

Causes of Conflict & Political Violence: An Introduction & Review of Anarchy in IR

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Let's begin with a basic point:

Conflict ranges from minor disagreements, feuds, and spats over national policies, to various forms of violence including terrorism and multiple kinds of war/conflict/violence, the worse being total nuclear war.

We should ask why is 'war' waged? And is 'war' the correct noun to describe conflict today?

Q. Why is it that most French citizens did not fear the re-unification of Germany, even though in WWI and WWII Germany was responsible for hundreds of thousands of French casualties?

What would it take for the states like France, Germany, UK, Japan, and the USA to fight each other today?

Realists would say it is bound to happen.

But is this really likely to occur today?

Is it Due to the Structure of the Int'l System?

- Distribution of power (# of poles – two poles, north and south? Multi-polar world?) may influence global stability.
- Neo-realists argue a bipolar system is most stable – less uncertainty, more effective alliances.
 - US-USSR did not fight in Cold War
- Hegemonic Stability Theory – one great power orders and manages the system. Hegemon is more likely to reduce conflict in system, unless their own power erodes and is then challenged.

Due to State Level Processes?

- States vary by foreign policy. How?
 - Varied degree of democracy;
 - Varied degree in economic interdependence;
 - Varied degree of international social interactions and interconnectedness;
 - Varied degree of trust in international institutions.

Other Processes?

- Role of ideology, cultures, religion?
- Level of development – maybe some states are more expansionist in their history but out-grow it.

Basic Facts About War & IR

- Hubris – Most states think they will win war, increases willingness;
- Anything that increases optimism, is a cause of war;
- Most states think war will be short;
- Thus, most wars result from uncertainty and miscalculation of who is more powerful– people keep repeating same old errors.
- In the above cases, drop the word, 'war' and insert the word, 'conflict'
- Does this substantially alter our understanding of violence in the Int'l System?

Explanations, cont'd

- It takes two states to fight a war.
- War is never an accident – it is an intentional choice. The same is true of peace.
- Why are there no names for periods of peace, when the causes of war and peace spring from the same roots?

Individual Level Factors as Unit of Analysis

- Decision-makers may change history
- Hard-wired for war?
 - Is violence innate or learned?
- Public opinion?
 - Do people always want peace?
 - Power of ideas?

Fundamental Question

**What is the fundamental difference
between international politics and
those politics that occur within states?**

**It is the lack of institutions with ultimate
power and authority to condition
politics.**

Let's discuss the implications

Anarchy

Is the world is full of conflict because the international system is chaotic”?

No. The world is anarchic! Anarchy and Chaos are not synonyms.

By anarchy, we mean the lack of a central or higher authority, which characterizes the international system.

- There is no legitimate central authority. Unlike domestic systems which are hierarchic, the international system is anarchic.**
- This does not necessarily mean that the world is chaotic. Of course, for short periods of time chaos has reigned, such as during times of world war.**
- There is an abundance of peace in the international system. While there are many disputes and some militarized conflicts, wars are very rare occurrences.**

Implications of Anarchy

- **Fundamentally motivates state behavior forcing competition with no assurance of survival.**
- **Self-help system: every state is on its own**
- **Autarky: Self-sufficiency is a goal.**
- **Lack of trust: Easy to lie or cheat.**
- **Human Rights Problems: Paradox of Int. Law**
- **Collective Action Problems: Cooperation is difficult**

- **Only military force and economic statecraft can be used to impose rules on other countries if they refuse to follow them.**
- **By economic statecraft we mean taking measures such as imposing tariffs, cutting off trade altogether through embargoes, freezing assets, etc.**
- **Thus, due to the concept of sovereignty, enforcing international law, norms, or other demands is similar to mob rule or arbitrary coercion.**

Origin of the Security Dilemma

Problem: By every actor seeking to maximize their own interest, such as security, this threatens other actors.

Security Dilemmas arise when states in the pursuit of security pursue policies that have the effect of making other state's less secure.

Implications:

- 1. Problem of offensive versus defensive weapons**
- 2. Spiraling tensions or arms races**
- 3. Systemic problem of the international system – all states affected**
- 4. May produce fear and conflict where none was there before**

Useful metaphor to illustrate this problem is the Prisoner's Dilemma Game

Imagine you and another person rob a bank but are later arrested but without air-tight evidence. You are placed in separate rooms for interrogation. You are faced with a choice to confess and blame the plan on the other person with the reward of going free or keeping your mouth shut. If you both keep quiet, neither of you may be convicted. If you both confess, you may both get more lenient sentences.

What would you do confess or keep quiet?

TABLE 2.2 ■ Payoff Matrix in India-Pakistan PD Game

		Pakistan	
		Cooperate	Defect
India	Cooperate	(3,3)	(1,4)
	Defect	(4,1)	(2,2)

Note: First number in each group is India's payoff, second is Pakistan's. The number 4 is highest payoff, 1 lowest.

Now think of this situation as the potential for nuclear black mail or the possibility of disarmament.

Would you disarm if you were either India or Pakistan?

Another Recent Example of Security Dilemma: NATO expansion

Nato Expansion

