

SECURITY AND SECURITY COMPLEX: OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

Luís Tomé

Professor at *Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa* (UAL). Visiting Professor at the *Portuguese War College (IESM)* and the *Instituto de Defesa Nacional (IDN)*.
Scientific Coordinator of OBSERVARE and Deputy Director of JANUS.NET
PhD in International Relations by Coimbra's University

Abstract

Security is one of the most ambiguous, contested, and debated ideas in the conceptual framework of international relations. The "traditional" perspective has been severely contested as new approaches develop, and the concept of security has been reworked in all its fundamental components and dimensions, from object and reference to range and security instruments. Likewise, the discussion over the definition and characterization of international security systems, namely regarding competitive security, common security, cooperative security, collective security, and security community, continues to be very lively. Starting from these debates, and in the light of the current international situation, we propose operational concepts of security and of security complex.

Keywords

Security; Security Complex; International Relations; Theory; Concepts

How to cite this article

Tomé, Luís (2010) "Security and security complex: operational concepts". *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, N.º 1, Autumn 2010. Consulted [online] on date of the last visit, observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en_vol1_n1_art3

Article received in August 2010 and accepted for publication in August 2010



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Security continues to be a top concern, a major issue of debate in national, regional, and global agendas. Likewise, it continues to require major resources and the sacrifice of many lives. However, as societies and international relations change, the approach to security also evolves. For that reason, security continues to be the focus of discussion, and to be redesigned in all its components and major dimensions, from its reference to international security systems. Starting from these debates, and in the light of the current international situation, what we propose in this paper are operational concepts of security and of security complex.

1. From "traditional security" to "new approaches"

A significant part of debates over security concerns the object it refers to and the range it covers: What is the object of security and what entity must be protected (*whose security*)? What are the nature and type of threats, risks, and challenges (*security in face of whom, or what*)? What is the agent of security (*security by whom*) and with what means (*security instruments*)? The respective concepts of security depend on how one answers these questions.

In the realist perspective,¹ according to which the international system is anarchical and in a permanent state of competition and conflict, the State is not only the major agent, but also the almost exclusive reference of security. In other words, it means *security by the State and for the State*. In this light, the concepts of security focused, for quite some time, around topics that James Wirtz (2007: 338) describes as *high politics*: war and peace, diplomatic summits, nuclear dissuasion, weapons control, military alliances, defence of "national interests" or, in other words, "national security" and "international security" always perceived from the exclusive stance of the State. In contrast, the topics of *low politics* (environment, energy, migratory flows, overpopulation, health, underdevelopment, etc.), despite being regarded as sources of problems, were seldom perceived as risks or threats to national or international security.

¹ Whenever, in this paper, we make reference to concept/approach/school/paradigm/ perspective/"realist" vision, we consider its essence or fundamental and defining traits, without tending to the great diversity and wealth of analysis it entails.



On the other hand, security was always associated with the military dimension, often to the exclusion of all others. There are even some authors who, like Richard Ullman, have reversed their position, after initially advocating a more inclusive perspective. He, who early on stated that *"defining national security merely (or even primarily) in military terms conveys a profoundly false image of reality [which] is doubly misleading and therefore doubly dangerous"* (Ullman, 1983: 129), later defended that *"if national security encompasses all serious and urgent threats to a nation-state and its citizens, we will eventually find ourselves using a different term when we wish to make clear that our subject is the threats that might be posed by the military force of other states. The 'war problem' is conceptually distinct from, say, problems like environmental degradation or urban violence, which are better characterized as threats to well-being (...) Labeling a set of circumstances as a problem of national security when it has no likelihood of involving as part of the solution a state's organs of violence accomplishes nothing except obfuscation"* (Ullman, 1995: 3-12). In fact, for a certain school of thought, the relationship between security and the non-military dimensions is only relevant when such elements are at the root of international conflict or have an impact on war.

The traditional approach to security highly centred on the State, on the topics of *high politics* and on the military instrument, has been severely contested. From the start, the incapacity of the State in face of pressures it encounters "from above", "from below", and "from within" (Tomé, 2003; 2004), becomes an issue. Other opinions, which João Gomes Cravinho (2006: 256) portrays as "hyperglobalistic", suggest that the State is about to become irrelevant as a deciding entity or, simply, that it no longer is an adequate structure to deal with the challenges facing Humanity.

