

# International relations essay sample

War



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International Relations (IR) is the field of study which concerns people and cultures throughout the world which the ultimately relationships among the world's governments. These relationships cannot be understood plainly as they are closely connected with other actors. Many theories have been used to explain the wide range of international interactions but one theory that has historically held a central position in the study of IR is realism. Realism (or realist theory) is a school of thought that explains International Relations in terms of power as it focuses on the concepts of power and the balance of power.

Like what it is said by Morgenthau: “ International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aim of international politics, power is always the immediate aim.” (Viotti, Kauppi, 1999) It is the image of international relations that is based on four assumptions: 1. The first assumption of realism is that states are the principal or most important actors in International Relations. (Viotti, Kauppi, 1999) As states represents the most important units of analysis, especially the Great Powers (United States, China, Russia, etc...) in IR. Non – State actors are often of lesser importance than state actors who are the dominant actors. 2. The second assumption of realism is that the state is that its primary concern is its national survival. States act to acquire more power to defend and to advance their own national or state objectives. 3. The third and final assumption of realism is that realist assumes that within the anarchical internal system, there is no world government to ensure the survival of individual states and hence individual states eventually must rely on themselves – self help. All these are not new in human history. Intellectual Precursors have written

about the cause of war and peace. Like Thucydides, who wrote about the “The Peloponnesian war” between the Athens and the Sparta in the fifth century B. C said “... .. this is in order that there should be no doubt in anyone’s mind about what led to this great war falling upon the Hellenes. But the real reason for the war is, in my opinion, most likely to be disguised by such argument.

What makes war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.” (Viotti, Kauppi, 1999) Others like Machiavelli who wrote of power, balance of power, formation of alliances and counter alliances and the different causes of conflict between states. His focus was on the national security of the state. Clausewitz writing took place during the interwar period (1919 -1938); he identified the uncertainty that attends decision-making in battlefield conditions Though there may be many theories and many precursors who have written on realism and the causes of war or conflict, no one theory can be absolutely correct. Each and every theory does have their own strengths and weaknesses and so does the realist theory. It does have much to do with the degree of genuineness of its assumptions. With regard to the first assumption of that states are the principals or the most important actors in IR may not be fully true though.

As over the years, though states are still viewed as the main actors in IR but non-state actors have progress and increase influence in IR. For example; international organizations like the United Nations, the European Union (EU; founded in 1952) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN; which was founded in 1967 in Bangkok). Concerning the second assumption that its primary concern is national survival, this is evident as states are continually

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wanting to maximize their national power so as to ensure that their nation's survival. Looking at the example of North Korea; where it maximize its power by restarting its nuclear program to counter what it regard as threats from America to it survival The third assumption of realism is known as self - help. The world is portrayed as an international anarchy - which means there is no hierarchically superior, coercive power that can resolve disputes, enforce law, or order the system.

Basically there is no world government where central authority is availed. Hence, it means that when one State is to increase its sense of security which is to increase military spending will cause another state to feel threatened and also then would also increase its military spending. But because of this, security dilemma will occur and therefore leading to an even greater insecurity for the states of the world. Lastly, one major strength of realism is that it gives explanations of the way why states behave in this manner in regard to security dilemma. For example; the territorial dispute over the Diao Yu between China and Japan and also the pressure or the stiffness between the United States and Iran over the request to become a nuclear power. Therefore, there are both strengths and weakness to the realist theory and similarly to the other theories of international relations. And it is these theories of international relations that will answer the inquiry of questions of why do wars occur, why conflicts do occurs and etc...

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