

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Schimbările care au loc pe mapamond fac ca relațiile internaționale să cuprindă practic toate sferele vieții sociale – de la cele politico-comerciale până la cele culturale, sportive. Relațiile dintre state, organizații internaționale, organizații nonguvernamentale și alți actori sunt exercitate prin intermediul politicii externe.

Prezentul articol este axat pe analiza principalelor teorii ale relațiilor internaționale în vederea aprofundării cunoștințelor în materie, dar și formării unei viziuni mai clare a cititorului privind rolul relațiilor internaționale la etapa contemporană prin prisma analizelor curentelor politice conceptuale.

The many political, economic and social changes in the last decades of the XXth century - the beginning of the XXIst century, has changed dramatically the world picture and led to the obvious transformation of international relations [1]. Currently, international relations include virtually all spheres of social life - from those commercial to cultural and sportive. Also, the actors have the same interests which belong to states, nongovernmental organizations. In contemporary literature of international relations Roman-Germanic etymon language, are often seen as political relations, as the sphere of interest and activity of states, as the sphere of relations of power and influence.

Thus, international relations can be addressed as: the totality of economic, political, ideological, legal, diplomatic relations, between states and systems of states; between the major social, economic and political forces; organizations and social movements activating in the international arena. Another definition of international relations is appreciated as relations between states and non-governmental organizations; political parties, companies, individuals from different countries. Trying to escape the boundaries of interstate relations, international relations are to be seen as the „totality of integrationist relations, which are formed in human society”. Such an interpretation, however, highlights the question of international relations aimed to participants or actors.

Often, in the literature of specialty the actors of international relations are considered as a starting point of research in this field. Thus, according to P.Aron, international relations are relations between political units since the concept includes Greek polishes, Roman and Egypt empires, but also the European monarchies, bourgeois republics or popular democracies. The content of international relations involves, first of all, relations between states. Also, according to researcher, international relations also mean peace or war relations, due to its nature and content. The peculiarities of international relations imply the possibility of either, and therefore contain an element of risk. Based on these assumptions, P.Aron considers international relations as a „natural” condition of society

In the international relations sphere dominates the „pluralism of sovereignties” and therefore, there is no monopoly on violence, each participant of international relations, in its actions and behavior is clear from the behavior of other actors. Similar ideas are submitted and by other researchers, highlighting the fact that international relations are characterized by lack of consensus among participants with reference to common values, but according to certain rules, reinforced by moral and legal norms, lack of central power.

However, against to his ideas of P.Aron, there are G.Caporaso, who believes that the main actors in the contemporary world of international relations are not states, but social economic groups and political forces. D.Synger, the representative of behaviorist school, propose to study the behavior of all participants of international relations - from individual to global community. D.Rosenau forward the idea that, structural changes, that have taken place in recent decades from world politics have become the main causes of relations between peoples and communities, have contributed to the transformations of these relations. The main actor is, in this case, not the state, but people, individuals. The result of changes in the sphere of international relations is the formation of so-called continuity.

Thus, from these interpretations, international relations can be classified on the basis of the social-economic, political, strategic-military, cultural, ideological, or depending on the participants - international relations, relations between the parties, organizations, and transnational corporations. Depending on the level and intensity of international relations there can be highlighted differences of the high, low or medium level. A classification of levels of international relations has been based on geopolitical criteria: global (or planetary), regional (European, Asian), sub regional [2].

Theoretical school of liberalism is one of the oldest in international relations theory. Researchers of this paradigm fundaments their theoretical conceptions based on the works of J.Locke, Im. Kant, J.-J.Rousseau, J.Mill, A.Smith, D. Ricardo. The liberal concepts in international relations theory have experienced periods of boom – from the beginning and end of the twentieth century. Liberalism is bound with the name of the 28th U.S. president - W.Wilson, who started the work on the open foreign policy and diplomacy, the same orientation in foreign policy after the democratic principles of mutual relations, cooperation and morality.

Liberal conceptions on human nature differ from the realists. They show human tendency toward cooperation, peace, based on the principles of justice and morality (that is why the concept is called idealism). Liberals stresses the need to develop values oriented towards unification of humanity, is against militarism; promote international free trade idea; expressed for „open diplomacy”.

