

UNIVERSITÀ DI TORINO

Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Scienze Internazionali

China and Global Studies



TESI DI LAUREA

**Non-traditional security in South Asia: the case of India-China
tensions along the Himalayan borders**

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Anno Accademico 2021/2022

Sessione di novembre

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War is still a watershed event in the history of International Relations.

The transition from a bipolar to a unipolar system, with the United States still at its top as the only global superpower, has changed the balance of power and led to the dissolution of the rigid blocks of alliances that characterised the conflict. On the one hand, there is the intensification of certain global phenomena, such as climate change and economic globalisation, which transcend national borders but have a significant impact at the local level; on the other hand, especially after the events of 9/11, new non-state actors are gaining in importance, such as terrorist groups and independence movements, capable of generating instability and tensions both at the national and international level.

Both macro-processes have a significant impact on the state's security: the current international system is much more dynamic and fluid, in contrast to the static and balanced context of the Cold War; now the actors must be able to face a multiplicity of threats and a more and more complex reality in which different phenomena interact. The presence of new globalised actors and processes directly affects the development and growth of countries, thus becoming a matter of national security. The transformation of the global context therefore also changes the way security is conceived. Within the academic world of IR, since the end of the '80s, the debate has been focused on the discussion of the concept of security, the threats considered within it, and the subject to which it refers, leading to the birth of new schools of thought. In this way, an attempt is being made to break out the pattern through which national security issues were interpreted during the Cold War, namely based on the nuclear race and strategic deterrence.

With the rise of Chinese power as an aspiring challenger to US hegemony, Asia has become today the continent most capable of altering global balances, especially considering the presence of different actors capable of influencing regional relations, but unable to impose itself as a single continental power. In the Asian context of security, it is possible to identify two main trends: on the one hand, there is the attempt by each state to securitise their national interests, and on the other hand, there is the desire to guarantee stability to foster economic growth. The challenge between Washington and Beijing in the Indo-Pacific theatre greatly influences the Asian security context, but it is not the only driver: regional organisations such as ASEAN, for instance, play a central role in maintaining regional balances. In a scenario where military security is extremely important, other direct threats to the regional states are present and they cannot be traced back to the military sphere.

The analysis that I would like to propose with my paper concerns a particular region, that of South Asia, an area characterised by historical inter-state and intra-state conflicts, with which political, economic, social and environmental processes of both regional and global nature interact. In particular, I will focus on one conflict (which I will use as a case study), namely the one between China and India along the Himalayan border, dispute that tends to be analysed from a military and strategic point of view, but which also presents elements related to non-translational security.

The research has a twofold purpose: the first is to contribute to the study of non-traditional security as a fundamental element to be considered in the analysis of conflicts and the national security policy of states. The second is to compare this thesis with a conflict currently underway, trying to identify possible issues of non-traditional security and study their relationship with the traditional dimension.

The two questions that will then guide the analysis are:

- How has the debate on the concept of security been articulated since the end of the Cold War within the field of International Relations? What are the most recent academic approaches?
- Taking into consideration the tensions between China and India along the Himalayan border, what non-traditional security elements can be identified? How do they interact with the military dimension?

The paper is based on the initial hypothesis that in today's international dynamics, non-traditional security is an essential element not only to analyse complex conflictual realities but also to identify short and long-term processes that can influence growth and relations between states. The case study chosen is intended to represent this objective: the basic idea is that the study of this conflict is often articulated by exclusively analysing the political and military issues that characterise the relations between China and India, especially concerning territorial disputes. However, it is presumable to think that what influences military action is not only the danger of invasion by a foreign army but also the need to protect one's territory from threats that cannot be ascribed to the military sphere.

The paper will be divided into three chapters: the first will be dedicated to the analysis of the Asian security context, with a particular focus on the South Asian region, in order to contextualize the Sino-Indian conflict. The second chapter, instead, will initially deal with the notion of security from a conceptual point of view and then investigate the evolution of the concept through the most recent schools of thought. Particular attention will be given to studies concerning non-traditional security. Finally, the third chapter will deal with the analysis of the chosen case study. First, the South Asian context will be analysed from the point of view of non-traditional security and then, the conflict itself will be examined. The final chapter will show the results of the work.

1.

The Asian security context

1.1 The Asian security context: an overview

Before analyzing the conflict between China and India along the Himalayan borders, it is necessary to describe its context and how it influences the relations between the two countries. Asia¹ is one of the most dynamic regions in the world. Its relevance in terms of economic growth and political influence has drawn the attention of the global great powers. However, it also hosts some of the current most strategic areas in the world and it is the region that most in the world presents interstate territorial disputes. The system of relations is characterized by strong state-centrism and particular attention is given to the respect of each other's sovereignty. This widespread nationalism emerges from the need to consolidate states and regimes and to reinforce a particular identity². Moreover, the economic development of the entire region has supported the progressive modernization of the military capabilities of the states that are reflected in new rivalries and growing tensions³. A peculiar characteristic of Asia is the diffusion of informal international organizations that have helped to increase the cooperation and the socialization of the countries, especially in the economic field⁴.

But the complexity of Asia is more related to the pronounced heterogeneity and numerosity of the actors that play an active role in the region. We can first consider the regional countries. China is undoubtedly one of the most important actors and the one that is most influencing the regional dynamics because of its rise. But we cannot avoid considering the role of India, Japan, and South Korea as major players in the economic and political regional scenario. As it will be deepened later on, the equation cannot exclude the role of all the other countries, the so-called "Middle States", and the regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), able to influence the regional equilibrium. Due to economic and security reasons, also several neighbouring countries belonging to Oceania (in particular Australia), the Middle East, and Europe are tightly connected to Asia and, even indirectly, influenced by the evolutions of the regional affairs. Crucial is also the role of Russia and the United States (US) whose geostrategic interests are inevitably linked to Asia. Because of this complexity, the idea of "Asia" or "Asia-

¹ For practical reasons I will consider as "Asia" the following countries: China, Hong Kong, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan (East Asia); Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam (Southeast Asia); Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka (South Asia); Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan (Central Asia). Division provided by Diplomat Risk Intelligence, «COVID-19 in Asia: A Country-By-Country Guide», thediplomat.com, 2020.

² Saadia M. Pekkanen, John Ravenhill, e Rosemary Foot, «The International Relations of Asia», in *Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 3–20, 5

³ Ivi, 7

⁴ Ivi, 8

Pacific” has progressively shifted to “Indo-Pacific”. Rory Medcalf in his article “Reimagining Asia: From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific” underlines how the regional actors’ interests have shaped the image of the continent, moving from the idea of Asia-Pacific, “which made good sense as a framework for regional order”⁵ to the idea of “Indo-Pacific”. This label originates from the recognition of “the growing economic, geopolitical, and security connections between the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean” that contributed to creating a unique strategic system⁶. This does not represent a loss of centrality of the Asian continent itself, but highlights the growing relevance of a “maritime Asia” because of the role that the Indian Ocean occupies in the international trade as one of the most trafficked economic corridors that link Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific Ocean through several straits⁷.

Although it is hard to include in this overview all the issues that stress the intra- and inter-regional relations in detail, especially about security, it is possible to outline some guidelines that characterize the Asian security context starting from the end of the Cold War. This exercise will be useful to take a picture of the macro-regional security dynamics, and of the forces that rule the State’s behaviour.

1.2 *Actors and dynamics*

The first step is to pay attention to the history of the regional context starting from the Cold War. The post-colonial experience of Asian countries has significantly contributed to the rising territorial disputes. Later on, the logic of the Cold War influenced the regional security dynamics transforming Asia into one of the theatres of the conflict between the two superpowers. However, Asia maintains its indigenous dynamics and its local conflicts, independent from the Cold War itself. In his article “Security architecture in Asia: the interplay of regional and global levels”, Barry Buzan argues that on the one side, Asia has been influenced during and after the Cold War by the global security context and by the changes in the distribution of the power within the international system that moved from bipolar to unipolar, but on the other side, it maintained some peculiar regional dynamics that has not been overlaid by the global one⁸.

The great economic growth that characterized the Asian countries in the 1980s and the progressive liberalisation of the trade favoured the interconnection among the regional powers and represented a source of legitimacy for the national regimes. These two processes created the necessity of a security regime able to guarantee stability within the region to favour trade and national development⁹. The research of stability is, even today, the base element that guides the regional countries’ action. The end of the Cold War and the rise of China represented two serious challenges for the regional equilibrium. Buzan highlights how the rise of China has caused a change in the distribution of power within the region

⁵ Rory Medcalf, «Reimagining Asia: From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific», *International Relations and Asia’s Southern Tier*, (2017), 9–28, 9

⁶ Ivi, 10

⁷ Ivi, 11

⁸ Barry Buzan, «Security architecture in Asia: the interplay of regional and global levels», *The Pacific Review* 16, n. 2 (2003): 151.

⁹ Ivi, 158

favouring a progressive convergence of two regional systems, that he identifies as Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, into one unique security system, East Asia. The collapse of the USSR, instead, left the US already set in the region to contain the Soviet expansion, the major military power in the area. However, a fundamental instrument to guarantee stability in the region was the foundation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 that aims to insert the regional and non-regional stakeholders within an institutional framework to limit the chances of conflicts and enhance the regional cooperation¹⁰. This institutional structure has been supported by the ASEAN countries, China, India, the US, and Japan for two reasons: first, it allows regional powers and the US to socialize with China engaging it within an institutional context but also to create a credible counterbalance in case of failure. Second, it allows regional countries (China and India first) to prevent the US from having the possibility to interfere excessively in the regional affairs avoiding its military prevalence on the regional dynamics. The result has been the creation of an anomaly: a security system that presents three regional great powers (China, India, and Japan), whose status quo seems hard to change, they, however, are not able to dominate the region from a security point of view. The small and medium powers have anyway a relevant role in influencing the security equilibrium¹¹. To summarize, after the Cold War, the Asian security context shows: a growing China able to influence the dynamics in East Asia but limited both by institutional rules and the necessity to rise peacefully without alarming the neighbouring countries; the US that still represents the first military power in the region but that is unable to monopolize the security dynamics; the enforcement of India's and Japan's positions as regional leaders, and the "Middle States" that have been able to bind the regional major powers in an institutional framework to guarantee political stability and economic development.

Looking at the current scenario we can notice a continuity of these trends. The emergence of China as a regional economic and political power continues to be one of the main issues, especially considering the worsening of the US-China relations in the last few years. However, this cannot be considered as the only driver that challenges regional security and stability. The trends that characterize Asian security today involve all the regional countries. We can identify two macro-trends in line with the post-Cold War picture. On the one side, every Asian country and the regional stakeholders attempt to militarily securitize their interests from a possible threat, but on the other side, they aim to keep the regional stability and enhance the cooperation participating in the regional informal institutions. These factors have resulted into a progressive increase of the military activities to be able at any time to protect the countries' core interests but also a stronger interdependence and collaboration to avoid conflicts and instabilities and support the regional development.

From the military point of view, the first trend that can witness a progressive militarization of the relations among the Asian countries is the rise of the military expenditure in the region. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2019 in Asia and Oceania, military expenditure increased by 4.8%¹². This growth is mainly driven by China, which showed an augmentation of 11.16 billion US dollars between 2018 and 2019¹³. But the same trend has been followed by South Korea, (+3.07 billion USD), India (+2.18 billion USD), Australia (+688 million USD), New Zealand

¹⁰ Ivi, 155

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, «SIPRI Yearbook 2020: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Summary», 2020 - current (2018) US dollars

¹³ SIPRI estimates. Notwithstanding the values are not official, it is possible to conclude that the augmentation of the Chinese expenditure between 2018 and 2019 is set around the 4.5-5%.

(+471 million USD), and Bangladesh (+541 million USD)¹⁴. Moreover, Central Asia recorded the highest augmentation of military expenditure (+16%)¹⁵ in the world, even if in absolute terms the amount is not so relevant. However, it is possible to identify the same trend considering a longer period. If we consider the period between 2010 and 2019, the military expenditure recorded relevant growth rates; in Central Asia, the military expenditure grew by 63%, East Asia by 58% South Asia by 41%, Southeast Asia by 34%, and Oceania by 25%¹⁶. Another challenge has been brought by nuclear proliferation. Asia, indeed, has become the continent with the highest number of nuclear countries, namely China with 320 nuclear warheads, India 150, Pakistan 160, and (apparently) North Korea¹⁷. Finally, it is possible to witness a recent reinforcement of strategic alliances. The first example is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). The Quad, informally established in 2004 by the US, India, Japan, and Australia to cooperate against the disastrous effects of the tsunami in India and formalized in 2007 to discuss the regional security issues, was reaffirmed on 12th March 2021 during the very first meeting among the leaders of the Quad countries. According to the Statement of the White House, the alliance between the four countries is multidimensional and it has as objective the promotion of “a free, open rules-based order, rooted in international law to advance security and prosperity and counter threats to both in the Indo-Pacific and beyond”¹⁸. However, despite not being explicitly mentioned, the military dimension of this alliance is testified by the joint naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal (Malabar in November 2020 and La Perouse in April 2021), that also saw the participation of the French Navy, and by the declaration of the current US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III¹⁹, reported by the Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby, stating that “the efforts of the countries known as the "Quad" — the U.S., Japan, Australia and India — are important in countering the malign influence of China in the region”²⁰.

As mentioned before, the constellation of informal organizations helps to limit the rising of this progressive militarization. In Asia, the institutional picture presents two regional organisations, the ASEAN and the South Asia Association for the Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and different cooperation platforms among which the most relevant are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the ASEAN Plus Three and Plus Six, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the East Asia Summit. In general, their three main purposes are, first, to enhance the regional development enforcing the regional economic cooperation; second, the maintenance of the political stability establishing a form of regional cooperation based on the principle of sovereignty and non-interference, and third, for the member states, to use this institutional framework from an utilitarian point of view, pursuing their national interests and controlling the actions of the other regional players. The SCO represents a good example that combines these factors. The SCO was created in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan but entered into force in 2003. According to the statutory document, the organization aims “to strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness between the member states; encouraging effective cooperation between them [...]; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability

¹⁴ Source: SIPRI. All the values are expressed in current (2019) US dollars.

¹⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, «SIPRI Yearbook 2020: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Summary», 2020 - current (2018) US dollars

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Source: SIPRI

¹⁸ The White House, «Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: “The Spirit of the Quad” » (The White House Statements and Release, 12th March 2021).

¹⁹ Lloyd J. Austin III was sworn in as the 28th Secretary of Defense on 22nd January 2021 after the assignment of the US President Joe Biden.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Defence, *Defense Secretary Highlights Commitment to Allies, Partners, Kirby Says*, 2021

in the region and establishing new, democratic, just and rational international political and economic order”²¹. In 2017, the Heads of State Council granted India and Pakistan the status of member²². According to Jing-Dong Yuan, in the beginning, the organization mainly reflected the security interests of China worried about the “three-evils” namely religious extremism, ethnic separatism, and international terrorism. Motivated by the goals of guaranteeing the region's stability and strengthening the relations with the new-born states in Central Asia and the Post-Cold War Russia, China tried to reinforce the role of the organization, especially after the facts of 11th September 2001 and the “coloured revolutions” in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan²³. Instead, the entrance of India and Pakistan can be interpreted as a combination of reinforcement of the cooperation in Central and South Asia, especially in counter-terrorism activities. This represents both the opportunity to bind China, India, and Russia together to enhance the reciprocal control on each other and to create a progressive interconnection to reduce the possibility of tensions in Central Asia and the Middle East. A crucial role in promoting regional stability after the Cold War has been played by the ASEAN and the related cooperation platforms. The diplomatic capacity of the ASEAN to provide a new institutional framework has been able to match with the US supply of security public goods and the growing provision of Chinese economic public goods²⁴. The foundation of the ASEAN Regional Forum, the “ASEAN plus three” (ATP), the “ASEAN plus six” (APS), and the East Asia Summit (EAS) represents the capacity to combine the necessity of cooperation within the region, not exclusively in the security field, reinforcing the communication and the interdependence of the regional and non-regional actors. It is also to provide an effective balance against the great regional powers, leading them to open a dialogue within the different cooperation platforms and avoiding that their influence might prevail on the interests of the small and medium states. The relations between the ASEAN, the US and China are emblematic. According to Yates, the ASEAN “situated its “regional conductor”²⁵” role within reciprocal role bargains with the US vis-à-vis its “offshore great power guarantor” role and China vis-à-vis its emerging “responsible regional great power” role”²⁶. The theme of regional political stability is again a pillar of these regional forums that present the political and security cooperation, especially concerning maritime disputes and counter-terrorism, as the first issue to face, as testified by the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Plan 2018-2022²⁷ and the ASEAN Regional Forum Ha Noi Plan of Action II 2020-2025²⁸.

²¹ Shanghai Cooperation Organization, «Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization», 2001.

²² It worth to mention that currently the organization includes some “observer states” (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia), the “dialogue states” (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey), and the “guest attendances” of Turkmenistan, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the ASEAN and the United Nations (UN).

²³ Jing-Dong Yuan, «China’s Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)», *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, n. 67 (2010): 855–69.

