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**Doctoral Thesis**

**The Role of International Organizations of  
Security in Global Transformations**

**- summary -**

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## Summary

International organisations, as a topic of debate in the work of researchers, began to receive increasing attention when the role they play became apparent. With a rather timid start - historiography records that the first international organisations in the period of the Westphalian system were those for economic affairs dealing with/regulating river navigation on the Danube - international organisations gained momentum especially in the 20th century. The first major organisation came into being as a result of the impetus of the American President Woodrow Wilson who advocated for open diplomacy, rather than the secret diplomacy behind the closed doors of the chancelleries and governments of the world's states, which was particularly characteristic of the period before the First World War. Thus, while the first of President Wilson's 14 points advocated this new type of diplomacy without specific reference to multilateralism, one might think that a consequence of the willingness of states to publicly assume, on the international stage, the treaties they were entering into with other countries, led to their common interests being known and aligned in a way that served, at the very least, the weakest objective of those at the table. For example, if France was interested in a partnership - be it economic or military - with Italy to facilitate navigation in the Mediterranean, which was publicly stated, then there was a possibility that other Mediterranean riparian states, such as Spain or Greece, would be interested in such cooperation. The public assumption of openness to cooperation was in itself a change.

In the same vein, the idea of transformation in international relations is rather a truism. One can hardly talk about international relations without referring to the constancy with which things change, whether in high politics such as economic, military and political or low domains such as social, cultural or environmental. In addition to the areas in which change is taking place, the scale of change and the level at which it is occurring are also issues that need to be considered. Change can occur in different areas, but especially at different levels: national, regional or global, with varying consequences for the countries of the world. In the case of changes at the global level, the impact has the potential to affect all actors, but not to the same extent, while changes at lower levels have rather limited spatial reverberations, but with potentially crucial implications for those affected. It is also true that a change at national or regional level has the potential to generate significant effects that spread to higher levels. For example, the India-Pakistan power struggle in South-East Asia generated a regional shift giving rise to a new state - Bangladesh - without major global changes. On the other hand, Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 drew states from all over the international

stage, giving rise to the most devastating war in recent history, with consequences for all actors more or less involved.

Uncertainty about international organisations was one of the reasons why I chose to address the role of international organisations in the arena of world politics. On the one hand, it is well known that the 20th and 21st centuries are the centuries of the emergence and consolidation of the most numerous and long-lived international organisations. On the other hand, because states have always enjoyed the spotlight and the attention of theorists in the field, international organisations have continued to be treated marginally despite their growing number and the diversification of the topics they address.

The year 1991 is representative for the entire international arena, given the systemic change that took place at that time with the disappearance of a pole of power. The implosion of the Soviet Union and the collapse of its network of influence was a shock. The change itself is nothing new in the international system. The way it was achieved in 1990, however, is highly original because it did not take place through major wars that affected/destabilised the system. In addition, even the new challenges that have emerged globally, have not acted as a destabilising catalyst as in the inter-war period, for example, or during the pre-Napoleonic era. What could be the sources of post-Cold War systemic stability? This is the basic question that has led to my curiosity about the role of international organisations in the global arena, especially in terms of transformations in the international system. In this paper I aim to test the hypothesis that international organisations have played an important role in peaceful system-wide transformations, including a contribution to post-transformation system stabilisation. For the clarity of the research, I have set out, in a systematic manner, the process I have used to test the above idea. The paper aimed at providing answers to several questions as it follows:

1. Although states are considered, by most theorists, to be the main actors on the international scene and the fundamental elements that determine the transition of power, to what extent could international organisations contribute to peaceful systemic change?
2. Do international organisations, based on characteristics such as centralization and independence, have the capacity to influence the behaviour of states?
3. Beyond the interpretation of national power characteristic of states, can one speak of international organisations possessing elements of power, especially from the spectrum of intangible elements of power?

