A Psychological Approach to International Conflict

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Ponder these examples:

The Korean war was started by a serious misjudgment of U.S. intentions. U.S. intentions were probably not clearly known to itself.

The Bay of Pigs invasion was based on a grossly inaccurate prediction of how the Cuban people would respond.

The Cuban crisis of 1962 was based on a Soviet misunderstanding of how the United States would react to the placement of missiles so close to our shores.

The only use of atomic weapons against human beings - the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - was based on miscalculation. These bombings, it has been concluded, "made no essential contribution to Japan's surrender without a last battle." 1

It seems likely that if atomic bombs are ever again dropped on human beings they will be employed as a result of misjudgment, despair, or insanity during the course of international conflict. How can we manage conflict so that it does not foster either fatal illusions or dangerous misapprehensions? How can we control conflict so that it becomes a stimulus to constructive social change rather than a source of mutual defensiveness and hostility? These are the questions I shall address myself to in this paper.

Note that I do not presuppose that conflict and controversy can be or should be eliminated either among nations or among people. As a psychologist, as a husband, and as a father I am convinced that conflict is an inevitable part

of social life. It is as desirable as it is inevitable. It prevents stagnation, it is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at; it is the heart of social change. Our objective is not to create a world in which conflict is suppressed but rather a world in which it is civilized.

How do we make conflict lively rather than deadly? How do we eliminate or reduce the "cut-throat" character of cut-throat competition? How do we prevent or overcome distortions in social perception? These are questions to which there is, as far as well-established, scientifically-verified knowledge. Yet there are "informed hunches" based upon a growing body of experience with interpersonal quandries, interpersonal controversies, marital quarrels, intergroup conflicts, labor-management disputes, community conflicts, political struggles etc. which seem to suggest some general principles.

Let me indicate some of the general principles which I will be drawing up during my talk:

1. Genuine conflicts of interest are often exacerbated and made more difficult to resolve by hostile misperceptions.

2. The social psychological dynamics of conflict are such as to foster perceptions of one another which tend to perpetuate conflicts even after the initial basis of conflict has become irrelevant.

3. Many conflicts have their origins in misperceptions.

4. Conflict is more likely to be conducted within mutually acceptable procedures and rules in situation where the parties have less at stake in a particular conflict than they do in the ongoing relationship between them or in the community which has generated the rules for regulating conflict. As Roger Fisher of the Harvard Law School has put it "If a country is going to be willing to lose a particular conflict rather than fight, it must perceive that its gains from exist-
ing and future international cooperation are greater than the loss it may suffer on this particular occasion."

An implication of this fourth principle is that efforts to control conflict can be designed to affect either the stake in the conflict or the stake in the ongoing relations. The following two principles relate to the two kinds of stakes.

5. "Issue control", the deliberate effort to define the issues in conflict in such a way as to limit their scope, is one way of making a conflict more resolvable.

6. The development of cooperative bonds, the stimulation of the awareness of mutually facilitating interests, the promotion of superordinate, common allegiances and goals, the recognition of common principles, procedures and institutions - all of these tend to lead to the use of techniques of persuasion and mutual compromise rather than those of violence or deceit when an issue of conflict arises.

Misperceptions Which Lead to or Exacerbate Conflict

I have suggested above that conflict may be initiated or enhanced by misperceptions. There are a number of reasons why perceptions may be distorted. I would like to consider with you some common causes of misperception, to illustrate the operation of each in international relations, and to indicate how these misperceptions can be counteracted or prevented.

1. The perception of any act is determined both by our perception of the act itself and by our perception of the context in which the act occurs. Thus, the statement "You did that extremely well" will be perceived rather differently if a Captain is saying it to a Private than if a Private is saying it to a Captain. The contexts of social acts are often not immediately given in perception and often they are not obvious. When the context is not obvious, we tend to assume a familiar context - i.e., the context which is most likely in terms of our own
experience. Since both the present situations and past experiences of the actor and the perceiver may be rather different, it is not surprising that they will supply different contexts and interpret the same act quite differently. Misunderstandings of this sort, of course, are very likely when the actor and the perceiver come from rather different cultural backgrounds and they are not fully aware of these differences. The stock conversation of returning tourists consists of amusing or embarrassing anecdotes based upon misunderstandings of this sort.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's first-hand observations led him to conclude that the Soviets and Americans have a similar view of one another; each says more or less the same things about the other. For example, each states: "They are the aggressors"; their government exploits and deludes the people"; "the mass of their people is not really sympathetic to the regime"; "they cannot be trusted"; "their policy verges on madness"; etc.

