

## THEORIES OF REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE STRATEGIC POSITION OF CENTRAL ASIA: UZBEKISTAN'S CONTRIBUTION

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### Abstract

This article examines the evolution of the concept of regional security and its theoretical classification, with a particular focus on the Copenhagen School and alternative paradigms in international relations. Special emphasis is placed on the concepts of securitization, regional security complexes, and the influence of constructivist and postcolonial approaches in analyzing regional threats.

The paper further explores the role of Central Asia in the contemporary architecture of regional security through the lens of Uzbekistan's position as an active and autonomous actor in international affairs. Based on the analysis of ongoing developments, the study highlights Uzbekistan's consistent efforts to promote regional cooperation, peaceful conflict resolution, and institutional collaboration, thereby contributing to the emergence of a favorable regional order amidst multifaceted global security challenges.

**Keywords:** Regional security, regional security complex theory, Copenhagen School, securitization, constructivism, postcolonial analysis, international relations, Central Asia, Uzbekistan.

### Introduction

The concept of regional security represents a complex and multidimensional phenomenon at the intersection of security studies and regional processes. Its content is subject to continuous transformation, driven by dynamic local and global contexts, which complicates the task of formulating a universally accepted definition.

Prior to the end of the Cold War, security studies were largely reductionist, focusing predominantly on the state as the principal unit of analysis and privileging the military dimension. However, with the disintegration of the bipolar system, regional aspects of security acquired greater prominence, leading to a broader understanding of security that encompasses both traditional and non-traditional challenges.

### Main part

The notion of "security" in international relations has evolved from a narrow, state-centric and military-focused framework to a broader, multi-dimensional construct. In the reductionist phase, the state was the principal referent object, and military threats were prioritized. The post-Cold War period introduced an expansionist phase, integrating economic, political, social, and environmental dimensions into security analysis.

In parallel, the conceptualization of "region" underwent a transformation. Contemporary theory views regions not merely as geographic spaces but as socially and politically constructed



systems<sup>1</sup> of inter-state interaction, shaped by shared cultural, historical, and economic attributes. This necessitates acknowledging a plurality of definitions—from geographic to ethno-political. The Copenhagen School, represented by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver<sup>2</sup>, identifies five principal sectors of security: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. According to the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), regions operate as autonomous micro-systems with distinct internal dynamics that are relatively insulated from global structures.

A central concept of the Copenhagen School is securitization—the process by which actors construct certain issues as existential threats through speech acts, thereby legitimizing extraordinary measures. Consequently, security is conceptualized as an intersubjective and socially constructed phenomenon.

However, RSCT<sup>3</sup> is not the sole explanatory framework. Other paradigms in international relations offer valuable analytical tools:

Realism underscores the anarchic structure of the international system, state competition, and the primacy of national interests. In regional contexts, it emphasizes power balances, alliances, and strategic rivalry.

Liberalism highlights the importance of international institutions, legal norms, and economic interdependence, emphasizing prospects for cooperation and integration to ensure sustainable regional security.

Constructivism concentrates on the influence of identities<sup>4</sup>, norms, and ideas in shaping state behavior. It facilitates the analysis of how regional actors construct threat perceptions and define relationships as friendly or adversarial.

Postcolonial theory, though less conventional in security studies, provides critical insights into post-Soviet spaces by examining the enduring impact of colonial legacies, imposed borders, institutional models, and contemporary forms of neocolonial influence.

The methodological toolkit for analyzing regional security encompasses both general scientific principles (systematicity, historicism, objectivity) and specialized approaches (interdisciplinarity, analysis of latent conflicts<sup>5</sup>, contextual specificity, and practical applicability). Empirical research employs mixed methods—qualitative (e.g., observation, interviews, case studies) and quantitative (e.g., statistical analysis, factor analysis, and modeling).

Assessment of regional security, especially in the economic domain, is challenged by the difficulty of verifying indicators and identifying threshold values, necessitating the development of more accurate metrics for threats and resilience.

