International Relations Essay

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Essay Question:

***1. The concepts of ‘anarchy’ and ‘sovereignty’ form the basis of the modern state system. Therefore, do they assist in ensuring stability in the world system, or are they in fact the key to current instabilities?***

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This essay will show both sides of the argument of whether the concepts of anarchy and sovereignty and whether or not it is an asset to the stability of the world system. Operational definitions of both Anarchy and Sovereignty are necessary to obtain a clear picture of their perception in modern society. Anarchy is best defined by its current perceptions, its origins, and the base ideals behind it. Showing different types of sovereignty of nations in multiple contexts display how they implement them on their economy, politics, and social standings. Today’s world system will be defined along with how different cultures and states interact with each other in that system, as well as defining what a modern state is. The two main types of instability that will be defined in context in this essay are forms of both political and social instability. For defining political instability, forms of inter and intra state conflicts and civil wars with be given. While defining social instability is more of a standard of living and equality problem within that society. All of this will tie in to the argument of whether the concept of sovereignty and anarchy may or may not cause a country’s instability. The arguments for anarchism for possibly contributing for the world system’s stability, is that things can be done without regulation and law but with a collective will of the individuals. The decentralization of key structures that the government controls; coupled with the minority being heard out by the majority are also major characteristics of anarchy. Arguments against anarchism are that these same ideals can cause tension between state and non-state factions, causing civil unrest.  Many terrorist factions have also spawned as a result of this idea. The argument for sovereignty is that it maintains order on key aspects of the government. It regulates businesses so there is economic stability and equality and keeps international trading open in its home markets.  Arguments against sovereignty are that there can be inequality on a political and social level because of a minimal consideration for the minority. There are instances where sovereignty is taken to the extreme, which can give rise to fascism or dictatorship for a homogenous society. This in turn spawns wars in order to “influence” others to follow the governments “perfect” ideals. Both anarchism and sovereignty have both traits that can cause government to thrive or collapse. Although these concepts are often beneficial, when taken to a radical extreme they can be the cause of instability themselves.

Sovereignty today is defined as coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups, which exercise clear priority over all other organizations within a defined area.  In terms of politics, sovereignty is defined as ‘final and absolute political authority in the community; this extends to law, government economy and regulation’ (Latham 2000). Anarchy’s guiding concept is that each person is born free and should not have to live under any laws but their personal set of rules and regulations. If ideally implemented into society, this would lead the abolishment of hereditary privileges and tyranny, rendering the State unnecessary. Going against a common misconception, Anarchy does not mean disorder or misrule (Meltzer 2011).  Similar to sovereignty, a modern state today can be defined as clusters of institutions that all have the same ideal or political policy.  Particular state forms are emanations of the formations of social interests, e.g. labor and capital parties (Caporaso 1996).  Today’s world system is primarily defined as a more complex network of nested and overlapping sub-networks on a global scale which mostly consists on a local, regional, and governmental scale. The current world-system is primarily focused on improving diplomatic as well as trade relations on a global scale (Chase-Dunn et al. 2000). Social instability is defined as unequal opportunities for different classes within a population. This can often be manifest in the form of economic inequality, where the gap between the rich and the poor is wide, leading to tension between both groups. A low standard of living for a vast majority of the population can often stem from economic inequality. Gender and class inequality can also cause social instability within a country due to the fact that the respective groups will not be allowed to specialize (Falkinger 1999). Political instability is on a much larger scale than social instability, and is a core extension of it. For instance, class and economic inequality can escalate tensions, which in turn can lead to civil wars within the country. This results in the loss of power by the government due to revolution and revolt of the people. Political instability can also apply outside the country and against other nations when religious, ethnic, territorial conflicts are present between states.  In modern society this is most notably shown in Middle Eastern countries.  Another sign of political instability is the over bearing control of the state which is characterized with a rise to an authoritarian position by a single party, military, or leader (Goldstone et al. 2010).

