

# ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE SECURITY – VULNERABLE PUBLIC GOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF A NONPOLAR SECURITY ENVIRONMENT. SHIFTS IN THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY

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*It is important to start our assumptions from the fact that, from some economists' point of view, most of the cases which were considered examples of actual public goods were found to be wrong. So, what we want to find out is whether, considering the fact that security must not be provided only through private means, we can still talk about an equal distribution of it, or it has shifted to a selective distribution of security. In order to answer the question whether security can still be provided by the state in an equal distributional system, we will use it as a premise and try to prove it. Beginning with the theoretical characteristics of a public good and with the definitions of the present concept of security we will try to find out if one can still speak of security as a public good, and moreover, as a global public good.*

*Key words: public goods, global public good, security*

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## **1. Current security environment characteristics - the globalization of insecurity**

Sustainable development of a state is meant to combine economic growth with preservation of the natural human health as a prerequisite for ensuring the equilibrium of systems that brings about the existence/operation itself of society and the maintenance of a stable security environment. Therefore, any modification to any of these components leads to changes and alterations of the whole process of sustainable development. Events occurring worldwide aimed at national and international safety and security have determined a new approach to national security, demonstrating how vulnerable are certain areas or sectors that provide essential services to all areas of social life.

By analyzing the international security environment, it is noted that many concepts have changed, many developments have been altered after all terrorist attacks of this decade. This raises a crucial question: 'Which are the characteristics of the world today?' Nowadays, the international environment is characterized by the extension of the influence of globalization in increasingly more activity areas, and this implies, as I said above, a redefinition of all concepts that until now seemed well founded.

In this respect, debating security, Timofte (2005) showed that 'extremely fast current changes require responses adapted to the multidimensional reality of security, removal of barriers between different measures of the intelligence services, in order to allow cross action, integrating all its dimensions (diplomatic, military, economic, socio-cultural, humanitarian, environmental and other), as well as the progressive adjustment of all types of societies'.

Also, in a paper on security standards, Muresan and George (2005) state that "events such as March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004 (terrorist attacks in Madrid), August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (USA left in the dark because of

a power failure) and September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (terrorist attacks on the WTC) have become benchmarks in the process of assessment and identification of new requirements relating to the priority of reforming the whole concept of security and its management at the individual to international level .(...) An initial issue dealt with only by the military sector, security tends to be a common good, being characterized by the phenomena affecting existing goods in a market.”

In this context it should be given greater attention to these areas of interest which directly concerns civil society, but also national security, given the extent and negative consequences that may result from disruption of the functioning of these industries or sectors. “The world will not be the same” was one of the most frequently used phrases after the tragic events of September 2001 in the USA. And indeed, now, after almost 9 years, we can say with certainty that the world has changed. First of all the principles that the whole world was based on have changed, principles that in the last decade of the XXth century – that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the Soviet Union – have seen an expansion of democratic regimes in the world, the flourishing of globalization, legitimization of the rule of law and human rights. Also, the individuals’ perception on the state's capacity to protect them has changed, they acknowledging the increased vulnerability of the citizen, of the state and of the security systems in general.

Therefore, it was clearly stated that the lack of control over the complex process of globalization has profoundly negative effects on ‘this interconnected world (Sarcinschi, 2006), globalization being seen as an amplification factor of insecurity. Also, because these systemic changes, ‘the classical array of security proposed by the Watson Institute for International Studies specialists<sup>71</sup>, is rather an array of globalization, insecurity, whereas illustrates how the risks, dangers and threats spread from the individual to global level and vice versa’ (Sarcinschi, 2006).

