

# ON THE CONCEPTION OF SECURITY (A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH)

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## **Abstract**

*Security studies are an interdisciplinary field of scientific cooperation. It successfully combines studies and methods from the spheres of political, legal, technical and military sciences, as well as such in philosophy, psychology, sociology and economics, owing to the poly-mantic content of this notion; covering: basic human need, human rights and a key sphere of social system – itself functioning in a systemic framework. Also, it bears on state functions and basic characteristics of international relations and on organizational and personal development. Owing to the growing insecurity in the world today, under the conditions of globalization and growth of new threats and risks, research interest in security problems has gone into deeper details of late. As a result of this, the content of security has become enlarged; it could no longer be limited to military aspects or the maintenance of law and order. The very functions of national states have changed; they are now involved in rivalry relationships with a variety of subjects in activities keeping up national and international security.*

**Keywords:** *polysemantic content, social system, security, law, order*

In the analysis below I set out my view on how security problems can be explained and defined by means of making use of fundamental philosophical notions and how their efficient solution can be achieved through the application of strategies and models in the political game theory.

## **1. Subjects and Environment of Security**

The notion of „social subject” in present-day social research is connected with stable roles played, or positions taken up: individuals, communities, groups, institutions or organizations, society, and even mankind as a whole, could play or take them up. Social subjects, individual or collective, are distinguished by their consciousness and self-consciousness, and their capacity to make free choice. They enter into a variety of social relationships. The criterion of subjectivity spells out ability to make and realize autonomous decisions. This definition only pertains to living and social systems, based on communication.

The ‘social subject’ develops, and partakes of the nature of different relationships with the world and the environment: in them it strives for realization of its natural forces. One might rightfully say that it is very difficult for the game model of social relationships to

reveal the nature of a subject's development; rather, the game model only dwells on its abilities and efforts to manage or not to manage a given environment. From this point of view, we should speak about security as of a notion related to different types of social subjects: individuals, social groups, organizations, society and mankind as a whole.

Security cannot be understood as a „state of a given social system”, for, if understood so, it could be interpreted as a desired state of affairs, a system is striving for. Such understanding cannot identify the dialectical nature of relationships creating and supporting security. The latter feature a process, while ‘the state of affairs’ is stationary and transitory. But, indeed, a coincidence in the development of ‘subject’ and ‘environment’ can be achieved here, whereby the subject can manage its effects successfully and retain its integrity. The establishment of security is of a dynamic nature, characterized by tension in stability and change. The transitory nature of security stands out when we treat it in parallel with insecurity. The development of reality involves overcoming of contradictions. Hence, security can be attained by means of overcoming continuously-arising contradictions in a given environment. Such contradictions can be ones of a sharp conflict nature; but they can also be non-antagonistic ones, solvable on the basis of the principles of consent and collaboration.

Security can be defined as a process of support of a satisfactory control by ‘the subject’ over harmful effects of ‘the environment’. Such control can guarantee the existence-per norm-of a given social subject or a social system. The ability of a social subject to successfully cope with the harmful effects of environment draws a dynamic dividing line between security and insecurity.

An environment can be natural or social, not affected or created by human intervention. The Copenhagen School of International Security Studies perceives of environment, or a strategic part of it, as a referent object in security maintenance<sup>[1]</sup>. The social subject is in active interaction with the environment; and is striving to control negative effects of the environment, concerned with its own survival. Apart from „the factor of nature” in human environment, the technological world, developed by human beings has an import of its own, too. It makes up the main difference between human environment and environment of other living organisms. A vast majority of effects in human environment are caused by different subjects: individuals or groups of such. The participants in social interaction vie with each other in the distribution of specific amounts of resources and their rivalry struggle is an essential trait of a given security environment. People do not establish relationships with nature only, while endeavoring to transform it in order to fall in with their aims and interests. They establish relationships with other people and human institutions as well - with more important influence on their own development. A security environment can be identified with the system of a subject's social relationships.

One could say that this definition of security is burdened with the activist values of the Modern Time, justifying its explanation in the context of the notion of power as „control on someone's presence”<sup>[2]</sup>. Security is closely related to power and the imposition of somebody's power will. It is an expression of the idea of subjection of the development of nature, humans and society of the unified principles of Reason, postulated in law and science. This conclusion refers the notion of security to „the program of modernity”<sup>[3]</sup>. It

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[1] Buzan, B., Hansen L. (2009). The Evolution of International Security Studies, 13-16; 212-217.