Similarly, many believe that it is inadequate to apply conventional logic of "state security" to non-consolidated state entities, or in cases when the "State" itself is perceived as the main source of insecurity for its people. In fact, in many instances, the internal environment is far more unstable, or Hobbesian, than the international one, reducing some States to the condition of "non-States": the notions of "Failed State", "Fragile State" and "State in Collapse" describe that type of situation.

This implies, naturally, a substantive alteration of the reference of security: *«When human rights and the environment are protected, the lives and identities of people tend to be safe; when they are not protected, people are not safe, independently of the military capability of the State where they live»* (Klare & Thomas 1994: 3-4). Thus, the State is no longer viewed as the only or even the major reference of security, and the security of individuals and communities gain relevance. Ken Booth (1991) - who calls himself an ex-realist, anti-realist, and post-realist and advocates an "utopian realism" - admits the possibility of a redesign of security around a global civil society and a community of global communities, with both local and universal issues: that is, "populations", more so than States, must be the reference of security. Variations of this perspective point to human collectivities (Buzan, 1991), society (Waever, 1997), the community (Alagappa, 1998), individuals (Alkire, 2003) or Humanity (Commission on Human Security) as the reference of security.

Furthermore, the traditional differentiation between "internal" and "external" security dimensions is clearly diluted. Even authors of the "realist school", like B. Buzan (1991: 363), wisely recognize the limits of that traditional dichotomy: *«Though the term 'national security' suggests an occurrence at State level, the connection between that*



level and the individual, regional, and systemic levels are too numerous and powerful to be denied...the concept of security so strictly connects those levels and sectors that it demands to be treated through an integrated perspective». In fact, it seems evident that «security threats are not confined to national borders, they are interrelated and must be dealt with at the national, intra-State, regional, and international levels» (Tomé, 2007: 18).

On the other hand, it became clear that security, economic development, and human freedom are inseparable. Along this line, Dietrich Fisher (1993), for example, distinguishes between *object of danger* (survival, health, economic well-being, liveable environment, and political rights), *geographic source of dangers* (internal, external, and global), and *human sources or natural sources of dangers* (intentional threat, non-intentional dangers of human nature, natural risks) to arrive at the conclusion that the main non-military dangers are environmental decline, underdevelopment, overpopulation, violation of political rights, and ideological nationalism. Likewise, B. Buzan (1991: 19-20) highlights five domains that are intricately related: military security, political security, economic security, societal security, and environmental security.

Economic security was the first of those non-military domains to deserve the attention of researchers, strategists, and politicians, in particular, following the 1973 oil crisis. In spite of that, it was not until the end of the Cold War that the idea that the *highest stakes* were moving to the economic arena gained momentum and became generalized: in face of the increase in economic interdependence and the need to guarantee conditions for economic development and access to supply and outflow markets and their routes, economic and energy security became crucial dimensions of security.

More recently, the *environment* has equally become associated with security. «*The process of environmental degradation*», Al Gore (1990: 60) stated two decades ago, «*threatens not only the quality of life, but life itself. The global environment became, then, a matter of national security*». A sign of the times, Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change of the UN were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace, in 2007.

There are many other aspects that have been included in the security agenda, albeit with different degrees of controversy and/or acceptance. For instance, while the inclusion of human rights, natural disasters, and infectious diseases is relatively controversial, terrorism is mentioned in virtually all contemporary literature on security, as do maritime piracy, transnational organized crime, cyber attacks, and biologic, bacteriologic, and radiological issues. No wonder, then, that Simon Dalby (2006) made more reference to the "geopolitics of global dangers" than to the competition among superpowers or territorial disputes, while Hartmann et al. (2005) highlighted a new agenda for security in the "era of terror" and "bio-anxiety."

