

From Security to Global Ecological Solidarity: Environmental Concerns and Anarchism¹

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Güvenlikten Küresel Ekolojik Dayanışmaya: Çevresel Kaygılar ve Anarşizm	From Security to Global Ecological Solidarity: Environmental Concerns and Anarchism
Öz Bu makale, çevresel kaygıların güvenlik çerçevesinde ele alınmasını eleştirmekte; güvenlik kavramı ve ekolojik meseleler üzerine anarşist bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Güvenlik odaklı yaklaşımlardan dayanışma temelli çabalara bir dönüşümü savunan makale, düşünme ve eylem için alternatif bir çerçeve olarak Küresel Ekolojik Dayanışma'yı (Global Ecological Solidarity - GES) önermektedir. Makale, güvenliğin istisna mantığına karşı hiyerarşik olmayan ve kapsayıcı bir yönelim olarak inşa ettiği GES'i, güvenlik odaklı kavramlara normatif ve analitik bir alternatif olarak öne sürmektedir. Bilhassa Kropotkin, Reclus ve Bookchin'in çalışmaları esas alınarak anarşist düşünce temelinde inşa edilen GES, ekolojik değerlere dayanan, devlet-dışı ve ulusötesi dayanışma biçimlerini inceleyen bir araştırma programı olarak da önerilmektedir.	Abstract This article critiques the treatment of environmental concerns through the lens of security and offers an anarchist perspective on the concept of security and ecological issues. It argues for a shift from security-focused approaches to solidarity-based endeavours and introduces Global Ecological Solidarity (GES) as an alternative framework for thinking and acting. GES functions as a normative and analytical alternative to concepts such as environmental, climate, and ecological security, replacing security's logic of exception with a non-hierarchical and inclusive orientation. Grounded in the anarchist thought of Kropotkin, Reclus, and Bookchin, GES is also proposed as a research programme on transnational, non-state solidarities based on ecological values.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası ilişkiler, Uluslararası ilişkiler Teorileri, Anarşizm, Çevre, Güvenlik, Güvenlikleştirme, Küresel Ekolojik Dayanışma.	Keywords: International Relations, International Relations Theory, Anarchism, Environment, Security, Securitisation, Global Ecological Solidarity.
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1. Introduction

Anarchy has traditionally been regarded as a negative concept in the field of International Relations (IR). The dominant scholarly view interprets anarchy as the “absence of supreme power”, treating it as a permissive condition for dispute and conflict in the international system (Art & Jervis, 2017, p. 3). Yet if anarchy represents “a social situation in which the sovereignty of man over man is abolished” (Degen, 1999, p. 163), then it is difficult to call a system ‘anarchic’ where states claim ultimate authority, wielding coercive force domestically and, in the name of ‘security’, externally, often to others’ detriment. Likewise, the neoliberal political economy, in which corporations and governments exploit the Earth’s resources, bears little resemblance to anarchy. The absence of a single supreme authority over these actors and structures does not make the system anarchic in the sense intended by anarchist theory; rather, in this respect, contemporary international relations are better characterised as *archic* than *an-archic*. Against these *archic* features, anarchist theory understands anarchy as an emancipatory ground. In Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s (1969, p. 247) terms, anarchy is not a “scourge” but a “benefit”; international anarchy is “a template for all social relations” rather than a problem to be overcome (Prichard, 2013, p. 4).

If anarchist theory treats anarchy as an emancipatory template for social relations, it opens a different set of questions for environmental politics in IR. Can environmental concerns be articulated within an “anarchist template”, rather than through *archic* concepts, above all security, which is frequently treated as a foundational ordering principle (*archē*) of international relations? What are the implications of the security paradigm’s dominance in environmental IR? What ethical and political costs follow when the security paradigm becomes the default language of environmental politics? And are there alternatives to security for addressing environmental concerns? These questions structure the article’s argument. By critiquing the concept of security along these lines, the article assesses the potential contributions anarchist theory can make to addressing environmental concerns.

The article expands on anti-security scholarship. Led by Mark Neocleous, who argues that the logic of security functions as “a means of modelling the whole of human society around a particular vision of order” (2008, p. 4), there have been arguments “against security” (2000) since the beginning of the new millennium. Scholars have been discussing the concept of “anti-security” (Neocleous & Rigakos, 2011; Manolov & Rigakos, 2014) and the “abolition” of security (Neocleous & ASC, 2024). The article examines the anti-security approach in IR, focusing on environmental concerns and grounding its analysis in anarchism. Methodologically, the study is a conceptual and normative-theoretical inquiry. It first reviews the literature on environment-security, surveying prominent approaches and works; second, it advances a normative critique of security by assessing critical IR perspectives and the ethically problematic features of security as discourse; and third, it proposes Global Ecological Solidarity (GES), rooted in anarchist thought, as an alternative framework to security logics in environmental politics. In doing so, the article seeks to destabilise security’s dominance in the literature and to bring a neglected approach, anarchism, into debates on environmental questions in IR.

2. Pervasive Dominance of Security: A Brief Genealogy

The conceptualisation of environmental concerns as a matter of security emerged during the 1970s. This framing accelerated when early texts cast environmental degradation as a survival problem. Survivalist discourse, consonant with security’s logic of exception, served as a basis for securitisation and became one of the sources that fed the development of the

environmental security paradigm. "We are proceeding along a collision course", wrote Richard Falk (1971, p. 9) in his renowned book *The Endangered Planet*, warning about "the degree of danger that arises from the environmental deterioration". Notably, Richard Falk is among the first scholars to examine anarchism within the context of IR. For instance, while discussing "future worlds", Falk (1975, pp. 219-223) also studied potential anarchist world orders. In his article "Anarchism and World Order", he argued that "anarchist ideas on 'security' and 'organization' must be set forth" (Falk, 1978, p. 66). However, the author did not delve into the anarchist conception of environmental concerns or the anarchist perspective on the ecological crisis. Falk's (1971, p. 231) comprehension of environmental concerns was founded on the premise of human survival alongside peace, welfare, security, and the future of "mankind". In a similar vein, Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout (1971) approached environmental problems from a security perspective by addressing the concept of "ecological catastrophe". They emphasised the narrow scope of the theory and practice of international politics following World War II, which was primarily preoccupied with "high politics". According to them, this situation must be challenged:

"Meanwhile, a more insidious, but no less lethal, threat to the human future grew and spread virtually unnoticed. This was the threat of worldwide catastrophe through progressive disorganization and destruction of the ecology of the earth" (Sprout & Sprout, 1971, p. v).

