

Defining security



Defining Security “ Security” comes from a broader subject referred to International Relations which is the study of all political cooperation that occurs between states that have their own government, international organizations with or without government influence, and some wealthy separate individuals. “ Security Studies concerns itself with a sub-set of those political interactions marked by their particular importance in terms of maintaining the security of actor” (Hough 2008: 2).

Depending on the emergency of security of an actor will depend how a government or country will act on the security measure. For example, concerns relating to health and rights of the people will be at top on the global political agenda compare to other events such as natural disasters or mass killings are rarely seen as security concerns. It might be of importance to the people that these events are happening to, but not to the people not being affected. There are four main paradigms of International Relations that affect issues in security.

Those paradigms are Realism, Pluralism, Marxism, and Social Constructivism. Realism is the idea that states should be self-centered, competitive, and should look after themselves and not trust any other states. The state should do anything within its reach to expand its power in wherever possible being in military or economic sectors in order to secure themselves and be at the top. Realists tend to favor governments that separate the high and low politics and best serve the national interest.

Low politics such as health issues, welfare, and other issues of that sort should be dealt at a domestic level and is separate from high politics, such as war. The idea of globalization in the 60's and 70's took International Relations

to a different perspective because not only did they have to deal with military power issues but now they had economic power issues to worry about. That's where Neo-Realism developed. Neo-realism still maintained the self-centered approach on the states but also included the idea to expand their powers beyond the sector of military and focus on to the state's economy.

In addition to Realism, another paradigm that affected issues in security was Pluralism. Pluralism was developed from a group of scholars that believed that Neo-realism had developed far enough from Realism. Pluralists believed that the pursuit of military power and economic power by a state, which was the idea derived from the thinking of Realism was too simple. " Pluralists, as the term implies, consider that a plurality of actors, rather than just states, exert influence on the world stage" (Hough 2008: 4).

Pluralism, which was built from the idea of liberalism, stated that the interests of individuals would be better served in an environment where their own governments would stop controlling their lives. Unlike realism, pluralists thought of " low politic" concerns as priorities for International Relations. The paradigm of Marxism focused more on economic concerns rather than military or any other power. Marxism viewed globalization to an idea of the past; there was nothing new in the idea of globalization.

Globalization was just a different way to demonstrate that the states with large economies would exploit the smaller ones. sort of like the bigger kid bullying the smaller kid. In a Marxist perspective, wars were fought for economic purposes which indicated that military power was used for economic gain instead for security. Social constructivism came into play in

the 1990's after there were many unsatisfied in the other paradigms. Social constructivism “ favors a more sociological approach and advocates a greater appreciation of the cultural dimension of policy making” (Hough 2008: 6).

It argued that “ world stage actors” did not follow any type of rational script rather, “ foreign policy reflects parochial ideological or moral guidelines rather than objective gains” (Hough 2008: 6). In the wide and narrow conceptions of security, the varied range of threats to humans have changed the whole perspective of international security, which previously had been based just on military based issues. Ullman described that a threat to security was solely based on two factors: the first, any threat that lowered the quality of a states' people and second, any threat that narrowed the policy choices of any actor of the state.

After the Cold War, some traditionalist suggested for security studies to go ‘ back to basics’ instead of widening their security measures to “ low politics” issues, they should stick to “ high politics” issues such military threat. “ The widening of security did not undermine the realist logic of conventional security studies. The focus was still on the state system and seeing relationships between states governed by power. Widening was simply extending the range of factors that affect state power beyond the confines of military and trade affairs” (Hough 2008: 8).

As for the realist, the ideology stayed the same. The main focus was still in the state's issues and its people, but as for the widening it, it was just the extension of some issues that affected state's power, beyond military issues. The deepening of security was driven by pluralists and social constructivists

which believed that the concept of “ human security” should be based on the individual’s need that makes up the different groups that exist and not the ‘ actors’ issues.

With that being said, the Copenhagen School philosophy cannot be resolved by the thought of the pluralists and the social constructivists which shifts the idea of security from the states to the people. “ While accepting the idea that non-military issues can be securitized and that the referent object of this can be something other than a state, maintains the logic that only the state can be the securitizing actor” (Hough 2008: 9).

The state would be the only one to determine if the issue that is being securitized is an existential threat and if needs to be acted upon. The securitization of issues must be determined by the state’s government and be prioritized by if it’s a ‘ low or high politics’ issue. As mentioned in the book, South Africa was one of the first countries that shifted away from military priority to a health priority. “ The proportion of South Africa’s (GDP) Gross Domestic Product spent on military defense is 1. 5 per cent and the overall proportion on health is 3. percent” (UNDP 2002). Today, military threats in some countries are still their priority but global leaders are still able to balance their military and health expense. In conclusion, “ Security” comes from a broader subject referred to International Relations. The paradigms that affect issues in security are realism, pluralism, Marxism, and social constructivism, having realist being the one which has dominated the study of security focuses on military security and to serve the state’s best interest.

Although the Marxist idea was to focus more on economic issues instead of military or any other issues, the pluralist and the social constructivist perspective changed the spectrum of international security from what was once solely based on military issues had broaden to other ' low politics' issues such as concerns relating to health and rights of the people, so basically shifting the idea of security from the states to the people.

In the end, the securitization of issues must be determined by the state's government and must be prioritized by if it's a ' low or high politics' issue.

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