

To what extent does security play a role in governing the relations between states?

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Security is an important factor when assessing the arena of international relations, though many scholars agree upon the fact that security is a contested concept. Consensus has been made upon security implying freedom from threats to core values, although there is a major disagreement of whether security should focus on global, international, national, or individual security (Baylis, 2020). **This assignment will argue that security plays an important role in governing the relations between states, because states will seek to maximize their own security by entering in international cooperation.** One of the ultimate goals for states entering in international relations is seeking internal and external security. Though throughout the last few decades the definition of security has been expanded from being concerned solely with national security to now also encompassing political, economic, societal, environmental, and military aspects (Baylis, 2020). These new focuses of security are of growing importance because they present new threats to security in all its arenas. Not all new threats to security can be handled with military action, which is why international cooperation can be necessary to secure states and individuals nationally as well as globally. Firstly, a short presentation of liberalism and the subvariant neoliberalism will be given. Secondly, seven arguments from a liberal perspective supporting the line of argument will be presented. Thirdly, counterarguments with a theoretical background in realism will be introduced and then refuted. Lastly, a conclusion will be presented connecting the arguments of the paper.

This assignment is informed by liberalism and the furtherly developed branch neoliberalism in international relations. Liberalism is based on ideas such as liberty, freedom, equality, and individual unalienable rights, with thinkers like John Locke and Immanuel Kant (Dunne, 2020). Kant's idea of Perpetual Peace and hereof the Kantian triangle have been important in liberal theory. Liberalism in international relations promotes international institutions, international trade, and the spread of democracy, which is exemplified in the Kantian triangle. Liberalists would argue that regarding international relations, world peace and security can be achieved through cooperation and interdependence of states. World peace and security should not only be achieved through military action, but also by protecting and promoting individual rights. (Pirnuta & Secarea, 2012). Liberal thinkers highlight four instruments to achieve world peace through international relations: international law, international organizations, political integration, and democratization (Pirnuta & Secarea, 2012). Liberalism in the last few decades, has been put a stronger focus on human rights and humanitarian intervention (Baylis, 2020). Neoliberal institutionalism also shorted as neoliberalism is associated with scholars like Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane. Neoliberalists acknowledge the

aggression of democratic states and that they will be involved in war and conflict (Meiser, 2018), while maintaining that democratic states will never attack each other internally, due to their common ideological position. This is known as the democratic peace theory (Placek , 2012). According to neoliberalists, the purpose of international organizations is to regulate the nature of anarchy, that still exists in the international sphere (Doyle , 1986).

The first argument to be made is, that security is one of the main reasons for states to enter international cooperation, because cooperation promotes communication as a conflict-solving method instead of military action, and thereby sparing states and individuals from war and military conflict. International security can be achieved through the developing pattern of institutionalized cooperation (Baylis, 2020), thereby using the communicative means to reach mutual understanding and agreement during conflictual periods. After entering into international institutions, states can create and sustain conditions under which they will be more secure and the international system will be more stable (Baylis, 2020). Furthermore, it will be in the interest of a state and its population to avoid military conflicts, as they often cause security issues like agony and poverty. An example of this is the European Union, where the economic and political institutions in Europe has helped with overcoming the traditional hostility between states (Baylis, 2020). This can distinctly be seen in the amount of wars before and after the second world war between European states. Another example of this a NATO, where collective security was the basic concept on which NATO was created. Allies of NATO intervene, when one state is threatened and resecure them from the agressor (Pirnuta & Secarea, 2012).

