INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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Summary

War and armed conflict has seriously affected the living conditions of a vast number of people in a very negative fashion throughout history. The study of security was initiated as a way to overcome or reduce the consequences of armed conflict. Thus, the importance of international security and its study cannot be underestimated. If one is trying to improve the living conditions of all the peoples of the earth, a very important aspect to consider is the prevention of conflict. That is the basic premise of this article.

Throughout the article the development of international security and its study will be discussed. Two main lines of study will be followed. First, the empirical and historical aspects will be presented. The focus here will be on the twentieth century, thereby founding the basis for the latest historical period. Second, the theoretical and conceptual developments in the discipline will be accounted for. It is the aim of the article that by following these two interconnected lines of study the whole field of international security will be explored. To conclude the article some perspectives on international security that might hold the promise for a more peaceful world are outlined.

1. Introduction

Even though the usage and the meaning of the term "international security" today is a relatively new one, the term covers subjects that have been of importance with regards to the living conditions of people throughout history. Stability in general and peace in particular have, throughout history, been the aspirations of many. Unfortunately, this has for long periods of time not been the case. War has always brought with it immense human suffering and seriously deteriorated living conditions. Thus, focus on war and peace, or on international security, can be said to be of great importance. International security is of great value as a quality that should characterize the world we live in, and as such it plays an important role in connection to the *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems*. Because only the absence of armed conflict creates the necessary precondition

to pursue the policies that can facilitate the development and enhancement of the other systems and mechanisms that facilitate life here on earth.

This article will explore the term "international security" along two main lines of study, and through these two lines an overview of the concept will manifest itself. On the one hand the historical and empirical development in international security will be presented, especially as it concerns itself with important historical events and periods, and how international security was perceived and explored during these periods, leading up to a characterization of the conditions for international security today. On the other hand the focus of the second part of the article will be on the theoretical development in the study of international security, as well as how the discipline has developed: on what insights it has identified. Finally, the latest theoretical developments will be presented. Towards the end of the contribution some perspectives will be presented, in relation to the empirical and theoretical development, on how thinking about security can contribute substantially towards the realization of genuine sustainable development.

2. International security: past and present

2.1. New forms of international security

International security has taken new forms in the twenty-first century. The concept of international security as security among states belongs to the twentieth century. Threats are no longer primarily coming from states. Threats are coming from ethnic groups obsessed by hypernationalism, from criminal gangs, *mafiosi* governance, from epidemics, AIDS, terrorism, dangerous food, from poverty, from economic mismanagement, from over-population, from failed states, from flows of refugees, and, most importantly, from pollution and the effects of pollution, the irrigation and destruction of nature, and the diversification of nature. The victims of the new threats are primarily the single individual (individual or human security), society (societal security), and the globe (global security). The physical and economical survival of the individual is threatened. The survival of societies is threatened, as concerns identity and coherence. The survival of the world as we know it is threatened in the long-run. For the first time in history there is a common, global awareness of the necessity of fighting for the sustainability of the globe.

One important precondition is the fact that the world more than ever in history has become one. The old slogan from the beginning of the cold war, "one world or none," is now relevant in a new, broad understanding taking in new dimensions: globalization, internationalization, transnationalism, interdependence, and integration. This implies that a world dominated by fragmentation, separatism, disintegration, hypernationalism, religious or ethnic fanaticism, isolationism, and self-sufficiency is threatening in itself. The only way to secure the world and maintain the sustainability of the globe is to support and emphasize the notion: "One world or none."

The good news is that the structural and political conditions for the realization of the one world concept are better than ever. Never before in history has there been a common, international acceptance by almost all the world's countries of common,

general global norms. These norms are democracy, a market economy, human rights, and personal freedom. The interpretation of these norms is different in different countries, and only few, often referred to as the rogue states, are not in agreement. It is, however, a fact that officially almost all states adhere to these international norms, and that they are inclined to follow them. Why is this so? They are following not necessarily in the "believing" sense, but in the "copying" sense, meaning that countries following these norms are often doing well in the international system. It simply pays – internationally, as well as domestically – to follow these norms. The bad news, however, is that the forces of antiglobalism, hypernationalism, isolationism, and hyper-religionism are still at work.

2.2. The concept of security

As indicated, "security" as a concept and as a phenomenon at the end of the cold war has taken on new forms. There are new security agendas, new security manifestations, and new rules of the game for security policy. How to explain and comprehend security as part of international relations in the so-called new world order?

Security is a highly contested concept. Is it at all possible to use it as a scholarly concept? Security is a word in common use, used in relation to a wide variety of personal and collective activities and conditions. One can distinguish between security in normal daily activities (job, economy, sex, transport, food), security for positive, desirable conditions (democracy, freedom, prosperity, development, a good life), and security against negative conditions (war, pollution, crime, all kinds of threats).