²⁴ Robert Yates, «ASEAN as the ‘regional conductor’: understanding ASEAN’s role in Asia-Pacific order», *The Pacific Review* 30, n. 4 (2016): 444.

²⁵ Yates defines “regional conductor” considering Asia-Pacific as an “orchestra” where “the great powers make up the different sections (brass, woodwind, percussion, strings). They possess the instruments (military hardware, economic and financial resources); it is they that essentially ‘make the music’. The problem of great power rivalry means that the different sections want the orchestra to play their own ‘score’ (vision of regional order) and thus exist in a state of competition. Instead, the ‘conductor’, who does not possess any instrument (lacks material capabilities), steps up to provide a ‘score’ (framework of norms and rules) for the orchestra to play. It is able to do so because it is acknowledged as neutral and competent.” (Ivi, 458)

²⁶ Ivi, 456

²⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), «ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan», 2018

²⁸ ASEAN Regional Forum, «ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) », 2020, paragraph 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6.

Taking as an example the “ASEAN plus three” (ATP), officially institutionalized in 1999 to enhance the cooperation between Asian countries after the 1997 economic crisis, including the ASEAN countries, China, South Korea, and Japan, it is possible to observe how it represents an important cooperation forum that promotes the dialogue between the regional governments. In 2005, India, Australia, and New Zealand joined the platform contributing to reinforcing Asian regionalism (“ASEAN plus six”). According to the Joint Statement on East Asian Cooperation of 1999, the platform aims “to promote dialogue and to deepen and consolidate collective efforts to advance mutual understanding, trust, good neighbourliness, and friendly relations, peace, stability and prosperity in East Asia and the world” in line with the international law²⁹. The fields of cooperation are two: Economic and Social Field and Political Field³⁰. Even in the case of ATP the issue of security is crucial. In the Statement, the Political Field refers to the relevance of security issues and the need to cooperate and increase the level of trust to maintain the stability of the region³¹. The question of regional security has become central also in a more recent document as the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Plan 2018-2022, which set the “Political and Security Cooperation” as the first point of the Plan³².

To further articulate the analysis, it is necessary to include in this scenario the Chinese project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that will be also important in the analysis of China and India relations. The project launched in 2013 by the Chinese President Xi Jinping is one of the great challenges to the stability of the region. From the practical point of view, the BRI consists in the creation of terrestrial and maritime commercial routes to connect China with the European continent involving Central Asia and the Middle East according to the logic of the “March Westward”, namely the Chinese strategy that aims to counterbalance the US pressures in East Asia engaging its West³³. Notwithstanding the economic dimension, the BRI presents a more controversial dimension which is related to international politics and the role of China in Asia and the world. This project represents an expansion of the Chinese interests in Asia, raising the question of which is the political goal of Beijing in the region. The debate is still open and shows divergent positions: on the one side, the idea is that the BRI is part of the greater strategy that aims to challenge the US hegemony in Asia, while on the other side, it prevails the image of an attempt to develop a new form of cooperation in Asia based on a “win-win” approach³⁴. Considering the constant that characterizes the security relation in Asia, namely the research of stability, the BRI represents a challenge for the regional security but also an important tool to manage peacefully the Chinese rise. On the one side, according to Mingjiang Li, the BRI, even if it cannot be categorized as a geopolitical strategy, supports one of the three Chinese core interests, namely “maintaining the steady and sustainable development of its economy and society”³⁵. The author, in fact, highlights that being a core interest for the Chinese government, it must be also defended by external threats. Therefore, the relevance of the BRI requires a strategic and security policy able to protect the investments and the durability of the project³⁶, which means China must be able to intervene, militarily or not, wherever its interests are

²⁹ Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), «Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation», November 1999

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), «ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan», 2018.

³³ Flynt Leverett e Wu Bingbing, «The New Silk Road and China’s Evolving Grand Strategy», *The China Journal* 77 (2017): 125

³⁴ Ivi, 111

³⁵ Wei Da, «A clear signal of ‘core interests’ to the world», *China Daily*, 2010.

³⁶ Mingjiang Li, «The Belt and Road Initiative: geo-economics and Indo-Pacific security competition», *International Affairs* 96, n. 1 (2020): 178..

threatened. On the other side, thanks to this initiative, China is trying to mitigate the risks of an assertive containment against its growing influence in the region promoting both a *raison de système* that sustains the transition toward a multipolar order based on a new form of governance following the logic of the “community of shared future for mankind” and underpin the regional multilateralism favouring the creation of an international social capital between the states³⁷. In conclusion, the characteristics of the BRI match with the two main dynamics that influence the regional security system: from the one hand, the BRI represents itself as an attempt to securitize the Chinese vital interests, even if not in a traditional way, responding to the US pressure by guaranteeing new provisions channels, the access to new markets, and building stronger relations with the neighbouring countries³⁸. From the other hand, the project, even if it cannot be considered as an international institution, in part has a normative nature since it aims to promote a new form of cooperation between the members that adhered to it acting through new institutions (for example the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank or AIIB) and existing institutions (SCO), supporting the creation of an international social capital able to influence profoundly the security and the development of the region³⁹.

1.3 *Lessons from the Asia security system*

After a presentation of the actors and the dynamics that characterize the Asian security context, it is necessary to suggest some conclusions that will be helpful also to contextualize the China and India relations. First, it is possible to argue that when we talk about Asia we do not talk exclusively about China and the US. In many cases, the image that is associated with Asia is a duality based on the American hegemony in the military field and the Chinese hegemony in the economic field. However, according to the thesis of Feng Liu and Ruonan Liu, this “dualistic-order thesis reveals its inability to withstand logical scrutiny and its failure to capture the political realities of East Asia. By drawing a line between regional economy and security—two essential domains of strategic interaction—the dualistic perspective exaggerates both the dominance of the US in one realm and China’s overwhelming influence in the other realm”⁴⁰. From the economic point of view, the authors sustained that despite China being one of the major economic powers in the region, it still does not have the position and the power to dominate the regional economy. Notwithstanding the weight that China has reached on the regional trade, especially with the ASEAN countries becoming its first commercial partner, the East Asia economies still depend on Japan, the US, and European countries, both in terms of exports and foreign direct investments. The UN Comtrade data show that on the one side, China has become the largest trading partner of the ASEAN countries, contributing in 2018 for the 26.26% to the total ASEAN importations and for the 18.25% to the ASEAN exportations. On the other side, the Asian economy is still strongly dependent

³⁷ Giovanni B. Andornino, «The Belt and Road Initiative in China’s Emerging Grand Strategy of Connective Leadership», *China & World Economy* 25, n. 5 (2017): 13–16.

³⁸ Yong Wang, «Offensive for defensive: the belt and road initiative and China’s new grand strategy», *The Pacific Review* 29, n. 3 (2016): 458.

³⁹ Andornino, «The Belt and Road Initiative in China’s Emerging Grand Strategy of Connective Leadership», 15

⁴⁰ Feng Liu e Ruonan Liu, «China, the United States, and order transition in East Asia: An economy-security Nexus approach», *The Pacific Review* 32, n. 6 (2019): 974.

on the American, Japanese, and European markets. If we gather the US and the EU markets, they together absorb 26% of the ASEAN exports, while Japan 10.54%. Moreover, the power of the Renminbi is still low and its transition in Asia is still limited if compared with the Japanese Yen and the US dollar⁴¹.

From the military point of view instead, the misleading argument is that the US, in force of its hard power, is the country that dominates the regional security dynamics. In terms of military power, the US is undoubtedly the first power in the world and no other countries seem to be able to challenge its hegemony in this field, at least at global level. However, even considering its superiority at global level, at regional level it is not possible to reach the same conclusion. Christopher Layne, in his article “The US–Chinese power shift and the end of the Pax Americana”, supports this thesis arguing that while at global level the US military hegemony is indisputable, at regional level, China “is beginning to draw level with the United States in regional military power in East Asia”⁴². Despite China cannot compete against the US globally, it can pursue its interests in its periphery actively and challenges the American forces. Beyond China and the US, there is another element to consider: the role of the Middle States. The image that seems to represent the equilibrium in Asia is an “everyone-against-China” situation where regional powers, India and Japan, and the other countries, led by the US, are creating a military counterbalance in Asia to face the rise of China. However, this can also be misleading, especially considering the role of the Middle States as marginal. As argued by Liu and Liu, “a powerful US presence in the region has stabilized the expectations of its allies and partners, not only by reducing the concerns and anxieties of those small and middle powers concerning a rising China but also by facilitating their engagement with China. However, it is in fact misleading to conclude that regional security and stability has solely relied on the United States. While the U.S. enjoys its superiority on the structural level, both China and the ASEAN states have played very positive roles on the processual level, making significant contributions to regional peace and stability”⁴³. While the regional powers are more active in containing the Chinese expansion, we cannot affirm the same for the ASEAN countries and the other regional small and medium powers. Moreover, we cannot sustain that their security policy is totally dependent on that of the US. Of course, the military support of the US army is fundamental to help these countries to face the expansion of Chinese interests in the region, but they continue to maintain a margin of autonomy in their foreign policy, engaging China and trying to develop a more cooperative environment rather than to pursue a total balance-of-power strategy against Beijing. The element that emerges is that these countries from the one hand are safeguarding their interests protecting themselves militarily from a possible Chinese intervention exploiting the American sustainment and using this position to negotiate with China from a position of strength⁴⁴. But, on the other hand, they are interested in developing cooperative relations with China to stabilize the region and favour the regional economic growth. Moreover, Liu and Liu highlight the fact that the interests of small and medium powers sometimes are not in line with the US’s and they must consider a possible American interventionism in domestic affairs as a security threat⁴⁵. The role of the Middle States, therefore, is crucial. In Ikenberry’s opinion, their operation of hedging between China and the US is fundamental for the maintenance of stability in the region. In his article “Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia”, he describes the existence of

⁴¹ Ivi, 974-980

⁴² Christopher Layne, «The US–Chinese power shift and the end of the Pax Americana», *International Affairs* 94, n. 1 (2018): 95.

⁴³ Liu & Liu, «China, the United States, and order transition in East Asia: An economy-security Nexus approach», 980

⁴⁴ Ivi, 982

⁴⁵ Ivi, 983

a “dual hierarchical order” with the US on the top of the military sphere and China on the top of the economic sphere. From the Middle States’ point of view, the most effective strategy to continue to be significant in regional affairs and to guarantee their security is to maintain good relations with both sides. He underlines that “if countries in the region look to the United States for security, they look to China for economic opportunity”⁴⁶. The objective, in fact, is to look for the support of both parties receiving incentives and benefits from their leadership but at the same time avoiding that one of the two parts could oppress them shifting from one part to the other when it is necessary⁴⁷. However, this stability can be maintained only if the two hierarchies remain stable, namely, the US military deterrence remains credible, and China keeps growing without assertiveness continuing to generate benefits for the neighbouring countries.

Therefore, can we talk about a regional security order? and which type of order? One of the proposals that in my opinion can summarize the elements that I discussed above is the one suggested by Acharya in his article “Power Shift or Paradigm Shift? China’s Rise and Asia’s Emerging Security Order”. To describe the Asian security order, Acharya uses the concept of “Consociational Security Order” (CSO). He defines it as “a relationship of mutual accommodation among unequal and culturally diverse groups that preserve each group’s relative autonomy and prevents the hegemony of any particular group/s”⁴⁸. This order is characterized by three features that differentiate it from the other security orders: the first is that within this order there is not a hegemon; the second is that, in contrast with the “concert” where the greater powers together manage the order excluding the small and medium ones, the CSO “has its basis in an elite cartel, the dominant groups work with the weaker elements to manage political order”; the third is that it is not based on a shared identity but on “cultural diversity, state sovereignty, and national autonomy”. These elements create a scenario where countries collaborate to maintain stability in a context in which war is not unthinkable, impeding that one power can achieve regional hegemony⁴⁹. This picture seems to fit with the elements analysed until now. First of all, as demonstrated before, we cannot recognize one or more hegemon in the region, not even looking at the two main hard power dimensions, namely, the military and the economic ones. The US and China are the leaders respectively of the military and economic dimension, but they do not dominate them. Second, because of this “dual hierarchy” and the existence of a broad regional institutional framework, the role of the ASEAN and, in particular, of the small and medium powers is not negligible nor neglected. This brings the regional great powers to confront with the Middle States, especially in the regional institutions. Third, the concept of sovereignty and non-inference is a principle shared among the Asian countries that are willing to cooperate regionally but maintain their degree of autonomy. To conclude, considering the other points, this order would confirm the existence of the constant that characterizes the regional foreign policies, namely the research of stability in the region, and their two pillars, the regional intrinsic tendency to the conflict and the definition of an institutional framework to enhance cooperation. The continuous spectre of the war forces the countries to be ready for a likely conflict (not excluded by the CSO) but at the same time, the economic interdependence and the necessity to control the action of the regional great powers,

⁴⁶ G. John Ikenberry, «Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia», *Political Science Quarterly* 131, n. 1 (2015): 13.

⁴⁷ Ivi, 3

⁴⁸ Amitav Acharya, «Power Shift or Paradigm Shift? China’s Rise and Asia’s Emerging Security Order», *International Studies Quarterly* 58, n. 1 (2013): 159.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

has brought to the constitution of an institutional framework able to mitigate the risks of a military dispute favouring political and military cooperation.

1.4 South Asia: which security context?

To conclude the chapter, I will present an overview of the South Asian sub-regional context that will be relevant for the next part of the dissertation. It is important, first, to highlight the peculiar characteristics of the area and the historical relations between the regional powers; second, to identify the main actors and their interests in South Asia; and third, to understand if the previous framework fits with the characteristics of the regional dynamics. Beforehand, a premise is necessary. When I talk about South Asia, I refer to the countries that I have mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. However, this division has been made exclusively for the research and for the necessity to delimitate an area to analyse. The countries that I have included in the category of South Asia do not act only within the region as in a close system but interact with other regional contexts.

South Asia, the context in which the conflict between India and China takes place, is one of the most conflictual scenarios in the whole of Asia. The political and security issues that influence the relations between the countries contribute to the development of a context more based on rivalry than on cooperation, even if the latter is not absent. Two historical and political factors caused this evolution of the regional relations: the first one is that being a post-colonial region, its nature is intrinsically conflictual because of the territorial disputes that this historical condition created⁵⁰; the second is the presence of a deep unbalance between “States” and “Nations”, a condition in which the political boundaries do not match with the national identification⁵¹. Both factors have contributed to the emergence of conflicts related to the outline of political borders and conflicts related to ethnic and religious divergences. The conflictual nature of the region can be confirmed by looking at the territorial disputes recorded after the end of World War II. Between 1945 and 2012 in Asia around 90 territorial and maritime disputes were recorded, thirteen of which involve South Asian countries. Eight of them are still not settled. Considering that the number of countries that are part of the South Asian region is eight, according to the division made at the beginning of the chapter, statistically, every country has or has had at least one dispute with another regional country⁵². Miller argues that the process of decolonization left a discrepancy between the political borders defined by the colonizing powers and the local national groups. Therefore, this incongruence has favoured the rise of issues that mined the stability and the integrity of the regional States. The conflictual consequence of these issues arises from the fact that they “are often used by a

⁵⁰ Barry Buzan e Ole Waever, *Regions and powers: the structure of international security* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 101

⁵¹ Benjamin Miller, «State, Nations, and the Regional Security Order of South Asia», in *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament* (Stanford University Press, 2011), 73–97.

⁵² Data reported by M. Taylor Fravel, «Territorial and Maritime Boundary Disputes In Asia», in *Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 533-536 and elaborated by the author.

revisionist leadership to legitimize hot conflicts, wars of aggression, diversionary wars, and irredentist/secessionist ventures⁵³.

Looking at the main players in South Asia, not even here can we identify a hegemon able to determine the regional dynamics. The most influential actors are India and China but also in this case it is not possible to overlook the role of the US and that of the Middle States. India is historically the strongest regional power because of its geographical dimension and demography and its preponderant role in the Indian Ocean, maritime space considered as its competence area⁵⁴. The necessity to maintain stability in a conflictual region has obliged India to maintain good relations with the regional neighbouring countries trying to include them in its sphere of influence promoting bilateral cooperation⁵⁵. However, the quality of its bilateral relations is affected by conflicts and tensions, as testified by the India and Pakistan relations⁵⁶. But considering the domestic level, India suffers from structural problems that impede it to project an economic and military power in the region able to overtake that of the other actors⁵⁷. Beyond the internal deficiencies, the Indian influence is challenged by China. The main goal of China's foreign policy in South Asia is, indeed, first, to maintain the stability of the region, and second, to contest the Indian power in the area⁵⁸. Even in this case, the regional conflict propensity and the relevance of the Indian Ocean make China look at this area mainly for security and political interest. However, as highlighted by Freeman, the Chinese approach is not limited to the traditional security issues but includes a broader range of issues concerning non-traditional security. Moreover, it is trying to engage South Asia from a multilateral point of view using different cooperation platforms. This is testified, for example, by the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation, by the role of observer in the SAARC, and by the involvement of South Asian countries in the BRI⁵⁹. China has progressively expanded its economic influence on the regional states developing relevant trade relations and investing strongly in regional infrastructures, enforcing the leverage on the medium and small states. However, its influence is not strong enough to exclude that of India. The third player is the US that since the beginning of the Cold War has considered South Asia and the Indian Ocean a strategic area where to pursue their interests. During the Cold War, this region had been fundamental to implement the strategy of containment against the USSR while today it hosts the main commercial routes toward the Middle East, namely toward the source of oil provisions⁶⁰. Thanks to naval base Diego Garcia situated in British Indian Ocean Territory in the middle of the Indian Ocean, the US are able to securitize the free maritime circulation and at the same time to create a deterrence to potential instability in the region⁶¹. Moreover, the presence in Afghanistan after 9/11 has contributed to stabilizing the northern part of the region. According to Jing-Dong Yuan, Russia and China agreed to the presence of the US from the anti-terrorist perspective⁶². Finally, the US is currently an observer member of the SAARC. However, the US interest in the Indian Ocean is also to monitor the rise of China in the region since the development of the Maritime Silk Road,

⁵³ Miller, «State, Nations, and the Regional Security Order of South Asia», 91

⁵⁴ Jan Hornat, «The power triangle in the Indian Ocean: China, India and the United States», *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, n. 2 (2015): 432-435

⁵⁵ Christian Wagner, «The Role of India and China in South Asia», *Strategic Analysis* 40, n. 4 (2016): 309

⁵⁶ Christian Wagner, «India's Bilateral Security Relationship in South Asia», *Strategic Analysis* 42, n. 1 (2018): 15–28.

