

The individual level analysis for systems politics essay



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War at the individual level analysis differs from that of systematic levels of analysis. War at the individual level concedes directly to that of human nature. Decisions of various individual leaders can be traced to that of human nature. According to the first level of analysis, war is the result of an individual leader decision making and is ultimately up to that individual. The textbook states that, " War occurs because of the choices people make, not due to inbred aggressive traits" (168).

It is my opinion that the majority of individuals in power have strong agendas both for the state and for personal self interests. While the first course of action by these individuals may be diplomatic in nature, they may very well succumb to the evils of armed conflict to obtain their objectives (whatever they may be). These individuals are only human and face human traits such as fear, greed, restlessness, a need for safety, and revenge. If individuals in power feel threatened, they may consider armed conflict as a solution to ease potential worries of current and future threats. According to the textbook, " human beings are built for consensus, not conflict" (167).

War at the systematic level involves structural processes that occur on a wide scale because of distribution of power among competing states. War results at the systematic level because of repeating trends such as power cycles, power transitions, and distribution of power systems. Power cycles and power transitions can fuel tensions and international conflicts that may possibly lead to armed conflict (but not always). The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America bipolar distribution of power that resulted in the cold war is a prime example of power cycles and transitions.

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The causes of war can be complex and often are the result of individual as well as systematic factors such as the example given in the beginning of chapter 7. Bismarck's personal ambitions for glory as well as the systematic power cycle of Prussia best explains why war results on various levels of analysis. Prussia was at a critical point of unification and the next step was to consolidate individual German states. With an individual leader bent on state domination as well as the systematic breakdown in diplomatic solutions, bloody armed conflict ensued.

In my opinion, the individual level is more useful in explaining the occurrence of war in contemporary times. The ideology and beliefs that people in power tend to lean towards determines whether or not these individuals will decide to embark on armed conflict.

7.

The following characteristics determine causes of war at the state level of analysis:

The geographic location of a state relative to its competitor may determine the frequency in which that state engages in conflict with its competitor.

Reoccurring conflict and territorial disputes is nothing new to Israel and the Palestine people. Both reside close in geographic proximity (In fact, many Palestine people actually live within Israel's borders). Since the Israel-Palestine war in 1948, both believe that the territory they occupy is rightfully theirs.

Cultural values and various forms of nationalism can lead to armed conflict since it reinforces commitment to one's own heritage. Xenophobia is also another factor that can contribute to conflict. If governments are persuasive enough in nationalist rhetoric and propaganda, they can convince citizens that foreigners are a threat to the state. Governments sometimes use this strategy if domestic support of the state to govern is strained or deteriorating.

Civil strife can produce massive unrest within a state simply because violence and displacement usually occurs when a state experiences a civil war. When the United States experienced civil war, it was because .

Poor economic conditions may breed discontent among the less fortunate

Political institutions

Civil strife is the most salient factor that contributes to war because of the risks associated in a governmental collapse of authority. This could lead to some form of anarchy which may result in a chaotic governance and the state's ability to keep control.

Civil strife, cultural values, and poor economic conditions are prime breeding grounds for new terrorists. Sometimes I wonder why the Global North spends so much money on military expenditures when they could take a fraction of those expenditures and help build sound infrastructures in the Global South. The Global North could build schools to educate the Global South instead of building bombs and investment could jumpstart businesses instead of wars. Of course this would take time. Every dollar that is spent building new

weapons could be deducted from military expenditures and transferred to investment of the Global South. If the Global North took a more liberalist stance on improving civil strife, cultural values, and poor economic conditions in the Global South, everyone involved would be much better off. The Global North would spend less money on weapons while the Global South would have minimal terrorist recruits because the standard of living would improve and thus people would be less discontent. In the end, everyone would be better off since there would be a minimal chance of conflict.

8.

One of the most interesting and opposing statements in the realm of competing ideology of armed conflict is that “one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter”. There has been armed conflict of some sort of another since the dawn of time. I find it ironic that each individual and each group thinks that their side is the right side. The textbook states that, “like most animals, humans instinctively defend territory they believe belongs to them”. I think it is possible to take this one step further and say that humans instinctively defend ideas and ideologies that they believe belongs to them and that everyone else must respect their beliefs. Since each side believes that they are right and the other is wrong it makes perfect sense that that “one person’s terrorist is truly another person’s freedom fighter”.

It is sad because terrorists do not abide by the Geneva conventions. For example, when terrorists flew a jet into the world trade center, none of the terrorists wore uniforms. Some may argue that these freedom fighters could

not afford them. Well obviously, these same freedom fighters were funded by Osama bin Laden.

