

FUNDAMENTALS OF A THEORETICAL MODEL OF SMALL COUNTRY SECURITY

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Abstract: The issue of building a state security model is immanently related to the factors that influence foreign policy and security policy. This applies also to the criteria by which to classify a state as “small” using scientific methodology. This process requires serious scientific research, public and even political work, as well as participation in discussions where alternative opinions and assessments are presented, but also specific proposals for measures for establishing such a model. This article does not claim to answer all the questions but rather seeks to lift the “curtain” a little and provoke a discussion, in view of the enormous challenges the world faces in modern times.

Key words: international relations and politics, foreign policy, security policy, national security strategies, peace studies, interdisciplinary studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are several basic methodological prerequisites when trying to build a model in the field of foreign and security policy, as well as to determine the role and place of the so-called „small country” to guarantee its security in international relations. Not only from a theoretical point of view, but also from a purely practical and logical point of view, foreign and security policy is always associated with a certain country – it is always „nationally colored“ and that is why we are talking about US foreign policy, Russian foreign policy, foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, foreign policy of the Republic of Bulgaria, etc. From this point of view, the author's aspiration is to elaborate a theoretical model that applies to the general case, but can also be used for a specific country, in a specific region and compared to a specific immediate neighbor.

Each country has its own approach and national specifics in the conduct of foreign and security policy, it has its own strategy and tactics, as well as its own interests, which we can trace in historical dynamics, and starting from there to identify main trends, factors and actors that influence the entire process of relations of this country in the

international environment. The relationship between foreign policy, security policy and international policy, as well as the connection with domestic policy, should be studied and analysed in a wider context. These spheres interact and are in a complex interdependence, just as the state is immanently connected to a whole complex of factors that influence its development and determine its role and place on the international stage:

1. The geographical location of the state and its geopolitical and geostrategic importance;
2. The national interests and goals it sets for itself;
3. The national defence strategy, military plans and military potential;
4. Cultural and spiritual values, achievements and heritage;
5. The level of economic, political, intellectual and technological potential;
6. The aspiration to achieve a high standard of living and well-being of the population;
7. The level of development and achievements of science and scientific research;
8. The level of participation of civil society in political governance;
9. The demographic, social, ethnic, religious situation, etc.

2. APPROACHES TO BUILDING A THEORETICAL SECURITY MODEL

For a long period of time from the middle to the end of the twentieth century, security at the national level was associated with the protection of national borders and non-interference in internal affairs. It was considered generally accepted that the state could guarantee its security by maintaining a certain level of military readiness and by participating fully in one of the two political-military blocs - NATO or the Warsaw Pact. Considerations of ensuring national security generally dominated international security interests.

At the beginning of the twenty first century, however, the problem „security“ took on completely new dimensions. The need for a new, much broader approach to the security problem has come to the fore. Countries have become too interdependent, and a crisis or regional conflict immediately triggers responses and influences processes throughout the world. In modern conditions, there is more and more talk of common security, of global and regional arrangements to guarantee the national security of states. If we assume that “security” is a scientific category that is an integral part of the science of international relations [1], then its field should be studied both in relations between individual countries and in matters of the so-called “broadly defined security”. But also as part of the sphere of domestic politics and more specifically on issues that directly or indirectly affect security [2]. Similar areas, for example, are defence, intelligence, border control, ecology, industry and technology – they can be defined as directly affecting security. Other important areas such as: energy, education, demography, culture and the activities of individual social, racial, ethnic or religious groups and organizations also directly or indirectly affect security. In each of these areas, security issues may arise and

–, respectively, actions and measures may be taken to ensure security. The tools for this can be diplomacy, participation in international alliances and organizations, exchange of information, intelligence, counterintelligence, taking military action, etc. The specific activities in each of these areas represent a separate issue of concern on which the political elite, security experts and researchers focus their attention. Examples of problematic issues are: certain political, economic, ethnic, religious or racial problems; border and territorial disputes, crises and conflicts on different bases, etc.

Actions and measures to ensure the security of citizens and the state in the classic case depend exclusively on the government of the respective country – in this regard there are no principled or theoretical restrictions. Along with this, a country's membership in an international union or international organization must be taken into account. If we take the EU as an example, the shared responsibility between the EU and the Member States under the common foreign and security policy and the EU concept of security must be taken into account [3]. Obviously, today the field of security research and the formation and conduct of foreign and security policy is an interdisciplinary issue that is related to the science of international relations, but also to sciences such as sociology, political science, law, economics, history, social psychology, cultural studies, ecology, military science and many other fields [4].

