

THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ITS FALL UNDER THE SCHOOL OF CONSTRUCTIVIST THINKING. ARGUMENTS. IDENTIFYING THE ELEMENTS BELONGING TO THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

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***Abstract:** This paper aims to highlight the arguments for which the concept of national identity, a concept that has given rise to many debates, falls within the school of constructivist thinking from the perspective of international relations and security studies. The concept of national identity, which, by reference to the nations, captures the psychological and sociological aspects of the individuals from which the nations are formed, faces an evolution at European level, in the context of the re-establishment of the political realities amid accession and integration into European Union. Under the assumption that the social reality is not an objective element, outside the human action and perceptions, along with the assertion that the study of social reality is not independent of its object of study, it is created the framework for the questions, arguments and researches it assumes in its sphere of study of constructivism. From the perspective of constructivist conception, both the identity and the interests of the actions in the international relations are not predetermined, but they are defined by the interaction with the other participants. This way of seeing the reality has also led to emphasizing the concept of security community.*

***Keywords:** national identity; national security; constructivism; security community; international relations*

1. INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, the United States of America took over the supremacy of the world, and the European states were no longer the same powerful actors capable of influencing the international play. But without remaining in the defensive, the European states have tried to compensate for this disadvantage and form a Union to gather their forces in order to counterbalance the increasing power of the United States. The Union of the European states, which initially referred to the economic cooperation between Member States, has gradually come to cover more and more areas, so that it is now an organization operating in many policy areas.

The states are forced to make decisions that have fundamental implications in their evolution, alternating between two coordinates: integration and cooperation, making it difficult for them to choose or delineate exactly the boundaries between the two directions. The current global context, which is based on the interdependence among states, makes it even more difficult to choose solutions. With the emergence of the European

Union, Member States have been forced to inform each other of the problems that have arisen, and reach an agreement, a common point of view, by negotiation, which leads to a common position and decision. The Member States have adapted to the new global order and transferred part of their decision-making power to a higher level of the organizations they have joined.

2. SELF-PERCEPTION, IDENTITY

The concept of ‘identity’ has recently been highly used, and the more its precise definition has been attempted, the more new facets of the notion have been discovered. It is a concept that remains open to polemics and debates, especially from the perspective of social sciences. New unexplored perspectives are discovered as the definition of the notion is attempted.

In the broad sense, the ‘identity’ is built around the individual’s sense of belonging to a group, a feeling that this individual has in common with the other members of the group. The sense of belonging can be manifested in relation to several elements, such as family, country, people, ethnicity, ideology,

professional group, all of which generate a certain type of identity. From this perspective, we call classify the 'identity' in national identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, group identity and enumeration could continue by associating the individual with other groups. In a globalised world, belonging to more groups is natural, generating the concept of multiple identity that encompasses all of the individual's identity connections.

The concept of multiple identity was supported and evolved on the basis of open society theory, evoked by the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper (1993:198) in which 'individuals face personal decisions', and the political decisions are the result of an argument, being taken in rationally. By promoting the concept of multiple identity, the man is seen as belonging to several social groups, a situation in which he can always choose to identify himself with one group or another, being free to assume any identity he wants in relation to the context. Various identities are considered, in terms of different affiliations, and not a single identity.

Another type of approach to the theory of 'multiple identities' is that proposed by Andrei Marga in his paper National Identity and Modernity, where the author makes an illustration of multiple identities based on the example of a traditional inhabitant of Cluj-Napoca. The author expresses the self-perception of the person, arguing one by one each identity assigned to him (professional identity, local identity, ethnic identity, regional identity, confessional identity, national identity, European identity, Central European identity), thus creating a plurality of identities that seem not to be excluded and which are justified in different contexts and can coexist.

From the perspective of the French sociologist Claude Dubar, the identity issue has reached a deadlock that has been generated by multiple belongings to various communities, associations, groups that have proven to be variable and ephemeral. There are approaches that, starting from the 'multiple identities' theory, risk depriving meaning and sinking into irrelevance the notion of national identity, replacing it with other forms of identity or reducing its importance by bringing the modern forms of identity to the forefront. However, national identity is the nucleus, fundamental identification of the individual, the other associations with different social groups, representing nuances emerged in the context of the evolution of the society, the technology and the easy way of communication. Perhaps the very antithesis that arises between the national identity and all the other forms of identity being voiced

makes the 'old' national identity resist over time and prove its tenacity and stability.