⁵⁷ Wagner, «The Role of India and China in South Asia», 317

⁵⁸ Carla P. Freeman, «China's 'regionalism foreign policy' and China-India relations in South Asia», *Contemporary Politics* 24, n. 1 (2017): 81–97.

⁵⁹ Ivi, 86

⁶⁰ Hornat, «The power triangle in the Indian Ocean: China, India and the United States», 435-437

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Yuan, «China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)», 863

namely the maritime section of the BRI. The engagement of India in the Quad is also a signal that the US is willing to contain a possible expansion of China's influence in the region. However, it is important to mention that the relations between the US and India are not so close as we can imagine. Despite the military and economic deficit compared to the US and China, India is trying to keep its foreign policy as autonomous as possible. After the collapse of the USSR, the relations between India and the US started to improve after the period of nonalignment and nuclear ambiguity, but still present some contrasts. The main issue that divides the two countries is the Indian aversion for a unipolar global order dominated by the US⁶³. For two reasons: first, a unipolar global order can limit the action of India in the international arena, and second, that an "overweening power" can be able to impose global regimes on different sectors, like non-proliferation or human rights⁶⁴. Despite the challenge brought by China has moved the two countries closer, India continues to engage the other actor in the region paying attention not to show itself as a close ally of the US⁶⁵. As in the challenge between China and the US, even in the context of China-India competition in South Asia, the small and medium countries play an important role in keeping the equilibrium in the region. Despite their economies not being able to compete against China and India, their governments still want to protect their political autonomy⁶⁶. Their strategy, in fact, is based on two parts: on the one side, they hedge between the two powers in order to keep a sort of deterrence from one power's interferences, on the other side, they try to bind them within an institutional framework. This, for example, is testified by the establishment of the SAARC for the will of Bangladesh in 1985. However, it is not comparable to other regional cooperation platforms such as the ASEAN Plus Three or the ASEAN Regional Forum. We have in fact to consider three elements: first, the goals of the organization do not include the theme of traditional security but that of non-traditional security. Second, the conflicts and the tensions have some repercussions on the functionality of the organization. For example, in 2016 India boycotted the SAARC Summit that should have been held in Islamabad after the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi charged the Pakistan government with promoting terrorism. The regional organization that can create a base for dialogue about security is the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)⁶⁷ but its statute includes only the issue of transnational crime and counter-terrorism. Third, as mentioned in the previous part, these organizations may become an instrument to control each other rather than a platform of cooperation. For example, the request of China to become a member of the SAARC does not find the support of India because potentially it can reduce its influence on the organization. At the same time, China agreed to India's entrance into the SCO as long as also Pakistan joined it.

If we try to insert this context in the security structure that I outlined above, we can notice that South Asia follows a similar pattern. The research of stability in the region is always the strategic goal that all the countries aim to achieve. The South Asian context shows the presence of the main two dynamics that I mentioned before: on the one side, the regional countries try to keep an effective balance to prevent a possible escalation of the conflicts organizing their relations in order to protect their interests. On the

⁶³ Sumit Ganguly, «India's Foreign and Security Policies», in *Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 419

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ivi, 420

⁶⁶ Darren J Lim e Rohan Mukherjee, «Hedging in South Asia: balancing economic and security interests amid Sino-Indian competition», *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, n. 3 (2019): 493–522.

⁶⁷ The BIMSTEC has been established in 1997 and includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

other side, the participation of the majority of the countries in regional and macro-regional cooperation platforms shows the will to cooperate. However, it is important to underline that South Asia presents two peculiarities. This context, for example, is different from that of East Asia. The peculiarity in this case is that in South Asia the first dynamic seems to prevail on the second one, which, however, is not non-existent. According to Miller, the region presents a high degree of weak or failed states and secessionist groups. On the one side, some authorities are enabled to properly carry out their power on the territory (as in the case of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka); on the other side, national groups aim to separate themselves from the States in which they live (as in the case of Kashmir). The combination of these two factors can provoke interstate wars (between strong States) or civil wars (between weak States) and the wider the incongruence between states and nations, the more effect of secessionist or revisionist movement will threaten the stability and the integrity of the States⁶⁸. The second factor that increases the instability and the risk of conflict is the presence of two neighbouring nuclear states, India and Pakistan, three including also China. On this issue, the debate is still open. For some scholars, the nuclear deterrence is a stabilization driver that can reduce the possibility of conflict and escalation, while for other scholars this is a factor that increases regional instability. According to Kapur, in the case of South Asia, the second scenario is more plausible. He argues that “first, nuclear weapons’ ability to shield Pakistan against all-out Indian retaliation and to attract international attention to Pakistan’s dispute with India, encouraged aggressive Pakistani behaviour. This provoked forceful Indian responses, ranging from large-scale mobilization to limited war. Although the resulting Indo-Pakistani crises did not lead to nuclear or full-scale conventional conflict, such fortunate outcomes were not guaranteed and did not result primarily from nuclear deterrence. Second, these crises have triggered aggressive changes in India’s conventional military posture. Such developments may lead to future regional instability”⁶⁹.

The context that I have shown in this chapter tries to identify the dynamics that characterize the regional security considering the political and military dimensions, more related to the traditional security. As I showed there is a balance between the continuous spectre of the war and the will of cooperating to enhance the stability of the region and support economic development. However, Asia, in particular South Asia, presents another side of security. In the next chapter, I will try to analyse the concept of security and I will try to confront it with a current conflict, namely that between China and India along the Himalayan borders.

⁶⁸ Miller, «State, Nations, and the Regional Security Order of South Asia», 81

⁶⁹ S. Paul Kapur, «Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia», *International Security* 33, n. 2 (2008): 72

2.

The concept of security: a theoretical framework

2.1 *The evolution of the concept*

When we talk about security, we talk about a condition that interests the existence of the individuals and the community. Security, indeed, stresses directly the integrity and the physical welfare of the people: the etymology of the word itself, *se curare*, indicates literally “take care of oneself”⁷⁰ or *securitas*⁷¹, namely “tranquillity given by absence of danger”. The connection between security and people’s life emerges from the fact that individuals live in a society: everyone pursues their interests, everyone owns material resources, and everyone interacts with each other within a system of relations that can be cooperative or conflictual. However, considering these three elements, the relations among the actors hide a certain level of uncertainty and can involve the presence of threats and the explosion of violence. Consequently, rational actors look for security in order to protect themselves from existing or possible dangers⁷². Moreover, Hedley Bull argues that “security” is an “elementary goal” that “all societies seek to ensure (...) against violence resulting in death or bodily harm” because “a constellation of persons or groups among whom there existed no expectation of security against violence, (...) we should hardly call a society at all”⁷³. As suggested by Berki, we can affirm that individuals are “the prime source of each other’s insecurity”⁷⁴. However, the same works for states. Indeed, they pursue their national interests, own resources and interact with other states. The existence of other national actors in the international arena is the first source of threat for the state itself⁷⁵.

The study of security as a condition through which the kingdoms and, later, the states can survive dates back to several centuries ago compared to the foundation of the discipline of International Relations (IR) in 1903⁷⁶. The analysis of this concept has been influenced by the historical events, by the changes of the international system and by the different schools of thought and the authors that, directly or indirectly, stress this topic. Machiavelli, Hobbes, Clausewitz, if we look at Political Realism, and Kant, Smith and

⁷⁰ Paolo Foradori e Giampiero Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce* (Il Mulino, 2014), 13.

⁷¹ "Security, n.". OED Online. June 2021. Oxford University Press

⁷² Filippo Andreatta et al., *Relazioni internazionali* (Il Mulino, 2012), 241.

⁷³ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5.

⁷⁴ Robert Nandor Berki, *Security and society reflections on law, order, and politics* (London Melbourne J. M. Dent & Sons, 1986), 24–40 quoted in Barry Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era* (Ecpr Press, 2016), 35.

⁷⁵ Andreatta et al., *Relazioni internazionali*, 242.

⁷⁶ Emidio Diodato, *Relazioni internazionali: dalle tradizioni alle sfide* (Carocci, 2013), 19.

Cobden, if we look at the Liberal doctrine, started to discuss how to achieve security, connecting directly this condition to the survival of the maximum political authority. The discussion has been resumed by the classical traditions of the IR, namely Classical Realism and Classical Liberalism, that tried to theorize the condition thanks to which a state can achieve security. The two traditions agreed on the fact that the only event that could threaten national security was the war, but they disagreed on the consequence that this assumption entails: Realists consider security as derivative of power while Liberals of peace⁷⁷. The two World Wars and the beginning of the Cold War set off the prevalence of the realist tradition on the Liberal thought led by the Wilsonian institutionalism⁷⁸. In the same period, within the IR, two new branches were created: the Strategic Studies (SS) and the International Security Studies (ISS). The first focused the attention on the phenomenon of war, considering it as a social one⁷⁹; the second, instead, made “security” as its “watchword” and started to debate over “how to protect the state against external and internal threats after the Second World War”⁸⁰. Since the beginning of the debate over security, the attention has always been drawn on the military dimension, or in general, on the hard power. However, the end of the Cold War brought back scholars to discuss security. This event, indeed, represented an important watershed in the IR for two reasons: first, the Cold War concluded without an effective war between the two superpowers, and second, was the collapse of the bipolar order. Both factors challenged the assumptions of the Realist school refuting the idea that the national interest is driven by power and security and contesting the durability of the bipolar system after the dismantling of the USSR⁸¹. The consequence of the collapse of the rigid system of alliance that counterposed the two blocks during the Cold War has brought back the states in a condition of strategic autonomy but has also stimulated them to review their security relations at global level⁸². Indeed, they have been forced to move from a “static and unidirectional conception of the threats essentially declined in terms of interstate relations and territorial defence” to a “manifold and multidimensional vision of the international dynamics and the challenge to [international] stability”⁸³. In other words, the states, thinking about their security, must consider not just new threats derived from other states, whose behaviour is no more predictable as during the division in the two blocks of alliances, but also new forms of threats that go beyond the typical military attack. Together with the collapse of the bipolar order, another element that makes rethinking security is the advent of globalized phenomena, like economic globalization and climate change⁸⁴. These trends led to a progressive overlapping and melting of domestic and foreign policies: the political decisions, indeed, seem to occur in a “diluted, diversified, dislodged, and so denationalized”, space⁸⁵. In the words of Rosenau, this caused a progressive process of boundary-weakening and boundary-broadening⁸⁶ where local decisions have global effects and, at the same time, international events have local consequences⁸⁷. Even the phenomenon of war was subjected to some changes after the end of the Cold War. Two are the main ones: the first regards the internalization of the conflicts, more and more

⁷⁷ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 2.

⁷⁸ Diodato, *Relazioni internazionali: dalle tradizioni alle sfide*, 21.

⁷⁹ Ivi, 288

⁸⁰ Barry Buzan e Lene Hansen, *The evolution of international security studies* (Cambridge University Press, Cop, 2009), 8.

⁸¹ Ivi, 159-160

⁸² Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 14.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ivi, 15

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Rosenau J., “The Dynamics of Globalisation: Toward an Operational Formulation”, *Security Dialogue*, 1996, 251 quoted in Ibid.

⁸⁷ Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 15.

intrastate rather than interstate; the second is the progressive change of the actors “of the war”, no more just the national armies, but also “irregular armed organizations” that obtain a level of competence and legitimacy that make them players of primary relevance⁸⁸. Moreover, we can witness other changes: the groups involved in the war (not just armies but also civilians), the type of war (for example cyberwars), and the purpose of the war (like the “Global War on Terror” against terrorism)⁸⁹. As a consequence of this evolution, the states have been forced to rethink their approach toward the relation between war and security.

The new challenges and changes that involved the conception of security brought back this theme to the top of the academic discussion. We can witness the diffusion of new approaches related to the studies of security that tried to broaden and deepen this concept⁹⁰. Despite the traditionalist military vision of security still existing, new schools of thought, especially European ones, add themselves to the discussion, proposing a new analysis of the concept in relation to the new international context. The most important are the School of Copenhagen and the Critical Security Studies. The School of Copenhagen elaborates a vision based on the broadening of the concept including new sectors within the larger sphere of national security and on the concept of “securitization”, namely the role of the interpretation of the threats⁹¹. The Critical Security Studies (CSS), instead, focus the attention on the re-elaboration of the concept of security itself. Founded by the School of Aberystwyth, the CSS tried to bring back the analysis on the role of people in relation with the state conceptualizing security in terms of emancipation⁹² as the origin of security. The innovation of these two approaches is not the loss of centrality of the state in the debate, but the fact that if we look at the relationship between state and people in terms of security, the first represented both the “major source of both threats to and security for individuals”⁹³. Moreover, they introduced in the debate the idea of the subjectivity of security and the role of perceptions. A more radical approach was proposed by the United Nations in 1994 within the United Nations Human Development (UNHD) report⁹⁴, namely the so-called concept of “Human Security”. Amartya Sen argues that “Human security is not a new idea, but it has had a remarkable revival”⁹⁵. Its introduction within the Human Development Report helps to make emerge the fact that within the concept of “human development”, there is a direct relationship between the security of individuals and their well-being and freedom⁹⁶. This approach, indeed, focuses the analysis on “downside risks of human lives” emphasizing “elementary human rights” (rather than the entire range of human rights)⁹⁷ moving all the spotlights on the figure of

⁸⁸ Stefano Ruzza, «C'era una volta la guerra. Sicurezza e nuove minacce», in *L'Orizzonte del Mondo. Politica internazionale, sfide globali, nuove geografie del potere* (Guerini, 2010), 44–49.

⁸⁹ Ivi, 41-46

⁹⁰ Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 16.

⁹¹ Ivi, 17; Ole Waever, «Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen New “Schools” in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery», 2004, 8.

⁹² Waever, «Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen New “Schools” in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery», 6.

⁹³ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 35.

⁹⁴ The UNHD report introduced this concept sustaining that “The developing nations, having won their independence only recently, were sensitive to any real or perceived threats to their fragile national identities. Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them, security symbolized protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression, and environmental hazards. (...) Human security is not a concern with weapons—it is a concern with human life and dignity”. UNDP, «Human Development Report 1994» (Oxford University Press., 1994), 22.

⁹⁵ Amartya Sen, «Birth of a Discourse», in *Routledge handbook of human security* (Routledge, 2014), 17.

⁹⁶ Ivi, 19

⁹⁷ Ibid.

the individual rather than the state that, as a consequence, becomes one of the factors that can affect the security of people.

However, the results of this broadening and deepening are not exempt from criticism and problems. About broadening the concept of security, it is Buzan himself that, despite being a pioneer of the School of Copenhagen, identified some problems related to this operation: he argues, indeed, that notwithstanding including other dimensions together with the military one in the concept of security has brought benefits, this process may cause a counterproductive effect, namely an excess of securitization⁹⁸. Or, talking about human security, the criticism moved to it refers to the difficult operability of this new paradigm, first, because of its lack of a precise definition, and second, because of the excessive largeness and vagueness of this concept⁹⁹.

2.2 *What is security?*

If we should define security, we would not find a unique version shared by all the scholars because of the different dimensions that the concept involves. Some of them are:

- freedom from danger or threat. The safety or safeguarding of (the interests of) a state (or, sometimes, a coalition of states) against some internal or external threat, now esp. terrorism, espionage, etc.; the condition of being so safeguarded¹⁰⁰;
- [security is] the relative freedom from harmful threats¹⁰¹
- absence of threats¹⁰²
- a threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state¹⁰³;
- security in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked¹⁰⁴.

In his book “People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era”, Buzan argues that “the nature of security defies pursuit of an agreed definition”¹⁰⁵. The word “security”, indeed, recalls exclusively the absolute idea of security, namely a condition where a subject is secure or insecure, without showing the “graded spectrum” that includes all the shades of what it concerns. Given that, Buzan agrees that, even if it is impossible to give a precise definition of “security”, we can easily

⁹⁸ Barry Buzan, «Rethinking Security after the Cold War», *Cooperation and Conflict* 32, n. 1 (1997): 25.

