

National Security: Essence and Perspectives (2019)

II. Deepening and broadening security

L5: Societal security

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L5 topics:

- Conceptual clarity
- Society and societal identity from security perspective
- Threats to societal identity
- Defending societal identity
- Societal security dilemma

Conceptual clarity

- **Comprehensive security** (B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold-War Era*, 1991) – “Societal sector of security” refers to the sustainable development of traditional patterns of language, culture, religious and national identities and customs of states. This means, society is the sector where the state can be destabilised through threats to its language, culture, religion or other customs.

Conceptual clarity (2)

Societal security (Ole Weaver+ *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, 1993)

- Societal concerns had become increasingly important as compared to concerns over state sovereignty in contemporary Europe (Time of the wars in former Yugoslavia).
- “Societal sector of security” is not enough to understand the contemporary relations between identity and security. What was required was a referent object of security (something that has to survive) beyond the state
- **Duality of state and societal security through reconceptualisation of the notion of survival**
 - The state security is concerned with threats to its sovereignty, territory, and borders - if a state loses its sovereignty it will not survive as a state
 - If a society loses its identity it will not survive as a society (at least, not in the same form).
 - Society must be secured by the state (reference object of security), while society may secure the state (reference subject of security)

Key questions of societal security

1. How can society be conceived as a referent object in its own right;
2. What is societal identity and how can it be threatened; and
3. How can societies defend themselves in the face of such threat

Society and societal identity from security perspective

- Security actions are always taken on behalf of, and with reference to a **collectivity**
- Societal security is concerned with the security **OF society as a whole**, but not the **security of social groups IN the society**
- Societies are formed by a sense of collective **identity** : where collective identity is defined, it enables the word **WE** to be used

Framework

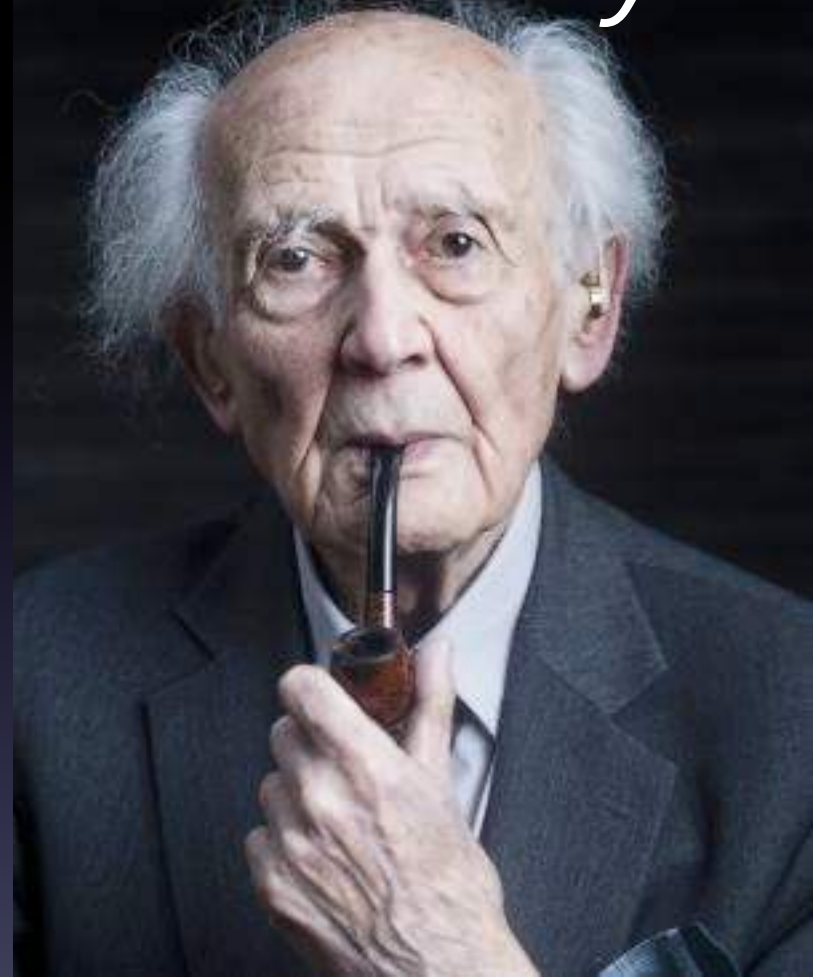
1. In security studies, societies are different from social groups and individuals. As the state security, the security of society could not be approached as sum of the social groups and individuals - society is an entity possessing a reality of its own.
2. They can operate as units in the international system – their reactions to threats against their identity have a significant political effect.
3. They have the right to survive