The fact is that, ever more frequently, we come across proposals that invert the hierarchy of *high* and *low politics* and place non-conventional issues at the top of the security agenda. This gives rise to the additional problem of *militarization of non-military dimensions of security*: in other words, the securitization of certain issues traditionally associated with low politics (that is, the discursive assumption that certain problems threaten "national and/or international security", elevating and giving them a



relevance never before achieved) could fuel a tendency to address and resolve them through traditional means of high politics, giving priority to military intervention and raising (in)security at other levels (Dannreuther, 2007: 42-44). In the same way, the *non-securitization* of some "traditional" threats (discounting or downplaying their significance) may lead to a breach between reality and the magnitude of the threat, by underestimating it.

The enlargement of the security agenda and the multiplication of "new dimensions" give rise to a much greater assortment in terms of security instruments, well beyond those of military nature, ranging from help to development to new judicial and financial regimens, from diplomacy to the advancement of human rights or the strengthening of the Rule of Law. Besides, other than States, there are clearly many more players involved who may either be threats (terrorist groups or criminal associations) or promoters of security (from international organizations to NGOs).

All this means that the realistic vision and the "traditional" approach to security have been questioned in their fundamental aspects: the State as exclusive actor and single security reference; threats, primarily external, intentional, and military; almost exclusive military instruments; the clear distinction between internal and external aspects (Brandão, 1999: 173). As a result, the debate around the *broadening* and *deepening* of the concept of security has intensified and we have witnessed its "expansion" in four fundamental directions, as stressed by Emma Rothchild (1995:55): "downward extension", that is, from the security of the States to that of groups and individuals; "upward extension", from national security to security at much broader levels, such as the environment/biosphere or Humanity; "horizontal extension", switching from military security to political, economic, social, environmental or human security; and "multi-directional security", from the States to the international institutions, local and regional governments, non-governmental organizations, as well as public opinion, the media, and abstract forces of nature or markets.

This has resulted in broader security concepts and measures, of which comprehensive security, world/global security, and human security stand out.

The concept of *comprehensive security* appeared in the late 70s and early 80s, initially developed by Japan - as part of the redesign of the "Yoshida Doctrine" and the concept of economic security. Later, other countries and organizations, such as Canada, the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and even the United Nations, adopted it. "Comprehensive security" underlines the multi-dimensional and multi-instrumental character of security, and shifts the focus from political-military disputes to a myriad of economic, social, and environmental concerns. At the same time, it concentrates on non-military instruments, such as development assistance, economic cooperation, or international institutions. Besides, according to promoters of "comprehensive security", the recognition of multiple dimensions and the cooperative development of multiple instruments may contribute to minimize tensions between traditional antagonists and to increase the security of all. G. Evans (1993), however, contends the greatest weakness in this concept is that it is so inclusive and ambiguous that it loses much of its descriptive capacity and, on the other hand, it becomes hostage of the overestimation of international cooperation.

Other concepts that are currently gaining support include *global security* and *world security*, both of which mean more or less the same. In its report "Our Global



Neighbourhood" the *Commission on Global Governance* expressly prefers the term "global security: «*Global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the planet*» (1995, Chapt. III, Promoting Security). Similarly, Gwyn Prins (1994: 7) supports the urgency of a "global security" because Humanity is connected through a new "community of vulnerabilities". Along the same lines, Seymon Brown (1994) invokes the concept of "world interests" to reconcile national, international, and sub-national interests.

The most controversial approach, however, is that of *human security*. This concept often appears associated with the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, though its ground-concept was developed much earlier: In June of 1945, in reference to the results of the San Francisco conference, the USA Secretary of State already reported that «*The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace...*» (cit in UNDP, 1994: 3). Therefore, the presumption of human security is to free all Humanity from fear and violence (freedom from fear) and poverty, and deprivation (freedom from want). Accordingly, «*Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity*» (ibid: 22).

This concept has been recurrently used, albeit with different characteristics and definitions.² Its own proponents differ regarding what *threats*, or *fundamental threats*, individuals must be protected against: the more strict concept focuses on internal violence exercised by governments or politically organized groups against communities or individuals; a more inclusive concept, however, considers that hunger, disease, and natural disasters must also be included. In turn, its critics point to an excessively vague nature, its ambiguity and incoherence, and even its arbitrary nature and inadequacy. Roland Paris (2001: 93-96) is particularly fierce in his criticism: «*if human security means almost everything, then, in effect, it means nothing (...) the ambiguity of the term serves one particular purpose: it unites a diverse, and often divided, coalition of States and organizations which "seek an opportunity to achieve some more substantial political interest and greater financial means" (...) Human security does not appear to offer a particularly useful analytical framework, either in academic or in political terms*».

