

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ‘We’ instead of ‘me’: How *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes allow us to conceive security differently and face insecurities together

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## Abstract

Although Critical Security Studies (CSS) has done much to advance security debates, some shortcomings remain. Its excessive focus on the individual – which we term ‘me’ – reduces CSS’ capacity to propose solutions to current global security problems such as pandemics and climate change. This paper contributes to the emerging scholarship on the potential of relational ontologies in Security Studies by introducing *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes into the debate. Indigenous cosmopraxes such as *Sumak Kawsay*, *Suma Qamaña*, and *Teko Kavi*, we argue, can inform CSS by providing alternative considerations to the pluriverse of ideas that address security crises. These cosmopraxes, which make up the broad notion of *Buen Vivir*, provide a way to think and enact security from a collective perspective, one that emphasises ‘we’ instead of the liberal self. In that sense, these cosmopraxes allow us to conceive security differently and face insecurities together.

**Keywords:** *Buen Vivir*; cosmopraxes; Critical Security Studies; pluriverse; security

## Introduction

Mainstream security debates are often based on the notion that conflict can only be avoided by expanding power to instil fear in actual and potential adversaries. Not coincidentally, these views have legitimised colonialism, imperialism, and other forms of exclusion<sup>1</sup> such as the epistemic violence that marginalises alternative forms of thinking.<sup>2</sup> Thus far, Critical Security Studies (CSS) has been the sub-field that provides the strongest critiques of mainstream security.<sup>3</sup> Yet CSS has its

<sup>1</sup>Jennifer Mitzen, ‘Anchoring Europe’s civilizing identity: Habits, capabilities and ontological security’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2 (2006), pp. 270–85.

<sup>2</sup>Claudia Brunner, ‘Conceptualizing epistemic violence: An interdisciplinary assemblage for IR’, *International Politics Reviews*, 9:1 (2021), pp. 193–212.

<sup>3</sup>Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: UCL Press, 1997); David Mutimer, ‘Critical Security Studies’, in Myriam Dunn Cavelty and Victor Mauer (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 45–55; Shahin Malik, ‘Challenging orthodoxy: Critical Security Studies’, in Peter Hough, Andrew Moran, Bruce Pilbeam, and Wendy Stokes (eds), *International Security Studies: Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 31–43.

own shortcomings, especially because much of CSS scholarship fails to recognise multiple agencies and debates across the so-called Global South.<sup>4,5</sup>

Despite CSS' commitment to challenging International Relations' (IR) structurally Cartesian methods, epistemologies, and claim to develop general theories – marked by impositions anchored in colonialities – CSS has yet to centrally address one of the most colonising premises of mainstream security frameworks: that we inhabit a single world, or universe, that makes it possible to think of one 'Global IR'. Even centred on a critical objective, CSS maintains what has been called an 'atomistic ontology'<sup>6</sup> – a rationality founded on the comprehension of entities as singular 'essences' that exist separately, a notion that reinforces individuality, a fixed notion of 'me'. Departing from this viewpoint, we reason that to reach truly Global IR,<sup>7</sup> CSS must embrace alternative<sup>8</sup> ways of seeing and living in the world,<sup>9</sup> which could contribute to the pluriverse of ideas that compose security debates. In that sense, CSS should account for multiple conceptions, including those that centre the collective, beyond individualism – which we term 'we', as opposed to 'me'.

The idea of the pluriverse is connected to what Amaya Querejazu calls relational ontologies, in which ontological units are not 'things' but 'phenomena' of the very complex and transitory relationships that exist between beings.<sup>10</sup> Recognising the importance of alternative frameworks would allow CSS to account for multiple knowledges produced in the Global South,<sup>11</sup> which, we argue, can contribute towards addressing collective insecurities.

As an especially illustrative example, CSS' excessive focus on individuals has not provided decisive means to face the Covid-19 pandemic, arguably the most important global threat we have recently faced. Early evidence on Covid-19's effect on armed conflict shows that many places dealt with an increase in violence alongside the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Several governments used the pandemic to promote themselves domestically,<sup>13</sup> furthering competition among countries. In fact, competition

<sup>4</sup>John M. Hobson and Alina Sajed, 'Navigating beyond the Eurofetishist frontier of critical IR theory: Exploring the complex landscapes of non-Western agency', *International Studies Review*, 19:4 (2017), pp. 547–72; Kwaku Danso and Kwesi Aning, 'African experiences and alternativism in International Relations theorizing about security', *International Affairs*, 98:1 (2022), pp. 67–83.

<sup>5</sup>We use the terms Global North/South as a shorthand to distinguish contexts along socio-economic and political characteristics, e.g. core–periphery, rich–poor, and so on. Amaya Querejazu, for example, states that 'West and non-West are not self-contained units, just "fractal" or "partial manifestations"': 'Cosmopraxis: Relational methods for a pluriversal IR', *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 875–90 (p. 881). We do, of course, recognise that there are important differences between and within the respective contexts in each group insofar as there are many Norths in the South and Souths in the North.

<sup>6</sup>Amaya Querejazu, 'Encountering the pluriverse: Looking for alternatives in other worlds', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 59:2 (2016), p. e007.

<sup>7</sup>Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds: A new agenda for international studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014), pp. 647–59; Melody Fonseca, 'Global IR and Western dominance: Moving forward or Eurocentric entrapment?', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 48:1 (2019), pp. 45–59; Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt, 'Problematising the global in global IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 49:1 (2020), pp. 32–57; Peter Marcus Kristensen, 'The South in "Global IR": Worlding beyond the "non-West" in the case of Brazil', *International Studies Perspectives*, 22:2 (2021), pp. 218–39.

<sup>8</sup>Importantly, we use the term 'alternative' in reference to different yet complementary ideas that can inform but do not seek to replace established approaches.

<sup>9</sup>See Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta (eds), *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2019).

<sup>10</sup>Querejazu, 'Cosmopraxis'.

<sup>11</sup>For an example of how this can be done in IR theory, see Rafael Alexandre Mello, 'Building bridges between dependency theory and neo-Gramscian critical theory: The agency–structure relation as a starting point', *Contexto Internacional*, 44:1 (2022), p. e20200109.

<sup>12</sup>Sara M. T. Polo, 'A pandemic of violence? The impact of COVID-19 on conflict', *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 26:3 (2020), p. 20200050; Marius Mehrl and Paul W. Thurner, 'The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on global armed conflict: Early evidence', *Political Studies Review*, 19:2 (2021), pp. 286–93.

<sup>13</sup>E.g. Brazil: see Matheus Pfrimer and Ricardo Barbosa Jr., 'Brazil's war on COVID-19: Crisis, not conflict – doctors, not generals', *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 137–40.

has prevailed over collaboration in national responses to Covid-19,<sup>14</sup> leading to border closures without a public health need and greater political separation. A possible consequence of this is that the Covid-19 pandemic has, for instance, worsened inequalities in the South<sup>15</sup> and between the North and the South.<sup>16</sup> Similar trends of unequal competition along the North–South divide have taken place in vaccine distribution, as national interest has been prioritised over global immunity<sup>17</sup> – which can be viewed as a stress test for how we may deal with ongoing<sup>18</sup> and future environmental challenges.<sup>19</sup>

In this paper, we draw on the notions of pluriverse and relational ontologies to introduce CSS to conceptual frameworks developed within societies that conceive shared existence as prior to individual, leading collectivism to be the basis for social life. More specifically, we discuss the ‘*Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes’<sup>20</sup> (i.e. *Sumak Kawsay*, *Suma Qamaña*, and *Teko Kavi*) practised by Indigenous communities across South America.<sup>21</sup> We adopt Querejazu’s notion of ‘cosmopraxis’, where cosmos refers to ‘a complex plural ethos of interconnections; the times/spaces realm of dimensions (human, natural, spiritual, physical) in which societies organise their lives according to basic assumptions about reality and their beliefs on how these realities come to be (cosmologies)’.<sup>22</sup> The concept, in this sense, evokes the relationship between cosmologies and their practical manifestation – the ways of being in the world that result from ways of thinking and understanding the world. Cosmopraxes thus exemplify how our actions and thoughts in/about the world are directly related to ‘our cosmological visions of the universe and our understandings of our role in it. How we understand time and space, and the relationship between humans, and between humans and other-than-humans is central to expanding our imagination and seeing the role of politics and the “participants” in the political pluriversal dialogue.’<sup>23</sup>

The concept of cosmopraxis provides a deeper understanding of how individuals perceive the worlds around them and relate to said worlds. It evokes sensibilities for engaging with multiplicity

<sup>14</sup> Andres Barkil-Oteo, ‘Addressing COVID-19 during times of competitive politics and failed institutions’, *Journal of Global Health*, 11 (2021), p. 03117.

