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## **KEY CATEGORIES FOR THE STUDY OF SECURITY IN THE POLITICAL SCIENCE DIMENSION**

*The article outlines the main categories for studying security issues within the framework of political science. The author examines the essence of key concepts such as security, threat, danger, and conflict, which form the foundation for building a comprehensive security architecture. In its most specific sense, security is defined as the preservation of norms, rules, institutions, and societal values. In the classification of security proposed by the author, special attention is given to the complementary nature and interconnection of different types of security. The article also explores the nature and classification of the concept of “threat”, understood as an objectively existing possibility of causing harm to an individual, society, or the state. The author notes that the most universal classification of threats is considered to be according to the nature of their influence: real, imaginary, and potential; according to the direction of influence: external and internal; according to the scale of influence: global, regional, and local; according to the spheres of influence: social, military, political, ecological, and informational; and according to the level of influence: strategic and tactical. It is clarified that “danger” refers to the objectively existing possibility of a negative impact on society, resulting in damage to national interests and state security. The importance of identifying the sources, conditions, and factors contributing to the emergence of danger is emphasized. The author highlights the close relationship between these three categories and the issue of conflict, which remains a major factor destabilizing security environments. The mutual influence of these categories on modern global political processes is underlined. The study concludes that, to describe the characteristics of the world order system and global security situations, it is most effective to apply stability theories — particularly the balance of power theory and deterrence theory. The conditions affecting the international balance of power have been outlined. Particular attention is given to cases where the deterrence of threats fails to achieve the expected outcomes. The author stresses that the prevention of conflicts and the minimization of their negative consequences should remain a top priority in maintaining global security.*

**Keywords:** security, threat, danger, conflict, world order, universalism.

**The analysis of issues** related to state and societal security, socio-political life, its components, features, and values, as well as the comprehension of its methodological and conceptual foundations, continues to remain within the discussion field of political science. Since the need for security emerged alongside the rise of human society, philosophers and researchers have attempted to justify the terminology, origins, and development trends of this issue over many centuries.

**The aim of this article** is to analyze the key categories of security research and to systematize their specific features within the framework of political science.

For example, Aristotle, when considering the ideal state system and ways of governing society, identified one of the main criteria as ensuring the security of citizens [1]. Platon emphasized that in an ideal state, everyone should perform their own role, possess what is theirs, and avoid encroaching on the affairs of others, “minding their own business and not interfering with others” [2, p. 117-122]. Jean-Jacques Rousseau also focused on finding a legitimate political order that would guarantee the well-being and security of all citizens, who, he believed, are “equal by agreement and by right” [3, p. 217-232].

In general terms, security at that time was understood as a state or situation of calm arising from the absence of real danger, as well as the existence of a material organizational structure that would promote the creation and maintenance of this situation. Among Western academic schools, this understanding of “security” is still considered a classical one.

Although the predominant meaning of security has repeatedly changed over centuries, this has not only expanded the research field of modern political and sociopolitical thought but also significantly increased the range of assessments and opinions regarding the essence and transformation of the phenomenon in its

broadest sense. “Security is the condition that makes everything else possible”, convincingly argued E. Rothschild in her works [4].

Thus, the thinkers of Antiquity and the Modern Era understood security as the creation of safe conditions for human life, development, and activity. Analyzing their views, H. Sytnyk concluded that “security is the provision of proper conditions for self-realization to all citizens of a state, protecting their life, freedom, and property from encroachments by any individual, organization, society, or state” [5, p. 20].

In the broadest sense, security is defined as “a condition in which a complex system exists, when the action of external and internal factors does not lead to processes considered negative for this system according to current needs, knowledge, and perceptions” [6, p. 96]. In English-language literature, a more specific interpretation can also be found: security is “the preservation of norms, rules, institutions, and values of society” [7, p. 289].

Several important conclusions can be drawn from these definitions, which should be considered when discussing security:

1. Security is a characteristic of a certain “complex system”. Since there are many such systems (individuals, enterprises, economies, finances, society, etc.), the term “security” can be reasonably combined with the name of the relevant system. In other words, there can be a great number of partial definitions of security.

2. Danger can emerge both in the external environment and within the system itself. Therefore, achieving security usually requires not only strengthening a system’s ability to withstand external threats but also making internal changes.

3. Security is in many ways a subjective and historically relative concept. Different actors might view the same situation as safe or unsafe depending on their needs, knowledge, and perceptions, which evolve together with societal development.

