War and Peace
A Systems Approach to the Understanding and Prevention (?) of Wars and Terrorism

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Abstract

The world is living in a culture of war. In spite of eras and areas of enlightenment, subcultures of warring people are persisting as is reflected in local and global terrorism. Emotions rather than rationality determine the aggressive behavior of the human species on this Earth. We react to the symptoms but neglect to study the causes of violence, terrorism and wars. It all boils down to a universal struggle for power and celestial glory.

A systems approach is proposed to investigate global society as a system of interrelated and interacting subsystems that are governed by brainless action and reaction. Diverse cultures constitute subsystems of often opposing beliefs that lead to controversy and belligerent action.

Prologue: Political Systems, Belief Systems: The Pitfalls of "isms"

The world is under the spell of "isms". While the West exhibits currently the ugly side of ***capitalism*** where the stock markets tumble down the slopes of corporate corruption, ***communism*** is taking a back seat since it was beaten by its inherent rampant ***bureaucratism***. Extreme ***nationalism*** invokes ***patriotism*** and ***conformism*** based on ***provincialism*** and often religious ***fanaticism***. ***Materialism*** leads to ***protectionism*** that defends egocentric interests with the power of ***militarism***.

Leftover monarchical ***absolutism*** and absolutist dictatorships oppress the citizens and provoke religious and state ***terrorism***. ***Symbolism*** is a polite way of flag waving, be it the swastika, the red star, the rising sun, or the Stars and Stripes. "Love it or leave it" is the slogan of the ignorant who are slaughtered on the battlefields.

We are reliving 1984 all over again. Governments call suicide bombers terrorists and terrorists call themselves freedom fighters. Humanism falls by the wayside and socialism has a hard time surviving. Those in power excuse themselves by classifying bombing of innocent civilians, "collateral damage". Religious zealots like the Taliban and Al Quaida bandits commit suicide in the name of Allah and believe in their distorted view that it is God's will to land them in heaven. Instead, they wind up in the hell of ignorance and nothingness. It is the ***globalism*** of international commerce that is seen in many parts of the world as a threat to cultures and lives of people in developing countries.

Concepts of System Engineering

"Good system engineering begins with a clear understanding of the ***world view*** and progressively narrows until technical detail is understood." (Ref. Pressman). Complex systems are hierarchies of macro-elements that are themselves systems composed of subsystems, sub-subsystems etc.

System engineering involves a variety of steps such as, conceiving a plan, analyzing the environment, specifying the requirements, designing the architecture of, and implementing elements into a system. A system has essentially two components: A static element and a dynamic one. The static element relates to its physical appearance; the dynamic element has to do with movement and transformation.

There are organic (living) systems and inanimate systems. An example of the first kind is our human body. An airplane represents an instance of the second type. Human society is a super-ordinate complex living system. A very important aspect of a system is ***control***: The brain controls all the organs in our body; a pilot, human or automatic, controls an airplane; politicians control the fate of their people.

The system engineering process can be classified as political when it deals with aspects of human interaction. A political system such as the United Nations has the following characteristics:

1. It is extremely large and has many sub- and sub-subsystems as, for example, nations, states, cities, and families (See Fig. 1).
2. It is rather complex in its dynamic behavior. The complexity is based on the nature of human interaction.
3. It is man-made and in its hierarchal structure it is superimposed by the dynamics of political interaction.
4. Most of the system inputs are random making it impossible to predict precisely its behavior at any instant in time.
5. The system can be uncontrollable as the actions of "rogue" states and terrorist organizations have proven.
6. The system has limited predictability. As with all human endeavors, only with statistical methods can we try to forecast the probability of actions and reactions in our associations.
7. It consists of many subsystems that can be treated as entities in themselves.

System (Engineering) Hierarchy

In general, one can consider a system (engineering) hierarchy as a tree structure of views and viewpoints that has at its apex a global or world view. In the ideal world, it could be the United Nations who promote peace as a rational mode for survival of all. Unfortunately, it is the nationalistic interests that always intercedes efforts towards peace for the world.

