn't have as many people who work in security theory though there's a lot of big IR people like Chris [17.23] Smith and Tim Dunne, you know, people who ask those big picture questions. And in the end almost every question was why have you approached this through the lens of security. So it was an interesting illustration of the ways in which different settings, different audiences will pick up I think different dimensions of a project relevant to their own level of expertise.

Clearly, we can talk about ethics when it comes to an issue like climate change without talking about security. And lots of very, very smart people, former colleagues of mine from this institution, from the time I worked here, like Simon [18.00], Ed Page and also people like Steven Gardner do some outstanding work on ethics and climate change without talking about security. There's no sense that I'm saying we need to come to terms with some of the ethical challenges that climate change raised. It's essential to engage security. That's not necessarily the claim I'm making.

Clearly, we can also map different environmental or climate discourses without defining these as security discourses and people like Martin Higher and John Dryzek for example do precisely this and talk about the contours of different sets of meaning as they apply to climate change.

Others would say well it's not just that you can do that but that's securitisation of climate change to the extent that we've seen it hasn't necessarily resulted in mobilisation for different sets of reasons. So Matt Paterson has made a case that actually in terms of mobilising international responses to climate change something like the language of ethics or the language of economics, you know, so people talking about obligations to the most vulnerable or people talking about the global GDP costs so he was using the example of the Stone Review and how that was effective in mobilisation intention relative to security. So his point is that we haven't seen much, securitisation's kind of the dog that didn't bark really when it comes to climate change.

And people like [19.22] have made this point as well that actually one of the interesting things about climate change is that it ticks, in terms of public engagement with climate change, that we do have political leaders saying this is a security threat. We do, broadly speaking, have in lots of different institutional contexts these claims being endorsed by the broader population, but we don't see, it's bloody hard enough getting even mainstream political responses like carbon pricing up, you know, and I'm using the entirely embedded example of Australia in this context which has a very sort of atavistic set of policies on climate change. Even that's hard enough, much less anything that could be conceived as emergency measures in the terms of the Copenhagen School would acknowledge.

And then of course there are others who say 'well, you know, maybe in terms of -, it might be the case that it mightn't have an effect but it also might be dangerous, it also might be a negative thing to securitise an issue like climate change' and Dan Deudney actually made this point about environmental issues in the early 1990s, kind of pre [20.24] a lot of the concerns of the Copenhagen School. Basically saying there's a lot of people talking about whether the environment's a security issue but ultimately, you know, security is about defence, it's about militarism, it's about secrecy, do we really want that to be the space in which we're discussing an issue like environmental change? It's a simplistic argument but actually really echoed by a lot of the sort of push for de-securitisation that you see from the Copenhagen School years later.

And then people like Mark Neocleous now basically saying, you know, security is a liberal technology that's designed to coerce and dominate, it's completely, you know, there's no chance really, drawing on the post structural tradition by and large, basically making the case that there's no chance to rehabilitate security, it's bad, it does bad things.

But in terms of the logic here of looking at security, it is a linkage that's increasingly made politically, so we do need to take that seriously. We can't just pretend that that's not happening and if security is politically significant and constructed, we need to ask precisely how it is given, meaning what implications this will have and what a defensible linkage actually looks like. And of course there is not one security meaning and logic contra the claims of people like Deudney, Neocleous, [21.44] I would say as well. There's no one single politics of security. It really does depend on the discourse of security that's applied, that you see radically different sets of policy responses to security issues depending on the contours of that discourse.

So the central question traditionally in environment security in terms -, and I'll go through this fairly quickly because this is a kind of very brief review of the literature on environment and security, you know, is the environment a threat to security has been the central question. And I'd make the case that this is a really bad place to start because it does suggest that what we first need to do is develop a criteria whereby we can have a uniform answer and either say yes it is or no it's not. And really it turns our attention away from the politics of how different political communities actually understand security.

So at first a lot of those advocating this view were basically saying 'yes the environment is a massive threat, it needs including in security' and there was a central normative agenda here. Betsy Hartman has made the point that actually a lot of the people who were making this claim were people that worked for environmental NGOs who were basically trying to use the language of security to mobilise an effective response from environmental change, which is kind of defensible as a normative push, you've got sympathies I think with that type of view, but it's not a particularly sophisticated analytical position and it does downplay the extent to which securitisation may actually not be particularly good, depending on how that's understood. But that was nonetheless the sort of first move.