Both Falk's and Sprouts' works reflect a humanist and, in part, environmentalist viewpoint. Despite the advocacy for broadening the concept of security, these studies did not directly address security in the academic sense. Concurrently, a number of scholars initiated an examination of environmental concerns pertaining to "national" security, thereby giving rise to the advent of statism in the literature. Lester Brown (1977) expressed concern over the "overwhelmingly military character" of national security, citing the emergence of non-military threats that may stem from "the relationship of man to nature". He maintained that the concept of national security should be broadened to encompass environmental challenges arising from the competition for energy resources and the ongoing ecological deterioration of the planet (Brown, 1977). During the 1980s, scholars increasingly incorporated environmental concerns into national security discourse. Richard Ullman challenged the traditional military-based security paradigm, asserting that this paradigm contributes to the escalation of "global insecurity". Conversely, he proposed a more comprehensive "total security" approach, encompassing threats arising from environmental problems (Ullman, 1983, p. 129).

The statist security paradigm took a more contentious turn after some scholars noted that conflicts might arise from environmental problems and suggested that being "militarily" prepared is also essential. These reactions, in part, reflected the oil crisis of the 1970s, which demonstrated that resource scarcities and shortages can lead to disputes and potential conflicts. For instance, Norman Myers (1986, p. 251) underscored the dangers of environmental impoverishment, positing it as a "major cause for tension and hostilities between nations". Furthermore, he cautioned United States decision-makers about the impending "environmentally induced change" (Myers, 1989, p. 41).

In the aftermath of the Cold War, environmental issues became a central component in the security agendas of states and international organisations. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) incorporated "environmental elements" into its "broad approach to security" as outlined in the New Strategic Concept (NATO, 1991). The United States introduced

the concept of “environmental security” into its security agenda with the 1991 “National Security Strategy of the US” (NSS) (The White House, 1991). In the wake of these developments, other states have also begun incorporating environmental security into their defence strategies. In summary, from the 1990s onwards, scholars and policymakers have increasingly acknowledged environmental issues as security concerns, thereby establishing them as a prominent focal point.

There have also been critical studies on environmental security since the 1990s. For instance, Daniel Deudney (1990, p. 461) has voiced concerns regarding the tendency to link environmental concerns and national security, positing that (1) these links are “analytically misleading” on account of the fact that traditional security concerns do not pertain to environmental problems, (2) they could weaken a globalist political outlook by reinforcing nationalist perspectives on the environmental crisis, and (3) the correlation between environmental degradation and conflict is “weak”. Nina Graeger (1996, p. 109) raised concerns about certain “conceptual and methodological shortcomings” in environmental security. Jon Barnett (2000, p. 271) sought to destabilise the environment-conflict thesis, arguing that it lacks an empirical basis and that theoretical links serve as a product of the North’s security agenda. Hugh Dyer (2001, p. 441) “drew some conclusions about the prospect of an ‘enclosure’ of the discipline by an environmental security concept”. However, despite the growing body of critical literature, the security perspective has remained dominant. Contributing to the general intellectual milieu where works such as “The Coming Anarchy” (Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan, 2000) gained popularity, some scholars emphasised “clear connections” between environmental threats and international tensions (Gleick, 1991), while others studied links between *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Homer-Dixon, 1999) in terms of “acute conflict” and “violent conflict” (Homer-Dixon, 1991; 1994) and “resource wars” (Klare, 2001) employing concepts such as “turmoil” (Homer-Dixon, 1999), “environmental anarchy”, used here in its pejorative, disorder-connoting sense (Beeson, 2021), and “struggle for survival” (Aksoy-Özcan, 2023).

“Human security” has been another approach of the post-Cold War era, emphasising that security is centred on individual human beings rather than on the state. This approach is predicated on the premise that the “life-sustaining functions of the biosphere are disturbed”, which is conceptualised as environmental degradation that “threatens the security of people” (Barnett, 2001, pp. 12-14). It can be argued that some of the aforementioned works (Falk, 1971; Sprout & Sprout, 1971) can be regarded within the framework of human security, even if they did not explicitly employ the term. They identified environmental concerns as potential threats to humanity’s future, signalling this before the term was coined. The term “human security” was formally introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 *Human Development Report*. It was characterised as a people-centric approach rooted in solidarity among individuals and applicable universally. In this report, environmental degradation was identified as one of the most significant threats, leading to the acknowledgement of environmental security as a fundamental component of human security. The report highlighted that human security transcends a defensive concept akin to territorial or military security; it is fundamentally linked to development (UNDP, 1994, pp. 1-28).

Today, the nexus between environmental issues and security remains a paramount concern for both international organisations and states. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has underscored the concept of environmental security, which aims to comprehend

how environmental degradation and climate change interact with peace and security dynamics, as one of its concerns under the topic of “disasters and conflict” (UNEP, 2024). In the third-year review of its 2016 Global Strategy, the European Union placed greater emphasis on climate change, describing the “climate-security” nexus as “critical” within its “integrated approach” to security (EU, 2019). Alongside these practical concerns, today, environmental concerns are more often addressed through the lens of security. There are additional security concepts, such as “ecological security”, which focus on ecosystem resilience and prioritise the rights and needs of those most vulnerable to climate change (McDonald, 2018, pp. 164-165); and go beyond “small efforts to add some humanitarian and environmental concerns to the security agenda” (Pirages & DeGeest, 2004, p. 21) or “climate security”, which has emerged from “the increasing recognition of the profound and far-reaching impacts of climate change on global stability and security” (Swain, 2025, p. 10). In addition, recent debates increasingly frame climate change through new securitising concepts, most notably the notion of a “threat multiplier” (UN, 2025). In the same vein, phenomena such as rising climate migration (Boas, 2015; Tezcan, 2024) and the processes of energy transition (Prendleloup, 2025) are increasingly discussed in security terms.