Independently of this controversy, countries like Canada, Norway, or Japan incorporated this approach in their security and foreign policies, in an attempt to implement it. Likewise, international institutions such as the World Bank, the OECD, the ASEAN, and the UN also adopted it as a reference to their activities. In reality, the idea that the first goal of security is the protection of individuals and communities is enough to cause reasonable changes: indeed, the traditional framework which explains and tries to avoid war, or promote peace, among States is clearly insufficient and irrelevant to deal with the new dangers and transnational concerns, violent conflicts within States, or to protect individuals or groups from certain attacks or tragedies (Tomé, 2007: 18). Therefore, human security is associated with controversial principles that emerged in

² One of the most influential is that of the Commission on Human Security (2003: 4): «*Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity*».



the international security panorama over the last years, such as "humanitarian intervention" or the "Responsibility to Protect", the latter formally adopted at the UN World Summit, in September 2005, as part of that Organization's reform.

Another perspective that has gained recognition in theoretical-conceptual debates and political thought is the so-called *critical security*, which shares and impacts the vision of human security with an anti-State and anti-realist theory. This approach is also particularly sceptical regarding the impact of international liberalism in the security agenda, going as far as to call it "subversive" or "subservient". Karlos Pérez de Armiño (2009: 8), for instance, states that *«it has been noticed a certain co-optation and distortion of the concept of human security by western countries, with the purpose of placing it at the service of their foreign policies»*. Additionally, José Manuel Pureza (2009), stresses *«the ambition to bring the fight against fear and deprivation into security priorities did not result in substantial changes in international power relations, and has served fundamentally as a point of support (one more) to the discipline of the turbulent periphery by the restless centre»*. The roots of neo-Marxist tradition in the critical theory of security are clear, but the fact is that, like all other main areas, the field of Critical Security Studies is wide and heterogeneous, and encompasses diverse tendencies, from Feminism, to Marxism-Leninism, and to Anarchism. The uniting factor in such originally distinct theories is their vision and common commitment to a *«"critical" rather than a "problem-solving" approach to IR»* (Danneuther, 2007: 49). In other words, the "critical vision" seeks to differ in the way it identifies the root of security problems, and how it proposes to substantially alter the situation it condemns. It attempts to "undo" conventional discourses and, in some cases, "invalidate" them to re(focus) attention on human condition and its emancipation. It employs an approach that relegates the interests of States, of the "centre" and the "powerful", to second place, in favor of individuals, "peripheries", and the "underprivileged".

2. An operational concept of Security

Clearly, Security is one of the most ambiguous, debated, and contested ideas in the overall conceptual framework of international relations. Concepts evolve with time and change according to circumstances, which, in effect, make it imperative to redefine the concept of security. The effort to conceptualise security and to accommodate the great complexity and diversity of its fundamental elements with impartiality, while preserving its analytical and operational usefulness, is a complex and delicate exercise. Nevertheless, we attempt to do it, based on six major premises:

- 1) Communities are the references of security;
- 2) Well being and political survival, considered from a relatively broad but discerning perspective, are the fundamental interests and values of security;
- 3) Threats and concerns relative to the security of communities do not come only from other States. They may also originate within the States and non-state actors;
- 4) Competition, cooperation, and the building of communities are equally relevant and may coexist concurrently;
- 5) The emphasis or priority granted to each dimension/concern/threat, and to each instrument of security, may vary from community to community;



- 6) The generic concept of security must be abstract, inclusive, and cautious to reconcile complexity, diversity, and change and to allow different levels.

Thus, security means the protection and promotion of values and interests considered as vital for the political survival and well being of the community. The closer the community is to the absence of concerns of political, economic, and military nature, the more safeguarded its security is.

Having the *community* as reference means that the object of security may be a State, an ethnic group, a transnational group or an international association, while accommodating the problematic nature of States and the existence of other security references "within" the States and/or "above" the States. At the same time, assuming *political survival* and *well being* as vital values and interests, allows the broadening and deepening of security beyond traditional dimensions, in a sufficiently inclusive and flexible manner, in terms of its content, threats/risks, and instruments.

