

How has the nature
of security changed
since the end of the
cold war



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many academics predicted that the demise of the USSR would usher in a new period of global peaceful progression and an end to conflict.

In order to discuss security we must find a definition; realists would see this as merely military security and survival but for this essay we shall take it to be the absence of threat in general, which could include economic security for example. This essay intends to analyse the changes in security over the past few decades in order to ascertain what the main new security threats are and whether the world has become more or less secure. Using the publications of contemporary writers, this essay will ultimately conclude that there are a variety of 'multiplying schisms' (Klare, 1998) which pose a serious threat to our future security and that we are just as insecure, if not more so, than before and that the nature of security is changing due to the introduction of new threats. The main areas of discussion will be the changing agency of security, the end of bipolarity and some examples of new security themes such as the environment. Throughout the essay the author will attempt to discern the origins of each new security issue, be that the end of the Cold War or the process of globalisation. As a foreword, due to length constraints this essay will attempt to avoid individual security and concentrate on national and international.

The first major change that shall be discussed is the evolving agency of security in the contemporary world. AgencyThe traditional view in the study of security was that conflict took place between states exclusively, that the nation state and its military were the only actors on the world stage; this realist view has been under serious criticism since the end of the Cold War.

To a certain extent this is still true of today; the world is still is still a

<https://assignbuster.com/how-has-the-nature-of-security-changed-since-the-end-of-the-cold-war/>

collection of nation states and debatably states are still the main actors, but in recent years there has been a mass proliferation of agency which has lead to more intrastate conflict and also lead to the change in nature of security from ' state centric' to ' multi-centric'. An explosion in population has brought its own security issue to the fore.

An increase of population has lead to an ' unmanageability of public affairs' which has weakened states. (Rosenau, 1998) This weakening is a new threat in its own right, the more unable a state is to deal with its population then the less secure that population is. However, the main problem with a surge in population is the other security issues it introduces, namely environmental threats which will be discussed later. Other than an increase in population, there is also the surge of agency by sub state and trans state groups such as paramilitary, organized criminals or terrorists. These groups gain popularity when loyalties shift from the state to a clan or an identity. An example of such a conflict is the fight of the Chechens in Russia where the actors are a sub state group and the conflict is of an intrastate nature.

Another example is the fight of the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza, where the actors are part of a trans state group fighting on an intrastate battlefield (Cha, 2000). The origins of this change are in globalisation which increased the ability for trans state organisations to communicate and work in coordination as well as offering a ' skill revolution' (Rosenau, 1998). There are also origins in the end of the Cold War, the large weapons deposits that were sold ultimately ended in the hands of sub state groups. In addition to this, the end of the Cold War put an end to the

oppression of certain minorities who then banded together to form sub state
<https://assignbuster.com/how-has-the-nature-of-security-changed-since-the-end-of-the-cold-war/>

groups in violent opposition to authoritarian regimes such as Yugoslavia. These sub state conflicts affect the security of people and states nearby and can affect even those in distant countries, for example the insecurity suffered by some Muslims in the Western world due to identity tensions. The examples presented add validity to the fact that sub state conflict has become a permanent fixture on the international security agenda and that this changing agency is part of the new security nature which has been fuelled by the breakdown of the Soviet Union's influence and the far reaching implications of globalisation.

Another change in agency is the increase in international organisations and institutions which have a bearing on security, technological and communication advances have made it easier for these to grow. One such organisation is the criminal sort, that will be discussed later but we must also mention ones that promote peace. Since the Cold War, the United Nations has evolved into a much larger and wider encompassing animal, between the years of 1988 and 1994 the number of UN peacekeepers on missions grew from 7, 500 to 78, 000 and the number of contributing countries grew from 26 to just under 80. Berdal, 1999).

As to whether the growth of the UN has made the world a more secure place is debatable, on the one hand it is not much easier to engage in multilateral action against rebel states but we could also criticise the UN of being a puppet of the security council and also say that is ineffective (on the invasion of Iraq for example). International organisations are not always created in the name of peace, large network of terror have also become major security threats since the Cold War; evolving from the domestically motivated <https://assignbuster.com/how-has-the-nature-of-security-changed-since-the-end-of-the-cold-war/>

terrorism seen in Northern Ireland to the internationally infamous Al Qaeda responsible for the 9/11 attacks which have changed the face of domestic and international security over the past decade. Many of these new threats are attributable to technological progression, but as will be looked at next, there is credence in the theory that multipolarity is also a major new threat.

The End of Bipolarity There is no doubt that international security has been changed by the end of bipolarity and we will now analyse in what way it has change the nature of security. In the place of a bipolar system the world could arguably defined as either a unipolar system lead by the hegemony of the United States of America or a multipolar system consisting of the European Union, the U. S.

A and China. Under certain definitions some academics also include India, China and Russia. (Buzan, 1991). For this essay we will take the stance that the world is in fact a multipolar system and assess the effects of this.

Waltz (1979) argues that a multipolar system is inherently more unstable and insecure as when considering a multipolar system, states were more likely to make mistakes when judging the ' relative power or the power and cohesion of coalitions' in the ' shifting and often unstable' multipolar world (Lebow, 1995, p. 27). In addition to this theory, Hobbesian thinking would determine a multipolar world as anarchical competition between states determined on survival. In contrast with this, Lebow argues that this is somewhat disproven by the existence of international institutions which moderate discussion and ' provide mechanisms for resolving disputes' (1995, p. 42).

