

What is security dilemma politics essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There are a number of security dilemmas currently working in Asia. This security conflict is driven by the competitions between pairs of countries different in their capabilities. Here, Pakistan views India as its primary threat, which in turn views China as its principal security concern. China on the other hand regards the United States as a challenger to its dominance in Asia and the United States is trying its best to maintain its hegemony and the consequent status quo. The unequal relationships in Asia have the ability to thwart global arms control and non-proliferation efforts.[1] They also have the deadly potential to fuel a dramatic expansion of ballistic missile and nuclear proliferation throughout the region.[2] Scholars gathered at a Russian think tank known as Institute of World Economy and International Relations (Imemo), which advises Kremlin, talked about the threat of nuclear war in South Asia being greater than anywhere else in the world today.[3]

What is Security?

National security has figured prominently in academic and political discussions of foreign policy and international politics since the end of World War II. Richard Ullman defines threat to national security as “ an action or sequence of events that threatens drastically so as to degrade the quality of life for inhabitants of a state or threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices of a state.” The term ‘ security’ in International Relations has conventionally been defined to mean protection of a state or nation to threats emanating from within as well as outside its boundaries. According to Walter Lippmann, ‘ a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by such victory in such a war’.[4]The

security of a nation rises and falls with its ability to deter such attacks on its sovereignty and territory. The Western nations and the Euro-centric view of International Relations has largely identified this position with the Realist school of thought that focuses mainly on acquiring more power in the anarchic system. Scholars from the Realist school of thought have always argued that states 'are self-interested, power-seeking rational actors, who seek to maximize their security and chances of survival.' In their view even if there is cooperation between states it is only to maximize their own security and not for any idealistic reasons.

The modern nation-state is the highest form of political order we have so far been able to develop and sustain. It evolved into its present form through the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, needed to secure itself from external threats and keep its territory intact. The history is testimony to the fact that the states in the international system are unable to coexist with each other in harmony and have made each other insecure by their mere existence. Their actions in pursuit of their national security have often resulted in frequent wars when combined with that of others. Thus the concept of security as developed in the early years of security studies post Second World War took State as a unit of analysis.

What is Security Dilemma?

The states in the international system through their actions try to enhance their security as much as possible. These interactions are primarily responses to what is known as 'Security Dilemma' in the literature on International Relations. It is also known as the 'Spiral Model.' John Herz was the first to coin the term 'security dilemma' in his 1951 book Political

Realism and Political Idealism. According to him the states 'are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst'.[5]In contrast to other classical realists of the time who focused on human nature as the main difficulty, he based his concept on the anarchic structure of the international system. The security dilemma is the core assumption of Defensive Realism, which believes that due to the anarchic structure of the international system, states focus mainly on their survival through any means making them obsessed with security.[6]In International Relations, Defensive Realism is a variant of Structural Realism with famous international relations scholar Kenneth Waltz propagating this notion. Waltz argues that the security dilemma is escapable because the weaker states will try to balance against their rivals and bandwagon with the stronger state in order to gain security in event on an attack by the enemy state. In contrast to this Offensive Realism, another variant of Structural Realism believes that states want to accumulate more power rather than just secure themselves. It points out that if states are able to gain an advantage or an edge, they will readily do so. John Mearsheimer, the strongest proponent of Offensive Realism argues that no state can be sure of other state's intentions, which can change over a course of time and use its offensive capabilities.[7]He is in agreement with Hans Morgenthau, one of the earliest proponents of Realism in International Politics, that there is not limit of state's desire for power. For Mearsheimer the security dilemma is inescapable, as the anarchic nature of the international system will force states to maximize power and enhance their security because they cannot trust each other. Neorealists and Constructivist schools of thought have also

<https://assignbuster.com/what-is-security-dilemma-politics-essay/>

used security dilemma as a concept. Neoliberal scholars argue that one of the functions of international institutions is to alleviate security dilemma.

[8]Whereas Constructivists assert that alleviating the security dilemma is one of the channels through which reshaping identity can remake anarchy.

