NATIONAL SCHOOL OF POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

PhD THESIS

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Bucharest
- 2022 -

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Specialization in Political Science

Basic parameters for building a stable security environment.

Case study: Romania between 2015 and 2019

- PhD Thesis Summary -

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Școala Doctorală

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"To write about peace thinking is to write about everything and nothing(...) But this is in the nature of human affairs: the more important the matter, the vaguer and the more difficult becomes the thinking about it – for if it had already been conquered intellectually and mastered technically, then it would no longer have been so important because it would no longer loom so high as a problem. Some other problem would have taken its place."

(Galtung J. , 1967, p. 6)

1. Argument

The present approach, materialized through this work, started from the desire to try to clarify a number of aspects regarding the security environment, namely the possibilities of its edification. An impulse also came from reading ideas synthesized by Johan Galtung, who stated that *the more important the matter, the vaguer and the more difficult becomes the thinking about it – for if it had already been conquered intellectually and mastered technically, then it would no longer have been so important because it would no longer loom so high as a problem. Some other problem would have taken its place.*

Although since the emergence of the discipline International Relations, efforts to identify the causes of war and eliminate the violent means from the instruments of dispute resolution have been diverse and numerous, there has been no unified approach. Also, depending on the inclination, the academics used either the concept of peace or security, even if they ended up talking about the same elements at certain times. To all this was added the constant transformation of the international space, which emphasized the need for continuous adaptation of the theory to the spectrum of reality.

In this respect and in order to have a unitary approach, the idea that materialized in the doctoral paper took birth. Entitled ***Basic parameters for building a stable security environment. Case study: Romania between 2015 and 2019***, the doctoral thesis aims, through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, to identify the variables that in the period 2015 – 2019 were correlated with peace and security and the interpretation of these data by combining statistical results, theoretical elements and factual data from the selected time frame.

In this way, the parameters, called basic in this paper, which should be on the states' agendas and which have the power to influence both the level of internal stability and the interactions that transcend the national space, should be highlighted. By basic parameters, we mean those indicators that are at the basis of building a stable security environment, namely those with which such a situation can be built; they are not all-encompassing, and therefore the only ones to consider, but they could represent a part of those indicators that underlie the construction of such an environment.

The medium stable security syntax resulted from the desire to combine aspects of the concepts of peace and security and to represent a middle ground among the different approaches that have been noted. Thus, it has been defined as the situation in which states, by

applying internal and external measures, manage to eliminate the use of violence from the problem/dispute resolution tool and in which the measures adopted lead to internal and external stability. Also, by joining the term stability I want to convey the idea of constancy, in other words identifying those indicators that do not determine a state of security in the short term, but that have the power to endure and propagate this state in the medium and long term. In this way, stability is seen as a property of the system that creates a mechanism of reaction and adaptability to newly created situations, states managing to overcome difficult moments.

2. Research methodology

This study is an explanatory one with descriptive and exploratory valences. A theme of this magnitude cannot be treated in a singular way, meaning that the descriptive approach helps with theoretical grounding and conceptual clarity, while the exporters' valences facilitate the generation of novelty elements to better understand the problem being investigated.

The research questions that guided the entire study were formulated in a connected manner, so that a positive answer to the first will direct us to the second research question. They were formulated in the following manner: **Can a body of variables be synthesized that influence the building of a stable security environment?** respectively **Are these variables interconnected?**

In order to provide clear and comprehensive answers to the two questions of the research, but also to achieve the purpose of this study, the overall objective of the research – **the identification and research of a set of variables that influence the building of a stable security environment** – and the specific objectives were sketched.

For this paper, the specific objectives, subsumed to the general one, were formulated in such a way as to reflect the topics discussed in the chapters of the paper, as follows:

- ✓ analyze the main concepts that will be used during the work – peace and security – and highlighting the way in which they interact;
- ✓ defining the stable security environment syntax and completing it, at the end of the paper, with elements extracted from the qualitative and quantitative analysis;
- ✓ the exposition of some of the most well-known and debated theories that researched the issue of building, maintaining, respectively developing a stable security environment;

- ✓ the conceptual clarification of the selected variables and the extraction from the specialized literature of the ways in which they have been connected over time with the ideas of peace, stability and security;
- ✓ exposition of the way in which the research variables are measured;
- ✓ applying the selected quantitative methods and explaining the results obtained;
- ✓ researching the results provided by the quantitative analysis and combining them with the main ideas extracted from the specialized literature and from the theories, respectively the strategies presented;
- ✓ analysis of the way in which Romania is influenced by the selected variables.

