

International security: Basic theories and concepts

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Learning goals

1. to understand the different meanings of security and its relation to the main IR schools
2. to be able to specify security with respect to different elements (means, costs, time...)
3. to get acquainted with the notions of security policy, (security) strategy, security environment and their key elements

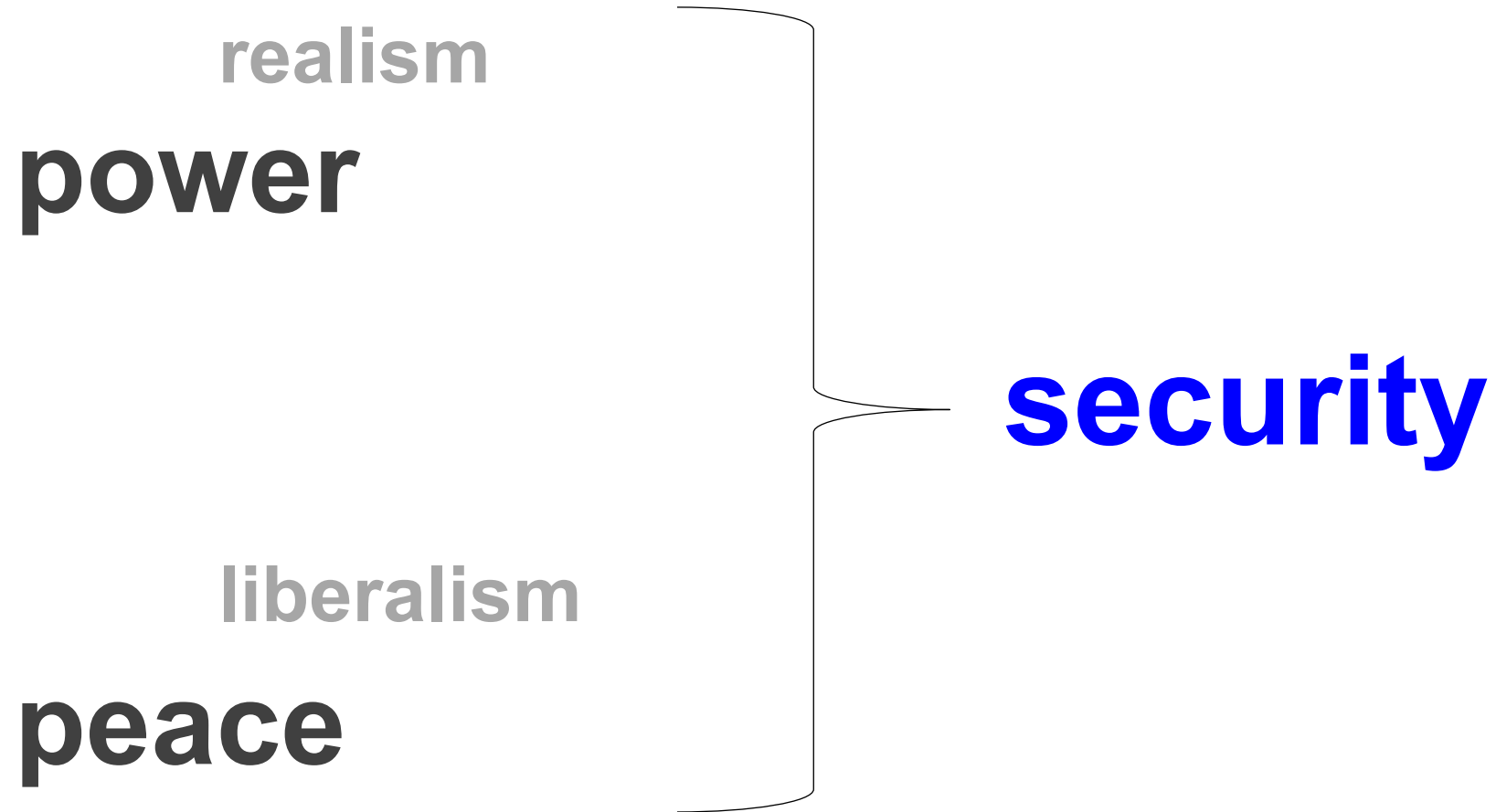
„Security matters. It is impossible to make sense of world politics without reference to it. Every day, people somewhere in the world are killed, starved, tortured, raped, impoverished, imprisoned, displaced, or denied education in the name of security.“ (Williams, 2008)