<sup>15</sup> Sara Stevano, Tobias Franz, Yannis Dafermos, and Elisa Van Waeyenberge, ‘COVID-19 and crises of capitalism: Intensifying inequalities and global responses’, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d’études du développement*, 42:1–2 (2021), pp. 1–17; Ricardo Barbosa Jr., Estevan Coca, and Gabriel Soyer, ‘School food at home: Brazil’s National School Food Programme (PNAE) during the COVID-19 pandemic’, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 24:3–4 (2023), pp. 620–39.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. as natural-resource extraction intensified: see Mary Menton, Felipe Milanez, Jurema Machado de Andrade Souza, and Felipe Sotto Maior Cruz, ‘The COVID-19 pandemic intensified resource conflicts and Indigenous resistance in Brazil’, *World Development*, 138 (2021), p. 105222; Estevan Coca, Gabriel Soyer, and Ricardo Barbosa Jr., ‘Matopiba’s disputed agricultural frontier: Between commodity crops and agrarian reform’, *IDS Bulletin*, 54:1 (2023), pp. 33–56.

<sup>17</sup> Yanqiu Rachel Zhou, ‘Vaccine nationalism: Contested relationships between COVID-19 and globalization’, *Globalizations*, 19:3 (2022), pp. 450–65.

<sup>18</sup> Roberto Goulart Menezes and Ricardo Barbosa Jr., ‘Environmental governance under Bolsonaro: Dismantling institutions, curtailing participation, delegitimising opposition’, *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft/German Journal of Comparative Politics*, 15:2 (2021), pp. 229–47.

<sup>19</sup> Pier Luigi Sacco, ‘The vaccine equity crisis is a stress test for all future major environmental challenges’, *Science of The Total Environment*, 825 (2022), p. 154073.

<sup>20</sup> The cosmopraxes that (in)form *Buen Vivir* are territorialised in South American Andean and Amazonian regions. We use the term ‘*Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes’ as a conceptual choice informed by conversations with Indigenous leaders and our engagement with the literature. With this choice, we seek to avoid a sense of territorial delimitation very common to the frontiers of modern colonial science, while still providing a meaningful distinction that accounts for varying senses of territoriality, ancestry, and belonging unique to each cosmopraxis.

<sup>21</sup> Alberto Acosta, ‘Buen vivir, una oportunidad por construir’, *Ecuador Debate*, 75 (2008), pp. 33–47; Xavier Albó, ‘Suma Qamaña = El Buen Vivir’, *OBETS: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 4 (2009), pp. 25–40; Aníbal Quijano, ‘Bien Vivir: Entre el “desarrollo” y la des/colonialidad del poder’, *Ecuador Debate*, 84 (2011), pp. 77–87; Unai Villalba, ‘Buen vivir vs development: A paradigm shift in the Andes?’, *Third World Quarterly*, 34:8 (2013), pp. 1427–42.

<sup>22</sup> Querejazu, ‘Cosmopraxis’, p. 877.

<sup>23</sup> Querejazu, ‘Cosmopraxis’, p. 878.

within pluriverses.<sup>24</sup> *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes emphasise connectivity, instead of divisions, by underlining a relational ontology that recognises how beings (human and non-human) transform one another while coexisting. Since the perceivable feature in our relations are our practices, relational ontologies are not concentrated on studying ideas and concepts, but on ways of living and relating.<sup>25</sup> Relational ontologies recognise the existence of a 'pluriverse' as an alternative to 'a single universe',<sup>26</sup> which is a colonial notion that imposes a single means of existence over others.<sup>27</sup>

*Buen Vivir* – which literally translates from Spanish to 'Good Living' – goes far beyond the idea of 'quality of life' conceived within the Global North (often implying living better than others or living well at the expense of others). Rather, *Buen Vivir* is to live in harmony with other living and non-living beings<sup>28</sup> that make up what is termed here as 'we'. Despite being one of the best-known concepts created in South America, its complexity limits our capacity to strictly define *Buen Vivir*. Nevertheless, Gudynas describes researchers' consensus on *Buen Vivir* as the result of non-compliance with conventional development styles and a need for radical change.<sup>29</sup> *Buen Vivir* is therefore closely connected to the argument made here: the emphasis on collectivity stresses the importance of 'we' instead of 'me'. This is key, as the current 'converging' or 'overlapping' crises<sup>30</sup> we face demand collective solutions that can only be effective if enacted globally.

The paper offers three contributions to the field of Security Studies. First, it examines some of CSS' shortcomings, especially the undue focus on individuals. Second, it introduces *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes to and connects them with CSS. Third, it assesses the ways and extent to which these cosmopraxes can contribute towards expanding CSS' conception of (in)security. We do so by exemplifying the value of conceiving (in)security from a collective perspective that is centred on 'we' instead of 'me'. In approaching Security Studies as pluriversal, the paper discusses how practices and ideas that constitute Indigenous realities can contribute to minimising insecurities while expanding CSS scholarship. Our goal is to bridge divides that keep such worlds apart.

## Security Studies and CSS

The origins and evolution of IR as an autonomous field of study,<sup>31</sup> its tendency to isolate itself from disciplines like History,<sup>32</sup> and the fact that the main IR journals are utterly dominated by authors

<sup>24</sup> Arlene B. Tickner and Amaya Querejazu, 'Weaving worlds: Cosmopraxis as relational sensibility', *International Studies Review*, 23:2 (2021), pp. 391–408.

<sup>25</sup> Tamara Trowsell, 'Recrafting ontology', *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2021), pp. 801–20; Tamara A. Trowsell, Arlene B. Tickner, Amaya Querejazu, et al., 'Differing about difference: Relational IR from around the world', *International Studies Perspectives*, 22:1 (2021), pp. 25–64.

<sup>26</sup> Trowsell, 'Recrafting ontology'; Querejazu, 'Cosmopraxis'.

<sup>27</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Albó, 'Suma Qamaña = El Buen Vivir'; Alberto Acosta, 'Living well: Ideas for reinventing the future', *Third World Quarterly*, 38:12 (2017), 2600–16; Philipp Altmann, 'Sumak Kawsay as an element of local decolonization in Ecuador', *Latin American Research Review*, 52:5 (2017), pp. 749–59.

<sup>29</sup> Eduardo Gudynas, 'Tensiones, contradicciones y oportunidades de la dimensión ambiental del Buen Vivir', in Ivonne Farah and Luciano Vasapollo (eds), *Vivir Bien: ¿Paradigma No Capitalista?* (La Paz: CIDES-UMSA, 2011), pp. 231–46 (p. 234).

<sup>30</sup> Katie Sandwell, Angélica Castañeda Flores, Lyda Fernanda Forero, et al., 'A view from the countryside: Contesting and constructing human rights in an age of converging crises' (Amsterdam: TNI, ERPI, FIAN International, 2019), available at: [www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/web\\_countryside.pdf](https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/web_countryside.pdf); Farhana Sultana, 'Climate change, COVID-19, and the co-production of injustices: A feminist reading of overlapping crises', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 22:4 (2021), pp. 447–60.

<sup>31</sup> Constantinos Koliopoulos, 'International Relations and the study of history', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (2019), pp. 1–20, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.242>.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and John M. Hobson, 'The big bangs of IR: The myths that your teachers still tell you about 1648 and 1919', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 735–58.

from a very specific background<sup>33,34</sup> have been suggested as evidence of why IR is one of the most colonial social sciences.<sup>35,36</sup> The fact that IR's expansion is deeply connected to the United States' (US) political interests and quest to maintain global leadership aggravates this further.

