

## GLOBALISATION AND THE PERPETUITY OF POVERTY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** Poverty, one of the most pressing and long-standing fundamental problems of the contemporary world, claims imbalances both at the base of Maslow’s pyramid – mortality, disease, hunger or malnutrition, absence of rest, sleep or quality life, lack or insecurity of shelter, employment, social exclusion, conditioning of love, sense of belonging, and at the top – failure to fulfil potential, low self-esteem, mistrust, lack of identity, lack of creativity, spontaneity, dignity. Although globalisation has actively contributed to the eradication of absolute poverty, it persists in terms of relative poverty. Poverty is a perennial, persistent problem, even within the European Union. The present article aims to examine through a comprehensive qualitative analysis the issue of security from the perspective of the phenomenon of poverty, integrating quality of life as a factor of human security and linking the culture of poverty, the concept of soft security with the impact of globalisation on the current security environment and on the state of human rights. The phenomenon of poverty is multifaceted, continuous and very complex, incorporating vulnerabilities, risks and social inequalities, ranging from lack of income to provide food, adequate housing for individual needs, decent or good living conditions, to limited access to basic services or needs to fulfil potential. Fulfilling one’s full potential is in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and includes one’s own aspirations, creative actions, focus on the inner self, quality education, expanding possibilities and horizons for action. There is no emphasis on the needs at the bottom of the pyramid, as these are an implicit necessity, and poverty can be defined not only in terms of living on the edge of subsistence, but also in terms of the precariousness of daily life, of a limited, inadequate life, at odds with universal principles, values and ideals.

**Keywords:** soft security, absolute poverty, relative poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion, globalisation, perpetuity of poverty, quality of life

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**Rezumat:** Sărăcia, una dintre cele mai apăsătoare și vechi probleme fundamentale ale lumii contemporane deopotrivă, reclamă dezechilibre atât la baza piramidei lui Maslow – mortalitate, boală, foamete sau malnutriție, absența odihnei, a unui somn sau a unei vieți de calitate, lipsa ori nesiguranța unui adăpost, a unui loc de muncă, excluziune socială, condiționarea iubirii, a sentimentului de apartenență, cât și la vârful –

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neîndeplinirea potențialului, stimă de sine scăzută, neîncredere, lipsa identității, necultivarea creativității, spontaneității, demnității. Deși globalizarea a contribuit activ la eradicarea sărăciei absolute, aceasta persistă în termenii sărăciei relative. Sărăcia este o problemă perenă, persistentă, chiar și în spațiul Uniunii Europene. Prezentul articol își propune să trateze printr-o analiză calitativă problematica securității din perspectiva fenomenului sărăciei, integrând calitatea vieții ca factor al securității umane și coroborând cultura sărăciei și conceptul de *soft security* cu impactul globalizării asupra mediului de securitate actual și a statutului drepturilor omului. Fenomenul sărăciei este multifățetat, continuu și foarte complex, încorporează vulnerabilități, riscuri și inechități sociale, de la lipsa veniturilor pentru asigurarea hranei, a unei locuințe corespunzătoare nevoilor individuale, a unui trai decent sau în bune condiții, la accesul limitat la servicii de bază ori în funcție de nevoile de împlinire a potențialului. Îndeplinirea maximală a potențialului se află în ierarhia nevoilor lui Maslow și include propriile aspirații, acțiuni creative, implică centrarea pe eul interior, pe o educație de calitate, pe extinderea posibilităților și a orizonturilor de acțiune. Nu se pune accent pe nevoile de la baza piramidei, acestea fiind o necesitate implicită, iar sărăcia poate fi conturată nu numai în sfera traiului la limita subzistenței, ci și din cea a precarității vieții cotidiene, a unui trai limitat, insuficient, în dezacord cu principii, valori, idealuri.

**Cuvinte cheie:** securitatea de tip *soft*, sărăcia absolută, sărăcia relativă, vulnerabilitate, excluziune socială, globalizare, perenitatea sărăciei, calitatea vieții

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## I. Introduction

The current security environment is in a state of flux, characterised on the one hand by major positive trends – the widening process of democratisation, the affirmation of human rights, the expansion of international cooperation relations through integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, and on the other hand, at the opposite pole, it generates risks and threats, originating from failed states and asymmetric actors.

In today's world, security and progress are interdependent, membership in NATO and the European Union (EU) implies the assumption of responsibilities that have at their core the maintenance of integrity, sovereignty and independence of the European state, respectively the placing of the state on an upward axis in terms of the educational system, the development of human, scientific and technological potential, the development of a competitive economic market. Whereas before the aim was the mutual annihilation of political and military blocs, today there is a clear concern for a global security architecture, although conflicts persist.

In the way the main actors of the system acted during the Cold War, the conflict was predominantly characterised by the vision of the realist school. The military strength of the two sides and the bipolarity within the system made it relatively stable. However, the main concern was centred on the arms race. Since then 1990, the international security system has undergone profound changes that have shaped the way international relations are now viewed and how events on the current political scene are perceived. The new realities and challenges governing security studies in the post-Cold War era have brought to the fore the need to engage in a series of reforms to the concept of security. According to Germann, these inherent needs oscillate on the one hand between adjustments to traditional concepts and force structures and “different security requirements, and on the other between comprehensive political reorientation and transformation, including the establishment of an entirely new national and regional security architecture”<sup>1</sup>.

