

Original Paper

To What Extent Is the Security Dilemma an Inescapable Feature of International Security?

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Abstract

This essay attempts to explore to what extent the security dilemma is an inescapable feature of international security. The three main schools of thought in international relations theory offer different perspectives on this issue. Realism asserts that the security dilemma is entirely inescapable. Liberalism, on the other hand, acknowledges its inescapability but argues that it can be mitigated through international cooperation mechanisms. Constructivism takes a different approach, suggesting that the constructed “security dilemma” can be fundamentally overcome by changing interactive behaviors. While liberalism and constructivism challenge realism’s conclusion, neither perspective can successfully refute the notion that the security dilemma is an inherent feature of international security. Liberalism is more applicable to economic matters and lacks explanatory power in the realm of international security, while constructivism tends to be overly idealistic and lacks the ability to effectively address real-world problems.

Keywords

security dilemma, security study, realism, liberalism, constructivism

1. Introduction

The “security dilemma” has been an important concept in the field of international security since its introduction by John H. Jerz, which refers to a paradoxical situation where states’ efforts to enhance their security can unintentionally lead to increased insecurity and heightened tensions. In the realm of international relations, the question that to what extent is the security dilemma an inescapable has

garnered significant attention and debate among scholars and policymakers alike. As we navigate an increasingly interconnected and complex world, understanding the dynamics of the security dilemma becomes ever more crucial. It sheds light on the challenges faced by nations as they grapple with the delicate balance between safeguarding their own interests and avoiding actions that inadvertently provoke others.

Most of the answers to this question are based on case studies from an empirical point of view, but due to the complexity of the reality and the non-uniformity of the variables, they do not have sufficient explanatory power to explain the conclusion that the “security dilemma” itself can be avoided. The novelty of the essay therefore lies in the purely theoretical approach to the issue from the perspective of the three classical theoretical paradigms of international relations.

Therefore, to respond to this question and prove the hypothesis that the security dilemma is an inescapable feature of international security, this essay will be divided into the following three progressive steps: the first is to clarify what is the “security dilemma”; the second is to sort out the conclusions of mainstream international relations theory on this issue and its theoretical logic; the third is to analyze further and refute the logic of the arguments against the theory that the security dilemma is inescapable. The arguments that follow will therefore be developed in the order described above.

2. What is the “Security Dilemma”

The “security dilemma” is an important concept in international relations and security first developed by John H. Herz in 1950 in his article *Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma*. This concept and mechanism were further systematized in John H. Herz’s *International Politics in the Atomic Age*. Specifically, it refers to a state of interaction in international society in which each “unit of power” (usually referred to as sovereign states in international relations) coexists on an equal footing, as it finds itself in a state of “anarchy,” which makes it impossible to regulate the behavior of all the “units” effectively and, naturally, to protect any of the parties to the system from attacking each other. Therefore, each “unit” will inevitably choose to strengthen itself out of fear, but this merely “non-malicious” behavior, aimed at improving its security, will also weaken the safety of others through mistrust and force others to strengthen themselves, putting itself in an even more insecure position. Since no party in this “arms race” can gain the so-called maximum power to guarantee the ultimate security, this interaction is destined to lead only to “self-defeating” (Herz, 1970, p. 231). It can therefore be described as a pessimistic, hopeless, “self-fulfilling tragedy.”

It can be seen that the philosophical origins of the “security dilemma” are more in Hobbes’ pessimistic notion of the “state of nature,” which is based on the premise that “human nature is evil”. Therefore, in the context of the “*Bellum omnium contra omnes*”, each individual, out of a desire for security, always tends to gain power over others while ensuring his safety. Within a state, the solution to this problem is introducing a powerful “god,” Leviathan, to maintain order, but the international community still remains in a “state of nature” without this higher dimension of authority. As John H. Herz himself

called it, his notion of the “security dilemma” is similar to the “Hobbesian Dilemma of Fear” proposed by the British scholar of the same period, Herbert Butterfield (Herz, 1970, p. 232). Therefore, this concept is fundamentally closer to realism’s worldview.