The main thesis of classical liberalism reduces to the following:

1. Man, by nature, is not aggressive, being prone to collaboration.
2. War is the result of inconsistencies between states, nations that can be solved by joint efforts.
3. The international community should recognize the need of international institutions as a mean of prevention armed conflicts.
4. States must rebuild their political systems, such as democratic governance within each country to contribute to peace and stability to develop interstate cooperation.
5. On the international arena there act not only factors of force, but also of other measures, such as economic and moral.

After the end of the Cold War, during which the theory of international relations there have been prevailed realists and neorealist, it was again established the liberal school age. This direction changes, due to new realities, in neoliberalism. Neoliberals emphasize the correlation between politics and economics; as particularly limiting, at the end of the XXth century, of military force. Neoliberals accept the role of the state in the world arena, but believe that this is not the sole actor. Along with states, in contemporary world intergovernmental, universal, regional, specialized organizations act according to the field of activity, as well as NGOs, etc.

Theoretical school of political realism derived from the works of thinkers such as: Thucydides, N.Machiavelli, Th. Hobbes etc. Among its representatives there are also E.Carr, G.Kennan, Morgenthau H., R. Niebuhr, K. W. Thomson. Realism - the current of international relations theory. It appeared in the first half of the twentieth century, as a critical of moral and Utopian concepts in politics, who ignored the realities of international arena. According to political realism, the essence of international relations is determined by the absence of general rules, of a control center.

Adherents of political realism argue that the main actor in international relations is the state, whose policy in this area is driven by national interests. The state, whose interests are constantly subjected to threats, has to pay particular attention to its own security, mobilizing the principal means - diplomacy and strategy - to achieve national interests. According to the realist vision, the most effective means of ensuring peace is the balance of power that has emerged not only as a result of collision of national interests and culture of unity, mutual respect for the rights of each and agreement on principles governing basic humanity. Realism was popular during the 40s-70s of the twentieth century; it reflects the realities of the Second World War, and then - the Cold War. The main theses of classical realism are reduced to the following:

1. International relations is the interaction of states, which by their essence, are homogeneous.
2. State interactions are performed chaotic, since there is no power, a center of power of the state. As a result, international relations are „anarchic”.
3. The main goal of the activity states in the international arena is the tendency to have priority, to prevail, especially in the military, which guarantees the security of states.
4. States are leaded first of all by their own interests. Especially the interests' category defends them upon speculative abuse on morality.

5. The political reality differs from the economic policy; for the policy the main issue is power, while for the economy - welfare.
6. In international relations, where the power factor dominates, states must always be prepared at the highest level, to contradictions.

By the early of '80s political realism paradigm has undergone some changes. Following the theoretical and methodological review, embodied in the critique of K. Waltz, it appeared neoliberalism. Waltz based his scientific conclusions on deductive method, indicating that the old realist theses have to be modified in scientific theory.

Currently, on the basis of neomarxism it is fixed the belief in the human progress with the development of capitalism, the need for demarcation of the interests of the rich countries by the poorest ones- of the North by South. Therefore, there have been proposed some theoretical explanations, which are quite apart from the Leninist approach of developing global capitalism and imperialist contradictions; it's about dependency theory, the theory of structural inequality, the world system theory.

These characteristics confirm that each paradigm proposes answers to various problems, use their arguments to their explanation, draw a lot of categories and methodological means. They can be used in daily practice.

So far, researches in this field did not give a generally accepted a theory accepted unanimously of foreign policy, with its own object of study, research methods and device categories. In the literature of speciality there have been crystallized several theories within the current.

Depending on the author, the notion of foreign policy acquires a different meaning or a specific colour. From the representatives of the traditionalist current, „the foreign policy of the state manifests itself as a whole, as determined by history, which may not be quantified”.

Thus, representatives of political realism (H.Morgenthau, R.Aron, J.Kennan, P.Osgud, A.Wallferce) foreign policy of the state is the main element of the international system. Although they didn't draw attention to the complex and ambivalent nature of foreign policy, they highlight its connections with the internal politics and international life, with psychology and organization theory, with the economic and social structure, etc. This approach has provided to critics of political realism – the advocates of modernist theories – a vivid research field of political activity outside the states, focusing on some methods specific to sociology, psychology, economics, mathematics, anthropology, computer science, etc.

In these approaches, it deserves to be noticed the methods used by systems theories: the method of modeling, situational method and structure functional analysis, game theory, etc. These have provided by adherents of systemic approach (D.Singer, Q.Wright, K.Deutsch, T.Shelling, etc.) using the opportunity to check their own assumptions in forecasting foreign policy, based on empirical researches, deductive considerations, internal-external correlations, and to carry out a systematization of the factors influencing the international guidelines of governments to create appropriate database and investigate the processes of making foreign policy decisions.