After the end of the Cold War, the reconsideration of the role of the state has meant a rethinking of the issue of security, raising the question “Who/what is actually threatened?”<sup>2</sup>. Is the discourse about the security of states and their national interest, as the realist school describes the concept, sufficient? Intergovernmental organisations have a great influence on the system (e.g. the UN), to which one must add the analysis of the impact of non-governmental organisations and, last but not least, one must consider the primary element in this context: the individual. It is precisely this shift from the state and the national interest to the individual, focusing on their safety and needs, that has been the important change. Thus, within security studies there has been a debate on neo-realist conceptualisation. Is it broad enough to cover the wide range of threats to human survival<sup>3</sup>? The present article will seek to address these issues over the course of the analysis by focusing on the role of globalisation in addressing global poverty in the post-Cold War contemporary security environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Germann, “Responding to Post Cold War Security Challenges: Conceptualising Security Sector Reform”, Working Paper, no. 94, *Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*, 2002, 5, <https://ciao-test.cdrs.columbia.edu/record/11774>.

<sup>2</sup> Radu-Sebastian Ungureanu, „Extinderea conceptului de „securitate””, in *Manual de Relații Internaționale*, ed. Andrei Miroiu and Radu-Sebastian (București: Polirom, 2006), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Rens van Rens van Munster, “Logics of Security: The Copenhagen School, Risk Management and the War on Terror”, *Political Science Publications No. 10*, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Southern Denmark. (2005), 3, [https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/files/153456109/PolSkr\\_Rens10\\_2005.pdf](https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/files/153456109/PolSkr_Rens10_2005.pdf).

## II. Expanding the Concept of Security

### II.1. Classification of Security Types

Dannreuther observes that “the concept of international security, as opposed to the more traditional concept of national security, is a product of the Cold War”<sup>4</sup>. While until 1990, a classification of security as national and international was sufficient in international relations, with the fall of communism we have seen a reconceptualisation of the concept. As the last decades have been characterised by events such as international terrorism, human rights violations, ethnic and religious conflicts, famine or environmental problems, security studies specialists have thought that a broader classification of security types was necessary. This has led to the emergence of increasingly common pairs of concepts such as traditional security (used until the end of the Cold War) vs. human security (used mainly after the end of the Cold War), individual vs. collective security, regional vs. continental security, and global security.

The most comprehensive classification was established under the framework of *Hard Security* vs *Soft Security*. With this, a shift was made from threats (dominant at the beginning) to risks and vulnerabilities. In this context, Sarcinschi explains that UN experts opt for a definition of security that includes “two categories of risks”, dangers and threats to it: “*hard* (Cold War era) that includes international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, intra- and inter-state conflicts, etc.; and *soft* (in recent decades), covering extreme poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, contagious diseases, environmental degradation, religious extremism, human rights violations, etc.”<sup>5</sup>.

### II.2. The Copenhagen School: Promoter of Soft Security

Barry Buzan states that “when we look for a proper conceptual bibliography on security, we find that there is no coherent school of thought”<sup>6</sup>. This was also the main reason for the establishment of the Copenhagen School

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<sup>4</sup> Roland Dannreuther, *International Security. The Contemporary Agenda* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Alexandra Sarcinschi, *Elemente noi în studiul securității naționale și internaționale* (București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare, 2005), 15, [https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf\\_studii/elemente\\_noi\\_in\\_studiul\\_securitatii\\_nationale.pdf](https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_studii/elemente_noi_in_studiul_securitatii_nationale.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Barry Buzan, *Popoarele, statele și teama. O agendă pentru studii de securitate internațională în epoca de după Războiul Rece* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2000), 15.

in 1991. The ideas promoted were a mix of traditional and constructivist approaches, and it was considered that a simple military approach to security studies was not sufficient for the era in which we live. Bringing the two strands face to face has created a “wide” vs “narrow” debate in security studies, with dissatisfaction at the narrowing imposed by the nuclear and military obsession of the Cold War. According to Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, this was spurred, “first, by the increasing importance of the economic and environmental agenda in international relations in the 1970s and 1980s, and then by the growing concern with identity issues and transnational crime in the 1990s”<sup>7</sup>.

The Copenhagen School was formed by a group of scholars working on specific political science agendas within the Copenhagen Institute for Peace Research. The key contributors to the formation of the Copenhagen School were Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, leading specialists in international relations and security studies, and the book written by the three, *Security: A new framework for analysis*, was the culmination of the Copenhagen School’s defining work and of its main lines of research in the early 1990s. The origins of the school can be traced back to the work of Barry Buzan, who predicted the changes to come three decades ago with the first edition of *People, States and Fear*. The essence of the constructivist vision of the Copenhagen School is to move from an objective analysis of threat sets to complex and multiple ways of generating and constructing security threats<sup>8</sup>. This vision was one of the new points made by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde in their security studies, through the following concepts: “securing”, “regional security complexes” (a concept first enunciated by Buzan and later developed by Wæver), and “security sectors”<sup>9</sup>.

