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SECURITY CONCEPT: ITS ESSENCE AND FUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION AS A POLITICAL CATEGORY

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Abstract: This study analyzes the theoretical essence of the concept of security, its modern political and philosophical interpretations, as well as its functional aspects as a political category. The interrelationship between traditional (military-political) and expanded (economic, social, environmental, and human) approaches to security is highlighted. The evolution of the concept of security, its role in the international relations system, and its importance in protecting the interests of the state, society, and individuals are also examined on a scientific basis. The study substantiates the necessity of understanding security as a complex, multidimensional, and systemic phenomenon.

Keywords: security, political category, regional security, security strategy, international relations, security model, threats.

The essence of security lies in protecting the interests of the state, society, and individuals from various risks and threats, as well as creating the necessary conditions for sustainable development. In contemporary international relations, the concept of security has expanded beyond the military sphere to encompass political, economic, environmental, informational, energy, and cybersecurity dimensions.

Central Asia is located in the heart of the Eurasian continent and has historically developed as a crossroads of civilizations, trade routes, and geopolitical interests. This strategic location has enhanced the region's significance in international politics, making it an area where the interests of major powers and global centers of influence intersect. At the same time, the region's internal development characteristics, the dynamics of interstate relations, resource distribution, and socio-demographic processes make security issues in Central Asia a complex and multidimensional phenomenon.

Following their independence, the Central Asian states underwent important stages in the formation of national statehood institutions, the consolidation of political stability, and the achievement of economic development. As a result, it became necessary to approach security issues not only from military or political perspectives but also in close connection with such factors as economic stability, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability[1]. As application to the specific conditions of Central Asia. Through this analysis, the study aims to develop a coherent, systematic, and scientifically grounded framework for understanding and a result, the concept of regional security has broadened, evolving into a comprehensive framework that encompasses interstate cooperation, institutional mechanisms, and long-term strategic approaches aimed at ensuring stability, sustainable development, and the effective management of common challenges and threats. In this context, the geopolitical and strategic significance of the Central Asian region, as well as the theoretical and methodological foundations for studying security issues, are analyzed

[1] Central_Asia_New_Gre at.pdf https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/109548/Central_Asia_New_Great.pdf

from a scientific perspective. Particular attention is given to the evolution of the concept of security, the principal approaches within regional security theories, and their assessing regional security.

In fact, the key elements and terminology of the concept of security—particularly security strategies, mechanisms of cooperation, and the role of international institutions—are of fundamental importance. Security strategies are generally formulated and implemented at both the national and regional levels. They encompass such areas as counterterrorism, combating illicit drug trafficking, preventing and resolving ethnic conflicts, and ensuring economic stability. International organizations, especially the United Nations (UN), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and other regional cooperation frameworks, play a crucial role in the development and implementation of these strategies. These institutions contribute to strengthening cooperation with the international community and provide effective platforms for dialogue, coordination, and collective action aimed at maintaining regional and international security.

Evolution of the Concept of Security: the traditional approach. The classical understanding of security was developed within the realist school of international relations, which views the state as the principal actor in the international system and defines security primarily in terms of military and political stability. According to this approach, the foremost responsibility of the state is to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence against external threats. During the Cold War, this paradigm dominated both academic and policy discussions, and the prevailing assumption was that security could be achieved mainly through the maintenance of a balance of power and the enhancement of military capabilities. Consequently, issues such as national defense, strategic deterrence, military alliances, and geopolitical competition occupied a central place in security thinking, while non-military dimensions of security received relatively limited attention[2].

