

# Everything and nothing essay sample

War



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Within the study of International Relations, Security has become an incredibly congested term – changing vastly from its military orientated origins. Throughout this examination of security it is crucial to remember that security studies puts particular emphasis onto contemporary challenges thus our perception of security must evolve as threats, and the world does. Barry Buzan divides modern security into five crucial sectors, these being: political, societal, environmental, economic and military<sup>1</sup>. Military security still exists, and underlies our traditional concept of what security is. Military security is concerned with threats of a military nature both national and non-national. Security has both broadened and deepened into many different sub-categories. Economic security looks to use non military methods – such as sanctions and aid to influence other actors. Environmental security concerning changes in the environment, which could have major implications for human life on earth, and due to its nature requires an international response.

Societal security covers the preservation of societies identities, which predominantly derive from either ethno-national or religious. The idea of human security further deepens the meaning of security to a far more individual, and personal perspective. These are not the sum of all the variations of security, the term security does appear to lose part of its meaning as a consequence of these iterations. These new variations of security do however give us an additional perspective in rationalising issues. The term security adds considerable political weight to a cause. However a word can only be so powerful; traditionally military issues were at the centre of political debate with areas such as the environment on the periphery, by

labelling these security they rise in importance as it implies a threat if not addressed, however with these issues rising others appear to fall in so putting them on a plane, on the same plane different visions of security are destined to collide. To further examine the problems of expanding security beyond its traditional meaning, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of security's traditional meaning.

Originally security was restricted to military dimensions, (this is natural as security studies traces its origins to strategic studies) at its conception in the post war period, military security was the first concern of all nation states, due to the stand off between western and communist forces during the onset of the cold war. The cold war was for the most part characterised by a security dilemma. A security dilemma is where one actor increases their security – this could be in the build up of arms, and during the cold war was synonymous with the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Other actors see this build up in arms not as security but as a threat and thus arm themselves to secure their safety and sovereignty. Naturally the original actor sees this build up as threatening so further arms themselves, this can develop into a ever greater build up of arms on both sides in an upwards spiral.

Neither side is being offensive, both are in fact building up arms to defend themselves, entirely unintentionally these actors are causing the security dilemma. This is the product of the international system, a system of paranoia where all states fight for their survival, a system characterised by the ' Law of the Jungle'3. The International system is this way due to its anarchic character – as there is no overruling international sovereign. There is no police no power to answer to for states beyond themselves, states must

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therefore look after their own interests to survive. As survival is the first concern of states<sup>4</sup>. In guaranteeing this survival military security is incredibly important, so it is possible to see how states grew to accredit much political weight to the term security in its traditional sense. But what of war? Surely military security revolves around this institution, so the importance of war and security are inextricably linked.

War has been a part of the international system long before the Treaty of Westphalia, and the creation of a state centric international system. Prussian war theorist Carl von Clausewitz described war as ‘ the continuation of politics by other means’<sup>5</sup>; by saying this Clausewitz was defining war as legitimate form of political interaction between states. However it is argued that in the modern world, war is no longer a central tool in interstate interaction. In the globalised world both the gains and consequences of war have become fraught with danger. Michael Sheehan gives a perfect example of just how much more of a risky operation war has become – ‘ Of all wars occurring between 1815 and 1910, 80 percent were won by the governments that started them. But 60 percent of wars between 1910 and 1965 were lost by the initiating state’. The risks of war now outweigh the gains in most circumstances. In the contemporary international system peace between states is the status quo, those breaking this peace have to answer to the United Nations (not a global sovereign but in many ways a forum for the concert of states).

States breaking this status quo can find themselves at war with many of the military states of the world, a position Iraq was in following the invasion and annexation of Kuwait in 1991. In the post cold war world, states seek to

cooperate with their neighbours to improve trade, rather than to invade these neighbours and occupy their land<sup>7</sup>. The experience of guerilla warfare fought by both the US in Vietnam and by the USSR in Afghanistan during the cold war has only contributed towards states aversion for declaring war. Finally the invent of nuclear weapons has created the most horrific of consequences to war that through deterrence, these weapons have made one of the most significant advances to the decline of war<sup>8</sup>. If war has declined to such a great extent, then are states are wrong to still put so much weight in traditional military security? Perhaps it is only correct to broaden our understanding of security to incorporate contemporary threats, as war is not the greatest threat to states in the globally connected, cooperative modern world.

To understand why military security is so important at current, perhaps as important now as it was during the Peloponnesian Wars in Classical Greece. Is to look at a concept known as the Balance of Power, which can be dated back to Classical Greece and is one of the oldest concepts in International Relations. Balance of Power is where states consciously work together to form the international system to prevent one state from achieving hegemony over all others. This is achieved by the creation of Alliances to balance against overly strong nations. If one state was to become dominant all other states would suffer as a due consequence. There is much to be said of Balance of Power in the current international system particularly regarding the United State's unchecked hegemony. However to look into why balance of power is still important, no longer as a concious decision by states but as an underlining force in international relations, it is beneficial to examine

Russia's actions in Ukrainian sovereign territory during 2014 to give better insight into balance of power but also the continued importance of military security in an era without inter-state war.