Concerns over political survival or well being may, independently or simultaneously, be the fundamental interests communities can ensure, though not necessarily with the same priority, in the same manner, at the same level, or in face of the same concerns: North Korea, Kurds, Palestinians, Iceland, Angola, or the EU, will certainly consider both their survival and their well being in vary different ways. Again, if the State is for some the greatest reference of security, for others it constitutes the major source of insecurity, while for others the major reference is not the State, but rather their ethnic or religious group, or the political elite.

Moreover, if there is a crucial problematic of political survival or of well being, it may not simply result from the conflict of material interests (such as territory, resources, etc.) but arise, primarily or equally, from considerations and perceptions of identity, either of ideological nature or historical and cultural heritage. Such problems and perceptions occur also in very distinct contexts of rivalry, conflict, involvement, and cooperation, which are dynamic and evolving.

Similarly, the safeguard and/or promotion of political survival and well being may imply the orchestration of military panoply but, complementary or independently, may favour internal or international normative/legal frameworks, diplomacy, politics, commerce and economy, or social-cultural aspects and others. Again, it depends on the specific community and circumstances. Accordingly, in the concept we propose, at the same time that political survival and well being limit the spectrum of security (in order to pose a security problem, a concern must, somehow, question values and interests considered to be vital) they are also sufficiently inclusive and flexible to allow a great variety of potential real situations. In similar fashion, the idea of community that emerges in our concept of security not only allows encompassing several levels (infra-state, state, and multinational), but also selecting those communities which may be more relevant and pertinent in terms of the security agenda and of the system, or security complex, under analysis. The same may be said regarding military, political, and economic concerns, since they can only be included in the operational concept of security depending on their relevance to the protection and promotion of interests and values considered vital to the political survival and well-being of the communities in question: of course, there are security concerns that do not threaten basic levels of security of populations, States, or regions; otherwise, we would be inviting a



tremendous array of potential communities and concerns that, in fact, are not of equal relevance.

3. Systems of International Security

A distinct, although related, debate concerns the characterization of "systems of international security". There are also very different perspectives and proposals on this topic. For instance, while Muthiah Alagappa (1998: 54-56) described three types of security systems he considers "pure" - *competitive security*, *collective security*, and *security community* -, Raymo Vayren (1999) listed three different "perspectives" on international security: *common*, *cooperative*, and *collective*. Patrick Morgan (1997), however, identifies five "ideal types" of systems, or multilateral forms of conflict management: *power restraining power*; *alignment agreement of major powers*; *collective security*, *pluralist community of security*, and *integration*. In turn, Brian Job (1997) goes further to subdivide the first into balance of power and collective defence, while Gareth Evans (1993) maintains that common security, collective security, and comprehensive security are different forms of cooperative security. Particular relevance is, then, placed on concepts centred on competitive security, common security, cooperative security, collective security, and security community.

In the traditional perspective, clearly inspired by realism, the *international security system is competitive* by nature, rooted in self-defence/security of States in an environment of conflict. In the perceived anarchical international structure, without any superior authority to guarantee survival and mistrusting and fearing the ambition of others, each State faces its own security as its main concern and assumes responsibility for self-defence and self-security, in a traditional *Hobbesian* challenge of order and competitive security. Even so, there are differences between the so-called "offensive realism" and "defensive realism". John Mearsheimer, one of the most distinguished authors of the "offensive" position, argues that «*States are always prepared to think offensively toward other States*» (2001: 34). Kenneth Waltz (2001) stresses a different viewpoint: States are not simply driven by "maximization of power", but also by maintaining their positions in the system and consolidating the balance of power which, in the logic of "relative gains", may be a source of international stability.

The competitive nature of the system, however, does not erase the possibility of cooperation among States on security and defence, or even the feasibility of a relative "international order". It is within this framework that realism finds comfort in the theories of *collective defence* (several States, confronted with a common threat from another State or coalition, unite to consolidate their respective capabilities and better defend themselves as a group, dissuade, or defeat the enemy/adversary), of *balance of power* (stressing the permanent play of weight, counter-weight, and/or compensation, primarily among the great powers), and of *hegemony* (stressing not only the ambitions and attitudes of the great powers constantly seeking maximization of power, but also the capabilities and potentialities/vulnerabilities of hegemonic power, which may be the determining factor in achieving greater or lesser stability in the inherent system of competitive security).