Therefore, based on the theoretical origin and mechanism of the “security dilemma”, it can be concluded that the most important core points, lies in the following three aspects, namely, the anarchy of international society, the premise of human nature is evil, and the failure of communication and mutual distrust based on it. These three elements complete the logical transmission loop of the system, i.e., the insecurity brought about by the logical starting point of anarchy influences international actors to choose to believe in the Hobbesian culture rather than the Kantian culture; this premise of human nature leads to distrust among actors and increases the possibility of communication failures; and such failures and further actions based on it will intensifies the insecurity of all parties involved in the anarchy, which may reinforces the state’s conviction of the Hobbesian culture, thus forming a logical closure of the above three key points on the concept of the “security dilemma”.

Since the concept of “security dilemma” was introduced, mainstream international relations theories have attached great importance to it and tried to understand and offer ways to alleviate or even avoid it based on their own theoretical perspectives. Generally speaking, realism believes that the “security dilemma” is an inescapable product of anarchy; liberalism agrees that the anarchy and the “security dilemma” cannot be completely avoided but believes that it can be alleviated to a certain extent; constructivism is more radical on this issue, arguing that the “security dilemma” can be avoided under certain circumstances.

Based on this, the following section will present the perceptions of each specific theory on this issue, one by one, from the perspective of the three main international relations theoretical paradigms.

3. The Arguments of Three Major Schools of International Relations on to What Extent is the Security Dilemma an Inescapable Feature of International Security

As mentioned earlier, the concept of the “security dilemma” is based more on the same philosophical origin as realism, namely Hobbesian pessimistic culture, so the following presentation of the arguments will start with the realism, which has the most “affinity” with it, followed by the liberalism with its slightly different conclusions, and finally, the constructivism, which fundamentally challenges the former conclusions on this issue.

3.1 Realism—The “Security Dilemma” Is Inescapable

Realism is based on the ideas of Hobbes and Machiavelli. The core is that international relations are governed by “inherently evil” human nature and are essentially a logic of power politics.

From such a “negative” premise, the argument for the “security dilemma” is that because anarchy is a natural feature of the international mechanisms, in such a state, the “security dilemma” based on the logic of “survival” is inescapable. As Robert Gilpin puts it, “fundamentally, international politics today is no different from the situation described by Thucydides” (Gilpin, 2012).

Specifically, realism argues that anarchy inevitably leads to a “security dilemma” because it has three characteristics. Firstly, “there is no automatic harmony in anarchy” (Waltz, 1959 p. 160), conflict and confrontation between states are the constant “leitmotif” of international relations, while harmony is only a short rest. Secondly, force is always “the preferred and common instrument in international politics” (Frankel & Waltz, 1980), and since there is no higher authority to regulate order, only the most violent and effective means of resorting to force is sufficient. Finally, self-help is the only and inevitable logic of behaviour in anarchy, as the state has no authority to rely on to provide guarantees. To sum up, “anarchy” from a realist perspective means that the state is always under the assumption of a coming conflict, a preference for the use of force and a logic of “self-help”.

By applying each of these core points to the “security dilemma”, the following mechanism for the occurrence of the dilemma can be derived: the assumption of conflict drives the state to improve its strength at all times; the preference for the means of force leads the state, especially in the area of international security, to choose to increase its military power to guarantee its security and prepare for potential conflicts; the logic of “self-help” prevents states from easily trusting the so-called “signals of goodwill” from others and eventually reaching the stereotypical conclusion that the best means of avoiding threats is to increase their strength. And once states compete to act against each other based on this conclusion, the “security dilemma” is reached.

As to whether it can be mitigated or even avoided, realism argues that as long as the “anarchy” remains unchanged, the iron law of the “security dilemma” will always dictate that states make such choices, just as structural realism argues that the level of international structures decisively influences the behavior of states. Thus, even if such an outcome is unpopular, and every state is aware that such seemingly “rational” behavior is just a rational process rather than a rational outcome (Waltz, 1959, pp. 192-193) joining this “arms race” type of vicious circle could only be the only option in this dilemma.

3.2 Liberalism—The “Security Dilemma” Is Inescapable but Can Be Mitigated to Some Extent

Liberalism can be traced back to the philosophical thought of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. And more precisely, liberalism in international relations comes directly from the ideas of the 18th-century Enlightenment. It is, therefore, more optimistic, full of the “goodness of humanity” and the “light of reason,” than the negative pessimism and power supremacy of realism.

