

Master 'Law and Politics of International Security'
Security Studies
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Assignment 1
November 2015
2917 words

The Security Dilemma: A Case Study on India and Pakistan

There are few examples in the history of relations where two states have stagnated in a confrontationist mode, despite their civil societies having intense and wide-ranging commonalities. India and Pakistan, from their very inception as independent countries, have been stuck in an adversarial predicament owing to a number of reasons (Dixit, 2002: 19).

Since the ending of British colonial rule over India and Pakistan in the year 1947, these countries witnessed troubled relations. Several territories on which mixed identity-based groups lived had to be divided between India, which is mostly Hindu but secular as a state, and Pakistan, which is a Muslim state. This led to tensions and eventually to wars between these two countries. Ever since, this hostile relation between India and Pakistan has remained, and in 1974 India purchased its first nuclear weapon. As response to this, Pakistan created a similar weapon. This arms race led to the global fear of a nuclear war, which might lead to many casualties not only in the region. Tensions and hostilities between India and Pakistan are ongoing, landmarked by terrorist attacks in India, conducted by Pakistani separatist groups. Peace talks between 2009 and 2011 eventually led to a certain willingness to cooperate. However, in 2014 tensions on the border of the two countries led to renewed hostilities, which are still ongoing (Global Issues in Context, 2015, *online source*).

Due to the fact that both India and Pakistan now possess nuclear weapons, and since their bilateral relation is described as hostile, the region faces a security threat (Ahmed, 2000: 782). Hence, in this paper theories on security are used in order to gain a better understanding of the ongoing hostilities between these two countries.

In the first section anarchy within international and regional politics is assigned as fundamental for the malign interactions between India and Pakistan. In this section, moreover, information on the security dilemma and its related paradox are provided. In the second section the concept 'security dilemma sensibility', and the possibility of international institutions in order to mitigate this security threat, are discussed.

These solutions can help to overcome the security dilemma India and Pakistan face, which is of the utmost importance for the stability of the region. Moreover, the tensions between these countries already caused many innocent lives (Lyon, 2008: 82), let alone what a nuclear attack would inflict.

Security Dilemma

In this section an overview of the security dilemma is given, which arises out of the absence of global governance. This theoretical information is explained through a case study on India and Pakistan. The complex relation between these rival countries is outlined and explained in terms of their 'security paradox'.

Realist scholars within the discipline of International Relations claim that states behave merely in order to serve their self-interest. This assumption is based on the idea that self-help is essential if states want to survive in the anarchistic world order in which they find themselves. Due to lacking global authority, and since states are driven by power accumulation, there exists an ongoing security threat within the international playfield (Orend, 2013: 251). Because of this required self-interest related behaviour, other institutionalized ideas, such as socially constructed norms and juridical rules are not sufficient to change the anarchistic world order. Therefore, an ongoing security threat remains to exist (Morgenthau, 1970: 4-15).

Governments are not able to comprehend the minds of decision-makers of other states due to the secret nature of foreign policy. They thus face uncertainties when it comes to intentions and objectives of other states (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 4-30). Fear, therefore, governs and motivates decision-makers in what the Realist Hobbes called “a state of perpetual war of every individual against everyone else” (Warburton, 2006: 66). This ‘Hobbesian fear’ is a state of nature in which security cannot be achieved due to the absence of a global sovereign.

The troubled relation between India and Pakistan can be understood in terms of this anarchistic system, which is a root-cause of their security problems. “India and Pakistan have been forced into power politics on account of the anarchic nature of the international system” (McLeod, 2008: 10). After their joint British ruling, there was no central authority over the two countries anymore, and their interests clashed several times due to disputes over territory (Global Issues in Context, 2015, *online source*).

States that experience a security threat see nuclear weapons as a successful way of achieving deterrence. By purchasing these weapons, they can secure their homelands within our anarchistic world order (Sagan, 1995: 57). India’s move to purchase nuclear weapons in 1974 can be explained through state’s general lust for power (Orend, 2013: 251). To wit, it is assumed that India acquired this weaponry in order to show its modern capabilities: “For India, the primary pressure seems to be from its nuclear and defense scientists who want to prove, against most evidence to date, they are world class. For Pakistan, the primary driver appears to be a fear of India’s superior conventional force” (Graham, 2011: 11). Since Pakistan did not know India’s intentions when it purchased its nuclear weapon, it responded driven by fear. Consequently, Pakistan also obtained nuclear weapons in order to protect its homeland. This arms race can be explained through the anarchic system in which central authority is lacking: Pakistan was unable to adequately interpret India’s policy to purchase nuclear arsenal due to lacking transparent information, which led to a security dilemma.