In a way we have three different realms for the term "security." First, the broad, day-to-day use of the word, referring to a position aspired to: of being safe, secure, protected. Second, the political use of the word, referring to political actions, processes, or structures that can secure the safety of a political unit. In the political sphere the term "security" is used as a political tool, for example, to provide a certain phenomenon with a specific priority by placing it in the realm of high politics. Finally, "security" can be used as an analytical concept to identify, describe, understand, explain, or even predict phenomena in the general social realm; phenomena such as "security policy," "security-policy interaction," or "security institutions and structures."

A significant change in the political use of the term "security" was, however, the invention of the concept of security policy. The United States, as the most important unit in the international system, was the initiator. In 1947 the US administration introduced the National Security Council, which became a model for several countries around the world. This also involved the introduction of a new concept, "security policy." Now it became possible for states, in linguistic terms, to conduct or pursue a security policy. Security policy was more than defense policy, more than military policy, more than a policy aimed at being prepared for war. Security policy also aimed at avoiding war. Security policy encompassed internal, domestic security, economic-development policy, and policy for influencing the international system so as to create a peaceful environment, regionally as well as globally, including foreign aid to developing countries. A famous example is the statement from Robert McNamara, the

former US Secretary of Defense, that "security is development." Security policy became an important tool for individual nation states to further their national interests by attempting to influence the international system. The pursuit of international security policy was the task of the United Nations (UN), which lost much of its influence due to the East–West confrontation.

In this way, during the cold war, the political notion of security was extended, from referring primarily to matters related to defense and the military, such as the avoidance of military aggression, to dealing with economic, political, and societal matters, domestic as well as international. The original, narrow UN conception of international security was based on the fact that the UN was the continuation of the victorious wartime alliance, which perceived aggression based on hyper-nationalism as the main reason for the outbreak of the Second World War. The UN was to be the tool for avoiding any repetition. The cold war, however, changed the international setting completely.

2.2.1. Security after the cold war

With the end of the cold war in 1989–91, confrontation disappeared and partnership took over: bipolarity was replaced by unipolarity. This implied a new security agenda.

On the global level hard security remained, but internationally, major wars were now fought in an asymmetrical manner, that is, between the only remaining superpower, the United States, supported by its associates, partly on behalf of international society, against international lawbreakers like Iraq and the Taliban regime. For the first time ever major wars (the Gulf War and the Afghanistan anti-terror war) were fought by forces authorized by what could be called "international society," that is, the UN Security Council acting on behalf of all UN member states in matters of "international peace and security." The Kosovo War did not get international society's full support, but was tacitly accepted afterwards. On the global and regional level, the "old" extended security agenda from the golden days of détente has returned; now, however, with the addition of at least four important "new" issue areas of security. First, societal security, thanks to the emergence of new or renewed political units based on nationalism or ethnicity, which may cause waves of refugees. Second, individual security, due to renewed emphasis on human rights and international crime. Third, security for the human body, against worldwide epidemics, pollution of food, and the lack of food. Finally, "new technology security," due to threats to the vulnerable IT systems, important of course only for technologically-advanced countries. As a consequence of the end of the cold war, geopolitics that refers to borders and proximity has returned; these dimensions now matter more than they did during the cold war, when political identity was related to the broad East–West division. At the same time a global cyberspace is at work.

So, in the new international system, with only one superpower, the security agenda has changed dramatically. The old cold war security debate continues between the "narrowers" and the "wideners," that is, those who see security as hard, military security, and those who claimed that as all events were based on conflicting structures,

everything is security, but is now less relevant. Most scholars admit that the new international system and the new organization of world order have given rise to a broadening of the security agenda, and to new analytical concepts to identify, analyze, and explain the political impact of this agenda.

2.2.2. Six levels of security actors

So, how can we deal with the complex problem of security in the new international system? In order to establish a general understanding of the analytical concept of security we would like to introduce a simple model (see Table 1). It is not our purpose to provide a new framework, rather the opposite: traditional dividing lines are re-used and re-combined.

A useful and rewarding exercise is to distinguish between six levels of security, each defined by the security actors that at the same time are victims of the security-related threats at that level:

1. Security for the individual (individual security).
2. Security for the social group, the community, "nation," organized national or ethnic entity (societal security).
3. Security for the state or "nation," in the US terminology (national security).
4. Security for the region, that is, a coherent security region, not necessarily one based on proximity (regional security).
5. Security for the society of nations or what could be referred to as "international society," consisting of all, or most states in the world (international security).
6. Security for the globe, meaning "Spaceship Earth" or the planet (global security).

How do these different levels of security, defined according to political units functioning as threats, as well as victims to threats, relate to each other?

How to map the vital threats to the six levels of security coming from the same six levels of security? The fundamental assertion is that the all-over general threat deals with the simple existence of the political unit in question. As to the specific vital threats to the six levels of units, the basic claims are the following.

To the single individual the vital threat seems to be that to physical and economic survival. It has to do with coercion and violence in physical and economic terms. You cannot be a "political man" if you are heavily victimized by these threats. To the national society the vital element is identity, which is the basic constructive element of society. Without identity there is no society. To the state, the vital threat is to sovereignty. Without sovereignty, a socio-political entity cannot be recognized as a state. For the region, stability and coherence are the main factors. Again, there is no regional organization without these vital elements. To the international society, a threat to the system's permanence, to the way that generally recognized norms and rules can exist in a basically anarchic order, is the essential one. Finally, to the globe as a kind of security unit, sustainability is considered to be the vital factor exposed to threats.