On the domain or national level, we could, for instance, consider the governance of different political systems such as imperial systems, democratic systems, or dictatorial systems.

Further down the hierarchy, one could select as elements of a democratic systems, judicial, executive, and legislative subsystems as we find them in Western democracies. On the same level, we could classify constitutional monarchies or other parliamentary systems.

Within the realm of an executive subsystem, the detailed view of sub-subsystems could relate to security (police, military, etc.) foreign and internal policy, budgeting, con-

Figure 1. System Hierarchy of Political Systems

trol of internal and external commerce, treatment ot the environment, population development, intra-state relationships, and more.
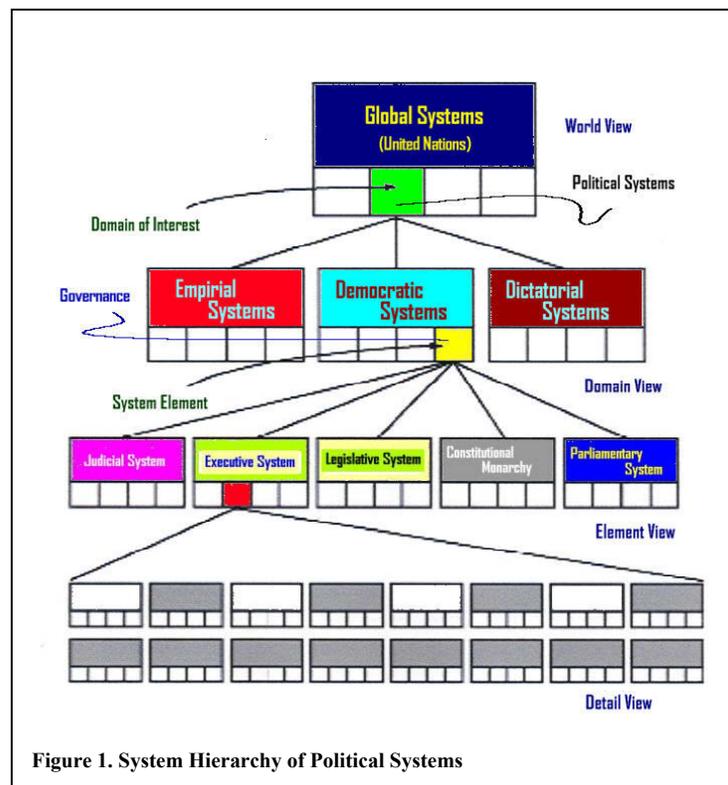
Human Engineering

As part of political systems we find systems of human engineering. In a sense, educational systems are systems of human engineering, for better or for worse. In democracies, education is generally directed towards diversity of political views, although political indoctrination often creeps in as is demonstrated in our pledge of allegiance that children have to recite in schools.

As quoted in Pressman, 500 years or so ago, Machiavelli said: "there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduc-

tion of a new order of things." Machiavelli, of course, is often maligned as the promoter of "Machiavellian" behavior that has connotations of dictatorial control. A new order of things is found in the attempts of the United Nations to bring the nations of the world together in peace and harmony. Unfortunately, this peace was chattered on September 11 of last year by the fanatic acts of a few religious zealots who were misguided by their leaders.

Indoctrination towards terrorist or militarist actions is the worst kind of human engineering. In the armies of the world soldiers are trained to obey orders even to the last consequence which is murder and suicidal death. In organized religions, indoctrination towards one-sided beliefs is an essential part of their hierarchies.

System Components of War and Terrorism

Wars and killings are a human affliction. They have been around ever since mankind appeared on this Earth. Indeed, killing is a natural instinct in the animated world; an instinct for survival; an instinct that dictates defense and aggression. That instinct is barely mollified by social agreement as reflected in our laws and rules of living together.

In order to analyze the reasons for war and for our aggressive behavior, we should define the system components of war.

1. First and foremost there are people; ordinary people, "innocent" civilians who are often following their aggressive instincts to pursue their egocentric agendas. There are the politicians of all persuasions who want to manipulate their fellow citizens, the lawyers who claim to be arbiters in human disputes. There are the warriors, the soldiers in military hierarchies who follow orders of those in power. And then there are the weapons manufacturers, the profiteers of evil who sell their products to anyone who has money and themselves to the devil.