Securitisation and desecuritisation have been applied through numerous analyses in security studies, including the analysis of states’ “foreign policy behaviour, the construction of transnational crime, HIV/AIDS as a serious security threat, minority rights and Buzan’s analysis on “the war on terror”. With the concept of securitisation, Wæver introduces the concept of “speech act” to the analysis of security which thus becomes, in one way or another, a particular form of discourse, an *act of discourse*, on whose logic the concept is built. Following the large number of linguistic studies in the 1980s

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<sup>7</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Dannreuther, *International Security. The Contemporary Agenda*, 2007, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis*, 1998.

and 1990s, Wæver problematises the concept of security<sup>10</sup>. Regional security complexes, as members of the school of thought themselves put it, are “subsystems, miniature anarchies, which have their own law and, by analogy with the international system as a whole, have their own structures”<sup>11</sup>. The third concept promoted by the Copenhagen School, that of security sectors, proved to be the most important and frequently used notion. A concept built on the research of Barry Buzan (1991), the *sectors* “are defined as arenas encompassing particular types of security interactions. Including military, political, economic, societal and environmental domains, these sectors encourage different forms of relationships between relevant actors”<sup>12</sup>, their purpose being to differentiate between types of interactions. The scholars view these sectors as consisting of several units, where security means ways of surviving in the face of existential threats, but these differ from sector to sector<sup>13</sup>.

The military sector is the sector that links to the traditionalist approach to security, which shows that the Copenhagen School does not deny the previous theory, but aims mainly to complement it with new elements. Political, economic and societal sectors refer to the intrinsic needs of the individual (e.g. financial security or respect for human rights). The environment sector represents a newer theme which, although it has emerged in the last decades, has developed very rapidly and has become a popular concept and a frequent topic of debate. It can be defined as the arena of activities, policies, and strategies that seek to address poverty while promoting environmentally sustainable practices. It encompasses efforts to alleviate poverty while simultaneously ensuring responsible natural resource management, reducing environmental harm, and mitigating the negative effects of globalisation on marginalised communities. The Copenhagen School contributed decisively to the paradigm shift in security studies by indirectly being a proponent of soft security.

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<sup>10</sup> Ole Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization”, in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 46-48.

<sup>11</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis*, 1998, 10-14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>13</sup> Matt McDonald, “Constructivism”, in *Security Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Paul D. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2008), 68.

### II.3. Human Security as an Instrument of Soft Security

Human security represents a reorientation of security thinking that has been widespread in security studies in recent decades<sup>14</sup>. The emergence of the concept was necessary given the existing context of international relations and the profound systemic changes in the post-Cold War era. Although the concept of human security is narrower than security in general, it is still difficult to define. For example, King and Murray define human security as an individual's hope for a life in which he or she does not experience widespread poverty<sup>15</sup>. It can be seen that the two authors look at the concept from an economic point of view, considering the material needs of the individual to be of great importance. On the other hand, human security represents primarily the ability of “all citizens to live in peace within their own borders, which implies the ability of the state to resolve and prevent conflicts through pacifist and non-violent methods”<sup>16</sup>. Here the emphasis is on the idea of peace achieved through dialogue, cooperation and negotiation.

Perhaps the best known and most widely used definition of the concept, to which its international use is also linked, is associated with the 1994 *Human Development Report* released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It is a global development network set up by the UN, an organisation that advocates “for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build better lives. The programme works with individual countries to find their own solutions to global and national development challenges”<sup>17</sup>. The UNDP also supports member countries to develop local capacity by promoting, to some extent, the idea of regionalisation, also seen at the Copenhagen School. The UNDP's definition of human security in its report is as follows: “Safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease

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<sup>14</sup> Marlies Glasius, “Human Security from Paradigm Shift to Operationalization: Job Description for a Human Security Worker”, *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 1 (2008): 31.

<sup>15</sup> Sabina Alkire, “A Conceptual Framework for Human Security”, CRISE Working Paper 2, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford (2003), 16, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08cf740f0b652dd001694/wp2.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Sadako Ogata, “Statement – Inclusion or Exclusion: Social Development Challenges For Asia and Europe”, Asian Development Bank Seminar, Geneva, April 27, 1998, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/statement-mrs-sadako-ogata-united-nations-high-commissioner-refugees-asian-development>.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Development Programme, “Our mission, our goals, our mandate”, <https://www.undp.org/about-us>.

and repression [and] protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life, whether in homes, in jobs or in communities”<sup>18</sup>. It was introduced in 1994, when the United Nations Development Programme published its annual Human Development Report and set the course for a new security paradigm.

Summarising the above definition, we can conclude that human security is a concept that has the individual at its core, its main objective being to ensure their security and protect their interests and needs. By comparison, human security is linked to human rights, one of its main objectives being to respect human rights worldwide. The great challenge facing the international community today is that the absence of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms threatens the prospects for lasting peace and human security<sup>19</sup>. At the same time as it launched the Report, the UNDP also launched the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were to be achieved by 2015 and essentially called for the eradication of poverty in the world. Achieving human security can be done on the basis of the objectives identified, but it must involve a vision beyond them, through sustained efforts to address all the threats people face<sup>20</sup>. Thus, international organisations are given a very important role, since they are considered essential to achieve stability and security.

