

DEFINING THE LIBERAL CONCEPT OF SECURITY: LIBERALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON SECURITY SYSTEMS

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Abstract: *Free The present paper deals with the liberal concept of security. This concept plays a very important role in rendering the manner in which modern societies act in the present-day economic, social or political environment due to the fact that many of the states, which are considered to be superpowers, and many international communities have enacted laws or have initiated interventions, either military or humanitarian ones, under the concepts highlighted by the philosophy of liberalism. This paper lays emphasis upon the theoretical aspects of liberalism as well as its influence on the security systems.*

Keywords: *liberalism, global security, international organizations, NATO, UN, OSCE, IMF.*

1. INTRODUCTION

First of all, it is important to define *liberalism*. This field appeared in Europe in the 18th century and it was developed around the ideas initiated by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). He is also considered the founder of the current named *idealist criticism*, presented in the philosopher's book, *Zum ewigen Frieden*. In this book, he praised the idea of Europe becoming a federal state, a very good example being the present-day *European Union*.

Kant thought that this Union had to go through a few processes, such as: creating a *republican constitution*, which would be adopted later by all the states from the coalition, creating a pacifist union of the states from the Union and allowing its citizens to walk freely, without being stopped at borders, within the framework of the Union, which can be illustrated by today's example of *Schengen*.

This society would have its foundation on the fundamental rights of men, received at birth and standing for the right to live, freedom and property. No power has the right to remove these rights.

Thus, it could be said that liberalism is an ideological current, socially as well as politically based on promoting ideas like

liberty and equality. Its main components are: constitutionalism, democracy, elections, human rights, free commerce, religious liberty or moral values.

2. LIBERALISM IN POLITICS AND ECONOMY

Liberalism, as a political doctrine, tries to diminish the power that the state could impose on its citizens. In other words, people have the right to practice their own interests and ideas, as long as these features do not endanger the rights and liberties of the other members of society.

Liberalists say that democratic states have more power than the totalitarian ones. The democratic state can be involved in several conflicts, but a democratic country will never attack another state, which has the same ideology. This idea was again based on Kant's concepts. The critics consider that this concept could be used as a pretext by the democratic countries, which want to attack totalitarian states (Chan, 1997:59). For instance, experts say that this pretext was used by the USA to attack Iraq.

This idea is represented in John Herz's concept, the *Security Dilemma Theory*, which is highlighted in the *Concept of Security* by

Radu Sebastian Ungureanu (2006:183). If a state tries to consolidate its security, it will automatically create a state of insecurity for another state, which tries to obtain the same thing. This will lead to a weakening of the international security system.

From an economic perspective, liberalism tries to diminish the intervention of the state and promote the idea of free market. Liberalists consider that states have to cooperate, a good example in this sense being *Schengen*. This interdependence will prevent states from attacking each other in order not to obliterate this economic prosperity. Also, an important role is held by organizations like the *International Monetary Fund*, which is perceived as an entity, which consolidates the relationship between states.

Liberalism is opposed to *realism*, which saw the international community as a jungle. The liberalists perceived this community as a garden, which could be taken care of in order to consolidate the global security (Doyle, 1997:19). Experts say that liberalism promotes four major ideas: *individual freedom* (people have the right to apply the rights they received at birth as long as they do not threaten the rights of the others), *property* (including the right to security and life), *individual responsibility* (each person is responsible for his/her actions), *equality in front of the law* (the actions are judged in the same way, for everyone, irrespective of wealth, sex, nationality). When it comes to international relations, it is important to mention three distinct branches: *international liberalism*, *neoliberalism* and *regime theory*.

The first case was influenced directly by the American president *Woodrow Wilson*, who suggested that the states should transfer their internal philosophy to the foreign policy. It refers to the intervention of some states in order to consolidate the global security. This was noticed in *World War I*, when Wilson convinced the Congress and the population to quit the old *Monroe Doctrine*. This doctrine was initiated by the former president, *James Monroe* (1817-1825) who adopted in the USA an isolationist ideology, especially because of the tensions with Spain. Thus, Wilson convinced the legislative branch that it is vital

to intervene in the war against the *Central Powers*.

Then the ideas of international liberalism were used in the *14 Points Act*, which stipulated, among others, the creation of the *Society of Nations* (or the *League of Nations*), the UN's ancestor, that is, one of the main elements of the present-day liberalism: state alliances aim at creating and consolidating the global security. But, it has to be mentioned that the document was an important failure for Wilson just like the *Versailles Treaty*, which tried to reconstruct the post-war Europe on an American foundation. The Congress refused to ratify the document and the USA did not enter the League of Nations. Also, it is worth to mention that international liberalism lost its power towards the end of the 20th century.