It is my contention that mutual distortions such as those described above arise, in part, because of an inadequate understanding of the other's context. Take, for instance, the view that "the mass of their people are not really sympathetic to the regime". In effect, we ask ourselves if Soviet citizens had the choice between (a) living in Russia if it were like the United States with its high standard of living and its political system of civil liberties, and (b) living in the present day Soviet Union, which would they choose? We think the answer is obvious, but isn't it clear that the question is wrong? The relevant comparison for them is between their past and their present or future: their present and future is undoubtedly vastly superior to their past. Similarly, the Soviet view is that a comparison between (a) Soviet society with its full employment and expanding economy with (b) capitalism in a permanent depression crisis would favor the Soviet Union. Perhaps it would, but is this the relevant comparison?

How can we prevent and overcome distortions and misunderstandings of this sort? Obviously, more communication, a great increase in interchanges of scholars,
artists, politicians, tourists and the like might be helpful. However, I think
we should take cognizance of the findings of the vast body of research on inter-
group contact: casual contact of limited duration is more likely to support deeply
rooted distortions than remove them. To have any important effect, contact must
be prolonged, functional, and intimate.

I suggest that the most important principle to follow in international com-
munication on issues where there is controversy is one suggested by John Cohen and
by Anatol Rapoport: role reversal. Acting on this principle, each side would
be required to state the position of the other side to the other side’s complete
satisfaction before either side advocates its own position. Certainly the pre-
cedure would not eliminate conflict but it would help to eliminate misunder-
standing. It forces one to place the other’s action in a context which is acceptable
to the other and, as a consequence, prevents one from arbitrarily rejecting
his position as unreasonable or badly motivated.

2. Our perceptions are very much influenced by our expectations and pre-
conceptions. Thus, a person who expects Negroes to be aggressive is likely to
perceive an altercation between a Negro and White as having been initiated by the
former. Once a child has acquired the reputation of being a trouble-maker, there
is a tendency to connect him with unexplained trouble around the house, and a
tendency to continue to see him this way even after he has changed. Similarly,
in international relations. Our preconception is that Communist nations are ag-
gressive, trouble-makers and that we are unprovocative, peace-loving defenders of
freedom. With such different preconceptions about their actions and our actions,
it is hardly surprising that there is a double standard in appraising Soviet and
American actions. Thus, American college students have favorable reactions to
such statements as: "The U.S. has established rocket bases close to the boarders
of Russia"; "The U.S. has frequently stated that its armaments are for defensive
purposes and will not be used in a first strike against Russia"; "Leaders of the
U.S. government have frequently called for liberation of the captive peoples in the Russian satellite nations." However, they have rather negative reactions when the statements are expressed as Russian actions - e.g., "Russia has established rocket bases close to the boarders of the U.S."\(^5\)

Our view of the Communists as "trouble-makers" leads us to perceive them as the root of international trouble - as though they were the instigators to the Viet Cong rebellion in Vietnam, as though they were the cause of the Castro revolution, as though they were sending more military equipment, military personnel, secret agents, etc. into Africa, Latin America, and Asia than we have been. The tendency to link communism in international trouble, of course, makes it difficult to accept the possibility that they might, after all, have some interests in international order. It inhibits us in our attempt to work out procedures for "fair competition" in the underdeveloped countries: we are convinced, before we try, that it would be doomed to failure.

3. Our perceptions of the external world are often determined indirectly by the information we receive from others rather than by our direct experiences. Human communication, like perception itself, is always selective. The perception of an event is usually less detailed, more abstract, and less complex than the event which is perceived; the communication about an event is also likely to be less detailed and less complex than its perception. The more human links there are in the communication of information about any event, the more simplified and distorted will be the representation of the event. Distortion in communication tends to take characteristic form: on the one hand, there is a tendency to accentuate the unusual, bizarre, controversial, deviant, violent, and unexpected; on the other hand, there is a tendency for communicators who are communicating to their superiors to communicate only that information which fits in with the pre-

conceptions of their superiors.

If we examine our sources of information about international affairs, we see that they are particularly vulnerable to distorting influences. There are only a small number of American reporters in any country; they do not necessarily work independently of one another. They are under subtle pressure to report items which will catch the reader's interest and conform to their publisher's viewpoint. In a period of hostility between nations, these conditions are not conducive to getting a clear understanding of how events are perceived by the other side or a clear understanding of the other's frame of reference.

I suggest that we should recognize the dangers inherent in not perceiving the other side's point of view regularly. Recognizing these dangers, shouldn't we offer to make arrangements with the Soviet Union whereby we would each be enabled to present our own point of view over the other's radio and TV and in their leading newspapers? Suppose the Soviet leaders are afraid to participate on a reciprocating basis, should we make the offer anyway? My answer is in the form of a question: do we have anything to lose by understanding their viewpoint as well as we can; wouldn't "truth squads" adequately protect us from deliberate attempts to mislead us?