From a methodological point of view, in the analysis of this issue, knowledge is needed about the structure of the political system of a country and about the ways of functioning of the legislative, executive and judicial power, as well as about the functions and responsibilities of the head of state. Depending on the peculiarities of political power, the system of institutions for conducting foreign and security policy is also built, the „paradigm of security“ is defined (for example), “to provide security to the nation”, “to provide security to the state”, “to ensure the security of the ruler”) and a control system is created that can be democratic but can be autocratic, one-party, religious, one-person, clan, etc.

3. THE SMALL COUNTRY – CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA/DETERMINANTS

When trying to build a security model of the small country, logically some questions arise, such as what is the historical experience of such countries and what are the criteria by which we can classify them as „small“. Here the debatable question arises, can we classify the Republic of Bulgaria as an example of a small country? The research ambition is provoked by the questions about the „explanatory factors“ of the concept of security of small countries. Answers are sought on: what the foreign and security policy should be; how to develop the relationship between „small“ and „large“ countries; what the relationship between small countries and regional and global security organizations should be; what are the most appropriate survival strategies for small countries, etc. [5].

An attempt for theoretical generalizations and assessments is made in [6] „The question of the politics of small countries and their security is part of the theoretical problematic of strength, alliances and integration in international relations, security studies, morphology, structure, functioning and management of the system of international relations“.

In the analysis of this issue, a quantitative limiter is proposed in the first place as to which country can be called a small –, for example, to have a population of up to 15 million people. It is necessary to assess that it is small countries that have such limited diplomatic and material resources that their leadership focuses mainly on preserving territorial integrity rather than pursuing global goals. Here we must also pay attention to the question that the size of the country matters when it relates to its immediate neighbours or to the region to which it belongs, i.e. the size of a country is an important variable.

The remaining criteria/determinants presented in comparative terms with a large country that is an immediate neighbour are:

- Military personnel/number of the armed forces (in comparative terms it should be 12:1 in favor of the large country);
- Military expenditure (23:1 in favour of the large State);
- Energy consumption (16:1 for the benefit of the large country);
- Production of iron and steel (14:1 for the benefit of the large country);
- Population (6:1 in favour of the large country);
- Urban population (8:1 in favour of the large country).

The theoretical model of criteria/determinants can be supplemented by several more factors without giving any comparative characteristic to the large country – immediate neighbour:

- Geographical location and area of the country;
- Gross domestic product (GDP);
- Total volume of military production with all the specifics of its specialization and traditions in this area; and also
- The availability of natural resources, and recently attention has also been paid to the availability of rare earth natural resources.

This methodology could be imposed in a comparative aspect, for example, between neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Turkey, as well as in the comparison between countries such as: Denmark and Germany; Poland and Russia; the Netherlands and Germany; South Korea and China, etc. The present study does not allow itself such a specific analytical comparison, because it would require a large scientific-theoretical and practical-applied resource, as well as the participation of a large number of researchers. In addition, it would also raise many questions, as well as a lively discussion about how countries are selected for comparison.

For the author, an important component in the construction of a concept of the security of the small country is the ability to direct research efforts to those problematic issues that have arisen in the historical development, dynamics and practice of small countries – usually they are related to their political, economic and physical survival in general and have stood out as a trend for a long period of time. So which country is small: It is a small state that recognizes that it cannot achieve security by using its own capabilities/resources [7].

That said we should bear in mind that this question is also subject to critical analysis when related to the other question – is there a modern country that can, with its abilities and resources, fully guarantee its security on its own? Even more so in the conditions of existence of nuclear weapons! In this sense, we would also refer to the Regions on the EU Security Union Strategy document of the European Commission, which is based on the understanding that everyone's security depends on the security of one Member State [8].

The questions become even more interesting when analysing and interpreting the historical layers and rich experiences of small countries that have had difficult and turning relations with their powerful neighbours. The problems also become extremely relevant when considered in the context of globalization in international relations, when the fate of small countries becomes increasingly dependent on modern trends in the world security agenda – to a much greater extent than on power disparities with the immediate big neighbour or other great power [5, p.50]. If we try to summarize, we mainly come to 5 essential aspects:

1. The status of neutrality and the resulting requirements (indicative trends are observed in this indicator – countries such as Sweden and Finland, for example, have seriously revised their long-standing status as neutral countries. On 7.03.2024. Sweden officially joined NATO and Finland joined the Alliance in the previous year 2023 – note author).