The “security dilemma” has received more attention from the neo-institutional liberalism of liberalism. In line with realism, neo-institutional liberalism basically shares the core assumptions of realism on the “anarchy” of international society. Also, it recognizes, to some extent, that the international mechanisms is characterized by a “cycle of conflict and insecurity”. However, due to differences in theoretical perspectives and research methods, they diverge in their response to the “security dilemma.” It can therefore be argued that neo-institutional liberalism is not a theory that explains the “security dilemma” as it is a theory that explains whether and how the it can be escaped or mitigated within its theoretical framework.

In terms of its fundamental theoretical features, neo-institutional liberalism has the following basic

views that differ from realism. Firstly, about power and security, unlike realism, which regards them as the most fundamental and core national interests and demands of the state, neo-institutional liberalism believes that they are indeed very important, but not so important that they can sacrifice all other interests as an absolute priority. In the current environment of peaceful development, it advocates that the state should pursue more the maximization of national interests than the maximization of power and security, in other words, power and security return to being “one of the important national interests” rather than “the only important national interest”. Secondly, based on the “de-escalation” of international relations in the current era, in which the possibility of large-scale military conflict is reduced, and globalized cooperation is further developed, neo-institutional liberalism considers that the military force is becoming less important in the study of international security. Force is no longer the first option for states, but rather the willingness and possibility to communicate and cooperate is increasing. Thirdly, while acknowledging the existence of “anarchy”, neo-institutional liberalism argues that states can still cooperate with each other based on the trade-off of maximising national interests.

Thus, with specific reference to the “security dilemma”, neo-institutional liberalism brings the rational choice theory from the field of economics to the theory of international relations and views the “security dilemma” from the perspective of “game theory” (Keohane, Chapter 5, 2005). It is even seen as a form of the “prisoner’s dilemma” (Nye, 2009, p. 15). The theory asserts that the role of international institutions in facilitating cooperation is equally applicable to the international security field. Therefore it argues that anarchy does not mean disorder, and thus concludes that the “security dilemma” is inescapable but can be mitigated to a certain extent.

Further, at the heart of this conclusion of neo-institutional liberalism lies the belief that international mechanisms “force” states to choose to cooperate for three reasons. Firstly, in the temporal latitude, international mechanisms can transform state interactions from a one-off game into a recurring game, forcing states to choose cooperation based on a rational trade-off of benefits through the shadow of the future. In this case, betrayal based on immediate interests can damage the state’s reputation, lead to retaliation for the next game in the system, and damage future gains, significantly increasing the cost of betrayal. Secondly, in the domain dimension, the establishment of the international mechanisms has shifted the interaction between states from a single domain to a composite multi-domain game, thus creating issue-linkage between different areas of cooperation, i.e., if a state gains less in one domain, it has the opportunity to be compensated in other domains. Hence, the country’s focus on “relative gains” is reduced and shifted to “absolute gains”. Conversely, based on the same logic, the consequences of a state’s betrayal in one area will also affect other areas, thus forcing them to cooperate by increasing the “cost of betrayal”. Thirdly, in the cost dimension, the international mechanisms provides a framework for cooperation and exchange, thereby reducing transaction costs and offering the possibility of redress in the event of “betrayal”.

In short, neo-institutional liberalism assumes that states are rational and capable of weighing up the

pros and cons based on the maximisation of their interests so that even if the international community is “anarchic”, since security and power are no longer the only demands of states, and peace and cooperation are beneficial to all states, at least states have an incentive to actively seek cooperation in the face of the “security dilemma”; this, coupled with the establishment of an international mechanisms that makes cooperation between states a realistic possibility, leads to the conclusion that the “security dilemma” is inescapable but can be mitigated to some extent.

3.3 Constructivism—The “Security Dilemma” Is Escapable

Constructivism, represented by Alexander Wendt, is a paradigm very different from realism and liberalism in that it introduces a sociological perspective to understanding international relations. In general, constructivism has two basic ideas, namely that both human and international societies are fundamentally constructed by ideas rather than by materials; furthermore, each actor’s choices of interests and modes of interaction, and even identity, are constructed by acts of interaction rather than by natural existence and constancy.

Thus returning to the question of the “security dilemma”, constructivism holds a more radical argument that the “security dilemma” is simply an “intersubjective knowledge” constructed based on interactions between states, i.e. an understanding that states do not trust each other to the extent that they assume the worst about each other’s intentions (Wendt, 1995 p. 74). But that this understanding is only a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Wendt, 1995 p. 74) so that the “security dilemma” can be escaped by successfully changing each other’s “intersubjective knowledge”.

