

Review of: "State crisis theory: A systematization of institutional, socio-ecological, demographic-structural, world-systems, and revolutions research"

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The author tries to explain state crisis by systematically constructing a synthesis of five research programs, neo-institutionalism, socio-ecological systems, demographic-structural theories, world-systems approaches, and revolutions research. They are competing but compatible hypotheses. The crisis can occur in conditions of ecological-economic sufficiency, and in conditions of worsening, but this difference is not emphasized by the literature.

For the author the researchers share the same object of study because they mention the same state crises, also they share the definition of a state as a political apparatus with coercive power over a population within some territory. The results of crises can be a breakdown or collapse, entrenchment or reform and there exists an overlap that theorists seek to explain. However, Hartley marks that there no exist a single systematic framework but several ones or "conceptual models" that he uses for construct his own.

In his outlook Hartley incorporates the idea from Van Bavel et al. (2018) that the societal response to adverse events can be influenced by institutional openness, being the possible outcomes the entrenchment as well as reform. From the socio-ecological (SES) literature, he takes the conceptual model of Butzer (2012) about historical collapse and resilience. Also, Hartley adds the idea of the world-system literature (WSA) that a crises can occur when population growth and intensification leads to environmental degradation. Furthermore, he considers the secular cycle with a disintegrative phase when the population tends to decline, elites are divides, the state is weak, and there is instability and disorder including civil war, ideas form the demographic-structural theories (DST). In addition to this views, Hartley takes from the revolutions research (REV) the difference between abundance and scarcity noting that abundance can lead to higher opportunities for looting, corruption, and slow economic growth; scarcity can lead to loss of economic activity, food crises, livelihood deterioration, and outmigration.

Because of these arguments, Hartley finds a broad consensus about the kinds of factors that might increase the likelihood of sufficiency crises. The factors are technological progress, an increased surplus, population growth, a youth bulge, the emergence of new elites that undermine older elites, urbanization, and the organization of people around new ideologies. Sufficiency crises lead to reform, entrenchment, or breakdown; they are not supposed to lead to collapse. In the second place, scarcity crises are generally precipitated by some "accidental" shocks, disruptions, disturbance, hazards, stress surges, adversities and triggers. The neo-institutionalists distinguish shocks from processes more "endogenous",

“inherent” or “systemic” but Hartley says that these hypotheses derive from a theory of diminishing returns, so he describes them as theories of “diminishing returns”.

In sum, he identified ten factors that increase the likelihood of sufficiency crises and eleven factors that influence the societal response to sufficiency crises. About shocks, he identified seven of them and eight varieties of diminishing returns. All in all, he establishes a framework to testing the competing hypotheses finding that they are compatible.