

International security studies: a report of a conference on the state of the field.

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International Security Studies: A Report of a Conference on the State of the Field

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

International Security Studies A Report of a Conference on the State of the Field Joseph S. Nye, Jr./ and Sean M. Lynn-Jones | Twelve years ago, in their foreword to the first issue of International Security, the editors expressed the hope that the journal would "contribute to the disciplined discourse that distinguishes a profession." Such discourse should periodically include an examination of the state of the field. The editors of International Security therefore believe that readers of the journal will find of interest this overview of the present vigor and future direction of the field of international security studies. In it, the chairman of the editorial board and the managing editor of International Security offer their perspective on the progress of international security studies, stimulated by a conference on the state of the field. We feel that more discussion of the present and future state of international security studies is necessary, and we invite further commentary. -The Editors | In February 1987, the Center for Science and International Affairs (CSIA) convened a

conference on "The Past, Present and Future of International Security Studies." Although undertaken as background for a report to the trustees of the Ford Foundation for their mid-decade review, the conference also presented an opportunity to survey the field that is the focus of this journal. Thus we believe that the ideas generated at the conference will interest our readers. Participants from several nations and seven disciplines brought a wide variety of views to the conference. Although there was no effort to reach a consensus, certain tendencies were clear. The interpretation and extrapolation of those tendencies is our own, supplemented by references to published works. What follows reflects our personal perspective rather than an agreed conference report or a systematic bibliographic study of the field. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., is Chairman of the Editorial Board and Sean M. Lynn-Jones is Managing Editor of *International Security*. *International Security*, Spring 1988 (Vol. 12, No. 4) © 1988 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

5 International Security 12:4 | 6 Defining the Scope of the Field

International security is not a discipline but a problem, as one participant put it. It developed around military capabilities and East-West issues that were easy to grasp. Deterrence theory and game theory provided a powerful unifying framework for those central issues, but often at the cost of losing sight of the political and historical context. The economic, cultural, and psychological aspects of security were initially given scant attention. The field is necessarily interdisciplinary, a point upon which most participants agreed. The central questions are concerned with international violence, but there are also other threats to the security of states. This range of problems is too diverse to be viewed solely through the prism of a single discipline but, because political conflicts between sovereign states are the key to many critical issues in international security, political science will continue to occupy the central place among the disciplines concerned with questions of war and peace.¹ As long as the fate of the earth could depend on how states address security issues, it will remain imperative not to overlook the potential contributions offered by other disciplines, such as economics, sociology, history, physical sciences, anthropology, psychology, and law. The interdisciplinary nature of international security studies makes it difficult to fit the field into the traditional structure of academic departments of most universities, but does not detract from the scholarly status of the field. Despite difficulties in drawing precise boundaries, it is possible to identify the subjects that form the central focus of international security studies. These are general issues, such as the causes of war and of alliances, as well as policy-oriented research on military and other threats confronting particular countries. The field includes basic theoretical work on the causes of conflict and war in the international system, the dynamics and outcomes of conflict, 1. A 1966 survey found that political scientists formed the largest group in the field. See Roy E. Licklider, *The Private Nuclear Strategists* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 95. Although Licklider predicted that "the study of strategy and disarmament will make...

International Security Studies

Joseph S. Nye, Jr.,
and
Sara M. Lynn-Jones

A Report of a Conference
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