

RE-THINKING SECURITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE SECURITY STUDIES APPROACH

Aleksandar Pavleski

Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Security, Defence and Peace
pavleski@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

Abstract

Security is a variable category. What makes people and states safe or feel safe depends upon two basic phenomena. The most obvious source of challenge to our security is a factor that threatens the values of the people and the values of the state. The first and most objective of these are physical threats, such as military threats. The second phenomenon is related to the interpretation of the impact of the environment on the security meaning, or how the environment influences perceptions and interpretations of security and insecurity as well. The focus of the paper analysis is on exploring different security interpretations, specifically through the prism of the four generations of security studies. Actually, such four generations of security studies provide the necessary theoretical framework for comprehensive analysis in this regard. Hence, the paper is analyzing the evolutionary nature of security understanding in a variety of historical and environmental aspects.

Keywords: *security, insecurity, security studies, securitization, Copenhagen School of security studies*

1. INTRODUCTION

A common finding in the analysis of security studies is that the security debate lasts a long period of time, as well as that the beginning of this debate begins during the period of the two world wars. However, instead of concluding that such a long debate leads to clarification of dilemmas related to the concept of security, it is more often stated that it only helped to complicate the situation in the analysis of security studies and to characterize security as a frequently misused concept. The conceptual ambiguity or lack of consensus on what security studies really study, as well as their identification with strategic studies (in the period after World War II), but also the characteristics of the security environment after the Cold War, contributed to many researchers in this discipline focus on the softer aspects of security issues.

In this regard, the focus of this paper is on the perceptions and understandings of security in different epochs and in different theoretical contexts. Actually, the complex understanding of the term security can best be explored through the analysis of the evolution and development of security studies. Hence, the understanding of security within this paper is specifically analyzed through the prism of the four generations of security studies: 1) first generation - early idealism; 2) second generation - strategic studies; 3) third generation - international security studies; and 4) fourth generation - new realism.

2. RE-THINKING SECURITY: THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Traditional theoretical approaches to security understanding are generally based on the analysis of the military power role and its significance. In particular, their definitions and understanding of security are based on three main assumptions: 1) the state is responsible for security; 2) security policy is aimed at maintaining the status quo; and 3) military threats impose the necessity for effective military defense, which becomes the primary state interest.

There are two dominant theoretical approaches within the traditional understanding of security: realism and liberalism. Both theories start from similar assumptions in their security explaining and understanding. Such are: 1) there is an anarchic structure in the international system and relations; 2) the states are central actors in international relations; and 3) states strive for rational responses in accordance with their own national interests.

The realistic security approach is generally oriented towards national security and it can be analyzed through the prism of several security notions: traditional realism, neorealism, structuralism, etc. They all have in common that they take the state as a reference object of security as well as that relations between states are in anarchy, which means that there is no external authority that would regulate relations and rules in a world security system (Buzan, 1991).

Actually, this context of anarchy imposes three major conditions on the security concept:

- 1) States are the principal referent object of security because they are both the framework of order and the highest source of governing authority. This explains the dominating policy concern with 'national' security.
- 2) Although states are the principal objects of security, the dynamics of national security are highly relational and interdependent between states. Domestic insecurities may or may not dominate the national security agenda, but external threats will almost always comprise a major element of the national security problem. The idea of 'international security' is therefore best used to refer to the systemic conditions that influence the ways in which states make each other feel more or less secure. Individual national securities can only be fully understood when considered in relation both to each other and to larger patterns of relations in the system as a whole.
- 3) Given the durability of anarchy, the practical meaning of security can only be constructed sensibly if it can be made operational within an environment in which competitive relations are inescapable. If security depends on either harmony or hegemony, then it cannot be lastingly achieved within anarchy. Among other things, this means that under anarchy, security can only be relative, never absolute. So long as anarchy holds, these conditions will obtain. If there is ever a structural shift out of anarchy, then the entire framework of the security problematique would have to be redefined (Buzan, 1991).

Regarding the above-mentioned, there is no doubt that the essence of the Realistic theory of security is based on creating an appropriate conception of international relations in order to protect the whimsical national interests of the states.

On the other hand, the liberal theory representatives have also accepted certain basic realist interpretations, such as that the international system is being dominated by anarchy as well as that the politics of force is an essential feature of the relations between the states. In security understanding, they perceive the state as a middle ground object. Actually, a basic

characteristic of the Liberal theoretical approach is that it does not dispute the importance of national security, but places it on the same importance level as individual, regional, international and global security. In this regard, the representatives of such a theoretical approach emphasize the importance of the multilateral forms of international cooperation and institutional association as the most effective way to conflict overcoming in the relations between nations and states. In general, it is usually argued that Realists focus on conflict within the international system, while Neoliberals stress cooperation.

Still, the traditional security approach to security does not prove to be fully applicable to security understanding in contemporary environments. According to Buzan, it is necessary to separate the term security from the term national security in a way that the term security itself will be perceived in a broader context (Buzan,1991).