Ideally Anarchism strives for a semi-utopian society, which involves world peace, economic prosperity and self-rule above an organized state. Literature written by William Godwin concerning anarchism, claims that it achieves its goals utilizing violence which is a completely false assumption about anarchism as a penultimate societal goal. Mikhail Bakunin opposing Godwin’s viewpoint, sees sovereignty and the state as absolute evil. His argument claims that a free society built on the basis of total autonomy will inevitably build toward a worldwide union joining all of humanity. Achieving a free society is rooted in and constructed on the principles of free agreement, reducing tensions, and numerous mechanisms for reducing instability (Borovoy 2011).  Anarchism doesn’t strive for violence or evoke visions of revolutions, bombings, and assassinations as many modern media outlets portray it. Due to the fact that these things rarely change the stratified nature of social classes in a society, but often widen these gaps. The notion of “Self-sacrifice” made popular by terrorists, political activists, or freedom fighters is only a sugar coated form of murder. Ideally, if conflict could be resolved by providing all members of society with the necessities of life, the State would be unnecessary and consequently removed. Eliminate poverty, and the social struggles of the impoverished will disappear. When the struggle disappears, instability disappears with the inequality that is often bred into modern societies (Abbey 1951).   While this model provides an ideal version of the future world-system, if implemented into modern society chaos and strife would be the sole results. This is a direct result of the fact that modern people are completely reliant of the economic and materialistic system that guides the world’s economy. It is extremely difficult to coordinate human behavior on a large scale without coercion to authority. The only possible way to achieve the ideals of Anarchy on a modern stage would be under conditions of extreme economic decentralization, which would force the kind of coordination among humans required by Anarchistic ideology (Paul-Wolff 1970).

History has shown that trying to apply Anarchistic ideals to a modern state only leads to conflict and instability.   Anarchism’s values are incompatible with the use of violence, because the core values of anarchism give every man equal rights to live a peaceful and self-governed life.  Modern Anarchists are often forced to implement some form of violence in their movements in order to make an impact and change their surroundings. This is exemplified in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict taking place in the Middle East. This is a perfect example because many Anarchists press their own ideals against those of the state on both sides. Israel is the oppressor and the Palestinian Arabs are oppressed, therefore the anarchists are on the Palestinian side. Palestinian anarchists want their own sovereignty, while Israeli Anarchists do not approve of their government’s actions and want to revolt against the authorities that are perpetuating the conflict (Gordon 2012). This instability leads to terrorist and militant activity from both sides of the Palestinian and Israeli border, with a violent rivalry created between the Fatah and Hamas groups in their respective countries.

Terrorism in this region goes beyond the country of Israel, as Jewish groups such as Igrun Tsvai Leumi used terrorist strategies to force UK to give up control over Palestine. Fatah has implemented conventional armed struggle and guerilla warfare against Israeli military targets. Groups connected to Fatah including the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades have carried out numerous terrorist attacks against civilians. The second faction the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). They have carried out numerous airplane hijackings in the 1960s and 1970s, but has switched its attacks against civilians in Israel. All of these terrorist attacks are done in order to send a message that Palestinian’s want to be an autonomous state (Crenshaw 1981)). Anarchism along with other forms of nationalism, and revolutionary socialism gives rise to terrorist plots and attacks for their motives. Terrorism similar to anarchism serves a variety of goals, both revolutionary and sub-revolutionary. Terrorists can be revolutionaries, nationalists fighting against foreign occupiers, minority scenarists combating indigenous regimes, and reformists; all of which share the basic ideal definition of Anarchism. These extremist groups resort to terrorism in order to acquire political influence. When human nature is added is an added factor to any political or social ideal it takes on a new lead to what that ideal originally strives for. The most basic reason for wanting to spread an ideal or influence is to gain recognition or attention. Another related factor is that absolute poverty, exclusion and social inequality will tap in to the human condition and warp the textbook ideal on what anarchism is therefore causing terrorism, conflict and the countries with instability (Newman 2006).

Sovereignty is the ideal to what today’s world system abide by on every situation as suppose to the dreamlike ideals of Anarchism. David Hume says it is a core part of constructing a civil society and has worked since the enlightened age of mankind. Sovereignty can maintain balance of powers between different states and countries. This is balanced by the fear of impending tensions of war, the growth of commerce and trade benefits between countries. Internally sovereignty and government control keeps everything balanced within society. When there is a single body of authority this can eliminate inefficiencies boosting production in manufactured goods, a better organized law enforcement and more transparent legislative body reducing corruption (Buchnan 2006). A functioning sovereign authoritative government body will surpass a divided Anarchist state on managing their economic status. Monetary sovereignty is a part of national sovereignty and is the most visible in policy of independent national central bank and national currency. That is the right to issue currency that is coins, banknotes and other legal tenders. As well as to determine and change the value of that currency and the right to regulate the use of that currency within that territory. With this level of regulation and monetary sovereignty protection, the government will be able to ensure economic stability for that country. Protecting the country from white collar economic frauds, crime money laundering and counterfeit currency designed to overthrow the economy with inflation (Kordic & Zivko 2011). Sovereignty ensures that laws are neutral in order to protect the interests of the people. Governments also ensure that the citizens’ standards of living is of high standards by providing them with welfare if needed. This comes with free government services like law enforcement, public schools and hospitals accessible by the citizens which a disorganized or an anarchist state would have difficulties maintaining with (Cukierman & Meltzer 1986).