The *common security* approach gained some emphasis following the report "Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament" by the Palme Commission (Independent



Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues), in 1982, amidst the tense Cold War context. Emphasizing the risks of escalation and the risks and limitations of unilateral initiatives, the Commission called for a common compromise for survival and security that would accommodate the legitimate interests of "others" as well as "ours". The argument is that security must be reached with others, not against them: hence such recommendations, like the creation of nuclear weapon free zones, mutual control of strategic defence of space, disarmament of superpowers and their respective 'blocks' of collective defence, and the strengthening of the United Nations and regional organizations. For Gareth Evans (1993), the positive aspect of this idea, as defined by the Palme Commission, is that it emphasizes common survival through security with "the other side". However, he points out that a great deal of the debates over common security has focused on aspects of military security and that is only one of many fronts in a more inclusive cooperative security.

The *cooperative security* became very popular in Europe as a result of the 1975 Helsinki Accords and, primarily, since the end of the Cold War. Cooperative security, however, has been defined and applied in different ways, although always based on the premise that, in order to be respected, security cannot be imposed or reached by one group on another and must be based on common institutions and norms. As a rule, cooperative security is perceived as a regimen which prevents and manages conflicts in a certain established framework of norms and procedures which imply accommodating rival (or potentially rival) interests and politics to maintain a stable international order under the leadership of the great powers (Vayryen, 1999: 57-58).

Muthiah Alagappa (1998: 53-54) further ascertains that relational identity in cooperative security is not a negative thing or, if it is, it is only to a very small degree and may, actually, be positive: States may be sceptic and distrustful of one another, but there is not a perception of immediate threat. Gareth Evans (1993) presents a rather broad concept of cooperative security that includes several forms of common security, collective security, and comprehensive security. In this author's view, the main virtue of cooperative security is that it provides a broad range of responses to questions of security: the essence of cooperative security is based on the fact it emphasizes cooperation over competition³. David Dewitt (1994) shares an equally broad concept of cooperative security, and includes in it the idea of comprehensive security, competitive security, as well as the balance of powers and alliances.

Regarding *collective security*, G. Evans defines it as being inherently focused on military issues, incorporating the idea that all members renounce the use of force among them and agree to promptly assist any other member that may come under attack. Collective security is, in this light, the corollary of common security, «*the last guarantee that the process will not stray from the course as the result of individual aggressive behaviour by any State - or that if it does, the reaction will alter it*» (Evans, 1993: 15-16). Likewise, in Vayryen's view, the purpose of collective security is to

³ G. Evans (1993) describes cooperative security as: 1) multidimensional in amplitude and gradual in temper; 2) more inclusive than exclusive; 3) places more emphasis on the assurance of security than on dissuasion; 4) it is not restrictive in terms of *membership*; 5) favors a multilateral approach over a bilateral one; 6) does not favor military solutions over non-military ones; 7) It assumes that all States are primary players in the security system while accepting that non-state players may have an important role; 8) Does not request the creation of formal security institutions, though, naturally, it does not reject them; 9) and, above all, it stresses the value of creating "dialogue habits" based on a multilateral approach.



create a virtual international coalition that will deter potential aggressors and, if necessary, punish them through the use of force, but without prior definition of the aggressor or the victim. It is anchored, primarily, on the premise of maintaining the *status quo* by representing and mobilizing the international society, and calling for a vast legitimate and representative measure of collective action. Therefore, a system of this type requires «*an established framework of institutions, norms, and procedures that are helpful in mobilizing international response when necessary*» (Vayryen, 1999: 59).

Brian Job, on the other hand, stresses the difference between *collective security* and *pluralist security society*. The former refers to a compromise of the type "all-for-one" among members in order to act, automatically and in synchrony, to assist a member State under threat or attack by another State. According to this author, collective security mechanisms, unlike collective defence, are not motivated by the need to plan or act against a perceived external threat, that is, a State excluded from the group. In this context the dilemma of security among members is attenuated, as there is not an immediate, or clearly identified, threat. Thus, collective security frameworks have a tendency to have a large range of participants, as they are designed to accommodate a large common denominator in terms of attitudes and compromises. Their success depends a lot on the degree of involvement and commitment of the most powerful members of the group (Job, 1997: 172-173).