Points to be considered

- *Societal* and *social* are not synonyms and not always refer to the *population* – Bulgarian society is that population contained by the Bulgarian state (as a nation-state) but which is composed by several societal units – Bulgarians, Turks, gypsies, as well as religious groups – orthodox Christians, Muslims,...
- Societal security can be defined as the maintenance of distinct ethnic and religious identities

The challenge of *liquid modernity*

Zygmunt Bauman: many previously solid things have become fluid – jobs, sexual orientation, relationships, places of residence. Society is no longer held together by a collective project that offers the individual a sense of cohesion and direction.



Threats to societal identity

- Threats to societal security exist when a society *perceives* (objectively or not) that its **WE-identity is being brought into question** through various **repressive measures against expression of identity**
 - forbidding the use of language, names, and dress (cultural cleansing);
 - closure of places of worships;
 - deportation from traditional living areas – ethnic cleansing;
 - mass killing (genocide)

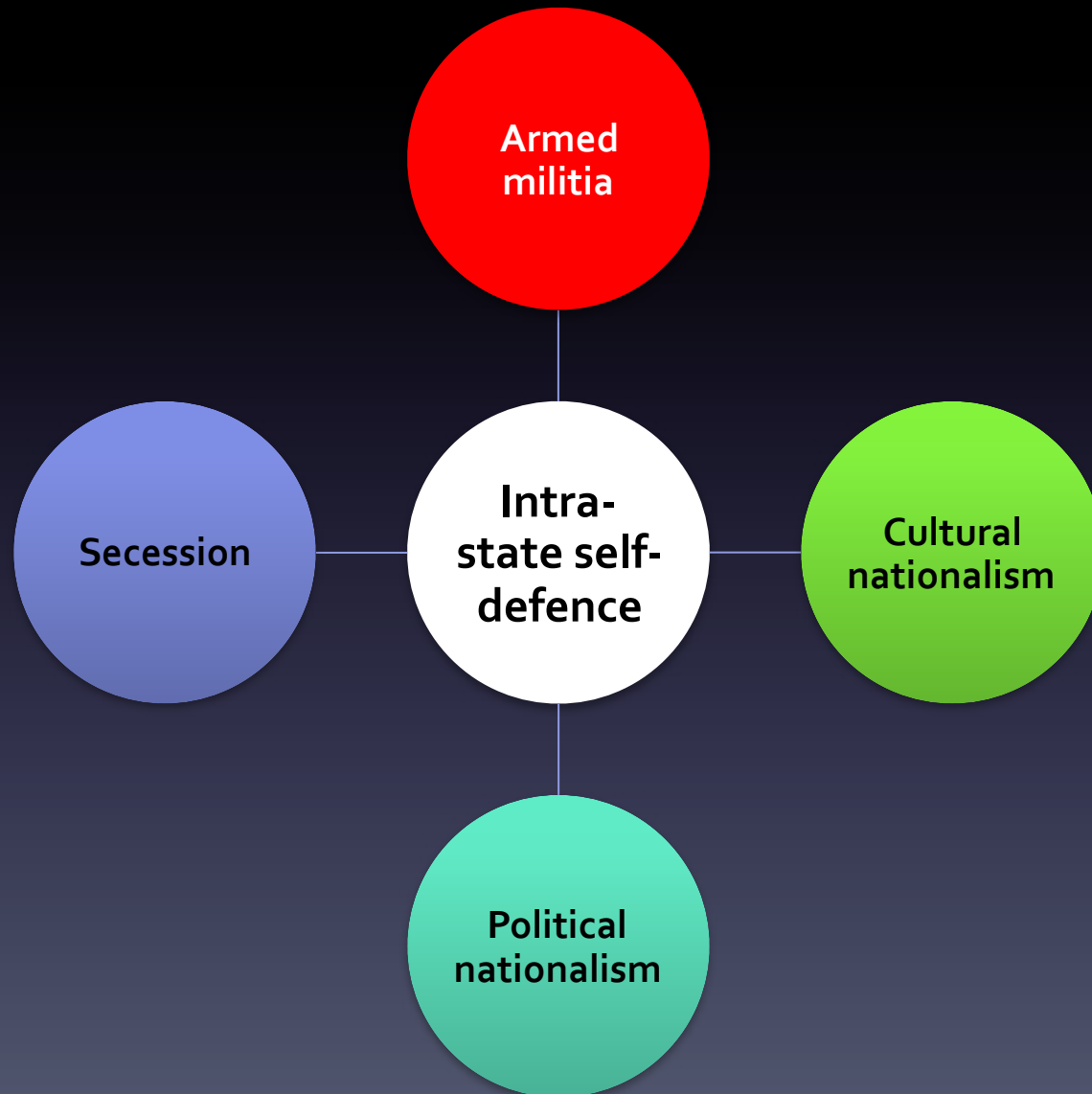
Threats to society in the five sectors of security