Taken together, these institutional priorities and the proliferation of securitising frameworks indicate that environmental problems are increasingly being understood and governed primarily as questions of security. In this regard, the security discourse within the context of environmental concerns continues to dominate. Importantly, this dominance is not confined to formal institutional frameworks; rather, security is pervasive in both theory and practice. Whether articulated from statist, humanist, or environmentalist perspectives, security tends to reproduce an *archic* and authoritarian mentality. The prevailing negative discourse of ‘anarchy’, which functions as a counter-concept to order in IR, also contributes to the (re)production of security as a compelling discourse. “In anarchy, security is the highest end”, wrote Kenneth Waltz (1979, p. 126). Yet, if anarchy is assumed as a liberating force, security has no role in anarchy, as it bestows coercive authority to those designated to provide it. From an anarchist perspective, this elucidates why security is inherently anti-anarchic. Seen this way, the anarchist critique of Ken Booth’s (1991a, p. 544) assertion that “anarchy in security is possible” might be that “there is no place for security in anarchy”. Nonetheless, in order to grasp the normatively contested dimensions of security, it is necessary to engage with the field of security studies.

3. Perils of Security: A Normative Critique

As some scholars have described it as a “renaissance of security studies”, there has been a significant expansion in security studies since the 1980s (Walt, 1991). Notably, new critical security approaches have introduced important conceptual and methodological perspectives to the field. The Copenhagen School has made some of the most important contributions to Critical Security Studies (CSS). One of the leading figures of this school, Barry Buzan (1983, p. 11), in his 1983 book, cited W. B. Gallie’s description of security as an “essentially contested concept”, which is why, according to him, security defies general definition. In the 1990s, the Copenhagen School developed the Securitisation Theory, marking a revolutionary step in CSS. Ole Wæver (1995, p. 75), in his study “Securitization and Desecuritization”, reframed the meaning of security as not being “given”, but rather as a “speech act” and stated “one should remain aware of the effects of having an issue codified in the language of security”. The Copenhagen School theorists contend that states can frame issues as matters of “security” and

in doing so, claim a “need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means”; in other words, “to break the normal political rules” (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 24-26). This critique undoubtedly challenges established security paradigms. However, it is important to examine the theoretical underpinnings of securitisation, particularly with respect to its ethical and ideological foundations.

Although they referred to “intellectual and political dangers” in extending the language of security to issues beyond traditional state security, the normative stance remains ambiguous (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 2). What are the ethical ramifications of securitisation? Is there no ideological aspect to “speech acts” as matters of securitisation? There are no clear answers regarding the normative aspects. Some scholars have even argued that the theoretical orientation of securitisation is not “critical”. For instance, Michael Williams (2003, pp. 521-522) noted the realist roots of securitisation theory and emphasised that the Copenhagen School viewed securitisation as an objective process and possibility, rather than a normative question.

According to Ken Booth (2007, p. 167), securitisation studies integrate aspects of neorealism, poststructuralism, and English school constructivism, and they struggle to provide clear political guidance regarding the next steps. He argued that securitisation theory is “state-dominated/centric” because the sole entity capable of securitisation is the state. Booth (2007, p. 165) opposed the Copenhagen School’s discourse-centric approach because it fails to account for critical aspects of reality and is founded on the false assumption that threats do not exist outside discourse. To illustrate, ecological threats were a reality prior to the conceptualisation of environmental security. Consequently, Booth contended that security is formed not only by speech but also by physical, social, and political realities. However, the rationale behind conceptualising these “realities” within the rubric of “security” also merits scrutiny. Harms and dangers are real; ‘security’ is the political framing that organises responses to them. Thus, security still appears to be a “speech act”.

Even though Booth did not acknowledge that invoking security is a political choice, he and his school, known as the Welsh School, recognised the ethical dimensions of security. Richard Wyn Jones (1995, p. 314), another Welsh School theorist, remarked that “Critical Security Studies is an idea whose time has come”. He argues that the primary objective of scholars engaged in this field is to challenge and dismantle the prevailing hegemonic security discourse (Wyn Jones, 1999, p. 160). Jones claimed that CSS embodies a position in the political struggle against traditional security. However, regardless of how challenging it is or what type of security is under discussion, the criticality of security has its limits because it tends to privilege those who define threats and implement extraordinary measures. In one of his works, Ken Booth discussed the concept of “emancipatory” security, yet he does not sufficiently interrogate the concept of security itself or the authoritarian implications that may be built into it. He wrote, “Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security” (Booth, 1991b, p. 319). According to him, critical theories remind us of the ethical base of politics, and by only pursuing emancipation, we can establish “real” security (Booth, 1991b, p. 326). His efforts are oriented towards contributing to a more cosmopolitan security, namely world security, where we “live in a better balance with each other and with the rest of nature” (Booth, 2007, p. 278).

Yet, as the discourse on security persists, it becomes increasingly evident that a divergence from this “balance” with nature is becoming more pronounced. Despite the expansion of security discourse, ecological harm continues to intensify. Each year, temperature records are

broken. In 2024, the global average temperature exceeded 1.5 °C for the first time, marking a milestone in the ongoing climate crisis (C3S, 2025). As security is invoked increasingly often, it appears that the world is becoming less safe. Some studies suggest that framing environmental issues as security matters provokes conflicts among the participating actors or between the actors and the regime itself (Gordeeva, 2022, p. 5). Beyond this dilemma, the concept of security, at its core, is predisposed to abuse because it authorises exceptional measures and concentrates decision-making power. It subordinates all else to itself. It paralyses people's senses, politically speaking. Consequently, from an anti-authoritarian standpoint, security fosters environments that promote domination, hierarchy, centralisation, and power dynamics, all at the expense of freedom. Security has devolved into an authoritarian paradigm for addressing concerns. Anarchism, a theoretical framework that has only recently emerged as an approach in IR, offers insights to illustrate these authoritarian aspects. For instance, Chris Rossdale drew attention to these negative facets of security:

"Security has become the governing ideology of our contemporary age. In its name bombs are dropped, uprisings suppressed, walls erected, weapons sold, and countless numbers spied upon, imprisoned, tortured, and killed; and yet, despite the monumental economic and political resources expended in pursuit of security, life for most people feels less, not more, secure" (Rossdale, 2019, p. 62).

