

Mearsheimer paper

[War](#), [Cold War](#)



Mearsheimer Paper In reading “ The Tragedy of Great Power Politics” by John J. Mearsheimer, he soundly explains the theory of “ Offensive Realism” in International Relations. Mearsheimer describes the theory of Offensive Realism as an anarchic international system that pressures countries to an aggressive state when dealing with international politics. He tries to identify the conditions that create conflict, the reasons of behavior, and the outcome it can produce. All in all, Mearsheimer believes that all great powers seek opportunities to advance power over other states, and ultimately become a hegemon. In identifying the conditions that create conflict, Mearsheimer starts by explaining fear as a condition of conflict, and how it leads to strategic aggression to produce security amongst other great powers. He breaks down the causes for fear into three things. First he recognizes the absence of a central authority to provide checks and balances to all states. Secondly he explains how states will always have some type of offensive military capabilities. Thirdly he explains that states can never be certain about other state’s intentions. These three premises are what drive fear and cause conflict amongst other states. Another condition that causes conflict is “ security dilemma”. This is when a state increases its own security but decreases the security of another. In identity the behavior, Mearsheimer explains the notion of “ Power” and how it is divided into two types. First type is “ latent power”, which is the combination of population and wealth to create military power. The second type is “ military power” which is armed forces with the support of naval and air force. Mearsheimer also states that with the “ dominance of land power” a state should largely invest in formidable armies to achieve power projection against other states. Another

characteristic a state should have is wealth. Wealth is important for a state to obtain because it is the economic basis of military power and that is the most important part in becoming a hegemon. In identifying outcome, Mearsheimer explains how states use strategic planning to control the shift of power within states, and itself. States that are trying to acquire power amongst other states use war, blackmail, bait and bleed, or bloodletting. While on the other hand states that are trying to prevent aggressors from obtaining power use balancing and buck passing. The strategies that states should avoid are bandwagoning because it creates a disproportion in shares, and power shifts to the strongest state's favor. Another is appeasement because of its passive nature, power shifts to the stronger state, and it puts the weaker state in a vulnerable position. Mearsheimer also clarifies the differences between bipolarity and multipolarity. Bipolarity is consistently more stable and generates peace; an example of this would be the Cold War and the presence of nuclear warfare. (Pg. 355) In multipolarity there are two types, unbalanced which is the least stable; it usually has a potential hegemon, and creates fear this was displayed in the Nazi era. (Pg. 355) Balanced multipolarity does not have a hegemon and states fear less of that state, a great example of this is the Interwar Years. (Pg. 354) Mearsheimer defends his theory by displaying foreign policy of the five great powers within one hundred and fifty years. He starts with the strongest three cases first such as Japan in the Meiji Restoration in 1868 until the country's defeat in World War II. Secondly, Germany's coming of power of Bismarck and Adolf Hitler until his defeat in 1945. Thirdly, the Soviet Union from 1917 until its fall in 1991. (Pg. 169) These three great powers searched for opportunities to

grow, and sought regional hegemony. While the United States, and the United Kingdom did not seek regional hegemony in the 19th century they acted as offshore balancers. Overall, Mearsheimer demonstrates how great powers seek regional hegemony to achieve total security amongst other aggressors or great powers. .