In order to determine the relationship between organisations and states, I explored the extent to which the power that states hold could also be attributed to international organisations. Complementarily, in

order to answer the above questions, I have considered two main objectives, to which a number of secondary objectives have been subsumed. Thus, the main objectives consisted in tracing the theoretical dimension and observing its manifestation in the relations between states and international organisations, while the secondary objectives aimed at:

- presenting, in a comprehensive manner, the ideas of international system and levels of analysis;
- capture the characteristics of the state and its formation;
- analysing the particularities of the idea of power in international relations and the process of power transition;
- presentation of the main defining elements of international organisations;
- listing and briefly presenting the most important international organisations whose activities are concerned with security, whether regional security or global security;
- outline elements of interest from the period of the first global organisation with international security concerns;
- analyse the Cold War period from the perspective of the main military organisations of that period;
- evaluating and testing hypotheses considering the role and impact of NATO within the international system.

The methodology underlying the research was eminently qualitative, with minor exceptions for the presentation of statistics on elements of national power, which could not be presented otherwise. Given the purpose of the work, qualitative methods were considered the most appropriate, thus the research was based on content and historical analysis, case study and, last but not least, comparison. For a more comprehensive perspective on the subject, I also applied an interview based on four questions that centralize the expertise of practitioners in the field of international relations. After collecting data through methods such as document analysis and content analysis, interpretation and comparison helped to strengthen the argument and provide answers to the proposed research questions. To complement the research approach, a significant part of the paper was devoted to the case study on NATO. Being a rather observational or quasi-experimental method as Stephen van Evera calls it, it combines the theoretical dimension with the practical dimension while contributing to the issuing of deductive statements (Van Evera, 1997, p. 28). In a holistic approach, the paper focused on the operationalisation of concepts such as interactional organisations, international system, power, as well as on the historical analysis of international relations where both states and international organisations are relevant actors, and on the content analysis of documents and declarations issued by states and representatives of the international organisation chosen for analysis, in this case NATO. The research project aimed to contribute to the field of international relations by presenting

perspectives that challenge traditional state-centric approaches. The research also aimed at providing and exploring perspectives that recognise the importance of other actors, but states, such as international organisations, in areas of particular importance such as security.

The context of analysing the role of international organisations in the global arena involves addressing concepts such as international system, state and levels of analysis. Given the primacy of the state in international relations since 1648, the paper briefly presents the emergence and evolution of the state in Europe and its universalisation as a form of political and social organisation. Max Weber presents the state as a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 2004), while Joseph Strayer analyses the way in which, throughout history, competing forms of manifesting authority over individuals - the empire, the church - have lost competition with the state (Strayer, 1970). As a result of the replacement of mercenaries by the development of standing armies on the basis of the collection of additional taxes and the unification of command over armed forces (Tilly, 1985) states came to be uniquely capable of provoking, waging and, above all, surviving hegemonic wars (Modelski, 1987). In three hundred years of state evolution - from 1648 until after World War II - there have been few perspectives that advocate against the idea of the primacy of states. This paper has not set out to change that approach, but rather to complete it with insights into the role that other international actors can play both in relation to states and the international system.

The debates around the ideas of international system and levels of analysis were initiated by Kenneth Waltz who, in his works *Man, State and War*<sup>1</sup> (2001) and *Theory of International Politics* (1979), drew attention on the different interactions depending on the level we are analysing, how the different levels overlap, and how systemic structure can influence the behaviour of states. Complementing this, David Singer (1961), provided a detailed description of how levels of analysis should be used to understand and explain international relations. The latter draws attention to the goals a researcher assumes when choosing one of the two levels of analysis he considers - state and systemic - because each respond to and offers different explanations: while the state level has the quality of being detailed but not comprehensive, the systemic level offers the advantages of an overview but risks losing the particularities of international relations through generalisation (Singer, 1961).