Secondly, security is maximized when states form economic interdependent ties through trade and trade unions. Trade and commerce become a smoother process and more prosperous due to common procedures and standards instituted by international trade unions like The World Trade Organization. This enables states to advance their common interests in these permanent bodies for international cooperation (Park, 2020). As the commercial peace of the Kantian triangle implies, conflict is less likely to occur due to aligned interests between trading states, when entering in trade organizations and economic interdependency (Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998). In addition to this, states see that war and military conflicts between trading states are more costly than solving conflicts through diplomacy. Not only would states have high costs of war, they also lose profits from reduced or disrupted trade (Meiser, 2018). States with closely formed economic ties, will be incentivised to

maintain peaceful relations, which increases security between the states implicated. A clear example of this is the establishment of Mercosur, the common market of Latin America's southern cone. Mercosur achieved securitization of 3 security clusters: Success of democratic transitions, insertion into the world economy and stabilization of civil military relations (Oelsner, 2009), which suggests that the Mercosur trade organization and the economic ties between participating countries have helped further peace and security.

Thirdly, a stable and peaceful international order established through a liberal governing of relations between states allow a greater focus on newer threats to global security. During the last decades security issues have moved from post-warfare threats to new threats to security, many of which might have been caused by globalization (Baylis, 2020). These are threats like new global terrorism, environmental issues, humanitarian and refugee crises and the violation of human rights. Threats this widespread need the cooperation of more if not all states to be solved through ambitious strategies, which will benefit the security of all states in the future. Environmental issues do not have borders, which makes it a global problem and a collective security issue. The gravity of this issue calls for cooperation within international organizations who can monitor, create legislation, and set goals to be met by all members. Additionally it can incentivise countries to make strategies and meet goals with the knowledge of possible consequences like economic sanctions if not accomplished before deadline. It will be very unlikely that big actors like China and the US will agree to transition into a greener economy due to the high costs, though the only way it will even be possible to get them to coordinate their behavior is through international organizations. The European Union has set goals for a CO₂ emission reduction by 2030 and strive to be CO₂ neutral in 2050, which all members must strive to accomplish, thus the incentive lies in wish to avoid the sanctionary consequences that will occur if goals are not met (2030 climate & energy framework , u.d.).

Fourthly, the security dilemma between states is best solved through international organizations, where trust can be created. The Cold War showed us how inefficiently security is governed when an arms race is occurring (Dunne, 2020). The security dilemma happens, when states take action to increase their own security, which since causes increased insecurity of other states because of their uncertainty about the purpose of their rivals' actions (Dunne, 2020). Security will be increased and stabilized if the supply of weapons of mass destruction are governed through treaties and cooperation in international organizations. The security dilemma can be avoided when governing the use and

supply of weapons of mass destruction within international institutions and cooperating to maximize global security. In addition, international institutions can help foster trust between states, and provide informative connections, which can negate the uncertainty that initiated the security dilemma in the first place (Baylis, 2020). This was clear during the Cold War, where weapons of mass destruction were of great threat toward all kinds of security, both globally, internationally, nationally, and individually. In 1968, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was created, only permitting the 5 countries of the security council to have nuclear weapons, which limited the number of possible arms races and security dilemmas which increased stability and security (Reus-Smit, 2020).

Fifthly, the complexity of the interdependent system decreases the risk of war and strengthens global security. It is in states' best interest not to conflict with each other, because they are intricately connected. Complex interdependence provides states with absolute gains from cooperating within international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and as long as there are mutual gains and interests, this interdependency will establish a more peaceful world order, which increases security (Derek, 2012). As global wealth increases over time through trade and foreign investments, economic interdependency is broadened, which then reduces the risk of military action due to the devastating effects it would have on all actors involved in this interdependency (Derek, 2012) As Montesquieu put it: "The natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace" (Montesquieu, 1823). An example of this could be the resolution of the 1998-2000 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, where economic interdependency and especially trade has offered post-conflict improvements. It was important that both the government and the private sector were involved to ensure private investment to reinvigorate the broken economy to encourage stability, peace, and prosperity for all actors of the conflict (Derek, 2012).