On the 18th of March 2014 Russia annexed the Crimea from the Ukraine, in response to a anti- Ukrainian opinion from the Crimea, which has always had a considerable Russian ethnic majority. This was met with international condemnation especially from NATO. During the Cold War there was a clear bi-polar balance of power between then nations that formed NATO and those who made up the Warsaw Pact. The Cold War is long since over however NATO still remains to balance and curtail Russia, simply by its existence. Russia's is clearly an expansionist state, their ambitions have been clear not just in the Ukraine but also in other former soviet states, and the Arctic.

Russia throughout 2014 had the military power capable of seizing more ground in the Ukraine, in particular the Donetsk region which like the Crimea had a large ethnic Russian majority and felt politically far closer to Moscow than Kiev, despite a substantial geographic difference. However it is due to the existence of NATO, that Russia did not send conventional forces into the Donetsk region, as it was aware that their would be great reprisals, instead Russia was forced to engage in an ambiguous war of state sponsored terrorism, limiting its use of force. Military security is still centrally important to security studies, it is through collective security institutions such as NATO that prevent offensive states and violent non governmental actors(VNGA's) from operating, it is due to the emphasis put on military security that allows us to enjoy peace. In this manner all other functions must come second place

to military security, as without military security any form of government is implausible – It is the first concern of States.

The traditional meaning of security remains important to states but what of this as the foundation, for an expansion of security. As fore mentioned there has been a expansion of security into a plethora of different threats, the first and most closely identifiable to conceptions of state power seen in military security is economic security. Economic security can mean a variety of different things, what is centrally important in differentiating between these meanings is the referent object that we use to examine economic security. There lies 2 main referent objects within economic security – these being: the state, and the individual – additionally others exist such as classes and the global market its self. Depending on your refrence point you can infer completely different outcomes on economic security. Looking for example at China, here is a nation which has the worlds second largest economy, an economy with a strong industrial back bone, however for the average individual citizen, life is far from this figure with a world bank report in 2014 finding 70% of Chinese society living below the international poverty line.

The traditional concept of security could be considered to include state referent economic security, as this is mutually supportive with military security. Economic security is crucial to the preservation of military security as the armed forces and diplomatic relations required to enable military security are expensive both to create and to maintain. The interconnected nature of economic security and military security has been questioned, with 2 clear examples of states appearing not to conform to this rule. Firstly is Japan which stands as the worlds 3rd largest economy and through the <https://assignbuster.com/everything-and-nothing-essay-sample/>

Yoshida Doctrine has managed to import most of its military security from the US<sup>10</sup>. On the other side North Korea stands as a strong geo-political military power in South East Asia, due to its large standing army and possession of nuclear weapons, however is economically insecure, relying on international food aid to sustain its population.

As convincing as these anomalies are, they are inconclusive, as economic security improves a states military potential, and Japan, with its large total population and large steel production capabilities is potentially a major military power within South East Asia, North Korea's comparably low manufacturing capabilities and urban population point to North Korea not having a strong military potential if push came to shove<sup>12</sup>. This pseudo military definition of economic security is still central to security studies, but what of other definitions, taken from different referent points.

On the plane above state economic security stands market economy security. To understand this we must see the overall international global market as our referent object, and its stability to correspond to security. Market economics are by no means an exact science however the market rises and falls periodically, and due to the near infinite variables does so almost completely randomly. In the contemporary globally interconnected world, states economies feed into the global market, in this manner states interests in the stability of the global market is interconnected to their own national economic security. This is particularly the case for the US, which both leads and is most heavily reliant on the international market. Crucially a unstable international market destabilises national markets, these periods of instability or 'crashes' are common in the international market the most

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recent being a full blown global financial crisis in 2008, which left much of Europe and the US in a heavy recession. How could securing global markets have a connection to traditional security? Surely securing an economy is achieved via economic policy and market regulation.

This is very much the case but Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 showcases the link between the international market and military security. In the day following the invasion every single market fell internationally. This led to an international response, with all nations not only looking to curtail Iraq's military power within the region but also to prevent Saddam Hussein from gaining a monopoly over the oil resources of the region, and therefore causing instability in the global market – therefore national markets. Major political actions are a visible power in a market characterised by subtle and invisible forces. Our traditional concept of security does not give us the means to stabilise the international market, however the idea of economic security has now become crucial to other forms of security in allowing academics to understand security, and politicians to make decisions.