Last but not least, because quantitative analysis is a consistent part of the present research and in order to better understand the causal relationships that might arise from the application of methods in this spectrum of analysis, the research hypotheses have been formulated. In this case, using instruments from the correlative sphere, the research hypotheses aimed to identify positive relations (the values of the variables change in the same sense – the more x increases, the more y increases), negative (the values of the variables change in different ways – the more x increases, the more y decreases), neutral (there is no connection between the chosen variables).

Given the formulation of approximative 24 sets of hypotheses, these have been presented in a tabular form in the paper; an example of formulating hypotheses for the relationship between hunger and the Global Peace Index is as follows: A) the higher the value of the Global Hunger Index, the higher the value of the Global Peace Index; b) the higher the value of the Global Hunger Index, the lower the value of the Global Peace Index; c) there is no link between the two variables, i.e. for this example there is no link between the Global Hunger Index and the Global Peace Index.

Regarding the methods of analysis used, for this paper we have chosen to combine the quantitative ones, tangible for the researcher, with the qualitative ones, which can provide explanations for the connections arising from the analysis of quantitative data. From the spectrum of quantitative instruments, we have resorted to correlative analysis, namely the Pearson coefficient and correlation graph, to identify the degree and nature of the association between variables and to confirm one of the three hypotheses stated, and multiple linear regression to determine whether the model chosen, by selecting the set of indicators and placing them in the relationship, it is viable.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is a scale to measure the power of linear association between variables. It can be used as: i) a descriptive measure of the linear association between two variables; ii) supporting evidence of a postulated linear relationship between two variables or a causal theoretical model; iii) an aid for establishing possible causal relationships between the variables. The correlation graph is a commonly used tool for visualizing the correlation identified, in this case, by the Pearson coefficient. If the variables are correlated, the points in the graph will fall along a line or curve; the more significant the correlation, the closer the points will be to the drawn line.

Multiple linear regression is used to determine the power of predictors, i.e. independent variables, but also to predict effects and trends. It is composed of several elements: the correlation coefficient, the coefficient of determination, the adjusted coefficient of determination, the statistical significance, all helping to understand both how variations in dependent variables are explained by independent variables, and to confirm whether the assumption formulated by placing variables in relation is correct or not.

All of these quantitative instruments were applied to a sample of around 50 countries (30%) selected following the application of a probabilistic (random) sampling technique. Two criteria have been set for the selection of states: i) their choice by reference to the Global Peace Index, being one of the most complex reports, analyzing 163 countries and which, beyond providing a score, divides countries into categories such as states with a high peace index, with an average index and a low index; ii) a geographical distribution, so as to include countries from as many continents as possible. The data subject to analysis was collected for a period of 5 years (2015 – 2019) to provide scientific consistency to the results and a high degree of validity; choosing a range increases confidence in the results, being able to see if trends are maintained from one year to the next or if they are only isolated cases/anomalies that cannot be generalized.

With reference to qualitative methodological tools, which manage to provide a deeper understanding of some concepts, theories, problems, we have resorted to mind mapping, content analysis, analysis of primary sources, observation, comparison and grounded theory. All of these have contributed to: i) conceptual clarity, ii) exposure and understanding of the theoretical framework, iii) interpretation of the results and drawing conclusions.

The particularity and originality of the doctoral thesis are given by the subject and methods of analysis used, but also by the attempt to bring to the attention of the Romanian academic environment an emerging topic on the national agenda and insufficiently addressed.

Originality also derives from the chosen model, referring to the independent variables that have been placed in correlation with the dependent ones, but also from the way of combining theories of international relations, theoretical aspects related to variables, various events on the international scene and quantitative analysis. By bringing together all these aspects, the interpretation of the results was a complex one, which tried to cover most of the facets of the problem and which brings together the internal and external plan, showing that the two interpenetrate when we talk about a stable security environment.

3. The synthetic presentation of the chapters of the doctoral thesis

In relation to the structure of the doctoral thesis, it was constructed taking into account the four steps of a logical analysis, as formulated by Johann Mouton and H.C. Marais in *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences:* presentation of the researched problem and theoretical framework – *Introduction* and *Chapter I*; conceptualization and operationalization of concepts, in this case of variables – *Chapter II*; data collection and application of quantitative instruments – *Chapter III*; analysis and interpretation of results – *Chapter IV* and *Conclusions*.