4. Our perceptions of the world are often very much influenced by the need to conform to and agree with the perceptions of other people. Thus, in some communities it would be difficult for an individual to survive if he perceived Negroes as his social equals or if he perceived Communist China as having legitimate grievances against the United States. If he acted upon his perceptions he would be ostracized socially; if he conformed to the perceptions of other people without changing his own perceptions, so that they were similar to those prevalent in his community, he might feel little self-respect.

It is my impression that most social and political scientists, most specialists in international relations, most intellectuals who have thought
about it, and many of our political leaders personally favor the admission of Communist China into the UN and favor our taking the initiative in attempting to normalize our relations with Communist China. Yet, conformity pressures keep silent most of us who favor such a change in policy. The strength of these conformity pressures in the United States on this issue has been so great that it has been difficult to think of Communist China or to talk about it in any terms except those which connote absolute, incorrigible evil.

How can we break through the veil of conformity and its distorting influences? Asch's insightful studies of conformity pressures point the way. His studies reveal that when the monolithic social front of conformity is broken by even one dissenter, other potential dissenters feel freer to break with the majority. The lesson is clear: those who dissent must express their opinions so that they are heard by others. If they do so, they may find more agreement than they anticipate. France's action, in recognizing China and breaking through the veil of conformity imposed by the United States, may make us all freer.

A considerable body of psychological research indicates that an individual attempts to perceive his environment in such a way that it is consistent with his self-perception. If an individual feels afraid, he tends to perceive his world as frightening; if he feels hostile, he is likely to see it as frustrating or unjust; if he feels weak and vulnerable, he is apt to see it as exploitative and powerful; if he is torn by self-doubt and self-conflict, he will tend to see it as at odds with him. Not only does an individual tend to see the external world in such a way as to justify his feelings and beliefs but also so as to justify his behavior. If an individual is a heavy smoker, he is apt to perceive cigarette smoking as less injurious to health than a nonsmoker; if he drives a car and injures a pedestrian, he is likely to blame the pedestrian; if he invests in

Much of this research is summarized in various articles in Katz (1960).
something (e.g., a munitions industry), he will attempt to justify and protect his investment. Moreover, there is much evidence that an individual tends to perceive the different parts of his world as consistent with one another. Thus, if somebody likes you, you expect him to dislike someone who dislikes you. If somebody disagrees with you, you are likely to expect him to agree with someone who disagrees with you.

The danger of the pressure for consistency is that it often leads to an oversimplified black-white view of the world. Take, for instance, the notions that since the interests of the United States and the Soviet Union are opposed in some respects, we must be opposed to or suspicious of anything that the Communists favor and must regard any nations that desires friendly relations with the Soviet Union as opposed to the United States. If the Soviet Union is against colonialism in Africa, must we be for it? If nations in Latin America wish to establish friendly, commercial relations with the Communist nations, must we feel threatened? If Canada helps Communist China by exporting food to it, must we suspect its loyalty to us? Are nations which are not for us necessarily for the Communists? The notions expressed in affirmative answers to these questions are consistent with the view that the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union can only be ended by total defeat for one or the other. But is it not possible that the conflict can be resolved so that both sides are better off than they are now? Recognition of this latter possibility may suggest that what benefits China does not necessarily harm us, and that nations with amicable relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union may be an important asset in resolving the conflict. What can we do to avoid the "consistency of little minds" and the rigidities of false pride? These dangers to accurate perception are most likely when an individual feels under threat, when his self-esteem is at stake. I think in such circumstances it is prudent to seek the advice and counsel of trusted friends who are not so emotionally involved in the issues.
Thus, I think it would be wise to consult with such nations as Brazil, France, and Great Britain on our policy toward Cuba and Communist China precisely because they do not have as deep an involvement with these countries as we do. Similarly, consultation with more or less neutral nations such as India, Sweden, Austria, and Nigeria might prevent us from developing an oversimplified view of the nature of our relations with the Soviet Union.

6. Ichheiser (1974) has described a mechanism, similar to that of projection, which leads to misunderstandings in human relations: the mote-beam mechanism. It consists in perceiving certain characteristics in others which we do not perceive in ourselves. Thus, the characteristics are perceived as though they were peculiar traits of the others and, hence, the differences between the others and ourselves are accentuated. Since the traits we are unable or unwilling to recognize in others are usually traits we consider to be undesirable, the mote-beam mechanism results in a view of the other as peculiarly shameful or evil. Thus, although many of us who live here in the North easily recognize the shameful racial discrimination and segregation in the South, we avoid a clear awareness of the pervasive racial discrimination in our own communities.

