

Chapter 13: International and global security

- Security is a 'contested concept'.
- The meaning of security has been broadened to include political, economic, societal, environmental, and military aspects.
- Differing arguments exist about the tension between national and international security.
- Different views have also emerged about the significance of 9/11 for the future of international security.
- Debates about security have traditionally focused on the role of the state in international relations.
- Realists and neo-realists emphasize the perennial problem of insecurity.
- The 'security dilemma' is seen by some writers as the essential source of conflict between states.
- Trust is often difficult between states, according to realists and neo-realists, because of the problem of cheating.
- Realists and neo-realists also point out the problem of 'relative gains' whereby states compare their gains with those of other states when making their decisions about security.
- Neo-realists reject the significance of international institutions in helping many to achieve peace and security.
- Contemporary politicians and academics, who write under the label of Liberal Institutionalism see institutions as an important mechanism for achieving international security.
- Liberal Institutionalists accept many of the assumptions of Realism about the continuing importance of military power in international relations, but argue that institutions can provide a framework for cooperation which can help to overcome the dangers of security competition between states.
- Constructivist thinkers base their ideas on two main assumptions: (1) that the fundamental structures of international politics are socially constructed; and (2) that changing the way we think about international relations can help to bring about greater international security.
- Some Constructivist thinkers accept many of the assumptions of neo-realism, but they reject the view that 'structure' consists only of material capabilities. They stress the importance of social structure defined in terms of shared knowledge and practices as well as material capabilities.

- Constructivists argue that material things acquire meaning only through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded.
- The power politics and realpolitik practices emphasized by Realists are seen as derived from shared knowledge which can be self-fulfilling.
- Critical security theorists argue that too much emphasis is given by most approaches to the state.
- Some critical security theorists wish to shift the main referent to the individual and suggest that 'emancipation' is the key to greater domestic and international security.
- Feminist writers argue that gender tends to be left out of the literature on international security, despite the impact of war on women.
- Feminist writers also argue that bringing gender issues back in will result in a reconceptualization of the study of international security.
- Post-modernists try to reconceptualize the debate about global security by looking at new questions which have been ignored by traditional approaches.
- There is a belief among post-modernist writers that the nature of international politics can be changed by altering the way we think and talk about security.
- Supporters of the 'global society school' argue that the end of the twentieth century witnessed an accelerating process of globalization.
- Globalization can be seen in the fields of economic development, communications, and culture. Global social movements are also a response to new risks associated with the environment, poverty, and weapons of mass destruction.
- The 'fracture of statehood' is giving rise to new kinds of conflict within states rather than between states which the state system cannot deal with. This has helped encourage an emerging politics of global responsibility.
- There are disputes about whether globalization will contribute to the weakening of the state or simply to its transformation, and over whether a global society can be created which will usher in a new period of peace and security.