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Issues in International Security

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Abstract

As a coursework requirement, this paper discusses issues in international security. It employs desk research, precisely external desk research as one of the qualitative methods to dissect the topic.

Even though this paper did not exhaust all the thematic areas expected for issues in international security. However, it brings new knowledge that contributes to the discipline of security studies. It argues that the threats associated with international security are far different from the issues in international security. It further argues that the issues are a multiplicity of factors impeding or frustrating the fight against the threats posed to international security.

Conclusively, the paper closed on the identification of the issues to be the main causes of the threats. Therefore, the paper calls upon the actors in the theater of international security to take serious cognizance of the issues obstructing the prevention, protection, alleviation, or mitigation of the threats in international security.

Keywords: *International Security, Issues, threats,*

Introduction

Since its inception following the Cold War, the term "international security" continues to occupy critical space in academic settings, and global peace forums at international gatherings such as the United Nations, European Union, African Union, Arab League, Arab and Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) groups, etc. This is because issues in international security have become great concerns characterizing the world we live in, and as such these issues despite their threats to humanity remained debatable in the international system. The most recent contemporary example that now occupies critical space in the international system is the ongoing Israel retaliatory response to Hamas's unprecedented attack that killed 250 Israelis on 7th October 2023 (Aljazeera News, 2023). The UN Security Council Resolution 2720 (2023) on Gaza in which 13 voted in favor, and the US and Russia abstained (UN, 2023) is enough to explain the dynamics the debates have taken in the international system surrounding Israel's retaliatory response to the Hamas attack. The mixed reactions or responses that greeted the resolution are some pieces of evidence to support the dynamics

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the debates have taken. For example, through its Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative, Israel took an exception and argued that hostages must be at the top of the Council's agenda (UN, 2023). The Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine viewed the resolution as belated. He argued that the resolution had been adopted after 20,000 Palestinians have been killed, almost half of them children and 60,000 wounded, and two million Palestinians have been forcefully displaced coupled with a humanitarian crisis (UN, 2023), The UAE Ambassador welcomed the adoption of the resolution unblocks lifesaving aid (UN, 2023), The Russian Ambassador termed the resolution as a tragic moment for the Security Council. Regrettably, he argued that the Security Council did not find the courage to support at least the minimum call for an end to the violence in Gaza, and it instead signed up for a "license to kill" Palestinian civilians (UN, 2023). China's Deputy Permanent Representative welcomed the adoption even though the adjustments did not meet China's expectations (UN, 2023). The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom supported the resolution because it would streamline aid checks so that humanitarian response can be massively scaled up (UN, 2023). The US Ambassador described the resolution as "a glimmer of hope amongst a sea of unimaginable suffering" (UN, 2023).

Arguably, the above examples regarding the dynamics the debates have taken reflect the issues at stake regarding international security. Against this backdrop, this paper or assignment although not about the Israel-Gaza Crisis, the Russia-Ukraine war, and perhaps other conflicts driven by national security interests seeks to explore issues in international security from a general perspective through five segments or parts. The first segment of the paper provides a general overview of international security as a concept. It takes into consideration the definition, its importance, and the dichotomy between international security and global security. The second segment examines relevant theories associated with issues in international security followed by relevant key actors in the theater of international security.

The third segment identifies major threats associated with international security. This is premised on the fact that it seems impractical to discuss issues in international security without regard for major security threats. The fourth segment elaborates on the issues in international security. It does so by providing a conceptual clarification that displays an implied or inherent dichotomy from threats associated with international security. In other words, it differentiates the issues in international security from threats to international security. Finally, the last but not the least segment concludes the paper.

Mindful of what could be observed as a digression from the topic under discussion, let it be cleared that the ongoing wars between Israel and Gaza, and Russia and Ukraine, and perhaps other examples are mentioned in passing to support or buttress critical arguments flagged by this paper.

Methodology and Material

Associated with qualitative methods, this paper adopts desk research, precisely external desk research. Somehow like content analysis, external desk research allows the researcher to review and analyze secondary materials such as public libraries, websites, reports, surveys, journals, newspapers, magazines, books, podcasts, videos, and other sources that exist outside the purview of the researcher (Owa, 2023). The researcher's primary objective for selecting this method is to gather data or information related to a specific topic under study. More importantly, it helps the researcher gain insights and understanding of a particular topic or research question (Owa, 2023). Of course, this paper is about a particular topic on issues in international security not a research question issues in international security. The secondary materials reviewed were sourced from the internet through the Google search engine and Google Scholar search engine.