The first chapter of the paper, entitled *Theoretical concepts and approaches*, is a theoretical foundation of this study. To understand the terms used, the research started from explaining the concepts of peace and security and their developments. The approach followed both a vertical analysis, by highlighting the main developments that took place over time, and a horizontal one, by emphasizing the meanings offered to the two concepts. The structured way of working has highlighted that attempts to theorize security have been made since ancient times, but they have taken shape especially after the second World War, when states and decision-makers wanted to unravel the mystery of the causes of the two World Wars, but also to identify ways in which such atrocities could be avoided. In the context of these new developments, two approaches were noted – the traditional one, in which security was understood strictly in military terms, and the new approach that involved an expansion of security related areas, such as political, economic, environmental and societal. Despite the different ways of relating to this concept, a number of aspects have been identified such as: i) security remains a central concept in the field of international relations, being present at all levels – from international, state and individual; ii) security is not understood strictly in

military terms, but it covers a variety of areas (economic, political, societal, environmental, etc.); iii) there is no single security reference point; iv) state and non-state actors remain interested in security, its preservation, or even the threat to the security of a state if we think of terrorist attacks or extremist movements; v) in order to build a stable security environment, an integrated approach to the areas is needed, given the multi-dimensional nature of security.

Like the concept of security, the concept of peace is one with a tradition that can be found since ancient times in writings, including religious ones. While the 19th century version of peace was unstable and dominated by European powers who understood the concept in different ways, peace in the 20th century aspired to be an idealistic one, with Woodrow Wilson's 14-point contribution being the most important one known. With the '60 and '70, Peace and Conflict Studies are divided into two branches: in the first category we can find the authors who support the concept of "negative peace" and are mostly followers of realism and neo-realism, while the authors of the second category group around the concept of "positive peace", among the prominent representatives being Johan Galtung.

The foray into conceptual clarity ended with the analysis of how the two terms are interconnected. The discovered connection points confirmed the proximity of the two terms, as they can be seen:

→ they have similar aims – limiting war and violent confrontation, differing in the means used;

→ there were times when historical contexts favored the use of one concept over the other; for example, during the Cold War, the Eastern States and the USSR used the concept of peace, while the Western ones talked about security; also, in the Middle Ages the term peace (which often involved security) was much more used;

→ with the emergence of theories of international relations, the term security has been used mostly by realistic theory, while that of peace of liberalism; constructivism has had a balanced position;

→ in the process of expanding the concept of security, movements increasingly joined the two terms, such as Ken Both describing security in terms of emancipation, or Richard Ullman's emphasis on providing basic human needs;

→ the sometimes-interchangeable use of security and peace in studies that talk about the importance of selected variables, which have the power to influence the building of a stable security environment; most of the articles do not make a clear distinction, they are regarded as an expression of a state of stability;

→ the two concepts, materialized in this thesis by the global peace index and the security threat index, according to the results obtained by quantitative analysis, are influenced in similar proportions by the same phenomena.

With the conceptual framework established, the next step was to expose some of the best-known theories of international relations – realism, liberalism, constructivism – and to highlight the ways in which they understood that building a stable security environment could take place. Realism, which, alongside liberalism, fueled the first great debate on international relations, emphasizes the depraved human nature, the importance of the concept of power, the anarchy that exists at the level of the system, while emphasizing the primacy of the state. From this school of thought, two strategies were born to achieve international stability; it is the balance of power and the theory of hegemonic stability. While the balance of power assumes that its talers are in balance, and when the situation is about to take another turn, various adjustment mechanisms such as balancing or bandwagoning are used, hegemonic stability theory highlights the need to secure a dominant position; this can happen if the hegemon has enough resources and there is no state that could jeopardize its position.

Liberalism is on the opposite spectrum, talking about the perfectibility of human nature, but also about issues such as cooperation, harmonization of interests and relevance of individual well-being. In this theoretical context, we have brought to attention three strategies that can lead to a stable security environment – the theory of economic interdependence, institutional liberalism and the theory of democratic peace. The theory of economic interdependence, as the name shows, relies on the pacifying benefits of developing economic relations with other states; the adherents of this theory extrapolate and go further, stating that with the increase of economic ties they will encourage the attainment of a higher level of cooperation in other fields. From the perspective of institutional liberalism, a similar situation can also be achieved through international bodies, institutions and norms generated by them, those that have the capacity to remove the option of violence and conflict from the agenda of decision-makers. The theory of democratic peace, which attracted attention through postulated assumptions, in a reconceptualization of Immanuel Kant's ideas, speaks of the beneficial effects of the adoption of democracy as a form of state organization.