Similarly, in international relations it is easy to recognize the lack of political liberties in the Soviet Union, their domination of the nations in Eastern Europe, their obstructiveness in the United Nations, etc., but it is difficult for us to recognize similar defects in the United States: e.g., the disenfranchisement of most Negro voters in many states, our domination of Latin America, our unfair treatment of the American Indian, our stubbornness in the UN in pretending that the representative from Taiwan is the representative of Mainland China. Since the mote-beam mechanism, obviously, works on both sides, there is a tendency for each side to view the other as peculiarly immoral and for the views to mirror one another.
What can be done to make the mote-beam mechanism ineffective? The proposals I have made to counteract the effects of the other type of perceptual distortions are all relevant here. In addition, I would suggest that the mote-beam mechanism breeds on a moral-evaluative approach to behavior, on a readiness to condemn defects rather than to understand the circumstances which produced them. Psychoanalytic work suggests that the capacity to understand rather than to condemn is largely determined by the individual's sense of self-esteem, by his ability to cope with the external problem confronting him, and by his sense of resoluteness in overcoming his own defects. By analogy, I would suggest that we in the United States will have less need to overlook our own shortcomings or to be fascinated with the defects of others to the extent that we have a thriving society which is resolutely overcoming its own problems of racial prejudice, economic stagnation, and lack of dedication to common public purposes.

7. **Intense threat, fear, or conflict tends to impair perceptual and cognitive processes.** When tension increases beyond an optimal, moderate level, it tends to impair perceptual and cognitive processes in several ways: it reduces the range of perceived alternatives; it reduces the time-perspective in such a way as to cause a focus on the immediate rather than the over-all consequences of the perceived alternatives; it polarizes thought so that percepts tend to take on a simplistic cast of being "black" or "white", "for" or "against", "good" or "evil"; it leads to stereotyped responses; it increases the susceptibility to fear - or hope - inciting rumors; it increases defensiveness; it increases the pressures to social conformity. In effect, excessive tension reduces the intellectual resources available for discovering to new ways of coping with a problem or new ideas for resolving a conflict.

There are several implications for international conflict. While it is apparent that some tension is necessary to help motivate attempts to resolve conflict, excessive tension may rigidify and stereotype the opposing positions.
Moreover, since tension-tolerance is usually greater in thriving groups than in groups which are plagued by inner difficulties, it is often easier to conduct reasonable and satisfactory negotiations when the parties in conflict are each internally secure. That is, it is often disadvantageous to fruitful negotiations to deal with a weak, insecure adversary. Thus, if my line of reasoning is correct it makes little sense for the United States to attempt to hinder the economic progress of the Soviet Union by trade and loan restrictions. Were the Soviet Union to experience serious economic difficulties and economic rebuff from the West, one might expect an even more rigid, hostile stance. I suggest that a lean and hungry China or Soviet Union would be less amenable to reason than they would be if they were secure and well-fed.

While distortions in perception are very common for the reasons I have outlined above, it is also true that, in many instances, everyday experiences provides a corrective. When reality is sufficiently compelling, and when the contact with reality occurs with sufficient frequency, they will be challenged and may yield. However, there are circumstances which tend to perpetuate and rigidify distortions. Let me briefly describe three major reasons for the perpetuation of distortions:

1. **A major psychological investment has been made in the distortion.** As a consequence, the individual may anticipate that giving up the investment will require drastic personal reorganization which might result in personal instability, or the loss of social face, or unknown dangers. Anyone who has done psychoanalytic therapy with neurotic patients knows that, no matter how costly and painful it is, a distorted but familiar mode of adjustment is hard to give up until the patient has sufficient self-confidence or confidence in his analyst to venture into unfamiliar terrain.

With regard to international relations, we have to consider that a disarmed world, a world without external tensions to justify internal political
policies, a world without violence as a means of bringing about changes in the status quo would be an unfamiliar world; a world in which some would feel that their vested interests might be destroyed. I am sure that many military men, scientists, legislators, industrialists, workers, and investors also fear a disarmed world because they anticipate that their skills, contacts, and knowledge will become obsolete, or they lose social status, or they lose financial. These fears have to be dealt with constructively or else they may produce defensive adherence to the views which justify a hostile, armed world. I suggest that we must carefully plan to anticipate the psychological difficulties in the transition to a peaceful, disarmed world. As a basic strategy to overcome some of these difficulties, I would recommend that we consider a policy of over-compensating those who might be adversely affected by the change; we want to change the nature of their psychological investment from an investment in military pursuits to one in peaceful pursuits.