By the end of the twentieth century, it became evident that the traditional security model was no longer sufficient to explain the complex nature of emerging threats and challenges. Economic crises, environmental disasters, demographic pressures, migration flows, and transnational crime demonstrated that security could not be ensured solely through military power. As a result, a broader and more comprehensive understanding of security began to emerge, giving rise to the expanded security model. According to the concept developed by Barry Buzan, security consists of five major sectors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. This approach emphasizes that threats to security may arise not only from armed conflicts and military aggression but also from political instability, economic vulnerability, social fragmentation, and environmental degradation. Consequently, ensuring security requires a multidimensional and integrated strategy that addresses both traditional and non-traditional sources of insecurity[3]. The expanded security model has become particularly relevant for Central Asia, where security challenges are closely interconnected. Issues such as water resource management, environmental degradation, labor migration, economic dependence, demographic change, and cross-border threats illustrate the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach to security. Therefore, contemporary security studies increasingly recognize that long-term stability and development can only be achieved through the integration of military, political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions within a unified security framework.

[2] Белокрылова Е.А., Кологерманская Е.М., Бевзюк Е.А. Комментарий к Федеральному закону от 28 декабря 2010 г. N 390-ФЗ "О безопасности". - Специально для системы ГАРАНТ, 2015 г.
[3] Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991), 75–120.bet

This approach makes it possible to link security not only to the interests of the state but also to the security of society and individuals. In the context of Central Asia, this model is particularly significant, as many of the region's security challenges are directly associated with economic vulnerabilities and environmental problems.

In particular, water scarcity, climate change, and the crisis of the Aral Sea have elevated environmental security to an integral component of regional security strategies. These challenges transcend national borders and require coordinated regional responses, as their consequences affect economic development, public health, social stability, and interstate relations across the region. At the same time, the insufficient level of economic integration among Central Asian states continues to hinder sustainable development and may negatively affect social stability. Limited economic interdependence, disparities in development levels, and barriers to regional cooperation can contribute to unemployment, labor migration pressures, and social inequalities, thereby generating indirect threats to security. Consequently, strengthening regional economic cooperation, promoting sustainable resource management, and addressing environmental challenges have become essential elements of a comprehensive security framework in Central Asia.

From this perspective, security should be understood not merely as the absence of military threats but as a multidimensional condition that ensures political stability, economic resilience, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Such a comprehensive approach reflects contemporary security studies and provides a more effective analytical framework for understanding the complex and interconnected challenges facing Central Asia in the twenty-first century. Contemporary security threats in Central Asia Extremism and radicalism are among the major factors threatening security in Central Asia. These phenomena are often associated with socio-economic problems, unemployment, and shortcomings in the education system, while also possessing a transboundary nature. As a result, they extend beyond the borders of individual states and pose challenges to regional stability and security as a whole[4].

In the overall development process of security systems, the importance of the regional security factor has been increasing alongside a growing awareness of regional specificity and relative autonomy. This situation differs fundamentally from the structural configuration of the Cold War period. Consequently, contemporary security problems are historical in nature and are closely interconnected with regional forms of social systems. For this reason, the concept of "regional security" is currently highly relevant.

This, in turn, places the necessity of studying regional security as a distinct category on the agenda. Previously, it was developed mainly within the framework of interpreting universal principles of state, national, and societal security. Regional security is an important component of the international relations system, referring to a process aimed at maintaining stability within a specific geographical area, ensuring security, and promoting cooperation between states[5]. Security is a political category that refers to the state in which the vital interests of individuals, society, and the state are protected from internal and external threats. According to contemporary approaches, security is defined not only by the absence of military threats but also by political stability, economic development, social well-being, and the protection of human rights.

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[4] John Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order* (London: Routledge, 2009), chap. 6, "Security and Sovereignty", 97–112 bet https://www.routledge.com/Post-Conflict-Tajikistan-The-politics-of-peacebuilding-and-the-emergence-oflegitimate-order/Heathershaw/p/book/9780415620086

[5] Динамика развития взаимоотношений между Европейским Союзом и странами Центральной Азии в контексте современных геополитических реалий

In conclusion, the above analyses demonstrate that the concept of security in the Central Asian region has undergone a profound transformation in its essence, and that regional security strategies have become highly relevant and increasingly important in today's conditions.

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