CDSn4001: Conflict Analysis

International systemic causes of war: balance of power

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Agenda

- Last week's concepts
- Systemic theories in IR and war
  - How does anarchy lead to war?
  - How can we achieve peace in anarchy?
- Different types of realism
- Balance of power theory vs hegemonic stability theory

What is conflict?

- "a situation in which actors use conflict **behavior** against each other to attain **incompatible goals** and/or to express their **hostility**" (Bartos and Wehr 2002).

Incompatibility of goals

- Can evaluate in two ways:
    1) Ask: Is it logically impossible for both parties' goals to be achieved simultaneously?
    2) Use payoff matrices

Payoff matrices

	Conflict Parties	
	Husband	Wife
Goals		
Four children	−3	10
No children	4	−8

Payoff matrices

	Conflict Parties	
	Workers	Managers
Goals		
Wage: $20 per hour	7	−3
Wage: $10 per hour	−4	8
Solvency of the firm	2	5

Payoff matrices: advantages

- Identify incompatibility
  - two goals are incompatible if one has a positive payoff only for the party and the other only for the opponent.
- Consider conflicts in which there are more than two alternatives.
- Determine the extent to which the goals are incompatible (e.g., zero-sum game).
- Determine whether an agreement is possible.
- Determine what agreement is "best" for both sides.

Rationality

1) consider possible actions/determine possible alternatives;

2) consider the likely consequences of each action/determine outcomes linked to alternatives;

3) evaluate each set of consequences/assign payoffs;

4) choose the action with the most desirable consequences/choose the alternative with highest payoffs.

Rational choice theory in IR

- A methodological approach that explains individual and collective outcomes in terms of individual goal-seeking under constraints (e.g., technological, political social, etc.)
- Assumes that actors are purposive
- Unit of analysis: strategic interactions
- Pragmatic view of theory (i.e., there are multiple ways of approaching the same problem)
- Uses simplification, generalization, formalization
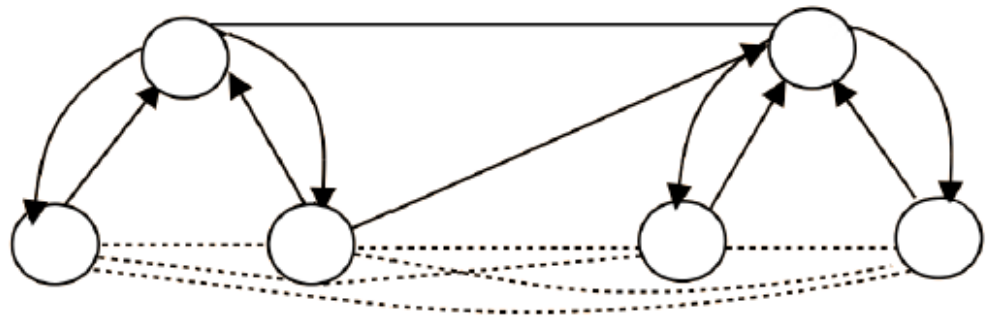
Hostility

- "antagonism, opposition, or resistance in thought or principle"
- Rational vs irrational behaviour

