

# Impact of diplomacy on international security systems



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How can diplomacy contribute to the enhancement of security in the International system? Please carry out an in-depth analysis of at least one case study.

Diplomacy has gone a long way towards the enhancement of security in the international system and its potential to continue to do so is substantial. Diplomacy has served to diffuse many of the situations where countries' diametrically opposed viewpoints have posed a threat to world security. Diplomatic actors have learnt lessons and have been able to refine the diplomatic strategies used to manage international security through their involvement in the resolution of situations where security in the international system has been threatened. Take for example the Cuban Missile Crisis, where diplomatic efforts averted a nuclear catastrophe in the height of the Cold War. More recently, multi-lateral diplomatic efforts have diffused the substantial threat posed by the ambitions of the North Koreans to expand their nuclear capabilities. At the time of writing, diplomatic efforts are fervently attempting to resolve the growing threat of military strikes against Iran. It can be argued therefore, that in the face of globalisation, the security of the world is increasingly linked to reliable systems of communication and trust between nation states; systems which are sustained through diplomacy.

This is not to say that diplomacy is an infallible tool which can be used to enhance security at international level. One only has to look at the failure of diplomatic efforts to avert the war in Iraq, the continued negotiations between Israel and the PLO and those diplomatic efforts which failed to resolve the tension in the Balkans before civil war erupted in order to

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evidence this viewpoint. However, when considered in overall terms diplomacy has made great inroads in the enhancement of security internationally and has the potential to continue to do so. Perhaps it can be argued that diplomacy is not always a reactionary method of averting crisis; it has an all important role in increasing global security in a pre-emptive way as well. Therefore, diplomacy when understood 'in the round' is the lifeblood of any system of trust and communication which is intended to enhance security in the international system, and diplomacy therefore contributes greatly to the enhancement of security in the international system.

To understand diplomacy and how it contributes to the enhancement of security in the international system, it is perhaps wise to ask the following questions: what is the exact definition of diplomacy?; what is the exact definition of security?; and; how exactly does diplomacy enhance security in the international system? These questions will be addressed during the course of this essay. Also, in terms of analysing how exactly diplomacy can enhance security in the international system it is perhaps useful to explain the role of agencies and alliances like to IAEA, NATO, the EU, the United Nations and the Security Council which promote the enhancement of security internationally by relying on diplomatic efforts. These agencies will be looked at, and their roles will be explained during the course of the essay. Most importantly however are the theoretical underpinnings of why and how diplomacy functions, and these will be addressed in the essay. The theories of Realism and Neo-Realism will be examined in the context of diplomacy and security enhancement in an international context as they are useful springboards to help explain the concept of diplomacy and human

interaction at the most basic of levels. A case study will be looked at in the essay and it will be explained in relation to the above mentioned issues. The subject of the case study will be North Korea and the diplomatic efforts that have served to avert what was potentially a nuclear crisis.

As Fierke (2005) observes, diplomacy can be described as negotiation in an international setting that is often conducted by a mediator who acts as a go-between between the actors seeking to reach agreement. Diplomacy requires subtle and sophisticated communication strategies as well as statesmanship and a good understanding of public affairs. Security is the state of being free from injury and immediate danger. Most situations which pose a threat to international security and which call for diplomatic efforts require ad hoc responses at differing levels from those best equipped and best positioned to intervene diplomatically. No country would find it easy to achieve diplomatic objectives alone, and this fact is evidenced by the existence and the successes of international agencies and alliances which promote diplomatic relations and interventions. The agencies often have common objectives and often act together in order to achieve these. The International Atomic Energy Agency exists to scrutinise the security threats that may be posed by countries who wish to advance their nuclear weapons programs. It has a supervisory as well as a diplomatic function. The European Union, first established to promote economic stability in Western European Countries, has expanded to serve an increasingly diplomatic function. Alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have more peace-keeping responsibilities and are frequently called upon to preserve peace, so that diplomatic efforts can continue in situations of

political and military instability. The United Nations and the Security Council have perhaps the most significant roles, when compared to the rest of these agencies. These organisations were formed to engender peace and diplomacy in a global context, and they have particular powers for example, the power to impose sanctions on those countries that are considered to be posing a threat to international security. The diplomatic deployment of these agencies can contribute and has contributed to the enhancement of security in the international system.