[2] Ionchev, D. [Йончев,Д.] (2008). Ravnishta na sigurnost [Levels of Security],33-34.

[3] Toulmin, St.(1994). Cosmopolis. Skritata programa na modernostta, Sofia: Kalus.

explains its ties with such modernist conceptions as „freedom” and „human rights”, „social contract” and „national state”. These notions involve an overcoming of „the state of nature” of intense feuds and the establishment of security in internal order and in international relations alike<sup>[4]</sup>.

These reciprocal dependencies bolster up perceiving of decisions in the security sphere in a broader context of our political decision and action, as such at the highest levels of security. It involves institutionalized, organized behavior and distribution of definite power resources in searching for response to effects of the environment on the social subject. This view allows of existence of a more wider range of different aspects of security – varying from military and legal to social and ecological ones. According to some representatives of the Copenhagen School, „a more general sectoral widening of security included societal, economic, environmental, health, development and gender” aspects<sup>[5]</sup>.

The relative weight and balance of various factors and levels of security maintenance has become changed in the Global Age. Overall involvement and the great variety of participants active in international relations, as well as appearance of a new type of threats and risks, make it necessary to plan acts in the security sphere and their effects in the context of the whole planet. One can say that national states are unable to ensure yet their security by themselves: they cease to be the main referent object in the analysis of international relations, as they were in ‘the Modern Times’ after the Westphalian Peace in 1648.

The view set out above feature new dimensions of „the epic conflict between security and freedom”<sup>[6]</sup>; itself with a long history, indeed. These two notions, security and freedom, are related to the modernist project, but it could be said, that a real tension exists between them. The safeguarding of security might entail limitation of individual freedom, so that unlimited freedom and security of all forms could be mutually excluded. Freedom is associated with responsibility for communitarian or social values - and security is one of them. Personal freedom could enter into controversial relationships with the freedom of others. Freedom is a personification of subjectivity, but security is crucial for the development of the subject.

Security can exist in normal set-ups or in crisis. The normal development of the social subject spells out ability of it to realize satisfactory control over the impact of environment. This means that the social subject would be able to make autonomous decisions and to realize acts in chime with its interests and aims. ‘Norm’ is a prescription for the existence of particular activity or inactivity; it is enacted by specific authority. A norm is valid, when it is part of a functioning normative system, regulating a given type of social relationships. Evaluations of the social subject as regards social facts are incorporated in a norm – specifically, its will to transform a *status quo*.<sup>[7]</sup> The security of a system is „in norm”, when some prescriptions are fulfilled in the realization of control by the subject over environmental impacts, as necessary and essential conditions for its survival and development. When such prescriptions are neglected, crisis comes up. Then the social subject is not able to control environmental impacts successfully; and its existence and development could be jeopardized.

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[4] Hobbes, T. (1970). Leviatan [Leviathan]”, Sofia, „Nauka i izkustvo”; Beitz, Ch.(1999).Political Theory and International Relations, 27-35.

[5] Buzan, B., Hansen L. (2009). The Evolution of International Security Studies, 12.

[6] Bauman, Z. (2003). Obsnostta – tursene na sigurnost v nesigurnia sviat, 32.

[7] Bouzov, V. (2006). Svetat na normite [The World of Norms], 19-27.

Crises-determining factors could be classified as challenges, risks and threats. A challenge is a critical state of the security environment, calling for certain answer. A threat is also a state of the environment, when it manifests itself in a normal framework. It can be revealed in a direct way, as a phenomenon immediately preceding a crisis. Risks are threats of an unknown, constant duration. They have a strong impact on the appearance of crises and are characterized by uncertainty. Risks can be the result of external factors or inherent mistakes.

These theoretical assumptions can be interpreted in a specific way in the context of different levels of security. The problem of building up an efficient system of security and mapping out of a corresponding security policy is very topical at all the aforesaid levels.

## 2. Levels of Security

The following classification of principal levels of security is accepted in the present-day security theory: personal, group (communal or organizational), state, regional and worldwide levels<sup>[8]</sup>. The first three of them are components of the content of the notion of national security. A state's security is the leader in this system; it connects national to international security, while the latter encompasses interactions of different types of agents at regional and world level. Globalization shifts the accent of security problems onto the world level; as regards mutual commitment between global and local levels, it is of determining nature (Figure 1).