Deeply entrenched colonialism in IR has directly influenced Security Studies,<sup>37</sup> which is recognised as an IR disciplinary sub-field.<sup>38</sup> For instance, Security Studies has never focused on the Global South's main security problems. While mainstream analyses discuss notions such as the 'long peace',<sup>39</sup> insecurities related to hunger and elevated crime rates have continued in the periphery. Mainstream Security Studies has been unable to interpret such insecurities through established concepts or to produce solutions that effectively address them. This is why, at least since the end of the Cold War, such mainstream frameworks have been thoroughly critiqued by CSS scholars.

Critiques often point to how debates on security remain dominated by scholars from the Global North. The process, which leads to the exclusion of alternative approaches, starts with the use of English as the de facto universal language to produce science and to understand IR<sup>40</sup> and is worsened by the unbalanced importance given to quantitative methods. The centrality of wars as the main security problem is similarly overestimated by Global North epistemologies, as statism still prevails in most ontological frameworks.<sup>41</sup> Although CSS has greatly broadened the concept of security and our understanding of the referent of security, CSS still grapples with its own shortcomings.

### Critical Security Studies

Granting that there is much diversity across CSS, scholars who adhere to this approach share at least three common features.<sup>42</sup> First, CSS scholars critique the statism of traditional approaches and argue that individuals are the referent of security. Second, since each individual, or group of individuals, is connected to specific realities, dangers to said referent include a greater number of issues that vary from hunger to climate change and specific conditions related to race or gender.<sup>43</sup> Third, most CSS scholars focus on suggesting potential strategies to mitigate said threats. In sum, the normative goal of Security Studies should be to promote individuals' emancipation

<sup>33</sup> Orion Noda, 'Epistemic hegemony: The Western straitjacket and post-colonial scars in academic publishing', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 63:1 (2020), p. e007; Haroldo Ramanzini Junior, Antônio Carlos Lessa, and Wilton Dias, 'RBPI and the study of IR: Fostering a multifaceted platform for global dialogue, debate and academic cooperation', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 66:2 (2023), p. e025.

<sup>34</sup> Noda, 'Epistemic hegemony'.

<sup>35</sup> Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa, 'From the everyday to IR: In defence of the strategic use of the R-word', *Postcolonial Studies*, 19:2 (2016), pp. 191–200; Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa, 'Hidden in plain sight: Coloniality, capitalism and race/ism as far as the eye can see', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 48:2 (2020), pp. 221–41.

<sup>36</sup> For an example, see Amitav Acharya, 'Racial origins of IR in US', Twitter post, 14 March 2021, available at: {[twitter.com/AmitavAcharya/status/1371102269085773828](https://twitter.com/AmitavAcharya/status/1371102269085773828)}.

<sup>37</sup> Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Racism in Foucauldian Security Studies: Biopolitics, liberal war, and the whitewashing of colonial and racial violence', *International Political Sociology*, 13:1 (2018), pp. 2–19; Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School', *Security Dialogue*, 51:1 (2019), pp. 3–22.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen M. Walt, 'The renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 35:2 (1991), pp. 211–39; Paul D. Williams (ed.), *Security Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds'.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Vale, 'Crossings and candles', in Stephen McGlinchey (ed.), *International Relations* (Bristol: E-International Relations, 2017), pp. 194–209.

<sup>41</sup> Tarak Barkawi, 'Decolonising war', *European Journal of International Security*, 1:2 (2016), pp. 199–214.

<sup>42</sup> Ken Booth, 'Global security', in Mary Kaldor and Iavor Rangelov (eds), *The Handbook of Global Security Policy* (Malden: John Wiley and Sons, 2014), pp. 11–30 (p. 12).

<sup>43</sup> Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Laura Sjoberg, *Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2010), among many others.



from any condition that threatens their security. Within this third common feature, there are disagreements as to whether solutions should be obtained locally,<sup>44</sup> regionally,<sup>45</sup> or globally.<sup>46</sup> Krause and Williams,<sup>47</sup> Bilgin,<sup>48</sup> Mutimer,<sup>49</sup> and Malik<sup>50</sup> provide interesting summaries of how CSS has evolved over time.

Among the various critical views of security, two are especially important for the themes discussed in this paper, equally for how they approach security differently and for their prominence within CSS: the Aberystwyth (or Welsh) School and Global IR. Ken Booth<sup>51</sup> is, arguably, the Aberystwyth School's main proponent. Booth maintains that 'emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do.'<sup>52</sup> States should therefore be less worried about their own security but should instead concentrate their efforts on providing security to individuals.

Global IR, an approach that Booth<sup>53</sup> and others such as Acharya<sup>54</sup> also engage with, seeks to overcome the Welsh School's excessive focus on the individual, emphasising the importance of global efforts to solve security problems. Solutions to converging crises (such as climate change, poverty, and inequality) can only be efficient if we are to reach a level of coordination that has yet to be seen. Global IR advocates that different views from across the world should be considered in security debates.

Global IR scholars also argue that empirical experiences are important in the formulation of new ideas and realities. Booth approximates such considerations to security analysis through the notion of 'global security', which characterises a 'universal collective of individual persons' who face global existential and global emancipatory threats as its referent.<sup>55</sup> While Booth's emphasis is on the collectiveness of threats, he fails to acknowledge peripheral collective frameworks that could contribute to promoting security – which we seek to do here by introducing alternative ontologies and epistemologies.

The failure to recognise approaches developed in the periphery is connected to a sense that only ideas that can be generalised are relevant, contradicting the notion of pluriverse. Acharya argues that national or regional schools 'must offer concepts and approaches that explain IR not only in that particular country or region, but also beyond'.<sup>56</sup> The problem arises because such 'bounded universality' can be achieved through two different strategies.<sup>57</sup> Critical Security Studies seems more aligned with the first, which presumes that theories which emerge in powerful countries tend to be widely known and accepted, a notion that is based on the idea of 'self' versus 'others' that reinforces a Newtonian cosmological base.<sup>58</sup> The second, which we use in this paper, is less

<sup>44</sup>Roger Mac Ginty and Pamina Fircchow, 'Top-down and bottom-up narratives of peace and conflict', *Politics*, 36:3 (2016), pp. 308–23; Filip Ejdus, 'Revisiting the local turn in peacebuilding', in Jorg Kustermans, Tom Sauer, and Barbara Segaert (eds), *A Requiem for Peacebuilding?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 41–58.

<sup>45</sup>Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ole Wæver and Arlene Tickner, 'Introduction: Geocultural epistemologies', in Arlene Tickner and Ole Wæver (eds), *International Relations Scholarship around the World* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–31.

<sup>46</sup>Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds'; Booth, 'Global security'.

<sup>47</sup>Krause and Williams, *Critical Security Studies*.

<sup>48</sup>Pinar Bilgin, 'Critical theory', in Paul D. Williams (ed.), *Security Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 89–102.

<sup>49</sup>Mutimer, 'Critical Security Studies'.

<sup>50</sup>Malik, 'Challenging orthodoxy'.

<sup>51</sup>Ken Booth, 'Security and emancipation', *Review of International Studies*, 17:4 (1991), pp. 313–26; Ken Booth, *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

<sup>52</sup>Booth, 'Security and emancipation', p. 319.

<sup>53</sup>Booth, 'Global security'.

<sup>54</sup>Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds'.

<sup>55</sup>Booth, 'Global security', p. 13.

<sup>56</sup>Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds', p. 651.

<sup>57</sup>Yaqing Qin, *A Relational Theory of World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>58</sup>Querejazu, 'Cosmopraxis'.

conflictive and less deterministic. It accepts that there is room for other ontologies to contribute towards explaining social realities. Every cosmology has a contribution towards explaining reality, since different ways of being coexist in the planet. By inviting CSS to move from the first option to the relational ontology of the second, we seek to point CSS scholars towards more effective security solutions.

### *Shortcomings: Failure to recognise Southern agencies and undue focus on the individual*

Despite its overall success in pushing Security Studies in a more progressive direction, CSS has fallen short in recognising important reflections and practices developed in the Global South, and it maintains atomistic premises built through colonially anchored ontologies and epistemologies, a limitation that, we argue, leads to an excessive focus on the individual (i.e. 'me'). Critical Security Studies denounces Northern impositions on the South,<sup>59</sup> which seems to indicate that it sees the South and Southern scholars as passive recipients of Northern cultures and knowledge. Ballestrin, for example, argues that there is a division of labour within the social sciences in which the Global North theorises and applies concepts based on Global South experiences.<sup>60</sup> Such a practice of minimising agencies subjects the South to Northern reflections almost unilaterally, which reduces the South to a mere research object incapable of theorising and explaining its own social dynamics. To fulfil the goal of contributing to emancipation broadly, including that of marginalised scholars, CSS must overcome the excessive focus on criticising dominant practices towards recognising Southern agencies and the analytical frameworks there developed.