⁹⁹ Roland Paris, «Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air? », *International Security* 26, n. 2 (2001): 88.

¹⁰⁰ "security, n.", definition n. 2b, OED Online. June 2021. Oxford University Press.

¹⁰¹ John E. Mroz, *Beyond Security: Private Perceptions among Arabs and Israelis* (International Peace Academy, 1980), 105 quoted in Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 17.

¹⁰² Ken Booth, *Theory of world security* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 100.

¹⁰³ Richard H Ullman, «Redefining Security», *International Security* 8, n. 1 (1983): 133.

¹⁰⁴ Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and collaboration; essays on international politics*. (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 150.

¹⁰⁵ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 16.

understand “the general sense of what one is talking about”, namely “the pursuit of freedom from threat”¹⁰⁶. However, according to Ken Booth, even if it is not possible to elaborate a precise definition, we must try to do it as well as we can for practical reasons: “if we cannot name security, how can we hope to achieve it?”¹⁰⁷. Considering the definitions provided above, despite their differences, it is possible to extrapolate some common “core elements” that characterize them. We can identify three “core elements”: first, the existence of a threatened subject, the existence of one or more threats, and the necessity of the threatened subject to escape from this or these dangers¹⁰⁸.

But before discussing on these three points, it is necessary to consider other elements regarding the general concept of security. First, security is a political matter. Despite not exhausting its entire meaning, security is defined as an object of politics. In the words of Kolodziej, “[p]olitics in human affairs arises whenever there is a difference over an outcome sought by two or more interdependent actors – individual humans or their agents – with respect to their disputed interests, aims, and values. (...) Security is a special form of politics”. Indeed, the issue of security becomes relevant when within a political dispute, one of the actors considers the possibility to use force, namely, to use violence or to threaten its use to pursue their interests. The famous sentence of General Carl Von Clausewitz, “[war] is merely the continuation of policy by¹⁰⁹ other means”¹¹⁰, confirms, indeed, the political dimension of security. However, while all the security issues have a political nature, not all the political issues concern security¹¹¹.

Second, “security” and “survival” do not indicate the same condition. In the words of Booth, “[s]urvival is an existential condition”, namely it means “continuing to exist”¹¹². In front of a condition of insecurity, to survive becomes the main objective of individuals and states. The author, indeed, wants to highlight that survive does not correspond to a condition of security. He argues that it is possible to survive even in a condition of total insecurity, as demonstrated by the example of some European countries, that even if they were defeated, invaded and deprived of their sovereignty during World War II, they still exist today. This is valid also for the individuals: some of the interned of the concentration camps, despite living in a condition of total uncertainty, were able to survive. That is because the more the threats create a condition of insecurity, the more they will determine the life of people and states. The greater the insecurity, the greater the relevance of survival will be. Security, indeed, is a “survival-plus”, namely a condition that allows individuals and groups to live a dignified life and to pursue political and social ambitions. So, security is more related to life quality than life itself. Booth compares security to the “freedom from life-determining threats, and therefore space to make choices”¹¹³. This is also supported by Thomas Hobbes that underlines that “[b]y safety one should understand not mere survival in any

¹⁰⁶ Ivi, 18

¹⁰⁷ Booth, *Theory of world security*, 99.

¹⁰⁸ Ivi, 100

¹⁰⁹ Holmes, in his article published by The Diplomat “Everything You Know About Clausewitz Is Wrong”, argues that the translation “*by* other means” (my italics), is not correct. He suggests that the right translation should be “*with* other means” (my italics) because using the other form, it seems that during war diplomacy, economy, and the other dimensions related to the life of the State cease to exist. Quite the opposite, all these dimensions interact and still exist even during conflict. (James R. Holmes, «Everything You Know About Clausewitz Is Wrong», thediplomat.com, 2014).

¹¹⁰ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On war*, edited and translated by Michael Howard e Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1989), 87.

¹¹¹ Edward A Kolodziej, *Security and international relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22.

¹¹² Booth, *Theory of world security*, 102.

¹¹³ Booth, 103.Ivi, 101-103

condition, but a happy life so far as that is possible”¹¹⁴. However, it is difficult to exclude a direct connection between the two concepts: if security means “absence from threats”, it is more probable that in this condition states and individuals would be able to survive. So, when we talk about security, we do not mean survival, but a condition thanks to which states and people can survive and, at the same time, maintain a certain quality of life and a certain freedom of choice.

The third element is that security is also subjective. Considering the second part of the definition provided by Wolfers, we can notice that security concerns not only the material threats but also the perception that actors have about their condition and other actors’ behaviour. The perception of the threat becomes, indeed, the variable element that can change from state to state or from individual to individual¹¹⁵. This idea mainly follows the constructivist line of thinking intending “security” as a concept socially built, subjective and not-objectively determined¹¹⁶. In this case, the term “securitization” refers to the reaction of the political actor (securitizing actor) to a certain threat and the relative responses¹¹⁷. The word “security”, indeed, has a great impact on determining the policies that the state must follow: the association between one issue and the word “security”, puts this issue in a position of priority compared to the others and so influences the consequential actions regarding this issue. In other words, to define something as a security question not only increases its relevance but acts also as an agenda-setter, namely it requires immediately the implementation of a certain type of policy toward this issue¹¹⁸. Being a subjective interpretation, this could be wrong. It may be possible that a political decision-maker underestimates or overestimates a certain threat negatively influencing the elaboration of the consequential policies. This can lead to two scenarios: a state feels safe when it is not (underestimation of the threat) or it feels insecure when actually it is (overestimation of the threat)¹¹⁹.

The fourth is the role of values in defining security. Recalling again the definition of Wolfers, he underlines that security regards the absence of threats for acquired values and the absence of fear that these values can be threatened. In his article, “The concept of security”, Baldwin proposes again this analysis sustaining that for both individuals and states, security can be considered as a value. However, this is not the only one: for the former, they could be physical integrity, economic welfare, and autonomy, while for the latter they could be territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence. Therefore, the question that Baldwin proposes is how important security is in comparison to the other values and which values individuals and states are willing to sacrifice for security¹²⁰. He defines three possible approaches: the prime value approach, the core value approach, and the marginal value approach. The prime value approach is strictly connected to the logic proposed by Booth analysing the difference between survival and security. Security, in this case, is viewed as the primary goal to achieve and the necessary one that allows the enjoyment of the other values. So, in every situation, security dominates the other values and justifies the allocation of all the resources to protect this value. The core value approach still considers security as one of the most important values but not the only one to pursue. In the same way as the primary value approach, it justifies the allocation of all the resources for all the core

¹¹⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. and trans. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 143–4 quoted in Booth, *Theory of world security*, 103.

¹¹⁵ Andreatta et al., *Relazioni internazionali*, 244–45.

¹¹⁶ Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 17.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Booth, *Theory of world security*, 108–9.

¹¹⁹ Ivi, 105

¹²⁰ David A. Baldwin, «The concept of security», *Review of International Studies* 23, n. 1 (1997): 18.

values¹²¹. The marginal value approach, instead, considers the law of the diminishing marginal utility applied to security (similarly with the other values). This approach considers that a minimum “amount” of security is necessary but just as other values like, such as potable water, clean air, and the other values that are related to survival. Moreover, “the value of an increment of national security to a country will vary from one country to another and from one historical context to another”¹²².

2.3 *The subjects of security: the state and the individual*

After these premises, it is time to go into the details of the analysis of the concept of security. I decided to do it starting from the three questions that I have mentioned before: who the subject of security is, which are the security threats, and how the subject can escape these threats.

As I mentioned in the first part of the chapter, when we talk about security, we talk about a condition directly related to the people’s existence, something that allows individuals to survive while maintaining a certain quality of life. However, the security of the individuals cannot be totally separated from the influence that the state has on the people’s life. The security of the one is fundamental for the security of the other. The interdependence between the state and the society can be interpreted in two ways: the one that sees the state just as the sum of the individual’s consent to be governed (minimal state), and the one that, instead, sees the state as a third actor, fundamental for the security of the community in an anarchical environment (maximal state)¹²³. In the first case, the focus relies on the figure of the individual and the state’s security depends on that of the citizens, while in the second case, the state is the relevant actor able to guarantee security and its actions are not linked to the people’s needs and will. The debate on the relations between state and individual emerged in the seventeenth century when the idea of the existence of a social contract between the individual and the state became widespread, and that theory was discussed within the field of the political sciences. The position regarding the minimal state was sustained by the illuminist John Locke in his text “Two Treatises of Government” written in 1689 arguing that in a state of nature, people are not subjected to another authority unless they spontaneously confer to someone the right to dominate and be sovereign¹²⁴. The opposite view, instead, can be identified in the idea of Thomas Hobbes that considers the state of nature as a condition of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, where people, guided by their egoistic nature, live in a state of war all against all. The state, in this case, is considered the only actor able to protect people that, conceding to it all the powers, receive in exchange the security from internal and external threats¹²⁵.

Therefore, both individual and state can be considered the subject of security. However, depending on which subject we decide to choose, the results of the analysis inevitably change. The level of analysis,

¹²¹ Baldwin underlines how the primary value approach and the core value approach are logically and empirically “indefensible”. He sustains: “Logically, it is flawed because it provides no justification for limiting the allocation of resources to security in a world where absolute security is unattainable. Empirically it is flawed because it fails to comport with the way people actually behave.”

¹²² Ivi, 19-20

¹²³ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 39.

¹²⁴ John Locke, “Two Treatises of Government: ” in *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*, edited by Ian Shapiro (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008).

¹²⁵ Hobbes T. *Il Leviatano* (1651), edited by G.Micheli (La Nuova Italia, Florence 1976) quoted in Diodato, *Relazioni internazionali : dalle tradizioni alle sfide*, 73-74.

indeed, influences the point of view from which it is necessary to look at security. In this research, according to its purposes, the focus will be on the “national security”, and so on the figure of the state as the referent of security. But to better understand the state’s security, it is necessary to make an overview of what individual security is and which its key elements are.

By doing that, we must consider individual security in two different ways: through its strict sense and put in relation with that of the state. The traditional approaches identify the external threats as the main danger for people’s life. The capacity of the state to protect the integrity of the territory, therefore, is considered as the condition thanks to which people can be considered safe. However, in some cases, the external attacks do not represent the main source of threat for the individual’s life. The idea of the Human Security is that there are situations in which people’s safety is not dependent on the territorial integrity but on daily life threats, like poverty, economic crisis, terrorism, civil wars, diseases, or a mix of them¹²⁶. To these threats, we must add those created by the state itself. Buzan, indeed, identifies four categories of state-provided threats: those arising from domestic law-making and enforcement, that concern unjustified penalties, miscarried justice against criminal activities, lack of environmental laws against pollution, and so on; those arising from direct administrative or political action by the state against individuals or groups, like persecutions or expropriation made by bureaucratic institutions; those arising from the struggle over control of the state machinery, like in the cases where the public structure does not guarantee a pacific or stable transition of power causing political instability and domestic tensions; and those arising from the state’s external security policy, namely the risks that people face when the state is dealing with an external threat. This last case considers war but also nuclear proliferation and military deterrence¹²⁷. All these threats, of course, are more plausible in some cases rather than others: in presence of a fragile or failed state they are more frequent since the state’s structure is unable to look after its basic functions because of a possible lack of authority, lack of legitimacy, or lack of capacity¹²⁸. Newman suggests a definition that summarizes all these issues: he defines “human security” as a condition of “freedom from fear”, namely when the individual is safe from physical violence, conflicts, and deportation, and “freedom from want”, namely freedom from mistreatment and oppression determined by a condition of underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy, and environmental degradation¹²⁹. Finally, it is necessary to underline that human security issues can represent an external threat for the state. The danger can come from the state’s proximity to unstable areas with the risk of the domestic problems spilling over neighbouring countries and relapse on the internal stability. For example, poverty, civil wars or environmental degradation can cause migrations, radical movements can influence some communities enforcing their extremism, transnational criminal activities can affect people’s quality of life, and so on.

Coming back to national security, the focus cannot be but on the state. The word “state”, such as “security”, is a debated concept. Indeed, we cannot find either a unique definition nor a shared conceptualization. However, it is possible to identify three core elements that we can use to describe what the state is and how these three core elements are connected with security issues. The three elements are the physical base of the state, the state institutions, and the idea of the state. Within the conception of state, they are bound to each other and interdependent, but one dimension can be sacrificed to protect the other two. The physical base of the state is represented by the population and the territory with all its resources and man-made wealth. This is the concrete element of the state and it is the only one that does not change among different states. However, looking at the territory, this is not something that belongs

¹²⁶ Edward Newman, «Human Security and Constructivism», *International Studies Perspectives* 2, n. 3 (2001): 240; UNDP, «Human Development Report 1994», 22.

¹²⁷ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 44–50.

¹²⁸ Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 26–28.

¹²⁹ Newman, «Human Security» in *The International Studies Encyclopedia* edited by R.A. Denmark, (Blackwell Publishing, 2010) quoted in Foradori e Giacomello, 17.

to the state by nature, but it belongs to it because of its capability to hold it and use it for its purpose and from the recognition of its ownership by the other states. A possible threat to the territory, like a military invasion, represents itself a threat to the property of the state, contesting its ownership. Moreover, the population must be considered as a fundamental part of the state, not exclusively that living within the boundaries but also the communities situated in other countries. Indeed, an attack on these groups can be considered an attack on the state for all intents and purposes¹³⁰. The idea of the state, instead, represents the abstract pillar, difficult to define but fundamental for the survival of the state. The idea is composed of the “nation” and the “ideology”. Both are extremely difficult to circumscribe but they cannot be excluded from the analysis. The nation is usually defined as “large group of people sharing the same cultural, and possibly the same ethnic and racial, heritage”¹³¹. The correspondence between the state boundaries and the national groups influences the stability and the structure of the state that can be defined as a “nation-state” when is the nation that gives life to the state or a “state-nation” when it is the state that by defining the boundaries creates the nation. However, as we noticed in the previous chapter, there are cases where these two elements do not correspond and this difference can represent a relevant threat to the existence of the state. It is the case of the nation divided in two states or the presence of two or more nations within a single state. The ideology, instead, is more related to the organization of the state. It defines not just the ends of the state’s life but also the means to achieve them. By doing that, the ideology influences the structures of the state and, as a consequence, how it is run by the government¹³². Finally, the institutions of the state are represented by the government machinery, including the executives, legislative, administrative, and judicial bodies, and the laws, procedures, and norms by which they operate. These elements are a concrete part of the state machinery but work through its idea: without the idea, the institutions are pointless but without the institutions, the idea will never be materialized¹³³.

Trying to place these three pillars side by side with national security, we can notice that they have different relations with this condition, and they can influence or be influenced by the integrity of the others. The physical base is the easiest to analyse. Its security depends essentially on the integrity of the territory and of the population. However, in some cases, territory and people can be sacrificed to protect the other two pillars. The idea of the state, instead, is a more vulnerable concept if related to that of security. Being an intangible element, it is difficult to find an effective way to protect it. The survival of the idea, therefore, depends on the legitimacy and the support that it has among the population and the institutions. If the idea is able to be resilient and flexible enough to resist the domestic and external changes, it does not matter which type of idea it is, because it will survive. On the contrary, if it is not able to adapt itself to the national and international transformations, its defence will result extremely expensive and it could lead to the collapse of the state¹³⁴. Finally, the institutions are positioned in the middle between the physical base and the idea. On the one side, they can be exposed to physical attack, both by internal and external threats, on the other side, the loss of legitimacy can provoke their fall. Most of the time, institutions and ideas fell together dragged by the failure of the other¹³⁵. To protect themselves from these threats, the institutions, in particular the government, can take advantage of the possibility to use the force both to protect them from foreign interferences and internal dissent, by considering these pressures as a matter of national security.

¹³⁰ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 91.

¹³¹ Ivi, 70

¹³² Ivi, 70-80

¹³³ Ivi, 86

¹³⁴ Ivi, 82

¹³⁵ Ivi, 86

By combining these three elements together with existing cases, it is possible to notice the presence of several scenarios in which every dimension is related to the others according to their peculiar characteristics. That is why when we talk about national security, we cannot talk about one single model of state and one single threat. A usual categorization based on the different combinations divides the states into “strong states” and “weak states”: the former are the category of states in which the idea and the institutions are solid and stable and the threats are mainly from outside the boundaries and related to the physical part; the latter, instead, show unstable institutions and ideas that are weak or even non-existent in which it is difficult to identify one single referent of security and where the territory is delimited only because is internationally recognized but it could not be considered as the object of security. In conclusion, the concept of national security cannot be the same for everyone and sometimes, as in the case of “weak states”, it is not possible to talk about it. So, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of the state before analysing its national security and the consequential threats.

