PS 17.428: United States Foreign Policy
Stephen Van Evera
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THEORY-FRAMING AND PREDICTION-INFERRING MEMOS

Please bring a 1-page theory-framing and prediction-inferring memo to class on September 24.

For your memo, please select a reading from among those assigned for that week or the previous week and:

1. In one or two sentences, frame the main theory or hypothesis the reading advances. If the reading advances several theories, frame your favorite.

2. Draw an arrow-diagram of this theory. Hand-drawn is fine.

3. Frame the more important general predictions (also called "observable implications") that you infer from the theory. An important prediction is: (a) unique--the prediction is not made by other theories; and (b) definite--your theory definitely makes this prediction, there is no plausible argument that it doesn't. If you have more than one--and you probably will--please rank them in order of priority: list first those you would focus on testing.

Predictions describe phenomena that you would expect to make if the theory is valid. They define expectations about the incidence, sequence, location, and structure of these phenomena.

Avoid framing tautological predictions that forecast simply that we expect to observe the theory in operation ("if the theory is valid, I predict we will observe its cause causing its effect.") Thus the hypothesis that "democracy causes peace" yields the following tautological prediction: "we should observe democracy causing peace." A non-tautological prediction would be: "we should observe that democratic states are involved in fewer wars than authoritarian states."

Come to class prepared to comment on whether tests of your predictions would constitute strong or weak tests of the theory.

Please confine your memo to one page or less.

Your memo will be ungraded.