The seven broad themes of human security mentioned by the UNDP in its report – economy, food, health, environment, personal life, community and political security – have led to the creation of two broad components of human security, each theme falling under one of them: *freedom from want*: economic, health, food and environmental security; *freedom from fear*: personal security, security from drug and alcohol abuse, property security and political security<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report (1994)* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1994encompletenostats.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Bertrand Ramcharan, “Human Rights and human security”, *Disarmament Forum* 1 (2004): 39, <https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs//strengthening-disarmament-and-security-en-342.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> The Commission on Human Security, “Outline of the Final Report – Human security – now”, April 2003, <https://search.archives.un.org/uploads/r/united-nations-archives/7/1/9/719f7d04a1232cb9532318cca9ab10c7b03017b15ea523aec84a82df31c677d2/S-1092-0054-05-00001.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Saferworld, “Security in South Asia – Human security in Bangladesh” (May 2008), 16-44, [https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloadfile.php?filepath=downloads/pubdocs/Bangladesh\\_HS\\_report.pdf](https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloadfile.php?filepath=downloads/pubdocs/Bangladesh_HS_report.pdf).



The most appropriate summation of this revision of the concept is provided by this Report of the Commission on Human Security, which identifies the following points for its safeguarding: “protection of people in violent conflict, people who migrate, protection and empowerment of people in post-conflict situations, and economic insecurity” – in other words, ensuring that people have the power to choose between opportunities, health, knowledge and identity values<sup>22</sup>. While the national security paradigm stems from the idea that the state is the main actor in international relations; slowly, by the 1960s and 1970s, state security took a back seat, with the main concern being the individual as the central element of society. The concept of state security thus becomes a supplement to human security. The focus on the individual human being and the population to which he or she belongs, “regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, etc., led to the crystallisation of the concept of “global human security””<sup>23</sup>.

Global human security is a constant concern of the UN to preserve peace and stability in the international human community. Human security has always been in the international spotlight, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, as expressed in Article 3 (“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”) or Article 22 (“Everyone has the right, as a member of society, to social security; this shall be directed, through national effort and international co-operation and with due regard to the organization and resources of each country, to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality”)<sup>24</sup>.

In this context, poverty means more than material deprivation or emotional instability. Poverty affects cognitive abilities in the areas of thinking, memory, attention, language skills. Financial insecurity cancels opportunities, lowers aspirations and the need/desire for continuous development. Thus, the individual does not objectively identify their own potential and excludes them from groups or environments that would have stimulated them if he had been in a financial context favourable to their own development. In general, children are most at risk of exclusion and poverty. By superimposing poverty on top of a social framework in which development is rarely implemented and the family

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<sup>22</sup> The Commission on Human Security, “Outline of the Final Report”, April 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Filofteia Repez, “The Role of International Organizations in Global Human Security Insurance”, *Acta Universitatis Danubius* 6, no. 1 (2023): 90.

should be the pillar of support for a child in training, achieving potential becomes unrealistic.

### **III. Poverty – A Global Security Threat**

Within the security culture, poverty is an integral part of soft security and a basic element in ensuring the well-being of individuals, in conjunction with the manifestations of the phenomenon of globalisation.

#### *III.1. Globalisation*

Globalisation is the main phenomenon disrupting the contemporary security environment, leading to the emergence of new risks and threats, although it claims to be born out of the imperative to combat them. It is defined as the process of widening global interconnectedness. Globalisation and security are closely linked. Globalisation implies interdependence between states, liberalisation of global flows of information, services, goods and capital, which entail highly dynamic and complex internal and external risks; given this context, the world has shown that it is not prepared to respond to asymmetric global threats, to overcome instability and armed conflict.

In addition to the positive effects – liberalisation of trade, hybridisation of cultures, expansion of democratic values, increased communication between communities, involving international migration itself, defence of individual identity, increased concern for ecology – globalisation also entails serious negative effects ranging from the multiplication of financial and economic crises, globalisation of organised crime, radicalisation of ethnic and religious fanaticism, to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, economic and financial aggression, illegal trafficking in arms and other unconventional lethal means, environmental disasters or clandestine migration.

#### *III.2. Quality of Life, the Main Factor of Human Security*

Quality of life is the most important aspect of human security; it refers to the relationship between the conditions of life, of human activity, and the needs and aspirations of human beings<sup>25</sup>. Quality of life resulting from social and sociological indicators and indices that measure certain conditions, namely:

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<sup>25</sup> Cătălin Zamfir, „Calitatea vieții”, in *Dicționar de sociologie*, ed. Cătălin Zamfir and Lazăr Vlăsceanu (București: Babel, 1998), 79-80.

- social and sociological indicators and indices of housing – housing stock, housing conditions (e.g. rate of population living in polluted areas, rate of urban population, etc.), development of the housing sector;
- social and sociological indicators and indices of poverty (e.g. subsistence minimum, poverty rate);
- health status indicators (e.g. access to health services);
- indicators of human freedom and development;
- indicators characterising the education system - quality of educational services, enrolment rate<sup>26</sup>.