2. Certain distorted perceptions perpetuate themselves because they lead the individual to avoid contact or meaningful communication with the object or person being perceived. Newcomb has described a process of autistic hostility in interpersonal relations in which a hostile impulse may give rise to barriers to communication behind which a persistent attitude is protected. Similarly, in international relations, hostile attitudes between the U.S. and Communist China produce barriers to communication which eliminate the possibility of a change in attitudes. Here, the best antidote would seem to be communication which followed the rules of procedure. 

3. Merton, in his classic paper on The Self-fulfilling Prophecy, has pointed out that distortions are often perpetuated because they evoke new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true. The specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. The prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the
very beginning. The dynamics of the self-fulfilling prophecy help to explain
individual pathology - e.g., the anxious student who, afraid he might fail, wor-
ries so much that he cannot study, with the consequence that he does fail. It
also contributes to our understanding of social pathology - e.g., how prejudice
and discrimination against the Negro keeps him in a position which seems to justify
the prejudice and discrimination. So too in international relations. If the repre-
sentatives of East and West believe that war is likely and either side attempts to
increase its military security vis-à-vis the other, the other's response will justify
the initial move. The dynamics of an arms race has the inherent quality of a
"folie à deux," wherein the self-fulfilling prophecies mutually reinforce one
another.

The Conflict Between East and West

In the preceding section, I have attempted to indicate some of the sources
of misperception in international relations and some of the conditions which tend
to perpetuate the distortions or make them come true. However, one may ask whether
I am suggesting that all international conflict is based upon misperception? Cer-
tainly not. There can be no doubt that there are accurately perceived conflicts -
e.g., the conflict over tariffs between the U.S. and the Common Market countries
in Europe, the conflict over the status of Taiwan, the conflict over the status
of Central Europe.

What about the conflict between "East" and "West"? Public statements of
the leaders of the two blocs define the conflict as a confrontation of two mutually
irreconcilable ideologies; and it is apparent that basic ideological differences
do exist. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that neither the United
States nor the USSR closely resemble its ideological "ideal type." Neither Karl
Marx nor Adam Smith would recognize his offspring.

Let us examine the central notions of each ideology. The key phrase of the
American ethos is "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The American
vision is of the lone, independent, self-reliant, enterprising man who has escaped from the restraints of an oppressive community so as to be free to pursue his individual destiny in an environment which offers ever-expanding opportunity to those who are the fittest. The starting point of the Communist ethos is the view that man is a social animal whose nature is determined by the way men are related to one another in their productive activities in any given community. The Communist vision is of men who are free to cooperate with one another toward common objectives because they jointly own the means of production and share the rewards of their collective labor.

There is no need to detail here how far short of its ideal each system is, nor need to describe the many similarities in values and in practices which characterize these complex, modern industrialized societies. One might even suggest that many - but certainly not all - of the differences which strike the casual observer of these two societies are differences which are due to differences in affluence and in national character rather than differences caused by ideological dissimilarities. In fact, neither ideology is more than an emphasis, a partial view of the total picture. Each side looks at the elephant from a different vantage point and, of course, describes it as two different beasts. However, this much can be said about the beast - the relation of the individual to society, the relation between individual liberty and social justice - it is a complex animal that has different needs and different characteristics at different stages of its development and in different environments. It is a poorly understood beast and only careful, objective study from all vantage points will give us insight into its care and nurture. But it is already evident that the beast needs both of its sides to function effectively. It needs individuals who are free to make their personal views and needs known, people who are neither conforming automata nor slavish followers and it also needs a community which enables men to recognize their interrelatedness and to cooperate with one another in producing
the social conditions which foster the development of creative, responsible people.

I suggest that neither the Marxist ideology nor the American ideology is consistent enough or operational enough to be proved or disproved by empirical test. Nor is either specific enough to be a guide to action in the day-to-day decisions which shape the course of history. What, then, is the function of these ideologies? Primarily, they function, as do most myth systems, to help foster identification with and loyalty to the on-going social system. They serve this function partly because an ideology is typically expressed in terms of some widely-appealing but vaguely-defined set of values - e.g., "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" - which because of their presumably inherent rightness assures the ideological adherent of his righteousness and of his ultimate victory. Ideologies usually arise in the course of a conflict and for an adherent, an ideology not only defines who will win but also it defines who will lose; it delineates an enemy.

An external enemy or devil serves useful functions to those in power. It serves as a convenient excuse for internal difficulties and setbacks. It inhibits political criticism and social change by enabling those in power to identify the critics of the established order with the external devil. It promotes internal unity by rallying the group against external threat and, finally, it provides a rationale and justification for the segments of the society whose prestige, skills, financial interests, and institutional existence are based upon the belief that there is a devil. What would the demonologists do without a devil? It seems clear that the external devil of "exploiting capitalists" and "Wall Street imperialism" has served all of the above purposes for the Soviet Union, Castro's Cuba, and Communist China. In a similar way Communism has served as the devil for us.

