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Key words: constructivism, human security, identity, national identity, human identity, structural violence

The paper aims at identifying, from a constructivist perspective, the implications of promoting the concept of human security at international level. In the present no general consensus has been reached on how this concept should be understood, still existing different opinions referring both to the methodological, definitional aspects as well as to the implications of the human security paradigm for the study and practice of international relations.

The relevance of the chosen theme is given, on the one hand, by the fact that the European Union aims at the construction of a strategic European culture which should be based on the concept of human security. For example, the Barcelona

Report¹, which suggests a human security doctrine for Europe (*A Human Security Doctrine for Europe*), recommends the integration of the human security component in the foreign and security policy of the EU. The Report starts from the idea that the security of the Europeans is tightly connected to and depends on that of the non – Europeans.

From a different point of view, the relevance of the chosen theme is given by the fact that the approach is an original one in Romania: the constructivist approach has not benefited of a special attention in our country, there being no special papers on this topic, and as far as the paradigm of social security is concerned, the number of papers and articles which deal with this concept is small, recent, and without resorting to the theory of international relations for its understanding.

Taking into consideration that a great part of the discussions concerning European strategic culture is based on constructivist precepts which postulate the centrality of identity and that the formulated hypothesis is that if an efficient functioning of the European security and defense policy is wanted a common European identity must be generated and a unique strategic narration must be composed (because it seems that the preeminence of national strategic cultures prevents a creation of a common European discourse regarding security and defense), I started methodologically from the assumption of identity as a key concept of the constructivist discourse and, after the conceptual clarification, the exploring of the options for the analysis and interpretation in relation with the human security paradigm.

By placing identity in the center of systemic explanations, the constructivist postulate identity as basis for interests, respectively for the construction of the international system, in contrast with traditional approaches to international relations (realism or liberalism) which were incapable of foreseeing the end of the Cold War or of explaining the architecture of the post Cold War order as they assumed the centrality of the concept of interest.

The assumption of identity as a central concept of the constructivist approach has made us pay attention to the fact that the promotion of human security is justified discursively on the basis of the idea that all human lives have

¹ *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe. The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities*, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/HumanSecurityDoctrine.pdf>.

the same value as we all belong to humanity, in contrast with the paradigm of national security which is based on the principal of privileged security of the nationals. From the liberal perspective, the only fundamental identity that we have comes from the common membership to human race. We can have, by chance or by our own choice, a number of other identities, but these are secondary. The fact that these are secondary does not mean that they are not important. In some circumstances, secondary identities can become very important and it is understandable that policies should reflect this aspect as long as primary identity, that of being human, is not compromised because of these policies.²

The paper has five chapters, an introduction, final considerations and bibliography.

The first chapter generally presents the constructivist approach, highlighting the fact that we are talking about a paradigm of the paradigms of the social sciences domain in which international relations is fitted, not being a similar approach to that of the other currents of international relations (realism, neorealism, idealism, liberalism, etc). Constructivism must be understood as ontology, epistemology and methodology. I highlighted the constructivist themes which are characteristic of international relations, the relation of this approach with realism, and finally, as the thesis discusses the human security issue, some aspects related to the constructivist security studies.

The second chapter, dedicated to the concept of identity and to the identity issue in different constructivist studies, wants to disclose the fact that this concept is an extremely contested one, difficult to circumscribe, being used by different authors in different ways, which makes the use of this notion difficult. As Maja Zehfuss observes identity is the central concept in sustaining the systemic argument elaborated by Alexander Wendt in *Social Theory of International Politics*,³ but the significance of the term identity is more problematic than it may seem in the beginning because the author does not offer a satisfying presentation of it, and especially this could undermine its construction⁴ (the identity of identity⁵ is

² BROWN, Chris, 'Borders and Identity in International Political Theory', in ALBERT, Mathias, David JACOBSON and Yosef LAPID (eds.) *Identities, Orders, Borders. Rethinking International Relations Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 2001, p.128.

