

## **Postmodern Openings**

ISSN: 2068 – 0236 (print), ISSN: 2069 – 9387 (electronic)

Coverd in: Index Copernicus, Ideas. RePeC, EconPapers, Socionet,  
Ulrich Pro Quest, Cabel, SSRN, Appreciative Inquiry Commons,  
Journalseek, Scipio  
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Postmodern Openings, 2011, Year 2, Vol. 7, September, pp: 17-28

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://postmodernopenings.com>

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Published by:

Lumen Publishing House

On behalf of:

Lumen Research Center in Social and Humanistic Sciences

# Theoretical-methodological Approaches to the Regional Security

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## **Abstract:**

*While studying the international relations, the formulation of a complete and unanimously accepted definition of security has constituted a genuine test for the researchers. The new paradigm of security, in process of its outlining, has, from the perspective of the impact on functionality of the international security system, a series of indubitable advantages, by introducing drainage mechanisms which limit the spiral of competition for military power and transfers the conflict from the area of armed fight to non-military domains.*

## **Keywords:**

*Regional security, National security, international, system, theoretical-methodological approaches.*

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## **Introduction**

At the moment, the notion of security has a vast application in diverse domains – in the political, military, economical, social, cultural ones, in the environment, planetary resources. It is present in scientific works, official documents, political speeches, journalistic articles, TV and radio news, etc. The situation is that almost any threat or danger to something in the society/international environment is perceived as generating a security problem. This does not simplify the attempts to explain and theorise this phenomenon.

## **The degree of the problem research**

While studying the international relations, the formulation of a complete and unanimously accepted definition of security has constituted a genuine test for the researchers. Thus, one of the most well-known definitions belongs to Arnold Wolfers, suggested in 1952, in an article based on the problem of national security – “*National security*” as an ambiguous symbol (Wolfers), published in the scientific journal *Political Science Quarterly*. According to this concept, security, in the objective meaning, implies the lack of threats regarding the accomplished values, and in the subjective meaning, the lack of fear that these threats may be attacked. The author cites in the same article a definition belonging to Walter Lippmann, who reflects the visions of the post-war epoch concerning the concept. Lippmann considers that a nation is safe to the extent that it is not in the dangerous position of having to sacrifice the essential values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, when provoked, to maintain them, by achieving victory in a war.

## **The general context of regional security. Theoretical and conceptual delimitations**

The beginning of the Cold War has been characterized by an increase of the influence of the realistic paradigm in the international studies, whose regularities have been widely reflected in the international politics practice. For the representatives of the realistic school, the concept of *security* implies the fight for survival. The state, as a biological being, is dominated by the instinct of self-preservation, and in the

anarchic international environment it increases the eventual threats and the risk of conflicts. In consequence, the static unit manifests egoist behaviour, directed to minimizing the threats, coming from other units, with which it is in a permanent competition for power. Pursuing power is, on the one hand, a natural consequence of the rationale of amplifying one's own security, believing that a powerful state (the emphasis being laid on the military power) has fewer opponents tempted and capable of attacking. On the other hand, the "political man" is a selfish creature by birth, characterized by an avid need to dominate others (Morgenthau, 2007:44-55), a feature which is transmitted to the state and is manifested by pursuing expansion and "the politics of prestige" (impressing other states with the size of the power). The result is a perpetuation of what Rousseau and Hobbes name "state of war" (whether the war is taking place or not) (Hoffmann, 1999:25). This aspect, offered by the realistic trend has been mostly based on the *national security*, or the *traditional meaning* of security, this being regarded as an exclusive attribute of the state and totally belonging to the domain of foreign policy. Nevertheless, most of the theoretical studies have focused on the research of the power, security being perceived as an attribute of it. However, the concept of national security primarily implies the physical survival of the respective state, the defence and maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity, the capacity of reacting adequately to any real or potential danger coming from outside or inside. At the same time, the notion of national security implies providing certain normal conditions for the auto-realisation of all the citizens, the defence of life, liberty and their properties against any attacks, whether on behalf of a person, organisation or the state (Burian, 2003:349).