In failing to recognise the existing pluriverse of ideas that contribute towards understanding different realities and ways of being,<sup>61</sup> critical approaches themselves will continue to be another framework that invisibilises alternative cosmopraxes. Pluriversal approaches focus on multiplicity and the careful and respectful communication with other worlds, even those we are unable to apprehend.<sup>62</sup> *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes' collaborative ontology allow Southern Indigenous peoples, such as the ones discussed in this article, to avoid violent conflicts with potential adversaries. Collaboration, peaceful manifestations, and non-confrontational political engagements are forms of agency and resistance that CSS must account for. Doing so can, thus, move CSS toward recognizing the potential contributions of alternative ideas and practices from the South.

In addition to not accounting for Southern perspectives on security, we reason that CSS is still excessively focused on individuals' needs and perceptions. Critical Security Studies seeks to overcome liberal and realist views of security, but its individualistic focus approximates CSS to the liberal tradition.

More specifically, both the Aberystwyth School and Global IR remain deeply connected to a liberal logic of privileging 'me' over 'we'. Consequently, these analytical frameworks are unable to capture other relationalities among broader insecurities. While considering individuals as the referent of security, both perspectives tend to overemphasise patterns and necessities that are most relevant to specific contexts and do not address insecurities that affect humanity as a whole. Even Global IR, which seeks to minimise such a pattern, sees the 'collective of individual persons' as the referent of security, maintaining the analytical focus on the individual. As a consequence, Global IR fails to recognise all human and non-human beings whose protection is essential, since our continued life on this planet is only possible insofar as all beings are also secured.

Behr and Shani point to this epistemological trap, questioning the very possibility of producing a 'critical' IR based on conservative, normative, and individualising premises.<sup>63</sup> The use of these

<sup>59</sup>Hobson and Sajed, 'Navigating beyond'.

<sup>60</sup>Luciana Ballestrin, 'América Latina e o giro decolonial', *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política*, 11 (2013), pp. 89–117 (p. 109).

<sup>61</sup>Trownell, Tickner, Querejazu, et al., 'Differing about difference'.

<sup>62</sup>Tickner and Querejazu, 'Weaving worlds', p. 402.

<sup>63</sup>Hartmut Behr and Giorgio Shani, 'Rethinking emancipation in a Critical IR: Normativity, cosmology, and pluriversal dialogue', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 49:2 (2021), pp. 368–91 (p. 371).

premises imprisons CSS in a Newtonian cosmological base,<sup>64</sup> which reinforces dichotomies and a logic of 'self' versus 'others'. A foundation that conditions Northern views of what science is, but remains largely absent from Indigenous cosmopraxes.

To avoid this ontological imperialism, one must adhere to a truly emancipatory research practice through what Behr and Shani call 'thin and thick' normativity.<sup>65</sup> 'Thin' normativity relates to critiques and deconstruction, while 'thick' normativity concentrates on building propositions. Critical Security Studies seems to concentrate exclusively on the first, but providing security in a world of global crises is achievable only through 'thick' normativity. To achieve this, security scholars and practitioners must be open to pluriversal dialogues that account for alternative theoretical and practical worldviews. Such a movement would allow CSS to relationally engage with cultural traditions that have yet to be recognised as worthy sources of knowledge. Next, we introduce *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes, which we assert are among such sources.

### ***Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes**

*Buen Vivir* has become a pivotal concept that challenges modernity<sup>66</sup> due to its significance to Indigenous communities in the Andean and Amazonian regions and its impact on political and philosophical debates.<sup>67</sup> We seek to advance the understanding of *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes and their possible contributions to Security Studies, but before engaging in that effort, it is important to situate the place from which we are writing. This article is not written from an Indigenous perspective, and, therefore, it does not have the intention to formulate a definite conceptualisation of *Buen Vivir*. It is written from within Westernised academia,<sup>68</sup> from an urbanised context, and within colonial modernity – albeit with a decolonial interpretation.

While analysing *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes, we seek to avoid the risk of repeating practices of appropriation that characterise modern/colonial epistemic violence.<sup>69</sup> In that sense, we are not looking to define or classify *Buen Vivir* and its cosmopraxes. We intend to approach *Buen Vivir* 'as an open question, a question that challenges our parameter of understanding and modernity's semblance of totality'<sup>70</sup> in an effort to contribute to opening CSS to pluriversal approaches. The use of *Buen Vivir* as a definite concept would mean reproducing a systematic disregard of the 'other' by invisibilising knowledges Indigenous peoples continuously produce.<sup>71</sup>

Among the multiple cosmopraxes that guide Indigenous people's lives in South America, we chose to discuss the concepts of *Sumak Kawsay* (Kichwa), *Suma Qamaña* (Aymara), and *Teko Kavi* (Guarani), three of the most important cosmopraxes that (in)form the meaning of *Buen Vivir*. We believe that, together, these three provide important insights into how *Buen Vivir* can contribute to further Security Studies debates. The cosmopraxes analysed here do not depart from a standpoint in which human beings are at the centre<sup>72</sup> or in which individuality is premised. *Buen Vivir* provides a way of existing that does not adhere to the modern methods of appropriation and representation.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Querejazu, 'Cosmopraxis'.

<sup>65</sup> Behr and Shani, 'Rethinking emancipation'.

<sup>66</sup> Rolando Vázquez, 'Towards a decolonial critique of modernity: *Buen Vivir*, relationality and the task of listening', in Raul Fornet-Betancourt (ed.), *Capital, Poverty, Development* (Aachen: Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz, 2012), pp. 241–52.

<sup>67</sup> Catherine Walsh, *Interculturalidad, estado, sociedad, luchas (de)coloniales de nuestra época* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Ramón Grosfoguel, 'The structure of knowledge in Westernized universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century', *Human Architecture*, 9:1 (2013), pp. 73–90.

<sup>69</sup> Rolando Vázquez, 'Translation as erasure: Thoughts on modernity's epistemic violence', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 24:1 (2011), pp. 27–44.

<sup>70</sup> Vázquez, 'Towards a decolonial critique of modernity', 244.

<sup>71</sup> Raul Fornet-Betancourt, *Tareas y propuestas de la filosofía intercultural* (Aachen: Verlagsgruppe Mainz in Aachen, n.d.).

<sup>72</sup> Vázquez, 'Towards a decolonial critique of modernity'.

<sup>73</sup> Jarrad Reddekop, 'Against ontological capture: Drawing lessons from Amazonian Kichwa relationality', *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 857–74.



As we discuss below, *Buen Vivir* has already been introduced in societal and academic discussions. Several policy and legal frameworks across South America have been influenced by the concept, formulating proposals for ‘harmony with nature, reciprocity, relationality, complementarity, and solidarity between individuals and communities.’<sup>74</sup> Yet activists have questioned the appropriation of Indigenous concepts that are used without specific policies and practices that benefit Indigenous peoples in the region.<sup>75</sup> These activists maintain that marginalised peoples in the Global South ought to benefit from how these cosmopraxes are used. In adhering to such a demand, we reason that *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes can serve as the basis for alternative understandings and projects that overcome the ‘me’ versus ‘we’ premise, allowing the richness of pluriversality to take place.

We limit our argument to the ways and extent to which *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes can inform CSS. While understanding life, and consequently security, as a collective endeavour that is anchored on collaborative practices and the maintenance of harmony, respect, and acknowledgement of mutuality among all beings, *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes can provide a unique contribution to Security Studies. ‘We’ is the essential collectivity on which security depends. *One* is only secure when *all other* beings are.