Each individual belongs to a social environment, so in order to preserve the security of a macro-group, the security of the individual must be guaranteed, as the two elements are interdependent. At the level of national, regional, area, regional or global institutions and organisations, there may be mismatches between the individual and the institution/organisation to which they belong, that can lead to a state of threat, discomfort and, by extension, insecurity.

### *III.3. Poverty Issues*

From an etymological point of view, the term poverty evokes decay and vulnerability. Whether it involves religious (salvation of souls) or ethical (concern for others) concerns, it requires a response organised around the ideas of caring and suffering. Josefien van Stralen begins his paper *Poverty: Methods of Social Intervention*, with the following observation: “Poverty is usually associated with a change in the standard of living from bad to very bad”<sup>27</sup>, which refers to the concept of “culture of poverty”, proposed by anthropologist Oscar Lewis in 1961. It is defined as “a situation in which the poor develop their own system of values and norms of behaviour, which is perpetuated from generation to generation”<sup>28</sup>.

Main characteristics of the culture of poverty are: financial problems, isolation or self-isolation of the poor from the rest of the community (social exclusion), feeling of helplessness, limited time perspective (life lived from day to day), poor socio-cultural integration, poor personal and family relationships (divorce, abandonment, authoritarian methods of education). Poverty means a “life deprived of the chance to live within a certain minimum standard of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Josefien van Stralen, *Sărăcia. Metode de intervenție socială* (București: Alternative, 1996), 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

living”<sup>29</sup>. This standard is relative, differing greatly from country to country. The spectrum of poverty is characterised by low income, low consumption and employment, insufficient or poor quality food, poor health, limited access to education, limited participation in decision-making, limited opportunity to influence one’s own standard of living. The phenomenon of poverty is associated with states such as deprivation, misery, hunger, disease, with the portrait of the poor being framed in specific terms: hungry, sad/ pessimistic, ragged, dirty, sick, beggar, unemployed, wretched/ unlucky, without income, vicious, lazy, desperate, weak. Where the causes of poverty are concerned, a survey indicated that 77% of those interviewed believe that poverty is due to super-personal causes (state, society) and 22.3% say it is due to personal causes<sup>30</sup>.

| <b>Causes of poverty</b> |         | <b>Causes of wealth</b>               |    |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|----|
| Unemployment             | 47 [30] | Thieving, cheating, dirty business    | 81 |
| Laziness                 | 30      | Hard work, perseverance, seriousness  | 56 |
| Economic causes          | 25      | Chance, luck                          | 35 |
| Government               | 21      | Intelligence                          | 22 |
| Low wages                | 20      | Profitable investments, good business | 20 |
| Lack of money            | 15      | Corruption, influence, batteries      | 19 |
| Social causes            | 15      | Courage, initiative                   | 16 |
| Alcohol                  | 12      | Inheritances, donations               | 13 |
| Political causes         | 11      | Higher education, competence          | 11 |
| Person / Individual      | 11      |                                       |    |

\*The table represents the frequency of references to the issue in question.

Table no. 1 Causes of impoverishment and affluence

Source: Adrian Neculau and Gilles Ferréoi, *Aspecte psibosociale ale sărăciei* (București: Polirom, 2000)

A first cause, but of course not the only one, is attributed to the economic structure (unequal distribution of national income, corruption, high state debts, etc.), to which are added the mistakes of the ruling regime (from incompetence to instability, all leading to a lack of reforms needed to boost the economy) that can cause the unemployment rate to rise. Thus, a second cause is the political structure. For example, in the case of former communist countries, the socialist regime left behind an inefficient, weak and irrationally constructed economy centred on large, rigid industrial enterprises with outdated technology. Thus, trying to rebuild the economy in the transition period proved difficult.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Adrian Neculau and Gilles Ferréoi, *Aspecte psibosociale ale sărăciei* (București: Polirom, 2000).

The reform strategy has been based on simplistic methods coupled with the invasion of profit-maximising interest groups. Consequently, the economic downturn had a detrimental effect on the standard of living linked to falling wage incomes as well as job losses. To these causes, we can add military conflicts (wars, revolutions) or non-military ones such as epidemics, high birth rates, natural disasters, etc.

Notably, social benefits are a form of supplementing or substituting individual primary incomes in order to provide all citizens of a country with an acceptable minimum standard of living. The system of social benefits and services is, together with the system of taxes, the main lever with which the state operates in the field of social protection. The main categories of social benefits are:

- Social insurance (retiree pensions, survivors' pensions, invalidity pensions, unemployment benefits);
- Social assistance benefits (child benefits, social assistance for the disabled, free transport, tax exemptions, preferential credits).

Most of the eliminated wage income is replaced by substantially less income in the form of pensions, unemployment benefits, support allowances, social assistance or even, in some cases, no income at all.