The majority of people in the west vehemently oppose terrorists because of its violent nature. Who would want to get blown up or watch a family member or country man die because of some terrorists group agenda? Nobody in the established world wants to live in fear and terror. In fact, if I had to take a wild guess, no one wants to live in fear and terror, no matter if those people live in the established world or not.

Some people around the world support terrorist causes because they feel sympathy for the terrorists causes and struggles. These people think that the human struggle against the establishment is as old as time itself.

Sympathizers usually share same religion, ethnicity, or culture. People that live in regions that harbor terrorist organizations support these terrorists because these terrorist provide order, services, and protection to local communities.

Al-Shabaab (a terrorist group in Somalia) is an key example and illustration of why terrorism is such a problem in the contemporary world, why people reverently support terrorists, and reasons why other people vehemently oppose terrorists. Al-Shabaab is responsible for suicide bombings against the Somali government, attacking nongovernmental organizations, and various media correspondents. In the last couple of years Al-Shabaab engaged in a two week gorilla like battle with the Ethiopian military (it has since withdrawn its forces from Ethiopia) and is currently attempting to overthrow the Somalia government. Al-Shabaab is even suspected of training pirates

that are responsible for attacking ships and oil tankers in and out of the Gulf of Aden. Training and consulting pirates has become a major concern to western nations since it disrupts trade and puts individuals from western nations of increased risk. Somali pirates make money by holding a ship's cargo and personal for ransom. Governments in the west have labeled Al-Shabaab as a destabilizing force in the Somali region. Foreign investment by nongovernmental organizations has been extremely minimal because of this destabilization (which fuels a viscous cycle of even more destabilization).

Somali pirates and the Al-Shabaab terrorist network may be a result of inequality in economic resources and cultural values as referred to in chapters 5 and 6. Some people may in fact support Al-Shabaab activities because they share the same cultural, ethnic, and extreme right wing religious views of the individuals that compose the terrorist group. Other terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda support Al-Shabaab's activities since both terrorists groups share similar extreme right wing religious views of Islamism.

9.

A main goal of terrorism of the past was to frighten as many people as possible but not necessarily killing as many people as possible. Today's terrorists don't care as much for a public audience, rather they want to kill as many people as they possibly can with a vengeance. The new global terrorism is more frightening than previous iterations because in today's world, terrorists can use relatively primitive weapons to carry out huge and dramatic terrorists plots. Take a look at the 9/11 terrorist attacks that

occurred in the United States of America. 19 Al-Qaida terrorists were able to hijack four American airplanes using nothing more than box cutters, pepper spray, and fake explosives. What the 19 Al-Qaida terrorists had working for them in their favor was the accumulation of months of planning, precise execution (with the exception of the airliner that crashed in Pennsylvania), and a little luck that there was a breakdown in communication within the United States of America's foreign and domestic intelligence agencies.

Terrorist organizations are using the intranet to communicate to a younger generation of angry and disenchanting youth. Using common video posting services such as services similar to YouTube and rogue websites, these organizations can communicate with their selected audience. Today's terrorist organizations operate in decentralized, small fractions run by local leaders. Organizations like al-Qaida may have a central cause but operates globally without the direction of any one leader.

On the one hand, in order to stem terrorism, the textbook suggests that, "those advocating repression see terrorism springing from the cold calculations of extremists who should be neutralized by preemptive surgical strikes" (183). This strategy clearly follows that of the Bush doctrine. The ideology of the Bush doctrine led to the invasion of Afghanistan and more or less war with Iraq.

On the other hand, the textbook suggests that, "...those who see terrorism rooted in frustrations with political oppression and relative deprivation urge negotiation and compromise" (183).

If I was a key U. S. presidential aid on foreign policy I would recommend the following three strategies:

Aim for and destroy all terrorist infrastructure and breeding grounds for training using military preemptive strikes.

Shut down and freeze terrorists financial assets and revenue streams.

Impose strict economic sanctions on countries who support, fund, or harbor terrorists.

The potential drawbacks of implementing the preceding strategies would be the cost of human lives of innocent citizens. Women and children who have nothing to do with state sponsored terrorism would be victims of these economic sanctions and military strikes. This would be grounds for considering each strategy on a case by case basis since collateral damage should not. The war against global terrorism may never be won since there are always going to be weeds springing up wherever dissatisfaction takes root. However, global terrorism in the future may be minimized if regions within the Global South take a turn for the positive and follow into the footsteps of the Global North. Ultimately, terrorism is a nasty apple that brings devastation to all involved. Hopefully, strategies like the three listed previously will rot terrorism to the core and eradicate unconventional activities among dissidents in the Global South.