Booth and Wheeler describe a security dilemma in twofold. First they explain it as a dilemma of interpreting other states’ behaviour, and secondly, they explain it as a dilemma of the response to this behaviour (2008: 4). Due to the uncertainties concerning other’s intentions, states tend to fear for the worst. Roe (1999: 186) even states that political actors tend to start their relations with others out of this security dilemma. Several occasions, subsequently, can manifest into forecasting the worst of others. Differing ideologies or religions among states

might lead to negative expectations of the other. Booth and Wheeler (2008) appoint these 'permanent aggravating factors' as stimulating features of the security dilemma. Differing religions and a history of hostility are *inter alia* considered as this type of factors.

The security dilemma starts when one state misinterprets the benign intent of another state, and therefore increases its military arsenal. This move might frighten the other state on its turn, which will choose the safe option of also increasing its military arsenal. This arms race has the tendency to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The purchased nuclear weapons by Pakistan, which it acquired as means to self-defence, were interpreted by India as hostile (Graham, 2011: 11). These malign interpretations can be explained by the religious difference between the two countries, which according to Booth and Wheeler (2008) is considered a permanent aggravating factor. Because of differing identity-based features, they both feared each other and misinterpreted each other's behaviour.

The arms race between India and Pakistan resulted into a severe nuclear threat for the whole region. This is the so-called 'security paradox', which is "a situation in which two or more actors, seeking only to improve their own security, provoke through their words or actions an increase in mutual tension, resulting in less security all round" (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 9). Thus, misinterpretations led to an arms race between India and Pakistan. By this arms race both countries unintentionally and undesirably decreased their security while actually aiming to improve it.

Having explained the relation between the anarchic world order and the security dilemma, clarified through the case study on India and Pakistan, in the following section we move to address possible solutions in order to mitigate the Indo-Pakistan security paradox.

Possible solutions

The security dilemma is the result of socially constructed realities as it is constructed by the perceptions of political actors. Since social actions set the dilemma in motion, there are possibilities of mitigating it. However, as complete understanding of other states' policy and intentions is impossible, certain suspiciousness will remain. In other words, "the security

dilemma cannot be abolished, it can only be ameliorated” (Jervis, 1978: 170). In this section possible ways of mitigating the security dilemma between India and Pakistan are presented.

The Social Constructivist Wendt (1992: 399-403) does not agree with the Realist claim of an anarchic world order. According to him, anarchy arises out of socially constructed expectations and thus is not a given fact. Self-fulfilling prophecies related to pessimistic assumptions shape states’ own, and other states’ behaviour. The root-cause for the security dilemma, therefore, is states’ perceptions and not anarchy. In line with this approach towards international relations, creating mutual understanding of others’ policy and intentions can mitigate the security dilemma between India and Pakistan because this eliminates false assumptions. Booth and Wheeler (2008: 7) explain this mutual understanding in the following way:

Security dilemma sensibility is an actor’s intention and capacity to perceive the motives behind, and to show responsiveness towards, the potential complexity of the military intentions of others. In particular, it refers to the ability to understand the role that fear might play in their attitudes and behaviour, including, crucially, the role that one’s own actions may play in provoking that fear. (Emphasis in original text)

This fear can be countered when both countries create a mutual understanding of each other’s position, and therefore are aware of the benign intentions of others. India and Pakistan can also build trust through ‘Confidence and Security Building Measures’, through which tensions might be lowered. These measures aim to get both countries to communicate again, which is very important for both India and Pakistan. They, thus, should implement policy directed at aiming to better understand each other (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 40-47).

“Following the nuclearization of the India-Pakistan relationship in the late 1990s, there have been moments of hope from mitigator perspectives” (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 284). One of these moments is the Lahore summit in 1999, initiated by India’s Prime Minister. This summit led to the Lahore Declaration, which is a trust-building action in line with the security dilemma sensibility. Another trust-building initiative is the mutual agreement to store their warheads separately from their launch-devices, which decreased mutual fear. Both measures are examples of the security dilemma sensibility in action (Ganguly & Hagerty, 2006: 193).

Despite these two examples of sensibility towards each other's situation, Confidence and Security Building Measures are hardly deployed by India and Pakistan. Mutual trust is still lacking due to Pakistan's alleged support to terror groups, and due to the ongoing dispute concerning the authority over the Kashmir territory. The Lahore Dialogue is a good example of a short-term measure, but long-term measures are still lacking (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 285).

Mutual trust can only be achieved through bilateral cooperation, a long-term security dilemma mechanism. Pakistan needs to stop using military force in the Kashmir dispute, and end its support to terrorist groups (if it ever did so). It should anyway gain control over these groups in order to stop their atrocities. India, on its turn, is already showing some sensibility towards Pakistan's fear (Stratfor, 2008, *online source*), but it should contribute more cooperatively to the Kashmir dispute. Also, it should avoid blaming the Pakistani government for the terrorist attacks on India's territory since this only leads to finger pointing. Instead, it should cooperate together with the Pakistani government aiming to counter terrorism on both territories.

If both states would cooperate in a long-term manner, their disputes might be settled. Without recognizing that they are currently following a dead ended track, they will remain being trapped in the security paradox which endangers a nuclear disaster for not only their own inhabitants. Both countries should therefore aim to implement sustainable Confidence and Security Building Measures in order to break the vicious circle in which they are currently trapped (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 86-87).