The subject of the research required consultation of an extensive bibliography, both theoretical and practical. In terms of the theoretical dimension, in addition to the concepts mentioned above, a

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<sup>1</sup> First published in 1959.

large part of the work revolves around the concepts of power, power transition and international organisations. Power, in international relations, has been dealt with mainly in association with nation states. Authors such as Hans Morgenthau (1948), Martin Wight (1998) and Kenneth Waltz (2001) have described and analysed the power of states and their constant preoccupation with acquiring it. National power is associated with tangible and intangible elements - population, territory, natural resources, quality of the administration and diplomacy - as described by these authors, and the purposes for which this power is used - to ensure security. It is clear that, despite being constituted by states, international security organisations do not possess the elements of national power. However, it would be wrong to exclude the possibility that these actors do not hold any global influence, given the large number of international organisations that have emerged throughout the 20th century (Singer & Wallace, 1970). In the 1970s and 1980s, international organisations aroused the interest of theorists, particularly with regard to their work in the economic field, with Susan Strange (Strange, 1997), Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (Keohane & Nye, 2009) among the best-known authors to address this topic. The impact of economic institutions on relations in world politics has been underestimated and risks being overlooked because states lose sight of competing actors in the international arena with asynchronous powers (Strange, 1997, pg. 302-303). On the other hand, Keohane and Nye, in the context of associating the state with hard power, argue for the role of economic relations between states to diminish the exaggerated emphasis placed on the military dimension (Keohane & Nye, 2012, pg. 263).

One of the fundamental processes with a major impact on international relations is the transition of power. In this respect, the approaches of Robert Gilpin (1981), Abramo Organski (1958) and George Modelski (1987) are noteworthy. Each of these three authors deals separately with the problem of the transition of power. Thus, while Organski analyses the sum of national capabilities, correlating them with the intention and ability of states to engage in hegemonic wars in order to prevent this status (Organski, 1958), Gilpin refers rather to the correlation between power and prestige, i.e. the predisposition of nation states to engage in hegemonic wars when the gains outweigh the costs and the objective is to change the international order in their favour (Gilpin, 1981). Modelski introduces a new perspective, considering change rather as an inevitable process, each hegemonic conflict going through four phases corresponding to the outbreak of a global conflict, the establishment of the winner who is also the new hegemon, its delegitimization, the devolution of power and the provocation of another global military conflict whose stake is hegemonic power (Modelski, 1987).



In the context of the inevitable changes in the international system - the number of poles of power according to its distribution - in this paper, international organisations are analysed from the perspective of the power they might hold. On the basis of power, they come to influence on the one hand, the international system as such and, on the other, the state actors within it. For such an analysis I will apply theoretical models proposed by Yoram Haftel and Alexander Thompson (2006) and Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal (1998) respectively. Abbott and Snidal put forward the concepts of centralization and independence, and Haftel and Thompson proposed theoretical models for identifying and testing them.

However, the capacities of international organisations, given that they do not possess elements of tangible power, was still a matter of debate. In analysing the concept of power of international organisations I have not considered a particular author, but I have introduced the concept of power in terms of behaviour. In order to define and identify elements of power in terms of behaviour, the paper describes and analysis types of intangible power identified and present in international relations. These include normative and regulatory power; cooperative power; punitive power; and last but not least, soft power, the latter being one of the characteristics predominantly used in relation to American soft power (Nye, 1991). Similar ideas have been developed by authors such as John Vogler and Charlotte Bretherton (2006), Hazel Smith (2002) and Karen Smith (2003), but all these authors, at the turn of the century, focused on analysing the European Union as a distinct actor with significant power to influence international relations in general and states in particular. The novelty of the present work lies in its focus on international security organisations (League of Nations on the one hand and NATO on the other).

Even after a considerable period of time since the multiplication of international organisations on the global arena, a considerable degree of scepticism remains about their impact on states. The classic debate between John Mearsheimer and Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin on the role of international institutions was an important step towards agreeing on the role that international organisations can play in relation to states. And while Mearsheimer rejects any meaningful contribution to the international arena, since international institutions are, in his view, merely an additional tool for promoting the interests of the most powerful actor (Mearsheimer, 1994), Keohane and Martin's response rather reveals the premises for the present study, the latter encouraging, through their approach, further research into the role of international organisations by testing and arguing in practical terms the influence they can have on states (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

As far as the practical dimension is concerned, the basic bibliographical resources are official League of Nations and NATO documents. In addition to the founding documents of the two

organisations, the paper also analyses their decisions and strategic documents in an attempt to assess, in accordance with the theoretical framework specified above - concerning centralization, independence - the power they hold or have held in relation to member states and the international system as such.