I have stressed the fact that ideologies are vague. Vagueness permits diverse aspirations and changing practices to be accommodated under the same ideological umbrella. There are two important implications to be drawn. First, it is useless to try to refute an ideology. Moreover, since an ideology often serves important integrative functions, the attempt to refute it is likely to elicit defensiveness and hostility. Like old soldiers, ideologies never die, they are left to fade away. Second, the vagueness of ideologies permit redefinitions of who is "friend" or "foe". There is ample room in the myth systems of both the United States and the Soviet Union to find a basis of amicable relations.

The conflict of the Cold War intensified our perception of ideological differences between "East" and "West". Now, however, as internal conflicts within both "East" and "West" emerge (the Sino-Soviet disputes and the Franco-American disagreements are only the more obvious cases) - we have an opportunity to revise our images of the nature of the so-called "struggle between Communism and freedom". We have more basis for recognizing that the ideological dispute is only the manifest rationalization of other less noble motives on both sides. As Freud pointed out the manifest life of the mind - what men know or pretend to know and say about the motives of their behavior - is often merely a socially acceptable rationalization of their unrecognized or latent motives. I suggest that the intensity of the ideological struggle has primarily reflected an anachronistic power struggle between nations that have defined their prestige and security in terms of world leadership. It is much easier for Communists to rationalize an attempt to subvert and overthrow a relatively progressive government in Venezuela by thinking of it and calling it a tool of American imperialism than to admit a crude attempt to weaken American power. Similarly, is it much easier for the United States to rationalize its support for corrupt, dictatorial governments in Taiwan and South Korea, in terms of the defense of freedom than to consider it an attempt to maintain our power in Asia.
Traditionally, the quest for world power has been closely bound to strivings for national security, economic dominance, and international prestige or influence. The quest for power has commonly taken the form of the attempt to establish military supremacy over one's major competitors. It is recognized increasingly that the drive for military dominance in the age of missiles and hydrogen bombs is dangerously anachronistic. So too, economic imperialism - Western or Eastern style - no longer provides as much opportunity for economic gain as does a concentration upon scientific research and development. However, the quest for international prestige and influence is a reasonable one for all societies.

Fair Rules For Competition

How can the competition for prestige and influence be kept peaceful? I suggest that we must develop fair rules for competition and a cooperative framework which will develop allegiance and adherence to these rules. Let me turn to a discussion of some fair rules.

A contest is considered to be fair if the conditions and rules of the contest are such that no contestant is systematically advantaged or disadvantaged in relation to other contestants, the contestants have equal rights and opportunities, and the contestants are in the same category - i.e., they are more or less matched in characteristics relevant to the contest's outcome. Thus, it is manifestly unfair if the rules are such that the international contest permits non-Communist nations to become converted to Communism or to join an alliance with the Soviet Union but do not permit Communist nations or allies to be converted to the American side. Similarly, rules which would outlaw the establishment of a Communist nation in the Western hemisphere but not give a parallel right to the Soviet Union and Communist China hardly would be fair. Rules which put smaller, weaker nations - e.g., Panama or Finland - in a one-to-one contest with larger, powerful nations are not likely to lead to outcomes that are viewed as legitimate by the smaller nations.
The major international arena for rivalry between the big powers today is the underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The competition for these "prizes" is mixed with arms and military confrontations. The danger of continued armed sparring in such places as Cuba, South Vietnam, South Korea, Laos, etc., is that misjudgment or despair may lead to an escalation of the armed conflict. We have lived through several close calls, it is time to rely on more than nerve and luck to avert disaster. I suggest that we take the initiative to propose fair rules for the competition of the "votes" or "allegiances" of the unaligned countries. As Amitai Etzioni has pointed out a set of rules would include such principles as the following:

1. No non-aligned country would be allowed to have military ties with other countries, particularly not with any of the major powers.

2. No foreign troops or foreign bases or foreign arms of any sort would be permitted to remain in or enter the non-aligned country. Foreign arms would be prohibited to rebels and to the governments of non-aligned countries.

3. A United Nations observer force consisting largely of personnel from non-aligned countries and equipped with the necessary scientific equipment and facilities (flashlights, infra-red instruments, helicopters, aerial photography, lie detectors, and the like) to check the borders, ports, airfields, roads, railroads, etc., would be deployed at the request of any of the major powers or by the Secretary-General of the United Nations after a majority vote in the General Assembly. Costs would be allocated so as to reduce the incentive to create repeated false alarms.

4. A United Nations research and development staff would be established to keep informed about the development of new observational techniques and equipment.