2. Secondly, there is the environment. The natural environment, if there ever was one, is dangerously modified by human intervention. Natural boundaries such as oceans, lakes, rivers, and mountains are superimposed by national boundaries that are often arbitrary and established

Figure 2: Global Educational System

by the victors for their own gain. Overpopulation as promoted by the manipulators of the human spirit is rapidly depleting our natural resources.

3. Diversity of culture often leads to misunderstanding. Most of the peoples on Earth have developed a belligerent culture of some sort. An exception are, perhaps, the "Gentle Tassadai' of Borneo who are reported to be peaceful and even lack a word for war. In Western cultures, military organizations are supposedly defensive in nature, but are they?

4. An important system component is usually ignored. However, history has shown that religion and religious and ideological indoctrination are often the initiator of wars. We see it in ancient as well as in recent times. In Northern Ireland, Catholics have fought the Protestants; in Kosovo and Bosnia Orthodox Serbs are fighting Muslims and Croatian Catholics; Jews are in conflict with Muslims in the Middle East. Certainly, we are in a war against Islamic Fanatics who have terrorized the most powerful Nation on Earth through their suicidal actions in New York and around the world.
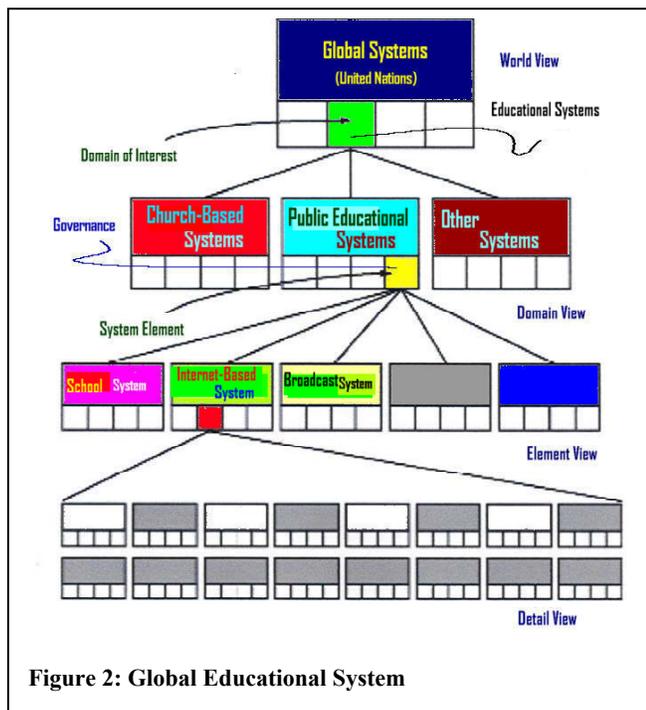
5. Weapon systems are elements of wars. In modern times, they have become sophisticated to the degree that killing has become anonymous where pilots can no longer distinguish between military targets and "collateral damage".

6. Flags are powerful symbols of nationalism and wars. Their symbolism often stands for naked aggression and poses the question why hasn't humanity progressed beyond the stone ages?

7. High-tech globalization of commerce has led to dominance by the rich and resentment by the poor. Internet communication and "embedded" war reporting has provided us with instantaneous living-room participation in cruelty and murder.

8. Lies and deception, a system of disinformation are the major tools in our age of "information". Orwell's doublespeak is rampant: War department is called Defense Department; civilian bombings are now classified as "collateral damage". The endless search for "Weapons of Mass Destruction" has, so far, resulted in a few handguns and Al-Quaida terrorists are still hiding in the caves.

System Engineering of Peace

Having analyzed the system components of war, we should discuss the elements of peace, if any, and how they can be activated and immersed into the consciousness of the global society. There are, of course, the United Nations who were established after World War II as a forum of peaceful coexistence. Unfortunately, they have proven to be ineffective in the face of powerful aggression and overbearing "pre-emptive" warring by the superpower(s).