The paper is structured in five chapters. The first chapter contains an analysis of the concepts of international system, state and power - including power transition. Each of these concepts is analysed from the perspective of how they have been defined by theorists, but also from the perspective of developments. The chapter also includes an overview of the levels of analysis, perspectives on the concept of the international system and its components. One of the central elements was power and power transition theories.

After an exposition of concepts such as the international system, the state and power, the second chapter examines the concepts of cooperation, international organisations and their characteristics. Cooperation is analysed in terms of historical developments, but especially in terms of theories of how to encourage and discourage international cooperation, such as the prisoner's dilemma. The chapter also discusses the idea of international organisations, their evolution and the role they could play in promoting international peace and stability. As fundamental characteristics of international organisations we have chosen centrality and independence. Based on these arguments and mirroring the first chapter, the research argues that international organisations possess a degree of autonomy and power that gives them the capacity to play a much more influential role on the international stage than some authors are willing to admit.

Given that there are some space and time constraints, I cannot analyse the whole spectrum of past and existing international organisations. Thus, I had to limit the research to those in the security field, which are particularly concerned with maintaining a climate of peace and which have the political and military capacity to achieve this aim, and which are also considered to be some of the organisations with the most important role at international level, given the priority of security in the hierarchy of national interests. Thus, the third chapter takes a historical approach, focusing on the period before and after the emergence of the first global international organisation concerned with international security and peace - the League of Nations. The chapter is structured in two parts. The first part will cover elements of the global transformations that took place after the First World War, including the disputes between the major global players at the time and the competition between them, as well as the differences between the elements of power they wielded. In addition, in terms of power, the chapter also presents statistics on the material and non-material indicators associated with the power that states held, and the upward trajectory of the US globally. This chapter aims to present

the framework in which the League of Nations came into being, as well as the role that states have played in the international arena and the relationship between the League and its constituent members. The second part analyses the League, in line with the analytical model proposed in the previous chapter concerning the centrality and independence of international organisations, i.e. the autonomy and power they could have to influence the international system and the states within it.

The fourth chapter, following the model of the previous one, brings the research closer to the present time. It includes a history of the emergence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in mirror image to the Warsaw Treaty. It aims to historically map the bipolar dynamics of the last century which was dominated by the rivalry between Washington and Moscow, each with almost symmetrically reified ambitions in terms of perspectives on international organisations. The two organisations were chosen by virtue of their assumed politico-military character.

The fifth and final chapter of the paper tests the very hypothesis proposed by this study, namely the role that international security organisations can play in the event of substantial global transformations. Specifically, the role that NATO has played in the peaceful transition of power in the international system in the post-Cold War period. The chapter includes an analysis of the distribution of power in the international system, on the one hand, and a detailed exposition and in-depth analysis of NATO, on the other. The analysis of NATO in this chapter follows the same analytical model applied to the assessment of the League of Nations in terms of its centrality and independence, i.e. the autonomy and power in terms of behaviour that it possesses independently of its member states. The assessment in the latter chapter revealed a considerable role in influencing states, both those already members and those outside the Alliance. On the domestic side, the coordinating power and the ability to impose norms and standards are notable. Externally, NATO's soft power contributed overwhelmingly to stabilising the European continent after the implosion of the USSR and the power vacuum left by the fall of the Berlin Wall, by attracting communist states that adopted and implemented the Western value grid. As we have previously stated, although the three Cs were formally established by the Lisbon Treaty, NATO acted for collective defence, collaborative security and crisis management. The crisis management dimension was all the more important in the overall picture of the international system as the immediate aftermath of the break-up of the communist world saw an increase in intra-state conflicts that risked spilling over into other regions. In addition, through projects such as the Mediterranean Dialogue and PfP, NATO expanded its scope of activity and its links with states outside the Alliance, thus also broadening its capacity to influence international actors.