Rosssdale is a scholar who studies security from an anarchist perspective. In his 2010 article, he suggested that an anarchist perspective in the discipline might start with the issue of agency and suggested that in IR and CSS, anarchism presents opportunities to challenge and redefine existing relations of agency (Rosssdale, 2010, p. 501). Additionally, in his doctoral dissertation, he sought to "conceptualise an anarchist response to the politics of security" (Rosssdale, 2013, p. vii). In another work, Rosssdale (2016, pp. 202-207) examined ways of "resisting security" by questioning "ethical resistance to the political and conceptual ordering of security" while also seeking alternatives to conduct "security in a more ethical fashion". However, the applicability of "more ethical" security can be a subject of debate within the context of anarchism. Rosssdale (2019, p. 63) provided a clearer picture in this regard in his 2019 article, stating that beyond arguing emancipatory security, anarchism can be utilised to challenge the fundamental concepts and political structure of security and insecurity; thereby weakening their influence on contemporary political life.

In light of these considerations, the very concept of security appears to be ethically indefensible. Consequently, the notions of "ethical security" and "anarchist security studies" are untenable. Anarchist intervention in security studies can only manifest as resistance to security. In this sense, anarchism functions less as a theory of 'better security' than as a critique of the security form itself, and as a repertoire for resisting it. As Saul Newman (2016, p. 23) puts it, "we start to fear security more than the thing we are being secured against". He elaborated on his thoughts on security in another publication:

"Security, in our contemporary society, has become a kind of metaphysics, a fundamentalism, where not only is it the impetus behind an unprecedented expansion and intensification of state power, but also becomes a kind of condition for life: life must be secure against threats — whether they are threats to our safety, financial security, etc — but this means that the very existential possibility of not only human freedom, but politics itself, is being negated" (Newman, 2010, p. 45).

Security embodies an authoritarian discourse, and securitisation has the function of creating the conditions for addressing issues in *archic* ways. Not only does the state securitise,

but the academy does as well. In the case of IR, securitisation has occurred through research and teaching. In the 2017 faculty survey of the “Teaching, Research, and International Policy Project” (TRIP), a total of 13,482 IR scholars from 36 countries were sent a survey. Of these, 3,784 scholars responded. One of the questions asked was “What is your research area in IR?”³ The most studied area was security, with 18.57% of respondents identifying “international security” as their “main area”. The second area was “other” at 10.84%, and the third was “international political economy” at 9.87% (TRIP, 2017). As a result, security was the primary research area in the discipline, nearly doubling the second area. Even if we set aside this result and similar outcomes, we can confidently assert that security is one of the most studied areas in IR. According to the document research tool of Web of Science Core Collection database, 284 articles were published with the keyword “security” in the area of international relations in 2024, significantly outpacing other common keywords such as “peace” (153) “economy” (111), “foreign policy” (106), “human rights” (96), “diplomacy” (78), “political economy” (56), “energy” (38), “theory” (32) and “international organization” (32) (Web of Science, 2025).

In a discipline where security studies hold supremacy and the majority of scholars focus on security, securitisation has become a mainstream trend. This hegemony encourages new security concepts, such as “ontological security”, which, according to some scholars, “all states seek to achieve” (Steele, 2008, p. 24) and is their “basic need” (Mitzen, 2006, p. 343). From an anarchist perspective, it is plausible to argue that these concepts contribute to the justification of the state. Against this backdrop, in a field dominated by security, efforts to desecuritize issues may have emancipatory effects. Instead of “rethinking” environmental security (Dalby, 2022), we should think about alternatives to security. Rather than contemplating “emancipatory security” (Booth, 1991b), we must emancipate IR from security. The concept of “climate security” (McDonald, 2021) is problematic from an anarchist perspective because the climate cannot be protected so long as it remains framed through the logic of security. An “ecological security” aimed at the “refocusing of the security discourse onto the environment itself” is unattainable because security cannot be ecological (Tkachenko, 2024). Greens also argue that framing ecological issues as security threats undermines essential green principles of anti-militarism and non-violence (Eckersley, 2013, p. 282). Besides, security obstructs the ability to tackle concerns from more democratic standpoints. To securitize an issue renders it more undebatable and impervious to alternative perspectives. As Claudia Aradau (2004, p. 388) argued, security prioritises authority over democracy, which is why the logic of security is “non-democratic and exclusionary”. In a discipline where this “logic” prevails, the existence of counter-logics is a necessity.

Being against security does not mean that human societies have no right or need to be protected. The issue is rather that *security* is a concept tightly bound up with the modern state and coercive political power. Anthropologists like Pierre Clastres have studied “societies without a State”, and his anthropology is instructive on this point. As David Graeber (2004, p. 22) characterised him as one of the “overtly anarchist anthropologists of recent memory”, Clastres, in his *Society Against the State* (1989), showed that protection and social order need not take the form of a separate commanding power. He examined the institution of “chieftainship” among various stateless peoples in Amerindian societies and compared it with the modern concept of “power”. In these societies, the “chief” is, of course, responsible for the

³ The reason for citing the 2017 survey is that there have been no other faculty surveys since then that involved this question.

protection of his people. But the chief has no authority or coercive force. He has nothing other than the prestige that society grants him to ensure order and agreement grounded in consensus rather than constraint. The chief, as a “peacemaker”, a moderating agency, is charged with maintaining peace and harmony. He can, of course, lead war expeditions, but if his decision does not coincide with the will of society, there will be no war. If the chief tries to drag society into war for power, this can cost him his chieftainship. The chief’s power depends on the goodwill of society (Clastres, 1989, pp. 208-210).