2.4 *National security threats: the new challenges*

Once the subject of security has been analysed, it is necessary to discuss which are the threats for the state, considering the three pillars mentioned before. Until the end of the Cold War, the studies related to national security focused the attention on the military dimension of security. The two World Wars and the conflict between the two superpowers, indeed, showed the importance of protecting the country from military invasions or nuclear attacks giving the military dimension the maximum priority. From a state point of view, the military threat is the only one that is able to damage or destroy all three components of the state. This type of threat is relevant because it entails the use of force affecting the relations among countries and the domestic equilibrium¹³⁶. The military capacity, indeed, determines the capacity of a state to protect itself from external military attacks and the ability to react to it. This capacity is something that states cannot exclude, especially considering the fact that they live in an anarchical international system where the phenomenon of war, interpreted as the conflict among states, can always be possible. Looking at the contemporary world, war appears more and more like an improbable phenomenon, but cannot be considered impossible. Coker sustains that war, especially between great powers, has seen its costs rise in terms of benefits because of the complexity of the contemporary world. However, “complexity does not negate the logic of great power conflict, it merely complicates it”¹³⁷. In this line of reasoning, we can also insert the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction like nuclear weapons, biological weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons, and radiological weapons: even if their usage is improbable because of their potential capability to cause much more serious damage than conventional weapons, they still represent a possible threat from which the state must be protected¹³⁸. Moreover, even considering the decline of interstate wars in the twentieth century (in 2021 just two

¹³⁶ Ivi, 116-118

¹³⁷ Christopher Coker, *The improbable war: China, the United States and the continuing logic of great power conflict* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2015), 175.

¹³⁸ Giampiero Giacomello, and Alessandro Pascolini. 2012. *L'ABC Del Terrore: Le Armi Di Distruzione Di Massa Del Terzo Millennio*. Milano: V & P. quoted in Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 44; Coker, *The improbable war: China, the United States and the continuing logic of great power conflict*, 170.

conflicts have been recorded, between India and Pakistan and between Armenia and Azerbaijan¹³⁹) there is no possibility to exclude the military instrument from the list of the major threats for the state's life¹⁴⁰.

However, national security cannot be summarized as military security. This concept includes a broader range of threats that - as the military ones - are able to endanger the basis of the state. In this case, when we used to talk about threats not ascribable to the military category, we used to talk about "non-traditional security". This concept has become more and more discussed since the Eighties in the field of Security Studies and IR but it started to occupy the academic debate on security in the early Nineties, just in the last years of the Cold War. It is necessary to highlight that this does not mean that these kinds of threats did not exist before that period, but the relevance that they started to have after the end of the conflict in the field of national security, especially after the acceleration and the expansion of certain phenomena like globalization and climate change, has been no more neglectable. Moreover, while some sectors gained relevance, new areas have been added to the concept of national security, like cyberspace and space. There is not a shared classification of all the non-traditional threats, but we can divide them into non-military security (the economic security, energetic security, environmental security, cybersecurity, political security, health security, and social security) and security against non-states actors (terrorism, international crime, migration, and insurgence). Already from the macro-categories, it is possible to understand that all these dimensions are connected and interdependent, in some cases also with the military sphere, while in other cases completely separated. However, they are all related to the security and the survival of the state. Before describing all these dimensions, it is necessary to mention that in the following part just some of the major non-traditional threats that are more commonly taken into consideration will be described because of obvious space issues.

The first dimension is economic security. Economic security has always been part of national security: the capacity to create wealth has always been related to the power of the state and in general, is considered part of the "hard power"¹⁴¹. But the role of economic security has been even more important since that economic policy has become an instrument of the state to pursue its interests in the international arena potentially damaging the other states. This, of course, is not a recent trend: already during the British Empire, the monarchy took advantage of its economic power to pursue its national interest through its economic policy¹⁴². Economic security can be divided into two different parts: the one related to the domestic economy and the other one related to the international economy. From the national point of view, phenomena like poverty, famine, or economic crisis have a devastating effect on people's lives but also on the structure of the state. Economic crisis, for example, can affect the stability and the legitimacy of a regime, or poverty and hunger can instead fuel the violence against the ruling class¹⁴³. On the other hand, economic policy can become a weapon for all intents and purposes looking at international level. One of the most common instruments is trade policy. This tool can take two forms: as an inducement or as coercive. Indeed, it can be used as a way to give advantages or to damage the other state's economy, like in the case of the oil exporter countries blocking the supply or changing the price¹⁴⁴. Other tools that are becoming more and more relevant are foreign investments. Today, they represent 90% of the monetary flows from one country to another. However, the main issue is about the fact that the states

¹³⁹ Source: Peter Hough et al., *International security studies: theory and practice* (Routledge, An Imprint Of The Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 98. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, «SIPRI Yearbook 2021: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Summary», 2021

¹⁴⁰ Peter Hough et al., *International security studies: theory and practice* (Routledge, An Imprint Of The Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 96.

¹⁴¹ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 127.

¹⁴² John Ravenhill, *Global political economy* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁴³ Peter Hough, *Understanding global security* (Routledge, 2018).

¹⁴⁴ Robert D Blackwill e Jennifer Harris, *War by Other Means Geoeconomics and Statecraft* (Harvard University Press, 2016), 50–53.

own the majority of the foreign investment shares. Not all the investments are made to damage or control part of the other state's economy, but, in the words of Ashley Thomas Lenihan, "may be employed as a means to increase a state's relative economic power, even when their investments are generally made on the basis of economic, market-driven, logic".¹⁴⁵ The countries, being sovereign entities, can move financial resources toward state wealth funds according to their geopolitical goals or to their advance knowledge about the future geopolitical events, creating a market advantage¹⁴⁶. In terms of security, the foreign investments are not so evident and their effect on the market can be seen in a longer period. However, toward this tool, states can gain more influences in the foreign strategic industries, or in general, influence the other state's foreign policy¹⁴⁷. Related to these two instruments, there are economic sanctions that can vary on the base of the market size and the global market shares of the sanctioned country, and they are often connected with political issues. Most of the time, the sanctions are based on trade restrictions able to interrupt the regular flows of fundamental goods necessary to the country's development or, rather, survival. Finally, another tool can be monetary policy. There are three basic transmission channels through which states can translate monetary policy tools into geopolitical influence: the global footprint of a country's currency, the ability to raise funds at low cost, and the ability to impact another country's borrowing costs¹⁴⁸. However, this power is strictly connected to the power of the country, not everyone has it. So, the possibility to suffer the monetary influence of foreign countries can affect the state monetary policy and damage the domestic economy.

The second dimension is energetic and resources security. Energy and resources are fundamental to the development of the state and for its capacity to sustain military power. However, the concept of energy and resources security does not present a univocal definition: in general, we can talk about a situation where a state is able to guarantee the availability of the energetic resources diversifying the sources and building the necessary infrastructures, to guarantee access to the energetic services to the citizens also in terms of prices, to increase the efficiency of the energetic system, and to protect the natural resources and the line of provision for the future generations¹⁴⁹. Considering these elements, we can notice that the energetic security is a twine of different interests: the political and military aspects that regard the international relations of the state and the capability to support the pursuit of the national interests; the economic aspects that are connected to the capability to create wealth and sustain the technological and economic development; the socio-environmental aspects, instead, regard the capability to guarantee long-term exploitation of the resources avoiding uncontrolled access to them¹⁵⁰. Therefore, there is a possible threat relatively to each aspect. Considering the short-term threats, we can find natural, political, and economic risks: the natural risks concern all the natural events able to block or damage the line of access to the energetic resources, like earthquakes or floods that can destroy pipelines or domestic infrastructures; the political risks, instead, concern the domestic instability, military conflicts, and terrorist attacks that can physically damage the resources and the infrastructures but also the tactical usage of the resources by the supplier countries to put political pressures; finally, the economic risks concern the total dependence of the state on one single energetic source both as a producer and consumer. In this case, the dependence binds the states to the trend of the resource availability and cost, making the entire economy vulnerable to the trend of the global demand and supply. The long-term threats, instead, are more related to the progressive depletion of resources, technological limits, or an excess of global demand

¹⁴⁵ Ashley Lenihan, "Sovereign Wealth Funds and the Acquisition of Power," *Journal of New Political Economy*, April 2013 quoted in Blackwill e Harris, 57.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ivi, 57-58

¹⁴⁸ Ivi 75-76

¹⁴⁹ Sovacool, B.K, "Introduction" in *The Routledge Handbook of Energy Security*, edited by B.K Sovacool, New York, Routledge, 2011 quoted in Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 65.

¹⁵⁰ Foradori e Giacomello, 64.

that could not match with the global supply¹⁵¹. One of the big issues of energetic security is the militarization of resources. In some cases, the state can decide to use its military force to secure its infrastructure, energetic sources, and line of provision embittering the relations with other states. These kinds of tensions, on the one side, can generate conflicts among producers, between consumers and producers, or among consumers for their access to the energetic resources, while, on the other side, these tensions can affect third countries even if not directly involved in the conflict¹⁵². Because of the rise of new industrial powers, which means higher global demand, and the progressive reductions of non-renewable resources, these kinds of scenarios can get more and more plausible.

Environmental security is highly related to energetic security. The debate on this kind of security is relatively recent: the theme of scarcity of resources emerged during the Cold War at the beginning of the 1970s and then at the end of the 1980s as an issue that could change the equilibrium in the conflict. During the 1970s, the oil crisis underlined the importance of access to energy resources and the necessity to link the depletion of the resources with the military dimension¹⁵³. In the post-Cold War era, even in the academic area, a more and more clear and defined relation between resources scarcity and conflict emerged in a determinant way¹⁵⁴. However, when we talk about environmental security, we do not talk only about resource scarcity but also about environmental disasters and the effects of climate change. All these factors have a significant impact on the economic activities and the socio-political conditions of the states. The climate changes, as demonstrated by the almost totality of the scholars, are representing a great threat for the states becoming an issue of survival for some of them: in 2002, for example, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Saufatu Sopoanga at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, emphasized the importance of a global response to this phenomenon because it represented a vital threat to his country because of the sea level rise¹⁵⁵. The problem that emerged from the climate changes is that they make uncertain and unstable the process of adaptation of the state's socio-economic structure to the environmental changes, showing failures in political and social security. One example is agriculture: increasing temperatures, rain irregularity, and natural disasters can drastically affect the productivity of the fields putting in danger local people's life causing food insecurity, famine, and poverty with consequential socio-political instability. The challenge for the local communities is to find a solution to the problem according to their capabilities that in some cases are economically and technically limited. Considering the relation between climate change and national security, the European Parliament and the European Commission published a list of possible threats originating from climate change: 1) conflicts linked to the depletion of resources as soil and water, 2) economic damages related to the natural disasters, 3) losses of territory due to the water level rising, 4) migration due to natural disasters and poverty, 5) fragility and radicalization that affect the stability of the weaker states, 6) increasing tensions on the energetic provisions, and 7) difficulties in organizing international counter-measures due to the effect of the previous points on the interstate relations¹⁵⁶. Finally, it is necessary to consider the transnational dimension of the phenomenon. As cited in the first part of the chapter, the effects of the climate changes do not respect the national borders: they represent a global challenge that states alone are not able to face. Considering their consequences as a national security threat, the main issue is that a single state can only try to adapt itself to the environmental changes, but it cannot fight them alone. Moreover, requiring global coordination and collaboration, the necessity of the establishment of global governance able to

¹⁵¹ Ivi, 64-65

¹⁵² Ivi, 71

¹⁵³ Hough et al., *International security studies: theory and practice*, 211.

¹⁵⁴ Ivi, 214

¹⁵⁵ Ivi, 218

¹⁵⁶ European Commission, «Climate Change and International Security: Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council», 2008; Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 85.

face these problems can represent a great barrier to the achievement of the goal, leaving some states at the mercy of natural disasters and resource scarcity.

The political and social security represents a fundamental point for the defence of the idea and institutions of the state. The risks, in this case, can derive from internal or external threats. The fact that I decided to integrate these two types of security together is because society and political system are difficult to disentangle¹⁵⁷. The main threats are represented by increasing pressure on the central government through attempts to overthrow it, secessionist and revolutionary movements, challenges to the state's ideology and legitimacy, threats to the national identity, lack of international recognition, and threats to the values, culture, traditions, and language of the society¹⁵⁸. In general, these threats can emerge spontaneously, as in the case of national secessionism, or are intentionally elaborated and implemented by other countries or national groups attracted by a foreign alternative¹⁵⁹. Moreover, there are cases where the political organization of the country is itself a threat to the political organization of other countries. An example can be the relation between India and Pakistan. India is a federal country with a secularized political system that has based its existence on the capacity of keeping all the nations and religions within the borders for reasons of national security. Pakistan, instead, was born on the principle of Islamic unity and defines the state's borders on religious elements. The two systems, in this case, collide and make the Indian political system a vital threat to Pakistan's *raison d'être*. So, talking about political and social security, we consider the security of the state structure and the idea of the state. However, we must consider two aspects of these threats: first, the intensity of the threats and so the fact that these can be identified as a matter of national security depending on the strength of the state's socio-political system (a strong state or a weak state); second, in some cases, these threats can involve the intervention of military forces both from foreign countries and from the national government itself¹⁶⁰.

A more and more relevant sector in current international relations is cyberspace. Cybersecurity cannot be excluded from the national security context. David Clark, in his text "Characterizing Cyberspace: Past, Present and Future", defines cyberspace including in the definition the people who participate, the information that is stored, transmitted, and transformed within it, the logical building blocks that make it up (like software and applications), and finally the physical foundations that support the logical elements¹⁶¹. So, we refer both to a physical and digital space. The diffusion of the ICT has brought a lot of benefits to the states also in terms of development, but also generated a serious threat to national security. Nowadays, communication infrastructures are critical infrastructures because their functioning is fundamental for the operability of the others. Their collapse would represent serious damage to the entire infrastructural system. The military sector, of course, can be damaged by cyberattacks, for example, intercepting conversations, hacking military databases, or directly putting out of commission some military ICTs. Then, there are all the other targets: the banking and financial system, the business sector, the media, the energetic system, the public administration, transportation, emergency services, and so on¹⁶². So, the challenge of cybersecurity is that it involves several stakeholders including the government, businesses, agencies, and civil society (if we look at the data that are shared every day about habits and likes) and several threats against the stability of a state. In some cases, cyberspace has been considered as "territory" on which countries carry out their sovereignty: China, for example, has publicly declared its cyberspace as a sovereign space and the protection of its "boundaries" must be respected and protected

¹⁵⁷ Buzan, *People, states & fear: an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War era*, 122.

¹⁵⁸ Ivi, 118-123

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ivi, 118-122

¹⁶¹ Clark, David, "Characterizing Cyberspace: Past, Present and Future", *MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory*, March 12, 2010.

¹⁶² Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 238-40.

by the interferences of the other actors for national security reasons¹⁶³. The relevance of cyberspace has made it the main target during or before a military conflict. The so-called cyber-warfare is, indeed, a solution for weaker states during “asymmetric conflicts” to indirectly hit the basic infrastructure of the other states. However, it is necessary to mention that the impact of this type of warfare is limited. Only a massive cyberattack can really damage the entire national cyberspace and in this case, it would be easy to track the author of the attack. However, the necessity of solid cybersecurity is fundamental to manage attacks of a minor entity and protect the country from greater interferences¹⁶⁴.

Finally, an important part of national security is health security. After the spread of the Sars-Cov-2 around the world, this sector has increased its relevance in the state’s policies. However, already after the end of the Cold War, health security has become relevant: cases like Sars, HIV, and Ebola have alarmed the national governments and have led to the recognition of those phenomena as national security threats. The diffusion of new diseases and viruses around the world has different causes: first, globalization. People and goods move all around the globe bringing new viruses from other countries. International transports, especially shipping transports, represent a perfect vector for the transmission of diseases through little animals or food. Finally, migrants (also from developed countries) can potentially transmit new diseases to places where they do not exist yet. Second, climate change and anthropological activities. The increasing temperatures have made tropical insects and diseases more common and resilient in the areas where the temperature was more temperate, and pollution and rubbish have increased the diffusion of infections. However, also progressive urbanization has favoured the gathering of people in large cities that often show degraded areas where the level of sanitation is very poor. Moreover, the contact between rural and urban areas can bring new viruses and bacteria to the large cities. Third, cultural reasons. The globalization of living habits has also favoured the spread of unhealthy ways of life and the adoption of harmful practices imported by other countries¹⁶⁵. Connecting health with security, it is possible to notice that in this relation the individual dimensions and the national one are included. Health security strongly concerns individual life: this factor, indeed, is part of the doctrine of Human Security and its absence represents a serious threat to people’s safety. But health security has been included also in a traditional security line of reasoning. The damages created by an epidemic, or other forms of diffused diseases can seriously produce, beyond the human victims, economic recession, government instability, migrations, and risk of military weakening¹⁶⁶. However, some scholars sustain the idea that health is a sector hard to securitize and this can lead to unwilled results. Elbe, Kamradt-Scott, Peterson, and Zelikow sustain that “[f]irst, using security language to draw attention to health problems locates solutions within the military and other security institutions of the state. This can lead to the erosion of basic human rights, lack of support for public health programs, loss of medical and public health authority, and inappropriate and ineffective health policies. Second, the logic of defence against security threats may undermine efforts to prevent and control the spread of IDs. Encouraging international efforts by highlighting narrowly self-interested reasons for developed states to share the health burden in the developing world implies that health is less important than security and relieves the West of a moral obligation to help developing nations”¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶³ Source: Cybersecurity Law of the People’s Republic of China (June 1, 2017), article 1

¹⁶⁴ Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 238–44.