### LEVELS OF SECURITY



Figure 1. Global security

The level of personal or human security is at the base of the levels outlined above. It can be reduced to three aspects: physical, psychical and social. Society and its state are in duty bound to guarantee human rights and freedoms, prosperity and normal conditions for life of

[8] Buzan, B., Hansen, L. (2009). The Evolution of International Security Studies, 187-224; Slatynski, N. (Слатински, Н.) (2000). Izmerenia na sigurnosta [Dimensions of Security], 44-46; Ionchev, D. (Йончев, Д.) (2008). Ravnishta na sigurnost' [Levels of Security], 16-18.

individuals. The fulfillment of this duty in the Global Age spreads over social subjects at the highest level as „international community” and „mankind”. Serious debates exist about their right of humanitarian intervention in a country, where human rights and freedoms are violated. The correct way-out here could be defined through clarification of the specificity of their subjectivity.

„Group security” relates to communities and organizations. Relationships between different national, cultural, ethnic and professional communities in the present-day societies with complex structure are a component of the content of this concept of security. A disintegration of communal connections could be the result of the action of economic and social factors, and of destruction of the symbolic complex of norms and values, leading to rivalry clashes and degradation.

Today, man as such is a „man of organizations” - state or private ones, differencing in the scope and sphere of their activity. The organizations, acting on a planetary scale are a new phenomenon. Every organization takes measures against external attacks on its activities in the production and marketing of items in economic market competitions, while keeping its structure and conditions for normal relationships between its members. Today, there exists a relatively high level of corporative security in developed societies.

The place of state security in the context of the levels featured above is quite specific. It defines the dimensions of national security together with the personal and group levels. The state is a political community and basic institute of the political system of a given society. Its functions of security maintenance are complex enough; they cannot be pared down to military aspects only or to internal legal order either. Sovereignty, i.e., the freedom of decision-making, is a very important function; it involves limitation in the globalization era and a part of it is the concern of international unions or transnational institutions.

The specific characteristics of international security are determined by existing relationships between state, regional and world level of security. In international relations every national state defends its own security and sovereignty. In their definition it starts out from national ideal and interests, themselves a subject of defense in conflicts bearing on security.

Regions are conditional separate areas defined on the basis of geographical proximity and mutual dependence of security of states in them, vis-a-vis other participants in international relations. They could be built up by „geographically clustered sets of such units, and these clusters must be embedded in a larger system, which has a structure of its own”. It could be noted that they have „analytical, and even ontological, standing, but they do not have actor quality”<sup>[9]</sup>. Regions are not self-reliant agents in international relations, but they are basic units in their analysis. A dominant tendency in past few decades is, indeed, the observed growth of the number of regional conflicts, a process, related to specific stability and latent contradictory character of existing centers of conflict.

Worldwide security is the highest level in the study of these problems. In the world today, on the basis of the internationalization of economic relations, advance in information and communicative technologies and intensification of political cooperation and cross border ecological risks, worldwide security is of global importance, no doubt. The problem of regulation of international relations worldwide as regards guaranteeing security of all participants in them is one of foremost importance.

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[9] Buzan, B., Waever, O. (2003), *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*, 27.

Nowadays our world is in a state of dynamic insecurity, owing to the fact that the pre-Cold War system of security has been destroyed and no efficient substitute of it has been found. The number of crises-boding security risks is growing without let-up.

The problems set out above could be studied and solved by means of using the decision theory and the political game theory as an integral part of it.

### 3. Decision Theory and Security Studies

The process of decision-making could follow individual and collective models of rational choice. The choice-making agent is a leader in the set of alternatives (options) available and has full or relatively-limited information about possible conditions in the world. Individual decisions are oriented to the choosing of an option with maximal value of utility. But the realization of selfish strategies of an individual in a given game situation could not lead mechanically, to attainment of collective utility. This fact makes up the gist of the so-called Paradox of Social Choice. In the case of collective decisions-making it requires to apply specific strategies, in which certain efforts could be combined to get to a stable result. These strategies can be corporative, when they attain utility for certain coalition of participants in a rival clash, or cooperative ones, leading to a consensual outcome in favoring everybody. Not only individual, but also common interests are at stake in the solution of problems and the overcoming of crises of security, and joint efforts for crises factors' overcoming are needed. Subject of choice are: allies, strategies for crisis overcoming, aims pursued and means used.