In this regard, new, alternative perceptions and understandings of security (also known as critical theories) have emerged during the 80s of the last century. The rejection of many realistic assumptions, including the assumption about anarchic international relations is a common characteristic of such theories. In addition, they do not perceive the state as a central reference security object and therefore emphasize the importance of both individuals and social groups as security objects. In this regard, security itself is understood through the prism of a broader social, economic and political context.

By uniting critical discourses, critical security studies seek to promote a decentralized approach to security and to support the practice of promoting security in societies through the emancipation of humanity. Hence, according to critical theory, security is always for someone and for a specific purpose. According to them, the conceptualization of security depends on the specific view and understanding of the world in which we live. While traditional security studies have found that its main feature is the power struggle between states within anarchic international relations and that conflicts between states are endemic, critical security studies focus on regional security issues as well as on enhancing the security of individuals and groups. Hence, through critical security studies, due importance is given to the concept of human security, which analyzes the security of the individual as a reference entity, as opposed to the security of other reference facilities (Георгиева, 2006).

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies approach is one of the most original attempts in promotion of such a security understanding. Specifically, the representatives of this school have promoted so-called security expanding and deepening. Expansion refers to the security understanding through the prism of five sectors: military, political, economic, societal and environmental. In this regard, military security concerns the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states and states perceptions of each other's intentions. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic security concerns access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religious and national identity and customs. Environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend (Buzan, 1991). So, compared to previous theoretical security approaches, the Copenhagen School understands security through a broader approach, which equally includes military, political, economic, social and environmental security dimensions. Related to the deepening of security, in addition to the state, the importance of other reference objects is emphasized, such as: the individual, the society, the region, and the world.

Starting from the aspiration and the necessity of a broader and deeper interpretation of security, the representatives of the Copenhagen School have developed the theory of securitization. Such a securitization theory has a significant impact on the expansion of the security concept and thus the security agenda itself. Seen from the point of view of this theoretical approach, security signifies a situation marked by the presence of a (security) problem and the existence of measures against it. So, according to this theoretical direction, threats are an integral part of everyday life and the daily functioning of states, but they become a security problem only in the absence of measures and activities to deal with them. Therefore, insecurity is a situation with a security problem but with no measures against it. In this regard, Ole Wæver pointed out that each question/issue can be asked as: 1) non-politicized - the state does not deal with the issue and it is not a part of the public debate; 2) politicized - the issue is part of a public policy and the government decides and provides certain means to address it; and 3) securitized - the issue is presented as an existential threat and it should be addressed as a priority issue which opened a necessity of extraordinary measures in dealing with it (Wæver, O. at. Al., 1992). It means that the securitization process is determined by the presence of an issue that is so urgent and existential, so it is important that it should be dealt with decisively by top leaders prior to other issues.

Regarding the securitization theory, there are four types of units/levels involved in the security analysis of securitization approaches. Such are: referent objects, things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival; securitization actors, actors who securitize issues by declaring something – referent object – existentially threatened; functional actors: actors who affect the dynamics of a sector and actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security; a public/audience that needs to be convinced and accept the necessity of securitizing a particular issue (Buzan, 1998).

3. THE FIRST GENERATION – EARLY IDEALISM IN SECURITY STUDIES

There are various opinions and interpretations in the literature regarding the location of the beginnings of security studies. According to some opinions, such beginnings could be traced back to the period from the mid-50s of the last century. One of the indicators that support such perception and thinking are the research activities of Yale University Centers (1930) and then Princeton (1951), which are aimed at analyzing national security policy. Another indicator is the research study - War Study (1926) by Quincy Wright, which on the one hand is the first quantitative analysis in an attempt to determine the causes of wars throughout history, but on the other hand, this study establishes the multidisciplinary nature of security studies by including the analysis of non-military dimensions in the security research.

Researchers from this period of security studies development support the idealism that man/human being is basically not a violent creature and thus that war can be prevented by international arbitration procedures. For these researchers, uncertainty is a consequence of the shortcomings/errors of the international system. Basically, in this period, security is understood through the prism of its epistemological origin, i.e. as freedom from worries, insecurity, security. On the other hand, worries, problems, cautions and insecurities are thought to stem from the war, which is a consequence of the malfunctions of the international system. Hence, the purpose of security studies in this period, in fact, is to free people from war, which is also the main research problem of the studies.

4. THE SECOND GENERATION – STRATEGIC STUDIES

The second generation of security studies is also known as the golden age of strategic studies or post-war realism. The main reason for shifting the focus from the previous idealistic optimism to realism is the result of unsuccessful attempts of establishing a power balance between European countries in the period between the two world wars. In this interwar period, the politics of force manifested itself with the annexation of parts of Poland by then-Nazi Germany, and then with the outbreak of World War II. These are the main events that influenced the limitation of the previous influence and the dominance of idealism in security studies.

Security studies through a realistic interpretation of the events after the end of World War II, the beginning of the confrontation of the blocs, and the struggle for the balance of power offer a simpler political context of international relations. This context explains the effectiveness and dynamics of the nuclear strategy and the strategy of deterrence, through which the block rivals try to establish a balance of fear of a possible war. Nuclear hardening is the way, i.e. the strategy through which the superpowers try to ward off the danger of aggression.