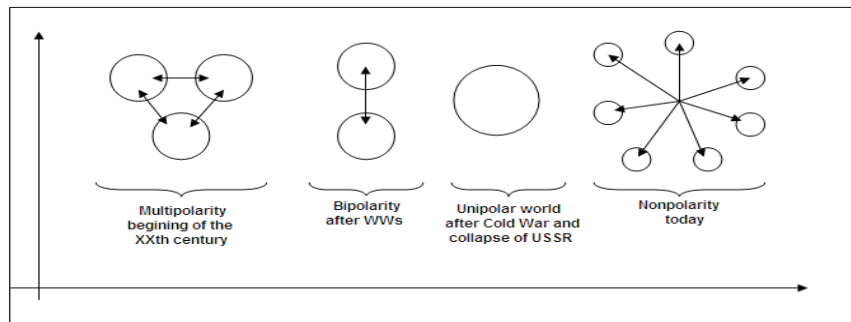
### ***1.1. Nonpolarity – characteristic of the current security environment***

Haass (2008), in Foreign Affairs, said that the main feature of international relations in this century is nonpolarity: a world dominated not by one, two or more states, but by the dozens of actors with different power. This trend is in itself a profound break from previous eras. In the first part of the XXth century we have a multipolar distribution of power, followed by the rise of a system of international relations dominated by two superpowers (the bipolar era). The Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union announced the beginning of unipolarity, an international system dominated by a superpower – the United States.

At first glance, today's world seems to be multipolar. The major powers (China, EU, India, Japan, Russia and USA), combined, comprise about half of world population, 75% of global GDP and 80% of the defense expenditures. However, appearances are deceptive. The world today differs substantially from what we call a classic multipolar system, because we see an unprecedented dispersal of power to various power centers, of which only a minority are states. Indeed, an emblem of the new world is that nation-states lost their monopoly on power and ability to influence global dynamics alone. The authority and power of the states is now shared with the main actors of globalization: global and regional organizations, NGOs, international corporations, media, paramilitary organizations, cities (New York, Shanghai), political parties, organized crime cartels, NGOs. In the era of nonpolarity, power and influence are becoming less interacted.

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<sup>71</sup> Watson Institute for International Studies, <http://www.watsoninstitute.org>.



The nonpolar world is a consequence of globalization. Globalization reinforces nonpolarity in two ways: a large part of cross-border flows take place outside the control of sovereign governments, and often without their knowledge. In this respect, globalizations dilute the influence of major powers. Likewise, globalization increases the power of non-state actors: energy exporters, terrorist organizations, multinational companies. It is increasingly clear that to be today's most powerful state does not mean to hold a virtual monopoly on power. It is very easy for individuals and private groups to acquire and to exercise substantial power.

The international security environment is marked by developments and major changes taking place globally, being characterized by a relatively high degree of instability, unpredictability, as well as by the expression of risks and new, asymmetric threats, thus emphasizing the need to redefine the whole concept of security and proper management of potential threats, both internationally and at the individual level. Thus, the focus moves on human security<sup>72</sup>, with an agreement regarding that security should be considered from a broad perspective, taking into account factors other than the military. But this expansion entails risks, namely that the security sector can become too powerful if it is active in the society's demilitarized areas, or may not have expertise to address these challenges. (EURISC Foundation 2004) And in these circumstances, can we speak of security as a public good?

## 2. Public goods and global public goods – definitions and characteristics

In the classical theoretic school, public goods are characterized as being non-exclusionary and non-rival, and can be also externalized. Perhaps, as Kaul (2000) stated, the easiest way to define a public good is to examine it in opposition with a private one. Private goods are typically traded in markets. Buyers and sellers meet through the price mechanism. If they agree on a price, the ownership of the good can be transferred. Thus private goods tend to be exclusionary, as they have clearly identified owners, and also tend to be rival, as, usually, only one individual has property rights over them at one time.

However, not all the goods are consumed similarly. The question that rises is: could there be exclusion without rivalry for some goods? And the answer is a positive one, although it is quite difficult to provide perfect examples of such goods. So, public goods have just the opposite qualities to those of the other goods. They are non-exclusionary and non-rival in consumption. In other words, the concept of public good refers to the fact that these goods belong to everybody in common, so that the consumption of a good by one individual does not affect the consumption of the same good by another individual - Samuelson (1954).

