Security is becoming the paradigm of international politics today. Since the Greek historian Thucydides wrote about the Peloponnesian war in the 5th century, security (at that time between Athens and Sparta) has been treated in political science as a central problem in the relationship between states. Today the rivalry between rising China and the USA under Donald Trump seems to be a classic “security dilemma”; the European Union makes security, “the Europe that protects” (Emmanuel Macron), its raison d’être.

History, however, has only recently taken up the topic. Historical security research could be of great use for international studies: it lies at an interface between political science, history and strategic studies. Historical security research addresses the question of how the foreign and domestic policy discourse of states in the past and present is shaped by the topic of security. The reference to security legitimises political action and political control. Security is being extended to more and more areas of politics.

Joint editors Christoph Kampmann, Angela Marciniak and Wencke Metelling devote their book to the relationship between security and the future. In their title they refer to the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who already stated this connection in the 18th century: “Security turns its eye exclusively to the future”. Security is an expectation of the future. The 13 chapters show that it has been given different substance throughout history: peace, peace and order, certainty, health, protection, stability, even sustainability or international competitiveness. The relationship between security and the future can take various forms. The study examines variants of utopia, prophecy, prognosis and planning. Eleven historical contributions are supplemented by two contributions from political theory and international law.

The book shows in a unique way what history can achieve for international studies. But it should also be read by those who are practically concerned with international politics and diplomacy. Historical security research encourages scholars to overcome the separation of theory and practice of international politics. The value of the book goes far beyond a specialist’s contribution to historical science.
In his chapter “Future – Security – Modernity” Achim Landwehr questions the assumption that only the revolutions of modern times were experienced as insecurity, as a break in continuity. He recalls the Reformation, the Thirty Years’ War or the plagues in the middle of the 14th century. Nor does modernity differ from pre-modern times in the fact that in it the future is open, shapeable. Threats such as nuclear war or climate catastrophe also make us think today of a not too distant end of the world.

Security as Utopia: For Angela Marciniak, this is the topicality of the English philosopher Thomas Morus. In contrast to Thomas Hobbes, who wanted to protect citizens from the “war of all against all” through a strong state, Morus created an ideal state that above all promised its citizens social security. It is the condition of freedom, a thesis that Wilhelm von Humboldt later takes up again. Morus demands “good governance” and thus proves his modernity.

Steffen Henne and Christian Wenzel compare the end-time diagnoses of the Cold War and the French Wars of Religion. In both epochs an existential threat to the survival of man and the world was seen, in the first case from a nuclear world war, in the second by the mutual annihilation of Catholics and Huguenots. There could be no future after these *finalités*. In both cases man bears a responsibility. In the 16th century he had aroused the “wrath of God”, in the 20th century one laments the “hubris of man”.

Security is the primary national interest pursued by diplomacy, which has two ways of dealing with an uncertain future. On the one hand, it can try to plan for the future. Governments make use of so-called “strategic foresight”. On the other hand, diplomacy can focus on prevention, on avoiding uncertainties. In his Chapter on “Prevention and Future Action in the Early Modern Era Using the Example of Dynastic Marriage Policy”, Christoph Kampmann shows what the study of history can achieve in order to sharpen the focus on diplomacy today. His case study is the marriage between Queen Mary I (Mary Tudor), who ruled the Kingdom of England from 1553 to 1558, and Prince Philip of Spain, who became King of England through marriage and then King of Spain in 1556. The marriage treaties reveal that the marriage was less about achieving specific future goals than about preventing future dangers. Of course, the bond between England and Spain opened up options for diplomacy. One future danger, however, was that a possible heiress of Philip and Mary would marry a French prince. Then France and the Netherlands would be linked. This in turn would have made a war between France and Habsburg more likely. Marriage policy became prevention.

The historical example of the Augsburg Religious Peace of 1555 is also relevant for diplomacy today. Sascha Weber proves this with his contribution. In the first half of the 16th century, the conflict between Catholics and Protestants was increasingly feared by the States of the German Reich as a threat to security. A section of religious zealots believed themselves to be in a kind of apocalyptic struggle. The great innovation of the Augsburg Religious Peace was to shift the conflict from the realm of religion to the realm of politics and law. The question of truth was excluded, it was “securitized”. The Reichstag at that time determined “peace and security in the German nation” as the goal of the negotiations. The solution of the dispute between the religions was explicitly postponed “to other times”. The conflict could only be carried out by “peaceful means”, a principle which seems very modern from today’s point of view. The parallel of the religious war at that time to the current conflict
between Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East catches the eye: but here the question of religion has become the means of politics, which makes a solution more difficult today.

But could the security achieved with the Peace of Augsburg be permanent? Hannes Ziegler asks this question in his contribution “Sleep of security. The finiteness of religious peace and the future of the empire” (1608–1618). It shows that religious peace was very soon called into question. The validity of its provisions was not seen as “eternal”: the regulation of the religious question was seen rather as a “moratorium”. The future was regarded as threatening, against which one had to arm oneself. Alternative ideas of security came up. A universal security order was not in sight. The actors expected war and thus made it more probable. Ziegler rightly points out that this dangerous pattern of “self-fulfilling prophecy” can be found in many historical situations, which proves the relevance of his contribution.