2. Relationships „dominance/subordination“ between „strong“ and „big“ and relatively „weaker“ and „small“ countries. Here, historical dynamics in similar relations come to the fore, and Bulgaria has „bitter“ experience in this direction.

3. The possibilities of small countries to join international security alliances. Here one can recall and analyse the whole process initiated after the end of the Second World War by the small Benelux countries, in their desire not to allow repeated aggression by Germany. As well as their consistent policy of creating a new Defence Alliance (NATO) to ensure their security.

4. The impact of integration within the EU on the security of small member states. Here you can make some interesting interpretations, for example, about the countries of the so-called Western Balkans.

5. The issues of military security and how small countries can guarantee it for themselves.

4. ATTEMPT FOR THEORETICAL GENERALIZATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATIONS

1. Small countries (*and we would add each country in principle* – T.K.), are responsible for their survival and of course for realizing conditions for their development. A small country must pursue a smart, wise, adequate and focused foreign and security policy, backed by quality diplomacy.

2. Factors that have a determining impact on the security of small states and exceed their capacity to address risks, threats and challenges in this area should be carefully analysed and monitored.

3. Some negative scenarios are also possible for the small country, when it may fall into a situation of overestimation or underestimation of certain factors, as well as fail to sufficiently mobilize its resources in solving significant problems in the field of foreign policy and security policy.

4. It is also possible to fall into a destructive nationalism, which will bring with it all the consequences that we observed, for example, in the collapse of the former Yugoslavia – country, an immediate neighbour of the Republic of Bulgaria.

According to a theoretical model developed by Olaf Knudsen, there are 6 key variables that summarize the interaction of external environmental factors and the role and responsibility of the small country in preserving its security [5, p.52]:

1. The strategic importance of the geographical location of the small country – according to the assessment of one or another leading great country.

2. The degree of tension between the leading great countries in the world.

3. The phase of the power (power cycle) in which the leading great country closest to the small country is located.

4. The historical experience of relations between the small country and the nearest great country.

5. The policy towards the small country of another(other), rival(s) great power(s).

6. The existence of multilateral frameworks for security cooperation that can stabilize the force disproportion.

Variable quantities need to be considered in unity, but the second and third quantities are key to the security of a small country. And this methodology could be used for the general case. This process is also influenced by the accumulated historical experience in the relationship between the small country and the nearest great power, but also between the small country and other centres of power in international relations. „When there have been dramatic periods and episodes in this story, the danger of simplistic interpretations of current security issues is greater than if these relationships were more mundane and unremarkable. It can also be said that the presence or absence

of trust in the great and strong neighbouring country on the part of the small country is highly dependent on historical experience. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that a hallmark of „neighbourly“ relations between small countries and a great country is dominance, and not infrequently violence, which does not lead to the establishment of trust between them. Therefore, the power disparities in the current modern situation do not improve due to reference to objective historical experience“ [5, p.55].

In analysing this issue, referring to and interpreting the history of foreign policy and international relations requires high standards, reflecting both the aspiration of small countries to prosperity, development and self-assertion, as well as, in parallel, a complete democratisation of the system of international relations. Because, throughout the twentieth century, and also at the beginning of the twenty first century, we observe huge deficits of democracy and cases of aggression and violence in international relations. Deficits of democracy and cases of aggression can be practically overcome if an overwhelming majority of small and medium-sized countries take an active foreign policy stance and assume their responsibility by contributing to the solution of problems and issues on the global and regional security agenda.

For small countries, but also for medium-sized and even great countries, the maxim applies that they must be able to find a balance between economic, military and political potential in realizing their foreign policy goals and interests – if they want to ensure their long-term historical development. Concentrating the state's efforts on only one of these elements leads to the emergence of serious problems and sometimes to the collapse of statehood.

5. CONCLUSION

An objective study to build a security model of the small country at the beginning of the twenty first century must be guided by several principled theoretical and methodological statements:

- A problematic and interdisciplinary approach to security issues nationally, regionally and globally;
- Affirming the understanding of „national“, „regional“ and „international“ security in a wider context and in their interconnectedness and interdependence;
- Defining national interests and foreign policy goals in tune with universal values and understandings of peaceful coexistence;
- Active participation of small countries in international security alliances and organizations in the implementation of the common foreign and security policy;
- Emphasis on solving problems and issues that can ensure sustainable development of the state.

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