In July 2009, the European Statistical Office presented a situation on youth unemployment and the conclusions were stark, 5 million young people in the European Union (EU) were unemployed. Across the members states, the unemployment rate among young people – aged 15 to 24 – was 18.3%, compared with 8.2% for the population as a whole. Mariana Nedelcu, former secretary of state in the Ministry of Labour, said that young people in rural areas and children in Romania were most prone to poverty and affected by unemployment, which was a growing phenomenon. At the opening of the ninth edition of the Central European Initiative's Forum to Support Young People in the Labour Market, Nedelcu remarked that Europe's motto for 2010 was dedicated to poverty<sup>31</sup>. In the context of the economic crisis, 2010 was designated by the EU as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. While the EU is one of the richest regions in the world, still 17% of EU citizens have such limited resources that they cannot afford the basics of life. Poverty is often associated with developing countries, where lack of food

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<sup>31</sup> Mediafax, „Copiii și tinerii de la sate sunt cei mai predispuși la sărăcie”, <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/copiii-si-tinerii-de-la-sate-sunt-cei-mai-predispusi-la-saracie-5016069>.

and clean water can often be a daily challenge, but Europe is also affected by poverty and social exclusion<sup>32</sup>.

Vulnerable groups of young people are represented by:

- poor young people (with little or no income, they are dependent on their families);
- unemployed young people (more numerous among the low-skilled);
- rural youth (working in the household, often in the parents' family, landless; little chance of specialising in new, modern professions);
- young people with low educational attainment (excluded from the labour market due to dropping out of primary or secondary school);
- young married people (face the problem of housing; have low, insufficient income);
- young girls (economically dependent, can easily fall prey to the exploitation)
- young people from social care institutions (at risk of being drawn into the world of delinquency);
- young people with deviant and delinquent behaviour (the category of street youth, drug and alcohol users);
- gifted young people (vulnerable because of the material and social hardships they face in the effort to affirm their exceptional qualities).

Children born into poor families are exposed to conditions of severe poverty, even destitution, which endangers their normal social and biological development. Abandonment, however, is not the product of poverty per se, but of family disintegration, which increases with poverty. Children in critical situations include street children, children without legal identity, neglected or physically abused children, children unwanted by their parents. People with disabilities represent another disadvantaged group. They must be assisted and helped to integrate into their social and family environment. The Roma are also a vulnerable group. In rural areas, the situation of the Roma population is precarious, with a severe education deficit and worrying conditions; there is a massive lack of professional qualifications, a high level of child abandonment, limited Roma participation in legal economic activities, and a lack of legal identity.

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<sup>32</sup> European Commission, “Europe joins forces to fight poverty and social exclusion”, 2010, [https://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/2010againstpoverty/about/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/2010againstpoverty/about/index_en.htm).

A large proportion of employees have experienced unemployment, with a high risk of becoming permanently dependent on social support. What is more, unemployment is less a transition period to another job than a permanent withdrawal from the labour market, a so-called passport to poverty, a metaphor often used in the media and elsewhere. Unemployment benefits are granted rather sporadically, and after nine months they are replaced by a substantially reduced support allowance.

In light of the context analysis, certain types of poverty are identified<sup>33</sup>: relative vs absolute; extreme; severe; subjective vs objective; long-term vs temporary; community; old poverty vs new poverty, to which are added others such as structural, distributional, consensual, social. Most psycho-sociological studies distinguish between absolute and relative poverty. Robert McNamara, in a speech from 1973, when he was president of the World Bank Group, defined absolute poverty as “a condition of life so limited as to prevent realization of the potential of the genes with which one is born; a condition of life so degrading as to insult human dignity”<sup>34</sup>. Cătălin Zamfir, in his book *Dimensions of Poverty* (1994) identifies two poverty thresholds: the *subsistence level* which is more severe and considers only the basic consumption needs of the population; and the *decent level* which covers all the goods and services absolutely necessary for participation in social life<sup>35</sup>.

When considering a typology of poverty, we can identify several types. Absolute poverty is the lack of basic resources needed for subsistence (food, water, clothing, shelter, etc.), while socially defined relative poverty is context and cohort dependent – the person is poor in relation to others<sup>36</sup>. In contrast, relative poverty is based on the idea of the existence of relative needs, variable in relation to natural, social and cultural conditions<sup>37</sup>. Extreme poverty represents a very small fraction of the population and is “such a severe lack of financial resources that the living conditions of the individual are absolutely unacceptable for a civilised society and seriously alters the dignity of the human being, producing rapid and hardly reversible degradation of the capacities for normal

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<sup>33</sup> Anca Tompea, „Sărăcie”, in *Enciclopedia dezvoltării sociale*, ed. Cătălin Zamfir and Simona Stănescu (București: Polirom, 2007), 518-522.

<sup>34</sup> Robert McNamara, “Address to the Board of Governors”, Nairobi, September 24, 1973, 1, 7, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/930801468315304694/pdf/Address-to-the-Board-of-Governors-by-Robert-S-McNamara.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Cătălin Zamfir, *Dimensiuni ale sărăciei* (București: Expert, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Tompea, „Sărăcie”, 2007, 519.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.

social functioning”<sup>38</sup>. Severe poverty is characterised by “such a low level of resources that it provides extremely modest living conditions, full of deprivation and restrictions [and] does not block efforts to escape poverty or recovery”<sup>39</sup>. People finding themselves in this group constitute a relatively small percentage, representing massive and persistent deprivation that over time impairs their capacity for normal social functioning<sup>40</sup>.