The second wave, those making a case that potentially issues like climate change, environmental change could trigger violent conflict and, in that context actually could then start to fit within traditional understanding of security. So you almost have this sense here that yes it could be a security threat but on the terms that aren't that, you know, dissimilar to nation states' current political agendas.

This was really consequential analytical move in that sense because it did sort of bring the environment into a discussion about security and it partly was embraced on the basis that it wasn't as fundamentally threatening to traditional security scholars as those basically saying 'well it's important so it should be a security issue'.

But security was still defined in terms of conflict, so there are a lot of people who rightly were concerned that this was basically saying it sort of defeats the purpose to say it's only important as a security issue to the extent that it could trigger armed conflict.

Others more recently, so people like Simon Dolby, your colleague here, Rita Floyd, Angela Earls making the case that actually we should focus on security as a social construction and what matters is whether it's constructed as a security issue or not.

Climate change was initially not that central to debates about environment. Security but it has become so over time, so really since about the mid 2000s and it's been increasingly prominent as the science and understanding of the scale of the climate threat has developed.

So in terms of then climate security discourses, and pointing to some of the pathologies and implications of these different discourses, and this is really the point where I'm drawing here on a piece I published a couple of years ago in political geography that looks at discourses of climate security and says 'well what are these different discourses and what sets of meaning, sets of

implications do they have in terms of how climate change is understood and what sets of practices follow from linking climate and security in particular ways'.

So the case I'd make here again is that, you know, what matters is the contours of these kind of climate security discourses rather than the simple question of whether climate change has been defined as a security issue. What matters is the set of assumptions that are made about whose security matters and from what type of climate related threats and what sorts of responses we might see.

And a nice way of illustrating this is sort of mapping the ways in which we can actually see already these different discourses being articulated in political terms with radically different implications in terms of the types of agents of security and the types of practices we see.

So national security, an embrace unsurprisingly of the national security framing of climate change with a lot saying that essentially, and this was especially Rita has made the case in some of her work that militaries themselves were pushing this line as a way of ensuring funding with the waning and end of the Cold War in the United States for example, but also a range of think tanks that tie themselves to the national security space. There's a sense here that, you know, for them climate change could challenge the nation's state and its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

And it's sort of the most stark portrayal of this was in 2001 a Pentagon commissioned report by Schwarz and Randall that looked at an abrupt climate change scenario and what some of the national security implications for a country like the United States might be and one of the standout claims from this was that they might actually see some self-sufficient states may actually seek to build boundaries around the nation state to prevent those displaced by climate change from actually accessing the states itself to ensure their security in those terms.

This is clearly a perverse response to climate change at a fundamental level. I think we can all agree that this doesn't help address the problem of climate change, effectively protecting those states lucky enough to have the capacity to adapt to those types of manifestations of climate change. But it is consistent with a national security discourse that focuses on the idea of territorial integrity and sovereignty and the capacity of the nation state itself. There's no inconsistency there. And this really does illustrate that on a fundamental level it's not necessarily the case that securitisation is nec-, immobilisation is necessarily good. So you get perverse policy responses and no solution to a global problem with this type of discourse.

And it's not just people like Schwarz and Randall who are trying to employ it but at different levels you see President Obama talking about energy security in terms of trying to use this language of saying well actually we need to move towards renewable energy because at the moment what we see is we see that we're relying on this despotic undemocratic regimes in the Middle East, we should try to make sure we have greater levels of control over our energy by shifting in this direction.

Which is kind of fine and, again, there's a lot of points where I have sympathy with that argument but you could also use exactly the same argument to justify a massive expansion of coal seam gas fracking, which we have, and you could also see that argument justifying significant expansion of oil exploration in Alaskan wilderness for example. So, you know, in terms of the fundamental assumptions upon which that discourse is based, it doesn't necessarily challenge the way we live and the need to reconsider that relationship to the natural environment.

At the international security discourse level, there's been a focus on the extent to which climate change can challenge international and the rules and norms of an international society for example. So we've seen very recently arguments about whether conflict in Syria and even the emergence of Daesh

or Islamic State has some links to dynamics of climate change. In 2006/7 a lot of emphasis on their role of climate change in triggering conflict in Darfur by people like Ban Ki Moon and the United Nations Environment Programme.

And there is more of an attention on this discourse on the idea of returning stability and maybe using some of that language or security as a way of mobilising a genuine international effort to address this particular problem. The problem with this though is that for many it involves institutions that aren't necessarily fit for purpose and it involves endorsing institutions that may in fact be partly responsible for problems of global climate change. And certainly this is the argument around say the structure of the international economics system, but also the ways in which the currently climate regime itself is structured around states and the lowest common denominator of international cooperation. So there are limits and limitations with that kind of discourse as well.