Today, the analysis of decision-making must lead to practical conclusions and advices in the solution of topical problems of the security of states and societies, and of mankind as a whole.<sup>[10]</sup> In preceding decades this idea has led to a remarkable growth of interest in the possible applications of the decision theory and game theory to political relations and security studies, with attention focused on the problems of deterrence through a balance of power in the era of arms race and the solution of conflicts in international relations. That was a natural approach in the era of the „Cold War” and global confrontation. At that time there existed no theoretical efforts to evolve a comprehensive theory of security crises at different levels. Such efforts have now become particularly relevant in the light of changes in the international order, after the end of the Two Camps confrontation and the beginning of a new era of insecurity.

A serious debate about the role of formal methods, developed by the theories of social choice, in studies of security in international relations was reflected on the pages of the journal „*International Security*”, issued the MIT Press, in 1999. Key positions in it are defined in the book „*Rational Choice and Security Studies*”<sup>[11]</sup>. The main challenge there comes from St. Walt; he speaks about a lack of formal methods' heuristic potentiality to analyze real worldwide problems, problems of politics and security. He speaks about impossibility to establish their empirical validity. His opponents emphasize the importance of: theoretical accuracy, coherency and logical consistency of formal methods, making it

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[10] Bouzov, V. (2009). Vzemane na reshenia pri krizi na sigurnostta [Decision-Making in Security Crises].

[11] Brown, M. et. al. (eds.) (2000). *Rational Choice and Security Studies*. Stephen Walt and his Critics; Walt, St. (2000). Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies. In: Brown, M. et al. (Eds.), *Rational Choice and Security Studies*. Stephen Walt and his Critics, (pp. 1-45). Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.

possible to solve problems of security through an *ad hoc* approach. Niou and Ordeshook justifiably adduce the fact that „originality in formal analysis does not reside, moreover, in the mere derivation of some result” and say that Walt has not understood how „the methods whereby formal and empirical analyses complement each other in any real ongoing scientific enterprise”<sup>[12]</sup>. Each one of the rational choice theorists apply these methods and interpret results differently. The formal methods indicated offer precisely justified instruction on how to develop a variety of interpretations in the search for new theoretical decisions.

The decision theory and the game theory have several advantages as methodological instruments in the analysis of security problems. The possibility to present, in a structured view, each choice situation and to apply qualitative methods to the evaluation of available alternatives with possible outcomes are factors leading to the finding of relatively grounded decisions. The simplified model of human behavior, in which the latter is considered as oriented to searching for maximal utilities, and economic choice is connected with the political one, and features a new integrative approach to the essence of ‘the sociality’; it does not exclude ‘the subjective realm’ as opposed to Marxism. The instrumental concept of rationality, explicated in logical models of decision-making, reflects not only the spirit of capitalism, but also new values of scientism of our epoch, dominated by the development of information and communicative technologies. They foster a relatively utopian idea about automation of human choice and transfer of responsibility for it on „thinking machines”. The game model of social and political interactions, presented as rival clash or cooperation in the distribution and re-distribution of certain resources, allows revealing of some of their material content and formal features.

The content of them, depending of political activities and activities of overcoming security crises, is an important reason for the attachment of such type of methodological importance to the decision theory. Such activities are collective ones in nature and are associated with the combination of individual interests in the search for a common result in the interest of all or certain dominant alliance. They materialize powerful set of hierarchical relations, expressed in institutional rules.

Illustrated below is the possibility of applying the theory of decisions to the selection of a political strategy of building up a more effective system of international security. Political relations – international ones in particular, can be modeled as game interactions in which there are certain strategies of pursuing success or profit. The interests of the parties in the game are opposed to each other, boiling down to the allocation of resources, whereby a participant seeks to maximize profits. Crises in international relations often become long-term conflicts, without a solution, visible and acceptable to the parties. One could well say that in such circumstances, efforts to overcome crises often rely on solutions such as the ones conjured up in uncertainty and ambiguity of information.

World history of the last decade shows that after the „Cold War” the world has not become a more secure place. The system of international security inherited from that era is unable to overcome regional conflicts and new threats to mankind. Alternatives are: unipolar world with a monopoly of power-imposed solution to global conflicts, or multipolar world, based on the balance of power and consensus in the common interests of guaranteeing security.