Constructivism, like realism and liberalism, recognises the existence of an “anarchy” in international society, but the difference lies in its view that this “anarchy” is only a “conceptual structure” that can change and is constructed by interactive acts. What really governs actors’ behaviour is the “social structure” in “anarchy”. And among the three elements that make up the “social structure” (shared knowledge, material resources, and practices), the most important is shared knowledge because it determines the definition of a country’s identity towards other countries, which in turn determines the definition of interests and further interactions. This leads to a constructivist logic chain of “act of interaction – “shared knowledge” - definition of identity - definition of interests - further interaction”.

The most important part of this chain of transmission is the “definition of identity”, which is at its heart. Constructivism sees the definition of three identities in international relations - enemy, competitor and partner - and corresponds to three ‘anarchic cultures’, namely Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian. The first Hobbesian culture is a pessimistic culture that views international relations in a purely realistic manner, positioning other actors as natural enemies in an anarchic system, with the “security dilemma” as its corollary. The second Lockean culture refers to positioning others more as competitors, and relations between states are characterised by a mixture of competition and cooperation so that the “security dilemma” is still escapable but can be mitigated. The third Kantian culture views others as partners, sharing identities and values, changing the logic of “self-help” to the logic of “other-help” until it succeeds in building a “multi-dimensional security community”, thus successfully escaping the

“security dilemma”.

In the above logic, the key to avoiding the “security dilemma” lies in the definition of partner identity and the construction of a Kantian culture of anarchy. As Wendt puts it “the actions of states towards their enemies are different from those towards their friends because an enemy is a threat and a friend is not”. (Wendt, 1995, p. 134) Thus, if states act in a “good faith” manner, their opponents tend to reciprocate with good faith policies, which in turn reinforces their expectations of peaceful relations between the two states, so that the positioning of mutual identity and the model of “anarchic culture” based on healthy interaction will slide from the Hobbesian to Kantian, thus successfully changing “intersubjective knowledge”, gradually building a “multi-dimensional security community” and successfully escape the “security dilemma”.

Constructivism also believe this process will be very complex and lengthy, it will be difficult to change once the two states are caught in a “security dilemma” because they have constructed an enemy identity and a Hobbesian “anarchic culture”. (Wendt, 1995, p. 145) However, it is still argued that theoretically, it is possible to reverse “intersubjective knowledge” by changing the act of interaction and that the constructed “security dilemma” can be radically escaped by a virtuous interaction.

4. Refutation of Liberalism and Constructivism

Based on the above discussion, it can be seen that the three mainstream international relations theories have given different answers to the specific question of to what extent the security dilemma is an inescapable feature of international security. Realism, which sees it as completely inescapable; Liberalism, which sees it as inescapable but can be mitigated by the facilitating power of the “international mechanisms” for cooperation; Constructivism, which fundamentally sees the constructed “security dilemma” can be escaped radically through changes in interactive behavior.

Further, the three major theoretical responses can be divided into two parts based on their tendency: realism, which firmly believes they cannot be escaped; liberalism and constructivism, which seek to challenge this argument.

Since the “security dilemma” is, in a way, a concept based on the logic of realism, the following section will focus on the latter two theories that challenge it, liberalism and constructivism, and analyse the reasons why their arguments lack the explanatory power.

4.1 Failed Challengers I: Liberalism Lacks Explanatory Power in the Field of International Security

The key point in the challenge of neo-institutional liberalism is that, while it accepts the assumption of “anarchy”, it believes that anarchy is not the same as a disorder because mistrust and insecurity about the actions of others are inevitable under anarchy, joining an “arms race” or even resorting to military means is also an option, but because of the high cost. Thus, once the international mechanisms offer the possibility of cooperation, states are inclined to choose the less costly solution to address the “security dilemma” through coordination and cooperation within the international mechanisms based on a rational balance of interests. This is because the emergence of international mechanisms creates an

expectation that particular acts of betrayal will not merely be isolated cases but will result in a series of interrelated evils, thus providing an expectation that can somewhat appease mistrust and insecurity between states. (Baldwin, 2001, p. 94) In summary, neo-institutional liberalism does not challenge the logical link between the assumptions and mechanisms of the “security dilemma” but argues that states have the option of cooperating within the international mechanisms rather than falling further into it. It, therefore, holds the argument that the “security dilemma” is inescapable but can be mitigated to some extent.

