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**SUMMARY OF PhD THESIS
THE CONCEPT OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST IN
THE NEOREALIST AND THE CONSTRUCTIVIST
THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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Introduction and methodology

This thesis focuses the concept of national interest a preoccupation of big importance for the decision factors, analysts and specialists from the field of international relations. This study is based on the assumption that the national interest is the most important objective of the state in contemporary international relations against effects of globalisation, of the appearance of powerful supranational, transnational and subnational actors that can put into discussion the supremacy of national interest.

The main goals followed in this research are: the identification of Romania's national interests in the security environment in the region of Black Sea and the analysis of the way these were defined and constructed, taking into account the neorealism-constructivism debate regarding the national interest. Neorealism emphasizes the existence of a unitary actor, rational, omniscient and egoist with national interests that aim at material gains. It insists on the anarchic environment, on the notion of competition for power and security, of calculation on survival. In comparison with neorealism, constructivism shows the role of state identity and of international socialisation in defining national interests. Also, perceptions, values and norms of the political class and of the public opinion play an essential role in the constitution of the national interest.

Concretely, the research questions are: "Which are Romania's national interests of security in the region of Black Sea from 2004 till present?", "How were defined and constructed these interests?", "Which is the modality of defining the national interests according to the neorealist theory of international politics?", "Which is the modality of defining the national interests according to the constructivist theory of international politics?", "The way of defining Romania's national interests of security follows the neorealist or the constructivist framework?", "The national interests are followed by Romania in conformity with the Euro-Atlantic identity or taking into account the cost-benefit calculation?", "At the basis of Romania's national interests are found geopolitical or identity rationalities?", "In the Crimea crisis (2014) Romania followed its national interests or those of Euro-Atlantic alliance?".

The two approaches, neorealism and constructivism, are applied to the case study concerning Romania's national interest in the Black Sea region in the security field from 2004 till present. The region of Black Sea represents a political, economic, strategic and cultural field of primordial importance for Romania's security. In neorealism's language the national interest represents a rational choice, the most efficient way to obtain its interests in the framework of the constraints of the security environment. According to constructivists, the

national interests are not exogenous to the social interaction. States are not only rational entities that form social relations to maximize their interests.

Chapter I. National interest- definition and characteristics

The first chapter reviews the literature containing definitions of the concept of national interest, identifying a number of 50 definitions, varying from definitions that contain metaphors to definitions as mathematical formulas. The most exhaustive definition is the metaphor referring to the national interest as formed from a core present in every situation and a shell formed by variable elements that modify according to the historical conditions. The core refers to the conservation of the physical, political and cultural identity of the state. The mobile shell is variable and its content depends on the interplay of the events and tendencies at a certain moment.

Analysing the genesis, the evolution and the problem of defining the national interest one can notice that there is no consensus on defining the national interest and it becomes almost impossible to be supported in a debate on foreign policy that would arrive at an efficient result concerning policy recommendations and evaluations. The central elements of defining the concept are physical survival, economic welfare and the increase of national prestige. The delimitation political instrument-analysis instrument is especially important in studies dedicated to the concept. As political instrument the concept is often considered a propaganda exercise with the aim of legitimising a certain policy and in order to motivate citizens to act in support of it, also political leaders are using the concept in war declarations, discourses regarding the wars, economy and other major declarations.

The modern concept of national interest is characterized by a fundamental ambiguity that derives from the tendency to assign constitutive powers to the national interest while one can try to control the definitions of the concept through definition and contextualisation practices. The more general the constitutive capacities assigned to the national interest the higher the resistance to the efforts to influence its significations. Therefore, the national interest designs a set of significations and tangible references in the real world.

Even if the national interest is a constant of all states there is a central debate if the national interest is immutable or if it depends on the historical context and on the strategic imperatives at one moment. The concept of national interest is situated at the second level of analysis of international relations, formed by states. The first level refers to individuals, the second to states and the third to the international system. The national interest is usually found

at the second level of analysis. Therefore, the national interest is established at the intermediary level, between individual level and the international one.

The usage of the concept by political leaders is a subject of debate for the public opinion and for political analysts. The finality of the government's actions through power instruments can be interpreted in different ways and the national consensus is vital in successfully following the national interests. The approaches of the national interest concerning the foreign policy, geopolitics and the theory of international relations are the most important because they explore the concept emphasising its multidimensionality. A study concerning the national interest can be interdisciplinary but the research interest of this paper concerns the approach of the concept in international relations theory.