Amitai Etzioni, in Winning Without War, has developed these ideas at some length. My presentation here is indebted to Etzioni but differs in some of the details.
5. Violations of the arms embargo would - once they were certified as such by an appropriate U.N. Tribunal - set in motion a cease and desist order aimed at the sender of arms or troops and a disarm order aimed at the receiver. Obedience to these orders would be checked by the U.N. observer force. Lack of compliance with the orders to desist and disarm would result in sanctions appropriate to the nature of the violation - e.g., a trade and communications embargo, a blockade, the sending of armed forces into the non-aligned country.

Would such a policy for the permanent military neutralization of the non-aligned countries be acceptable? Shortly after Stalin's death, the Soviet Union began to foster non-alignment among third countries under the slogan of a "vast zone of peace". Since 1954, Soviet economic aid has gone to more than twenty underdeveloped countries, all of which - with the exception of Cuba - have maintained their independence and their status of non-alignment. Similarly, since late in Eisenhower's administration, the United States has been willing to give aid to countries that have not taken our side in the Cold War - e.g., Yugoslavia. The non-aligned countries themselves have shown more and more desire not to become members of one or another military bloc. The time seems propitious for the super-powers, while they still remain dominant powers, to help establish the rules for non-armed competition for prestige and influence.

Suppose some such rules could, in fact, be established, what effects might be expected? Clearly, the revolutionary ferment in Asia, Africa, and Latin America would not disappear. Now would it be unlikely that Communist governments would take power in some countries. These rules would not have prevented Castro from overthrowing Batista in Cuba. However, I suggest that the critical issue is not whether the local Communists or their sympathizers can achieve power in a given country without external military aid but rather whether after achieving power, they remain in power because of foreign military aid and whether they become a base for military aid to Communists in other countries.
Let us look at the issue of communism and the underdeveloped countries more directly. I suggest that a Communist government in an underdeveloped country presents no threat to us so long as it remains militarily unaligned.

Such a government may be a tragedy to its people but I insist that we must be fulfilling our moral responsibility if we develop and enforce rules that could prevent outside military aid from foreclosing the possibility that the people will overthrow a government that is obnoxious to them. A Communist government that stays in power with the acquiescence of its people may be distasteful to us, and we may not want to aid it to stay in power, particularly if it is a terroristic government. But we can hardly claim the right to obliterate it. We do not intervene against such right-wing terroristic governments as those in Haiti, Paraguay and Nicaragua. (To the contrary, we have given these terroristic governments military aid because presumably they are anti-Communist; military aid which could only be used effectively against their own people)

The underdeveloped countries face incredibly difficult problems. The "revolution of rising expectations" has created aspirations that can not be fulfilled in the foreseeable future without massive aid from the richer nations. Even with massive aid (aid that would have to be many times more that is now being given) it would be a long and slow process before most of the underdeveloped countries reach an economic, educational, and technological level that will put them in reach of the standards of living found in modern industrialized nations.

The Soviet Union can not afford to give massive economic aid to many underdeveloped Communist nations. They can not support many Cubas. Although we can afford to give much more aid than the Soviet Union and, in fact, to give much more than we do, our own capacities are not limitless. Both of our capacities could be considerably enhanced, as would the capacities of the recipients of such aid, if we could agree to keep arms and armed forces outside of the reach of the underdeveloped areas of the world. Too much of the assistance going to underde-
veloped countries in the form of military aid and too much of the production of underdeveloped countries is being channeled into military expenditures.

How would the United States make out in a competition for the free "vote" of the underdeveloped countries of the world? Would we do better than the Soviet Union, better than Communist China, better than France? I do not know but if we can not do well in a free competition, perhaps we might consider the possibility that there is something wrong with us and had better revise many of our conceptions and ways of relating to other nations. We start off with many advantages! We have unsurpassed, and even unused resources to draw upon, we can turn out more food and more material goods than any other nation. We have a democratic tradition and the reputation of being the land of opportunity, which is respected throughout the world - the names of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Kennedy are revered almost universally.

We also start out with disadvantages. We have identified ourselves with the status quo, with governments that are unwilling to institute the economic and political reforms necessary to make them responsive to popular aspirations. Also, the populations of most of the underdeveloped countries are non-white, and unfortunately, we have not yet overcome the pervasive practices of racial discrimination and segregation in our country. We are making progress but the progress is slow: the racial tyranny in Mississippi and the Negro ghettos in New York have not yet begun to disappear. It seems evident that unless we can achieve much more rapid and substantial progress in eliminating racial barriers at home, these barriers will obstruct us abroad. It also seems apparent that if we are going to be effective in the underdeveloped countries our aid has to be directed toward those governments which are attempting to increase their national productivity and to improve the lot of their populations. Aid to countries that are not effective in improving their productivity or aid to tyrannical governments will not help the position of the United States in the long run international competition for prestige and influence. Too often our aid has gone to just such countries. Wouldn't
our position in Latin America be somewhat better than it is now if Trujillo’s accomplices, Duvalier’s thugs, Stroesner’s henchmen, and Battista’s militia had not been armed with guns supplied by us? Surely, the guns in the hands of the tyrants and their accomplices should be supplied by someone else, not us.