The term of national identity is relatively recent, being used, according to the French historian Anne-Marie Thiesse, author of the paper 'La Création des identités nationales. Europe XVIII^e – XX^e siècle' since 1980, although the awareness and the definition of the sense of belonging to a particular nation lie in the 19th century, when the nation-states is formed. Being a community feeling, the national identity has individual elements that vary from one community to another and give color to the phenomenon.

Considering that we, in this paper, propose to analyse the identity in the light of constructivism, including the notion in the school of constructivist thinking, we will briefly present this theory, which has substantially changed the conception of how states relate to each other from a security perspective by the way they identify themselves, but equally by how they perceive threats to national security.

3. A REVOLUTIONARY THEORY, CONSTRUCTIVISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The 'constructivism' is primarily one of the three paradigms of learning, alongside behaviorism and cognitivism. The constructivist theory of learning considers that the student will better retain the information if he/she is forced to reformulate it to explain it to others, transmitting the message expressed in his/her own words, which is more effective compared to the situation in which the student would perform a simple reading of information. Starting from this initial formulation of the constructivist theory, the social constructivism has later stood out, which is that current which focuses on building senses and meanings by the members of a social group, reaching finally to a common code of communication. Through this common code of communication, the group that uses it identifies itself internally, but also delimits itself from the exterior.

The social constructivism is based on the assertion that the world is the product of social interaction, which can be measured and analyzed with specific scientific means. This form of social constructivism uses, in the study of security, subjective ontology and objective epistemology, in other words, states that the world is socially built and can be measured and analyzed (Sarcinschi, 2005:95).

The constructivism is a theory of scientific knowledge that claims that any type of knowledge is

built and does not naturally rise, so that knowledge is ultimately determined by intersubjective social perceptions, conventions and experiences.

In order to have the image of the context in which the constructivist theory was formed, it must be pointed out that the 'international society of the last three centuries can be described by three defining vectors, which correspond to three traditions of approach in International Relations, each characterized by certain specific processes that they emphasize, to the detriment of the others. A first tradition is the Hobbesian tradition, centered on conflict and war; a second tradition is the Lockean tradition, which emphasizes contractual, exchange relations from international relations (such as economic cooperation relations); the third tradition is the Kantian tradition of the global society, which focuses on transnational solidarity processes and on what we now include in the idea of global governance. Therefore, the society of states of the last centuries is structured around three essential processes: war (conflict), exchange (cooperation) and solidarity (communion)' (Miroiu, 2006:108). No current of thought in international relations is based on one of the three traditions, they complemented each other and combine to give the particular structure of each theory

The 'constructivism' is a relatively new theory in the sphere of analysis of international relations, dating back to 1992, when Alexander Wendt published in the International Organization magazine the article 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', where the author presents the international relations from a constructivist perspective. Alexander Wendt argues that the anarchy is not inherent in the international system in the way other schools of international relations imagine it, but it is rather a construction of the nation-states in the system (1992:399). The constructivism is an attempt to create a connection between rationalistic and reflective theories, which were the dominant theories when constructivism was promoted. The alternative theory of international relations proposed by Alexander Wendt is one of the most revolutionary theories in recent years and has the merit of reconceptualising and rebuilding the field of international relations as a scientific and academic discipline. Wendt (2011:358) considered that the subject of this paper is 'the ontology of international life'. Apart from the fact that the paper has important epistemological consequences, especially for the epistemology of international relations as part of social sciences, it aims to rehabilitate idealistic ontology as the foundation of

knowledge and understanding of international relations. Wendt argues that the researchers of the social world should be more concerned with 'explaining the world' and less concerned about how the world can be known.

The constructivism, from the perspective of international relations, is considered to have two meanings: 'in a first sense, it refers to a certain theoretical approach of international relations and social sciences in general, with implications for the research agenda and methods used, shared by several authors. In a second sense, the constructivism designates a meta-theoretical position on social sciences, based mainly on arguments of epistemological and ontological nature, bringing together a large number of different theories' (Miroiu, 2006:73).