The classical example is that of a light house that is meant to guide the ships' crew to sail safely to the land. So, any ship that is near the light house and can see its light can use it, without paying anything and without excluding anyone else from using it. Still, some economists reject the idea

<sup>72</sup> UNDP introduces for the first time in a report of 1994 the concept of 'human security', that was developed subsequently. It is suggested to change the concept of security in 2 ways: from an increased approach on territorial security to highlighting individuals' security, and from a security based on weapons to a security based on sustainable human development (<http://www.undp.org/hdro/hdrs/1994/english/94overview.pdf>)

of public goods. For example, Fudulu (2003), speaking of this classical example, argues that if two or more fishermen are approaching the same lighthouse, they are using in fact different goods, because ‘there is at least one aspect of consumption which is different. They might be using the same building and other technical facilities, the same power, the same personnel, but they cannot use the same location to watch the lighthouse. Fisherman A’s location cannot be employed by fisherman B. The area from which the consumption of the good can be performed (which is a fundamental aspect in this peculiar case) has shrunk and it will shrink as the number of fishermen increases; the lighthouse is less and less “good”. In fact, we can say that we are dealing with different goods.’

In spite of these theories, whether there are public goods or whether individuals are left only with “the choice of a distributional system, that is, equal distribution (for what economists call public goods) or selective distribution (for what economists call private goods)”, as considers Fudulu (2003), economically speaking, public goods have the following characteristics: *non-rivalry*, that is a public good is non-rival in consumption because the margin cost associated with this good by another person is zero and the variable costs remain constant no matter the number of individuals using it and *non-exclusiveness*, that signifies that technically it is impossible to exclude a person from benefiting from a public good through a divisibility mechanism, *i.e.* the price.

Based on these characteristics, one can ask where public goods come from, that is who provides them, because, once they exist, they are there for all to enjoy. Economists such as Fudulu (2003) say that it is because of these special features of the public goods that markets cannot produce them, or at least not in sufficient quantity, hence compensatory state actions are required. So, as there are situations when market failure phenomenon appears (noticed through the existence of externalities), the state intervenes in order to correct this situation through the provision of public goods that can satisfy the demand, facilitate the development and promote social cohesion. As we have said previously, this phenomenon appears when the market itself can not allocate the resources efficiently.

We must add that economists define *externalities* as instances where an individual or company’s actions have economic consequences for others for which there is no compensation. One important distinction is between positive and negative externalities. Instances of the latter are most commonly discussed, such as the environmental pollution caused by a plant, which may have impacts on the value of neighboring homes. The basic conclusion is that, in the absence of government intervention or other solutions to internalize the externalities, negative externalities are over-provided and positive externalities are under-provided.

As any kind of good, public goods are produced and require resources. So it is often the most rational strategy for private actors to let others produce them and seek to enjoy these goods without contributing to their production. This is perhaps the greatest dilemma that public goods face. Without some sort of collective action mechanism, they risk being under-provided. Conversely, without collective action, public goods would be over-provided – and Kaul (2000) mentions here “public bads”, such as pollution, noise, street crime and so on.

For a long time, during discussions on public goods, there was the assumption that they have exclusively a national nature. But in the present reality, the new challenges that our world faces, and we mean here the systemic changes generated by the irreversible globalization process, have imposed a reshaping of the concept of public goods. Globalization is associated with increased cross-border flows that include goods, services, labor and financial capital. We can no longer speak only of public goods at a national level, as globalization has affected this concept, too, and led to the emergence of *global public goods*.

Based on the same theoretical aspects presented above, we can characterize global public goods as goods whose benefits reach across borders, generations and population groups. So global public goods provide non-rival and non-exclusionary benefits to people living in different countries. The only difference from the national public goods is that, if at the national level states

often step in to facilitate the collective action needed to avoid over-production or under-provision of public goods, at the international level there is no such institution. Yet, as history has shown, if global public goods do correspond to national needs and interests, states manage to reach agreement on coordinated action.