9:10 a.m. ET, February 23, 2022

Zelensky says the "future of European security" is being decided now in Ukraine

From CNN's Tim Lister in Kyiv





Realists (and power)

- international politics is anarchical (no higher power above states)
- the overriding goal of states is to survive
 - by increasing their **power**
- power as the prime motive for the behaviour of actors
- security as a derivate of power (accumulation of power to ensure security)
- power - primarily understood in terms of material resources to induce harm or coerce other states (power = military capabilities)
- neorealism - **security** as the primary motivation of states

Liberals (and peace)

- human nature as essentially good → people capable of mutual aid and collaboration
- mutual benefits and international cooperation (x rejection of power politics)
- war is not inevitable, its frequency can be reduced by eradicating anarchical conditions
- central issues - lasting **peace** and cooperation in IR
- the idea of an international community
- security as the primary goal in state-to-state interactions

Security as an inherently contested concept?

The concept of national security

"... a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice **core values** if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war." (Walter Lippman, 1943)

Objective x subjective security

“... 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 attacked.” (Arnold Wolfers, 1952)

The concept of national security

- those definitions reflect a dichotomic view of security (secure or not)
- it is uncertain what are **national / core values** or interests?
- perspective of **national security** and great powers
 - less useful for small states
 - ignores international security

Modern definition of security

“a state, under which threats to an object (usually a nation-state or an international organization) and its interests are eliminated as far as possible and this object is effectively equipped to eliminate existing and potential threats and willing to cooperate” (Mareš, 2002)

Negative x positive security

“...national security includes traditional defence policy and also the non-military actions of a state to ensure its total capacity to **survive** as a political entity in order to exert influence and to **carry out its** internal and international **objectives**.” (Michael H.H. Louw)

Specifying security

- A. Security for whom?
- B. Security for which values?
- C. How much security?
- D. From what threats?
- E. By what means?
- F. At what cost?
- G. In what time period?

A. Security for whom?

- whose values are to be secured?
- traditionally, state as the dominant referent object → gradual „deepening“ of security (will be covered in Lecture 3)
 - individual / community
 - state
 - international system / global community

B. Security for which values?

- the concept of national security traditionally included sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity
- values often enshrined in the constitutional order
- some states also seek protection for more marginal values
- the protection of values often translated into **interests** to be promoted
- example: Security Strategy of the Czech Republic (2015)
 - Vital interests
 - Strategic interests
 - Other important interests

C. How much security?

- security is a value of which a nation can have more or less / which it can aspire to have in greater or lesser measure
- absolute security is unattainable → how much security is enough? (without activating security dilemma)
- allocation of scarce resources among competing ends

D. From which threats?

- threats to acquired values can arise from any sources
- security traditionally equated with military threats → gradual „widening“ of security (will be covered by Lecture 2)
 - Military
 - Political
 - Societal
 - Economical
 - Environmental

E. By what means?

- traditionally equated with the accumulation of military power
- today - many different policies may be plausibly adopted in the pursuit of security
 - different elements of power (**D**iplomatic, **I**nformation, **M**ilitary, **E**conomic)
- Security Strategy of the Czech Republic (2015) – the means differ according to the interests (vital x strategic x other)

F. At what cost?

- the pursuit of security always involves costs (security policy compete with other values / policies)
- the economic law of diminishing returns - at a certain point, the gain in security no longer compensates for the added costs of attaining it
- states / citizens tend to experience efforts for security as a burden → inclined to minimise these efforts