Last but not least, constructivism was that movement that brought a new breath to international relations. Their responses to some of humanity's concerns are formulated using a number of keywords such as norms, rules, identities, interactions, language, and discourse. Constructivism sees the world as a constantly developing project, as something that becomes

and not something that it is, meaning that international relations and connections between actors are not static and immutable, but are social constructs susceptible to unlimited reformulation over time undertaken by willing actors. In this theoretical field, the idea of security communities brought up by Karl Deutsch has been revitalized. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett are the ones who made efforts in this regard and who focused on the pluralistic security communities, considered to be closer to the developments taking place at the international level. These have been defined as **"transnational regions made up of sovereign states, whose peoples maintain credible expectations of peaceful change"** (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 30).

The presentation of these strategies has shown, in addition to various ways of creating a stable security environment, that there are points of convergence between them (see common elements of institutional liberalism, economic interdependence and those of security communities) and that in order to achieve the goal – to achieve security and peace – a wide range of fields (economic, social, political, military, etc.) are instrumentalized.

The second chapter – *The multidimensionality of the security environment. Basic parameters* - as the title suggests, it had the role of exposing those parameters synthesized following the mind mapping process that could influence the building of a stable security environment. In order to have a structured working method and to highlight the multidimensionality of the process, the variables were presented by including them in four broad areas – political, economic, social and military. Corruption and the rule of law have been framed in the political sector, terrorism and militarization are variables belonging to the military field; in terms of the social sector, we talked about the issues of food security, fundamental rights and freedoms, but also of human development; last but not least, resources (extensive range, natural resources and especially economic ones) have been placed in the economic sector. In addition to these, relations with neighbors were treated in a separate subchapter precisely because it is difficult to draw a clear line, but also because elements of this indicator can be identified in all four areas.

For each individual case, the concepts were defined, the main theoretical approaches were highlighted, but also the way in which they are correlated with other concepts such as stability, security, peace, conflict, etc. A distinct subchapter had the role of bringing into focus the elements of convergence that exist between the identified parameters, emphasizing that a clear line cannot be drawn between these indicators and the areas in which they manifest. The

identified points of convergence confirmed the multidimensionality of the process of building a stable security environment.

Going through all the indicators, understanding the facets and the possible effects they determine, led to drawing the following conclusive lines: i) to have a comprehensive picture of the stable security environment, a multidimensional and plurivalent approach is needed; ii) in many cases, the selected indicators can be considered both causes and effects of stability/instability; the manifestation of corruption, the violation of human rights, food insecurity, the inequitable distribution of resources, an insufficient level of human development, are part of the variables that can lead to a state of instability, as well as an integrated approach to these problems can determine building a stable security environment; iii) situations were identified in which the links of the indicators with the idea of stability brought into question elements from international relations theories; this highlights the way in which theory merges with practice.

The next step after the theoretical foundation of the paper and the understanding of the conceptual framework was the application of quantitative analysis methods. In this regard, **Chapter III** involved a brief insight into the role and importance of quantitative instruments in the field of Social Sciences and implicitly in that of International Relations. Subsequently, by calling on the reports used, the manner in which it is calculated was stated for each indicator. Data was collected from several organizations such as the Institute for Economics and Peace, The Heritage Foundation, Transparency International, World Justice Project, United Nations Development Programme, Freedom House, all recognized for their work and significant contributions.

The next step involved the application of the Pearson coefficient, correlation graph and multiple linear regression. In relation to the degree of correlation with dependent variables – the Global Peace Index and the Security Threat Index – the instruments have highlighted that corruption, rule of law and relations with neighbors are among the top indicators that can influence building a stable security environment. Quantitative research has pointed out that a low manifestation of corruption, an application of the rule of law principles and the development/maintenance of good neighborly relations can contribute to a state of peace, stability and a decrease in security threats. The following positions, although very slightly different in order for the two dependent variables, highlight the impact that the terrorist phenomenon, political rights, civil liberties, state freedom, economic freedom, human development and the equitable distribution of resources may have it on the proposed process.