### **3. Security as a global public good**

International developments thus led to a reassessment of the concept of "security" and to the need to redefine it. The Challenges induced by globalization, its overlapping with the trends towards regionalization and fragmentation, generate new tensions and new risk factors. Great disparities in the economic development, which increasingly emphasizes within conditions of unprecedented technological progress, discriminatory access to education and health, vital life resources, information and knowledge cause serious social crisis, generate frustration and raise discontent. With economic globalization, social crises are accompanied, not once, by identity crises, generating unexpected violence.

International relations explain, traditionally, the concept of security through the concepts of power (supported by the disciples of the Realist School) and peace (associated to the disciples of the Idealist School). These concepts have governed all the aspects of national security until the 80's. Speaking of the security concept, Buzan (1991) pointed out that "this is a more fickle, sharp and useful approach to the international relations studies than power or peace". The current international situation advocates the revival of some geopolitical theories which consider globalization as a central component of national strategic power. Most citizens tend to define the risks to their security predominantly in domestic terms – from drug and people trafficking to terrorism, organized crime and state corruption. In the past, national security was considered "the nation's capacity to follow its national interests" (Hartland-Thunberg, 1982) or "the nation's capacity to hold out against foreign aggressions" (Giacomo, 1989). In others' point of view, national security was "that part of the governmental policy that has as objective the creation of national and international conditions favorable for the protection and extension of national values against real or potential enemies". (Trager and Simonie, 1973)

Nowadays, the concept of *security* has acquired different dimensions within the context of globalization, such as economical, political, ecological and military dimensions. Conventional military power has lost its role as an indicator of one state's power and as an institution able to dishearten a wide range of possible threats. According to Krell (cited in Ionescu, 1993), "military security no longer means ensuring territorial inviolability, but protecting the individuals and their daily life against military violence". Thus, national security became human security, focusing on the individual and the community.

Based on the theories of public goods, and on the definitions of security experts consider that *national security* is a *public good*, the citizen being the beneficiary of the state's efforts. The international organizations consider the concepts of security and also peace as being public goods. Moreover, with the outgoing process of development and globalization, both the United Nations Program for Development and the World Bank have also included these concepts as being global public goods. Why?, one can ask. Because, besides creating and preserving the equilibrium of the social and economic systems, another role of the state is that of protecting the interests of its citizens. For such purpose the national interests are defined as the totality of the common factors in the diversity of the particular purposes of the people, which refers to the present and future protection of the citizens, at the same time with the rational, efficient and sustainable use of the resources.

Buzan (1991) states that, in the context of the actual international system, security represents the ability of the state and society to defend the autonomy of its integrity and identity. Thus, based on the above, and even on Samuelson (1954), one can notice that the state's intervention in



regulating the economic order and ensuring the equilibrium of national systems in order to create and maintain a safe and stable security environment is perfectly justifiable.

### **Conclusion**

Non-rivalry and non-exclusiveness define public goods. However, because of the recent transformations and shifts in the international relations and in national policies, the concept of security tends not to be considered anymore as a public good, as it comprises the characteristics of rivalry and exclusiveness, if only we consider the problems the minorities encountered in the US after September 2001. To amend this, as security must be a state produced and provided good, the government should shift the focus from national defense to human security and must interact with the civilians in order to realize a compromise between ensuring national security and preserving human rights and liberties.

Although in the current international context, the contradiction between freedom and security has become undisputed at the practical level, we cannot say yet that this antithesis has a degree of artificiality in the sense that 'we cannot talk about the existence of a total security status, as meeting the objective and subjective conditions referring life and living conditions vary from one individual to another, from an international player to another' (Sarcinschi 2006). In this context, what is possible for someone, for someone may be objectionable, and hence the problems that occurred. In fact, the main question is 'how much people are willing to give of their rights and freedoms for an added security?'

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