¹⁶⁵ Hough et al., *International security studies: theory and practice*, 254–59.

¹⁶⁶ Alexandra Gheciu e William Curti Wohlforth, *The Oxford handbook of international security* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁶⁷ Elbe, S., “Should HIV/AIDS Be Securitized? The Ethical Dilemmas of Linking HIV/AIDS and Security”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 2016, 50(1): 119–44; Kamradt-Scott, A., “Health, Security, and Diplomacy in Historical Perspective” in S. Rushton and J. Youde (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Health Security*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015; Peterson, S. “Epidemic Disease and National Security”, *Security Studies*, 2002/03, 12(2): 43–81; Zelikow, P. “Review of The Global Infectious Disease Threat and Its Implications for the United States”, *Foreign Affairs*, 2000, 74(4): 154 quoted in Gheciu e William Curti Wohlforth.

2.5 National security threats: the new actors

Beyond the existence of new threats of different nature, there are also new dangers for the national security deriving from new non-state actors that from this point of view are playing an important role in the international arena. Terrorism represents one of the most relevant threats after the Cold War, especially after the events of 9/11. The threat of terrorism is based on the use of violence for political purposes conducted by an organization or a particular subnational group that aims to cause psychological repercussions not just on the immediate victims (that most of the time are civilians) but on a broader target¹⁶⁸. The effect of a terrorist attack can be different according to the struck objective: it can be psychological (fearing people to do something), economic, political, military, or direct to ethno-nationalist groups, single-issue groups, and religious groups¹⁶⁹. From the national security point of view, all these events generate a repercussion on the state's integrity and stability. Being a transnational issue, terrorism has benefited from globalization and technology development in the field of communication to enlarge its range of action, becoming a global issue and a threat for all states. Moreover, the Internet and the cyberspace have become a fertile ground for cyberattacks toward companies or other state institutions and the danger that some terrorist groups could take possession of weapons of mass destruction cannot be neglected. One of the main issues facing terrorism is difficult to face militarily: in many cases, military measures can result ineffective or inappropriate considering the entity of the attack. Often the countermeasures are taken at intelligence level and with the intervention of other states' agencies¹⁷⁰.

Another threat is brought by international crime organizations. According to Donald Cressey, this label includes all the organizations that have a highly centralized and hierarchical internal structure, are characterized by ethnocultural bonds, and that operate at international level to gain profits and power¹⁷¹. On the question whether international crime can be considered a threat to national security, the debate is still open: Neorealists, for example, do not consider it as a danger for the state since it is not a military issue. However, some doctrines consider international crime organizations as a matter of national security considering the threat that this can bring to national political systems and to the international political system¹⁷². To operate, these types of organizations need to control territories and resources that escape from the direct control of the state, to use violence to gain or maintain power over them, and to provide a credible deterrence toward the threat of the use of violence in case of disobedience. So, these factors challenge the power of the state's institutions controlling territory and the use of force¹⁷³. The activities of criminal organizations can be varying: they can include illicit goods traffic (forbidden goods, stolen goods, or forged goods), crimes linked to people movement (human traffic and exploitation), and cybercrimes¹⁷⁴. Again, all these activities have been favoured by the globalization process that has made the transfer of people and goods easier, making crime activities more and more global. As in the case of terrorism, international crime is difficult to fight toward the military tool: often the state can indeed organize the action of the military and paramilitary forces against criminal organizations, but it becomes

¹⁶⁸ Hough et al., *International security studies : theory and practice*, 153. Hoffman, B. *Inside Terrorism*, Revised edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) quoted in Hough et al., *International security studies : theory and practice*, 153.

¹⁶⁹ Hough et al., 153.

¹⁷⁰ Ivi, 159-60

¹⁷¹ Cressey, Donald R., *Theft of the Nation: The Structure and Operations of Organised Crime in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969 quoted in Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale : le nuove minacce*, 140.

¹⁷² Robinson, J., *The Merger: How Organized Crime Is Taking over the World.*, New York, London: Pocket. 2000 quoted in Foradori e Giacomello, 144.

¹⁷³ Foradori e Giacomello, 146.

¹⁷⁴ Ivi, 151

difficult in cases of high corruption or criminal infiltrations in the state institutions¹⁷⁵. However, it is important to mention that criminal organizations can play an important role in case of conflict: they can provide political violence on the interested territories obtaining immediate advantages, play a relevant role in the phase of stabilization after the conflict, and can work with the national institutions at the moments when they do not have the complete capacity to operate on the territory¹⁷⁶.

To conclude, it is important to mention the role of insurgents and revolutionaries that aim to change, the first, the relations between rulers and ruled, and the second, the entire social and political order. Considering the pillars of national institutions and the state's idea, these can represent a serious threat to the stability of the government and the entire political system¹⁷⁷. Indeed, both cases often see the intervention of the military forces organized by the current government to block insurrections. Finally, the role of immigrants. This can represent a serious challenge for the state and its security since this phenomenon is linked to the concept of sovereignty, border control and internal regulations. Beyond this, immigration can favour criminal activities and increase the risks of terrorism, or, in extreme cases, it can threaten the national identity¹⁷⁸.

2.6 Conclusions

Starting from the above analysis, it is necessary to elaborate on some conclusions in order to summarize the chapter. The concept of security was rethought after the end of the Cold War and it is still evolving. However, this evolution shows some basic principles that determine the direction of this trend. It is possible to identify three main points that characterize this evolution: the first one is the fact that the integrity of the state depends both on military aspects and non-military aspects. As we have seen, despite the fact that the traditional security aspects are not neglectable, new global phenomena and the transformation of the international system have generated new threats for the states that more and more must face issues hard to solve by the use of force. The second point is connected to this argument: the military tool continues to be the means par excellence to measure the power of a state both in terms of defence capacity and offensive potentiality. In some cases, non-traditional threats can involve the intervention of the armed forces. However, there are some problems with this approach: the use of the military instrument to face non-traditional threats can reveal itself inefficient (like in the case of terrorism), unusable (like in case of climate change), or counter-productive, moving the disputes between states to physical conflict. Consequently, to face or mitigate the severity of these threats, states must elaborate on new instruments and new approaches both at national and international level. The third point appears as a contradiction of the second. The origin of the non-traditional threats cannot be traced back to a single state or a single actor. Their range, indeed, exceeds the national boundaries and involves several actors. The transnational character of the issues, therefore, requires international coordination among the international actors and efficient global governance to manage the risks of the new global trends. However, global cooperation on these topics results quite difficult: taking again the example of the climate changes, this problem would require the coordination of all the states that together should mitigate their impact, especially in the most affected areas of the world. But the timing and the barriers

¹⁷⁵ Hough et al., *International security studies: theory and practice*, 232.

¹⁷⁶ Foradori e Giacomello, *Sicurezza globale: le nuove minacce*, 148.

¹⁷⁷ Ivi, 122-23

¹⁷⁸ Ivi, 161-69

that this deal implicates makes the military intervention or, in general, the unilateral intervention of the single states the most plausible way to undertake to safeguard the national security from these dangers. In conclusion, the state finds itself in a situation in which traditional and non-traditional threats can put in danger its integrity, most of them cannot be faced efficiently through military intervention because of the global dimensions of the issues and the number of actors they involve, but the difficulties that global coordination creates lead it to protect itself and its national interest through unilateral action.

In the next chapter, I will try to demonstrate how these principles can be applied to a concrete case, taking as an example the conflict between India and China along the Himalayan borders which beyond the military aspect shows some aspects related to non-traditional security.

3.

Case study: the tensions between China and India along the Himalayan borders

3.1 Introduction: South Asian non-traditional security

Recalling the last sentence of the first chapter and the framework elaborated in the second one, I decided to analyse a particular conflict to demonstrate how nowadays non-traditional security issues perform a relevant role in the evolution of the contemporary clashes among countries, even where the traditional military dimension of security prevails. The case that I have chosen is the ongoing conflict between China and India along the Himalayan borders. The choice of this conflict, as I will explain later on in detail, has been determined by the will to show that in a dispute that apparently owes exclusively to a military confrontation based on the defence of the respective territories in a space historically contended, the non-traditional security issues that characterize this area can influence the dynamics of the relations between the two states. However, before getting to the heart of the case study, it is necessary to elaborate on an overview of the regional context from a non-traditional security perspective.

Looking at the South Asian regional context, the issues that involve non-traditional security are different and stress all the regional countries. Every issue arises in different ways and with different intensity according to the different scenarios, influencing, consequently, the relations among the actors. Considering the framework elaborated in the previous chapter, in South Asia it is possible to identify all the threats that have been considered in the analysis: from health security to economic security, from environmental security to cybersecurity. Moreover, the role of the non-state actors, like terrorists or secessionist movements that affect both the domestic policies and regional relations, is relevant. Since an extensive study of the entire range of the regional issues can move the analysis out of its focus, I decided to take into account just the issues related to the case study, namely, water security (within the larger field of environmental, energetic, and food security), terrorism, insurgent movements, and migrations.

3.1.1 Water security

The question of water security is crucial in South Asia. Water is a fundamental resource for people's lives, not just for biological needs, but also for economic activities, energy, and food production. Moreover, it

is a necessary element for the maintenance of natural ecosystems. Authors like Biba¹⁷⁹, indeed, discussing the role of water in the region, talk about the “water-food-energy nexus” highlighting the strict interconnection and relevance that these three elements have within a community. Not having substitute resources, water is an unavoidable element for people, and, therefore, for states. The growing population (around 1,768 billion people, 3 billion including China) and the regional economic development have increased the demand for freshwater and the human pressure on the environment¹⁸⁰. The guarantee of having the necessary amount of water is becoming a crucial factor that influences the relations between the regional states. Transboundary water management is, indeed, the first main issue that stresses the sphere of non-traditional security: the fact that some countries cannot directly control the flow rate of their rivers because they start in another country, makes the first dependent on the water consumption of the second. The relevance that water has for the local populations makes this issue a vital element for the security of the state in terms of economic, environmental, energetic, and socio-political security.

In the case of South Asia, the majority of rivers flow within the region across different countries. Most of them originate from glaciers and snow accumulation on the mountains, especially located in the Tibetan Plateau and along the Himalayan range. Currently, almost the totality of the Plateau is under the administration of the Chinese Government, including the majority of the springs of the major rivers of the region like that of the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo. On the other hand, some countries control just a portion of the national rivers, like Pakistan and Bangladesh, and result almost totally dependent on the upper states. Looking at the dependency ratio of the regional countries it is possible to notice the imbalance of the distribution of the water resources in the region: the dependency ratio of China is around 1% while for other countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh it is respectively 77% and 91%¹⁸¹. This scenario gives life to different diplomatic actions to try and find a shared agreement on transboundary water management: in some cases, two states reached a deal that regulates the consumption of water, like in the case of the Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960 by India and Pakistan that is still valid today, or in the case of the Memorandum of Understanding between New Delhi and Beijing in 2013 for the provision of hydrological information about the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo river in the flood season. Despite the mechanisms implemented by regional countries, transboundary water management is strongly affected by the South Asian conflictual environment that “impedes the development of robust multilateral institutions”¹⁸². Moreover, these kinds of agreements do not guarantee the participants from potential non-fulfilment by the other part since supranational organism able to control the respect of the deals do not exist in any case. These difficulties in finding an effective agreement are also exacerbated by the diffuse phenomenon of water stress¹⁸³ that the regional countries are facing related to the rapid economic and population growth: according to FAO, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are in a condition of “medium-to-high” stress (respectively 34.16% and 24,52%), India and China in a condition of high stress (44.78% and

¹⁷⁹ Sebastian Biba, «New Concerns, More Cooperation? How Non-Traditional Security Issues Affect Sino-Indian Relations», *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 45, n. 3 (2016): 3–30.

¹⁸⁰ Anthony Mely Caballero e Alistair D.B. Cook, *Non-traditional security in Asia: issues, challenges, and framework for action* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), 66.

¹⁸¹ Data source: AQUASTAT (FAO)(2013-2017). The Dependency ratio is defined by FAO as “Indicator expressing the percent of total renewable water resources originating outside the country. This indicator may theoretically vary between 0% and 100%. A country with a dependency ratio equal to 0% does not receive any water from neighbouring countries. A country with a dependency ratio equal to 100% receives all its renewable water from upstream countries, without producing any of its own.”

¹⁸² Selina Ho, «River Politics: China’s policies in the Mekong and the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo in comparative perspective», *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, n. 85 (2013): 2.

¹⁸³ Water scarcity or stress is defined as the total quantity of freshwater withdrawals as a share of internal resources (FAO)

21.04%), while Pakistan shows an “extremely high” level of stress (363.64%)¹⁸⁴. The necessity of freshwater resources to satisfy domestic needs and water shortage lead the states to avail themselves of the right of usage of internal water for their national interests undermining the solidity of the deals.

Finally, to cause transboundary waters management distress are the climate changes, in particular the phenomenon of global warming. Two are the events that can seriously affect water availability in the region, and so their management: the former is the increase in temperatures and the latter is the frequency and strength of the monsoon. The progressive warming of the regional climate produces a double effect: the reduction of the dimension of the glaciers that causes both a minor capability of preserving water for all the summer months and the risk of glacial outburst floods, namely the excessive glacial melting and the incapability of the rivers to sustain this amount of water. According to Reuters, reporting the data published by the China Meteorological Administration in August 2021, these phenomena are visible on the Tibet Plateau: the summary of the agency has shown an increment of the temperature in the area of 0.35 degrees Celsius every decade since 1960 (twice the global average) and a reduction of glaciers surface of 15% in the last 50 years¹⁸⁵. Climate changes is also influencing the regularity of the monsoons, fundamental for the rivers that flow from the Himalayas and for regional tributary rivers. Monsoon precipitations are mainly concentrated between June and October, alternating periods of floods with drier periods. However, the increasing intensity of rainfalls augmented the violence of the seasonal floods damaging not just infrastructures but also food production lines. This phenomenon is more visible in the Eastern Himalayan sector where rivers have as their main source of water the monsoon precipitations. The Western sector, instead, is less influenced by these events and during the warmer months there are frequent cases of drought and soil salinization¹⁸⁶. The combination of these issues is requiring political answers to manage the situation and all the regional countries have elaborated strategies to face them. However, climate changes do nothing but exacerbate the importance of transboundary water management.

3.1.2 Terrorism

The second issue that concerns non-traditional security in South Asia is terrorism. First of all, it is necessary to underline that “terrorism” in this case represents a tag that the various government used to classify the violent actions of separatist movements, insurgencies, political assassinations, and so on¹⁸⁷. Recalling what I mentioned in the second chapter, these are part of the “non-state actors” and have a real impact on regional dynamics. South Asia is, nowadays, a sensitive region for this kind of issue: it is the second region in the world for terrorist attacks (3,430 in 2018) and death caused by terrorist activities (7,664 in 2018)¹⁸⁸ and, except for Bhutan and the Maldives, all the regional countries have experienced

¹⁸⁴ Data source: AQUASTAT (FAO) (2017)

¹⁸⁵ David Stanway e Christian Schmollinger, «China warns Tibet climate risks could soar despite short-term gains», *Reuters*, 2021.

¹⁸⁶ Ahsan Uddin Ahmed, Arivudai Nambi Appadurai, e Sharmind Neelormi, «Status of Climate Change Adaptation in South Asia Region», in *Status of Climate Change Adaptation in Asia and the Pacific* (Springer, Cham, 2019), 126–28.

¹⁸⁷ P. R. Kumaraswamy, «Terrorism in South Asia: The Changing Trends», *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, n. 1 (2007): 23

¹⁸⁸ Data source: Global Terrorism Database (2018)

this phenomenon¹⁸⁹. The reasons why this problem is so emphasized in the region are two: the first is the diffuse presence of dispute related to ethnic and national issues¹⁹⁰; the second, as Akhmat et. al. suggest in their article, is the growing of socio-economic inequalities that are characterizing the growth of the regional economy. However, in order to analyse the phenomenon of terrorism in the region, it is necessary to recall the common concept of all terroristic activities, namely, the use of violence for political goals. This represents a key element through which it is possible to understand the dynamics behind these activities in the region.

According to the International Peace Institute, we can categorize South Asian terrorist activity in three macro-groups considering the groups' motivations: nationalist groups, religious extremists, and ethno-nationalist groups¹⁹¹. Nationalist groups are particularly active in the disputed region of Kashmir and Punjab, with the recent insurgence of the Sikh separatists of the Khalistan movement. In India and Nepal, the Communist Party that is governing Kathmandu, which played an important role in determining the independence of Nepal from the Hindu Kingdom in 1996, is building strong cross-border relations with the Indian Communist Party, also generating a certain level of danger in Bangladesh where leftist movements are active¹⁹². Religious extremism presents both an Islamic and a Hindu matrix: the former involves Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and more recently Bangladesh while the latter mainly India, where some Hinduist movements are promoting the Hindu identity as state religion.¹⁹³ Finally, ethno-separatist movements are currently active in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and represent a source of both internal and external instability because of their cross-border nature¹⁹⁴.