What, then, are potential elements of peace?

1. First and foremost, it is ***human behavior*** that ***needs to be modified*** to appreciate the benefits of peaceful interaction. This could be accomplished through concerted Global Education and democratization of knowledge. To this end, the Internet and global communication are the pertinent tools that are already in place and could be used to promote positive ideas.

2. ***Eliminating weapons, certainly "weapons of mass destruction"***. Profit motive is the strongest force behind the peddling of weapons. Unfortunately, in the interest of power, even governments do not shy away from selling their deadly merchandise

3. ***Reducing the political influence of religious organizations***. Although organized religion of all persuasions has always emphasized the aspects of peace, they bless their warriors before they send them to war. Certainly, competition between religious organizations has contributed to antagonism between peoples. It is an irony that "salaam" in Arabic and "shalom" in Hebrew mean peace, but where is it between Israel and the Palestinians?

4. ***Reduction of poverty***. The world population is divided in the poor and the rich. As long as there are starving people on Earth, there will be discontent that is exploited by the manipulators leading to terrorism and wars. There are many reasons for poverty. For one, over-population is an exponential problem that needs to be controlled through education. Unfortunately, here again are the organized religions that promote unchecked population growth. Secondly, overgrazing of arable land has lead to a rapid increase in deserts.

5. ***Sharing resources***. Resources are unevenly distributed. They are exploited by the rich and powerful nations to the detriment of poor countries.

6. ***Improving the global environment***. The global Environment has been deteriorating over the past decades. It is tragic that the most powerful nation on Earth is scoffing at international agreements on the environment. Its new administration has thrown out negotiated environmental agreements in collusion with the powerful lobbies of the oil barons and land grabbers. The Amazon jungle is decimated by senseless burning for arable land, thus, reducing the amount of oxygen vital for survival.

7. ***Reorganizing the legal systems***. National legal systems are constructed to the whims of the ruling class. Capital punishment is still a mode of legalized murder and so are aggressive wars as practiced by "civilized" nations. The international court in Den Haag is but a farce since the most powerful nation on this globe tries to manipulate it to its own will. Prisoners of the mighty are deprived of their internationally guaranteed rights to fair trial and kept in subjugation. Peace will stay an illusion as long as these conditions of arbitrary enforcement persist at the pleasure of the powerful.

8. ***Modifying the territorial Imperative***. In his book, "The Territorial Imperative: A Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origin of Property and Nations", Robert Ardrey states, "Lions, eagles, wolves, great-horned owls are all hunters, and all guard exclusive hunting territories. The lions and wolves, besides, hunt in cooperative prides and packs differing little from the bands of primitive man." He suggests that the territorial imperative that forces men to defend his space, is embedded in our genes, as it is part of our animalistic behavior. Wars have arisen over territory more than for any other reason. We set up boundaries to prevent others from intrusion: "Our home is our castle". European history demonstrates that the territorial imperative is a powerful force that has led to conquest and defense of possessions. Yet, in most recent times, it has also shown that the territorial imperative can be modified as is reflected in the creation of the European Union where it is realized that territory is no longer governed by egocentric nationalism. People can freely move across borders and settle in places other than their home countries.

9. ***Tolerance of and Respect for cultural diversity***. This is probably the most crucial element. Despite the fact that the United States is a country of immigrants where cultural diversity is the consequence of migration from all over the world, intolerance towards foreigners is still very much alive. Fear of terrorism has affected official behavior as is reflected in discriminating treatment of people from Asia and the Middle East.

Where do we go from here?

Progressing from a culture of war to a culture of peace is as complex as humanity itself. Although the United Nations has its shortcomings, it is still the most appropriate forum to mediate potential conflicts among the nations of the world. In recognizing the elements of peace we should embark on a global educational endeavor where international law is understood as a universal obligation for all and without exceptions. It is a tragedy that leaders of the strongest world power have embarked on a dangerous course of provocation. There is war whenever mediocrity rules. Combined with religious zealotry, mediocrity is a danger to mankind's survival that should not be underestimated.

References

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