Other classifications operate on subjective – objective spectrum. Subjective poverty is determined by assessing subjects and is an indicator of relative deprivation. It refers to individuals’ representations of poverty and well-being. The subjective definition of poverty became popular in the 1970s and is often considered an alternative to traditional methods of defining and measuring poverty<sup>41</sup>. Meanwhile, objective poverty is measured by objective, relative or absolute indicators<sup>42</sup>.

Tompea also analyses the notion of long-term poverty is the state of not meeting an individual’s basic needs over a longer period of time, which can have consequences for their physical and mental state. Temporary poverty affects physical and intellectual capacities and social participation less. Causes of long-term poverty may include the birth of a child (a child implies additional costs for the household), increased household size, the area in which the household is located, changes in family structure (divorce, death), etc., and avoidance may be determined by human capital (level of education in the family), social capital (peer support networks), labour market situation (possible employment/earning opportunities)<sup>43</sup>. These forms can be exacerbated in the context of community poverty characterised by the lack of a public service or infrastructure in the community<sup>44</sup>.

According to Dean, Cimadamore, and Siqueira, we can also refer to the existence of *new poverty* caused by long-term unemployment and inequality in society<sup>45</sup>. In this sense, structural poverty is one type that helps us explain why

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 519.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 522.

<sup>45</sup> Hartley Dean, Alberto Cimadamore, and Jorge Siqueira, “Introduction”, in *The Poverty of the State. Reconsidering the Role of the State in the Struggle against Global Poverty*, ed. Alberto Cimadamore, Hartley Dean, and Jorge Siqueira (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales – CLACSO, 2005), 29, <http://www.crop.org/viewfile.aspx?id=344>.



poverty exists. In 1978, Holman shows that the existence of poverty is closely linked to the structure of society. He identifies three functions performed by poverty in which it sustains existing differences in society<sup>46</sup>. The first function is that of legitimising the existing social structure. Thus, if the poor exist and are responsible for their situation it means that their position is deserved, which implies that those who make up the upper strata of society are also responsible for their situation and deserve their social position. The second function performed by poverty is to reduce the desire for social change. A third function that the existence of poverty fulfils is that the existence of a group of poor people provides labour for *dirty work*. Thus, the poor are necessary to society because they accept dirty, dishonourable, unhealthy jobs and very low wages<sup>47</sup>. Society develops a series of mechanisms through which poverty is perpetuated, the author using the example of three major social institutions involved in the perpetuation of poverty. These three institutions are: education, the media and social services<sup>48</sup>.

An interesting development concerns consensual poverty which refers to the common perception of poverty, what the public thinks. In 1987, in his attempt to systematise analyses of living standards, David Piachaud identified three types of approaches to poverty: consensual, standard budgets and behavioural (analysis of behaviours and lifestyles in relation to income)<sup>49</sup>.

Noting the relativity of poverty both in space (from one society to another) and in time (the same society in different historical periods of its evolution), Townsend opts for the social definition of poverty: “Individuals, families and groups in a population, may be categorised as being in poverty when they lack the resources necessary to obtain the kinds of diet, to participate in activities and to have the living conditions and facilities that are customary or at least widespread or encouraged in the societies to which they belong”<sup>50</sup>. According to Ghebrea, definitions on poverty are multidimensional - not only economic, but also social, political, psychological, cultural, moral, even

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<sup>46</sup> Tompea, „Sărăcie”, 2007, 520.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> David Piachaud, “Attitudes to Pensions”, *Journal of Social Policy* 3, no. 2 (1974): 137-146.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom. A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living* (London: Allen Lane, 1979), 31.

aesthetic<sup>51</sup>. As we have shown, poverty is associated with concepts such as deprivation, social exclusion or social reproduction – which refers to both the economic and cultural capital of a family. Thus, a child born into a poor family will be deprived not only materially but also educationally, and will have little chance of competing with children born into families with material and educational resources. School thus becomes the main instrument for reproducing deprivation from one generation to the next<sup>52</sup>.

The concept of deprivation has two meanings in sociology<sup>53</sup>:

- Absolute deprivation (the state in which we feel we do not possess what we need);
- Relative deprivation (the perception that we do not have enough relations to others whom we believe have no reason to be superior to us)<sup>54</sup>.

In Ghebre's view, poverty manifested as absolute deprivation predisposes to social indifference and apathy, while relative deprivation is characterised by high rates of social violence<sup>55</sup>. As early as 1979, Townsend defined poverty as the absence or inadequacy of diets, facilities, standards, services and activities that are common or usual in society<sup>56</sup>. In relation to the states' development, poverty will be further influenced by a country's degree of wealth or poverty, relative to geographical location and other factors.