Following conducted research, one can consider that the proposed hypothesis - concerning the role of international security organisations in global transformations - is confirmed, but it contains a number of nuances and clarifications. On the one hand, we have the League of Nations, which has not been able to ensure a climate of stability and security at international level, and on the other, we have NATO, which has managed to absorb part of the shock of the transformation. As far as the post-World War I security environment is concerned, it should be noted that it had a number of peculiarities. It was the beginning of the era of formal cooperation. States were still sceptical about openly engaging in cooperative formats, let alone considering that their actions could be punished by sanctions from an international organisation, and this was demonstrated in practice. The lack of instruments to isolate and sanction states that violated international principles damaged both the image and the ability of the organisation to be taken seriously. In addition, the systemic change that brought it about was achieved by changing international values and less by changing the number of poles of power, with the centre of gravity actually shifting from Europe (Britain) to America (USA). The League of Nations remains a benchmark for formal cooperation, but it has reached its limits rather quickly, being influenced by states and the international context rather than capable of acting in the opposite direction.

Referring to the three types of change classified by Robert Gilpin: systemic change which equates to changes in the type of actors in the international arena; change in the mode of interaction between actors which refers to the rules governing the behaviour of states in the international arena; and systemic change the transition from one government to another by replacing one power in the system, we can conclude that the change in the 1990s was a systemic change because the Soviet pole was replaced by the American one (Gilpin, 1981, pg. 39-40). The strengthening of NATO's role was achieved through a transformation of the security environment in the sense of shifting poles of power, the third type of change. Compared to the inter-war period, the relationship to international values has not changed drastically: most of the former communist states quickly abandoned their political and economic ways and moved westwards. At the same time, the tradition of formal cooperation was on the rise, with the number of international organisations increasing. NATO, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, was viewed with confidence rather than scepticism. Not only did the states within it accept this, but it was also validated by the desire of other countries to become members of the Alliance. In doing so, the Alliance also strengthened its international position.

On the basis of the two characteristics analysed - centralization and independence - I have been able to observe a metamorphosis of NATO that has created the premises for influencing the international arena. Power in terms of behaviour has been amplified also thanks to a diffuse security

environment that has widened, especially horizontally, encompassing more and more threats: from intra-state conflicts to terrorist and sabotage actions. In the face of these challenges, NATO has been able to coalesce its members around a common goal so that the response is concrete and concerted. Even the criteria imposed on the former communist states were a strategy for normalising/standardising international interactions. The main elements of NATO power in terms of behaviour are coordination, standardisation and soft power. Admittedly, NATO's success is due also to the openness that states have shown to international cooperation. For example, without endowing the NATO Secretary General with the power he currently has (agenda setting, representation of the organisation in relation to other international actors, ability to mediate conflicts and disputes within the organisation) NATO would not have the same influence and visibility.

Although the research hypothesis has been confirmed, this paper also faces several limitations. On the one hand, applying the theoretical framework to only three international organisations cannot extend the research results to all international security organisations. The case of NATO only confirms that the politico-military cooperation approach can lead to a sufficiently important and active international actor for managing the threats posed by intrastate conflicts, terrorist actions and international disputes. On the other hand, there have been serious limitations on access to bibliographic sources other than those in Romanian, English and French. Future lines of research could address the subject of mirror development of international organisations, whether security or other high policy profile. For example, I am looking at power shifts in the international system in the context of small-scale wars (such as in Ukraine, the Middle East, Africa) rather than in the context of global conflicts. Based on the idea that in an environment as interconnected as the one we live in today, there is no need for strictly military action to destabilise a state or a region, the appropriate hypothesis could be tested that international organisations have the capacity to manage non-traditional threats better than states, even more so, as international organisations are, today, a natural actor in the global arena.

Consideration of international organisations in all global issues will remain even more important because, on the one hand, the historical record, at least for the 20th century, shows an almost perfect cyclicity of periods of war and peace. In this context, change is inevitable, but this does not imply that it must also be deterministic, meaning that all processes of power transition in international relations have the same outcome: war. Adopting Alexander Wendt's famous idea of anarchy (Wendt, 1992), change is what international actors make of it. Last but not least, perspectives on the role of international organizations are worth keeping in mind also due to studies in the field that propose measures such as "the inclusion of states in larger economic, political and security

institutions that require historically normal behaviour" to avoid hegemonic wars (Allison, 2022, p. 270).

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