These societies understood that a power above the community carries a deadly danger, and they never allowed the construction of a power separate from society or foreign to it. A political power that could think on its own, separate from society, and step outside society is made impossible in these societies. Therefore, the need for protection does not lead to the construction of approaches and instruments that could be used outside or against the people. The modern state, by contrast, is based on an understanding of political power above society, a power that subjects human beings to sovereignty. In Clastres’s (1989, p. 11) terms, “the truth and reality of power consists of violence; power cannot be conceptualized apart from its predicate: violence”. “Security” is one of the main fields in which this violence is most clearly experienced, and even one of the principal fields that produce it. Security is one of the most important instruments of the modern state, which rests on the power to compel, the capacity to coerce, and the command-obedience relation. And for this reason, security is structurally predisposed to exclusion, hierarchy, and domination.

Anarchism, with all its philosophical and theoretical underpinnings, can serve as a pertinent approach for understanding and challenging these ethically fraught aspects of security. As George Woodcock (2004, p. 8) argued, anarchism can help stimulate “taste for free choice and free judgement” which modern society bartered for the “illusion of security”. According to Errico Malatesta (2015, p. 14), anarchy is “society organised without authority”, and by “authority”, he means “the power to impose one’s own will”. Anarchy is therefore not opposed to every form of guidance or influence, but specifically to imposed authority. Security, in turn, is a concept through which this imposed authority is exercised most firmly and continuously reproduced. By contrast, anarchism aims at a form of social life “where nobody is in a position to oppress or exploit anyone else” (Malatesta, 2015, p. 13). Security can be criticised from this standpoint as well, meaning that it often generates more oppression and exploitation rather than less. This contradiction is evident even in much older anti-authoritarian traditions. For example, in one of the most cited ancient sources of anarchism, *Tao Te Ching*, there is a verse as follows: “Let the universe itself / reveal to you its splendor / How do I know this should be so? / Because of this— / The more restrictions, the more poverty / The more weapons, the more fear in the land / The more cleverness, the more strange events / The more laws, the more lawbreakers” (Lao Tzu, 2008). Just as more weapons create more fear, more security leads to greater insecurity.

4. Global Ecological Solidarity: Insights from Anarchist Thinkers

Thomas Malthus (2018), in his well-known work *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, devoted a substantial portion to critiquing William Godwin (1793), whom Kropotkin (2005, p. 238) later describes as “the first to formulate the political and economical [sic] conceptions of anarchism”. Malthus (2018, p. 293) characterised Godwin’s philosophy on society as romantic and imaginative, aiming to make both Godwin and the readers aware of realities by reminding them of the “severe touch of truth”. According to him, “the mighty law of self-preservation

expels all the softer, and more exalted emotions of the soul" (Malthus, 2018, p. 293). This is primarily because "the temptations to evil are too strong for human nature to resist" (Malthus, 2018, p. 293). Read as an anthropology of fear and scarcity, this is a proto-security ontology. Peter Kropotkin's writings also help clarify this point.

Kropotkin criticised the "narrowness" of the "Malthusian conception of competition between each and all" and proposed an alternative perspective on nature. This perspective challenged both overly optimistic views that assumed only harmony, love, and peace in nature and the overly pessimistic views that saw competition, war, and misery (Kropotkin, 1908, p. 3). Nature involves struggle, but also sociality. If there is competition, there is also mutual support. He sought to demonstrate that solidarity and mutual aid have always existed in both animals and humans. On his account, species that cooperate tend to survive and flourish more than those organised primarily through competition. He believes that "mutual aid" constitutes the fundamental principle of evolution. Species that help each other the most will have the highest chances of survival. It is not mutual struggle, but mutual support and solidarity that drives evolution (Kropotkin, 1908, p. 300).

For Kropotkin, evolution is primarily about "with", not "against". This line of argumentation also provides opportunities to assess the concept of security. Security relates to "against", while solidarity pertains to "with". Security emulates Hobbesian adversarial logic. It draws its authority from fear. In a manner akin to challenging Malthus, Kropotkin also contested Hobbes's (1987, p. 24) assertion that "man to man is an arrant wolfe". Kropotkin argued that the Hobbesian state of nature, "all against all", has never been evident throughout human history. This pessimistic portrayal has been (re)established by writers who were "always watchful of wars, cruelty, and oppression" (Kropotkin, 1908, p. 77). Kropotkin also noted that Darwin's ideas have been (ab)used to bolster this bleak view of humankind. "At no period of man's life were wars the normal state of existence", he wrote (Kropotkin, 1908, p. 114). In contrast to the Malthusian and Hobbesian perspectives, Kropotkin contended that ideas of equity, justice, devotion, solidarity, and support have always existed within human societies. Consequently, a principle that encompasses all, mutual aid, has consistently been the foundation of our ethical conception, according to him (Kropotkin, 1908, p. 298). Building on this idea, rather than concentrating on how to be "secured" against, especially regarding global issues, it is more constructive to focus on promoting solidarity while considering human tendencies and achievements related to "mutual aid". However, this is an ethical conception focused on humanity. What about ethical conceptions regarding the non-human world?

Anarchism, particularly classical anarchism, has always faced criticism regarding its approach to the human-nature relationship. Peter Marshall (2008, p. 47) observed that, in the past, anarchists opposed wielding power over others, yet they felt it was essential to enhance their power and control over nature. Nevertheless, this may be an overgeneralisation and risks overlooking the ecological legacy of classical anarchism. Indeed, classical anarchism exhibited aspects of the "controlling nature" mentality that was characteristic of the modernist-positivist spirit of the 19th and early 20th centuries. For instance, Kropotkin (2005, p. 13), in his book titled *Conquest of Bread*, discussed humankind's struggle with nature, asserting the need "to subdue the forces of Nature" through the utilisation of science and technology. This overreliance on science as a means for the "struggle of humanity against hostile forces of nature" has led to a problematic relationship with nature (Kropotkin, 1992, p. 29). In other writings, however, he referred to humanity as a "conscious part of the grand whole" (Kropotkin,

1901, p. 4). He further accentuated the solidarity and integrity of all natural beings by underscoring “man’s oneness with nature both animate and inanimate” (Kropotkin, 1899, pp. 199-200).