The current international landscape—characterized by instability, transnational threats, and intensified competition among global powers—has reinforced the need for regional security

<sup>1</sup> Security: A New Framework for Analysis - Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, <https://books.google.com/books/about/Security.html?id=j4BGr-Elsp8C>

<sup>2</sup> Book Review Buzan, B. and Wæver (2003) Regions and Powers - University of Bradford, <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/library-resources/journal-of-peace-conflict-and-development/Regions-and-Powers-book-review-final-version-edited.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>The Theory of Regional Security Complexes in the Middle Eastern Dimension, [https://ejournals.eu/pliki\\_artykulu\\_czasopisma/pelny\\_tekst/4d98015f-91bc-4c51-8e24-14a7da18d08b/pobierz](https://ejournals.eu/pliki_artykulu_czasopisma/pelny_tekst/4d98015f-91bc-4c51-8e24-14a7da18d08b/pobierz)

<sup>4</sup> Regionalism and Constructivism: Gains and Promises - IR - International Relations, <https://www.ir-journal.com/issues/theoretical-readings-in-international-relations/regionalism-and-constructivism-gains-and-promises>

<sup>5</sup> Regions and Powers | Beyond the Horizon ISSG, <https://behorizon.org/regions-and-powers/>



strategies<sup>6</sup>. Against this backdrop, Central Asian states increasingly assert themselves as autonomous actors, seeking to build a resilient security architecture grounded in sovereignty, good neighborliness, and multilateral cooperation.

Uzbekistan plays a pivotal role in this process. In recent years, it has emerged as a key proponent and mediator of regional rapprochement. Its departure from foreign policy isolationism, active promotion of regional initiatives, and constructive engagement with neighboring states have enabled Tashkent to assume a leadership position in advancing collective security.

Notable dimensions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy contributing to regional security include:

The resolution of bilateral and multilateral border disputes with neighboring countries;

Initiatives in water-energy diplomacy to avert resource-based conflicts;

Engagement in regional integration frameworks such as the SCO, CSTO (as a partner), and CICA;

Combating transnational threats including terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, and cyber threats;

Modernizing the national security sector and strengthening legal mechanisms for international cooperation.

Uzbekistan also actively promotes a policy of desecuritization—seeking to mitigate inter-state tensions through diplomacy, economic collaboration, and cultural exchange. This approach fosters conditions conducive to developing hybrid models of regional security<sup>7</sup> that emphasize not only military defense but also sustainable development.

Accordingly, Central Asian states—and Uzbekistan in particular—are transitioning from passive recipients of foreign policy to fully-fledged actors in the international system. Their initiatives aim to institutionalize cooperation, build mutual trust, and construct a cohesive regional identity, consistent with the core tenets of constructivist and postcolonial theories.

## Conclusion

Regional security constitutes a vital domain of contemporary international relations scholarship. The transition from a traditional military-centered paradigm to a comprehensive, multi-tiered analysis allows for the inclusion of diverse factors—ranging from environmental and social to political and cultural dimensions.

The Regional Security Complex Theory offers a robust framework for examining regional interactions, emphasizing the role of geographic proximity and socially constructed threats. Simultaneously, the integration of realism, liberalism, constructivism, and postcolonial theory enhances analytical depth and interpretive pluralism.

Future research should aim to refine theoretical foundations, promote interdisciplinary integration, and develop practical tools for evaluating regional<sup>8</sup> resilience in an increasingly volatile global environment.

<sup>6</sup> The Regional Security Complex Theory and Energy Triangle of EU-Turkey-Russia, <https://therestjournal.com/2024/01/31/the-regional-security-complex-theory-and-energy-triangle-of-eu-turkey-russia/>

<sup>7</sup> Approaches to Regional Security Analysis | Request PDF - ResearchGate, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351829998\\_Approaches\\_to\\_Regional\\_Security\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351829998_Approaches_to_Regional_Security_Analysis)

<sup>8</sup> Integrated Threat Management: An Alternative Approach to Regional Security System for ECOWAS - ScholarWorks | Walden University Research, <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=10684&context=dissertations>



In an era of multipolarity and shifting global dynamics, Central Asia is emerging as a strategically significant geopolitical region. The region's states, notably Uzbekistan, are exhibiting heightened agency and a commitment to collective security<sup>9</sup>. The rejection of isolationism, proactive regional diplomacy, and the establishment of multilateral cooperation mechanisms—including through the SCO, CIS, and UN—affirm Central Asia's status as an independent actor in global security affairs.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has consistently positioned itself as a driver of regional trust and integration. Its multi-vector foreign policy, focus on economic interdependence, resolution of border disputes, and advancement of transport and energy connectivity underscore its stabilizing role. Furthermore, Tashkent's emphasis on desecuritizing inter-state issues and reframing conflict narratives through diplomacy reinforces its contribution to regional peacebuilding.

Thus, Uzbekistan is not only pursuing its own security but is also actively contributing to the construction of a sustainable and cooperative regional security architecture. Its approach reflects a shift toward collective security based on equality, mutual respect, and recognition of shared regional identity, offering prospects for institutional consolidation of Central Asia as a sovereign actor in international security.

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<sup>9</sup> The Thesis of Merging The Regions: An Approach to The Concept of The Regional Security Complex, <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/download/11714/7579/13940>



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