Individual economic security fits into another category known as human security, the concept of human security deepens security well beyond its original meaning, as security traditionally has been so connected to state power and survival. In the post cold war era view on the world have been able to change, with world politics no longer dominated by a stand-off between 2 nuclear armed states – It has now become possible to look deeper into the world and consider the human element. Ethically the importance of the individual in international relations has been discounted, indeed enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant identified human's as being

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portrayed as 'means to the end's' of states<sup>14</sup> but how can the state of the individual possibly be considered security? And what effect does the security of the individual have on both state and international security.

The 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) came to the conclusion that the future of war was not to be between states but within them, terrorism and civil wars fuelled not by ideology but from socio-economic imbalance and deprivation<sup>15</sup>. The validity of this prediction has been proved again and again, the Iraqi Insurgency, a thorn in the coalition forces between 2003 to 07 which was able to easily recruit from a recently unemployed public sector and military in the wake of transitional reforms – which saw a huge percentage of civil servants and members of the military lose their source of income<sup>16</sup>. The prior just being one example of national insecurity stemming from a lack of security for the individual, but what does it mean to have human security? Human security is subdivided into 7 key sectors, being: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security<sup>17</sup>. These sectors of security are not exclusive of each other and often overlap.

Additionally examining the sectors of human security we can see that many of the sectors of human security mirror those of states, economic, environmental ect. This is because within states there is a clear trend of interdependence between human security and state security. It is often considered by structural realists that any form of human security must be subordinate to state security – seeing state security as a prerequisite for human security. The 'Arab Spring' of 2012 serves as the backdrop for a

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strong counter-argument. During the Arab Spring societies rose up to topple dictatorial governments centrally in response to disparities in wealth and a lack of political representation<sup>18</sup> – with varying success. Syria is now a failed state, there is no military, economic or societal security<sup>19</sup>, this emerged from a lack of security at the individual level.

Evidently human security is a crucial addition in enabling us to understand how secure different vectors truly are. Indeed by making the individual the referent object of security we can begin to view the foundations of state security. Crucially the relationship between state and human security is contested, and depends greatly on the theoretical perspective you choose, as the purpose of the relationship is entirely different from a state centric view to a human centric outlook<sup>20</sup>. Human security is often criticised as militarising domestic issues, however the supportive link between human and traditional security is clear, human security should therefore be on the agenda for states, even with the most realist view.

Next on the agenda is Environmental security, this broadens security massively as unlike other forms of security it requires international cooperation in order to address the threat. Whatever the referent object taken, be it the individual, the state, or the environment itself – the security of the environment affects and concerns all. In addition to this environmental security, is a further oddity as it's pursuit can be detrimental to other securities, however at the same time if environmental security is not addressed it will mean disaster for both our military and economic security, as described by Myers “ If a nation's environmental foundations are depleted , its economy will steadily decline, its social fabric deteriorate, and its

political structure become destabilized. The outcome is all too likely to be conflict, whether conflict in the form of disorder and insurrection within the nation, or tensions and hostilities with other nations”.

Environmental security much like human security have only begun to make headway into spheres of academic study following the cold war, Barnett attributes its rise due to a vertigo in security policy and studies, combined with a growing environmental consciousness of those in developed countries<sup>22</sup>. A more important reason for the rise of environmental security is due its implicit links with international, and state’s military security. Climate change has the potential to further destabilise the world, by limiting our access to resources and land. This will lead to a greater potential for conflict over these resources. Additionally it breeds further instability, a CNA report examining the threats posed to national security from climate change described climate change as a threat multiplier in some of the world’s most volatile regions<sup>24</sup>. Short of nuclear war, nothing has the destructive potential both internationally and to states as the consequences of environmental insecurity.

Overfishing, and agricultural diseases causing food shortage, affecting individuals. Man-made environmental disasters – such as oil spills can cause great economic damage, destabilising states. Perhaps the greatest threat comes from global warming however, which will lead to polar melt. 44% of the world’s population live in coastal areas<sup>25</sup> and would be forced to move if polar melt was to continue, undoubtedly then environmental security should be a prime concern for all states especially coastal nations. One of the reasons for maintaining military forces is to protect not only a state’s

population but also its territory, Holland would be in line to lose 95% of its land to the sea, should the polar ice melt, if we therefore consider the state as the referent object of inquiry, the threat of climate change is massive.

The final area of new security to be taken into account is societal security. This opens up a new referent object for observation that being societies. A society can be defined as a community of people with a shared identity, this identity can come in many forms, but typically has 5 elements that make the society unique, these are culture, history, religion, language and territory – these together form a cultural identity. Societies can be found within states, such as the Basque, in Spain or across a multitude of states such as the Kurds in the Middle East or the Sami in Lapland. Few but some states can claim to have a unitary society, a national identity that is shared by all one example is Iceland. Due to a lack of native population on the Island, settlers were able to create their own identity. Even in the case of Iceland however the state and society are not the same thing. The State is administrative, formed of fixed territory and a formal membership. Society on the other hand is centrally concerned with identity and the way that communities see themselves.