[9]

Robert Jervis explains this concept as ‘ the notion that increasing a state’s security causes other states to increase their own security, which in turn decreases the security of the first.’[10]The system thus coerces the states into taking certain losses to cooperate in order to bring stability and relative security. Yet the inherent desire remains to dominate the political arena through cheating, bargaining and collaborating to hinder cooperation. A security dilemma arises out of the anarchic nature of the International System. Each state has to take responsibility for its own security in the system of self-help for its own survival. Without any government at the international level, the states are left to fend for themselves. This leads to states taking every possible step to expand their capabilities in every sphere, be it economy or military, to defend itself when the time comes. The states in order to secure themselves forget about the security apprehension of the neighboring states and compel them to take counter-measures to enhance their security. They begin to ‘ prepare for the worst’, and this common search for security leaves them more insecure than they were before. A case in example talked about in our class on National Security would be India acquiring nuclear capabilities, which put pressure on Pakistan to get nuclear weapons. The process, which started in 1960s, and 70s has left India more insecure now than ever before as Pakistan has refused to

agree with a 'no first-use policy' on nuclear weapons like India. It purportedly has more nuclear warheads than India according to the estimates of many reputed think tanks internationally.

Jervis identifies a number of the factors associated with security dilemma that impede states ability to work cooperatively towards a mutually desired goal of general security. He mentions intentions, capabilities, creation of buffer states, indications of aggressive intents and incorrect perception of weapons acquired for defensive purposes.

The Security Dilemma in Sino-Indian Relations:

The scholars of International Relations agree that there would be a geopolitical shift from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. And it can be forcefully argued that China and India will dominate the events of the region as rising powers in the international system. Considering the past shared by these two countries after coming to their own, the chances of a classic case of great power competition are numerous. It can be better understood by studying the first Sino-Indian border conflict and the series of skirmishes between them in 1962. The war was a result of tensions that arose during the 1959 Tibetan uprising and the subsequent asylum given to the Dalai Lama after the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) took control of the territory. India on its part can also be blamed for adopting a 'Forward Policy' intended to demonstrate its control of the disputed areas. Fifty years have now been passed since the Sino-Indian conflict and the perceptions in both the countries about each other still remain highly suspicious. There has been constant tussle over various issues between these two countries ranging from China's security ties with countries in the South Asian-Indian Ocean

<https://assignbuster.com/what-is-security-dilemma-politics-essay/>

region to India's growing interest in the South China Sea and areas China considers as its sphere of influence. India with its 'Look East' policy has been seeking for deeper engagements with the countries earlier known as Indochina. China on the other hand has long supported Pakistan, India's archrival, with its nuclear program and infrastructure development. These two countries have left no stone unturned to rattle each other over their actions, which are skeptically viewed and enlarged by hostile media on both sides. It has become one of the most significant factors for the deep-rooted suspicion between the two Asian giants.

In this classic "Great Power" rivalry, China is trying hard to win by keeping New Delhi occupied within the South Asian region. China considers itself as a global power while wants to keep India as only a regional power limited to South Asia. India's recent ascent in the international scenario with its billion-plus population and growing economy has raised eyebrows in China. The strategy China has applied is to keep aiding Pakistan in its relations with India, which will keep it occupied in the South Asian region and China can expand in the Indo-Pacific till then. While China has slowly inched towards equidistance between India and Pakistan, it continues to have a pronounced tilt towards Pakistan, which casts an inevitable shadow over the Sino-Indian relationship. China's other major patron-client relationship in the region is with Myanmar. This is less threatening from India's standpoint, since China's interest in the relationship is not India-centric, and India for its part is consciously seeking to upgrade its own ties with Myanmar with some limited success.

The notion of security dilemma throws substantial light on the complex relationship between China and India since the past six decades.

Conclusion:

As the two powers become more economically interlinked war becomes a secondary or a last resort option for them. The decision-makers in both New Delhi and Beijing are conscious of this fact. A key question that remains is whether India and China will remain satisfied with relatively small strategic forces or whether they will seek to develop large, operationally deployed forces.[11]India and China are expected to further spread their “ Spheres of Influence” in the Indo-Pacific region with the US willing to support New Delhi as part of its own forward policy in the region. India has to tackle one of the major problems faced in democratic countries that being more reactive than pro-active hampers the policymaking.[12]The reason behind this is that the political class in India is not much familiar to international relations and foreign policy receives very little emphasis in the course of day-to-day politics. Though Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is not a classic professional politician, and could even be considered more of a statesman, the tendency to look inward has prevented a more active engagement with the outside world.