Overall, the environmentally problematic aspects of anarchism should be examined, but this should not deter us from exploring its ecological legacy. One of the most prominent figures of this legacy, Élisée Reclus, drew attention to the social factors that disrupt the integrity of human and non-human nature. He wrote that the “complete union of Man with Nature can only be effected by the destruction of the frontiers between castes as well as between peoples” and is regarded as one of the early thinkers who laid the foundation for political ecology (Reclus, 1896). He highlighted the connections between the exploitation of humans and the exploitation of nature, and, to overcome this oppression, he underscored the need to restore the human-nature relationship. According to Reclus, the threats to the environment are the state and capitalism. He thought globally and wrote about the dream of “worldwide freedom (*liberte mondiale*)” which also encompasses ecological aspects (Reclus et al., 2013, p. 120). In this context, one of the notable contributions of anarchism to contemporary environmental concerns is its ability to go beyond the outdated notion of “international” and consider globality. As a movement that opposes borders dividing humanity and envisions a political community on a planetary scale, anarchism can provide opportunities to explore the global nature of environmental concerns. Accordingly, some recent studies on anarchism have called into question the concept of “international”. For example, Şaban H. Çalış (2025, p. 16) argues that the logic of the “international”, both by definition and in practice, views the world through a separatist lens in contrast to the “global”, and even conceives of it as a space destined for nation-states. This argument aligns with the notion that environmental concerns are inherently of a “global” nature rather than “international”. Environmental concerns need to be addressed from a global perspective rather than an international one.

Reclus’s global perspective can be better understood in relation to his occupation as a geographer. For instance, he suggested the utilisation of “globes” instead of maps. He believed that the representation of the Earth could only be understood on a global scale. According to him, a flat surface never truly represents a spherical surface, which is why we need grand representations of our shared home that would serve as a globe-shaped model of the Earth, vast in size, where everyone can feel at home. In his view, we must have these globe-shaped representations on a monumental scale; they were going to remind us that we are “one and the same family” and strengthen this feeling of integrity (Reclus, 1898). However, Reclus’s geography encompasses much more than these cartographic elements. Like his fellow geographer Peter Kropotkin, their comprehension of geography encompasses not only geological but also anthropological aspects (Huteau, 2018, p. 22). That is why Reclus (1882, p. 4) studied “Earth and its inhabitants” together, envisioning a world that “its center everywhere, its periphery nowhere”. This may be regarded as a maxim of globality.

As John Clark and Camille Martin noted, Reclus’s subject is “global humanity, embedded in nature, yet undertaking an open-ended and creative project of liberatory self-realization” (Reclus et al., 2013, p. 4). Long before the discussions of “deep ecology” (Naess, 1973) and the “anthropocentrism-biocentrism” debate in terms of environmental ethics (Taylor, 1986), Reclus challenged the separation of humankind from its environment and emphasised the integrity of human-nature relations. “A secret harmony exists between the earth and the peoples whom it nourishes”, he wrote, urging people to see that integrity (Reclus et al., 2013,

p. 110). He warned against the dangers of science in relation to the enslavement and exploitation of non-human nature, particularly animals, in one of his writings titled "The Great Kinship of Humans and Fauna" (1933). He argued that we should perceive animals not as enslaved beings, but in terms of "fraternal association". They are "companions", not "servants" as he argued (Reclus, 1933). Consequently, he suggested that we ought to reconsider not only our relationship with nature but also the notion of relationality itself.

Murray Bookchin examined this relationality through the lens of ecological principles, advocating for a renewed relationship between humanity and the natural world:

"I have stressed that our foremost need is to create a general human interest that can unify humanity as a whole. Minimally, this interest centres around the establishment of a harmonious balance with nature. Our viability as a species depends upon our future relationship with the natural world" (Bookchin, 1990, p. 171).

He asserted that in a manner analogous to the Enlightenment's attempts to establish a universal human interest, it is imperative for us to cultivate a general interest that transcends the particularistic concerns of class, nationality, ethnicity, and gender (Bookchin, 1990, pp. 166-169). Bookchin adopts ecological values as the social ethos of the future. For humanity to live in harmony with nature, it is necessary to turn to ecology for the essential guidelines on how future society should be organised (Bookchin, 1986, p. 29). In his book titled *Re-enchanting Humanity*, he expressed his reliance on humankind and its potential for an "ecologically oriented" society (Bookchin, 1995, p. 232). He developed a theory of social ecology, positing that environmental issues are, in essence, social issues, and claimed that a free society founded on ecological principles could effectively mediate humanity's relationship with nature. (Bookchin, 1982, pp. 1-2).

In Bookchin's (1980, p. 69) ecological theory, society is conceived as an ecosystem grounded in diversity, spontaneity, and non-hierarchical relations. The first principle, diversity is not a mere assemblage of parts but a "holistic dynamic totality" that integrates differences, generating richness, stability, and interdependence; planetary unity thus arises from multiplicity (Bookchin, 1980, p. 272). Humans, flora, fauna, soil, and inorganic elements together form a community whose qualitative differences complement one another and expand ecological diversity. The second principle, spontaneity, "behaviour, feeling, and thought that is free of external constraint", cultivates organisational forms that are organic, self-generated, voluntary, and non-hierarchical (Bookchin, 1980, pp. 259-260). The other principle, complementarity, acts as the cohesive principle, embodying a "new animism" that recognises the intrinsic value of others and fosters creative, loving, caring, mutually supportive symbiosis (Bookchin, 1980, p. 268).