The constructivist theory is covered by Alexander Wendt in antithesis with the theory that, when he published the article 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', was the major theory in the field, namely the neorealist theory or the theory of structural realism. The author regards the constructivism as a theoretical framework in which the fundamental elements of the international politics are conceived as social structures. The identity is viewed as a constant fact that determines the behaviour of international actors, although it can be partially modelled by this behaviour. The assumption that Alexander Wendt considered was that the reference system is in fact a built system. He argued that the anarchy is not a constant structure, but 'the anarchy is what the states understand from it', which determines the behaviour of the states. It is a condition whose meaning is in itself conditioned by the relations of help. The self-help that the states can provide is not the only possibility they have in international relations, but only one of many possible forms of state and interests. From Wendt's perspective, the power and the interest are built realities, and the culture is the one that has a determining role in building them. Every thinking process is essentially a reflective act, says Wendt, and the states are also individual actors (from the general perspective of methodological individualism) and are capable of their own reflective thinking processes. This reflective process of the states has led to the perception of an international system in which states interact with one another by calling on the 'public reason'. This international system is in fact a global (emerging) 'public sphere' in which the states act on the basis of rules perceived by themselves as being of the system. All the states at

global level forms thus more than the sum of its elements, and the understanding of this whole is essential to understanding international relations.

The neorealists believe that the key variable that determines the main actions of the states is the distribution of power among states. Thus, from the perspective of neorealists, in the context of anarchy, the international politics is directly determined by the way in which power is distributed among states. From Wendt's perspective, the international relations can not be studied on the basis of the power distribution among states, because the meaning of the international relations is based on ideas, norms and practices. 'There are collective meanings that constitute the structures that organize our actions', (1992:397) as most aspects of the system of international relations are socially built, being the result of continuous processes of social practice and interaction. The anarchy and self-help are not caused by the structure of international relations, but are determined by the interactions between states and the way in which the states perceive themselves and other states. The anarchy and self-help may or may not depend on these variables relating to the states. And if one of the important variables to which the state relates is its self-perception, then one can conclude that the identity of each state is at the base of Alexander Wendt's argument.

Wendt took as an example the position of England and Germany towards the United States, which can not be evaluated solely on the basis of the resources of these states and their military capabilities, because their military power will always be interpreted differently depending on the position of the state concerned. If the state is a potential ally, the things will differ from the situation in which the state is considered a competitor or an enemy. The British missiles did not have the same meaning for the United States as the Russian missiles, regardless of their number and destructive power, because there is a difference of position between the United Kingdom and Russia in relation to the United States of America. In his article, Alexander Wendt explains from a personal and innovative perspective the relation between the United States and USSR during and after the Cold War, and concludes that the reason why this war ended, which lasted for over 40 years, was not the military impossibility of the two states to continue the conflict, but the fact that they reached an understanding, more exactly, they did not perceive themselves as enemies.

In his paper, Alexander Wendt explains how the interaction between the actors on the stage of

international politics leads to the shaping of the identities, priorities and interests of the states, as well as to the evaluation of the power of others.

The Alexander Wendt's constructivist theory in international relations demonstrates how the European institutions can build, through an interaction process, the identities and interests of the Member States, they learn and develop cooperative skills, rather than concepts that go into the military sphere.

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE THEORY SUPPORTED BY ALEXANDER WENDT BY THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE ANTI- MISSILE SHIELD BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN DESEVELU TOWN IN ROMANIA

On 29th March 2004, Romania officially joined NATO by submitting the instruments of ratification with the State Department of the USA, the depositary state of the North Atlantic Treaty, and a few days later, on 2nd April 2004, the official ceremony of the raising of the Romanian flag took place at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. Romania acquired the status of ally in 2004, and during the years that followed, our state maintained its active involvement being present with its allies in NATO operations and missions aimed at promoting stability and security globally. Romania has proved to be a constant and coherent ally that has provided permanent support, with substantial contributions in areas of important for Euro-Atlantic security.

Having a permanent concern over what national security interests mean and in the context of adopting policies and perspectives of the North Atlantic allies, Romania has developed a close and sustainable cooperation with the United States of America.