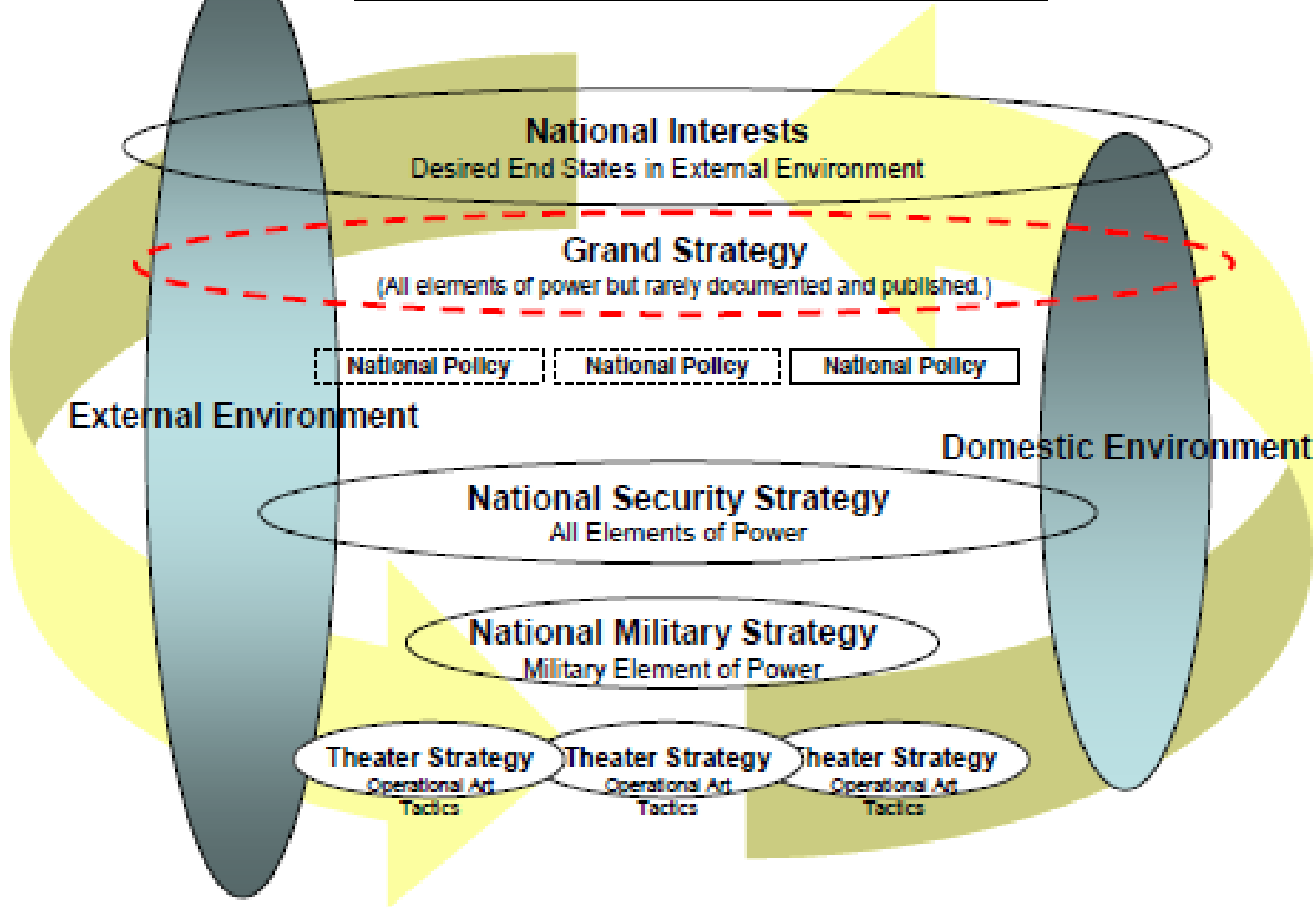
G. In what time period?

- most rational policies may differ greatly from short-term efforts to attain security
- security policy needs to adapt to changes in strategic environment, alliances, political priorities, resources etc.
- grand strategy - security policy - security strategy

Strategic environment and strategy

- **strategic (security) environment** - „internal and external context, conditions, relationships, trends, issues, threats, opportunities, interactions, and effects that influence the success of the state in relation to the physical world, other states and actors, chance, and the possible futures “
- strategist seeks to protect and advance the interests of the state within the SE through specific effects
- **strategy** = ends + ways + means
- strategy seeks to cause specific effects in the environment by employment of specific instruments of power (DIME)

Comprehensiveness of Strategy



Security policy

– (national) security policy

- a general description that sets priorities and goals for security provision
- how a state aims to provide for its own security and that of its population
- a national understanding of the threats and risks of the security environment, and the values and principles that will guide the state in providing security

– (national) security strategy

- how the goals set in a national security policy can be achieved
- a practical document (or set of documents) that details the necessary instruments to implement a national security policy

Elements of national security policy

- i. Vision and goals
- ii. Values and principles
- iii. Strategic environment (current and future threats, risks, challenges and opportunities)
- iv. National interests and strategic objectives
- v. International obligations

Summary

- different approaches towards security (realism x liberalism)
- security as a neglected concept
- the need for specification of security (actors, values, threats, amount...)
- difference between (national) security policy and security strategy
- main elements of national security policy