

# Security dilemma

## ***Security dilemma***

The security dilemma is a condition in which states in a self-help system, unsure of one another's intentions, arm for the sake of security and in doing so set a vicious circle in motion where the insecurity of others rises as each state interprets its own measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening

Having armed for the sake of security, other states feel less secure and buy more arms because the means to anyone's security is a threat to someone else, who in turn responds by arming. In the anarchical international system, the primary goal of states is to maximize their security. Even if states focus solely on this goal and have no intention of harming others, many of the actions taken by states to increase their security will decrease the security of others.

Decreasing the security of others does not automatically place the state in a dilemma, but because of the anarchic structure, other states will follow suit if one state arms. They cannot know whether the arming state will use its increased military capabilities for an attack in the future.

For this reason, they will either choose to increase their military capabilities to reestablish the balance of power, or they will launch a preemptive attack to prevent the arming state from upsetting the balance in the first place.

If they choose the first option, the result may be a security spiral, which is an action-reaction process, where two states are tied in an armaments race with each state responding to increases in weapons procurement and defence expenditure by the other state, leading them both to arm more and more heavily. This may lead to war in the long run. If they choose the last option, military conflict will be imminent.

## ***Misperception***

The phenomenon of misperception falls within the psychological theories of decision making. Simply put, it is a state of affairs in which an actor's perceptions of the world, of other actors, and their actions diverge from reality. Misperception can either stem from states naturally trying to deceive each other or from psychological factors.

That being said, it is the direct product of inaccurate inferences, miscalculations of consequences, misjudgments about how others will react to one's policies, misjudgments of another state's intentions, motives, and misinterpretation of the realities faced by another state. The state of misperception is always present in the international system and affects the actions of states through its influence upon their leaders/governments.

Henceforth, it can often lead to a security dilemma or even war by creating overestimates and underestimates of hostility.

Robert Jervis has made several hypotheses concerning some psychological factors that often result in misperceptions.

1. decision-makers tend to fit incoming information into their existing theories
2. decision-makers remain attached to a particular opinion and disregard new pieces of information that do not conform with them
3. an actor's perceptual thresholds are influenced by what he has experienced and learned about
4. a state's previous unfortunate experience with a type of danger can sensitize it to other examples of that danger
5. the way people perceive data is influenced not only by their theories about other actors but also by what they are concerned with at the time they receive the information;
6. there is an overall tendency for decision-makers to see other states as more hostile than they are
7. actors tend to see the behaviour of others as more centralized, disciplined, and coordinated than it is
8. states tend to take the foreign office's position for the stand of the other government as a whole
9. actors tend to overestimate the degree to which others are acting in response to what they do when the others behave in accordance with the actor's desires; but when the behaviour of the other is undesired, it is usually seen as derived from internal forces
10. when actors have intentions that they do not try to conceal from others, they tend to assume that others accurately perceive these intentions
11. it is hard for an actor to believe that the other can see him as a menace
12. actors tend to overlook the fact that evidence consistent with their theories may also be compatible with different views.

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