Thus, in order to build a stable security environment, it is desirable to see respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the creation of development opportunities[1], the fair distribution of resources, but also the absence of violent phenomena such as terrorism that have the capacity to destabilize states and regions. Moreover, by focusing on two variables - political rights and civil liberties - we observed that the violation of civil liberties can produce more instability than the suppression of political ones, thus confirming the ideas identified in the specialized literature that spoke about the emergence and manifestation of terrorism against non-respect of these categories of rights and freedoms. The last positions were filled by the Hunger Index and militarization; in the case of hunger, a weak positive relationship was identified, showing that this phenomenon can play an important role especially in an already unstable context, in which it contributes to the amplification and increase of discontent. In connection with militarization, the correlation relationship is rather null, pointing out that for the sample and reference period this variable has not in any way tilted the balance of stability.

Beyond these correlations, of interest for the doctoral thesis was also the confirmation/disconfirmation of the chosen model, that is, of the set of independent variables placed in relation to the dependent ones. In this regard, multiple linear regression and component elements confirmed that there is a set of independent variables that can influence dependent variables – an expression of stable security environment – and that the proposed model is 70% reliable. Moreover, fluctuations in the values of dependent variables are explained in proportions of over 75% by independent ones, and the indicator that shows us the degree of confidence in the results and whether the choice of indicators was appropriate – the statistical significance – was below the limit of 0,05, basically confirming the importance of the independent variables.

The last chapter had the role of integrating theoretical and quantitative data, the purpose being to outline the way in which the building of a stable security environment can take place, but also to carry out a folded analysis on Romania to understand the developments taking place at national level.

Following the creation of several approaches, we reached the one where we opted for the cumulative interpretation of the variables. Thus, in the first part we talked about the existing relations between corruption, the rule of law and relations with neighbors, in the second part about the security-freedom dilemma, revealed in this case by the indicators on the

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[1] It includes aspects of human development and economic freedom.

spectrum of rights and freedoms and the terrorist phenomenon, and last but not least, we have brought together under the same umbrella the socio-economic indicators; depending on the opportunity, for each case, examples were brought that supported the results obtained.

The diagnosis of the first relationship – corruption, the rule of law, relations with neighbors – showed the strong manner in which they are interconnected and how, depending on the context and other variables, they contribute significantly to stability or instability. For example, only in the reference period 2015 – 2019 the protests that made requests regarding corruption and the rule of law amounted to 40,56% of the total organized ones. In addition to this, the way in which the development of relations with neighbors plays a role in domestic politics. In the context of these connections, two "circuits" of the relationship were highlighted: i) the dual link between corruption and the rule of law, which mutually stimulate each other and cause positive or negative effects on relations with neighbors; ii) the existence in the neighborhood of stable states and good relations with them can positively influence the security environment and implicitly the rule of law (application of principles) and corruption (low levels of it).

In relation to the first circuit, a high level of corruption affects and even prevents the consistent application of the principles of the rule of law, just as a state in which these principles are not applied and respected creates fertile ground for the manifestation of corruption. Both cases can cause damage to relations with neighbors by decreasing trust at the level of partners, affecting political, economic or other relations, decreasing relations on certain economic levels (tourism, trade, etc.), up to isolation/exclusion from regional and international forums. In the second case, a good relationship with neighbors who have a low level of corruption and who apply the principles of the rule of law can cause positive changes at the level of the state they interact with. In such a scenario, where good neighborly relations merge with internal stability, we can identify elements of the security community, a concept analyzed in the first chapter. Interactions between actors end up determining the structures and nature of the relationships between them, with the possibility for state entities to replicate the good examples they see in their partners. The types of relationships were explained including by exposing the situation of states such as Poland, Austria and Nigeria.

Arriving at the dilemma of security-freedom, which in this doctoral thesis took the form of the link between terrorism and fundamental human rights, it was brought back to attention with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The main ideas generated by the symbiosis of variables refer to the attention to be paid in the process of combating the terrorist

phenomenon, respecting rights and freedoms and avoiding their restriction. If these elements are not addressed in an optimal manner, it causes a vicious circle in which restrictions on rights and freedoms generate discontent, a context in which terrorist groups take advantage of this and can create a basis for recruitment; in this sense, several adherents of these ideologies, including from the national territory, can lead to increased instability and perpetuation of a state specific to negative peace.

