



CHAPTER 17

Security and Insecurity

This chapter examines various attempts to bring security to an international system which, according to realists, is characterised by “anarchy.” The UN is discussed in detail with attention paid to its particular blend of liberal and realist elements—liberal in inspiration, but in practice heavily influenced by the “realist” calculations of permanent members of the Security Council and the UN at large. NATO is another key institution whose history and rationale is examined.

The chapter proceeds to discuss alternative approaches to security, such as the peace movement, the drive to narrow the “north–south divide,” and the attempt to address climate change. The chapter also discusses armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War, showing how early hopes of a “New World Order” after the collapse of communism have been dashed. Although 9/11 and the rise of terrorism is the obvious development in this story, there are other serious threats to security in the early years of the twenty-first century. The chapter concludes by noting an increasing problem of scarce resources and its connection to climate change and politics.

Chapter Outline

- **Security, Insecurity, and Power Politics**
- **The United Nations and Collective Security**
- **The UN Security Council**
- **The Role of NATO**
- **Alternative Approaches to Security**
- **Post-Cold War Conflicts**
- **From State Security to Human Security**

- Security and Insecurity After 9/11
- Conclusion

Key Terms

Anarchy
Balance of power
Bipolarity
Conflict prevention
Global South
Hegemony
Interdependence

Liberal institutionalism
Peacebuilding
Peacekeeping
Peacemaking
Postmodernism/
poststructuralism
Power politics

Protectionism
Realism
Security dilemma
Social justice
Social movement
State of nature

Discussion Questions

1. Why do traditional theories of security see peace as tenuous at best? Do you agree with this assessment?
2. Why is the League of Nations considered a failure? Was it successful in any way?
3. Does the current organization of the UN Security Council accurately reflect the balance of power among states? Should there be more or less permanent members? If you were to be in charge of making adjustments to its organization, what would you do?
4. What is human security and how does it differ from traditional understandings of security?
5. In what ways does climate change effect matters of state security? What challenges does it pose and how well suited is the state to deal with those challenges?
6. How does climate change influence politics? In an era of scarce resources and globalization, how does climate change also influence economics?
7. Should the permanent five structure of the UN Security Council be changed? Has the Security Council outgrown the need for the permanent five?
8. Can you think of different types of security? Is food security political?

Further Resources

- <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/index.htm>
Home page of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- <https://www.csis.org/>
Home page of the Washington DC–based Center for Strategic and International Studies
- <http://www.hsrgroup.org/>
Home page of the Human Security Report Project, based at Simon Fraser University
- <http://www.globalwarming.org/>
Information relevant to issues around climate change
- <http://www.un.org/>
Gateway to the United Nations home page
- <http://www.e-ir.info/>
e-International Relations home page, offering a wide range of resources and information on a number of security related issues
- <http://foodsecurecanada.org/>
Food Secure Canada
- <http://www.fao.org/hunger/en/>
The State of Food Security in the World