National security becomes a central concept for politicians, scientists and researchers in this realistic framework. Strategic studies are developed around this concept, in fact, by refocusing on security studies. In particular, in this period the problems of national security are considered exclusively from a military point of view. It dominates until the moment when security begins to be seen as a narrow concept, and the discipline that researches security issues in this period, as closely dependent and subject to political influences.

At this stage, national security and its military aspects are considered a central issue in strategic security studies. Contrary to the previous interpretation that international arbitration can deter security threats, the theory of deterrence and intimidation, as an important policy instrument in the nuclear era, has a dominant place in strategic studies.

In particular, at this stage, security is perceived as the absence of fear, as a result of the fact/perception that a confrontation between superpowers would lead to mutual destruction. Given that intimidation is an integral part of international politics, this type of insecurity has been described as a war on intimidation.

In general, strategic studies, as a second stage in the development of security studies, are not only focused on the analysis of political priorities or the consequences of nuclear intimidation as a means to prevent war, but security at this stage refers to the study of threats, use, and control of the armed forces.

5. THE THIRD GENERATION - INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

The third generation in the development of security studies is known as international security studies, which occur as a result of confrontations within the security studies themselves about the meaning of the concept of security and result in a reduction of the influence of realists. A series of developments in the international community, including the Vietnam War and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, have reinforced the belief that strategic studies are unable to predict the events facing the international community outside the dynamics of nuclear strategy between superpowers. During this period the belief is growing that the threats posed by the non-military aspects of security are as serious threats to states and humanity as the non-nuclear threat.

During this period the most serious criticisms of security studies and their shortcomings appeared with the advent of peace research, and then with the advent of peace studies in the 1970s. As a result of the criticism, security studies have been redirected, and later recognized as international security studies. Within them, the concept of security is expanding and deepening, but the state remains a central object of security. However, despite the changes this generation of security studies is making to establish a usable security concept, it is still failing to reach a consensus on the importance of security.

Actually, from the early 1980s until the end of the Cold War international security studies sought to overcome the classic shortcomings of security studies, generally through:

- Expanding the security concept by including non-military dimensions (economic and environmental security issues such as poverty, inequality, etc.); and
- Deepening the security concept by including other security entities besides the state (individual security and human rights).

6. THE FOURTH GENERATION SECURITY STUDIES

The fourth generation or the new golden age of security studies, according to analysts, was caused by the events of September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. The primary motive for the new realistic approach in security studies is the conclusion that although the bipolarism and the Soviet threat have disappeared, the threats to peace and security have not diminished, much less disappeared. The fear caused by new threats and dangers gives different dimensions to security. Namely, unlike the period of the Cold War (in the period of dominance of strategic studies, when the fear of nuclear disaster dominates), within the fourth generation of security studies, the fear of the possible consequences of international terrorism is dominant.

In this context, since 9/11, the fear of terrorism has sparked debates about what constitutes security, dominated by the finding that security is a historically volatile state. Hence, Krause and Williams conclude that the historical dynamics that determine world politics influence both the contemporary meaning and nature of security (Krause, L., Williams, M., 1997).

Starting from these positions, the critical and constructivist approach to security opens up new dimensions through which security can be analyzed and defined. In this regard, instead of defining security as the period of September 11, 2001 (absence of threats to survival), it is suggested that it should be defined as a state of absence of fear (not just a threat), with security studies being studies of emancipation from fear.

Hence, if the threats were defined as a clear or express intent to inflict harm, then after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the definition of threats is under pressure to be revised and indicates that - the threat that does not intimidate us is latent, covert and repressed intent to inflict injury.

7. CONCLUSION

The first attempts at more serious research and understanding of security as an integral issue of social life and relations between states are located within the theory of international relations. Actually, in this context, as mentioned above, security is generally studied as a sub-discipline of international relations. In this regard, the traditional, realist conceptualization of security is based on the use or threat of use of force, and therefore the main focus is on military power and its significance. On the other hand, the representatives of liberalism considered such security understanding and explanation as limited and insufficiently applicable, especially in relation to non-military security risks and threats. Their research focus is on the importance of cooperation between countries as an instrument through which security can be achieved.

As a result of the many initiated security debates during the 20th century, four generations of security studies have emerged. Within these security studies, the debate on the meaning of security and the scope of the field has been continued on both the ontological (what to study), and epistemological (how to study) levels. In this regard, one of the axes has been the inclusion or exclusion of non-military threats such as economic, societal, or environmental issues. Another dimension of the widening or deepening debate has revolved around security 'actors'. Both of these arguments have put a question mark against the focus on the state and military sector of the neorealist theoretical position of international relations. The third dimension of the debate was about the question of the levels of analysis. In this regard, the traditional dichotomy of 'national security' and 'international security' has been challenged by the introduction of the concepts of individual security, regional security, and global security (Mandel, 1994).

As a result of all the above mentioned, it could be concluded that security is a really variable category as well as that its complex nature imposes the necessity of a serious and comprehensive approach in its understanding and thinking.

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