³ WENDT, Alexander, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁴ ZEHFUSS, Maja, 'Constructivism and identity: a dangerous liaison', GUZZINI, Stefano, and LEANDER, Anna, *Constructivism and International Relations. Wendt and his Critics*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, pp. 92 – 117.

circumscribed to state, so a situation of incompatibility is created as identity is meanwhile given and constructed).

Given the great variety of conceptualizations and significances offered to identity, I considered it useful to illustrate in this chapter the theories regarding the international system, formulated by Alexander Wendt and Rodney Bruce Hall, authors that resort to the concept of identity, respectively collective identity, as well as the way in which different constructivist authors have used the concept of identity in the studies they have written.

We appreciate that the solution given by Charlotte Epstein⁶ in the conceptualization of identity is valuable and useful for the study of international relations, and we are talking about the discursive approach and the replacing of the concept of identity with that of identification.

The third chapter discusses the concept of human security, the importance of international context for its highlighting in security studies, in international relations, as well as its presence in the political discourse (beyond terminology, the concept is not new, having a long history). I insisted on the issue of defining human security, on the inherent difficulties that appear in evaluating the threats to human security, and especially on the problem of structural violence.

Chapter four refers to the relation between national identity, state – centric security and human security, marked by a fundamental tension, showing the fact that from a constructivist perspective of the interpretation of the causes of certain risks and security threats, the system of national states represents a constitutive cause in generating human insecurity situations.

In the last chapter I evaluated the implications of promoting the concept of human security at international level according to the theoretical and practical aims served by the paradigm of human security, in its smaller sense, as well as from the perspective of systemic effects which may be generated by the identification with humanity.

Radical constructivists, supporters of the ideas to the end, criticize Alexander Wendt for choosing to consider the theme of state and the explanations of its

⁵ Sintagmă folosită de ZEHFUSS, Maja în *Constructivism in International Relations. The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁶ EPSTEIN, Charlotte, 'Who speaks? Discourse, the subject and the study of identity in international politics' *European Journal of International Relations*, 17(2), 2011, pp. 327-350.

behavior as being an ontological issue, not an epistemological one. We agree with them, because instead of sustaining without doubt that the state is real, radical constructivists insist on the fact that the first preoccupation of constructivist researchers should be that of asking questions regarding the way in which people know themselves, as well as the way in which they act according to these ideas or conceptualizations. Words, as discursive acts which create knowledge and human actions linked to rules are considered to be more edifying than state identities stipulated by Alexander Wendt. Understanding the way people know themselves and create social condition for them and other actors, such as states, is probably the first suitable move in analyzing the political phenomena and, especially, in exploring security aspects.⁷

In the same line, the paper ends with some conclusions which sustain that the paradigm of human security, interpreted from a constructivist point of view, underlines the fact that a great deal of the causes of human insecurity is connected to the construction of identity. The privilege given to national identity in the political organization of the world, together with the underprivileged human identity, represents a constitutive cause of human insecurity, and an effective strategy of promoting human security should endorse the reverse of the identity hierarchy, meaning the placing of human identity on the highest place in the political organization of the world. By promoting the concept of human identity the discourse of self – identifying individuals with humanity is implicitly promoted, which means according to Rodney Bruce Hall's systemic theory (presented in chapter two) an epochal change of the international system. Even if the concept of human security, in its minimalist approach, legitimates humanitarian interventions which may serve particular interests (realist ones), the effects of the ethical argument which sustains the paradigm of human security, in the extended variant of the concept, will occur more and more strikingly. From a constructivist perspective, the legitimacy of some actions by the appeal to moral values, to human identity will have major systemic implications, even more as the structural causes of human insecurity will be highlighted.

⁷ KOŁODZIEJ, Edward, *Securitatea și relațiile internaționale*, Iași, Polirom, 2007, pp. 322 – 323.