Specialists divided the historical development of liberalism into four distinct phases:

- 1) defining the concept through features like idealism and international liberalism;
- 2) integrating liberalism (because of the connections between liberalism and international as well as regional integration);
- 3) interdependent liberalism (developing economic and social factors in the context of the relations and international organizations);
- 4) institutional liberalism.

3. COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND WEAPONS CONTROL

Liberalists say that the world peace and security could be maintained and developed only through the cooperation of the states. Also, the world peace should be maintained not only by military interventions, but also by implementing measures like protecting and promoting the individual rights. For example, liberalists think that the fight against terrorism could also be done with legislative measures, not only through military activities. It is important to mention two concepts which form the trend of liberalism in security: *collective security* and *weapons control*.

Collective security is basically the concept which was used when *NATO* was created. Thus, it is a protection measure adopted by several allied states. When one of these states

is threatened, then its allies intervene and annihilate the aggressor. This concept is based on participation and obligation, which means that all the states which form a community have to intervene in order to annihilate any threat to the alliance. Obviously, this is not the case of NATO, because some countries refused to participate in the Iraq or Afghanistan military intervention or Iceland, which is incapable of participating in such an intervention. It could be said that the objective of these countries is to annihilate all risks and to consolidate the global security or neutralize an enemy before he could make his move.

It could be said that the concept has the following features:

- *to prevent* (wars cannot be stopped, but the international organizations can prevent an aggressor to initiate operations),

- *to block* (the international organizations have to recognize the aggressors and stop them),

- *to annihilate* (the allies have the rational power and the aggressors are a threat to the international security and therefore they must be annihilated),

- *to discourage* (the international community has to inform the aggressor that they are against their actions and give them final warning to stop their actions).

At the level of global security, the *weapons control* is translated as having less weapons, which means having less insecurity elements for the states. Therefore, the officials try to reduce the number of weapons or remove weapons, but also try to intensify the disarming processes and annihilate the illegal weapon traffic. It is worth to mention that applying liberalism does not mean that wars do not exist, but it means that liberal states will intervene only to protect and consolidate their status or to defend their allies. For this reason, many specialists say that liberal states try just to protect their interests and not the international justice (Owen, 2004:95-96).

4. THE LIBERAL CONCEPT OF SECURITY

The liberal concept can be applied in the liberal pattern of security which is also an

optimistic pattern, which relies on political solutions, with the purpose of gaining and preserving peace. The liberal solution is based on the use of four instruments: *the international law, the international organizations, the political integration and democratization* (Badalan, 2009:73).

The *international law* is a judicial mechanism which communicates to several states a single perception regarding the international system. In fact, it offers the possibility of applying a series of rules that have the purpose of minimizing the tension and incertitude between states. This is why states promote the appliance of standards belonging to the international law.

Obviously, the international right is important when dealing with economic relations (concerning foreign trade, foreign currency transactions, etc.). But the main purpose of this instrument is to provide the possibility of solving some conflicts through judicial means and not through military interventions. A significant negative aspect of the international law represents the lack of a legislative body at a global level designated to adopt and implement the stipulations. This system is used by the European Union; its legislative body (consisting of representatives of all the states that are EU members) decides the norms, the rules that should be approved by all the countries of the Union.

Another negative aspect of this concept is the lack of an institution delegated to supervise and punish the violation of rules. For example, the *International Court of Justice* cannot intervene without the permission of the states. Therefore, the countries decide whether they implement or not the decisions which were taken at the international level and the manner in which they will supervise the fulfillment of these norms. It can be implied that the efficiency of these decisions taken through this instrument depend entirely on the interest of each state to make it happen. States will also decide if and how restrictions will be applied to states that do not fulfill the international rules. If states/an alliance of states decide/s to adopt the resolutions through this instrument, then the norms of the international right can be divided into judicial norms *with a general*

perspective, meaning that they are valid for all the states, and norms with *particular perspective*, which can be applied only for two or three states.

Analysts consider that a greater role in solving the global security issues (which seems head towards a war between the Occident and Iran) will be held by the *international organizations*. The existence and functionality of these organizations is based on the following issues: the participation of states as contracting parts, the existence of the multilateral treaties as constitutive parts, the existence of some common objectives or means, the making of an own constitutional structure. There are two large organizational categories: *intergovernmental and nongovernmental*. The intergovernmental organizations consist of states, they have specific procedures concerning the decisional process as well as headquarters. It deals with solving some global issues which concern different fields, such as: economic exchange, education, criminality, humanitarian assistance etc.