Based on the previous, the core of liberalism lies in the “forcing” effect of international mechanisms on state cooperation, and this conclusion is based on three points: firstly, in the temporal latitude, international mechanisms can transform state interactions from a one-off game into a recurring game; secondly, in the domain dimension, the establishment of the international mechanisms has shifted the interaction between states from a single domain to a composite multi-domain game; thirdly, in the cost dimension, the international mechanisms reduce transaction costs and offering the possibility of redress in the event of “betrayal”. Therefore, each of these three points will be refuted in the following to conclude that liberalism lacks explanatory power in the field of international security.

In general, the shortcomings of the neo-institutional liberal theory of the problem lie in the underestimation of the mistrust and uncertainty of cooperation between states in the international security sphere.

Firstly, in the security sphere, states attach less importance to recurring games because “a single pre-emptive war may well limit or destroy an adversary’s ability to retaliate effectively”, and by the same token, once a state is at a disadvantage in an “arms race” or the failure of a single war can completely kill its ability to continue repeated games with its adversary. So by its very nature, the security game is not a game that can be repeated many times, but rather a game that can be won or lost in a single instance, following the logic of “all or nothing”, and therefore the logic of not “betraying” is based on the fear that the game will become more costly in the future does not hold water.

Secondly, security interests have a natural “higher order” status than interests in other areas, just as wealth and life are not equally important to people, national security is always more important to the state, and the sacrifice of security can hardly be compensated for in other areas of secondary interest. More crucially, the neo-institutional liberal believe that the state places greater importance on “absolute gains” based on this logic is also not sufficiently convincing in international security. Since the loss of national security interests cannot be compensated for in other areas, there is no satisfaction for the state that it will be compensated for. Besides, the logic of a “zero-sum game” in this field tends to make the state more concerned with “relative gains”.

Finally, international regimes can reduce transaction costs by providing “credible information” and mechanisms to redress rights. In the former case, however, the extreme mistrust between states in the security sphere makes it difficult for states to properly understand even the true intentions of their opponents due to “cognitive biases between states”. (Jervis & Xu, 2017) On the other hand, they tend

to hide their true intentions rather than share them, i.e., “rational concealment of state intentions” (Mearsheimer, 2010). As a result, states can hardly get more accurate and credible information from international mechanisms regarding security issues. In addition, the mechanisms for remedying rights provided by the international system are even more ineffective because whether and to what extent international mechanisms in the security field can provide remedies is itself based on the will and capacity of the great powers rather than the definitive, codified, non-discriminatory treatment. There is a high degree of uncertainty, so few states would place such important security interests on an uncertain international mechanism rather than on its strength which has more certainty.

It can therefore be argued that although liberalism, as represented by neo-institutional liberalism, has opened up new perspectives in explaining international relations, its theories are more applicable to topics such as economic cooperation, for example, and lacks explanatory power in the field of international security.

4.2 Failed Challenger II: An Overly Idealistic Constructivism that Lacks Explanatory Power in Solving Problems in the Real World

The challenge posed by constructivism is that while it shares with realism and liberalism the existence of an “anarchy”, it does not see it as a “material, constant” premise but more as a “cultural, evolutionary” state, so that with virtuous practices of interaction, a certain “shared knowledge” can be generated, which in turn can lead to the construction of a friendly identity and a “Kantian anarchic culture” until the ultimate goal of a “multi-dimensional security community” is reached. At this point, there is a high degree of mutual trust between states so that even if there is a conflict of interest between them, they will believe that it can be resolved peacefully, thus fundamentally escaping the “security dilemma” based on anxiety and suspicion. As an example often cited by constructivism, while the United Kingdom has many nuclear weapons, the United States hardly sees them as an imminent security threat; North Korea, even though its nuclear technology is not yet fully mature, is still seen by the United States as a great danger to national security and is committed to its “denuclearisation” (Wente & Qin, 2000 p. 330)

Based on the preceding, constructivism is based on the following two theories: firstly, the so-called “anarchy” is a variable, culturally constructed consciousness rather than an absolute, material and objective state; secondly, the “anarchic culture” can be constructed through interactive behaviour, so as long as there is a virtuous interaction between states, a culture of partnership and trust will gradually be constructed, and the “multi-dimensional security community” will be the endpoint beyond the “security dilemma”. Therefore, the following section will refute each of these two points and conclude that constructivism lacks explanatory power in solving problems in the real world because of overly idealistic.