The application of systems theory meant a step forward both in theory, and also in methodology in the study of international relations as a result of the country give up to approaches „centripetal” within international relations, conceived as an „amount” of foreign policies of states. Another merit of the followers of this theory lies in expanding the number of actors in the international system by including (with states) the international organizations, political parties, religious movements and transnational economic organizations. In the 60s of the twentieth century, in the U.S. there appears more works in the field. According to D. Singer, foreign policy can be explored from two perspectives: 1) internal influences, that take place within state borders and 2) external influences, outside its borders.

A particular impetus to the systemic approach is known also the cyber communications theory, an outstanding representative of which is K.Deutsch. Explaining the cybernetic approach to foreign policy, K.Deutsch resembled a game of pool. His theory is criticized by French researchers of international relations, P.-F. Gonidec and R.Charvin, which notes that, unlike physics, in international life encountered obstacles by subjects may be caused not only by direct influences (predictable), but also by hidden influences (interests).

Directions and analysis levels of modernist theory were diversified in the measure of democratizing the principles of scientific research. It became increasingly obvious to separate them according to two criteria: methodological and theoretical level. However, operation with theoretical categories that can be verified

empirically lead to conducting researches, characterized by reductionism, and fragmentation of the objects of study and de facto by the denial of the specific foreign policy and international relations.

Of the over 30 theories appeared within the modernist current (behavioral) in the 60s of the twentieth century, there deserves to be mentioned: the theory of international conflicts, integration theory and the foreign policy in decision-making theory (or the theory of foreign policy). Thus, the research process in foreign policy in decision-making is considered both in terms of methodology, as a principle of foreign policy analysis, and also on the level of theoretical construction, with its own subject of study. This is one of the main reasons that the issue of foreign policy-making continues to make the subject of study numerous particular theories, in the absence of a comprehensive meta-theory.

Following the spread of behavioral theory and the theory of „rational decisions” (based on the theory of „game”), in the '70s in the U.S. it was spread the concept „**bureaucratic process of making decisions of foreign policy**”. Representatives of this concept consider that the actions of foreign policy are represented as the result of interaction of different state structures and of compromise of interests. Noting the role that has the bureaucracy in this process, followers of this concept chose the object of analysis of decision-making process, absolutizing its importance.

A more complex model of decision-making process in the field of foreign policy has been developed by British researcher -J. Burton. Advocate of the structuralist-functional current in order of analyzing foreign policy he introduced the scheme „stimulus-response”. This model is based on the so-called „change factors” (primary and secondary) which act outside the border states. In his view, the primary vectors (factors) would be represented geographically, geologically, by biosphere, and those secondary appears as a result of secondary social interaction (the social groups). Also, in analysis of the process of decision making of foreign policy a growing application finds a theory is „based on some methods which are simulators, and the theory of zero and nonzero-sum game”.

With reference to researches conducted in the last decades of the twentieth century in foreign policy sphere, international relations theory scholars admit failure in creating a meta-theory. Despite this, the researcher J.Rosenau proposes a „proto-theory” of foreign policy, in which factors that influence on it form a global system [3]. Thus, Rosenau proposes five variables linking foreign policy of the state with the international relations system, as follows:

1. elite (personality) policy;
2. elite role in developing foreign policy;
3. governmental factors affecting political behavior externally;
4. social, economic, cultural, ethical, development factors influencing actions internally and externally;
5. relations between states and international factors influencing foreign policy (geographical factor, the size of the state, ideology, etc.).

J.Rosenau separated factors influencing foreign policy: external (related to international system) and internal (government, society, the political elite). Although the Rosenau's „proto-theory” doesn't represent a paradigm which would explain foreign policy of states, his concept brings new elements in foreign policy theory because of interconnections of internal-external systems which identify them.

A more detailed concept in determining *internal* and *external* factors that contributes to formation foreign policy is proposed by M.-R. Djalili and Ph.Braillard on the basis of four approaches of the decisions' making. Among the internal factors there are mentioned: the physical (geographical situation of the state, its natural resources and demographic situation), structural factors (political institutions, economic organizations, resources, etc.), and the cultural and human factors (culture, ideology, collective mentality, personality). Of the external factors it is included: the international system, the actions of other states and common resources.