#### *III.4. Anti-Poverty Strategies*

In order to combat poverty caused by underdevelopment, the UN initiated the Development Decades: the first, 1961 – 1970, provided for a minimum annual economic growth of 5% for developing countries, and the second, 1971 - 1980, a minimum annual GDP growth of 6%, and since 1990, with the advent of the Human Development Report, several reports have been devoted annually to preventing and combating the same phenomenon. Among the most important strategies to combat the effects of poverty are the development of programmes such as “Second Chance Education” (on

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<sup>51</sup> Georgeta Ghebre, „Perspective sociologice asupra sărăciei”, in *Sărăcie și asistență socială în spațiul românesc (sec XVIII-XX)*, ed. Ligia Livada-Cadeschi (București: Colegiul Noua Europă, 2002), 95.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>54</sup> See also: Bogdan Voicu, „Abordări subiective și consensuale ale sărăciei. Despre deprivarea relativă”, *Calitatea vieții* 17, no. 3-4 (2006): 233-251.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.; Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom*, 1979.

absorbing the education deficit), the promotion of inclusive education for people with disabilities (in 2000 there was an increase in the involvement of NGOs in solving the problems of people with disabilities). In Romania, Law no. 76 / 2002 on the unemployment insurance system and employment stimulation was adopted to address this issue, meanwhile the Guaranteed Minimum Income Law indirectly reduces severe child poverty and the Social Shelter Programme initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, prevents risks related to the effects of natural disasters (transit housing)<sup>57</sup>.

The education system is an important instrument of anti-poverty policy, as it has the role of interrupting the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Education is a key element in preventing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. The main school risk groups are:

- families facing extreme poverty, deprived of the most basic living conditions, including housing;
- remote rural areas with poor or ineffective access to quality education;
- families in poor areas characterised by social disorganisation;
- populations that developed in a violent environment, victims of abuse or human trafficking;
- children with disabilities or children with parents with disabilities;
- minority groups (i.e.: Roma population) affected by severe poverty results in school non-attendance<sup>58</sup>.

Cultural anxieties related to immigration further complicate the global landscape, while economic inequality continues to widen, stoking anger and unrest. The rise of automation adds another layer of complexity, as job displacement becomes a growing concern. In this evolving landscape, governments face the daunting task of redefining their relationship with citizens, emphasizing the importance of education, tax reform, and innovative social policies to navigate the challenges of a globalized world. Poverty is today a major concern for the whole of humanity, for politicians, for analysts of economic and social life, but also for the masses of individuals fighting against this increasingly exacerbated phenomenon. The impact of globalization on poverty is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, it brings opportunities for economic growth, but on the other

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<sup>57</sup> Guvernul României. „Planul Național din 31 iulie 2002 antisărăcie și promovare a incluziunii sociale”, July 31st, 2002, <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/68331>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

hand, it exacerbates income inequality, which in turn intensifies the plight of marginalized communities living in poverty<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, globalization significantly reshapes labour markets, influencing the availability of jobs, wages, and working conditions. While trade liberalization initiatives have the potential to contribute to poverty reduction, their outcomes vary and necessitate careful policy design to maximize their positive effects. Given these complexities, global governance institutions play a critical role in shaping the way globalisation influences poverty and must actively strive for inclusivity and sustainable development<sup>60</sup>.

In an immediate pragmatic context, economic recovery is the most important in eliminating poverty. Guaranteeing minimum security for all citizens and universal access to health and education services are public goods necessary for a successful social market economy. One solution to poverty is to fund social programmes that are profitable long-term investments with positive short-term effects. Thus, strategies must be developed to activate the economy by stimulating income-generating economic activities, investing in infrastructure, transforming agriculture into an efficient economic activity, reconsidering the budget structure. In a word, the various components of social policy must be improved<sup>61</sup>. Poverty is felt in society to varying degrees, with children/young people and the elderly being the worst affected. In relation to poverty, the former are exposed to abandonment, vagrancy, sexual harassment, begging, illiteracy, and degradation manifested through vices (drugs, alcohol consumption). Poverty leads to school abandonment, to illiteracy, and from the outset acts as a brake on society's development.

## IV. Conclusions

The phenomenon of poverty acts on the development of society and is associated with isolation and social marginalisation that can trigger further social, economic and political problems. It can be blamed on poor governance, on the lack of experience in managing times of crisis. The relationship between globalisation and poverty is intricate, marked by both promising prospects and

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<sup>59</sup> Manfred Steger and Paul James, *Globalization Matters: Engaging the Global in Unsettled Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ian Bremmer, *Us vs. Them: The Failure of Globalism* (New York: Penguin, 2018).

concerning challenges. While globalisation opens doors to economic growth and opportunities, it simultaneously widens income disparities, particularly affecting impoverished communities. Labour markets are significantly reshaped, impacting job availability, wages, and working conditions. Trade liberalisation initiatives hold potential for poverty reduction, but their outcomes necessitate careful policy design. In this globalised era, addressing poverty requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing economic recovery, equitable access to essential services, and social program investments. Moreover, global governance institutions play a pivotal role in shaping how globalisation influences poverty, emphasising the importance of inclusivity and sustainable development in this dynamic landscape.

The effects of poverty are notable: insecurity, disorganisation, limited prospects. Poverty can lead to violence, exacerbate nationalism and discrimination. Poverty limits human freedoms and deprives people of their dignity. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, extreme poverty and social exclusion violate human dignity. Social exclusion is the process with the most harmful social effects. In the context of our analysis, poverty is a socio-economic phenomenon that always implies a standard of living (material and spiritual) below the minimum necessary for a decent life. It is a constant concern that modern society needs to address as failure to deliver on policies can create distrust in one's own society and lead to poor political outcomes when people cannot exert their rights to their full potential due to their socio-economic standing.

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