When national interests of one state are analysed it must be taken into account a series of factors: the general characteristics of the international system, the level of power of one state, the position of one state on world's map, the power instruments from which a state benefits. In principle the essential national interest is the survival of the state and the assurance of the national security but these can suppose different things in time and from state to state.

The understanding of the concept is proven to be captive between two extremes. At one extreme it is considered that the national interest has a precise signification that corresponds to the political world and the legal one and at the other extreme the national interest is defined through the use of language and depends by the linguistic practices and conventions.

Chapter II. Neorealist approach of the national interest

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework of international relations in which essential concepts such as anarchy, international system, state, international structure, agent, capabilities distribution and last but not least national interest are defined and analysed to emphasise the particularities of the neorealist approach. Firstly, the ontological, epistemological and methodological premises of the neorealist approach are presented to underline the meta-theoretical position of the approach. Secondly, essential concepts from the neorealist framework are presented to include the concept of national interest in the neorealist approach. In this approach is particularly important that the states that seek survival and to act rationally to compare its capabilities with other states and to determine its position in the international system.

Essentially, a state can maintain equilibrium in the power balance in favour of a certain state through the enforcement of the military forces or through the creation of alliances. If a powerful actor uses its capacities to improve its position in the international system there are minimum chances that other states will enter into competition with this state unilaterally (through the enforcement of the military forces), on the contrary they will try through the formation of alliances to re-establish the balance of power. If one assumes that the majority of states do not have the option to obtain security in the face of more powerful states through military improvement because they do not have the necessary resources, then the need for power balance supposes that states will always make alliances with the weakest part to compensate the power of adversary states.

Neorealists are pessimist with regard to possibilities of cooperation supposing that the normal state of international relations is one of competition because of the fact that it does not exist at the international level an authority capable to assure the accordance with the treaties, with the commitments between states etc. Responding to pressures of anarchy in time of peace states are inclined to confront with adversaries through arms races and through attracting allies. In contrast with the constructivist approach neorealism does not allow theoretic space for states' identity in the process of constituting the national interests. Interaction is not considered to be an important determinant of interests. To take interests as given from the methodological point of view implies an ontological question about the measure in which these interests are considered as processes that must be socially supported or fixed objects that are to be found outside the social time and space.

Chapter III. Constructivist approach of the national interest

The third chapter follows the same line of analysis as in the second chapter but emphasising the constructivist approach of international relations. Ontological, epistemological and methodological premises of constructivism are presented to show the particularities of constructivism within the theoretical approaches of international relations. Thus, anarchy, international system, international structure, agent, international norms and the national interest are analysed.

In constructivism states are real actors to which human qualities can be attributed such as wishes, convictions and intentionality. A first key step for the development of such a theory is the acceptance of the hypothesis that states are actors with human characteristics: intentionality, rationality, interests etc. Approaching the national interest, socio-constructivism has the following central assumptions: states as entities with properties such as

intentionality or empathy are the main actors from the international politics, national interests are associated with national identities, states' socialisation on the international arena influences significantly the conceptualisation of the national interest.

Constructivists do not consider the state as an agent that seeks only survival. They treat interests and identities as malleable elements according to specific historical processes giving a particular attention to dominant discourses from societies because these reflect beliefs, interests and establish accepted behaviour norms. Placing identity in the centre of systemic explanations, constructivists posit identity as the basis for interests offering an alternative way of thinking regarding the constitution and the definition of the national interest.

The fact that national interests can be interpreted in different modalities one needs the states to do certain things to securitise identities and to act accordingly without constructing interests as they wish. States are doing presuppositions about Self and the Other on the basis of international structure. Thus, there is a logic of interaction based on what the actors know about their roles rather than on what they know one about the other, foreseeing the other's behaviour without everyone to know the other's intentions. In addition, through normative pressure socialisation through norms produces changes in the conceptions about identity and national interest.

The relation between rational choice and social construction is important for the theory and the practice of international relations. For neorealists the national interest is a function of competition and the distribution of material capabilities conditioning states' actions. States are guided by the logic of consequences, acting rationally in the sense of producing a result that will maximise their interests. Constructivists are focusing on norms and common understandings of events and actions from the international system.

Chapter IV. Romania's national interests in the region of Black Sea

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the case study in which Romania's security interests were followed in the Black Sea region in the context of the two theories represented by neorealism and constructivism. From neorealist perspective one should underline Romania's geopolitics and geostrategy in the Black Sea region and from constructivist perspective the Euro-Atlantic identity is important regarding the formation of national interests in the region.

There were identified and defined the most important concepts and notions specific to the region presenting and analysing the implication of regional actors, international and of the organizations interested into the region of Black Sea, their way of promoting their interests

being whether through direct action or through organizations in which they are part of (NATO, EU), the regional evolutions generated by destabilising factors (frozen conflicts, nonconventional threats) and destabilising actions of the Russian Federation.