Another possibility of mitigating the security dilemma involves the help of international institutions. From an Institutionalist perspective, societies can be influenced and shaped through institutions. Institutionalism, a perspective within International Relations, therefore claims that the world order is not anarchic, but structured through international institutions. Even some Realist scholars, who do assign anarchy as a root-cause for the security dilemma, are of the opinion that international institutions can mitigate this dilemma due to their

cooperative nature, which eventually might secure the self-interests of each individual state (Krasner, 1982: 86).

Just like Wendt's (1992: 399-403) focus on norms, beliefs, and perceptions, international institutions are based on the idea of:

patterned practices, or *practices* that are routinized, typical and recurrent ... Institutions are based, usually, on coherent *sets of ideas and/or beliefs* that describe the needs for the common practices and point out how certain social goals can be achieved through them. ... Institutions reflect *norms*, and they include rules. ... They prescribe how the critical actors or agents should behave. (Holsti, 2004: 21–22; Emphasis in original text)

Asia, however, has no multilateral institutions. Realists explain this in terms of America's disinterest in military cooperation with this region after the Cold War, and due to the lack of a common threat for Asian countries, which stopped them from setting up a collective security institution (Hemmer & Katzenstein, 2002: 580-884). Still, even if a multilateral institution were to be created today, it would fail to mitigate the tensions between India and Pakistan for two reasons.

First, Islamabad will never give up its claim over Kashmir. Pakistan has therefore asked for international assistance over this disputed territory, but India rejects any international involvement. There, thus, is no international mitigation-option available to solve the Kashmir-case (Tan, 2008, *online source*). Second, the nuclear arms race is not limited to India and Pakistan. If this was the case, an institute might be able to bilaterally mitigate the tensions between the two, using transparent policy in order to create mutual trust. However, as since India's arms race is also a response to nuclear China, it is very hard to create an institute addressing the dispute between India and Pakistan without focussing on China's nuclear security paradox vis-à-vis America (Booth & Wheeler, 2008: 287). To sum up, an international institute addressing the tensions between India and Pakistan is not sufficient to mitigate the Indo-Pakistani security dilemma due to the influence of *inter alia* China's nuclear arsenal.

A security regime, however, might be able to mitigate the security dilemma between India and Pakistan, and is defined as “an issue-area-specific subset of international institutions” (Kelle, 2014: 5-6).

By a security regime I mean ... those principles, rules, and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behaviour in the belief that others will reciprocate. This concept implies not only norms and expectations that facilitate cooperation, but a form of cooperation that is more than the following of short-run self-interest. (Jervis, 1982: 357)

Since the limited scope of the objective of a regional security regime, this form of institutionalization seems more fruitful in the Indo-Pakistan conflict. As mentioned, international or regional institutions would not only involve India's and Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, but would be very complex due to China security paradox vis-à-vis America, and thus have lesser chance of succeeding.

Bilateral negotiations in the form of a security regime between India and Pakistan can serve to mitigate their disputes, and overcome the anarchic structure in which both countries are currently operating. Moreover, regional security regimes turned out to be very effective to mitigate conflicts (Fawcett, 2008: 309). However, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is the only organization that approaches a security regime in the region (Hemmer & Katzenstein, 2002: 578). Hence, it is recommended to implement such a regime.

Considering the similarities between their civil societies (Dixit, 2002: 19), Hemmer and Katzenstein (2002: 587) claim that these common features are promising for bilateral progress between India and Pakistan. To wit, shared norms between groups are considered as fruitful factors within political interaction (Archarya, 2005: 49). India and Pakistan should therefore start implementing a shared security regime in which mutual agreements bind both actors. This, eventually, will lead to growing reciprocal trust, which will mitigate their security dilemma.

To conclude, possible solutions in order to mitigate the security paradox between India and Pakistan are not only the implementation of security dilemma sensibility and Confidence and

Security Building Measures; a security regime can also positively influence the relations of the two countries. Setting up an international institution, however, seems not fruitful due to the influence of other global powers' interests, which affects the security dilemma between India and Pakistan.

Conclusion

In this paper it is demonstrated how anarchy within the world order is a root-cause for the security dilemma between India and Pakistan. Mutual fear and mistrust has led to malign interpretations of each other's intention, resulting in an arms race. In order to overcome this security paradox, security dilemma sensibility and Confidence and Security Building Measures can serve to mitigate. Mutual trust can also be built through the creation of a security regime, which mitigates the anarchic structure in which India and Pakistan are viciously trapped. However, successful bilateral cooperation is dependent on the resolution of the Kashmir-dispute, and thus, both countries first have to show serious effort in order to solve this single dispute before long-term cooperation is even possible. It is of the utmost importance for both countries to invest in bilateral agreements since the nuclear arms race does not only jeopardize the lives of their own civilians, but moreover affects the whole region.

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