Following the line of foreign policy that our country has approached after the fall of communism in 1989 and conditional upon the security of its own territory in a geographical position requiring a decision making, Romania signed on 13th September 2011 the Agreement between Romania and the United States of America on the deployment of the ballistic missile defence system of the United States and the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States of America. The two documents are of paramount importance and the engagement of Romania by signing them implies the unequivocal marking of the direction and the historical path of our country for a long time. Both the Agreement

and the Declaration concluded between the two states are based on Article 5 of the NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY (Washington DC, 4th April 1949), which states that: 'The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.'

The Agreement between Romania and the United States regulates in very clear terms the rights and obligations of the Parties with regard to the deployment of a Ballistic Missile Defence System of the United States on the territory of Romania in the military base of *Deveselu*. *By concluding this agreement, Romania was the first country in the world to host such a system*

While the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States of America uses generic terms that do not specifically bind either party and that outline possible future opportunities 'to increase trade and investment, cooperation between business communities and development of more in-depth industrial and technological cooperation.' The existence of the strategic partnership with the United States of America is a long-term and ever-developing commitment that takes shape as common projects are developed between the two states, the pillars of the Romania - USA relation being the political dialogue, security, economics, people-to-people contacts, science and technology, research, education, culture.

In the Deveselu Military Base Development Project, we can see some key moments that marked the event, namely: September 2011 - when the agreement on deployment of the missile shield was signed, December 2015 - when the missile shield became active and operational, and May 2016 - when the official inauguration of the missile defence system took place. Since these three moments have been followed with interest from

the Romanian media and there have been numerous press articles that have reported these phases, we propose hereafter to capture the way in which the event was presented.

The signing of the Agreement between Romania and the United States of America on the deployment of the ballistic missile defence system of the United States and the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States of America was considered a success of foreign policy by the Romanian authorities, bringing Romania into an area of greatest interest to its American allies. In this context, the titles of the press articles at the time, as well as their context, are eloquent in the presentation of the pro-American position of the population: 'What the agreement on the deployment of the shield in Deveselu sets out: The firm commitment of the USA to defend the Romanian territory by means of the missile system against an actual attack', 'The Americans have arrived at Deveselu', 'The American missile shield at Deveselu places Romania on the strategic map of the world' or 'Historical moment: The missile shields at Deveselu is inaugurated'.

The theory of Alexander Wendt considers that the states have different positions relative to each other primarily by reference to the relations between them. Putting the territory of the Deveselu military base at the disposal of the United States of America was not considered a threat from the USA to the security of the Romanian state, given the diplomatic relations between the two states. The analysis of the decision considered the positioning of the United States of America as an ally of Romania and not as a competitor or an enemy. The elements of power and interest have directly shaped the positioning of the two states in this issue and led to the conclusion of the two agreements. The choice made by the two states has been based on mutual trust in assuming and fulfilling the obligations by each party involved. Such a partnership could not have been concluded with other states as it was concluded with the United States of America, with the identities and interests of the states involved in the process having a major importance. The system of relations that have been built socially on the basis of continuous processes of interaction and social practice is the basis of the relation between the two state.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The constructivism is characterized by an emphasis on the importance of the normative and

material structures, the role of identity in shaping the political action and the relation of mutual constitution between agents and structures (Reus-Smit, 2008:207). The constructivism considerably exceeds the main theories of security. It is important, first of all, because it describes the individual and state security as social constructions that can be endlessly reformulated by eager and willing actors, and not as a static concept, blocked under determined and unchanging conditions, as realists and neorealists assume. More and more theoreticians and practitioners of international relations rely on the conceptual tools of constructivism, especially on removing it from conventional ideas on causality and empirical theory when they approach international politics and security (Kolodziej, 2007:319).

The main postulates of constructivism are proved by the example envisaged in this paper, namely the deployment of the American missile shield on Romanian territory at Deveselu, because the policies of the two states are the result of the intersubjective sharing of ideas, norms and values at the level of state actors. A major contribution of the constructivism is the re-discovery of the nature of social product of the international world. The world of interactions between the international actors is eminently a social space and is regarded as a social creation as a whole, just as its defining components are social products.

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