Starting from the theories that define the concept of security the objectives of foreign policy and security of actors from the Black Sea region are analysed as well as the means used for their operationalization. Firstly, the analytical framework of the Black Sea region is analysed from the geopolitical and geostrategic point of view, then the threats and the vulnerabilities from the area are analysed together with the security policies of the main actors that influence the security environment from the Black Sea region.

The research concentrated on the evolution of important events with a predominant role in the elaboration of security policies of the state and international actors in the region. The documentation on the subject of the thesis was elaborated through the consultation of the literature and the official relevant documents. This research aims to respond to some questions concerning the definition of the concept of security analysing its role in the proposal of foreign strategic policies of the main actors from the region of the Black Sea in order to ensure an environment of peace and stability in this region.

While the literature on theory and practice on the region of Black Sea presents a contextual image and a general perspective on the actual state of the region from an official perspective of the subjective reality and of the opinions of the specialists in the field and of the perspectives of evolution of the Black Sea region, the analysis here concerns a personal interpretation.

The region of the Black Sea constitutes a geopolitical complex that implies a multidimensional analysis and the geopolitical and geostrategic interests and the competition of the big powers participated in the control and the dominance of the region that emphasise the objective and subjective factors to show contradictions, competitions and the diversity of the region. The scope and the objectives of the research are determined by the actuality of the theme having as central objective the definition of certain strategies of action in order to implement Romania's interests of security in the region of Black Sea.

The dynamics of the political, economic and social transformations from last decades show a series of realities and tendencies that mark the development and the stability at the regional level and the analysis of successive crises as their impact on the security having as effect a rethinking of the mechanisms of evaluation and prognosis and a serious analysis of the causes and the history of the actors that chose to implement their strategies, interests, values and political directions according to events and new geopolitical realities.

The actual geopolitical structure of the Black Sea region is marked by two main dynamics. The first of them is the substitution of the old soviet influence with the American influence that is also in competition with France's and Germany's ambitions. The second dynamic refers to the energetic route that ties the natural gases with the gas in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea area to the Balkans and the EU.

At the same time, the region of the Black Sea is an environment that managed positively by the actors whose interests are in place can be extremely favourable for the economic, technical and military cooperation. The region bears the occidental interests, those of the Russian Federation and two systems therefore emerge: Euro-Atlantic and CSI.

Furthermore, the strategic perspective of the region shows certain equilibrium of geopolitical parity. The Black Sea region is a region of multiple antinomies. It deals with old conflicts but also with new threats. It has a heterogeneous character in terms of political, economic, religious and cultural profiles being the main source of insecurity and instability for Europe.

Conclusions

The analysis led to several general conclusions. Firstly, following the theoretical analysis of the concept of national interest it was demonstrated that the national interest is considered to be a characteristic of the modern state and a constitutive principle of the international system, the recent changes in the international politics as well as the process of globalisation indicates that this concept depends on the norms and values of an imagine international community. The analysis of the concept of national interest in the two approaches from the neorealist and constructivist theories demonstrated how complex it is defined and interpreted in the two visions as well as the differences that justify the two theories.

Secondly, at the level of discourse on the national interest in the period of 2004-present the realist logic and geopolitics are predominantly based on the maximisation of the national interest but that is enforced by a solidarity discourse based on norms and euro-Atlantic values.

Thirdly, the statistical analysis of discourses of numerous politicians from 2004 till present indicates the fact that Romania's national interests were based on the rational calculus on maximising the power and security and also on socialising according to occidental norms (democratisation, modernisation, toleration).

Fourthly, several indicators and measures of the concept of national interest in the field of security were emphasised taking into account the neorealist and constructivist approaches. Thus, by defining Romania's national interests of security in the Black Sea region the security strategies, the discourse of the political leaders and the diplomatic activity were analysed following the proposed indicators.

The national interests can not be understood outside identities as they are based on them as result of some complex processes of social interaction. Romania understood that following its own security separately by that of the neighbours according to the self-help system as in immature anarchies was not meant to be advantageous as it could produce a reaction of zero sum game and a mechanism of security dilemma through increasing the mistrust in relations with neighbours.

The invocation of national interest refers mainly to a sum of interests that assure the security and the welfare of a state. Analysing the genesis and the evolution of the concept of national interest, its apparition and development it can be observed it was concomitant with the development of the state. Once the nation-state developed terms such as prince's will and state reason lost from the mobilisation of the public will.

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