Similar to any type of political or social ideal Sovereignty has its set of downfalls. Sovereignty can cause policy disagreements and severe tensions between two nations with different policies or ideals. The concept of sovereignty emerged during a period of civil war in both France and England. The ideal began as a theory to justify the king being master in his own modern kingdom and extending absolute authority. Due to the over extension of rule by a sovereign ruler, minorities disagreeing with the ruler’s policies will see it as arbitrary. This is the reason for the great civil war in the United States to resolve that issue of external sovereignty imposed by Europe in the 19nth century (Keohane 2002). The over extension of sovereignty can breed inequality between social statuses or which set of people side with a certain political party. Due to the fact that it will be hard to apply a universal law when it will only benefit a portion of the population. The scale will be tipped towards the majority who sides with the government’s policy causing inequality to the minority. It’s not just political and economic equality that sovereignty can tread on its also social. In a nearly homogenous country there will be confrontations with religious, cultural and racial differences between the groups (Kingsbury 1998). Sovereign homogeneity can eventually escalate to fascism as shown throughout history. Fascism is the extreme case of absolute governmental sovereignty that escalates into dictatorship similar to the Hitler regime. Germany before and during World War II strived for a homogenous state leaving only people with Aryan characteristics. Over extending their territories to Poland causing other European countries to wage war on Germany. This invasion is for the sole cause of economic expansion, race purification, and creation of a pitiless national dictatorship as a unified whole. One of the steps included in the race purification is the purging of Jewish ethnic groups around Europe. This includes people that are deformed, mentally ill, syphilitic, and drunkards. All of these measures are taken in order to preserve the perfect ideal of sovereignty. Extreme sovereignty have bred genocide, inequality, mass murder, murder and war throughout history. (Knox 1984).

The concepts of anarchy and sovereignty affect the modern state both negatively and positively. Sovereignty has brought more stability than instability when the concept is applied on the modern contemporary context of today’s world system. It has maintained balance of powers between states and territories. Organized a government structure in order to eliminate inefficiency, and improve legislative transparency. With Monetary Sovereignty the maintenance of a stable financial system is important because it affects the daily financial activities of the people. With an Authoritative body the government will be able to ensure stability within its territories by providing governmental services like law enforcement, education, or welfare. With the concept of anarchism if applied realistically it would be difficult to organize a stable system devised to maintaining economic stability. Due to the fact that organizing something of that magnitude will prove difficult because of the lack of allocation of the work. Anarchy ideally can also bring stability to the world system. With the ideal of a free society that will be autonomous will eventually build to a stable world with less conflict. Along with it the dream for an equal society where the minority can be heard, everyone has equal opportunities, and a good standard of living. Although these are just ideals, when anarchism is applied in a real modern context it will only bring chaos. This is due to the fact that when human nature and misinterpretation of the ideal can warp the true textbook description of anarchism. The anarchist ideal has bought chaos through terrorist attacks, and wars between states particularly around the Middle East. It has brought death, political and social instability between the conflicting countries. This can be said with sovereignty as well where the base idea of what a “sovereign state” is a homogenous society with likeminded thinkers under an authoritative figure. When sovereign states with different ideals interact it can sometimes cause disagreements and tension. A sovereign homogenous state can escalate into a fascist one. Prime example is Adolf Hitler in 1939 proclaiming a pure unified Aryan state. Over extending his political power and invading neighboring states and nations eventually causing World War II. Causing millions of death only for purging certain people from all over Europe in order to fulfill a dream of a homogenous sovereign world. Objectively the concepts of anarchism and sovereignty have served multiple ways on ensuring a stable world system and government. It is only the extreme cases that when the ideals of sovereignty and anarchy are applied has caused conflict and instability.

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