Contribution to Knowledge

This paper contributes to knowledge in a few ways that could certify academic benefits. First, it provides an enlightenment that may not have been known to some audience coming across this paper. Secondly, because it explores the subject matter, especially the issues from different dimensions or perspectives, it could be used as a research tool in academic settings. Finally, it adds to the contribution of the academic discipline of International Relations that encapsulates international security as one of its sub-fields.

General Overview of International Security

Before diving into the crux of issues in international security, a clarification of the concept of international security matters a lot. On the grounds that there is no consensus on the definition of the concept of security because of its subjective posture or nature, it makes sense to think of international security in a similar context. This is simply because of the attachment of security to international thus calling it "International Security". Nevertheless, few attempts have been made to clarify the concept. In the words of (Aorere, n.d.), international security is the action taken to prevent and deal with conflicts and protect people and their way of life. The action may involve military action, peacekeeping, capacity building, and diplomatic agreements such as treaties and conventions. According to the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria's website (2023), the concept of international security refers to the measures taken by countries to ensure the safety and protection of their citizens, borders, and interests in the international arena. It primarily deals with the security concerns of individual states and their interactions with one another. It focuses on traditional military threats, such as territorial disputes, arms proliferation, and interstate conflicts.

In the view of Stockholm University (n.d.), international security focuses on historical, social, and political dynamics around issues related to war, conflict, and the pursuit of peace and stability.

Also known as strategic studies, international security established field within the International Relations discipline, focuses on the role and functions of military forces in international politics (B0145, 2022).

The above definitions, which imply realism that will subsequently be discussed as one of the key theories, emphasize states' inclination to protect their interests in the international system. States' interests in the international system are germane and critical to their national security. This claim provided a normative justification for a state-centric approach to international security. Moreover, the definitions that captured war, and conflict have traditionally narrowed international security to military operations. Because of this traditional understanding, it is safe to make the inference that international security is highly a state-centric perspective that opens the corridor for skepticism between powerful states and emerging powers.

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On the flip side of the same coin, the above definitions of international security do not seem to resonate with contemporary concerns in international security. This is simply because besides the threats primarily coming from states that require a traditional response (military operations) they are also coming from ethnic groups obsessed with hypernationalism, criminal gangs, mafiosi governance, epidemics, AIDS, terrorism, dangerous food, poverty, economic mismanagement, over-population, failed states, flows of refugees, and, most importantly, pollution and the effects of pollution, the irrigation and destruction of nature, and the diversification of nature(climate change) (Heurlin & Kristensen, n.d.). This suggests the need for the definition to move away from military operations or incorporate measures taken by states to ensure the safety and protection of their citizens against threats that require a non-traditional approach or intervention in the international system.

These threats that require non-traditional intervention are also embodiments of states' interests in the international system.

The Importance of International Security

The definitions of international security reinforced by the recent global epidemic (COVID-19), the Russia-Ukraine War, the Israel-Gaza Crisis, growing tension between China and Taiwan, the US and Russia, China and the US, the US and Iran, etc. are just good enough to explain the importance of international security. This is because it explains why states engage in wars and other complex security threats or issues. Moreover, it uncovers the security problems and opportunities that the world can consider in remodeling international relations across the globe and provides an understanding of when states need to intervene in each other's domestic affairs that threaten their national security interests.

The dichotomy Between International Security and Global Security

Even though the focus of this paper is not about global security. However, it is important to bring out the dichotomy necessary to clear possible misunderstandings between the two concepts.

As their names imply, it sounds logical to rationalize that the two concepts are related. However, they seem to differ on three thematic areas namely scope, focus, and approach. Let's take a closer look at each of the thematic areas.

Scope

International security principally examines the security concerns of individual states and their interactions with one another. It focuses on traditional military threats, such as territorial disputes, arms proliferation, and interstate conflicts. Global security, on the other hand, incorporates a broader scope, addressing both state-centric and non-state-centric challenges that affect the entire international community (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria's website, 2023).

Focus

The prime focus of international security is on the protection of a nation's interests, sovereignty, and borders. It emphasizes both military capabilities, intelligence gathering, and diplomatic efforts to maintain peace and stability (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria's website, 2023). The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, and the most recent Israel-Gaza crisis are spectacular or contemporary examples.

In contrast, global security places greater emphasis on addressing transnational threats, namely terrorism, cyber attacks, climate change, and pandemics. It argues that the remedies for tackling issues in global security lie in collective actions and cooperation among nations or countries (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria's website, 2023). For example, the fight against global terrorism championed by the US through its foreign policy.