However, to fully understand the function of diplomacy and how it can enhance security in the international system, it is useful to take a speculative look at how the world might work in the absence of diplomacy. A good place to start in this endeavour is perhaps to examine the theories of Realism and Neo-Realism and how they relate to the ideas of international security and diplomacy. Realism and Neo-Realism are discourses which seek to explain how power in the context of international relations may be seen through the lens of human propensity. They may help one to rationalise diplomacy as they seek to explain human nature and how this idea influences the accrual and preservation of power in the international system. Machiavellian adages such as ‘better feared than loved’ explain the classical realists’ viewpoint that power is, simply, the prize of those who inspire fear in others most effectively <sup>[i]</sup>. Morgenthau, a classical realist suggested that:

i) International relations is propelled by a set of objective, rational laws that reflect unchanging human nature;

ii) Interest is 'defined in terms of power' and therefore international politics must be understood as operating outside the spheres of moral and ethical concerns;

iii) The definition of interest in terms of power is universally true and remains a consistent point of reference which can be used to understand events in international politics;

iv) National interest takes precedence over moral concerns, and therefore states are permitted to act rationally, at all times in order to protect national interests;

v) States try to behave morally. However, immoral actions can be pursued in the national interest;

vi) Political considerations must be understood singularly, as a primary concern, because interest is defined in terms of power.

The theory of Realism therefore regards power as a dynamic that cannot exist independently of human characteristics such as selfishness and competitiveness. Realists would also argue that power must be relinquished if one pursues a course of action which does not involve behaving selfishly, competitively and ruthlessly. Therefore, a realist would argue that diplomacy cannot contribute to the enhancement of security in the international system as the theory of Realism assumes that the pursuit of diplomacy is not only axiomatic to the effective accrual of power, but sees benevolence and diplomacy as both pointless and naive.

Neo-Realism on the other hand has a more sophisticated view of how diplomacy can contribute to the enhancement of security in the international system. It has evolved as a more contemporary, more widely accepted rationale and explains power and international security by focusing more on the role of international states in politics, than on the role of human nature. Neo-Realism explains the distribution of power internationally in terms of anarchy, and the absence of centralised authority structures. In the absence of these central authority structures, international actors are forced to follow a route of self preservation which involves behaving competitively, and involves using diplomatic skills like co-operation if these serve to augment their security relative to other states. Therefore when North Korea announced that it intended to withdraw from the thirty-two year old nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, neo-realist diplomacy is largely what led to their recent announcement that they would cease their nuclear proliferation objectives in exchange for compensation. The North Koreans have also stated that it is important to maintain a good relationship with the United States. However, how has this diplomatic success story enhanced security in the international system?

The answer is that diplomacy enhances security in the international system by identifying and building channels of communication with extremist regimes and other international actors who could pose a potential threat to international security. International security is enhanced by identifying what the best ways to communicate with these actors are. Evidence to support this viewpoint can be seen by again turning to look at the situation in North Korea. North Korea has long been an insular regime, devoted to the rejection

of Western values and traditions. George W Bush has even identified North Korea as being part of the 'axis of evil' described in a now famous speech about the 'war on terror'. However, Western diplomacy and communication with North Korea is not something that came about simply to resolve the 2003 nuclear crisis. Diplomacy has been a long running strategy between North Korea and the West. For example, the diplomatic efforts that helped to diffuse the historical long running tension between North and South Korea have created the diplomatic bedrock which was capitalised upon when the 2003 North Korean nuclear crisis emerged. The multi-lateral discussions that led to the eventual resolution of the crisis involved Japan and South Korea; countries that the West has spent years building diplomatic channels of communication with. It is important therefore to understand that diplomacy is not just about communication strategies or strategies that come into play as a reaction to a crisis; diplomacy is about the forming and preserving of relationships and the building of trust and co-operation between international states. It is only when diplomacy is understood in this context that the writer's argument that diplomacy can contribute to the enhancement of security in the international system gains credibility.

To conclude, it has been argued in this essay that diplomacy can contribute in many ways to the enhancement of security in the international system. Past diplomatic initiatives and past diplomatic successes have been examined and extrapolated in support of this argument. North Korea has been used as a case study to illustrate the writer's argument. The theoretical relationships between diplomacy, power, international security and human nature have been examined in depth by looking at the theories of Realism



and Neo-Realism, and this helped to explain the growing importance of sophisticated diplomatic strategies in enhancing security in the international system. Most importantly this emphasis served to explain and illustrate the many ways in which diplomacy can contribute to the enhancement of security in the international system.

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[i] Aristotle's definition of legal rationality as 'reason free from passion' also conveys the realist's vision of morality and rationality as distinct spheres, which too, is a predicate of Realism.