The liberalism is the second trend that submits for analysis the theory of national security. Its theories have been reflected among the states with a reduced defence potential, but with big problems, generated by territorial misunderstandings and conflict situations with actors who fit in the category of big powers. The idea of *collective security* in the interwar period has become one of the basic concepts of the liberal-idealist trend. The essence of this "plan" of preventing war consists in institutionalizing a system where the whole international community agrees to oppose to any military aggression of any member. The collective security is directed towards the interior of the organisation formed of sovereign states with the goal to protect them from an

eventual aggression of one against another. Moreover, it is considered the only correct way to overcome the security dilemma. The concept and idea of *security dilemma* belongs to John Hertz, being taken over and developed by Robert Jervis. This may be considered the main critique expressed to the realistic approach, stressing out the vicious circle of competition regarding arming. This way, the realisation of one's own security results in other states' insecurity and makes, despite all efforts, both partners move even farther from the certainty of security (Țâgankova, 2004:322).

The liberal-idealists, as well as the realists, analyse security through another concept – the one of peace. In consequence, Barry Buzan registers security as being “an incompletely developed concept” (Buzan, 2000:15), and Baldwin considers it “neglected” (Baldwin, 1997). This term shall take revenge at the end of the cold war, extending on several life domains: social, economic, cultural, spiritual ones, becoming practically impossible to understand the limit between the studies of security and the one of other disciplines which have as an object of study the human society.

The end of the seventies brings realism in the foreground under another form, giving birth to a “new” paradigm – the neo-realism – which stresses out the concept of system and systemic approach. The latter is explained by K. Waltz, who, in comparison with the analytical approach, presumes the reduction of the whole to particular elements, examining its properties and connections. He considers that in the situation when the results are affected not only by the properties and the inter-connections of the variables, but by the way how they are organized, too, a systemic approach is necessary. Any approach or theory, if founded, must demonstrate how exactly the systemic level – or structure – is distinguished from the level of the units in interaction (Waltz, 2006:72). Waltz aims to create a systemic theory of the international politics, capable to explain the laws formulated by the empiric knowledge. It can be tested through experience, but there is no method that would lead to the creation of a theory. The laws are “observation facts”, the theories are speculative procedures introduced to explain them (Țugui, 2007:157). Therefore, the respective approach implies a higher degree of abstracting and theorization, although it cannot ignore reality, because it is ultimately the final evaluator.

The application of the systemic approach to the security concept intensified after the end of the cold war. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, the exponents of the so-called “School from Copenhagen”, have reformulated the security concept, offering it complex perspectives. Waever analyses the security concept from its historical, philosophical and political-linguistic aspects, reaching the conclusion that “security” can be perceived as what a state is preoccupied with – the maintenance and consolidation of society (Buzan, 2000:15; Buzan, 2003:44). Barry Buzan introduces a series of changes of principle in the investigation of security. First of all, he considers that this is excessively idealized, and the different national perspectives do not manage to give a general definition, but only solutions to specific problems. It is considered that the realists-idealists dispute (security being a product of power versus security being a product of peace) does not clarify things. He criticizes the examination of security as a derivative of power, especially of military power, but accepts both the realistic hypothesis of the international anarchic system, and the liberal one of interdependence. He accepts the influence of the globalisation process, under the form of increase of the chances for peace, concomitantly with the appearance of vulnerabilities and risks, and brings in the foreground two ideas – the one of *securing the problems* and *sectoring* the security. The first one implies understanding security as a social construction process (identification, definition, securing a vulnerability, risk or threat) – securing (*sectoring*) or *de-securing* means a process of social involvement, similar to the political process, with the implication of the public, where certain problems are transferred to the category of existential threats to the state and the respective society. Thus security is not objectively defined, but socially built.

The second one recommends approaching security by *sectors*: political, military, economic, social, environmental ones. Also, the dynamics of the security can be reproduced through the identification of the analysis levels within the international system. He takes over from Waltz the idea of the three levels of analysis centered on individuals, states and the international system, but widely speaks about a fourth one, the regional one. Here we find the idea of a *security complex* which is defined as “a group of states whose prime security concerns relate sufficiently close, that their national securities cannot be taken into consideration in a realistic way separate from one another” (Waltz,



2006:72). This is a first definition given by Buzan to the regional complexes of security, explaining that: “The complexes of security do not belong to the structure of the international system in the meaning established by Waltz. To the international system overall, they are action-reaction phenomena, thus being related with other recurrent models, like the arming race and the commercial wars. In Waltz’s scheme, which I mostly accept, such phenomena count as a part of the level of analysis of the unit. We would label this category of action-reaction as formations of processes, in order to differentiate it from the explanations that result from the units’ characteristics themselves. In spite of all this, it is valid to see the complexes of security as sub-systems – as miniature anarchies – in itself. From this perspective’s point of view, by analogy with the whole systems, they possess their own structures.”

