

CDSn4001: Conflict Analysis

**Studying conflict: theory
and levels of analysis**

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Agenda

- Levels of analysis – how to study conflict
- What is theory and what is it good for?

The levels of analysis and the study of conflict

- Why levels of analysis?
 - “methodological bets”
 - Scope of the research objective
- What types of levels of analysis?
 - Individual, state, systemic
 - Often just two: within state and outside of state
 - Could be more levels

The “three images” in IR

- Kenneth Waltz, *Man, State, and War* (1959)
 - Why do wars happen?
 - Human nature, “bad” states or societies, international anarchy

Individual causes of conflict

- Role of political leaders, personalities, groups of people
- Cognitive biases, misperceptions, psychological issues

Domestic causes of conflict

- Ideological
 - Nationalism, militarism, etc.
- Governance, political and economic regimes
- Cultural, historical, ethnic factors

Systemic causes of conflict

- The character of the international system in which states co-exist
- Creation and destruction of alliances, changes in formal institutions and norms at the international level



Theory and the study of conflict

- What is theory?
- What is a good theory?
- Why do we need (good) theory?

Theory

- What is theory?
 - An explanation of some aspect of the world based on reasoning, observation, and/or experimentation.
- What is a *good* theory?
 - Describe, explain, predict, prescribe
 - Accuracy, generality, parsimony, causality