Types of conflict

- **Structural** (i.e., conflict of interest)
  - Vertical relations – there is always conflict, because it is built into the structure; the periphery states are denied opportunity to pursue goals
- **Actor** (i.e., conflict of values)
  - Horizontal relations – conflict can come and go (actors are capable of formulating and pursuing goals)
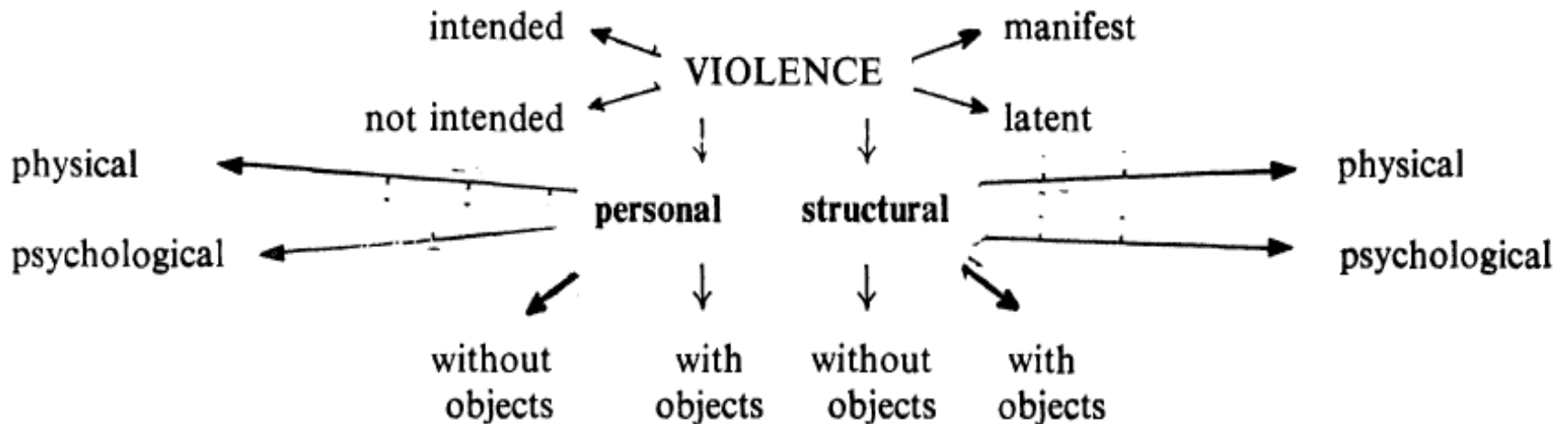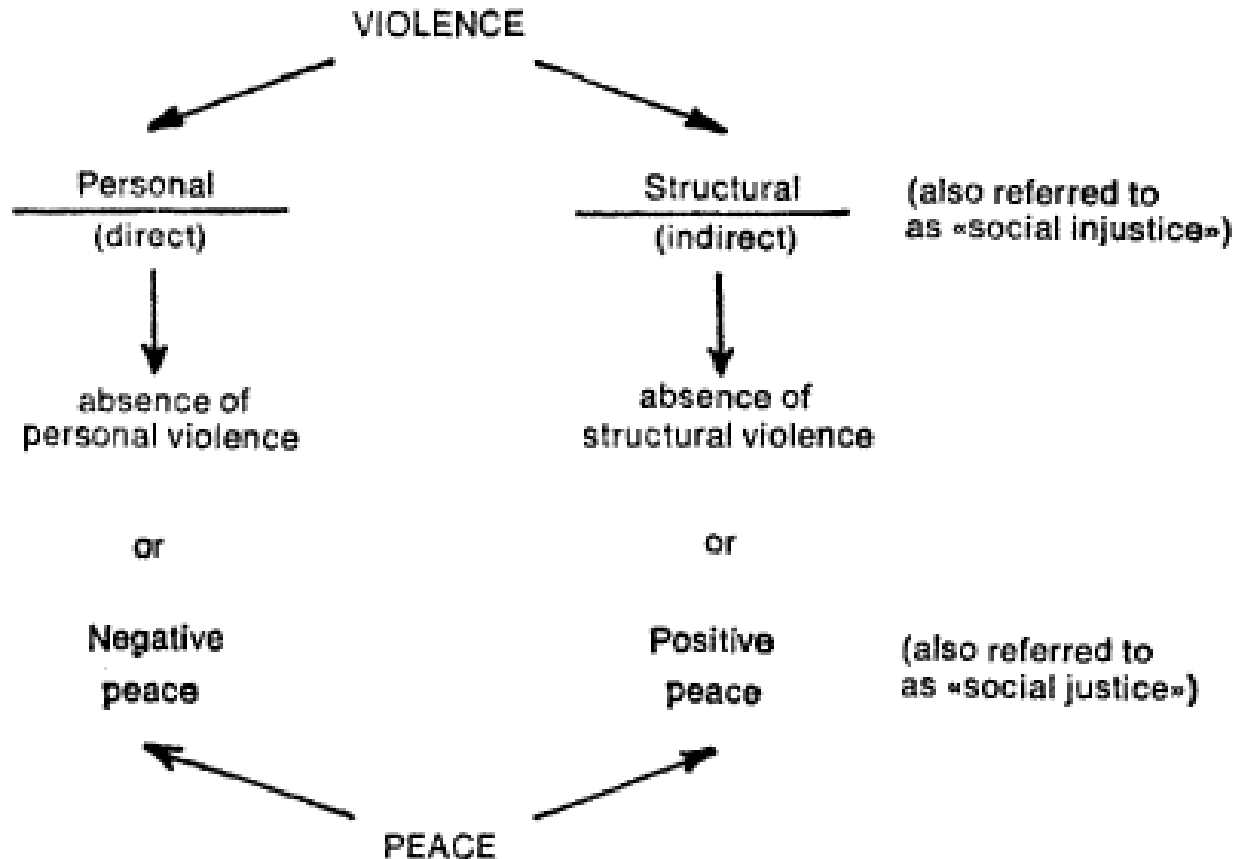
Center S_1

Periphery S_2

What is violence?