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[12] Niou, E., Ordeshook, P. (2000). Return of the Luddites. In: Brown, M. et al. (Eds.), *Rational Choice and Security Studies. Stephen Walt and his Critics* (pp.78-80). Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.

The accepted orientation to the model of making collective decisions by proxy appears to lead to negative consequences for the insecure world. A proxy can be perceived of as an agent managing or coordinating collective efforts: once he has made decisions on behalf of all, no one can play solo. There is a strong requirement that a „proxy’s choices” could be „other-person or *socially* grounded”<sup>[13]</sup>. But there are no guarantees that the actual proxy options meet the interests of its constituents, or pupils who have authorized it. Today there exist a widespread view that the „New World Order” of dominance of one superpower, the U.S., committed to settling the world conflicts with power intervention - is not a permanent security guarantee. Unless the U.S., NATO and EU assume the role of proxy in situational coalitions created under their control. Examples of this approach are the crises in the Balkans<sup>[14]</sup>, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In all of them there seems exist a gap between the proxy benefit and benefit of others involved, when it is not possible to reach a solution of the conflict acceptable to all parties. Ambitions of regional leaders to resist imposed power and to realize their own decisions in their respective region, spell out growth of volatility work.

The above said can be illustrated by the failures of global leaders to reach an acceptable agreement at all levels to take common measures against the currently ongoing global financial crisis. Each of the major players in it is looking for individual salvation, led by corporate interests. The same could be said about programs to combat poverty and ease up debt burdens of developing countries, about efforts to achieve sustainable, steady development, etc. The desired consensus in Copenhagen in 2009 has failed, because of the selfishness of the developed countries. Corporate interests and conflicts always lead to such negative results.

The model of choice according to dominating option<sup>[15]</sup>, offers more possibilities for achievement of effective decisions. One option here is dominant for decision-makers, if they prefers its outcome to be the outcome of each other option, anyway other participants to act; or he prefers it in a certain context of their actions, while remaining indifferent to other options. If such option is not available, and if ambiguity exists, an agent might make a choice as per a rationalizable possibility, dominating in a current situation. A choice made in chime with a dominant option, is determined by attitudes and principles of lasting value. Most often than not it leads to a decision finding an equilibrium (balance) in the game. It is clear that, when the balanced possibilities are more than one, a choice can be justified by value arguments. T. Schelling has such a problem in his „*The Strategy of Conflict*”<sup>[16]</sup>.

This model suggested allows the formation of coalitions based on a limited consensus among several parties. It could be said that this is the sole realistic road to the finding of solutions in the now raging global financial crisis, to the overcoming of poverty and the ecological crisis by means of reducing emissions, with due respect for the interests of developing countries. The choice of a dominant option postulates an option of finding equilibrium or cooperative decisions, acceptable to each party; they do not make their status worse. In the context of international relations the imposition of such a model of management and settlement of crises calls for overcoming of the unipolar insecure world

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[13] Shick, Fr. (1997). Making Choices. A Recasting of Decision Theory, 113.

[14] Bouzov, V. (2001). Der Balkan – Ein Zusammenstoß von Kulturen oder die Konfrontation von Zivilizationen. In Angelova, P. Veichtbauer, J. (Hrsg.) *Pulverfass Balkan. Mythos oder Realität*, Internationales Symposium (pp.187-195). Rörig Universitätsverlag.

[15] Shick, Fr. (1997). Making Choices. A Recasting of Decision Theory, 110-121.

[16] Schelling, T. (1980). *The Strategy of Conflict*, 2 edition, Harvard University Press.



and emergence of new leaders, in the ranks of existing global opposition. In economic terms, such perspectives are taking shape in China, the EU and Russia, also in some new unions as the Shanghai Organization and the BRIC countries.

Security in such a world would be based not only on a balance of forces, but also on value-motivated consensus around common interests.

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12. Niou, E., Ordeshook, P. (2000). *Return of the Luddites*. In: Brown, M. et al. (Eds.), *Rational Choice and Security Studies. Stephen Walt and his Critics* (pp.78-80). Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.
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14. Schelling, T. (1980). *The Strategy of Conflict*, 2 edition, Harvard University Press.
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