Sixthly, according to rational choice theory, states are rational actors, who seek to maximize their self-interests. States will acknowledge that cooperation is in their best interest contrary to military conflicts, and that better outcomes for their individual nations and the international community can be achieved through international cooperation (Segre, 2014). It is in the interest of the national population to cooperate because states are able to advance their interests globally instead of merely domestically or regionally (Park, 2020). Neoliberalism views international organizations as the means to provide collective goods, which then benefits all states (Park, 2020). Denmark is a relatively small country, though it has had a quite significant role in spreading liberal western values, and additionally

Denmark has been one of the initiators of international peacebuilding and has criticized the bureaucratic institutions' inadequate way of handling post-conflict peacebuilding (Tarp & Bach Hansen, 2013). The Peacebuilding Commission was inspired by a workshop in Copenhagen organized by the Danish government which led to the birth of the Peacebuilding Commission. This took Danish interests into account as it further increased Denmark's influence and provided them with a certain legitimacy in the UN (Tarp & Bach Hansen, 2013). With this increase in legitimacy and acknowledgement even small countries like Denmark can help spread liberal values like peace to ensure national and international security through international institutions.

Lastly, the spread of democracy through international institutions minimizes the risk of war, which increases security of the democratic states implicated. According to the democratic peace theory, identified democracies will have a low probability of engaging in war with each other (Placek, 2012). The first leg on the Kantian triangle asserts the importance of spreading democratization to promote peace, in which international institutions play a vital role by facilitating the spread of values between states (Oneal & Russett, 2001). Identified democracies exercise values such as fairness of elections, checks and balances of power, and transparency. Thus, it can be argued that democratic states have similar interests, which is also the main precondition of the second leg of the Kantian Triangle; Economic interdependence. When states hold similar interests, conflict is less likely to occur (Oneal & Russett, 2001). When one of two states is a low-scoring democracy or an autocracy, disputes between them are double as likely to occur (Oneal & Russett, 2001). The democratic peace theory also suggests that leaders of democratic societies will be held accountable by their population and hereof act diplomatically in their best interest. During the 20th century, no wars between two democracies have occurred. During the first world war, the U.S. allied with the democratic European empires, defeated the fascist and authoritarian empire of Germany (Longley, 2021). In addition, newer wars have been fought by the US and their democratic allies in the middle east against authoritarian Islamist governments to counter international terrorism (Longley, 2021).

From an opposite realist perspective, one can argue that international law is not enforceable, due to the lack of authority in the international system (Reus-Smit, 2020) to legislate, adjudicate and enforce the international laws, and this questions the laws' real existence and legitimacy. International law is weak due to its poor capabilities of prosecution; therefore, states will diverge from international law to pursue their own self-interest, which is increasing national security. According to the realist

perspective, states can only rely on themselves to survive, and self-help is the principle of action (Waltz, 1979), so states will ultimately break international law if its national security is at stake. Although, law is less likely to be broken with international institutions, where international law becomes the regulatory institution that can govern interests in a peaceful and constructive way. Although the enforceability of international law can be argued as weak, an aggressor risks international backlash in form of sanctions, and missing out on benefits of peace such as trade, diplomatic recognition from other states and actors, and foreign aid (Meiser, 2018). During the period of the Cold War, it was unthinkable to prosecute state leaders, who had committed gross violations of human rights, though this changed dramatically after the cold war. International mechanisms for ensuring individual criminal accountability have been expanded e.g., with the establishment of International Criminal Tribunals for the former Rwanda and Yugoslavia and the ICC, such that violators of international law can be held accountable to their violations (Reus-Smit, 2020).