In Job's perspective, a higher level of cooperation is that of the *pluralistic community of security*, where there is a deeper, and qualitatively higher, level of multilateralism and institutionalism and where membership is more restrictive and very regulated. This happens because the pluralist community of security presupposes the mutual identification and identity development among participants, which is necessary to materialize and sustain the principle of diffuse reciprocity on a long-term basis. More importantly, the distinctive character of the security community is «*the cognitive transition that occurs among States, and which, in principle, does not encourage or fear force as a means of interaction among themselves*» (Job, 1997: 174-175). In M. Alagappa's view, also, the "community of security" is deeper than cooperative security, since it is more demanding in its premises and has a greater potential for preventing the emergence of new disputes: «*In a community security system, national identity and national interest become fused with those of a larger community of states*» (1998: 55). Therefore, there is no exception to the use of force among members of the community and it becomes illegitimate as an instrument of politics among the States that form it: in this perspective, security is collective by definition.

4. The notion of Security Complex

It is important to ascertain whether any, and if so which, of the aforementioned systems characterizes, on its own, the world reality, or that of specific macro-regions, in an exclusive logic: in our view, not one but several of those systems may be identified and overlap in the same international or regional framework, which justifies the reference to a security complex. On the other hand, independently of the favoured concept to characterize a certain framework, in a specific space and time, a security system is only one of several in existence; it interacts with other systems and other



units in a dynamic network of direct and indirect effects on the framework of relationships reflected in the security environment.

Thus, the *security complex* may be understood as a *system of security systems*. More specifically, the *security complex is a network of linear and non-linear relationships among multiple components and of interactions among several systems of security at different levels, and of different dimensions, from which result certain patterns in connections, structures, and behaviours that, in turn, interact with the internal and external environments of that security network*.

The concept of security complex is associated with the study and theories of *complex systems*. It is a scientific field that permeates all areas of knowledge and which, in short, focuses on «*how parts of a system produce collective behaviours of the system and how the system interacts with its environment*» (New England Complex Systems Institute – NECSI). There are five main ideas that are fundamental to the understanding of the concept of systems complex and, therefore, of security complex: system, pattern, network, scale, and linearity.

Naturally, the most important is the concept of system, inasmuch as we started by defining "complex" as a "system of systems". According to Yaneer Bar-Yam (s/d) "*a system is the outlined portion of the universe which is separated from the rest by an imaginary border... the key concept of 'system' is that, once it is identified, it describes: the system's properties, the properties of the universe beyond the system which affect the system, the interactions/relationships among the parts of the system, and between these components and the universe.*" The system is not isolated from the environment; rather, it interacts with the environment. In some cases, it may be useful to isolate the system. In other cases, one first focuses on the interactions/relationships. Often, the identification of a certain security system stems from delimiting a certain geographic space and focusing on the characteristics of interactions and/or how they change. However, it is also possible to identify systems in a way that does not correspond to spatial division: for instance, we may consider an economic system in face of other systems (cultural, political, institutional, etc.) and downplay spatial aspects.

Pattern corresponds, in short, to the idea of repetition - of structures, ideas, behaviours, or, in ultimately, of systems within a broader collection of systems. One simple way to understand a pattern is to detect repetition of behaviours or relationships. But we may also think of the pattern in terms of quantity and quality of repetitions: the more often and coincidental those repetitions are the more solid or clear a particular pattern is. Therefore, identifying patterns of security, understanding how they interrelate, and observing their effects upon the group of systems, help us determine the character of a certain security complex.

The *network* is the sum of connections that allow interactions and influences among the parts (units and sub-systems) of the system complex. Sometimes, the designation of network expresses, in itself, a system in its whole, considering the effects of these connections. There are, obviously, many types of networks, but a fundamental aspect to understand is that the parts are directly or indirectly connected among themselves; subsequently, each network connection can be characterized by vectors such as force, influence, substance, motivation, capacity, etc...Potentially, all networks have influence over the interconnected components, other networks, and the network complex as a



whole. The study and explanation of a security complex in a given region or in the world involves, then, setting up networks amidst networks and players which implies not only identifying the different networks and units, but also observing their effects and establishing which behaviours and influences are common or different in the multiple connections.