Both states and societies have different individual definitions of what security is, they are not necessarily intertwined but state security (or insecurity) can impact on society security and vice versa. Buzan defines societal security as “ the sustainability, within conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom’<sup>26</sup>. Centrally to this is the idea of an identity, and it is this idea of an identity that is secured. For there doesn’t need to be any physical

violence to members of a given society to warrant a societal security dilemma, indeed physical violence can destroy societies, there has been many intentional attempts to destroy societies by violence: The Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide, The Yugoslav wars to name a few. Societies can come under threat from many other soft issues also such as migration, the dominance of a majority society, or constraints put upon the society from a state, these are not all, In fact societies can be harmed from threats emanating from all of Buzan's five sectors of security, In effect anything that prevents the reproduction of a society can be considered as threatening to societal security.

The security of societies has a profound impact on state security, and interestingly secure societies can both cause instability within a state and improve on a state's national security. The Scottish in the United Kingdom have a strong identity attached to a territory, they create through this a nation, much like Kurdistan. There has however been a movement to create an independent Scotland, thereby turning Scotland into a autonomous state, in 2014 there was a referendum concerning Scottish independence, the vote for the preservation of the union only won by 5% of the vote.

The potential for harm was therefore huge, and threat in proportion, If Scotland became independent, then the UK would loose sovereignty over a major part of its territory, as well as its population<sup>28</sup>. However maintaining cultural identities is not all negative to state security, identities have the potential for internal group solidarity and loyalty<sup>29</sup>. Societal security management is often 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' in the manner that state security policy is dictated. The protection of identities, comes from the <https://assignbuster.com/everything-and-nothing-essay-sample/>

constant reproduction of culture by the society, additionally campaigning for the political rights of a society must come from within society. Societal security is very much connected to traditional state centric security, indeed originally it was considered to be a part of state security within the discipline<sup>30</sup>. Much like human security, it cannot be solved simply through force, it requires a strong relationship between the society and the state, as to whether devolution should occur is another state issue.

There has been a definitive broadening since the end of the cold war, all of the above sectors save military security gained a far greater level of importance in both academia and policy making. During the cold war no other sector of security could truly go under study as the threat of international war, and the potential of nuclear war was so threatening that security studies hid in the shadow of the cold war. Indeed Buzan argued that the cold war had been an event of such significance that it was “capable of structuring the mainstream security dynamics of interstate society for several decades”<sup>31</sup>. Buzan defined this dominance of security studies on a system wide basis as macro securitisation. Following the cold war there was the aforementioned period of liberalism, whereby security was able to become broadened into other sectors, potentially however the events of 9/11 changed all of this.

The US response to 9/11 was to declare a ‘War on Terror’(WoT), and instantly this changed the field of Security, parallels to the cold war are easily drawn from the very beginning of the WoT, looking at George W Bush’s “You are either with us or against us” speech- forces us to take a side, and could be described as the affirmation of Samuel Huntington’s work *A*

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Clash of Civilisations, just as in the cold war there is a clear bi-polar backdrop to the WoT. Though we may be seeing a regression back into a military centric view of security studies other sectors of security still remain important, through study we see the increased interconnectivity of the sectors, and how all are mutually supporting, regardless of the referent object all forms of security are connected indefinitely with the survival of the state. What security must do is reflect the current system so that real threats match perceived threats, without this characteristic of evolution (one that it shares with the international system) security studies would be useless, so the broadening of security following the end of the cold war could be described as the discipline continuing to remain relevant, and in touch with what is happening in the world.

Though once again military security dominates the discipline, other sectors are by and large still present and could move into a position of pre-eminence at any time, changing in response to world events<sup>32</sup>. It is easy to imagine such a shift in the discipline through the sector of environmental security, as fore mentioned the potential harm of a massive environmental disaster associated with global warming is huge. If evidence was sufficient enough that there was a strong threat of such an environmental catastrophe – we could most definitely see environmental security superseding the importance of military security causing policy makers to reassess security priorities. By describing security as having a meaning of everything and nothing you suppose that the term has lost its meaning, that it has become vague.

The reality is however the opposite, broadening security has given us a greater understanding of what security is. Just as liberalism and realism



could be considered tools to enable us to understand the world; referents and sectors are platforms to view international relations from a different perspective rather than being self contained areas for policy analysis<sup>33</sup>. These different perspectives give us a broader eye on event, which allows us to have a greater understanding of events, their causes, and their consequences. Bringing clarity and allowing policy makers to act more decisively. Rather than coming to mean ‘ Everything and Nothing’ Security studies is now more comprehensive and useful than it has ever been.

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A clash of civilisations

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