Firstly, constructivism’s “conceptual rather than material” feature is too subjective and, therefore, too idealistic. This is because the logical starting point for constructivism’s argument is the “anarchy” in line with realism and liberalism, and the definition of the “security dilemma” is no different too, the

only viable path is to avoid all of this in an “innovative manner”, choosing to explain the “security dilemma” as a conceptual reaction to the power between states. This fundamental distinction makes constructivism’s argument for escaping the “security dilemma” become too thin in the face of the cold, material reality of the world. In short, the explanatory power of this theory is based on conceptual, indefinable thinking, which, like the seeming grandeur of a ‘pavilion in the sky’, is stretched to the limit when it comes back to reality.

Secondly, even if one takes a step back and fully accepts all the presuppositions of constructivism and its theoretical tendency to “conceptual rather than material”, there is still a problem of over-idealisation in its argumentation. As mentioned earlier, the logical starting point for escaping this dilemma, which is given by the theory as virtuous interactive behaviour between states, does not address the question of the motivation of states to “show favour” in the first place, especially in the field of international security. In the reality of the international community, it is hard to believe that any state in a “security dilemma” would voluntarily be willing to risk its survival by being the first to make concessions, as in the case of Mikhail Gorbachev’s huge concession to the United States that eased or even ended the 40-year-long Cold War, but to this day has been rewarded not by the trust of the Western world but by the “NATO East”. This shows that, in reality, unilateral concessions are not the first to avert a dilemma but rather to make one’s situation worse. Moreover, even if one side is willing to make concessions, the other side is not necessarily able to fully trust and understand the goodwill that such an act releases and reciprocate based on that goodwill, as it may mistake that goodwill for a disguise for aggressive intentions, as in the case of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, which was signed not as an effort at peace but as a preparation for aggression. As Wendt himself acknowledges: the act itself cannot account for the meaning it contains. (Wente & Qin, 2000, p. 330) Therefore, it is too difficult and idealistic to construct a friendly “intersubjective knowledge” in real-world security issues.

It can therefore be argued that although the more radical views and novel perspectives of constructivism can be theoretically logical, its over-idealisation has led to the theory being more of an academic exercise than a real solution to the problem of national security where the logic of power prevails.

5. Conclusion: The Security Dilemma Is an Inescapable Feature of International Security

In summary, the concept of “security dilemma” refers to a situation that because the natural mistrust of anarchy diminishes the sense of security, when states choose to increase their power for security reason, they will feel more insecure eventually. This concept is essentially based on realism’s worldview, and therefore the dilemma is inescapable in the realist context, but both liberalism and constructivism challenge this conclusion from their own perspectives.

Liberalism, represented by neo-institutional liberalism, argues that the emergence of international mechanisms will “force” rational states to cooperate to maximise their national interests so that the “security dilemma” cannot be escaped but can be mitigated to some extent. However, this view

underestimates the mistrust and uncertainty of cooperation between states in the security sphere; the specificity of security interests makes their logic quite different from that of economic interests, therefore the states attach less importance to recurring games in the security sphere; the difficulty of compensating for security interests in other secondary spheres; the low credibility of information provided on security-related issues in international mechanisms and the high degree of uncertainty about the mechanisms for redress of rights. It can therefore be argued that the theory is more applicable to economic issues and lacks sufficient explanatory power in security.

Constructivism sees “anarchy” as more of a conceptual “intersubjective knowledge” so the identity and model of the “anarchic culture” can be changed. As long as there is a friendly act of interaction, the “partners” identity and the Kantian culture can both be created, forming a “multi-dimensional security community” and escaping the dilemma at all. However, this theory is too idealistic, which is even more inappropriate when explaining security issues that reflect the contrast in material power between states; moreover, both the first gesture of goodwill by a state in a security dilemma and the belief in and reciprocal feedback of signals of friendship by other states are difficult to achieve. It can therefore be argued that the idealistic tendency of constructivism lacks sufficient explanatory power in the context of security realities that emphasise caution.

Thus, returning to the logic of realism, the “anarchy” from the international structural level impacts the behaviour of specific states due to their assumptions about the coming conflict, their preference for the means of force and the logic of “self-help” behaviour. So as long as the “anarchy” remains unchanged, the iron law of the “security dilemma” will always dictate such choices by states, leading to the conclusion that the security dilemma an inescapable feature of international security.

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