

Chapter 1

A “SYSTEMS APPROACH” FOR FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

On the top of the fundamental problems faced in foreign policy analysis, the question of which level of analysis should be preferred, is located. Should the basic level of analysis be states, international organizations or international structures?

Theories which had been developed up until today have been set out in this paper in order to find out the answer of this question. Realists mostly focused on the states, neo-realists usually focused on the structure of international system, liberals generally focused on the characteristics of social and economic systems such as democracy and international trade, and constructivists basically focused on factors such as perception, meaning, national identity and interests. Each of those theories has surely contributed considerably to the literature especially in explaining international relations (IR). However, each one has been criticized severely by the others for being unable to explain the complex network of relationships which have been experienced at the stage of international relations fully.

In other words, the mainstream international relations theories have not been able to develop universal models, which are applicable to all times and all conditions. Those theories although could be regarded as, to some extent, successful in explaining the conducts of states at certain times and in certain conditions, they were failed to explain the foreign policy dynamics of those states and the structure of international system as a whole in the following years.

Therefore, it can be argued that one of the most fundamental problems of IR discipline is the failure of developing universal models. A holistic approach which could include all or most of the mainstream theories' arguments has not been developed until today. Hence, this study is conducted to meet this need to some extent.

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of the arguments of mainstream theories in a reconciliatory way. The introduction and understanding of the system's logic in this way will support the thesis that foreign policy is moving in the direction of universal principles which can be applied to almost any time and any country's foreign policy.

Furthermore, in spite of regarding the actors of foreign policy just as the states or international structure, this study suggests to include various actors which are affecting the international relations both inside and outside the borders of the states. That is to say, it is not satisfactory to take just the state or the international community as the sole unit of IR analysis. There is need for a holistic model that will deal with the states, the international structure, international organizations and multinational corporations as well as the internal environment within the borders of the states, such as psychologic and sociologic factors affecting decision makers, and analyze the relationship among all these variables and parameters on the same basis. The systems approach offers this opportunity to researchers.

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