The problematic of regional security, examined by Buzan and Waever brings completions to the first definition, the regional *security complex* being described as “a set of units whose processes of securing and un-securing are interdependent at such an extent that the security problems of the component units cannot be analyzed or solved separately one from another” (Buzan, 2003:44). Thus, “the most important parts of the processes of securing and un-securing, at the level of the international system shall manifest themselves within the regional groups.”

The usage of the concept of regional security complex facilitates the adaption and the restructuring process of the states’ foreign policy strategies, by means of an efficient evaluation of the regional complex. Almost every state is capable of comparing its perspectives of national security with one (or more) security complex. Moreover, the decision factors from different states can use the empiric studies based on this concept and scenarios created starting from theory in order to obtain the best alternatives for the foreign policy and strategies of security. The scenarios based on theory, as well as the empiric studies are possible because the formation of the security complexes “derives from the interaction between the anarchic study and the balance of power as consequence, on one hand, and on the other hand – the pressure of the local geographic proximity” (Buzan, 2003:44) Another advantage is that, though the main structure is given by the interaction between the main powers, the role played by the small states can be also studied. As a unanimously accepted methodological notion, the small state appeared in

the theory of the international relations in the post-war period, at the same time with the beginning of the collapse of the colonial empires. There are several criteria that a small state can be identified by: territory, population, natural resources, geo-strategic location, etc. The realistic approach to the classification of the states in terms of power prevails in the international relations, which represents on the one hand – the capacity to influence other states' decision, and on the other hand – it is intrinsically associated to possessing the human, natural, military, territorial resources, the economic potential, the political stability, national cohesion, etc. Being differently combined from case to case, these resources, plus the capacity and the desire of the governors to adequately manage them, determine the power of this state (Prohnițchi, 2001).

There are a lot of regional more decors in the specialized literature. For example, Robert Jervis defined “the security regimes” as being that framework in which “the rules, principles and regulations which permit other states to be restricted in their behaviour, believing that other states will respond in the same manner” are comprised. “This concept implies... a form of cooperation between states which means more than just a simple pursue of interests on a short term.” This pattern may be applied only in the conditions where there is no power or regional actor with revisionist intentions... in other words, the maintenance of the status-quo in the respective region corresponds to the political and security interests of all the states (Jevis, 1967:84). The regional complexes of security must not be confused with the security regimes. The Cooperation Council from the Bay (CCB), for example, constitutes a security regime, but cannot be considered a regional complex of security.

“The pluralist community of security”, according to the description offered by Karl W. Deutsch, is formed of states which have developed a common sense, integrated, related to security (Rosenau). Unlike the states that belong to a complex of security, which are forced to take account of the effects of the un-security, too, those belonging to a community of security have reached an advanced stage of mutual trust. It is presumed that these states have created not only a stable order, but moreover, a stable peace. As Deutsch's assumptions related to the security community presume inclusively giving up the analysis grid characteristic to determining the security dilemmas, it can be affirmed



that this concept of security community is one that deviates from the principles of realism, being oriented to the constructivist approach. In the security community, it is presumed that the states are able to intervene through diplomatic techniques or mechanisms in order to prevent the appearance of conflicts. A second assumption that the security community needs is the existence of a capacity of the states that form this community to make a common front against an external actor (state or non-state) or a group of actors. Besides, one of the fundamental criteria for developing a security community is that of the existence or construction of “an institutional maturity sufficient to generate diplomatic techniques, able to combat problems and crisis”.

Moreover, this institutional maturity cannot be sufficient out of the existence of some mutual positive expectations of the member-states, whose perception have to be harmonized and integrated in a unique model of inter-state interaction. In this context, the common perception of the community member states regarding the external threats is necessary. Other concepts that fall under the same category are: “the formation of a regional conflict” – proposed by Raimo Vayrynen (professor at the Institute for International Peace Studies from Indiana, USA), “subordinate system” – proposed by Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel (professors at the University of Maryland, and respectively Harvard).