### *Sumak Kawsay*

In Kichwa, *Sumak* ‘is the inner thought, the original conductor of order, the harmony of the human being with nature and with the sacred spirits’ and *Kawsay* is ‘the daily life of all beings on Earth.’<sup>76</sup> Silva proposes that the complete concept can be translated as ‘harmonious life.’<sup>77</sup> Many scholars across South America and beyond have learned from Andean and Amazonian communities (Kichwas, Quechuas, Guaranis, and Aymaras) by adopting *Buen Vivir* and, particularly, the language of *Sumak Kawsay* over the last decades. Interconnections between major Indigenous organisations that date back to the 1990s<sup>78</sup> spread *Sumak Kawsay* beyond the Ecuadorian Amazon.<sup>79</sup>

One important example of how this *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxis has been applied to build a social and political plan is the ‘Kawsak Sacha Declaration’ or ‘Living Forest Declaration’ made by the Kichwa people from Sarayaku, located in present-day Ecuador.<sup>80</sup> The Sarayaku Assembly established a Life Plan intending to apply and perpetuate ancestral practices and re-establish the principle of *Sumak Kawsay*. The Life Plan is guided by the concepts of *Sumak Kawsay* and *Kawsak Sacha*, an idea that identifies the Living Forest: ‘where our ancestors ... lived, where we live, where our future generations will live and where the protectors of the forrest and all native peoples will remain.’<sup>81</sup> The *Kawsak Sacha*<sup>82</sup> declaration proposes a legal recognition of territorial and *Pachamama* rights as necessary for planetary security.<sup>83</sup> *Pachamama*, to many Andean and

<sup>74</sup> Alberto Acosta, *O Bem Viver: Uma oportunidade para imaginar outros futuros* (São Paulo: Autonomia Literária. Editora Elefante, 2016), p. 33, our translation.

<sup>75</sup> Ariruma Kowii, Carlos Pérez-Guarmambel, Lourdes Tibán, and Celso Fiallos, ‘Sumak Kawsay, La palabra usurpada’, Plan V, 2014, available at: {[www.planv.com.ec/historias/sociedad/sumak-kawsay-la-palabra-usurpada](http://www.planv.com.ec/historias/sociedad/sumak-kawsay-la-palabra-usurpada)}.

<sup>76</sup> Sarayaku, ‘Sarayaku, El pueblo del medio día’ (Ecuador: Oficina Puyo, 2018), available at: {[sarayaku.org/declaracion-de-kawsak-sacha/](http://sarayaku.org/declaracion-de-kawsak-sacha/)}, unpaginated, our translation.

<sup>77</sup> Fabrício Pereira da Silva, ‘Comunalismo nas refundações andinas do século XXI: O Sumak Kawsay/Suma Qamaña’, *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 34:101 (2019), p. e3410117.

<sup>78</sup> Examples include the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB), the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Peru (CONAIP), and the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI).

<sup>79</sup> Ana Patricia Cubillo-Guevara and Antonio Luis Hidalgo-Capitán, ‘El Sumak Kawsay genuino como fenómeno social amazónico ecuatoriano’, *OBETS: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 10:2 (2015), pp. 301–33.

<sup>80</sup> Altmann, ‘Sumak Kawsay as an element of local decolonization in Ecuador’.

<sup>81</sup> Sarayaku, ‘Sarayaku, El pueblo del medio día’, unpaginated, our translation.

<sup>82</sup> According to Santi and Santos (Kawsak Sacha-Selva Viviente: Perspectivas Runa Sobre Conservación: 156–7), Kawsak Sacha is a philosophical concept, a political proposal, and an everyday practice.

<sup>83</sup> Sarayaku, ‘Sarayaku, El pueblo del medio día’, unpaginated, our translation.

Latin American peoples, is the entity that represents and integrates the whole, “the living Earth as a whole in any place”.<sup>84</sup> Thus, Pachamama is conceived as a deity to which one also integrates, the great and generous source of life of all beings, human and non-human, material and immaterial, established in the relationship between the body and the ultra-human community, an interiority projected into the whole, in nature and existence itself.<sup>85</sup> The *Sumak Kawsay* ontology used in the document refers to harmony, respect, and dignity between and for all beings, living and non-living. The declaration became a platform to mobilise the struggle for territorial rights and the defence of the natural balance of the world, ancestral knowledges, and traditions internationally.

*Sumak Kawsay* has been vital in the defence of the Sarayaku territory. Among other things, it was used to support a favourable Inter-American Human Rights Court decision – an objection against natural-resource exploitation and territorial appropriation<sup>86</sup> without prior consultation.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, *Sumak Kawsay* has even informed the political practices of state actors. The Ecuadorian Constitution, for instance, includes principles related to *Sumak Kawsay* and *Buen Vivir* in its articles 14 and 250.<sup>88</sup> This marked Ecuador as having the first constitution to recognise the Rights of Nature. A key political figure in this process, Alberto Acosta, president of the constituent assembly, promised to work under the *Sumak Kawsay* principle, attesting that they ‘decided to build a new form of citizen coexistence, in diversity and harmony with nature, to achieve *Buen Vivir*, the *Sumak Kawsay*’.<sup>89</sup>

### *Suma Qamaña*

In Aymara, *Suma* can be translated as ‘beautiful, pleasant, good, kind, perfect’. *Qamaña* is ‘to dwell, to live in a certain place or environment’, and *qamasiña*, is ‘to live/to coexist with someone’. *Qamaña* can also mean a sheltered place protected by stones, and the act of caring for others – in this use, it also presumes coexistence with *Pachamama*. For the Aymara people, *Suma Qamaña* means to know how to live together.<sup>90</sup> Silva proposes to translate *Suma Qamaña* as to ‘live in peace’, to ‘live together well’, or even to ‘create the life of the world’.<sup>91</sup>

David Choquehuanca, current Bolivian vice president, and Fernando Huanacuni, former Bolivian foreign relations minister, are two important Aymara researchers. For Choquehuanca, *Suma Qamaña* describes the Aymara way of life, which includes respect for nature, equality, and balance between humans and other living and non-living beings.<sup>92</sup> *Suma Qamaña* is, therefore, a communal solution to contemporary social challenges. Choquehuanca maintains that the very proposal of *Suma Qamaña* implies rescuing and valuing the traditional Aymara way of life.<sup>93</sup> Huanacuni insists that *Suma Qamaña* does not represent just an idea, but a paradigm.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>84</sup>Luis Alberto Reyes, *El pensamiento indígena en América: los antiguos andinos, mayas y nahuas*, 1st Ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2009), p. 315.

<sup>85</sup>Matías Ahumada (2016) El cuerpo y la comunidad ultrahumana. Animales, nahuales, y plantas. Pensar la Pacha. La tierra, el agua, el aire y el fuego. Clase 1, Módulo I. Diplomatura Universitaria en Filosofía de la Liberación. Aportes para pensar a partir de la descolonialidad. UNJU – AFyL.

<sup>86</sup>Leading causes of violence in the region: see Ricardo Barbosa Jr and João Roriz, ‘The subversive practice of counting bodies: Documenting violence and conflict in rural Brazil’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 21:4 (2021), pp. 870–86.

<sup>87</sup>Sarayaku, ‘Sarayaku, El pueblo del medio día’.

<sup>88</sup>República del Ecuador, ‘Constitution of 2008’ (Quito: Ecuador, 2008), available at: {[pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.html](http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.html)}.

<sup>89</sup>Acosta, ‘Buen Vivir, una oportunidad por construir’, p. 15.

<sup>90</sup>Albó, ‘Suma Qamaña = El Buen Vivir’, pp. 26–7.

<sup>91</sup>Silva, ‘Comunalismo nas refundações andinas do século XXI’.

<sup>92</sup>David Choquehuanca, *Hacia la reconstrucción del Vivir Bien* (Quito: América Latina en Movimiento, 2010).

<sup>93</sup>Choquehuanca, *Hacia la reconstrucción*.

<sup>94</sup>Fernando Huanacuni, *Vivir Bien/Bien Vivir: Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias* (La Paz: Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas, 2010).