Regarding the role of socio-economic elements in the architecture of the security environment, connecting them was a natural approach, given that security threats can have roots in the two areas and therefore can produce shock waves. The symbiosis between quantitative results and theoretical aspects contributed to the creation of the interpretation, in which we found that fair distribution of resources and economic freedom underlie a high level of human development. The relationship is not one-way, as we have already become accustomed to, it is multidirectional and any of the three variables, through a coherent approach, can generate benefits for other levels. Another discovery is given by the importance that corruption and rule of law have in this equation, political indicators confirming the place they have obtained in the hierarchy of variables that contribute to building a stable security environment. I decided that the two variables for which the weakest correlations were identified, food insecurity/hunger and militarization, should no longer be exposed, in these cases the data highlighted in the second chapter being valid; in addition, depending on the context, they can play a role in balancing the situation.

Last but not least, from the desire to see how the national territory fits into the paradigm of the present study, a part was dedicated to understanding and highlighting the elements that in the reference interval showed their usefulness for the security architecture. Considering the small database that made the quantitative approach difficult, the non-manifestation of phenomena such as terrorism, for which our country received the value 0, and the lack of fluctuations during the five years for the variables that measure rights and freedoms, the quantitative analysis was completed of elements extracted from different reports, studies and strategies that talk about Romania's performances in different fields. Starting from the results of the quantitative analysis, we observed that between 2015 – 2019, the values of the dependent variables underwent mutations according to the variations in the values of human development, hunger, economic freedom, relations with neighbors, militarization and the rule of law. To these is added the phenomenon of corruption, but also that of the fair distribution of resources.

By correlating the information extracted from both quantitative and qualitative research, the following were observed: i) corruption and the rule of law represent well-rooted problems in the Romanian society, which have their origin in the past periods and which affect a multitude of fields – medical, education, safety and public order, economic, etc.; ii) a deficient approach to the components that fall under the umbrella of the concept of human development; iii) shortcomings in the distribution of resources, including due to poor management of phenomena; for example, corruption contributes to the waste of important financial resources that could be directed to other areas; iv) the volatility of the regional security environment and the need to strengthen a stable internal environment that facilitates mechanisms to deal with threats coming from different regions.

On the basis of the database, but also of the continuation of the enunciation of some indicators in the national Defense Strategy for the period 2020 – 2024, which shows a failure to resolve them, guidelines have been drawn up which should be taken into account in order to build a stable security environment; they follow different areas of activity, both internally and externally, subsuming the multidimensional approach promoted by this research. Among the outlined directions to follow, it is worth mentioning the increase in GDP for education, the improvement of medical services, the reduction of the percentage of the population living in poverty, concrete and effective measures in the fight against corruption and, through direct reporting, a respect for the principles of the rule of law in accordance with European and Euro-Atlantic commitments, and the creation of a prosperous and safe environment in the immediate vicinity. All this has the role of contributing to the sedimentation of a stable security environment in our country.

4. Conclusions

The study dedicated to this doctoral thesis started from the evolutionary character of the international system, which emphasized the need to synthesize a body of variables that would contribute to building a stable security environment. In this sense, the research in this paper introduced us to a wide range of topics related to the concepts of peace and security, from theoretical approaches specific to the field of International Relations, to the identification and highlighting of the main variables that could influence the stable security environment with the help of the application of quantitative research methods.

At the end of this study, the specific objectives set from the introductory part were achieved, determining, as a consequence, also a fulfillment of the general object. Thus, combining theoretical aspects with factual elements and quantitative data led to the **identification and research of a set of variables that influence the building of a stable security environment**. In addition to the general and specific objectives, without being a stated objective from the beginning, the research represents a contribution to the study of the conceptual fluidity of security.

Bringing together all the presented aspects and completing the puzzle that aimed to compose the image of building a stable security environment favored the formulation of clear and coherent answers to the two questions of the research.