In “Postponing the Future: Observations on Early 19th Century International Law between Prevention and Positive Creation”, Marie-Christine Stenzel addresses a question that is of particular relevance in diplomacy today: what are the conditions of multilateralism in times of threat? Stenzel traces the development of law and an international order from the Peace of Westphalia to the middle of the 20th century. The law is in a position to make the future more secure, as it creates a certain reliability in view of perceived uncertainties. This makes it possible to plan for the future through cooperation between states. The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 had indeed regulated the relationship between the empires and created sovereign states. But it lacked the idea of a “common security”, to use a term from the second half of the 20th century. The relations between the states were regulated bilaterally, which offered many possibilities for alliances or conflicts. Stenzel even refers to the concept of the “common future”, as it was only used by the United Nation World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. Without such an understanding, the multilateralism of the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 would indeed not have been possible. At any rate, the Peace of Westphalia was not yet a European order, as it became the goal of the Vienna Congress of 1815. This order, however, looked less towards the future than towards the past. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars had called into question the current order of monarchies in Europe. The old order was to be restored. This is a parallel with the Soviet Union’s idea of consolidating the status quo in Europe after the Second World War, through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). But the CSCE became a kind of catalyst for change, contributing to the end of the Cold War. The Congress of Vienna not only created an order that was relatively stable, albeit with interruptions (Crimean War), until the First World War, but also Article VI of the Quadruple Alliance of the Paris Peace of 1815 can be regarded as the founder of institutionalised multilateralism. It provided for members to meet at fixed periods to discuss common interests “for the benefit of tranquility and prosperity between the nations and the maintenance of peace in Europe”.

Tobias Bruns’ contribution on “1878 as a Cultural Turnaround in Security in German History” deals with the relationship between internal and external security and domestic and foreign policy. In international studies, this connection is often neglected. In 1878 two assassination attempts were carried out against the German Emperor Wilhelm I. The perpetrators had connections to the social democrats. Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was accused of using the attacks to weaken social
democrats and liberals at home and to bring about a conservative turn. This, in turn, had enabled the German Reich to make its way into the First World War until the failure of the Weimar Republic. It is undisputed that the attacks in the German Reich fuelled fears of a revolutionary takeover, a socialist conspiracy. The feeling of insecurity also extended to the economy. At that time, the Reich was not yet seen to be threatened externally, but in its internal order. At the Berlin Congress of 1878, Bismarck had declared the Reich “saturated” in foreign policy terms. The connection between domestic and foreign policy lay in the fact that on the one hand a revolutionary coup would entail foreign policy uncertainties, and on the other hand cautious diplomacy depended on internal security. Today’s international studies cannot do without an analysis of this context.

Diseases such as AIDS, swine flu or Ebola are not only seen today as insidious diseases in the narrower sense, but also as a threat to the security of states. The plague in the Middle Ages and early modern times, or later the “Spanish flu”, not only cost many human lives, but also caused the collapse of state welfare. Today, this issue is an integral part of the broader concept of security. Since the 19th century, epidemics have been regarded as a test for the security and stability of state and social systems. In the analysis of this security policy context lies the insight value of the contribution by Malte Thießen and Andrea Wiegeshoff on “Security from epidemics: On the tension between future plans, security and statehood in the German Empire”.

As part of our conception of a liberal constitutional state, security forces only act in the event of a concrete threat to internal security, in the event of known dangers, or in the event of well-founded suspicion. Later, however, the terrorism of the 1970s in European states prompted the police to engage in prevention, i.e. to take precautions for an unknown future. In his contribution Larry Frohman examines the extent to which the liberal constitutional state is reaching its limits: “Rule an unrecognisable future. Law, exception and the logic of preventive surveillance”. The more security one wants to achieve, the more data about “unknown unknowns” (Donald Rumsfeld) must be collected and linked. Today, in the age of digitisation, this is possible on a large scale. The dangers of such prevention for the rule of law, and commensurate necessity of data protection, are seen, especially in Europe. At the same time, there is a growing awareness that total security cannot be achieved anyway.

For nuclear reactors, however, nothing less than absolute safety can actually be accepted because of the far-reaching consequences of accidents in the future. It has proved to be an illusion. That is why the German Government decided to phase out nuclear energy after the Fukushima accidents. Prevention is therefore only possible if no nuclear power plants are built at all. Proponents of nuclear power, on the other hand, believe that the risk is very small and the benefits very great. In view of the decay time of radioactive material, the relationship between safety, future and responsibility is measured in millions of years. “Reactor safety as future communication. Nuclear policy, nuclear debates and nuclear developments in West Germany and Eastern Europe 1970–2015”, this is the contribution of Anna Veronika Wendland.

Elke Seefried examines what the term sustainability, coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, means for security: “Global security: the roots of the political discourse on sustainability and the perception of global interdependence of the 1970s and 1980s.” On the one hand, the concept of security was extended far beyond the military dimension. The perceived economic,
social and environmental risks became the new dimensions of the concept of security. Thus, these policy areas were at the same time “securitized”, they became the new contents of security policy. On the other hand, political scientists such as Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane analysed the growing global interdependencies that increased the vulnerability of states. The consequence is globalisation, which now seems to be on the retreat.

Globalisation has produced winners and losers. Among the winners was above all the Federal Republic of Germany. At times, it was the country in the world that was most closely intertwined with the world economy and international value chains. At the same time, however, this exposed it to global changes. It had to survive in international competition and secure its “location”, as the saying goes. This was the only way to secure the future. Competitiveness, safeguarding the future and safeguarding locations are among the basic concepts of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Wencke Meteling’s contribution: “Securing a location = securing the future. Zur Angebotökonomischen Modellierung von Zukunft in der Standortdebatte” concludes the volume.