Scale refers both to the size of the complex under study and the scope of the impact of units, networks, patterns, and systems, as well as the influence of the complex of systems itself. In both instances - size and range of influence - a security complex interconnects security of different scales, from intra-State levels to global security. Scale is important both for purposes of definition and delimitation of the security complex itself, and for measuring mutual impact at different levels. For that reason, all other scales must be considered.

Finally, *linearity* is a recurring aspect in relationships of cause-and-effect. The concept of linear relationship suggests that «*two quantities are proportional between themselves: if you double one, you must also double the other*» (Bar-Yam, s/d). Linear relationships are, in many cases, the first approach used to describe international relations, despite the fact that there is not a single way to define what a linear relationship is in terms of "content": for example, a linear relationship of historical association and identity elements between the Popular Republic of China and Taiwan is necessarily different from a linear relationship in an economic or political and diplomatic perspective between the same countries. The problem is that, even taking into account a great variety of linear relations, it is still very far from characterizing a system, and even further from characterizing a complex system. Therefore, it is necessary to consider, equally, the *non-linear relationships*, which are understood, simply, as those which are not linear and greatly amplify the potential scope of causalities and dependencies. Often, problems are very difficult to understand and resolve because the relationships between causes and effects are not easy to establish: alterations in a system "here" have frequent consequences in a system "there", since the parts and systems are interdependent. In other words, returning to the prior example, the relationship between the PR China and Taiwan results from many sorts of relations between the two, but at the same time, it also reflects and helps to stipulate relationships, at different levels, between either country and the USA and other players in Asia-Pacific and around the world. This means that the security complex is made up of, and to some extent results from, the sum and convergence of linear and non-linear relations with repercussions in the domain of security.

Conclusions

The concept of security proposed in this paper - meaning *the protection and promotion of values and interests considered to be vital to the well-being and political survival of the community, and considering that the closer the community is to the absence of concerns of political, economic, and military nature, the more safeguarded its security is may, admittedly, be the focus of criticisms and objections*: open to abuses; subjective and ambiguous; problematic in terms of "theoretical placement" and identity of research agenda. However, any concept of security slightly more inclusive is virtually exposed to criticism, and we cannot allow that to dissuade us from introducing what we consider to be an operational concept. On the other hand, restricting a concept for the



sake of great simplification would risk making it less adequate to reality, as we would be forced, *a priori*, to consider exclusions independently of specific situations. Consequently, and in the face of the need to make an option, we decided to pursue a more open, inclusive, and flexible approach, in order to consider all the possibilities of the highly complex and contested concept of security.

Moreover, the purpose of defining a concept is to indicate its essence and its fundamental limits, and it must be the measured according to its applicability to *problem solving*. In our view, the approach we propose expands and deepens the concept of security without making it excessively inclusive, as it establishes important parameters in terms of reference (community) and core values (political survival and well-being); it does not restrict, *a priori*, the range of possibilities of interconnections and the multiplicity of its vital parts; it permits to involve/ characterize different types of concepts, divided in function of the reference and nature of threats, of instruments and concerns; and it simplifies comparative analysis among different theoretical-conceptual hypotheses, and between the latter the specific reality of security. At the same time, it permits evaluating the most significant aspects and, if necessary, establishes new interconnections.

Regarding the concept of "security complex" - *defined as a system of systems and a network of linear relationships among multiple parts, a system of interactions among several systems of security, at different scales and dimensions, which result in several patterns in connections, structures, and behaviours that, in turn, interact with the internal and external environments of that security network* - they clearly overlap the multiple characterizations of the systems of security. In a specific space/dimension where many and different units and systems interact, the impact is not only a certain international/regional "order", but also a certain security complex, which eventually comprises, simultaneously, elements of competitive security, collective security, cooperative security, and security community. And, in fact, taking into account the current international reality as a whole, there is not a system, but rather a complex of systems of security.

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