Approach

International security often relies on a realist perspective, which prioritizes the national interest and the balance of power. It is characterized by traditional approaches to security, including military build-up, alliances, and deterrence. The proliferation of nuclear weapons causing skepticism and tension or conflict among power states such as the US, Iran, North Korea, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France, etc. could be used to qualify contemporary example. Global security, on the other hand, adopts a liberalistic perspective that is more holistic and cooperative approach, emphasizing the interconnectedness of issues and the need for multilateral cooperation. It recognizes the importance of addressing root causes and promoting sustainable development to achieve long-term security (Universidad Francisco de Vitoria's website, 2023).

Relevant Theories Associated with Issues in International Security

Judging from the general overview coupled with the dichotomy of international security, the realist theory and Social Contract theory widely discussed in International Relations implicitly occupy critical and dominant space in issues in international security. Let's look at the reliance on this claim. The entire general overview of international security discussed in this paper throws more emphasis on militarization as the institution states rely on to prevent and deal with conflicts and protect people and their way of life. Arguably, the emphasis on militarization as the reliance seems quite interesting. However, it is not substantive enough to explain the realist theory and the social contract theory. It is just the prelude to the theory. So, let's delve into the nitty-gritty of the theory to see how it supports the reliance.

Copious literature reviews continuously show that realism has traditionally been the dominant theory in international relations that essentially encapsulates security studies since the end of War World II. Developed and polarized by historical thinkers such as Niccolo Mechiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Hans J. Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers, George F. Kennan, Robert Strausz-Hupé, Henry Kissinger, and Reinhold Niebuhr that emerged in the 1930s, realism or known as political realism emphasizes the role of the state, national interest, and power in world politics or international politics (Bell, 2023) that essentially incorporate security as one of the thematic areas. The emphasis on realism treats the state as the referent object. In other words, in the eyes of realist theory, the state is the main unit of analysis. Thus, realism is, therefore, primarily concerned with states and their actions in the international system, as driven by competitive self-interest. Under the lenses of realism, states exist within an anarchic international system in which they are ultimately dependent on their own capabilities, or power, to further their national interests. The most important national interest is the survival of the state, including its people, political system, and territorial integrity. Other major interests for realists include the preservation of a nation's culture and economy. Therefore, the realists argued that,

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as long as the world continues to be divided into nation-states in an anarchic setting, national interest will remain the essence of international politics (Bell, 2023). By this assertion, it is errorless to equate the states to legitimate governments as the leading players in international and regional systems (Ardam et al, 2021). In this context, the governments are the main rational actors seeking to advance their national interests, responding to external threats, and taking advantage of opportunities provided by regional and international order or systems. The national interests of governments are defined in terms of power. Power is the stimulation of another actor's ability to adopt defined behavior based on the desired pattern or to refrain from performing undesirable behavior. This power is achieved and maintained through diplomatic means by moving forces (militarization) (Ardam et al, 2021).

Realism and International Security

As it relates to international security, it is worth arguing that realists would believe that if the government cannot maintain its security, it should do so nothing will be able to do. Under these conditions, an efficient military force to support diplomacy, foreign policy, and finally, security is essential. Realism concludes that because governments are key players in the international system, they will be the source of security. To this end, there are two sub-theories advanced by structural realists or neorealism that seem to justify states' or governments' inclination to acquire more power in the international system. Defensive structural realism and Offensive structural realism. Briefly, let's take a careful look at each.

Defensive Structural Realism

Introduced by Kenneth Waltz, defensive structural realism holds that states are disposed to competition and conflict because they are self-interested, power maximizing, and fearful of other states. Moreover, it argues that states are obliged to behave this way because doing so favors survival in the international system (Waltz,1979). In his historical but convincing essay on "International Politics," Waltz argues that the anarchical structure of the international system encourages states to maintain moderate and reserved policies to attain national security (Waltz, 1979). What is that 'anarchical structure of the international system that encourages states to refrain from conflict? Milner (1991) opines that in an anarchic structure, there is no hierarchically superior, coercive power that can resolve disputes, enforce law, or order the system of international politics. In his opinion, Waltz argued that the absence of a higher authority than states in the international system means that states can only rely on themselves for their own survival, requiring paranoid vigilance and constant preparation for conflict. In Man, the State, and War, Waltz describes anarchy as a condition of possibility or a "permissive" cause of war (Waltz, 1954) He argues that "wars occur because there is nothing to prevent them" (Waltz, 1954). Similarly, American political scientist John Herz argues that international anarchy assures the centrality of the struggle for power "even in the absence of aggressivity or similar factors", emphasizing that a state's interests and actions are determined by the anarchic structure of the international system itself (Donnelly, 2000).

