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<u>Is war a pre-requisite for peace?</u>

This essay will focus on military war, and consider peace to be the ideal opposite of war, which occurs when there is no fighting. The focus will be on bi-lateral or multi-lateral war. This clarification is made due to the ever growing possibility of trade wars and increased protectionism. Briefly, I will evaluate two theories, neorealism and liberalism, to show how both, in separate ways, suggest that war is not a pre-requisite for peace. I will show that from a neorealist perspective, the threat of war is a pre-requisite for peace, and war itself is not. Where as, according to the liberalist view, there would be no need for war due to cooperation through institutions, suggesting that war is not a pre-requisite for peace. However, I will then discuss how in some ways liberalism often reduces to realism and consequently, the rest of the essay will analyse the question from a neorealist outlook in more depth. Although empirically, the theories have apparent failures, within the terms I will identify, my judgement is that war is not necessary for peace to prosper, but the threat of war is what fosters peace.

A structural realist presumes a state of anarchy in the international order in which war is always possible. States are sovereign in the international order and there is no higher government of states. A neorealist would come to reason that gaining relative power is the only way to be protected against other states. Gilpin defines realism as 'primacy in all political life of power and security' [1]. Power comes in many forms, from hard power, (e.g. economic might), soft power (allies and diplomacy), to institutional power, whereby influencing spatially different states[2]. Many realists focus on military power given its measurable nature. If a state is the most relatively powerful nation, the threat of another state attacking is diminished because the attacking state will face assured

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[1] Gilpin 1984, p.305
[2] Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p.43

annihilation. As a result, a neorealist would see states building up vast militaries, only as a protectionary measure in the hope that these militaries will not be used.

From the neorealist perspective, it is therefore seen that power centric international politics cultivates peace. Peace exists not thanks to war, but due to the threat of war. However, it must also be understood that the concept of war only exists due to war having occurred throughout history, and this is necessary for preventing war. In other words, if war had never occurred, there would be no knowledge of the horror it creates. The a posteriori knowledge and concept of the horrors of war could be argued to be it's own pre-requisite for peace. However, this is besides the point. A realist sees the threat of war as sufficient in creating stability within international politics.

In comparison, liberalism promotes the potential of institutions, both formal and informal, to strengthen international cooperation. Formal institutions may exist in the form of bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or the European Union (EU), whose success was acknowledged in 2012 when it was award the Nobel Peace Prize. Informal institutions can include democracy, through which there can be debate in order to reach outcomes. Liberalism suggests these institutions 'can provide information, reduce transaction costs, make commitments more credible'[3], allowing debate to occur. Through debate, a variety of views can be heard, and differences of opinion can be understood and appreciated. When differences are better understood, the likelihood of conflict is diminished, to the point of guaranteed peace. Simply, from the perspective of liberal institutionalism, war is so unlikely thanks to increased cooperation, that institutions themselves have the capacity to be their own pre-requisite. However, through democratic institutions such the the United Nations, peace may be tested through democracy as strongly differing views may cause international tension, that may spark conflict. Recently the UN was left in a stalemate as Russia and

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[3] Keohane, 1995, p.42

the United States disagreed over an investigation into the suspected chemical attack in Syria, preventing action being effectively taken.

Mearsheimer contends that institutions are 'a reflection of the distribution of power'[4], through which states utilise institutions to bolster their military strength. Recent evidence of such realist behaviour, is the US administration's wish for the EU to increase military spending, with the threat of decreasing their own[5]. Through using institutions to alter another state's behaviour in this way, states, such as the US, can provoke their allies to also increase their military strength. This supports the realist claim that to some extent, powerful countries 'create and shape institutions'[6]. The use of institutions by states for their own gain re-iterates the realist argument when regarding institutions from a military perspective. Exacerbating the supremacy of realism over liberalism in this case is that there exists a large bias within institutions towards certain states[7], often because these states were involved in their founding. If a states' allies are stronger, so is their relative power, and there is a reasonable assumption that they will not be attacked by their allies.

The neorealist view is worthy of further exploration. Waltz uses the school of neorealist thought to propose the expansion of nuclear weapons as the best course of action for achieving security in the world[8]. Through this expansion, a security dilemma is created in which a state's 'fundamental motivation to seek a [nuclear] weapon is the perception that national security will be improved'[9]. This is due to the fact that states seeking self-help in the anarchic world order have managed to balanced the threat that they face from other aggressor states[10]. Therefore, if state A has balanced its nuclear arsenal (either through internal or external balancing) against state B, and

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[4] Mearsheimer, 1994, p.7
[5] BBC, 2017, see link
[6] Mearsheimer, p.13
[7] Strange, in Gilpin, 2001 p.85
[8] Waltz, 1990
[9] Deutch, 1992, p.124-125
[10] Sagan, 1996, p.57

one attacks the other, there is a guarantee that one state will retaliate with a second strike ensuring Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). This theory of nuclear deterrence ensures that the international status quo is maintained as states and governments are perceived to be 'rational actors'. Through this security dilemma, is clear that the mere threat of war is enough to generate a peaceful world.

The realist school assumes rationality, however, evidence shows this may not be the case. Whilst the threat of war is enough to create peace for most, some states that have deeply held beliefs may be un-deterred, as nothing will stop them from achieving what they consider to be their teleological goal in ending the existence of another particular nation[11]. Furthermore, Scheber argues that human actors can stop being rational due to evolutionary differences such as fear and emotion[12]. Therefore, the realist-induced behaviour of building up weaponry could lead to unpredictable emotions which contradict the theory and lead to an un-peaceful situation. States, governments and human actors that control weapons are not guaranteed to be rational actors and therefore, the rationality associated with the guarantee of the security dilemma and nuclear deterrence cannot always ensure security for each state.

That being the case, the threat of militant war need not be as extreme as nuclear war to discourage war and act as a pre-requisite for peace. Mueller challenges that in general, it is not purely atomic diplomacy that compels states into peaceful behaviour, but the relative escalation of any means of warfare that can alter a security situation[13]. Ultimately, nuclear diplomacy is not exclusive in guaranteeing security, as other military reactions can have an equal effect. Bundy highlights the 'folklore of atomic diplomacy'[14] that Truman offered to Stalin in wake of the

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[11] Smith, 2006, p.26-14
[12] Scheber 2011
[13] Mueller 1984, p.66
[14] Bundy 1984, p.28-33

prolonged period that Soviet troops remained in Iran (March, 1946). The messages from Truman to Stalin did not talk of nuclear weapons and therefore the threat of nuclear war was not what deterred the Soviet army (ibid.). This illustrates that although the threat of war is powerful, the threat need not be as severe as nuclear war to be able to have the desired effect.

Further analysis would question how realism and liberalism can be reconciled with the existence of military based institutions such as NATO, especially since states 'invest significant material and reputational resources in NATO'[15] implying they value something of what these organisations can offer. Nevertheless, in the context of war and military action, realism offers a better lens of analysis for international politics than liberalism, as liberalism can reduce to realism. In judgement therefore, it is not the war that is a pre-requisite for peace, but the threat of war that creates peace. This threat of war is facilitated by nations competing for power, through a neorealist conception of international politics.

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[15] Keohane, 1995, p.39

Flora Keeling

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