However these institutions should be seen as vehicles for states to dominate others and essentially breed insecurity. Multipolarity also encourages insecurity as states may be inclined to take advantage of the declining superpowers of the old bipolar system (Levy, 1987). Whether or not this action is initiated by the declining hegemony in self defence or the challenging power is irrelevant as the situation is undoubtedly insecure. The decline of powers and the creation of a multi power system also has the consequence of rising regional conflicts as powers are not strong enough to engage on a global scale and this leads us to another change in the nature of security; regional antagonisms. Regional Conflict The Cold War fostered much tension between regional rivals which did not dissipate after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The countries which relied on the support of the USSR were severely weakened by its demise and this created a sense of world insecurity, for example the long standing rivalry between India and Pakistan was intensified by India's strong ties with the Soviet regime, especially when this support disappeared. Another example would be the halting of arms supply to Syria and North Korea which has forced them to entertain more peaceful strategies (Klare, 1998, pp. 63-65). These examples show that the new nature of security has more regional impacts and consequences for policy.

This new sort of conflict is also exacerbated by global economic integration whereby certain countries are quickly becoming rich and powerful. The creation of such powers is likely to cause tension throughout neighbouring states, for example China's growth may instil the peoples of her

neighbouring states with insecurity. However, it is valid that economic
<https://assignbuster.com/how-has-the-nature-of-security-changed-since-the-end-of-the-cold-war/>

integration can lead to regional cooperation as well, as with the ASEAN countries, however examples of these are somewhat tenuous as economic integration can also lead to countries being dependant on others and not self sufficient and therefore not secure. In the same vein, we will see an increase in conflicts fought over resources as our dependency on certain materials such as oil become more difficult to obtain, showing that the new era of security is fraught with danger as events in one country can have disastrous effects on the economy of another, for example the Libyan and Egyptian revolts of 2011. Regional tension is also compounded by the rise of ethnical and identity conflicts seen in the past years. Although many of these animosities were present before, the existence of a bipolar system leads to many of these being repressed and so we once again have to adapt to them, an example would be Saddam Hussein's actions in northern Iraq (Macmillan, 1996).

Related to this is the new phenomenon of democratisation which is sometimes followed by conflict between voting blocs, for example Yugoslavia. Civil wars between rivalling clans in some African states which have lost dictators are also an example of regional instability in this new era; Somalia and Liberia for example. It is clear that for these reasons and through these examples that regional instability is resurfacing as a security issue in the new world. Transnational Criminal Organisations (TCO's) Unlike other world security issues it is sometimes difficult to judge whether organised crime can be a threat to national or international security, but this essay contends that as we move to a more interdependent and

interpenetrated world, that organised crime can have serious consequences for state security.

Globalisation has made the movement of cargo, information and money simple in comparison to the previous century and this has led to a massive growth in international organised criminals who 'treat national borders as nothing more than minor inconveniences to their criminal enterprises' (Roth, 1992). As well as globalisation, the end of the Cold War could also be seen as a factor in the increase in crime; with large amounts of unused weaponry and soldiers forced out of work, there is a real possibility that the collapse of the USSR had a monumental effect on organised crime and spurred the growth of the Russian mafia. Many of the effects of these organisations are subtle as they are purely economic, and may sometimes even benefit the constituent country financially (Williams, 1998, p. 265).

In William's essay on transnational organisations, criminal threats to security are divided into three levels of analysis; individual, national and international. On an individual level, organised criminal activity is associated with violence. In that sense the higher the crime rate, the less secure we are. In addition to this, the targets of crime such as drugs and sex trafficking are left vulnerable and therefore insecure.

On a national level, these groups disrupt the justice system, create chaos and disorder and can even shut entire political systems down. For example, the Italian mafia have acted against the judiciary and the Russian mafia have been able to sway political outcomes with money and threats. It is also important to note that in countries with a weak leadership TCO's will create a

parallel hierarchy with brutal efficiency to rival it, creating domestic and then international insecurity. Another international threat is the coalitions sometimes created between rouge states and TCO's, this can lead to better equipped criminals and richer rogue states (Williams, 1998, p. 268). It is clear that the growing presence of TCO's after the Cold War is a threat to security on all levels.

Environmental Security Environmental change is possibly the foremost 'new' threat to international security, with the industrial expansion that comes with population growth and economic globalisation the world's population is estimated to hit 8 billion by 2025 (Homer-Dixon, 1998) and this has some heavy consequences. Considering the limits imposed on this essay, we shall not discuss the plethora of disasters or humanitarian effects of climate change but move on to its effects on security. Dixon neatly summarises the two negative paths a country may take after a drastic environmental change such as prolonged drought. Firstly, he states that a country may keep the struggle internal and eventually cave to domestic pressure possibly through the form of rebellion which has obvious effects on regional and national stability (The Philippines is an example of this). The second and most malevolent form of response is that the state is forced into military action to obtain new resources from neighbouring states; this may be true for the future of states such as Brazil or Indonesia.

(Homer-Dixon, 1998). Another threat of declining resources is the threat that larger, more powerful countries will use their military or economic muscle to obtain resources or at least purchase them at a reduced cost which has issues on both economic and national security. Another aspect of this threat <https://assignbuster.com/how-has-the-nature-of-security-changed-since-the-end-of-the-cold-war/>

is the ability for industrialised countries to exert an effect on the environment which then in turn damages another country for example it is estimated that the majority of sulphur dioxide in Japanese territory is created by industry in China or South Korea. A damaging gas such as this being externally created surely creates considerable security tensions.

Conclusion The evolving nature of world security is a very difficult topic to discuss in such a short work, but it is clear through the course of the argument that this is an era of insecurity. We need only look at current affairs to see that the security environment is changing and that new powers are arising. It could be said that the Cold War was defined by a lack of conflict or cooperation, but this essay contends that the post Cold War world consists conflict and cooperation, which is a more perilous situation.

Problems of international terrorism, anarchical state systems, organised crime, identity issues and the environment are a mix of old and new ideas but all contribute to the conclusion that the new nature of security is a worrying prospect.