Offensive Structural Realism

Coined by John Mearsheimer, offensive structural realism comes as a contrast to defensive structural realism. It argues that states face an uncertain international environment in which any state might employ its power to destroy another thus the best way to remain secure or safe is the inclination to amass as much power (military capabilities) (Mearsheimer, 2001). Articulated by Mearsheimer, offensive structural realism is built on five bedrock assumptions. The first assumption is that there is anarchy in the international system, which means that there is no hierarchically superior, coercive power that can guarantee limits on the behavior of states (Mearsheimer 2001, 30). Second, all great powers possess offensive military capabilities, which they are capable of using against other states (2001, 30-31). Third, states can never be certain that other states will refrain from using those offensive military capabilities (2001, 31). Fourth, states seek to maintain their survival (their territorial integrity and domestic autonomy) above all other goals (2001, 31), as it is the means to all other ends (1990, 44). Fifth, states are rational actors, which means that they consider the immediate and long-term consequences of their actions, and think strategically about how to survive (2001, 31). Because the international order or system is filled with such uncertainty regarding states' intentions, the nature of states' military capabilities, and other states' assistance in a struggle against hostile states, Mearsheimer (2001, 31) argues that the best way for great powers to ensure their survival – a goal which is favored above all others – is to maximize power and pursue hegemony. The competition of militarization hegemony by the US, China, India, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, having their respective military specialized units in space operations doubtlessly indicates that space has become a new war-fighting domain is one of the contemporary examples of offensive structural realism eloquently articulated by John Mearsheimer. The US is the most influential actor in space with advanced technology, a significant military presence, and the world's largest budget spending on space programs (Wehtje, 2023). Another classic and spectacular example is the alarm by the risk of nuclear escalation among major Powers that threaten international peace.

Despite their significant contributions to international relations theory articulated by several prominent proponents, the two sub-theories of realism have their own fair share of shortcomings. Collectively, none of them provide practical prescriptions for the anarchical structure posing an informed threat to the international system.

The Social Contract Theory

Premised on the assumption that realism puts the security of the states in the hands of the government as mentioned under the realist perspective, it makes sense to invoke the social contract theory as the crutch to support the realist views on international security.

Popularized by Thomas Hobbes in his historic but classic essay "Leviathan" in the 17th century, the theory argued that in a state of nature, without any governing authority, individuals would suffer a constant fear of violent death. To avoid this, they willingly enter into a social contract where they surrender certain freedoms to a sovereign ruler (government) in exchange for protection and security (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946). Another progenitor, John Locke emphasized the importance of individual rights and believed that the purpose of the social contract was to protect these rights. He argued that if a government failed to do so, individuals had the right to rebel and establish a new social contract (Main, 2023).

By understanding or interpretation, the social contract theory places the obligation upon the government or state as the

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contracting party to protect its citizens against security threats. This is why Locke in his emphasis reminded the state or government about the obvious consequences of reneging on the maintenance of domestic security. That is to say, as far as the contract or agreement is concerned, the citizens reserve the right to replace the government either through popular uprising, popular sovereignty, or through the ballot box.

Despite decades following the development and perhaps obvious demerits or shortcomings of the social contract theory, it has shaped modern political thought and continues to be relevant in discussions on international security. By this explanation, the realist posture taken by states or governments all in the name of protecting national security interests is quite understandable. For example, the US military operation that killed Osama Bin Laden in 2011 in Pakistan arguably violated international law could exemplify the social contract as the US obligation to protect its citizens and vital installation against Qaeda threats. More importantly, the US action in Pakistan supports realism especially offensive structural realism.

Relevant Actors of International Security

From the general overview of international security coupled with the relevant theories, it can be easily inferred that the states equated to governments referred to as state actors and non-state actors are the core actors driving the agenda of international security.

State Actors

Core state actors equated to relevant government functionaries include the military or armed forces, police, gendarmerie, border guards, customs and immigration, and intelligence and security services. Each of these security institutions by statute performs multiple functions or duties that help to maintain national security. In the international system, state actors push and protect the national security interests of their respective governments or states. A typical example would be the ongoing retaliatory war between Russia and Ukraine, and Israel and Gaza that bordered on the national security interests of both states. More importantly, these countries' positions seem to be justifiable under the lens of the realist theory.

Non-State Actors

Bearing in mind that the definition of international security mentions peacekeeping, and diplomatic channels or means to prevent, and deal with conflict germane to the protection of lives and vital installation the critical position occupied by non-state actors is implied. Non-state actors are international organizations predominantly composed of different states or countries. International organizations include the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the Arab League, and others, to ensure mutual survival and safety. A fresh or memorable example of diplomacy was the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) resolution 1325 which ended the 14 years of civil war in Liberia.