The concept of „foreign policy” must be viewed in the broader coordinates, in order to examine the internal sources, tools and models of development, because the set of these components may be changed over time and substantial influence on the character of state activity [4]. Internal sources can be interpreted as ideo-political, socio-economic, institutional and bureaucratic sets. The set of ideo-political sources is implicit „the world picture” and its place within the state, social consciousness embodied in the acceptance of political elites, state leaders, based on which is formed the main ideas on the promotion of foreign policy. Social-bureaucratic sources involve aggregation of economic interests and material of individuals and social groups [5]. The latter set of external sources of power requires a determined system of power, different for states in particular, and policy making apparatus.

The set of instruments to achieve foreign policy by the state may be quite large. From one end of the spectrum there is the use of force, directed towards providing interests of the state, including the methods of violence, namely the use of armed force. On the other hand, at the other end there is diplomacy, understood as a complex of instruments and non-violent methods to ensure state interests. According P.A. Țăgăncov, there are two ways that states can achieve their foreign policy: military strategies and diplomacy. The two complement each other and make up the foreign policy of the state. Other traditional forms of realization of foreign policy are: initiation, weakening or breaking off relations, opening representative offices in the state of international and regional organizations as a member or participating in them, at different levels to achieve and maintain contacts with representations of other states, parties and movements with which the state has no relationship, but is interested in maintaining dialogue on solving problems. Analyzing the means to carry out foreign policy to achieve specific purposes we can include the following: political, economic, military, informational.

To the political means, first of all, the investigator assigns the diplomacy as the official state activity through specialized institutions, achieved through specific measures, procedures, methods, accepted by the position of international law and that have a legal-constitutional status [6]. Diplomacy is done through negotiations, visits, conferences, bilateral and multilateral conferences, diplomatic correspondence, and participation in the work of international organizations.

By means of international foreign policy is understood the use of economic potential of the state to achieve its objectives. The state that has a strong economy and a high financial capacity, occupies an important place in the international arena. Even countries where the territory is small, don't have enough human and material resources, can play an important role in the world arena, if they have a basis and competitive economy, based on advanced technologies and are able to expand their achievements beyond the borders. Active economic means are embargo, the regime of most favored nation clause, providing investments, credit and lending or refusing to grant them.

By military means external policy envisages the state's military force - the army, the quantity and quality of weapons, the moral status of the military, the existence of military bases and nuclear weapons. Military means can influence both directly and indirectly towards other countries. To indirect means refers, according to the researcher, the arms race, which includes producing and experimenting with some types of new weapons, exercises and military maneuvers, developing effective methods of application of force.

The means of propaganda include the entire arsenal of contemporary media, propaganda methods, which are used to strengthen authority and to complete the image of state in the international arena, thus contributing to ensuring the confidence of allies and potential partners. Due to the mass-media, it is built a positive a favorable image of the state, or contrary it is expressed dissatisfaction to with certain events. Frequently the means of propaganda are used also for public opinion misinformation.

As for other non-state actors of international relations, such as church, transnational companies, etc. their external relationships are generally carried out, as a rule, outside of state foreign policy, being also a part of international politics.

Given that the number and type of international actors is continuously growing, now it can be hardly determined the goals of foreign policy. When referring to the states - the main actors of the international system - the main goal of their foreign policy is designed either as „*providing their own interests by any means allowed*”, being extended to „*insurance of international favorable conditions for realizing the interests of a state*”, or reduced to „*promotion peace relations and good neighborly and integration into the global community*” or understood in a more realistic - „*States must do what is necessary (which circumstances so require) and thus sometimes evade obligations*”. In the latter respect, most countries promote their foreign policy objectives according to specific goals and interests arising from the fact that the international system, the regional geopolitical situation, as well as their own political considerations, historical, cultural and mentality of the elite [7].

State structures have specialized organs, competent in carrying out political activity, and of the control over these activities: Ministry of Foreign Affairs or External Relations, departments or parliamentary committees responsible for carrying out foreign policy, the embassies, containing specialists in military matters, economic (representatives of Chambers), scientific and cultural attaches, working under the supervision of embassies and representations abroad, on the basis of programs, formal or semi missions. Foreign policy,

through the submitted goals, by the means and methods for achieving these goals reflect the internal situation of the state. It is based on available resources, also on the professional potential.