Human security discourse would focus on whether climate change can and indeed has made the case that climate change does undermine the realisation of human lives and the fulfilment of human lives in particular ways. And most recently, strikingly, the IPCC in its 2015 report had a chapter on human security where it was making the case that climate change was a clear threat to human health and to long term livelihood.

Some of the problems with this one are really interesting in terms of the ways in which it flags even larger problems for an ecological security discourse. The idea that, you know, this type of discourse still needs traditional forms of agents to actually implement and realise a lot of the changes that it advocates, so it almost requires by some definition actors acting in a manner that’s inconsistent with their immediate set of interests. There’s still the problem here that obligations as well to future generations and other living beings aren't necessarily institutionalised in this sort of framework.

So existing discourse is a problematic but can we imagine one with more defensible ethics, better sets of practices and any prospect of implementation. I think the ecological security discourse certainly has more defensive ethics, encourages potentially better practices, whether there are prospects of implementation is a much more difficult question.

And that's a kind of illustration of how I'd see I guess these discourses mapping out. So rather than just the question of whether these issues are seen as a threat necessarily being the determinant of whether securitisation is good or bad, I think you can see across a lot of these discourses different conceptions of how states, how different actors should respond, who'd responsible for addressing a problem like climate change that some focus on mitigation, others on adaptation, some focus on the continued centrality of states or a state system and others focus on broader dimensions of civil society.

So in this project that I've finally actually got around to outlining now, having spent most of my time outlining the limits of current approaches, which is a hell of a lot easier incidentally than outlining your own, just for future reference! Some get to the point, it seems to me that we're at a point when more and more people are beginning to talk about ecological security, in part because of some of the Anthropocene literature. But so far some get to this point and kind of stop. So Simon Dolby's critique of traditional approaches and the assumptions they make are really outstanding but it's frustrating to me in many ways that he hasn't quite pushed beyond the point of a really sophisticated critique of traditional approaches to outline well what does a progressive approach actually look like.

Some get to this point and actually dismiss it as politically naïve and John Barnett is a great example here that in his early work, he really makes a case of ecological security as the most defensible approach to environmental issues, to the environment security relationship but ultimately in that early work says well it is the most defensible but it's kind of on the sidelines of

political debate, no-one's going to embrace an approach that has a focusing on future generations and other living beings, that's kind of crazy. And really significant that the lead author of the 2015 IPCC report on human security was of course none other than John Barnett who then has made this strong case around human security as a way of orienting concerns for the most vulnerable.

Some get to this point and then actually articulate what they think ecological security means and do it, to be frank, fairly badly like Dennis Pirages who makes a case for equilibrium, preserving equilibrium even in the context of recognition that actually we can't, you know, trying to get to the point where we're preserving an existing balance assumes that we're not already changing the climate and that some degree of change is locked in. He also plays to stereotypes of ecocentric approaches and ultimately making a case for population control as one of the central responses to environmental change.

Some deny the possibility of moving beyond anthropocentricism so Rita has this argument that essentially because we are humans we can't really claim to speak on behalf of other beings. Other view anything that attempts to move beyond it as inherently misanthropic, so people like [Buchen 35.11] for example.

But I'd say that the idea of the need to push in this direction and revisit such boundaries and binaries as humans versus non-humans even, to some degree, subject versus object distinctions, has really been furthered by the realities of Anthropocene so Simon Dolby's work's very good and I'll talk about the Anthropocene in a moment, the arguments of new materialists who challenge this subject/object distinction like Jane Bennett who talks about the ways in which existing external realities that are usually just viewed in objective terms actually are constitutive of us in subjective terms.

And some second wave green political theorists like Robyn Eckersley who looked for ways to try to expand circles of moral concern through green consciousness for example without necessarily falling into some of the traps of ecocentrism.

So ecological security for me is ultimately oriented towards ecosystem resilience and with it the rights of the most vulnerable across time, space and species. There's a need to focus on the functionality of ecosystems in this discourse for me, so what it is that ecosystems are actually doing in terms of how they function and this is part of the resilience argument that I'll make in a moment.

And this is particularly important in the context of change associated with things like the Anthropocene and the idea that this idea of humans viewing an external environment and its preservation as useful for providing human welfare but not necessarily beyond is based on this idea of a distinction that really is no longer tenable in the context of climate change and the Anthropocene.