At the level (international system), the interests of state actors often overshadow and dictate the agenda of international security to the detriment of the innocent civilian population. A classic example can be seen in what this paper described as a toothless bulldog Resolution 2720 adopted by the UN Security Council on 22 December 2023 as a diplomatic intervention for the ongoing crisis in Gaza. With 13 votes in favor, and the US and Russia abstaining, the resolution, among other points, demands immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip (UN, 2023). Up to the submission of this paper, Israel because of its national security interest has yet to respect and honor the resolution. Moreover, and arguably, the way the votes went including abstention and various responses from state actors Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives, is enough to explain how national security interests overshadow the urgent humanitarian imperative.

Major Threats Associated with International Security

As mentioned in the introduction, it would seem impractical to discuss issues in international security without regard for major security threats, this segment of the paper provides a catalog of major threats associated with international security.

Arguably, since the end of the Cold War, the international security landscape has changed dramatically. Relations between all the major powers are now comparatively stable and there has been less conflict between states. However, the dramatic changes fostered by international corporations and peace policy in the landscape of international security did not eliminate or alleviate the obvious threats. Look at the below catalog.

Terrorism

It is a highly contestable concept and phenomenon that lacks a universal consensual definition under international law. Because of its subjective interpretations or political and ideological connotations, it has taken multiple definitions confined to the context of states' jurisprudence or statutes that designate terrorist groups.

Since 9/11, terrorism has emerged as a major threat to international security, this includes the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq, the Levant, or ISIL/Da'esh, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Afghan Taliban, Al-Nusrah Front, Al-Shabaab, Ansar al-Sharia. Lord's Resistance Army, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), Al-Qa'ida Core (AQ), Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian. Peninsula (AQAP), Hamas, Hezbollah, Boko Haram, TWJWA, also known as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) (Counter Terrorism Guide, n.d.). The political and ideological connotations of terrorism explain the reasons for its growing or increasing existence. Regardless of the reasons thereof, terrorism is one of the major threats to international security simply because it has targeted and killed innocent civilians who know nothing about its provocation.

The Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

Since its inception in 1994, the UNSC President declared the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction to be a threat to international peace and security (International Peace Academy, 2004). According to the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/32/84-B, Weapons of Mass Destruction is defined as "atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which might have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of the atomic bomb or other weapons mentioned above." (UN, n.d.)

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Weapons of mass destruction constitute a class of weaponry with the potential to:

- Produce in a single moment an enormously destructive effect capable of killing millions of civilians, jeopardizing the natural environment, and fundamentally altering the lives of future generations through their catastrophic effects (UN, n.d.)
- Cause death or serious injury of people through toxic or poisonous chemicals.
- Disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm or kill humans, animals, or plants (UN, n.d.)
- Deliver nuclear explosive devices, chemical, biological, or toxin agents to use them for hostile purposes or in armed conflict (UN, n.d.)

When viewed under a humanitarian lens, WMD technology can spread in many ways. Components of WMD, their delivery systems, or related materials may be hidden in cargo and transported by land, air, or sea. They can be sold for cash, cryptocurrency, or through wire transfer. Or someone can pass along specialized knowledge or expertise (Russell, 2006). Those states most actively working to develop weapons of mass destruction, although limited in number, are for the most part located in unstable regions of the world the Middle East, South Asia, and the Korean peninsula. For at least the next decade, few if any of these states will be able to deliver such weapons more than a thousand kilometers or so in a reliable and timely manner. Therefore, the greatest threat posed by these states is to their neighbors and regional stability (Al Mauroni et al, 2021).

Militarization of the Space

International concern is growing about the use and potential misuse of space. The militarization of space is not new, yet it has developed and become more advanced today. Major powers, such as the US, China, and Russia, now have their own military units specialized in space operations, indicating that space has become a new war-fighting domain. The militarization of space and developments in space technologies have resulted in growing tensions hinting at a need for new agreements to promote cooperation. So far, the UN has made several unsuccessful attempts to reach a new space treaty (Wehtje, 2023). The US is the most influential actor in space with advanced technology, significant military presence, and the world's largest budget spending on space programs. As stated by former President Trump in 2019, "Space is the world's newest war-fighting domain," and space has become an increasing source of threat to the national security of the US (Wehtje, 2023).

Cyber Threats/Attacks

From an international security perspective, cyber threats or attacks endanger the safety of modern states, organizations, and international relations. Whether it happens as a conflict between states, a terrorist, or a criminal act, is an attack in cyberspace to compromise a computer system or network, but also compromising physical systems as was the case with the Stuxnet worm. In layman's, popular terms, most often mentioned in the media, it is called a hacker attack. Identical methods of a hacker attack are applied for both military and terrorist purposes (Cvrtila & Ivanjko, 2022).