Another contrary argument is that cooperation between states to obtain security is impossible due to the anarchical structure of the international system which leads to distrust between states. Realists argue that states care most about relative gains, and that they may steer clear of agreements that make other states relatively stronger (Meiser, 2018). As Mearsheimer expresses “In the anarchic world of international politics, it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi” (Mearsheimer, 2006). The distrust is too prominent for states to let other states grow stronger than themselves and thus the state will seek to maximize its own power and security at the expense of other states. In situations where states can gain from cheating and escape punishment, they will defect from international cooperation, which is why it will never be possible. However, with an impartial third party, like the UN, to fairly monitor the protection of interests and the behavior hereof, the incentive to defect from agreements decreases significantly (Meiser, 2018). Additionally, states will focus more positively on absolute gains via international organizations and cooperate where prosperity and growth are likely to occur (Meiser, 2018). An example of this is fishing quotas set by the EU, where it is in the best interest of everyone not to exceed quotas and exterminate a race of fish. The EU monitors the quotas, such that one state does not violate them to maximize their individual profit (European Commission, u.d.). Another example is the U.S. ban on allocating exclusive fishing privileges, where fishing quotas followed hereof ensures efficient fishing and economic investments in equipment and technology (Nye, 1998)

A third contrary argument emphasizes that global security is more stable during periods of bipolar structure in the international system. According to realist theory, the anarchic structure of the international system calls for a balance of power best achieved by bipolarity. The doctrine of balance of power suggests that states will prevent one power from becoming the overall hegemon to secure their own survival (Baylis, 2020). The cold war period is described as a period of stability and peace as an effect of bipolarity, and with the collapse of this structure at the end of the Cold War, the multipolar structure brings with it extreme nationalism and ethnic rivalries which leads to insecurity (Baylis, 2020). Though multipolarity does bring a more complex structure to the international system, it can be argued that power can be balanced through international institutions and that multipolarity boosts creativity and efficiency when dealing with new global security threats like global terrorism, cyberwar, and sustainability. Consequently, due to the globalized nature of these, international organizations are vital due to the broad spectrum of qualified actors they provide to efficiently overcome these challenges. With a bipolar structure, qualifications would be less extensive, and thereby less creative in solving new threats. These new threats have no borders, and are particularly difficult to deter, due to their changeability, which demands international cooperation. The UN shows a way of combatting these new threats with cooperation across borders, with ambitions like the 17 Sustainability Development goals and Global counter-terrorism Strategy (United Nations, 2008).

A final argument opposing the main line of argument is that states will breach international agreements or go against cooperative norms to secure their own self-interests, which undermines the legitimacy of international institutions. States are the most powerful actors according to realism, and as self-interested actors (Dunne, 2020), states might have their own objectives in mind, when acting in the international sphere. States see an opportunity of breaking laws or agreements due to consequences' gravity and effect being limited in international organizations. However, states risk severe consequences by disregarding norms of international institutions and in most examples the consequences have been severely devastating to the countries implicated. An example of this can be seen in the unilateral invasion of Iraq in 2003. This move by the U.S. was considered very illegitimate, since it ignored the absence of consent from the UN. This action caused the U.S. to lose some of its diplomatic recognition for some years following the invasion (Meiser, 2018). Another example of this is Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in Ukraine in 2013-14, where Russia breached the UN international law. Consequently, a long list of European countries imposed economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia which heavily contributed to current the Russian economic crisis (Hansen, 2020).

To conclude, this paper has presented arguments backing the line of argument that security plays an important role in international relations, when perceiving it from a liberal theoretical perspective. Counterarguments have been presented and analyzed, where the refutation indicates the importance of international institutions and democratic values, when security is the goal. International institutions provide a communicative means of conflict resolution, which maintains peaceful order during disagreement. This peaceful order makes room to focus on new security threats that have evolved due to globalization. These are issues like environmental issues and terrorism, which thus call for different measures than the realist approach, which was used during the Cold War period. From a liberalist viewpoint the security dilemma is best solved through international cooperation to ensure the building of trust between states, which can be further improved via diplomatic and economic interdependence which decreases the risk of military action taken by states. Security is an important objective for states when entering in international institutions, because they seek to maximize their own national security as rational actors. States recognize that the benefits of having international alliances and partnerships are superior to acting alone, and thus naturally they pursue cooperation to maximize their security benefit. This assignment strongly indicates that security plays an important role in international relations, and therefore states will seek to achieve to highest level of security possible by entering in international institutions.

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