There's a focus on urgent mitigation action but also, given some degree of climate change is actually locked in, there needs to be some discussion about the role of adaptation. Even, you know, from precaution and precautionary sets of practices, even to controversial practices like geoengineering. All actors with a capacity to generate avoidable harms have responsibility in terms of agency depending on capacity and contribution. And dialogue and humility is really central given the complexity of local context and complexity really makes this discourse a really difficult one to get hold of what it looks like in terms of immediate practical challenges and the application to local context where ecosystems themselves are often not immediately recognisable to external actors or viewers.

And there's a real need I think to prevent principles becoming either repressive or misanthropic forms of orthodoxy. And this would be the sort of

central claim of those from a broadly post structural tradition who would always have problems with the idea of locating progressive potential within an alternative conception of security itself.

So what is security in this discourse? This idea of the Anthropocene is central here in part to the logic of sort of making the case for ecological security and the idea here is that human activities are so pervasive that they affect the earth at a global scale and complex interactive and accelerating ways. That humans now have the capacity ultimately, and this is to simplify hugely, to alter the earth's system upon which humans actually depend. Which suggests the need for a couple of things:

1. To address the separation of humans and nature and the anthropocentrism in existing accounts of what security mean and;
2. To recognise that we can no longer preserve balance or try to stop climate change but try to retain ecosystem functionality, so the resilience of ecosystems themselves.

And resilience plays for me a fairly central role in this discourse. Resilience here is understood in terms of the capacity of ecosystems to sustain life across time and space, retain organisational structure following [39.14] change and absorb change while retaining essential function.

Now resilience is ubiquitous politically and is incredibly controversial. Some view it as necessarily neoliberal in scope. But it can, in my reading and certainly as it's been applied in work on ecology for example, it can entail radical measures, not just the preservation of the status quo, to ensure that functionality continues. And there's an excellent piece for those who are interested in resilience, there's an excellent recent piece by Olaf Corry in international political sociology where he actually critiques the critiques of resilience as a form of neoliberal dominance for example.

So whose security are we looking at in this ecological security discourse? The focus here is really on dynamic complex and interrelated ecosystems in the context of climate change. In part, because this separation of humans and the conditions of human survival is just harder to make.

The ethical functions are holistic drawing on some insights of ecological perspectives, like [NAS 40.26] for example but, and critical political ecology, the work of people like Eckersley, but it really tries to challenge and move beyond some of the anthropocentric ecocentric binaries. And the extent to which that's really possible is something that's incredibly contested in social and environmental theory, but it's something that I've been reading a lot around.

And one of the great things about being on study leave is I'm reading stuff. Do you remember reading stuff, Adam, do you remember what that was like?!

Adam: It's been a while!

It's great fun, it really is, it's part of why I got into this in the first place, but I've hardly spoken to any academic who hasn't said you get to a point where you end up sort of writing and re-reading your own stuff. You're reading incredibly strategically in terms of the project that reviewers have said 'you haven't engaged with this' or you're just reading to try and stay on top of your teaching and admin jobs and actually the one wonderful thing about study leave so far for me is that I'm going 'oh maybe that'll be useful, I might read that' and I can't remember, I think it was about PhD the last time I actually had that approach to reading, so it's been wonderful. I've been, yeah, at times sort of grabbing my wife sounding slightly manic going 'I've read this thing about anthropocentrism and it was wonderful!'. Anyway, that's just the sad, pathetic life that I live and I probably need to get out of the house a little bit more than I currently do.

Anyway, so it also means in terms of moving, this conception of who security means allowing our ethical scope to extend beyond contemporary human populations and some of the work in so-called post humanist turn, people like Audra Mitchell, Cudworth and Hopden have pushed in this direction. It's incredibly challenging, both ethically and pragmatically, so you get people like Claire Palmer saying, you know, thinking about future generations means weighing up non-identity, people that don't actually have an identity against those who do and that's really complicated. Nolt makes the case about the scale of moral demands it actually places on us as being unrealistic in terms of what's achievable politically.

Others on the impossibility of genuine non-anthropocentrism, I mentioned [42.42]'s work here and many on the challenges, the inherent challenges of prioritising interest when they're in competition both between and within species and generations in a really complex ecosystem. These aren't simple problems to address.

But with climate change, we do have I think a fundamental crisis that ultimately necessitates new ways of conceiving and realising what security actually means and what we mean by our security in the context of this type of threat.