Regarding the classification of security, the basic category in its system is “national security,” which is characterized by a state’s ability to ensure the protection and security of its citizens. However, modern global challenges create such large-scale problems for states that it becomes increasingly difficult to manage them independently. As a result, there arises a need to coordinate efforts among several (usually neighboring) states, which is referred to in the academic community as regional security. Moreover, trends of recent decades – such as globalization, worsening global economic issues, and advances in military technology – have turned security into a global issue. Various contradictions arising from clashes of state interests require involving multiple actors in negotiations and compromise-seeking processes, with the goal of developing and maintaining global security initiatives.

Naturally, protecting human life is the primary, but not the only, task of security. In fact, it must represent a comprehensive system of measures centered around the human being [8, p. 328]. For example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs identifies the following areas of human security and corresponding tasks, which collectively define the concept of global security:

1. Economy: creating jobs and combating poverty.
2. Food: addressing hunger issues.
3. Health: counteracting diseases, unsafe food, malnutrition, and lack of access to basic medical care.
4. Environment: combating environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters, and pollution.
5. Personal security: protecting against physical violence, crime, terrorism, domestic abuse, and child labor.
6. Community: preventing interethnic, religious, and other types of discrimination.
7. Political security: countering political repression and human rights violations [9].

Today, both domestic and foreign researchers generally regard security as a state of protection against certain threats and dangers. The interconnection of these categories was highlighted by the German analyst M. Stürmer, who noted that wherever the threat decreases, the danger increases [10]. Despite their seeming difference, both definitions essentially describe the same phenomenon, though they emphasize different aspects of this complex and multifaceted concept.

According to H. Pocheptsov, the term “threat” can be understood as an immediate danger of harm to national interests and national security or as an anticipated event, preparation for which reduces the risk of its occurrence [11, p. 174]. In this context, threats can be characterized as objectively existing possibilities of causing harm to an individual, society, or state. Currently, political science offers a wide range of threat classifications, but the most universal one is as follows [12]:

- by the nature of influence: real (already occurring, such as official statements by high-ranking officials), imaginary (emerging from unreliable or mistaken assessments, often based on unofficial sources), and potential (possible threats, such as the accumulation of military potential by an adversary or a lack of coordination within a state's governing bodies).
- by the direction of influence: external (originating outside, aimed at subjugating the targeted state) and internal (related to the condition of society).
- by scale of impact: global, regional, and local (based on the scale of consequences, losses, and the number and level of conflicting parties).
- by sphere of influence: social (targeting the established order in society), military (involving military force), political (aiming at changes in the political sphere, balance of power, or course), environmental (relating to environmental issues like global warming), and informational (for example, cyber threats).
- by degree of impact: strategic (posing fundamental danger to the state) and tactical (specific political, economic, social, or informational problems).

As for the category of “danger,” it should be understood as an objectively existing possibility of negative influence on society, causing harm to vital national interests and the security of the state. Danger serves as a generalizing category in relation to any phenomena that can, in some way, cause harm to individuals, society, or the state and worsen their further condition. By studying the genesis of danger based on the degree of predicted harm, it becomes possible to develop appropriate measures aimed at its neutralization. It is important to emphasize that, in order to define a danger, it is necessary to identify its sources, conditions, and factors contributing to the destabilization of a situation.

Both categories – “threat” and “danger” – are directly connected with the issue of the existence and spread of conflicts, which are a key factor in the destabilization of security. A conflict is understood as the most acute way of resolving significant contradictions that arise in the process of interaction, involving opposition between the subjects of the conflict and accompanied by negative emotions [13]. In the context of analyzing security challenges, among the variety of existing conflicts, it is appropriate to focus specifically on social conflicts. They most often become the object of study in political science and directly influence the security situation within the state and globally.

For instance, to describe the system of world order (international relations) where a significant number of traditional sources of stability and security manifest themselves too weakly, several theories of stability achieved through threats were developed. The most well-known among them is the theory of the balance of power, which is often adapted for broader application in cases involving threats within various social and security situations. According to one interpretation of this theory, a balance of power exists when all states in a given system have reasons to refrain from attacking one another, based on military considerations. If only conventional (non-nuclear) weapons are taken into account, such deterrence depends on the existence of natural or artificial obstacles to aggression (as was the case with Switzerland before it obtained neutral status), the military capabilities of the potential target, and its ability to secure assistance from other states (through the presence of treaties on mutual military support). All of this can be effective as a deterrent when an attack's success is impossible or when it threatens the aggressor with unacceptable costs [14, p. 22].

Several mechanisms for achieving a balance of power are identified, one of the ideal models being a system of collective security. This involves assistance to an attacked state from other countries. This mechanism is incorporated into the UN Charter (and was, to some extent, applied during the Gulf War), but in most conflict situations, this mechanism is difficult to fully implement, since some states sympathize with one side, while others support the other. If collective security fails to work, countries facing militarily powerful opponents can maintain or restore the balance of power by arming themselves or seeking allies [13].