The USA, Russia, and China are nations known for their skilled military cyber units. In addition to the above mentioned states, France and Israel are working on the development of cyber capabilities. American intelligence officers believe that there are 20 to 30 armies with respectful capabilities for cyber-war, including Taiwan, Iran, Australia, South Korea, India, Pakistan, and several NATO countries (Risk Based Security, 2014). The United States Cyber Command, along with the agencies they work with, has some of the most intelligent, patriotic-minded civil servants, both military and civilian, who create plans and capabilities for domination in cyberspace intending to preserve national security and peace (Risk Based Security, 2014). Arguably, the involvement of these states in cyber activities creates multipolarity of cyberspace is enough to explain the threat to international security.

Climate Change

Debatably, climate change has moved away from emerging threats to one of the major threats posed to international security. All the international fora on climate change that have brought together community of nations and international communities bear testimony of the threat climate change posed to human security. For example, extreme weather is becoming increasingly common as the world gets warmer. Recurrent droughts in Africa; floods in Asia and Latin America; and violent wind and fire storms affecting even rich countries are destroying homes and livelihoods and creating new vicious cycles of poverty. Rising sea levels, changing seasons and the threat of new disease outbreaks are affecting rural and urban communities and increasing tensions as water supplies dwindle, food prices rise, and people leave their homes to seek safety elsewhere (Universidad Europea, 2023).

Conflict and War

Civil and internal conflicts, insurgencies, and political chaos that have caused massive displacement of people, massive deaths, and destruction of vital installations or infrastructure remain one of the biggest threats to international security. According to Universidad Europea, (2023) because of conflict and war, there are now more than 82 million people living in refugee and displacement camps or far from home, creating tensions between host communities, forcing families to make dangerous journeys, and exposing vulnerable people, especially women and children, to trafficking gangs and exploitation. Countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Yemen, South Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Venezuela Myanmar, etc. are either confronted with civil and internal conflict, political chaos, or insurgency.

Hunger and Malnutrition

Captured as number two "Zero Hunger" under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) inaugurated in September 2015 is enough attestation that hunger and malnutrition are among the threats to international security. According to this goal, malnourished children are more likely to die from infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, measles, and pneumonia (UN, n.d.).

Artificial intelligence

In the words of Frankenfield (2023), artificial intelligence, or AI, refers to the simulation of human intelligence by software-coded heuristics. Similarly, Schorer (2024) defined AI as a wide-ranging branch of computer science concerned with building smart machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. Research has documented AI implications for international security. In her well-researched report, Puscas (2024)

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eloquently conceptualized the risks or threats AI poses to international security. Accordingly, AI technology has the proclivity to cause three risks namely miscalculations, escalation, and proliferation. When it comes to miscalculations, the inclination of the intelligence community to use AI as a tool for forecasting has implications for military decision-making. Conceptually, she argued that misuses or failures of the technology can result in grave errors in intelligence reporting, incorrect interpretations of an evolving operational context, and grave miscalculations in armed conflict. Moreover, AI can impact the international security landscape more broadly, such as by introducing uncertainties to strategy and the future of conflict (Puscas, 2024).

As for escalation, Puscas (2024) claimed that AI can increase the risks of escalation in myriad ways, such as by integration into weapons systems (e.g., nuclear, or conventional), by triggering intended or inadvertent forms of escalation, and also through its integration in decision-support systems where AI may prompt decisions to escalate.

On the side of proliferation, she pinpointed several risks associated with AI, including a result of the convergence between AI and other technological domains, or the proliferation of AI technologies themselves because of the wide dissemination of AI-powered software which can be repurposed or fine-tuned by a wide range of actors (Puscas, 2024).

In summation, this paper opinionates that among all the threats mentioned above, terrorism because of its unpredictability since 9/11 has become the most important threat to contemporary international security.

Issues in International Security

This sub-section presents the crux of the paper. In the opinion of this paper, issues in international security are different from international security threats. Arguably, the issues are the multiplicity of factors impeding the prevention, protection, alleviation, repelling, etc. the international security threats. These issues are tied to the causes of the threat. In other words, to tackle or address the threats, it is imperative to take serious cognizance of the issues. For the benefit of any doubt, let me provide the elucidation.

Issue 1: National Security Interests

It may sound strange to catalog national security interests as one of the issues in international security. Let's see how it fits in.