The international organizations can be classified as follows: 1. global organizations, such as: ONU, the World-Wide Organization of Commerce, UNESCO, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the World-Wide Organization of Health, the World-Wide Organization of Labor, IMF etc. 2. Intercontinental, regional, and sub-regional organizations, such as: UE, OSCE, the Organization of American States, the Arab League, etc.

When talking about nongovernmental organizations, it must be underlined the fact that only 10% of them have a global character, the rest being regional or intercontinental. The majority of these organizations are found in North America and aims at solving problems belonging to different fields, such as: economy, environment, health, culture, law, ethics, theology or security. They represent social groups that can mediate the signing of some treaties (generally between the states) concerning nongovernmental aspects (for example, the integration in society of persons who have AIDS or the pollution issue).

5. THE UN, NATO, EU, OSCIE, IFM

Some of the most important institutions of the world which must be mentioned are the *UN, NATO, EU, OSCIE* and *IFM*. The UN is the only organization in the world which has a global character. Nowadays, it consists of 190 members and the main purpose of the organization is to maintain peace and world security, to create and improve the economic and social cooperation, to assure the international cooperation which aims at the spread of respecting the human rights and fundamental freedom, without discrimination irrespective of race, sex, language or religion as well as developing friendly relations between the states (Miga-Besteliu, 2006:10-11). The ONU has been dealing with a lot of issues, such as: the *Korean War*, the *Kuwait War*, the *Suez Chanel*, *Afghanistan*, the *Iran-Iraq War* etc.

NATO represents an institution with regional character, but in the last few years it became extremely important due to the involvement of the Alliance in conflicts that do not aim directly at the NATO territory, or in other words, intervenes with the purpose of annihilating aggressors that do not represent a direct threat to the states of the Alliance. This fact is also due, to a certain extent, to NATO's capabilities of involvement all over the globe (based on an international warrant). The *EU* is very important nowadays because its leaders started to get involved in areas and states located near the European community (a recent example is Iran as a result of the nuclear program).

Also, when talking about *the International Monetary Fund*, it must be underlined the fact that this organization became very important due to the economic crises, which started in 2007. It could be said that the Fund has an important role in the legislative branch of the states which require financial support (like Romania nowadays). This has led to the populations' protests, which in turn led in many cases to the changing of the governments (Spain, Italy, Greece or Romania being some recent examples). It is important to mention that more and more organizations will have an important role in the global security

environment, organizations, such as: the Arab League or the Shanghai Organization.

The third instrument in the liberal security model is *political integration*, which is a process of creating new political communities and international institutions. Again, experts consider that this instrument is a way of forcing states to solve their problems through wars. Basically, its aim is to create and consolidate institutions which will have more power than the states which act on their own. A good example in this sense is the European Union, through different acts like the *Maastricht Act*. The states belonging to these institutions will never attack each other. Still, one of the weak points of the institutions is the contrast between the two sides which usually form such alliances, meaning the rich and the poor (a good example is again the European Union).

The last component of the liberal model is *democratization*. Experts consider that conflicts can be initiated by the political systems adopted states. According to the liberalists, wars cannot start between democratic states.

On the contrary, realists consider that wars will start irrespective of the regime, be it totalitarian or democratic. According to the liberalists, wars are determined among others by the inefficiency of the governments. A good example is that according to the UN documents, most states invest less than two dollars/person on education, but invest approximately 160 dollars/person on military equipment.

The liberal paradigm says that peace represents a major objective for maintaining economic prosperity and therefore, the increasing role of the democratic institutions is more and more important. Spreading democracy in the world will maintain peace (Moise, 2008:171).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Liberalists used the ideological concepts in order to directly influence the current foreign environment. The concepts of liberalism have their origin in the 19th century ideas enacted by philosophers. In the 20th century, there were

some branches which developed from liberalism, like the international liberalism created by the American president Woodrow Wilson.

Nowadays, the liberal model of security in the 21st century world has four big instruments: the international law, the international organizations, the political integrations and democratization. The international organizations will have a more and more vital role at the level of global security especially because of the tensions between Iran and the Occident.

Nobody knows clearly what are the advantages and disadvantages of these actions enacted by these organizations or of the leaders who use the liberal concepts. Though, it is clear that they have the power to decide the course of some state (for example, the recent NATO intervention in Libya) and we can say that nowadays the Occident depends on these concepts.

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