*Suma Qamaña* is based on *aymara ayni*, which means complementarity.<sup>95</sup> *Suma Qamaña* is the daily praxis of human existence according to Aymara cosmology<sup>96</sup> and represents the search for well-being, reciprocity, and redistribution, with joy, where 'work' is not a physical burden, but community fulfilment.<sup>97</sup> Like *Sumak Kawsay*, *Suma Qamaña* has also been included in legal documents,<sup>98</sup> most notably in the Bolivian Constitution.<sup>99</sup>

### *Teko Kavi*

*Teko Kavi* manifests in the Guarani's social, political, economic, and cultural systems and practices. *Teko Kavi*'s constitutive social elements are *Meteirämiño* (unity) and *Mboroaiu* (love expressed by the individual being when surrendering to the collective being). For the Guarani people, human qualities are related to the 'gift of giving' principle, in which life is perceived as a conscious human action in favour of the others. Politically, *Teko Kavi* emphasises being *Iyambae* (free) and the *Nemboaty* (society assembly). In the economic dimension, *Yopoepi* (reciprocity) is the most important concept. Culturally, *Teko Kavi* evokes *Yomboete* (respect) and *O kuakua*, the principle of living righteously to grow, learn, and mature life.<sup>100</sup>

In Guarani, *Tekohá* can be translated as territory, the place where Guarani life and culture can be perpetuated. *Tekó* means 'way of being, system, culture ... Without *Tekohá*, there is no *Tekó*, without territory there is no Guarani life.'<sup>101</sup> *Teko Kavi* is, in this sense, what allows the community to be maintained traditionally. *Teko Kavi* is considered the Guarani way to express *Buen Vivir*, indicating the feeling of shared experience.<sup>102</sup> For Guarani people, 'good living' can only occur when there is harmony with nature and all other beings.<sup>103</sup>

The Guarani people of *Charagua Iyambae* (a Bolivian territory inhabited by different cultures, but mainly by Guarani people) have used Indigenous cosmopraxes in legal disputes. In 2015, they requested autonomy for the *Charagua Iyambae* Territory to exercise the right to self-determination and self-government in the region.<sup>104</sup> This was the first Indigenous autonomy case granted by the Bolivian state. Their plea was officially approved in 2017, becoming jurisprudence for other autonomy claims.<sup>105</sup> The Autonomous Statute is substantiated 'in homage to the struggle of the people and the memory of the ancestors and leaders who forged it, to offer our daughters and sons

<sup>95</sup>Fernando Huanacuni, 'Paradigma occidental y paradigma indígena originario', in Pablo Quinteiro (ed.), *Crisis civilizatoria, desarrollo y Buen Vivir* (Buenos Aires: Duke University/Ediciones del Signo, 2014), pp. 55–65 (p. 56).

<sup>96</sup>Huanacuni, *Vivir Bien/Bien Vivir*.

<sup>97</sup>Simón Yampara, 'El viaje del Jaqui a la Qamaña', in Pablo Quinteiro (ed.), *Crisis Civilizatoria, desarrollo y Buen Vivir* (Buenos Aires: Duke University/Ediciones del Signo, 2014), pp. 193–9.

<sup>98</sup>Ximena Andrea Cujabante Villamil, 'Los pueblos indígenas en el marco del constitucionalismo Latinoamericano', *Revista Análisis Internacional*, 5:1 (2014), p. 209–31.

<sup>99</sup>Bolivia, 'Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009', trans. Max Planck Institute (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 2, available at: {[www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia\\_2009.pdf](http://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia_2009.pdf)}.

<sup>100</sup>Luis Fernando Heredia, 'Teko Kavi: Filosofía y práctica de la vida buena Guarani en el Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia', p. 201, available at: {[www.descosur.org.pe/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Fernando-Heredia.pdf](http://www.descosur.org.pe/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Fernando-Heredia.pdf)}.

<sup>101</sup>Campaña Guarani, 'Cuaderno del Mapa Guarani Continental: Equipo Mapa Guarani Continental (EMGC) en el ámbito de la campaña Guarani' (Campo Grande, MS: Campaña Guarani, 2016), available at: {[campanhaguarani.org/guaranicontinental/downloads/cuaderno-guarani-espanol-baja.pdf](http://campanhaguarani.org/guaranicontinental/downloads/cuaderno-guarani-espanol-baja.pdf)}, our translation.

<sup>102</sup>Wildes Souza Andrade, 'A etnicidade Guarani entre seus intelectuais: Uma comparação entre Bolívia e Brasil', Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Comparados sobre as Américas, Universidade de Brasília, 2019, available at: {[repositorio.unb.br/bitstream/10482/37966/1/2019\\_WildesSouzaAndrade.pdf](http://repositorio.unb.br/bitstream/10482/37966/1/2019_WildesSouzaAndrade.pdf)}.

<sup>103</sup>Gabriel Castro Siqueira and Alessandro de Oliveira dos Santos, 'A felicidade segundo o Povo Guarani Mbya: A Noção de Bem-Viver', *Revista Acta Psicossomática*, 1 (2018), pp. 80–8.

<sup>104</sup>Rafaela N. Pannain, 'Charagua Iyambae: Del fin del silencio Guarani a la construcción de la autonomía "sin dueño"', in Pavel C. López Flores and Luciana García Guerreiro (eds), *Movimientos Indígenas y Autonomías en América Latina: Escenarios de Disputa y Horizontes de Posibilidad* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2018).

<sup>105</sup>CEJIS, 'Centro de Estudios Jurídicos y Investigación Social: Síntesis del proceso de la Autonomía Charagua Iyambae', CEJIS Org, 2017, available at: {[www.cejis.org/sintesis-del-proceso-de-la-autonomia-charagua-iyambae/](http://www.cejis.org/sintesis-del-proceso-de-la-autonomia-charagua-iyambae/)}.

the paths that lead us to the *Ivi Maraei* (land without evil) for the *Buen Vivir*.<sup>106</sup> The Indigenous jurisdiction is directly connected to Guaraní identity and is based on transparency, respect for Guaraní culture, equality, and other values mentioned in the document.<sup>107</sup> The statute highlights the transgenerational responsibility for the environment and is guided by the principles of *Teko Kavi* (harmonious Life), *Motiro* (joint and solidary work in society), *Mbaeyekou toyeporu yem-boetereve* (use of natural resources according to necessity in respect to nature), *Mboroaiu* (love for others), and *Ñemoäta gätu* (courage).<sup>108</sup>

Importantly, these Indigenous cosmopraxes have been practised by various communities that live under their principles and recognised state actors. New constitutions in South America increasingly recognise Indigenous peoples' rights to territory, as well as ethnic and cultural identities, demonstrating openness to pluralism<sup>109</sup> within state authorities.<sup>110</sup> The Bolivian Constitution,<sup>111</sup> for example, incorporates the concepts of *Suma Qamaña*, *Sumak Kawsay*, and *Teko Kavi*,<sup>112</sup> affirming that 'the State assumes and promotes ethical-moral principles of a plural society: *ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar or a thief), *suma qamaña* (live well), *ñandereko* (harmonious life), *teko kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (land without evil), and *qhapaj ñan* (path or noble life)'.<sup>113</sup> This evidences how *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes are more than philosophical ideas, having been used to assure the security of many communities' ways of life by demarcating territories, as well as becoming constitutional principles and laws. In fact, *Buen Vivir* reaches beyond the protection of Indigenous communities by also influencing non-Indigenous communities.<sup>114</sup>

### Broadening CSS through *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes

Indigenous peoples, their traditions, and *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes play an essential role in epistemic and political subversion of colonial patterns of power.<sup>115</sup> If colonialities are critically interrogated to create emancipatory possibilities for the future, *Buen Vivir* can provide an essential contribution not only as a way of thinking (concept), but also as a way of living (practice). It has the potential to provide alternative ways to both analyse and enact shared relations between humanity and the world. It is for this reason that *Buen Vivir* is best understood as a cosmopraxis and not just a conceptual framework.

*Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes centre collectivism as an essential characteristic of life. We argue that the *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes can provide important contributions to overcoming CSS' limitations in at least two complementary ways. First, by framing security through a pluriversal standpoint to avoid invisibilisations that have been common in IR scholarship<sup>116</sup> and even in CSS (see more under 'Shortcomings' above). Second, by moving the referent of security from 'me' to 'we'. Such a move is especially important since the primary threats to security that we face today – which have been labelled 'converging' or 'overlapping' crises<sup>117</sup> – demand shared and integrated solutions that can only be effective if enacted collectively.

<sup>106</sup> Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 'Estatuto de La Autonomía Guaraní Charagua Iyambae', 2014, p. 10, available at: {[www.sea.gob.bo/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EA-Charagua.pdf](http://www.sea.gob.bo/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EA-Charagua.pdf)}, our translation.

<sup>107</sup> Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, p. 33.

<sup>108</sup> Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, p. 14.