As the name suggests, national security interests are matters of vital interest to all countries. They include national security, public safety, national economic security, the safe and reliable functioning of critical infrastructure, and the availability of key resources. Of particular concern is national security, viewed as an umbrella concept that captures the rest of the variables in the definition. However, its application or interpretations remain state-centric or driven by states' connotations creating the grounds to view the concept as very subjective. For instance, in Subramaniam's concepts, national security is anything that gets in the way of state progress, whether inside or outside, that is a national security threat against the interest of that state (Subramaniam, 1972). From the look of Subrammanim's concept, the use of "anything" that lies in the purview of the state makes the concept to be subjective. And because of that, it is an issue. Ponder deeply about this situation. Why does the US perceive the nuclear arsenal possessed by Iran, Russia, China, and North Korea as a serious issue to its national security interest and by extension international security but at the same time have no issues with France, India, the UK, etc. possessing nuclear arsenal? Regardless of the possession, aren't nuclear arsenal posing a significant threat to international security? Is this not an issue in international security? So, with the issue, how is it possible for the international community precisely the UN to deal with the situation? Granted, the UN has adopted a good number of normative frameworks such as Resolution 1540 (2004), The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), UNSC Resolution 984, etc. to address the proliferation of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction. However, the effectiveness of these framework documents remains debatable. This is evidenced by the proliferation.

It can be argued that because national security interests are so vital to state survivability, a state could do whatever it takes within its power to protect its interests. For example, the US through its approved military operation code name "Navy SEAL mission" under the Obama regime ignored international law and best practices by using the Black Hawks, coated with special radar-evading paint and panels enter Pakistani airspace and subsequently killed al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden in 2011(Hashim, 2013). Similarly, Russia in the name of protecting its national security interest continues to bombard Ukraine, and Israel is also doing the same against Gaza. These examples are not to imply that national security interests are bad in themselves. Absolutely not. The way or manner states construct the concept that is sometimes detrimental to other states explains the issues.

States Perceptions of Multiple Security Threats

Arguably, many current threats associated with international security lie beyond the capacity of any one country to resolve. Therefore, the concept of cooperative security seems to be one of the viable options or alternatives. Unfortunately, the issue of states' perceptions of multiple security threats could make them more reluctant to pursue cooperative security because while efforts might improve one situation, they could have unforeseeable consequences for another. So, with this issue, it makes no error to see it as one of the factors impeding the fight against threats associated with international security.

The Issue of Double Standard

In the opinion of this paper, the concept of double standard is one of the issues impeding the fight against some of the threats associated with international security. Take the case of the double standard of nuclear weapons by reflecting on these assertions below.

"*The real danger comes from some miserable Third World country which decides to use these weapons either out of desperation or incivility*," says Kenneth Adelman (cited in Gusterson, 2006, p2). "*There have to be nuclear weapons in the hands of more responsible countries to deter such use" by Third World nations,* says Hans Bethe (cited in Gusterson, 2006, p2). These two assertions reflect a Western-centric mentality determining which states or countries should possess a nuclear arsenal. The West sets the standard that looks down on third world county and more importantly, apportioned the danger to third world countries. In other words, this Western-centric mentality or notion sees the third world country as lacking the technical maturity to be trusted with

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nuclear weapons. On the flip side of the same coin that stereotyped third world countries, it is worth asking the question does the West have the technical infallibility nuclear weapons ideally require (Gusterson, 2006)?

Besides the double standard of nuclear weapons frustrating the fight against the threats to international security, the UN's double standard on Israel is conspicuously indisputable. For example, within the past fifty years, Israel has invaded and attacked numerous neighboring countries without any true consequences from the U.N. The invaded countries include Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Despite all the unrest that these invasions have caused in the Middle East, the UN has never forcefully acted against Israel including the most recent retaliatory attack on Gaza causing a serious humanitarian catastrophe. The U.N. should have acted against Israel as strongly as it did against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The US double standard in the fight against global terrorism cannot go unnoticed in this paper. The Biden administration employs a double standard when it comes to Afghanistan. President Biden appeases the Taliban and deals with them despite a notorious terrorist group, i.e. the Haqqani network. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the leader of the terrorist Haqqani network, is wanted by the FBI. The State Department promises a 10 million dollar reward for information leading to his arrest. Haqqani is also the interior minister of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate and has repeatedly shown face in a variety of official ceremonies (Entekhabifard, 2022). Interestingly, the Biden administration is fully aware that this same terrorist who was on the US's own Top Wanted lists is now committing crimes against humanity as the Taliban's interior minister. Haqqani is on record to have accepted responsibility for planning of the 2008 terrorist attack on Kabul's Hotel Serena. Six people, including an American citizen, Thor Hesla, were killed in this attack. He has also admitted that he had planned the assassination of then-Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, in April 2008. He has organized many more suicide attacks against the citizens of Afghanistan and the forces of the coalition. Despite an authoritative report by United Nations experts in June 2023 noting the "strong and symbiotic" links between the Taliban, the Haqqani network, al-Qaida, and other terror groups, the Biden administration has softened Washington's stance on the Taliban as a sponsor of terrorism (Pforzheimer, 2023).