In addition, four conditions can influence the international balance of power:

- the presence of a large number of states within the system (the more states, the more diverse the possible coalitions and the more ways to form alliances against a potential aggressor);
- freedom of action for national leaders to maneuver and rebuild alliances to restore the balance of power (if states are divided into two cohesive alliances, this may create threatening conditions for the dangerous polarization of the entire global community);
- the absence of extreme hostility in relations between countries;
- the ability to measure military capabilities (when such measurements are impossible, defense alliances may prove inadequate, or a potential aggressor may miscalculate its own strength and initiate conflict).

According to deterrence theory, efforts to create conditions and preventive measures to counter emerging threats should take various forms (for instance, in the context of the intensifying military confrontation

between the USA and Russia, a nuclear doctrine was signed to ensure relative stability and nuclear deterrence). Such measures depend on whether a state under attack possesses nuclear weapons or is allied with a nuclear-armed state. Therefore, an essential factor is the ability to deliver a retaliatory strike after surviving an initial attack. Conversely, when deterring an attack on a non-nuclear ally of a nuclear-armed state, the key factor becomes intent. If the ability to strike back is preserved, a country can maintain significantly fewer nuclear resources than its opponent and still feel secure within its borders [13]. However, building stability on threats and faith in a balance of power faces numerous problems. Deterrence through threats may fail to achieve the desired results, causing an escalation of international tensions in cases such as:

- the misuse of available information during decision-making;
- a lack of military prospects and the assumption of inevitable losses;
- when decision-makers are under significant pressure from external or internal political interests, willing to risk military adventurism.

Nevertheless, despite the stability theories developed by researchers that rely on threats, the priority should always remain the prevention of conflicts or efforts to minimize their negative consequences to preserve an optimal security situation and to create a universal and generally acceptable security architecture.

**In summary**, it is important to highlight several key aspects. Firstly, the issue of security has taken a central position in the discourse of political science, particularly in recent years. Secondly, there is a strong and undeniable interconnection between the core categories of security, threat, and danger. These concepts not only serve as individual subjects of political analysis and debate but also complement and influence one another within the framework of the global security system.

Thirdly, conflict, as a major factor destabilizing security, acts as a significant catalyst for the development of stability theories — the most prominent among them being the balance of power theory and the deterrence theory. Each of these theoretical approaches offers mechanisms aimed at preventing the escalation and spread of conflicts. Nevertheless, it is noted that preventive measures focused on preserving or restoring sources of global stability remain the universal and most effective determinant for maintaining an optimal security environment.

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### **Лавриненко Г. А. Ключові категорії дослідження безпеки у політологічному вимірі**

У статті окреслено основні категорії дослідження питань безпеки в межах політологічної науки. Автором проаналізовано сутність ключових понять, таких як безпека, загроза, небезпека та конфлікт, які слугують фундаментом для формування цілісної архітектури безпеки. У найбільш конкретному визначенні безпека розглядається як збереження норм, правил, інститутів і цінностей суспільства. У запропонованій автором класифікації безпеки особливу увагу приділено взаємодоповнюваності та взаємозв'язку різних її типів. Також у статті розглянуто сутність і класифікацію категорії «загроза», яку визначено як об'єктивно існуючу можливість завдати шкоди особистості, суспільству чи державі. Автором зазначено, що найбільш універсальним вважається поділ загроз за характером впливу на реальні, вигадані та можливі; за напрямком впливу на зовнішні та внутрішні; за масштабами впливу на глобальні, регіональні та локальні; за сферами впливу на соціальні, військові, політичні, екологічні та інформаційні; за ступенем впливу на стратегічні та тактичні. З'ясовано, що поняття «небезпека» означає об'єктивно існуючу можливість негативного впливу на соціум, що призводить до шкоди національним інтересам і безпеці держави. Наголошено на важливості виокремлення джерел, умов і чинників, які сприяють виникненню небезпеки. Автором підкреслено тісний взаємозв'язок між цими трьома категоріями та проблематикою конфліктів, які залишаються основним фактором дестабілізації безпекового середовища. Зазначено взаємовплив цих категорій на сучасні світові політичні процеси. У висновках статті стверджується, що для опису особливостей системи світоустрою та глобальної безпекової ситуації доцільно застосовувати теорії стабільності, серед яких найбільш поширеними є теорія балансу сил і теорія стримування. Виокремлено умови, що впливають на міжнародний баланс сил. Зазначено випадки, коли стримування загрозам не приносить необхідних результатів. Автором акцентовано увагу на тому, що пріоритетом у забезпеченні глобальної безпеки має залишатися недопущення конфліктів або мінімізація їхніх негативних наслідків.

**Ключові слова:** безпека, загроза, небезпека, конфлікт, світоустрій, універсалізм.