<sup>109</sup> Erick Viramontes, 'Questioning the quest for pluralism: How decolonial is non-Western IR?' *Alternatives*, 47:1 (2022), pp. 45–63.

<sup>110</sup> Villamil, 'Los pueblos indígenas', p. 212.

<sup>111</sup> Bolivia, 'Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009.

<sup>112</sup> Villalba, 'Buen Vivir vs development'.

<sup>113</sup> Bolivia, 'Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution of 2009', p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> Catherine Walsh, 'Development as *Buen Vivir*: Institutional arrangements and (de)colonial entanglements', *Development*, 53:1 (2010), pp. 15–21.

<sup>115</sup> Quijano, 'Bien Vivir', p. 858.

<sup>116</sup> Querejazu, 'Encountering the pluriverse'.

<sup>117</sup> Sandwell, Flores, Forero, et al., 'A view from the countryside: Contesting and constructing human rights in an age of converging crises'; Sultana, 'Climate change, COVID-19, and the co-production of injustices'.

### *From universe to pluriverse: Overcoming exclusions and dichotomies*

*Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes can provide CSS with the means to move the security debate from a universal to pluriversal framings that challenge one of the most basic premises developed by Northern ontologies. This is key to minimise the first limitation of CSS discussed above: CSS' failure to recognise Southern agencies and cosmopraxes. In efforts to maintain their ways of living for many centuries, Andean and Amazonian Indigenous peoples did not seek to impose their ideas onto other forms of being. This would be an unnatural endeavour to them, considering that *Buen Vivir* is based on coexistence and harmony, not competition and violence. Similarly, while arguing for the incorporation of Indigenous cosmopraxes into CSS, we are not seeking to replace CSS or even more traditional views of security. Instead, we challenge the notion that humans are naturally competitive and that dominance is the exclusive means of relation between North and South.

The Aberystwyth School and Global IR are centred on a logic in which the 'other' seems very distant and not capable of contributing to the creation of a better world. Since these traditions overlook Southern frameworks or require universality to test the validity of a school of thought,<sup>118</sup> these analytical frameworks are unable to produce alternative views of security. Critical Security Studies still envisions a world divided between cardinal points: North versus South, West versus 'the rest', and so on. This maintains a central philosophical axis of coloniality that leads to a tendency of simplifying the roles and agencies in each of these points: if knowledge originates in a field dominated by one side, what comes from the opposite side must be subdued.<sup>119</sup>

There is, therefore, a tendency for domination itself to become the focus of analysis, minimising the importance of Southern contributions to Northern thought. A more proactive discussion on what is being produced by the 'other', and how these alternative forms of thinking (and being) can minimise insecurities for all, can open CSS to important venues of inquiry and practice. To achieve this, CSS ought to overcome the excessive emphasis on exclusions and dichotomies.

Recognising Southern agencies necessarily implies incorporating different methodologies, ontologies, and epistemologies into what is seen as security and the ways to achieve it. For this reason, a pluriversal understanding<sup>120</sup> of security is needed. While most scholars, traditional or critical, emphasise divisions in the production of knowledge, pluriversality insists that the whole world (i.e. living beings and the shared environment) is interconnected. Seeing the different theoretical frameworks produced around the world as part of a pluriverse would allow CSS scholars to conceive Security Studies differently.

The failure of CSS to incorporate a broader array of voices and perspectives limits the sub-field's capacity to realise critical and emancipatory goals. To overcome this, we draw on relational ontologies<sup>121</sup> and the concepts of 'thin' and 'thick' normativity.<sup>122</sup> Connecting CSS to such concepts will open up avenues of scholarly inquiry that may push Security Studies towards a truly emancipatory 'thick' normativity that, instead of objectifying nature, could lead to a level of coexistence among all beings that would increase global security.

### *From 'me' to 'we': Overcoming the liberal self*

Once alternative ideas and forms of living are recognised as an integral part of the pluriverse of knowledges that inform security debates, we contend that *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes can provide CSS with the means to move from 'me' to 'we' as the referent object of security. The difficulty for CSS in fully engaging with climate change, pandemics, hunger, and other key present-day insecurities is related to the excessive focus on the individual as the referent of security. These problems affect

<sup>118</sup> Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds', p. 651.

<sup>119</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, 'Aprendendo com a outsider within: A significação sociológica do pensamento feminista Negro', *Revista Sociedade e Estado*, 31:1 (2016), pp. 99–127 (p. 108).

<sup>120</sup> Querejazu, 'Encountering the pluriverse'; Querejazu, 'Cosmopraxis'; Townsell, 'Recrafting ontology'; Viramontes, 'Questioning the quest for pluralism'.

<sup>121</sup> Querejazu, 'Cosmopraxis'.

<sup>122</sup> Behr and Shani, 'Rethinking emancipation in a Critical IR'.



human and non-human beings simultaneously, thus solutions must be formulated through global collaboration. *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes provide scholars with a means to think through collective ways of seeing, conceiving, and acting upon the world, to overcome CSS' individualistic perspective of the liberal self. This ontological turn would allow new security solutions to be proposed and new realities to be built based on collectivity.

*Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes insist that human life can be fully realised and secured only when all beings are accounted for. The assurance and defence of human life – i.e. security – can occur only when humanity recognises nature as the basis of life, an entirety to which it belongs and is not apart from. The *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes discussed here do not differentiate between preserving human lives and the lives of others – as both traditional and critical security scholarship and practice tend to do. *Buen Vivir* does not differentiate humans from *Pachamama*. On the contrary, we exist only insofar as 'she' is included in the broad idea of 'we'. In territories where the basic principles of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous peoples prevail, every being is deemed to be part of the same natural, shared community.<sup>123</sup>

## Discussion and conclusion

We are living in a uniquely challenging era of global crises that affect our capacity to 'live well', or at all. To solve the most important collective security threats we face today, divisions must be overcome, and responsibility must be shared. In this paper, we draw attention to some of CSS' shortcomings and present *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes as an alternative to address them. To conclude, we specify how these Southern voices can complement CSS by introducing new avenues of inquiry and practice.

The dialogue between CSS and *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes is not only possible, but desirable. Despite its many contributions, CSS has inadvertently emphasised divisions, which can minimise CSS' capacity to face global challenges. The colonial relations once upheld by Europeans and now amplified by the Global North are denounced but still reproduced by CSS. Within that literature, it is still the Global North that defines security and insecurity as well as how states and individuals should ensure their continued existence and well-being. CSS recognises that there is no neutrality and objectivity in Security Studies. We contend CSS should delve deeper in questioning long-standing premises by acknowledging alternative – yet complementary – ways of living and seeing the world, incorporating them into security debates, which would entail moving from a 'thin' to a 'thick' normativity.<sup>124</sup>

## Potential contributions

*Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes allow us to conceive and experience security as a collective endeavour. In that sense, broadening CSS via *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes has at least three positive outcomes. The first is changing the referent of security, as *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes and their relational ontology can free CSS from its focus on the liberal-self and individual-based emancipation (see 'Security Studies and CSS').<sup>125</sup> This would allow diverse forms of (in)securities to be recognised, beyond atomistic thinking in a single universe. Second is a change in the philosophical base of security debates, moving them from a Newtonian cosmology, based on conflict and competition, to one premised on cooperation and collaboration. Third is a change in the strategy to achieving security. While traditional approaches focus on the notion of self-help, and CSS sees security as the emancipation of individuals from threats and risks (see 'Security

<sup>123</sup> Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador [CONAIE], 'Proyecto político para la construcción del Estado Plurinacional e Intercultural: Propuesta desde la visión de la CONAIE 2012' (Quito: CONAIE, Fundación Pachamama, 2013), p. 28; Altmann, 'Sumak Kawsay as an element of local decolonization in Ecuador', p. 753.

<sup>124</sup> Behr and Shani, 'Rethinking emancipation in a Critical IR'.

<sup>125</sup> See also Lucy Gehring, 'The autopoetics of the self: A "demonic" approach to Ontological Security Studies', *European Journal of International Security*, 8:4 (2023), pp. 413–30.

Studies and CSS'), *Buen Vivir* sees security as the creation of a collective consciousness in which every being's security is dependent on the security of the collectivity as a whole (i.e. humans, non-humans, and the shared environment in which 'we' all exist). In that sense, CSS' assimilation of *Buen Vivir* positions the threats we face as global and the means for achieving security as collective – beyond the scope of states and individuals alone.

