SUMMARY

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a comprehensive challenge to dominant conceptions in Security Studies. Security has been approached as a political phenomenon, resulting from political assumptions and having political effects. The politicization of security has been pursued by a number of so-called ‘critical approaches,' including ‘security as emancipation.’ The latter argues that security consists in removing or alleviating constraints upon the lives of individuals and groups – such as poverty, ill health, or lack of education. This thesis asks two questions: firstly, can the ‘security as emancipation’ approach, in its current formulation, deliver on its claims and promises, in the context of the effort of politicization in Security Studies? And secondly, if it is shown that there are weaknesses, in what ways can the analytical and normative outlook of security as emancipation be strengthened through an engagement with other resources in the literature? Chapters 1 and 2 establish the context in which the merits of security as emancipation must be judged. They conclude that an engagement with this approach must focus on the way it conceives the multiple connections between security and politics. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 pursue this insight, by focusing on the notions of reality, threat and power respectively. In each of these themes, the argument identifies gaps in security as emancipation and suggests theoretical reconsiderations based on an engagement with approaches and ideas – in the critical security literature and in social and political theory – that so far have been neglected or not examined sufficiently by this approach. This thesis aims to re-establish security as emancipation as a valid interlocutor within critical debates about security. It also aims to show that the dialogue between critical approaches is, not only possible, but beneficial to understanding the politicization of security.