Although Bookchin's self-identification as an "anarchist" diminished over time, the principles underpinning his ecological society remain rooted in anarchist philosophy. His later "communalism", which is "antihierarchical, and collectivist" continues to position itself against the nation-state by envisioning a "directly democratic confederal alternative to the state and to a centralized bureaucratic society", a horizon that remains deeply indebted to anarchist thought (Bookchin, 1994). At the same time, his ecological society also exhibits utopian aspects, but this does not imply that the goals are unachievable. The approach he developed, termed "reconstructive utopian thinking", was grounded in the realities of human experience. He argued that what could be should evolve into what must be for humanity and the intricate biological systems that support it to endure. Change and renewal can emerge from current

challenges rather than from mere wishful thinking or vague ideals (Bookchin, 1982, p. 3). His propositions are chiefly intellectual, and he criticises the technicalisation of ecological issues within academia, which he regards as a contrary tendency to intellectualisation. He argued that “any conjunction of the words nature and philosophy automatically evokes fears of antiscientific archaisms and premodernist regressions to a static cosmological metaphysics” (Bookchin, 1996, p. 39). This precisely relates to IR, as the assumption that quantitative research is more “scientific” prevails. As Bookchin (1982, p. 272) noted, the roots of ecological problems should be primarily understood from a philosophical perspective. His philosophical insights on ecology “as a source of values and ideals” may be seen as an ethos for future world society.

The ecological values propounded by Bookchin, along with Kropotkin’s ideas on solidarity and Reclus’s global vision, could be the foundation of Global Ecological Solidarity. While there are several studies that focus on ecological solidarity regarding “biodiversity conservation” (Thompson et al., 2011), “social-ecological stewardship” (Mathevet et al., 2018), or “international law” (Rafaly, 2023), to the best of my knowledge, Global Ecological Solidarity has not yet been explicitly conceptualised through an anarchist theoretical lens. Global Ecological Solidarity is a novel normative-analytical framework that challenges “environmental security” and similar concepts, which create barriers in developing global responses to the ecological situation of the Earth. The concepts of security serve as a reinforcement of authoritarianism rather than as a catalyst for action; they represent the self-serving perspective of those whose security is being discussed, rather than fostering global thinking, and they serve to reproduce the values that give rise to ecological issues instead of fostering ecological values.

While security persistently privileges the state, GES, drawing on the ideas of the anarchist thinkers discussed above, takes as its referent a planetary community composed of human and nonhuman beings. Of course, contemporary studies that engage with the anarchism-ecology nexus also merit closer examination, since they can further clarify and extend this planetary horizon (see, for example, Purchase, 1997; Gordon, 2009; Tokar, 2014, pp. 117-161; Clark, 2020; Shahar, 2021). Precisely because GES is a broad and open-ended framework, approaching it from different angles, through critical engagement, refinement, and empirical elaboration, can open up further analytical and normative possibilities. GES is concerned not with the environmental security or interests of people within particular borders, but with the common and sustainable life of all beings globally, grounded in ecological values. Whereas security rests on a centralising and hierarchical rationality, GES proposes a solidaristic, polycentric, horizontal, and ultimately “anarchist” locus. While security depoliticises ecological problems to the detriment of humans and non-human nature and legitimises exceptional measures, GES de-exceptionalises and foregrounds a more democratic orientation in environmental politics. It would not be misleading to say that, in this respect, the world needs solidarity based on ecological values rather than security.

In practice, there are numerous examples of non-state, non-profit forms of solidarity that have coalesced around ecological concerns. Among the most widely known examples include the Climate Action Network (CAN, 2026), a global network that brings over 1900 civil society organisations across more than 130 countries to combat climate change and advance social justice, and Demand Climate Justice (DCJ, 2026), which works for climate justice and explicitly aims to function as a campaign vehicle that collectivises Global South grassroots voices. Other global movements also deserve mention, such as Break Free From Plastic (BFFP, 2026), which

runs campaigns against plastic pollution; anti-extractivist initiatives such as Yes to Life, No to Mining (YLN, 2026); and the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN, 2026), a worldwide network of ecovillages designed around sustainability. It is also worth noting that these organisations and movements have achieved significant outcomes and are helping to lay the groundwork for stronger solidarities in the future. They could form the basis for more advanced coordination platforms, for example, a future “Global Ecological Solidarity Council” designed to facilitate horizontal collaboration. Taken together, these cases show that ecological solidarity already operates through transnational, non-state infrastructures, an empirical terrain that GES can conceptualise and systematically analyse. The conceptual and theoretical studies of GES may help analyse these practical aspects and also lay the groundwork for new studies beyond and against the concept of security. In this sense, it can also be treated as a research programme, contributing to research on non-governmental and non-profit forms of solidarity for an ecological society on a global scale.

5. Conclusions

Security-centred approaches to address environmental concerns are analytically distorting and normatively undesirable. Under conditions of global interdependence, one cannot be “secure” simply by averting environmentally induced problems. No one can “secure” themselves because, as problems manifest on a planetary scale, there is nowhere to be “secure”. Under the capitalist neoliberal economy, insulating humans from environmental risks does not amount to being “secure”. Nor is “ecological security” coherent in the absence of a global ecological society. From an anarchist perspective, “security” thus functions as an ideological promise that manipulates hope by offering a “secure” world while leaving the established order intact. Therefore, security is a concept that belongs to and helps reproduce the current global order. It stimulates attention and instils a belief that security can be achieved with present actors and structures. Thus, the concept re-legitimises those actors and structures.

Securitisation scholars have rightly emphasised security’s capacity to license extraordinary measures, but their arguments address only part of its ethical problems, such as oppression, exclusion, and injustice. Additionally, when discussing more ethical security approaches, most other schools of Critical Security Studies have overlooked the conservative logic of the security paradigm, which reproduces the social ontology tied to state sovereignty, property, capital accumulation, and hierarchy. This limitation is especially stark in relation to ecological issues, where the harms are diffuse, structural, and produced through the very social relations that security typically protects and reproduces. Consequently, for ecological issues, ‘security’ is conceptually self-undermining; in this sense, environmental security verges on an oxymoron. The intensification of security discourse has not delivered the promised protection; instead, it often legitimates coercive forms of government while the underlying harms persist. Stepping beyond the security logic and ceasing to use it as a concept opens space to rethink environmental politics along more emancipatory lines.