In whatever form they show up, violent actions made by separatists or insurgents represent for the states a clear threat to their security. Terrorist attacks often do not generate just victims within the population but aim to damage infrastructures and institutions. The high possibility of terrorist attacks makes regional countries less attractive for foreign investors and damages to critical infrastructures can have serious repercussions on local economic activities¹⁹⁵. However, the implications of these activities are not limited to the domestic space: the first risk for a neighbouring country is the spillover effect. In areas like that of Kashmir, contested by India and Pakistan, interested by movements for regional independence, a possible escalation of the conflict can have repercussions not just on India and Pakistan, but also on China, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. Many countries use these movements to destabilize neighbours or to create a sort of deterrence with them, in the first case sustaining these groups from outside or using their containment as a possible card to play in a broader range of relations, often without considering the real requests of these movements.

This scenario shows the relevance of the political aspect of terrorism and the impact that it has on regional political dynamics. But, in order to better identify them, it is necessary to put aside religious, nationalistic, ideological feelings and focus the attention on the actors' political goals. In South Asia, terrorism activities are ascribable to both religious extremists and independence movements, groups whose limits are not

¹⁸⁹ Ghulam Akhmat et al., «Exploring the root causes of terrorism in South Asia: everybody should be concerned», *Quality & Quantity* 48, n. 6 (2013): 3065–79.

¹⁹⁰ Kumaraswamy, «Terrorism in South Asia: The Changing Trends», 11.

¹⁹¹ Eric Rosand, Naureen Fink, e Jason Ipe, «Countering Terrorism in South Asia: Strengthening Multilateral Engagement» (International Peace Institute, 2009), 3.

¹⁹² Ivi, 4

¹⁹³ Ivi, 5

¹⁹⁴ Ivi, 6

¹⁹⁵ Akhmat et al., «Exploring the root causes of terrorism in South Asia: everybody should be concerned», 2.

always distinguishable¹⁹⁶, like in the case of Kashmiri militants and Islamic terrorists. Despite religious and secessionist motivations being relevant aspects that characterize terrorist activities, they are just instruments through which states and groups vehicle their actions¹⁹⁷. Governments, as well as militants, use these elements to justify their actions in front of the public opinion notwithstanding being led by political goals, often contrary and in conflict. Putting the political reasons in the foreground, the clashes between irredentists and states are always asymmetric and the objectives of the former are outclassed by those of the latter (again as in the case of Kashmiri)¹⁹⁸.

It is necessary to mention that at the regional level within the institutional context of the SAARC, states elaborated some forms of cooperation to coordinate the action against terrorism. In 1987 Member states signed the “Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism” to share information and regulate extradition and in 1995 they established the “SAARC Terrorist Offence Monitoring Desk” to share “information on crimes related to terrorism” and support the “exchange of expertise, experience, methodology and strategies to combat terrorism and other related organized crimes”¹⁹⁹. More recent is the establishment of the “SAARC Anti-Terrorism Mechanism” that, through periodic meetings involving experts, has the goal of re-emphasizing “the importance of coordinated and concerted response to combat terrorism”²⁰⁰. However, not even these mechanisms are totally effective against these threats: citing again the International Peace Institute, “[even] if these SAARC initiatives are implemented, however, the region-wide response will require that more attention be paid to cooperation in addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and other non-security-related preventive measures and respect for human rights, which is conspicuously absent—even from the recent SAARC declaration”²⁰¹.

3.1.3 Migrations

Finally, migrations can be considered as a source of instability in the South Asian region. The core element, in this case, is the fact that migrations often include the border crossing, both legally and illegally. The protection of the borders is part of the main tasks of the state that tries to defend them under an international legal regime that recognizes those borders. It is evident that there is a connection between the two issues that made migrations a security matter²⁰². For a state cross-border migrations can represent either a resource or a threat depending on which dynamic prevails: migrations, for example, can represent an important economic resource, but also as a promoter of the interests of the country of origin²⁰³. In South Asia, refugees and migrants move to other regional countries for reasons related to conflicts (as in the case of India and Pakistan in the region of Kashmir), politics (for example, Tibetans), religion, and ethnic issues²⁰⁴. The movements related to these issues are strictly connected to the arrival of militants or insurgents from other countries increasing the risk of terrorism and instability. One of the latest trends

¹⁹⁶ Ivi, 15

¹⁹⁷ Ivi, 11; Ivi, 20

¹⁹⁸ Maria Abi-Habib, Jalaluddin Mughal, e Salman Masood, «In Pakistan-Held Kashmir, Growing Calls for Independence», *The New York Times*, 2019.

¹⁹⁹ South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation, «SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk», Saarc-sec.org, 1995.

²⁰⁰ South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation, «The SAARC Anti-Terrorism Mechanism», Saarc-sec.org, 2009.

²⁰¹ Rosand, Fink, e Ipe, «Countering Terrorism in South Asia: Strengthening Multilateral Engagement», 10.

²⁰² Partha S. Ghosh, *Migrants, refugees and statelessness in South Asia* (Sage, 2016), 130.

²⁰³ Ivi, 128-29

²⁰⁴ Ivi, 137-153

that will probably affect South Asia in the next future is climate migration. The increasing temperatures and climate change are worsening people's life in certain areas and causing natural disasters, like floods and droughts that have damaged entire territories. According to the ActionAid Report 2020, if Paris Agreement parameters are not respected and temperature is not kept under 2.5 Celsius degrees, climate migrants might exceed 37 million people²⁰⁵ without considering those generated by natural disasters. This phenomenon interests all regional countries and can represent a relevant issue, especially its political management. Last but not least, the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic has increased the relevance of controlling people movement within the region: the virus, in this case, has become a vector of instability for the regional countries considering the difficulties that all of them have faced in managing the internal health security.

Transboundary waters and terrorism are just some of the non-traditional issues that involve South Asian regional relations. In both cases (but it is plausible to think that it may be valid also for other issues) we can notice that their management follows the same pattern mentioned at the end of the second chapter: regional states are aware of the existence of non-traditional security issues that can threaten the national stability and they are trying to face these problems through bilateral or multilateral agreements, also acting within regional institutions. However, the nature of the threat, the fact that these issues are combined with territorial disputes, the absence of external authority that guarantees the respect of the treaties, and, therefore, the high cost of cooperation, create the conditions to increase the level of uncertainty and conflict in the region contributing to influence the entire range of relations among members and neighbours.

3.2 The case study: India and China tensions along the Himalayan borders.

Before analysing the case study, it is necessary to present a brief overview of the tensions between India and China, starting from its origins until the most recent episodes.

3.2.1 The origins

In order to understand the developments of the conflict, it is necessary to understand its origins and the historical dynamics that led to the current situation. First of all, the area we are talking about is an area starting from the Northern borders between China and India, in particular from the Karakoram Pass, up to the Arunachal Pradesh region, passing through Nepal, the Sikkim region, and Bhutan. The area mentioned above can be divided into three sectors: the Western part, which includes the border between the Ladakh and Aksai Chin regions, the Middle part, which covers the area between Nepal and Bhutan, and the Eastern part, which includes the borders between Tibet and the Arunachal Pradesh region. Each area has its morphological characteristics that have and still determine the evolution of the border issue. The Western sector is an arid area, with an inhospitable climate and situated at high altitudes. The Middle

²⁰⁵ Harjeet Singh et al., «Costs of Climate Inactions: Displacement and Distress Migration» (Actionaid, 2020).

sector, on the other hand, is also characterised by high reliefs and some mountain passes that connect India and China through the Himalayas. Lastly, the Eastern sector is flatter but still bordered by the mountain range of the Tibetan Plateau. The Himalayan range and the Tibetan Plateau in general, represent a natural barrier between the two countries.

In order to understand today's disputes, it is necessary to go back to the British colonial period. The question of boundaries was primarily a matter of the British crown's interests in the region during the eighteenth century. London saw in the regions of Kashmir, Tibet and Xinjiang some strategic points to control first the Russian advance in Central Asia and then the Chinese consolidation in the area²⁰⁶. The definition of the borders, which underwent several modifications over time, was nothing more than a British instrument to promote their national interests in the area²⁰⁷. This situation changed when the British Empire gave way to the establishment of the Indian government in August 1947. The Indian interests were, indeed, different from the British ones, and the question of borders became central again, especially after the birth of the People's Republic of China in 1949²⁰⁸. The region of Tibet became once again central to both countries, and despite the diplomatic efforts in trying to define precise borders, in both the Western and Eastern sectors they remained disputed and not recognized by either side. While in the Eastern sector the conventional line still used today remains the McMahon line (not recognised by Beijing)²⁰⁹, the Western sector was the location that hosted the 1962 Sino-Indian war. At the end of the conflict, a conventional line, called Line of Actual Control (LAC) was established but without receiving formal recognition from either countries.

Since the early 2000s, the question of borders has again become a topic of debate between China and India. Especially in the Western sector, there have been several tense situations between the various armies. Some of that are:

- Depsaing Plain stand-off (2013-*ongoing*) (Western sector)
- Demchok stand-off (2014-2018) (Western sector)
- Dong Lang Plain (or Dokhlam Plain) stand-off (2015) (Middle sector)
- Dong Lang Plain (or Dokhlam Plain) stand-off (2017) (Middle sector)
- Bara Hoti stand-off (2020)
- Pangong Tso (or Pangong Lake) stand-off (2020-2021) (Western sector)
- Galwan Valley stand-off (2020-*ongoing*) (Western sector)
- Hot Spring and Gogra stand-off (2020-*ongoing*) (Western sector)

In some cases, like that of the Galwan Valley stand-off, skirmishes caused different victims²¹⁰ among the respective armies, while in other circumstances, tensions between Indian and Chinese troops have been limited and governments have dealt with a progressive retirement of the respective contingents (as in the case of Pangong Lake stand-off). In every case, tensions have never escalated.

The border issue still has a purely strategic nature: each country is trying to use this issue to promote its interests in the region. However, the approaches of both countries are diametrically opposed: while China would like to gain advantages in the Eastern sector by keeping the Western one, India, on the contrary, would like to keep the Eastern borders while taking back the part lost during the war in the Aksai Chin region. It is clear that the military dimension, in this case, has a preponderance in the analysis of the

²⁰⁶ Neville Maxwell, *India's China war* (Jonathan Cape Limited, 1970), 19–20.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ivi, 67

²⁰⁹ Ivi, 49

²¹⁰ The number of victims of the skirmishes has not been defined officially. In the case of Galwan valley stand-off, the number of victims is around 20 people, but it has not been confirmed by any government (Source: BBC, «Galwan Valley: China and India clash on freezing and inhospitable battlefield», *BBC News*, 2020).

clashes. However, although there is an obvious relevance of defending the borders from a military invasion, there are other reasons of a non-military nature that influence the dynamics of these disputes and that somehow also explain why this issue has returned to be of primary importance for both countries. As explained in the previous section, this conflict is part of a regional context that presents several threats that cannot be traced back to the traditional military conception of security, such as the management of water resources, independence movements, terrorism, and migration flows. The analysis that will take place in the next part, aims to explain how these threats influence China and India relations along the borders and which nexus can be traced between these threats and the conflict itself. In order to do this, it is necessary to get away from the logic of borders and rely exclusively on the capacity of a country to administer, exploit and protect a certain territory. Maps, in this case, can help to understand the geographical position of the single stand-offs, but it is not possible to use them to determine if these places belong to China or India, first, because there is not an official and shared division of the territories, and second, because maps' representations reflect Indian or Chinese point of view on territories dispute, which makes them unreliable.

3.2.2 Non-traditional security issues: climate change and water resources

Water resources are fundamental for both China and India in a context of rapid economic and population growth²¹¹. As said in the previous chapter, the relevance of water for economic activities and people's life makes this resource essential for the countries' development. Both for China and India an important role is played by river basins that, flowing toward the major rivers and their tributary, provide water within the countries: in India the most important ones are the Gange, the Indus, and the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo while in China the Huang He, the Yangtze (or Xi Jiang), and the Zhu Jiang. Their water is used mainly for agricultural activities and irrigation, hydropower energy production, and services, depending on the area that they cross. However, for water provision the Tibetan Plateau (also defined as "the Third Pole") represents the major source for all the water flows in China, India, Southern and South-eastern Asia. The Tibetan glaciers perform the role of water supplier assuring an annual provision for all the basins. Some of the rivers that the Tibetan Plateau feeds, cross different countries and flow into different seas. To guarantee a sufficient amount of water for all the countries that these rivers cross, it is necessary to have a coordination among governments on the quantity and the way of the usage of water resources. China and India share three main rivers, namely the Indus, the Sutlej and the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo²¹², and some tributaries of the Gange, all originating in Chinese territory.

Starting from this point, it is possible to identify two relevant issues in this scenario: the first is the relevance for India and China to preserve their hydric resources, the second is the necessity to build effective cooperation on transboundary water management. The preservation of hydric resources has become essential after both countries have recorded a high level of water stress because of the pressure that the economic development is generating on the environment. Their protection does not pass only through more efficient usage of internal waters, but depends also on the capability to protect them from external exploitation, especially if they flow along the borders. Transboundary water management, instead, stresses mainly the diplomatic relations: the problem that emerges from India and China relations on the

²¹¹ Jagannath P. Panda, *India-China Relations: politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order*. (Routledge, 2018), 66.

²¹² The Indus and the Sutlej originate respectively from the Mansarovar Lake and Rakas Lake (Source: Government of India Ministry of Water Resources, «Indus Basin», India Water Resources Information System, 2014) and cross China, India, and Pakistan, while Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo origin from Mount Kailash (Source: NASA Earth Observatory) and cross China, India, and Bangladesh.

topic is the absence of solid treaties that regulate river management. On the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo and the Sutlej different Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) have been signed²¹³ where both governments committed to provide hydrological information in certain periods of the year, but without defining an effective mechanism of water management. Even for the Indus management, India and China have never discussed this topic except during the meetings of the Expert Level Mechanism. Despite the attempt to cooperate in this field, the problem of cross-border waters still represents a critical sector for India and China relations. A discussed episode was the accusation made by the Indian government to Beijing not to provide hydrological data of the Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo during the flood season. About this river, China has been also blamed to project some dams and channels to divert the river flow, immediately denied by the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying who defining this news as “untrue”²¹⁴. It is necessary to mention that the absence of shared and precise borders makes it difficult to find an effective solution regarding the control of water resources and, as a consequence, their management. The picture, therefore, shows a context in which both India and China need to preserve and control water resources, especially those flowing along and across the Himalayan borders but without a solid agreement on transboundary water management and the common recognition of national borders.

So, considering this scenario, which are the possible threats that make this issue ascribable to a matter of national security? Being a question related to the defence of national territories and, therefore, of the domestic resources, the first threat has a military nature. The possibility that foreign troops occupy some territories and have the capacity to exploit their resources, is certainly a source of insecurity for both countries that use the military instrument to protect them. In this case, the presence of Indian and Chinese troops along the borders is proof. However, in this scenario, the nature of the threats is not only military: phenomena such as over-exploitation of hydric resources and climate changes contribute to increasing the relevance of preserving water and building a cooperation mechanism to manage transboundary rivers. As already underlined before, human activities are massively contributing to putting great pressure on national freshwater resources, making their demand overtake their regeneration. But, strictly connected to this issue, there are climate changes and global warming. A study conducted by Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and the University of Utah has shown the progressive and rapid melting of the Himalayan glaciers in the last decades due to the temperature rise²¹⁵. At the same time, the increasing intensity of rainfall, in particular in Monsoons seasons, and their irregularity are provoking both floods and periods of drought in some regions²¹⁶. The combination of these phenomena is causing serious damages to the populations living in the most affected areas: first, the detachment of large parts of glaciers can hit infrastructures built along mountain ranges. For example, in February 2021, Reuters reported the destruction of a small hydroelectric project situated in the state of Uttarakhand (India) caused by a glacier break²¹⁷. The same effects, relatively to the Himalayan areas are the already mentioned glacial lake outburst floods: one of the most recent areas under observation is the Kyagar Lake situated in the Chinese Karakoram Mountain range because of its critical situation²¹⁸.

²¹³ On Brahmaputra/Yarlung Tsangpo, India and China signed two MoU in 2002 and 2008 and their implementation plan in 2013. On the Sutlej river, government signed two MoU in 2005, 2010, and 2011 (Source: Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India quoted in Panda, *India-China Relations: politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order.*, 71).

²¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, «Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s Regular Press Conference on October 31, 2017», www.fmprc.gov.cn, 2017.

²¹⁵ Echo Xie, «Climate Change Causing Himalayan Glaciers to Melt Twice as Fast», South China Morning Post, 2019.

²¹⁶ Ahmed, Appadurai, e Neelormi, «Status of Climate Change Adaptation in South Asia Region», 126–27.

²¹⁷ Sanjeev Miglani e Michael Perry, «Rescuers search for 125 missing after glacier burst in Indian Himalayas, many believed trapped in tunnel», *Reuters*, 2021.

²¹⁸ Meimei Zhang et al., «Characterization of Kyagar Glacier and Lake Outburst Floods in 2018 Based on Time-Series Sentinel-1A Data», *Water* 12, n. 1 (2020).