Overcoming CSS' shortcomings is possible when we draw on essentially different sets of premises and practices. Indigenous cosmopraxes can contribute to formulating alternative frameworks that contradict dichotomic thinking and patriarchy, proselytising religions,<sup>126</sup> capitalism, statism/nationalism, racism, and consumer democracy, ideologies that underpin modernism/positivism – which Booth himself considers to be the ideological belief systems that pose the most important challenges to global security.<sup>127</sup>

In sum, there is great value in alternative ways of thinking based on collectivity. Analytical frameworks that have dominated the field of Security Studies and CSS are focused on divisions, a notion that can maximise insecurities. When an analytical framework stresses the importance of borders and states, or the coloniser–colonised dichotomy, there is a tendency to increase negative feelings towards those termed as 'others'. Through such dichotomous framing, some may obtain security only when protected from 'others' that do not 'belong'. *Buen Vivir* cosmopraxes overcome dichotomous premises that are typical of Security Studies such as 'human being' versus 'nature', 'civilised and developed' versus 'traditional and Indigenous', and 'us' versus 'them'. Overcoming these divides is possible when CSS moves from 'me' to 'we' as proposed here. Such a move leads to a different conception of security, where individual security can only be achieved when the entire collectivity faces insecurities together. In moving beyond 'us' versus 'them', the collective can, in fact, overcome the individual in matters of security.

### *Inherent, but surmountable, challenges*

While there are gains, broadening CSS via *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes also poses at least three important challenges. These include overcoming essentialisation, the naturalisation of conflict, and the centrality of the state. Indigenous knowledges have the potential to decolonise IR,<sup>128</sup> yet these cosmopraxes may be perceived as utopian<sup>129</sup> if these challenges are not openly acknowledged.

First, one should avoid the risk of essentialising Indigenous cosmopraxes.<sup>130</sup> There are similarities between *Sumak Kawsay*, *Suma Qamaña*, and *Teko Kavi* that allow them to be recognised as related ways of thinking that may lead to similar projects for the world. Albó, for instance, considers these cosmopraxes as an expression of a common culture.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, some specificities cannot be disregarded, and *Buen Vivir* should not be seen as a uniform concept. The experiences and perceptions of Indigenous peoples are rich and have many variations. It would be misleading to think that one concept could summarise such diversity. In this perspective, 'the *Buen Vivir* proposal is, necessarily, an open historical question that needs to be continuously investigated, debated, and practiced.'<sup>132</sup> Romanticising the oppressed<sup>133</sup> must be avoided in all emancipatory proposals.

<sup>126</sup> See Ricardo Barbosa Jr. and Guilherme Casarões, 'Statecraft under God: Radical right populism meets Christian Nationalism in Bolsonaro's Brazil', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 50:3 (2022), pp. 669–99.

<sup>127</sup> Booth, 'Global security', pp. 16–17.

<sup>128</sup> Mariam Georgis and Nicole V. T. Lugosi-Schimpf, 'Indigenising International Relations: Insights from centring Indigeneity in Canada and Iraq', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 50:1 (2021), pp. 174–98.

<sup>129</sup> Viatcheslav Morozov and Elena Pavlova, 'Indigeneity and subaltern subjectivity in decolonial discourses: A comparative study of Bolivia and Russia', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21:3 (2018), pp. 689–716.

<sup>130</sup> Jonatan Kurzweil, Hamid Fernana, and Muhammad Elvis Ngum, 'The allure of essentialism and extremist ideologies', *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 43:2 (2020), pp. 107–18.

<sup>131</sup> Albó, 'Suma Qamaña = El Buen Vivir'.

<sup>132</sup> Quijano, 'Bien Vivir', p. 859, our translation.

<sup>133</sup> Ballestrin, 'América Latina e o giro decolonial', p. 111, our translation.

To presume that Indigenous values are stuck in the past and that they are ‘pure’, untouched by changing societies, or that their knowledges are free from colonialities’ interference, is a mistake.<sup>134</sup> Indigenous ideas are not intrinsically better than those more common in CSS. Our effort in this paper, therefore, is not to substitute CSS by alternative frameworks, but rather to propose that these Southern knowledges could complement CSS by positioning them as part of the pluriverse of ideas that inform Security Studies.

A second challenge is that many analysts, including CSS scholars, maintain that conflict remains the prominent tendency in the international arena and, thus, that conflict must be the premise of security debates. Such an argument is based on a biased view of reality. Conflict is not the permanent basis of human existence or relations. It is for this reason that Security Studies has much to gain by acknowledging experiences from communities that do not perceive conflict as a natural state. Exploring alternative forms of living, based on collective arrangements, is one of CSS’ most important ontological and epistemological quests for future research, especially since even critical scholars often normalised domination and conflict. Seen as natural, violence and the imposition of power over those who are deemed weaker are not discussed from an ethical standpoint. Barkawi, for example, develops a decolonial view of wars but still sees force as an ‘ordinary dimension of politics’.<sup>135</sup>

The third challenge lies in overcoming CSS’ assumptions that although individuals are the referent of security, states remain the primary providers of security. Historical-colonial legacies often lead Indigenous communities to perceive the state as a threat *to*, and not the provider *of*, security. Moreover, even if it is possible to presume that these political units can still play an important role in the provision of security for many,<sup>136</sup> states are not a permanent and natural institution in the ordering of social life, as even the most prominent IR scholars recognise.<sup>137</sup>

While the adoption of *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes into state legislations and constitutions may be seen as beneficial, this does not automatically translate into positive outcomes, since, in some cases, the inclusion is used to exclude other narratives of what it means to live well. This has led to accusations of state appropriation and co-optation,<sup>138</sup> to the extent that *Buen Vivir* may become what governments limit it to. Even legislation and policies that draw on these notions can silence plurality,<sup>139</sup> a challenge that scholars should consider when seeking to introduce Indigenous cosmopraxes into Security Studies.

Critical inquiry should consider, in fact, that Indigenous cosmopraxes challenge the state’s role as the main, or at times single, provider of security. These cosmopraxes are promising because they substantiate alternative forms of social organisation that have already been in place for millennia. The section on ‘*Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes’ above cites examples of how a specific set of Indigenous cosmopraxes shape social life within and outside the state in South America. In addition to these specific contexts, several other societies in Africa<sup>140</sup> and China<sup>141</sup> also organise their social life through collectivist perspectives. While further comparative research is needed,

<sup>134</sup> Silva, ‘Comunalismo nas refundações andinas do século XXI’.

<sup>135</sup> Barkawi, ‘Decolonising war’, p. 205.

<sup>136</sup> Ricardo Barbosa Jr and Estevan Coca, ‘Enacting just food futures through the state: Evidence from Brazil’, *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue Canadienne des Études sur l’Alimentation*, 9:2 (2022), pp. 75–100.

<sup>137</sup> E.g. Alexander Wendt, ‘Why a world state is inevitable’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:4 (2003), pp. 491–542.

<sup>138</sup> Kowii, Pérez-Guartañbel, Tibán, and Fiallos, ‘Sumak Kawsay, La palabra usurpada’.

<sup>139</sup> Walsh, ‘Development as *Buen Vivir*’.

<sup>140</sup> Vianne Ma and Thomas J. Schoeneman, ‘Individualism versus collectivism: A comparison of Kenyan and American self-concepts’, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 19:2 (1997), pp. 261–73; Thomas Kwasi Tieku, ‘Collectivist worldview: Its challenge to International Relations’, in Fantu Cheru, Timothy Shaw, and Scarlett Cornelissen (eds), *Africa and International Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 36–50.

<sup>141</sup> Weigang Gong, Meng Zhu, Burak Gürel, and Tian Xie, ‘The lineage theory of the regional variation of individualism/collectivism in China’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11 (2021), pp. 1–19.

these examples, seem to be more common than recognised by Security Studies and other social sciences.

Despite these challenges, CSS' inability to provide collective responses to global insecurities makes broadening the sub-field urgent. By adopting alternative premises, such as the *Buen Vivir* Indigenous cosmopraxes presented here, CSS scholars can move beyond critiques that (in)advertently emphasise divisions towards conceiving security differently so that 'we' may face global crises together.

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