At present, the approaches of James N. Rosenau (Rosenau) stand out in the domain of the study of security, who realises a correlation between the theory of complexity, chaos and the concept of security. The theory of complexity represents a means of investigating the dynamics of the non-linear systems, that is not complimentary to the linear methods, meant to the measurement of the irregular world (for example, statistics). The non-linear systems have the following characteristics: the inputs and the outputs are not proportional; the whole is not equal, in quantitative terms, with the sum of its parts and, in qualitative terms, it is not identifiable by the characteristics of the component elements; the cause-effect connection is not evident; the phenomena from this area are not predictable, but, in their own limits, they organises themselves.

At the same time, James Rosnau studies the evolution of the international environment of security, before and after the Cold War, in terms of the same complexity theory. The main conclusion is that, after

the Cold War, a new epoch is born, a epoch of multiple contradictions: the international system is less dominant, but more powerful; the states transform themselves, but they do not disappear; the sovereignty of the state is eroded, but powerfully valued; the borders do not allow intruders to pass, but they are characterized by an increased degree of porosity, etc. Analyzing these contradictions, a series of complex questions arise: how can a world characterized by ambiguity be evaluated? How can a political space, in a continuous transformation, in which, simultaneously certain dimensions erode themselves, and others fortify themselves, be studied? How can the politics of national security be re-conceptualized in such a way, that it would include various notions like identity, affiliation and territoriality? Rosenau affirms that clarifying these questions, and also the uncertainty that they generate, fortify the belief that we are deeply implied in an epochal transformation process, a process sustained by a new vision on world, and implicitly, on the security environment (Rosenau).

All these concepts: complex, regime, security community are the result of the systemic approach, although maybe not in the very strict manner proposed by Waltz. They represent regional systems, formed of states whose security, as a result of a prolonged interaction, obtain a high degree of interdependence. The term of regional system of security shall be utilized in parallel with that of regional complex of security. Nevertheless, the first one has a more general character, can be applied to more extended zones and can include two or more inter-connected complexes. These regional systems (or sub-systems) are empirical phenomena with historical and geopolitical roots, excluding the definition of the sub-system as “any subgroup from the international system”, as Haas does, for example. However, the fact that the notion of security complexes, in a way, a simple analytical proceeding, being a perception lens meant to bring in the focus of attention the regional level of the analysis with much more clarity, must not be forgotten.

Thus, we can say that the presented concepts actually suggest the necessity of a displacement of the analysis angle of the strategic studies from the state level to the regional one, considering it the most appropriate for the case and practical studies. The level of the international or global system is too distant from the real interests and the regular behaviour of the states, and the focus on the security of a state practically excludes the high degree of interdependence reached in

the contemporary epoch. Those who consider it from the globalisation perspective are of the same opinion, specifying that the extinction of bipolarity has marked a decrease in the importance of global security and a reformulation, in regional and local terms, of the primary interests of security of the big powers, evolved into military powers of medium rank, as the national strategies of security. We assist at present at a “decentralization of the international security system”, the appearance of “regional complexes of security, which are relatively disparate”, a regionalization of the global security (Held, 2004:225).

The regional security constitutes the degree of protection of the mutual relations between the states of a planetary region against the destabilisation of the situation, the crisis and the military conflicts of regional proportions. According to the UN Statute (art. 52, p.1), the conclusion of certain regional treaties, the creation of certain regional structures is admitted. The assurance of security in the region, the solution of litigations and conflicts in a peaceful manner, the contribution to their solving, as well as the problems related to the disarmament and the reduction of the arming are included in their competence.

### **Conclusions**

We can finally conclude that one of the best solutions in the development of the security studies is the approach at the level of international and regional system, and for the case studies and the realisation of certain conceptions and viable national security strategies, especially the regional level. The new paradigm of security, in process of its outlining, has, from the perspective of the impact on functionality of the international security system, a series of indubitable advantages, by introducing drainage mechanisms which limit the spiral of competition for military power and transfers the conflict from the area of armed fight to non-military domains.

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