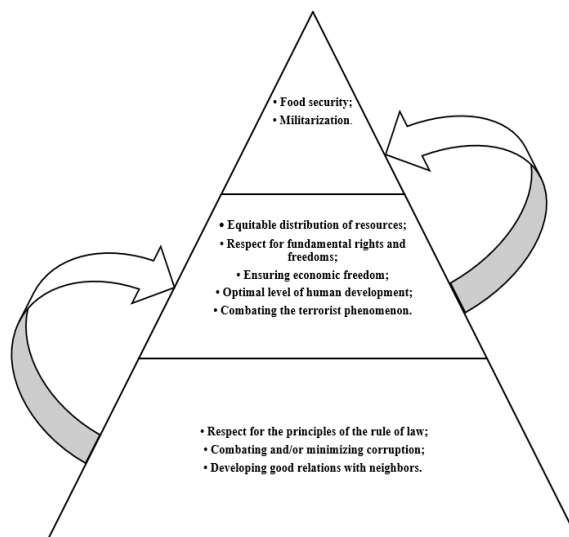**I. Can a body of variables be synthesized that influence the building of a stable security environment?**

The combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects has made it easier to formulate a clear and affirmative answer to this question. Thus, at the foundation of the approach to building a stable environment were placed corruption, rule of law and relations with neighbors, being those variables whose correlation with peace and security fell into the strongly significant category. They were joined by terrorism, civil liberties, political rights, state freedom, human development, economic freedom and fair distribution of resources, the results placing them in the category of those with significant to strongly significant links with the dependent variables. The ranking was supplemented by hunger and militarization, which, although they have the necessary force to contribute to building a stable security environment, for the analyzed time frame and the sample investigated, have shown a weak to zero correlation.

II. Are these variables interconnected?

The whole study, starting from theories of international relations to the interpretation of the results, has shown that interconnection can be labeled as a leitmotif of research aimed at explaining stability and building such a state. The role of interpretation was precisely to formulate an answer to this question, and in this sense, we can say that the studied variables are interdependent, influence each other, the method of their correlation in this thesis represents only a part of the joints that can arise and contribute to the building of a stable

security environment. To make a reference to mathematics and combinations and subsets, there can be x variants of links and interpretations taken by n.

The symbiosis between the theoretical aspects and those resulting from quantitative analysis led to the synthesis of a set of variables that can influence the building of a stable security environment and to the confirmation of the idea that they are interconnected. In order to visualize this whole process and to understand one of the facets that the security environment has, based on the identification correlations, a so-called pyramid of building a stable security environment has been sketched. Thus, at the base are the indicators whose correlation coefficient was the highest, but also whose impact was observed by reading the literature. The foundation of the security environment implies, in fact, the manifestation of a political stability on the internal and external level, with roots strongly anchored in respect for the laws of the country.

Figure: The pyramid of building a stable security environment

In these circumstances, ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms, human development, economic freedom, and the equitable distribution of resources come to be a natural effect of stability and rule of law; on this level, action should be considered in all the areas mentioned, but not only. At this level, if we are talking about the manifestation of terrorism, the states will call on the most suitable tools without affecting certain categories of people and without triggering a vicious circle. If most of these elements have been met, then food security should no longer be a problem, and militarization, with all its components, will be in the hands of rational actors who will use it for legitimate purposes and in proportion to the threat.

Achieving the general and specific objectives, confirming research assumptions and formulating comprehensive but clear answers to research questions does not mean that a number of **challenges and limitations** have not emerged during this process. On the contrary, the courageous attempt to bring quantifiable data closer to the theoretical field of international relations involved: i) sifting an increased flow of information and identifying those who play an important role in building a stable security environment; ii) organizing and integrating data

collected from NGO/think tank reports; iii) eliminating a large number of states from the analysis due to the lack of data; the initial approach concerned 100 countries; iv) the cyclical relationship of the indicators and therefore the impossibility of providing explanations of the manner in which only A determines B; v) identifying a more comprehensive manner of interpreting the data; vi) providing an understanding of Romania based on low quantitative data; vii) errors generated by calculations without being able to accurately identify the source, as is the case in 2018 for the Security Threats Index.

The present study can be considered as the beginning of a more complex academic endeavor, involving several researchers and deepening and complementing the ideas highlighted by this doctoral thesis. Based on the lessons learned, I would recommend: i) the inclusion of at least one indicator from the ecological sector, but also from emerging fields that states must face - such as cyber; ii) expanding the number of countries analyzed and the time period; iii) attempt to highlight a region-by-region interpretation taking into account particularities.

What did this study highlight?

The analysis in this paper highlighted three basic issues that any research should take into account: i) the high dynamics of the security environment, ii) the need to continuously adapt the theoretical framework to system changes, and iii) the importance of a multidisciplinary and pluralistic approach.

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