In this light, anarchism offers a salient approach. As a tradition against the modern state and capitalism, it has a legacy of critiquing security and a rich repertoire for ecological thought. This article introduces Global Ecological Solidarity as a normative-analytical framework, drawing upon the ideas of anarchist theorists. Firstly, building on Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid, GES holds that solidarity tends to generate actions oriented to the flourishing of people and the Earth, whereas security tends to produce actions oriented to reinforce the very actors

and structures that harm them. Secondly, GES posits that solidarity should be approached on a global scale. Because the environmental crisis is planetary, solidarity must be conceived in global terms: drawing on Reclus, GES treats globality not merely as scale but as an ethic of interdependence and responsibility. Finally, following Bookchin, GES takes an ecological society, grounded in diversity, spontaneity, and decentralisation, as a necessary horizon.

Global Ecological Solidarity constitutes an attempt to reframe problems and solutions in addressing environmental concerns. If security tends to organise politics around protection against threats through authoritarian and exclusionary logics, solidarity organises politics around living-with: mutual support, shared vulnerability, and collective care. In contrast to the security paradigm that encourages policy choices to be read through an authoritarian lens, GES is an analytical-normative framework that seeks to enable a more emancipatory and inclusive reading, to reorder priorities accordingly, and to re-approach problems from a more decentralised standpoint so as to expand the scope for more democratic, non-state, horizontal governance. This framework can also be regarded as a research programme. It invites scholarship that maps and evaluates non-governmental and non-profit forms of solidarity, explores and tests ways of scaling these solidarities across transnational and global contexts, and critically examines the possibilities as well as the limitations of an ecological society. The aim is pluralist: contributions from varied theoretical lenses on GES, discussions of its operationalisation, and empirical evaluations are all in scope. Above all, GES invites an ongoing dialogue.

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Extended Summary

From Security to Global Ecological Solidarity: Environmental Concerns and Anarchism

This article examines the dominance of the security paradigm in addressing environmental concerns within International Relations (IR) and argues that anarchist theory offers a meaningful alternative to this paradigm. The concept of security, which has become the default framework for engaging with environmental problems in both scholarship and practice, is analytically distorting and normatively undesirable. Against the security paradigm, the article proposes Global Ecological Solidarity (GES) as an alternative normative-analytical framework rooted in anarchist thought. The overarching aim of the article is to contribute to the literature seeking to destabilise security's dominance in IR and to bring anarchism, a largely neglected tradition, into debates on environmental questions. The study is a conceptual and normative-theoretical inquiry that proceeds in three steps: a review of the environment-security literature, a normative critique of security that engages with critical IR perspectives and anarchist theory, and the construction of GES as a framework drawing on the ideas of Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, and Murray Bookchin.

The literature section surveys how environmental concerns became progressively framed as security matters. Early texts from the 1970s cast environmental degradation as a threat to human survival, establishing a survivalist logic that would become one of the sources feeding the subsequent development of environmental security discourse. From the late 1970s, scholars began connecting environmental problems explicitly to national security, and this trajectory deepened following the Cold War. Political actors institutionalised environmental security in their strategic frameworks. The United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report* formally introduced human security, identifying environmental degradation as a central threat. In subsequent decades, additional security concepts emerged, including ecological and climate security. Despite a body of critical scholarship questioning environment-security linkages since the 1990s, the security framing has remained dominant in both theory and practice. The article argues that this dominance is not confined to formal institutional frameworks but permeates the academic discipline itself, where security is one of the most studied research areas in IR.

The normative critique of security engages with Critical Security Studies and anarchist scholarship. The Copenhagen School's securitisation theory is acknowledged for revealing that security is a speech act that licenses extraordinary measures, but is found to be normatively ambiguous and theoretically state-centric. The Welsh School's attempt to link security with emancipation is equally problematic, as it leaves the concept of security analytically intact. Drawing on anti-security scholarship and anarchist engagements, the article argues that security is structurally disposed toward hierarchy, centralisation, and the concentration of decision-making power. It authorises exceptional measures, depoliticises issues, and reproduces the social order tied to state sovereignty and capital accumulation, the very relations most implicated in producing ecological harm. A range of sources and examples illustrate the extent to which security research dominates the discipline, highlighting that the securitisation of environmental concerns is not only institutional but also deeply embedded within academia. The section concludes that environmental security is, in significant respects, conceptually self-undermining, and that the intensification of security discourse has failed to deliver the promised protection while often legitimising coercive government. The concepts of "ethical security" and "anarchist security studies" are therefore rejected as untenable; anarchist intervention in security studies can only meaningfully manifest as resistance to security rather than its refinement.

The constructive section develops Global Ecological Solidarity as an alternative framework. GES draws on three bodies of anarchist thought. Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid provides the ethical foundation: against the Malthusian and Hobbesian assumptions underlying security's logic of fear and competition, Kropotkin demonstrates that solidarity and mutual support have been significant in the development of species and societies. Security is oriented 'against', whereas solidarity is oriented 'with'. Reclus's global vision supplies the spatial dimension: as a geographer who insisted on the integrity of human and non-human nature and envisioned worldwide freedom encompassing ecological dimensions, Reclus's view grounds GES in a planetary rather than narrowly international perspective. Bookchin's social ecology provides organisational principles such as diversity, spontaneity, complementarity, and decentralisation, and his insistence that ecological problems are at root social problems requiring a reconstruction of social relations directly informs GES's orientation. The article also points to existing non-state, transnational movements as empirical cases that GES can conceptualise and analyse. These movements already operate through solidaristic rather than security-based logics, and the article suggests they could form the basis for more advanced coordination platforms, such as a future "Global Ecological Solidarity Council" designed to facilitate horizontal collaboration on a planetary scale. GES is presented both as a normative-analytical framework and as a research programme, inviting empirical, theoretical, and critical contributions.