Government's foreign policy objectives are defined, promoted and justified to public according to certain goals and ethical finalities that governments share in order to achieve their interests, including maintaining state sovereignty and state independence or for security insurance and social welfare [8]. Sometimes, foreign policy may be, according to J.Holsti, an expression of charitable impulse that is to assist poor countries and victims of natural or humanitarian disasters.

In terms of international law and the affirmation of its basic principles, democratic values, including human rights and fundamental freedoms, the foreign policy of state must increasingly take into account more and more to develop and promote their interests both at external and internal level. Hence, states are forced to realize their foreign policy based on the following international principles:

- nonaggression or threat of force;
- settlement of international disputes by peaceful means;
- noninterference in internal affairs of other states;
- international cooperation;
- equal rights of peoples and their right to decide their own fate;
- sovereign equality of states;
- fulfillment in good faith the obligations assumed;
- inviolability of borders;
- territorial integrity of states;
- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

After, J.K. Holsti, the value and maximum requirement of these principles is that „no state may seek to achieve, maximize and protect its objectives of foreign policy, thereby damaging the major interests of another state”. In fact, these principles are rather as external constraints, where states decide their own foreign policy on different considerations, in terms of: the degree of interdependence and interaction levels, political system, government system, the configuration of internal and external political, moral religious values, interests and political culture of elites, and other short term factors that influence or determine the changes of balance of power the status-quo.

However, foreign policy requires also the state activity in international relations system. This activity takes an undeniable importance. Especially in this contest, there are met the interests of states on the issue of disarmament, safeguarding state security, disaster prevention, combating terrorism and crime. The state makes its interests through political activity which is quite varied, and represents itself as an imperative attribute [9].

The political activity of state can be understood not only in a narrow sense, limited, as an activity in one or another area. Any social activity is oriented to a specific activity. It includes not only the practical actions of the subjects, but also it determines, develops goals and content of its activity. In the literature of speciality these sides differ and are analyzed separately: 1. the process of developing goals and content of political activity; 2. the policy making process. Directions and goals of political activity do not demand a distinction (in this case they form a whole) and here the political activity of states is investigated as a whole [10]. Especially in this sense, it is both „an agent” of relationship of interdependence between domestic political and socio-economic relations, and also of interstate relations. According to the Romanian political analyst Silviu Brucan, the foreign policy activity „spread” reactions to a series of internal and external incentives; it considers the nations as systems with *inputs*, *outputs* and *feedback* in constant interaction with the international environment. In his view the primary sources of foreign policy are included in the five variable sets: the natural and material bases, social structure and social forces, the state system, the management.

The first criteria of material-natural base include territorial size, geographical location and the forces of production. The social structure and social forces include classes and social groups, the main relations between them, nationalities and nations, each with its ideology and consciousness, cultural and historical traditions, with psychological impulses and moods that make them work inside and outside the country [11]. Economic and political crises, hits the state, elections, massive strikes, violence on large-scale, military hostilities and war are included in short term factors. State system includes the national a decision mechanism, the state apparatus and government, their power tools.

All these variables have an international dimension, necessarily reflected in how people and their leaders see the country's role in world politics. Beginning with territory size, geographical location and its resources, which all have a relative value compared with other countries, and reach the general criteria of development, which it has to be reported on international indices - all variables in of infrastructure acquire valuable of foreign policy development, only if they are measured on a global scale.

The foreign policy of a state has as support the economic, demographic, military, technical, scientific and cultural potential. Geopolitical location of the state during the historical evolution dominated in election by the state the partners and development its relations with opponents [12]. Conditions of geographical area are considered some of the basic causes, whose presence implies a certain political orientation of the state. Close correlation of geographic area - political, under the principle of causality, allows according to the researchers' concept the possibility of generalizations, law formulations and principles of universal validity data, which would help to found the theoretical geopolitics [13].

Lying at the junction of three macro-regions - Central Europe, Balkans and CIS, the Republic of Moldova tries to find its place in the international arena.

Thus, through foreign policy it is understood the state activity in international affairs or state activity on international arena which rule relations with other subjects of foreign policy activity: states, parties, international and regional nongovernmental organizations. The foreign policy of the state must be understood as a specific historical category - it does not exist outside of space and time. The essence of spatial factor is that external world is a material world, which occupies a certain space, its characteristics that often create limits of political behavior within the given state. And the time factor is determined by those that foreign policy is state activity within a certain time. It has a practical character, that state, meanwhile, proposes its goals and problems to be solved.

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