The Incompatibility of National Interests

From an international politics perspective, the incompatibility of national interests has been one of the key issues associated with international security. In a simple explanation, the incompatibility of national interests connotes a clash of national interests among or between states throughout history. There is no degree of certainty as to the definition of national interest, and there is no consensus among statesmen, scholars and practitioners of international politics as to the nature and constitution of the national interest of a state. This is because what determines a nation's interest varies from nation to nation, as different criteria are used to determine what constitutes the national interests of nations. The question of who defines the national interest of a nation has always come up when scholars try to analyze approaches to foreign policy formulation vis-a-vis national interest. Attempting to answer this question, Alade (1997) stated that national interest is often determined by the interest of the dominant class who controls the state's government machinery. This is a testimony that it is the elites in the state that determine what should be of interest to that state which forms the platform for its foreign policy formulation. Morgenthau (1972) made us comprehend that all foreign policies of nations "must consider survival as their minimum requirement since national interest is identified with national survival". The national interest of a nation must be connected to that state's desire to survive. It is connected to security which could be economic, political, military, or ideological security that must not be exposed to external threats. This is in agreement with Van, Dyke's (1957) assertion that "national security relates to the ultimate desire that the state survives and lives without serious external threat to its values or interest which are regarded as important or vital. By Dyke's claims, it can be rationalized that all nations are therefore obliged to protect their physical, political, economic, and possibly, cultural identity against being encroached upon by other nations.

On the grounds of survivability, states would do all they can to protect their national interests. Consequently, it becomes an issue if the protection of their national interests clashes with another state(s). The ongoing Russian military aggression against Ukraine which is viewed by many legal and political pundits as an invasion from all indications qualified as a spectacular case or example of incompatibility of national interests between Russia and Ukraine that threatens international security. Based on the concept of the notorious fact that does not demand citation, the global community is aware that one of the main reasons for Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 stemmed from Ukraine's sovereign right to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which would have further enhanced the NATO eastward expansion. Mindful of its national security interest, Russia viewed Ukraine's manifest expression as incompatible with its national security interest and therefore warned that it would embark on special military operations to protect its national security interest. On the contrary, Ukraine insisted that its decision was strategic to their national security interest as well. This example of incompatible national interests is not to determine the merits of the justification advanced by Russia's invasion and Ukraine's retaliation. It is just to explain how the incompatibility of national interests is an issue in international security.

Another spectacular example is the U.S., and Chinese national interests are fundamentally incompatible causing geopolitical tension. A few experts have given their opinions on the issue. For example, Elliott Abrams, a Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations asserts "*A China not ruled by the Communist Party would have not only different domestic policies but quite different foreign policies as well* (Foreign Affairs Asks the Experts, 2018).

Graham Allison, Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government posits "*China and the United States share some vital national interests, for example, no general war between them, but have conflicting national interests, for example over who will be the predominant power in the Western Pacific* (Foreign Affairs Asks the Experts, 2018).

Rebecca Friedman Lissner, Research Fellow at Perry World House, the University of Pennsylvania's Global Policy Research Center argues "*Although the United States and China share certain interests on matters of global governance, they have opposing interests in the Asian regional order. Whether and how these competing interests are managed will be the defining geopolitical*

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question of twenty-first century geopolitics" (Foreign Affairs Asks the Experts, 2018).

No doubt the views expressed by the various experts present their individual opinion. However, what cannot be refuted or denied about the incompatibility of national interests between the US and China is that Beijing is pursuing regional hegemony over Asia, especially the Indo-Pacific region which is incompatible with the US national security interest. If successful, China will very likely pursue the kind of global preeminence that would enable it to directly intervene in and exercise a domineering influence over Americans' lives (Colby, 2023). Arguably, because the US is cognizant of the implications China's aspiration to dominate the Indo-Pacific region will have on international security, it is doing everything within its diplomatic prowess by improving relations with other countries like Taiwan to counter Beijing's hegemonic ambitions. This incompatibility of national interests between the US and China has sparked geopolitical tension that was exacerbated by the U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022 despite warning of the repercussions from Beijing (Haenle & Sher, 2022).

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper comes as a course requirement meant to expose the author's (student) comprehension of the course "Issues in International Security". It does not cover all the thematic areas that embody the course.

This paper has provided the argument that the threats associated with international security are not the issues. As discussed, the issues in international security are a multiplicity of factors impeding or frustrating the fight against the threats in international security. This implies that to address the threats associated with international security, the actors in the theater of international security must take serious cognizance of the issues elaborated in this paper.

To put it another way, this paper concludes that the issues discussed in the paper are the causes of the threats associated with international security.

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