Jervis analyzes the fact that there is no higher power that rules over all nations/countries/states to prevent anarchy. As a result of this, there is a constant fear between nations as to whether they are defensive enough in situations of attack by others, or they have enough firepower to initiate a warfare.

This situation of whether a nation is too powerful to be considered as a threat by others or whether a state is powerful enough to fend off its enemies is what causes an intense dilemma which in turn causes wars.