2.2.3. The individual as victim: threats to physical and economic survival

To the single individual there are vital threats coming from practically all security actors: from other individuals, from society, from the state, from the region and from the globe. It is interesting to note that according to statistics of criminal acts, life-and-death threats from person to person most often occur inside families or close groups. The most dangerous place seems to be the home. However, vital threats could also come from a societal, collective actor. Think, for instance, of a situation in former Yugoslavia where a gun pointing at an individual will be fired if the answer to the question "Are you Serb, Croat, or Bosnian?" is wrong. State-based vital threats are exemplified in the actions that the secret police in a dictatorship direct towards innocent citizens, for example, the Gestapo-style 5 a.m. arrest.

Threats from regions can also, in specific cases, be of the vital kind. The precondition here is that the region is able to act through an effective organization like the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Only in rather rare cases has international society posed a vital threat to single individuals. Quite specific circumstances, such as an effective, global collective security policy have to be in play. Collective security is a very rare phenomenon. The last occasion of this was the Gulf War in 1990–1, where individual Iraqi citizens were exposed to military attacks. Also, the international society will pose an indirect threat in the case that it is severely weakened or is breaking down, and sheer anarchy is reigning. Lastly, the global threat: In this case, the individual will be extremely exposed as victim. Just to mention a few examples: natural catastrophes, epidemics, future possible threats from outer space, and severe pollution.

2.2.4. Society as the victim: threats to identity

Society will not be a victim of threats coming from the individual. Even in very extreme cases one can hardly imagine a terrorist representing only him/herself or a small violent group, threatening the existence or the identity of a whole society. This threat relationship is weak. A threat to identity from a competing society is, however, probable, and may be seen as vital. An example is the competition and conflict in Italy during unification in the nineteenth century over which of the many Italian "nations" should dominate the new state. Likewise, for a national society, a threat from a state can be vital. Examples are numerous: Turkey to the Kurds, Russia to the Chechens, and England in the past to the Welsh or Scots. The regional actor can sometimes be a highly relevant threat to a "nation's" identity. One has only to consider the possible threat of the EU to the identity of individual member states. The same goes for the impact that NATO had during the cold war as it attempted to construct a Weidentity superior to, and in some cases at the cost of, national identity.

In a similar way international society could act as the source of threats to identity. International society as represented in the League of Nations, had, as a very important objective, the principle of "the self-determination of peoples." This principle resulted in a considerable increase in the number of nation states in Europe, thus solving the identity problem for many nations that became states. At the same time, however,

multinational, constructed identities were challenged. The principle of self-determination had no high priority in the new formation of international society as it emerged from the Second World War, that is, in the UN. Rather, the opposite became the norm: The accidental splitting of nations (primarily Germany), the removal of huge populations, and the recognition of borders that took no consideration of national affiliations. This constituted a threat to societal identity. Also the international society in the new world order can threaten national or ethnic society, identity through international, humanitarian intervention. As regards global threats, societal identity is not explicitly a victim. There is only an indirect threat to society.

2.2.5. The state as victim: threats to sovereignty

Assessing the state as a victim of vital threats, which will primarily concern sovereignty, one can assert that the individual does not pose any essential threat for the state, any more than for society. A society can constitute a certain threat, especially where state identities are weak, if not absent, and national/societal identities are very strong, as, for example, was the case for Eastern European states inside the Soviet Empire during the cold war. Here the problem was that the communist regime, in possession of state sovereignty, had very limited legitimacy.

In this way the national society constituted a threat to the state. On three occasions this situation led to violent conflict: in 1953 in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), in 1956 in Hungary, and in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The threat relationship between state and state is a vital part of the anarchic international structure. Again, a regional threat can be in play, as, for example, was the case for Serbia during NATO's military operation in Kosovo in 1999. It can also be seen as a major threat where international society is an actor, as, for example, in the few cases where the collective security system of the UN is at work. The precondition for this sort of threat is that willing and able states should act on behalf of the international society in conducting war to save a victim of war, a state attacked by an international lawbreaker (for example, the Gulf War, with Iraq as the lawbreaker). As regards global threats, the situation is close to that of the national society: The state as a state is not explicitly threatened by globally-oriented events.

2.2.6. The region as victim: threats to stability and coherence

Insofar as the region, or rather the regional organization, is a victim, threats will mainly relate to stability in the region and the coherence of the regional organization. Individual and societal actors will play minor roles. States, however, will be able to pose a threat to regional stability and coherence. This involves, primarily, major and great powers, including superpowers, as, due to their influence on the salient environment, they are to a large degree able to construct and deconstruct regions and sub-regions, and in this way seriously affect the existence or non-existence of regional organizations. Regions will be able to threaten the coherence of other regions, but not on the scale of great power or superpower activities. The international society can indirectly have a threatening impact on regions, primarily due to weakening or the breakdown of the international society. Global threats will have an influence in the last analysis.

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