So ecosystem resilience is viewed in this approach as the best means of realising security for vulnerable groups, for future generations, for other living beings. And indeed for contemporary vulnerable human populations.

So what means of security does this entail? The question of how security is to be realised here is also of course acutely difficult. There is profound complexity interrelationships and uncertainty when it comes to climate change and this has been one of the problems of the issue politically as well that of course even if we say yes climate change is happening and is human induced, you know, even incredibly smart scientists writing about this can't say with certainty how things as complex as ecosystems are going to respond

to [44.01], where those points are, tipping points for example where things will get really, really serious. It's almost impossible to make those distinct claims because of the complexity of things we're talking about.

And there's of course incredibly difficult choices about prioritising different sets of responses. Precaution is clearly important in the context of uncertainty and we saw this broadly endorsed of course with the Rio declaration at UNCED in 1992 where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainties shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. Of course, you know, inserting cost effective is applied to developing states and there's a sense that of course with all of these sets of principles there are compromises that are being made but, nonetheless, we see here some endorsement of elements of this approach.

Mitigation is clearly central including a rapid shift to no or low carbon economies. Dialogue is central in terms of helping facilitate understanding and the match up between what can be universal or abstract principles on the one hand and local practice as an understanding of ecosystems on the other. There's been some fascinating work about indigenous understandings of climate and ecosystems in particular context.

Adaptation to climate change in the context of the reality of some degree of climate change is necessary, however, and this is where it does get controversial because in the past adaptation was seen as a cop out, it was seen as a way of taking attention away from the necessity of mitigation. And adaptation here suggests the need even for something as controversial as geo-engineering so here, you know, solar radiation management, measures to reduce carbon concentration, things like sequestration of geo, so carbon storage for example.

Really controversial practices because they're seen as a search for a silver bullet that involve no change to existing practices. It's really hard to predict

the outcomes of some of those mechanism given ecological complexity and it doesn't help that a lot of people advocating them are people who are basically saying 'yeah, we can continue to produce greenhouse gas emissions' like my former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott.

But it does need to be part of this conversation, even if necessarily short term or stop gap and Simon Dolby's work on this I think is really good. But the emphasis will still be on transitioning to low or no carbon economies.

And finally, in terms of agents of security, another significant dilemma. Agency in the context of climate change is genuinely universal of course and diffused but requires key actors or institutions to orient their concerns towards others. And this, for many, is the heart of the problem. You're actually requiring developed states to find ways of orienting their moral concerns towards not just underdeveloped states but to future generations or to other living beings and that can be difficult.

All those in a position to create avoidable harms for ecosystems have some degree of responsibility in this scheme albeit differentiated depending on responsibility for those harms and the capabilities that they have in actually redressing them.

But the requirement for contemporary human populations to orient their ethical concerns beyond borders, lifetime and species is simply too challenging for some and, as I've noted, [47.27] the political relevance for others, as people like John Barnett have argued. But like other challenges, this is actually applicable to other sets of controversial ideas, you know, whether you're talking about the responsibility to protect or nuclear disarmament, you see dilemmas of interpretation and application apply to all security discourses, even the most simplistic or atavistic, you know, national security debates around what should our defence structures look like, should we be spending more on nuclear forces or nuclear weapons or conventional forces for example.

I don't think we can reject the imperative for change on the basis of the difficulty for achieving it. To me, the task is really outlining where and how we can advance movement in this direction and that's one of the things I haven't spent as much time talking about today but is clearly an important part of the project.

We can see movement with the endorsement of things like precautionary principle, common but differentiated responsibility. A lot of the work on the Anthropocene, growing, including international climate action of course, high hopes for Paris. And civil society activism.

So ultimately the contemporary challenge of climate change I think requires us to rethink the way we think of security if we are linking the two. And orienting towards the resilience of ecosystems. There are obviously some massive dilemmas with such a discourse in terms of moving beyond anthropocentrism, whether that's possible or even desirable. Dealing with the scale of uncertainty and complexity that an ecological security discourse clearly must. Prioritising threats and responses in terms of the myriad of the sort of range of ways in which ethical responsibility plays out.

Clearly the politics of actually getting to the point where these views are not just articulated but potentially taken up and institutionalised. And the [implacability 49.25] too in broader terms of this set of principles beyond [] of climate change.

At least those are the dilemmas that I'm vaguely aware of. There might be a series of others that have become immediately relevant to you across the course of the presentation and I look forward to hearing some more about them.

Thanks.

Introducer: Thank you.

[Applause]

END OF RECORDING