Second, glacial melting due to higher temperatures is diminishing the capacity of preservation of the glaciers, reducing, as a consequence, their capacity to feed rivers, especially in the warmer seasons. This causes intensify the effect of droughts, especially in the most arid regions like that of the Western Himalayan sector, but also reduce the flow rate of important rivers both for India, like the Indus and the Gange, and China, like Yangtze and Mekong, with all the already mentioned consequences that this implies.

For the purpose of my analysis, it is relevant to understand how all these events can be connected to the military tensions between India and China. Analysing the position of the most recent clashes that have taken place in the Western Himalayan sector, we can notice that disputes are located close to the mountain rivers. The clashes in the Galwan valley, the Demchok, Depsang Plain, Hot Spring and Pangong Lake are all situated close to river flows, respectively the Galwan, the Indus and the Shiyok rivers²¹⁹. In a context where borders are not clearly defined and disputed, rivers and river valleys represent a natural point of reference for both countries and in some areas they represent a natural border²²⁰. The modification of glacier's shapes and the reduction of rivers' flow rate can in some cases change the perception of the borders. However, the most plausible reason that can in some way justify the position of these clashes is the necessity to defend rivers from external exploitation or control. The case of Demchok stand-off is evident: this point is located at the entrance of the Indus into a small portion of a disputed territory where India has a military base. The construction of a canal for irrigation built along the river has provoked the intervention of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to stop the works. This testifies the will of both states to avoid the complete control of water resources from another country and, as a consequence, to concede the possibility to exploit them and use them. The same reasoning can be applied to the Galwan Valley skirmishes: this valley is, indeed, directly connected to Shiyok river, one of the major tributaries of the Indus and in the warmer seasons, even if the weather conditions are inhospitable, it allows the transit of troops and the construction of buildings²²¹. Even in the Depsang Plain stand-off it is possible to identify some connections with water resources control. Depsang Plain, beyond the fact that it is a strategic area because of its access to the Karakoram Pass, gives the origins the Shiyok river, whose importance has been already mentioned, and represents direct access to another key area for both countries' hydric resources, namely the Siachen Glacier, contested also with Pakistan. Hot Spring and Gogra Valley are two other cases: both places are situated in the Chang Chenmo river valley, another affluent of Shiyok river that flows along the LAC. Finally, the Pangong Lake has been a theatre of recent tensions (then solved thanks to a reciprocal disengagement and withdrawal): it can be categorized as a "cross-boundary lake" that from the Tibetan Autonomous Region reaches the region of Ladakh, but it crosses a border that is still disputed. The stand-off happened in the proximity of this contested border justifying both the relevance of rivers and lakes as natural boundaries and the control of water resources.

In the case of India-China tensions, non-traditional security issues do not represent a short period threat: even if some effects of climate changes and human activities impact on the environment are already visible, and the rise of these problems chronologically coincides with the increment of standoffs, the main impact of India and China security will be possible to be verified/* in the next future. Glacial melting and the reduction of river's flow rate will more and more affect people's lives and economic activities, increasing the damages in areas where floods and droughts are more common and where water represents an important production factor, as in the agricultural sector. Moreover, this contributes to favouring the access to some passages across the mountain ranges or river valleys, unusable in the past or some periods of the year, thus increasing the importance of defending borders. This can lead China

²¹⁹ Shiyok River originates from Depsang Plain and is an important tributary of the Indus.

²²⁰ BBC, «Pangong Lake: India and China complete pull-back of forces», *BBC News*, 2021.

²²¹ BBC, «Galwan Valley: China and India clash on freezing and inhospitable battlefield».

and India to increase their presence along the borders, and so to foster the tensions, considering that the dispute for Himalayan water resources will become more and more a core issue for countries' development and security.

3.2.3 Non-traditional security issues: migrations, independentism, and terrorism

I decided to gather these three issues, first, because they are all related to the capacity of India and China to control their borders and, second, they can be included within the group of non-state actors and so considered as a non-traditional threat because of their potential in fostering internal instability. From the Chinese perspective, the question of protection of the borders is linked to the relevance of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in Chinese domestic stability. For what concerns their defence, Johan Eriksson and Mark Rhinard argue that it is possible to identify a nexus between internal and external security that guides Beijing politics in these areas²²². This nexus is based on the necessity for the Chinese government to protect the regions both from internal violence and external support to irredentist movements, respectively to Uyghur and Tibetan communities²²³. In both cases, the secessionist and independentist elements are present within these regions and, as in the case of Xinjiang, it has been possible to see episodes of violence. Clarke underlines the fact that what increased the relevance of the Uyghur issue was the “transnationalization” of the phenomena: he identifies in the collapse of the USSR, the events of 11/9, and the rise of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia (especially in Afghanistan) united with the progressive exposure of China globally supported by the opening of the frontiers²²⁴. These dynamics forced Beijing to avoid that local communities could establish relations with international terrorism, especially the Islamic one²²⁵. Even for India, indeed, terrorism and irredentism are a matter of national security. The first concerns the territorial connection of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar regions with Xinjiang. According to the Census of 2011 made by the Ministry of Home Affairs of India, the two Indian federal States host the largest Muslim community in the country, respectively around 38 million and 17 million people²²⁶. It is plausible that also for the Indian government the protection of the borders to avoid connections between foreign Islamic communities is a key point for internal equilibrium.

The case of Tibet, instead, is related to the ties that the region has with the Tibetan community located in India, especially after the exile of the Tibetan government in 1959²²⁷. Despite the question not being at the centre of the theme discussed by India and China, the independentist feeling is still present within the Tibetan community and represents a reason for worrying both for New Delhi and Beijing. Despite the fact that they currently do not represent an immediate threat there are some problems that can complicate not just the relations between China and India but also those between India and the Tibetan community. In Panda's opinion, the main issue that New Delhi and Beijing must face is how to deal with a post-14th Dalai Lama scenario and the considerations that the Tibetan community will have of the new government²²⁸. Moreover, he presents another plausible scenario, namely, the possibility of mobilization of the Tibetan community keen on moving to Tibet Autonomous Region that can be an important source

²²² Michael Clarke, *Terrorism and counter-terrorism in China: Domestic and Foreign Policy Dimensions* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 18.

²²³ Ivi, 21

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Biba, «New Concerns, More Cooperation? How Non-Traditional Security Issues Affect Sino–Indian Relations».

²²⁶ Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, “Census 2011”, *Government of India*

²²⁷ Panda, *India-China Relations: politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order.*, 53.

²²⁸ Ivi, 61

of instability considering that India and China have never established any strategy to manage this eventuality²²⁹.

Finally, it is necessary to underline the role that migrations could have on China-India relations. More than the bilateral migrations from India to China or from China to India, which result insignificant, it is the migration flow that stresses the entire region that makes boundary security a more and more essential goal. For China, this represents an important issue, especially considering its closeness to two important migration corridors to Xinjiang and Tibet, namely the one between India and Bangladesh and the one between India and Pakistan. According to the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020 of the United Nations ESCAP²³⁰, in 2019 the Bangladesh-India corridor was the third largest migrant corridor in the world with 3.1 million people while that between Pakistan and India has seen the transit of 2.7 million²³¹ people²³². The potential threat that migration can bring to China can also be represented by the will of India and Nepal to maintain open borders and free mobility between the two countries, reinforcing the necessity to secure borders. Still related to China-Nepal-India relations, China, after the agreement with Kathmandu to engineer a railway along the Himalayan range, proposed the construction of infrastructure that can connect China and India passing through Nepal creating new economic corridors and, therefore, new potential channels between Tibet and Indian territories²³³.

It is difficult in this case to connect these phenomena with every single case of tensions along the borders. However, some of the locations mentioned before where tensions happened are linked with some point of connection between China and India. One example is the Karakoram Pass, a road that transits through the Karakoram range and connects Ladakh with Xinjiang. The Karakoram Pass is exposed on the Depsang Plain, a place where Indian and Chinese armies had a stand-off. Another delicate point is the Siliguri corridor, situated in the Indian region of Sikkim that connects Tibet with Bangladesh passing through India. The stand-off that happened on the Naku La Pass testifies again the relevance of these roads that cross the Himalayan range²³⁴. Even if it has not been a location of a direct confrontation, the contested area of Tawang, in the Eastern Sector is related to this issue. Tawang does not represent only an important starting point for an economic corridor that connects India, Bhutan, and the other South-East Asian countries, but it represents a symbolic place for the Tibetan community outside Chinese borders both for the presence of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery and the historical links with the figure of Dalai Lama²³⁵. The area was already a point of contention during the British presence in the area during the Simla convention of 1914²³⁶ and today is still contested by China²³⁷. This place has a strict connection with the Tibetan questions for its cultural relations but also because of its closeness to the Bum La Pass,

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

²³¹ From Pakistan to India 1.1 million people; from India to Pakistan 1.6 million people (Source: UNESCAP).

²³² United Nations, «Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Impact for Migration», UNESCAP, 2020.

²³³ Weijia Hu, «Cross-Himalayan corridor promotes marriage between China and India - Global Times», www.globaltimes.cn, 2019.

²³⁴ In the same area there are other two main passes: Naku La Pass there is the Jelep Pass situated along a road that connects Lhasa with Indian territories and crosses the region of Sikkim, and the Dongkha La Pass that connects Tibet with Sikkim region. According to Xinhua, in 2006, this pass was opened for commercial and pilgrimage purposes. (Xiang Bo, «Mountain Pass along China-India Border Opens», www.xinhuanet.com, 2017).

²³⁵ Manoj Joshi, «Is Tawang becoming the focus of Sino-Indian relations? », Observer Research Foundation, 2017.

²³⁶ Maxwell, *India's China war*, 49.

²³⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, «Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Remarks on Indian Prime Minister Modi Attending Activities in Disputed Area of Eastern Part of China-India Boundary», www.fmprc.gov.cn, 2015; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, «Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Regular Press Conference on October 28, 2016», www.fmprc.gov.cn, 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, «Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Remarks on Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to the East Section of the China-India Boundary», www.fmprc.gov.cn, 2019.

which had already been crossed during the Sino-Indian War in 1962 and that today is considered an important corridor between Tibet and India²³⁸.

Here again, we can see how the threats can be traced to both the traditional and the non-traditional spheres. The first case is related to the possibility that external armed forces could use these passages to access national territory. Indeed, the construction of roads and infrastructures along the border by both countries has been one of the reasons that have led to the various tensions in these areas, being potentially able to facilitate the movement of troops and armed means²³⁹.

The second case, instead, is mainly related to the movement of people: for China and India, we have seen how independence movements, terrorism, and migrations have the capacity not only to generate political instability in certain regions but can directly cause damage to infrastructures and people. This element becomes even more important if we consider the fact that individual states can use these threats both as a "weapon" and as a deterrent, through the support and promotion of these actors in certain contexts. If we were to add another potential non-traditional security threat, as mentioned above, melting glaciers would facilitate the passage of both people and troops through major mountain passes, making the issue of border control even more dedicated and relevant.

3.3 Findings and discussion

The results that emerged from the analysis of this case study, follow the lines outlined at the end of the second chapter. First of all, the tensions between China and India are part of a regional context characterised by territorial disputes, also linked to a past in which foreign powers influenced the dynamics of the area. Moreover, South Asia is affected by both global and sub-regional processes that not only pose a real threat to individual countries but also influence their external relations. Even in this case, threats ascribable to the non-traditional sphere of security are linked to cross-border phenomena, not localised within a single country. These, therefore, lead the individual governments to the necessity to find shared solutions with the neighbouring countries with which they share these issues. However, as it has been pointed out, the presence of disputes, the high cost of cooperation, the absence of agreements guaranteeing effective management of these phenomena, but above all the fact that these can represent a means through which neighbouring states can be struck, lead to a de facto fall back on the use of the military instrument. The case of China and India is proof of this: the historical territorial disputes combined with the difficulty of the two governments to find agreements on the management of transboundary waters, to cope with the effects of climate change, and to elaborate a bilateral mechanism to counter phenomena such as terrorism, raise considerably the costs of cooperation, thus leading New Delhi and Beijing to use military forces. In this case, one can see that this is not the most effective but the most efficient solution. The stand-offs that have been analysed, indeed, have never degenerated into open conflicts between the two armies, showing how the will of the two governments seems to be that of maintaining the status quo, despite the still open territorial disputes, which are still far from a concrete solution. The use of the army can be linked to the attempt to guarantee the security of the State, protecting

²³⁸ Sudha Ramachandran, «Arunachal Pradesh: Cultural and Strategic Flashpoint for Sino-Indian Relations», Jamestown Foundation, 2017.

²³⁹ See Sudha Ramachandran, «China Completes New Highway Near De Facto Border With India», *thediplomat.com*, 2021 and Vijaita Singh, «Critical Road on China Border Being Constructed in Ladakh: MHA», *The Hindu*, 2021.

it from the impacts that non-traditional threats can have on it, in the absence of guarantees on the respect of any bilateral or regional agreements and effective cooperation mechanisms.

However, it is precisely these elements that can change the conditions that today characterise the management of the borders between the two countries. It is, therefore, possible to assume, that a possible intensification of these processes, with a consequent increase in the scope and strength of these threats, could further exacerbate these tensions, running the risk of favouring an escalation of the conflict considering the lack of trust that characterises the relations between China and India, especially in the field of border management.

Conclusions

We can generally conclude that the hypothesis elaborated in the introduction, namely the idea that non-traditional security is a not negligible aspect in the analysis of complex conflictual realities like that of China and India along the Himalayan borders, and that, in this case, respective military actions are led by the necessity to protect the countries also from non-military threats, has been confirmed both in literature and in reality. It has been possible to identify the existence of a debate concerning not only the presence of new threats to the security of States but also new perspectives which enrich the discussion on the subject by increasing its complexity. The concept of security, which historically has been interpreted in different ways according to the historical period in which it has been studied, after the end of the Cold War has interested once again the academic debate on the subject. With the end of the bipolar system and the spread of globalised phenomena, security as interpreted during the conflict between the two superpowers no longer proves true in reality. The state, intended as a political entity based on a territory, internal institutions and an idea, in front of these changes has had to review the perspective through which it looks at its integrity in an increasingly dynamic international context. Hence the need to broaden the concept of security to include new threats and actors. What can be concluded from the study carried out is that non-traditional security has acquired great relevance in the study of the security policies of the states and its consideration in the analysis of the international dynamics is unavoidable. The approaches proposed by the most recent schools of thought are reflected in real cases, thus making them applicable to the analysis of certain dynamics.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the tensions between China and India along the Himalayas have shown two issues: the first confirms the previous conclusion that it is necessary to take into account the elements related to non-traditional security in order to understand its dynamics. The second is that traditional and non-traditional security, although usually studied separately, interact in a real case. As emerged from the study of the South Asian context, regional conflicts, including the case study, are influenced by military and strategic issues as well as non-military dynamics. This demonstrates, on the one hand, the need to broaden the concept of security to include different threats, as suggested by the most recent schools of thought, on the other hand, traditional and non-traditional security are interrelated and this correlation influences not only national but also regional security dynamics. Studying this relationship, in this specific case, becomes fundamental in order to understand the reasons that drive both the diplomatic and military action of both countries. The exclusion of one of the two dimensions would not allow a complete picture of the disputes, precisely because it would be impossible to bring out their connection.

Given this conclusion, however, a question emerges: in this specific case, is it possible to understand which, between traditional and non-traditional security, is the dimension that has the greatest impact on the course of the conflict? This represents one of the limitations of my analysis. The impossibility of objectively calculating their impact on the decisions of individual states and the inability to determine which has the greatest impact does not allow us to determine how much non-traditional security issues alone are capable of provoking or influencing a military clash. However, it is not possible to exclude from the analysis their impact on a country's security strategies. The main problem, in this case, is to be careful not to overestimate their impact. Despite not being easy to determine their weight behind the political decisions, research results show that they are the origin of security issues, being able to push the

government to intervene through military actions. The use of armed forces, therefore, becomes an instrument of the two countries to protect themselves from the effects that these threats have on security. This is because the high cost and difficulty of cooperating to deal with certain phenomena, which would be the most efficient solution, become problematic when national security is stressed. Military intervention is not the most efficient choice in terms of costs but the most effective in the short term.

Another limitation of the research is the fact that for some issues it is not possible to immediately verify the veracity of the proposed thesis. If we take the case of the effects of the melting of the Himalayan glaciers, even if it is possible to ascertain the existence of the problem, its real impact on the tensions between China and India can only be verified over a longer period. However, given that it is unlikely to be a reversible phenomenon in the short term (perhaps even in the long term), it is still possible to follow its trajectory from the current effects and try to develop plausible future scenarios. In this case, the research also tried to identify medium- to long-term dynamics that are nevertheless taken into account in security policies and that therefore influence current choices.

It is, however, clear from the results obtained that the debate on non-traditional security remains still open and not totally shared by all scholars, but it is necessary to understand certain events that affect the present international system. In view of the fact that some of these threats are likely to increase not only in scope but also in intensity, and therefore in severity, the relevance of these issues will get more and more relevant. Combined with a context already characterised by various tensions such as that of Asia, these can play a very important role in determining the evolution of the Asian security system, further risking to increase its instability and conflict.

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