- "the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is" (Galtung 1969)
  - when this is *avoidable*, violence is present

intended

not intended

VIOLENCE

manifest

latent

physical

psychological

personal   **structural**

physical

psychological

without objects

with objects

without objects

with objects

Peace

• absence of personal violence and absence
of structural violence - negative and positive peace

VIOLENCE

Personal
(direct)

Structural
(indirect)

(also referred to
as «social injustice»)

absence of
personal violence

absence of
structural violence

or

or

Negative
peace

Positive
Peace

(also referred to
as «social justice»)

PEACE

Basic tenets of realism

Interest of states	**Survival**
How to achieve survival	**Increase power**
Human nature	**Man is flawed and therefore prone to conflict**
Anarchy	**The environment in which sovereign nation-states act**

The international structure

- Kenneth Waltz – an American political scientist and the father of neorealism
  - Asked: Why do wars occur?
- "International anarchy is the permissive cause of war."
  - Sovereign nation-states in a system of international anarchy will behave conflictually, because there is nothing or no one to prevent conflict.

International anarchy

- International politics is composed of sovereign nation-states that are beholden to no higher power.

- There is no world government (i.e., self-help system)

- Anarchy in IR is **not** lack of order but **a lack of an orderer.**

Realism and power

- Hans Morgenthau: "International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power."
- Power defined largely in terms of coercion.
- Mostly viewed as specific assets or material resources available to state.
  - Power is military power.
  - Economic power as an essential underpinning of military power.

(Classical) realism vs neorealism

Classical realism	Structural realism (neorealism)
Power for the sake of power: power as end	Power for security: power as means
Human nature as the cause of war	Anarchic structure as a necessary but not sufficient condition for war
Domestic factors matter (in a limited way)	Focus on states as unitary actors interacting in international system

Defensive vs offensive realism

STRUCTURAL REALISM	
DEFENSIVE	**OFFENSIVE**
States should gain "appropriate amount of power"	It makes sense for states to pursue as much power as possible
Pursuit of hegemony is foolish	States should pursue hegemony
Key writers: Waltz, Jervis	Key writers: Mearsheimer, Gilpin, Schweller

Balance of power theory

- **Balance of power**: A system in which no single actor is dominant; also, the distribution of power in such a system, which is not necessarily equal.
  - no single state is sufficiently powerful to defeat the others.

Hegemonic stability theory

- Stability results from unipolarity, in which one dominant state ensures some degree of order in the system.
- **Hegemon** = leader or dominant actor
  - "global cop", reducing the degree of anarchy in the system
- War is most likely when the dominant position of the leader erodes, giving other states the temptation to seek dominance.

  ➢ if the rising second-place state seeks to assert its power, or
  ➢ if the hegemon attacks preemptively to crush the rising threat before it becomes even more powerful.

Balance of power vs hegemonic stability

- **Balance of power**: stability in balance; chances of war increase as one state seeks to dominate the others

- **Hegemonic stability**: stability in dominance; chances of war increase as the situation moves toward equality

Polarity in international politics

		Examples
Unipolarity	The hegemon keeps order, sets up the rules, mediates disputes, and opposes any autonomous action	Rome USA since 1991?
Bipolarity	Two competing great power hegemons. Each presides over an alliance of weaker states.	Athens vs Sparta (5th century BC) The Cold war
Tripolarity	With three great powers, no balance is possible. Each state seeks to avoid having the other two gang up on it.	?
Multipolarity	With a municipality of powers, multiple combinations can produce balance.	Almost all European history (19th century Europe) World since 9/11?

Is this a realist world?

- Do you agree with realists? Why (not)?

- How do we achieve peace in a realist world? In a neorealist world?