- **Military sector** – threat of physical depopulation or deportation *during invasion* (e.g. Nazi in France and Poland); regime internal repression of ethnic or religious group.
- **Political sector** – Government suppression of minorities by laws, law enforcement repressions and even military actions
- **Economic sector** – effects of globalisation on identities; closing traditional economic activities
- **Societal sector** – migration that brings “foreign” elements to the local identity
- **Environment sector** – environment degradation when identity is tied to particular territory, economic activities and way of life

Defending societal identity

1. To try to move the threat onto the state's security agenda, asking actions to protect identity
2. To defend themselves by non-state means

Intra-state defence of the societal identity



Societal security dilemma

- A societal security dilemma occurs **when the actions taken by one society to strengthen its identity causes a reaction of the second, which, in the end, weakens the identity of the first**
- The source of dilemma is the **uncertainty** about what the other society is undertaking exactly – employing cultural nationalist (autonomy) or political nationalist (autonomy/secession) strategy. Assuming the worst, the dilemma can lead to spiral actions including violence.

Conclusion

- The concept of societal security might be very useful in cases of identity (ethnic or religious) conflicts when non-military dynamics might be missed by the traditional state security approach
- As analytical tool, the concept is particularly effective in understanding states where the lack of cohesion between state and society defines them as “weak.”
- However, the concept is based on a very fluid entity: societies and their identities are not “things” (fixed facts); they are constantly constructed and re-constructed (a principle difference from the state)

Critical thinking questions

(April 7, 20.00)

Q1: How does the concept of 'societal security' mark a departure from traditional understandings of security?

- a) Securing the sustainable development of the state was dependent on societal security as an independent interest that was not secondary or dependent on the other sectors, including the military.
- b) The end of the Cold War allowed security studies to move beyond the confines of the dominant realist and neorealist perspectives, with an emerging interest in other, non-military, conceptions of security. Those who wished to broaden the scope of security studies advocated the inclusion of resource, environment, and other referent points for analysis.
- c) Societal security referred to the sustainable development of traditional patterns of military capabilities. Military threats could be subdivided to include the infrastructural strength, the technology, personnel, the economic base and the political base of the military security sector.
- d) Contemporary processes of globalisation and societal conflict required the development of new conceptual tools beyond the state as the referent object. Security was dependent on factors beyond geographically conceived survival: survival of the state was superseded by survival of the nation (ethnic) state.

Critical thinking questions

(April 7, 20.00)

Q2: Which of the following is essential to societal security?

- a) Sovereignty.
- b) Identity.
- c) Hegemonic ethnicity.
- d) All of the above.

Critical thinking questions

(April 7, 20.00)

Q3: Which of the following statements **does not** describe 'nations'?

- a) Nations may be made up of different ethnic-identity groups.
- b) Nations may be difficult to distinguish from societies.
- c) Nations are defined by the boundaries and borders of the state.
- d) Nations may contain multiple religious identity groups.