The proposal I have made for the military neutralization of the underdeveloped countries has many technical problems which I have ignored - e.g., the nature and composition of observer forces, the composition and functioning of the Tribunal, the kinds of sanctions which might produce effective compliance. I assume that the major technical problems center about the need to reduce the likelihood that the rules can be violated in such a way as to give any side an insuperable advantage. Without going into this issue in detail, I think it can be seen that any given violation is not likely to have catastrophic consequences for the military security of any of the superpowers. And even if an underdeveloped country is subverted or taken over as a result of a series of violations, this is hardly likely to be catastrophic. Moreover, in such a case, the violations are hardly likely to be undetected. Thus, violations become evident before they become a substantial threat to one’s security.

In other words, an agreement on fair rules for competition does not require a great deal of trust. It may be feasible in the kind of world that exists today. If the proposal were in fact implemented, it seems reasonable to think that it could be followed by such steps as a military neutralization of Central Europe, which could then lead to a massive reduction of the armed forces of the superpowers, which might be followed by a reduction of the strategic capabilities of the superpowers to a level of “minimum deterrence”. Beyond that point, which seems remote in time, it seems unreasonable to speculate. If we get to that point, the world conditions will have been altered radically in ways which are not now predictable,
Developing a Cooperative Framework

Acceptance of fair rules for competition means an abandonment of cut-throat competition. It implies a change in the conception of one's adversary: he becomes a contestant rather than purely an enemy. The conflict changes its character. The rules which limit the forms of conflict, bind the contestants together in terms of common interests. However, the common interest in the rules is not, by itself, likely to be adequate to resist the debilitating effects of the inevitable misunderstandings and disputes which are associated with any system of rules. The bind between the contestants must be strengthened by enhancing their community or cooperative interests.

How can this be done? The key to the development of cooperation can be stated very simply. It is the provision of repeated and varied opportunities for mutually beneficial interactions. In relation to the Soviet Union, we have done some of this. But obviously not enough. Let me quote from a recent issue of the Wall Street Journal:

Russia is ready, able and anxious to become a good customer of the West — especially the U.S. — and equally eager for a chance to sell Western buyers its own wares.

The Soviets say they're ready to buy about $350 million of chemical equipment a year from the West over the next seven years, plus large quantities of construction equipment, farm tools and other machinery.

On the selling side, the Soviets offer to conclude "long-term contracts of 10 and 15 years" to supply U.S. firms with Russian iron ore, manganese, chromium and other raw materials. The idea is to still any U.S. fears that the Soviets, who are often accused of using trade as a political weapon, might suddenly stop selling a commodity once a Western firm had become dependent on it.

And there's little doubt of the strength of Russia's desire to strengthen the USSR economy through trade with the West. To help make up for crop failures, the Soviet Union already has arranged to buy nearly $1 billion worth of Western wheat. To speed growth of its economy, it is relying largely on a $46 billion, seven-year program of building up chemical and related industries. Authorities estimate that nearly $2 billion worth
of chemical equipment may have to be purchased from Western Europe, Japan and the U.S. if this Soviet chemical program is to achieve its goals.

But trade with Russia runs into powerful political opposition from many Americans who feel it helps to strengthen a potential enemy. At present, any U.S. firm wishing to sell goods to Russia must get a Government license to export them, and licenses are supposed to be denied to "strategic" goods. The government before the wheat sale interpreted this injunction strictly enough to keep U.S. exports to Russia in 1962 down to a piddling $15 million.

A U.S. company wishing to import goods from Russia is free in most cases to buy as much as it likes. But to bring the goods into the U.S. it will pay a tariff three to four times as high as the duty on goods imported from other lands, and U.S. firms selling goods imported from Communist countries have often run into consumer boycotts. Such pressures in 1962 held U.S. imports from the Soviet Union to an insignificant $16 million.

Our reluctance to trade with the Soviet Union, our unsuccessful attempts to get our allies to limit their trade with them, the C.I.A.'s strange economic report on the Soviet Union are all indicators of an underlying view which hampers the attempt to strengthen cooperative bonds: the view that anything which helps them hurts us. Clearly, it helps them if their control over their nuclear missiles is such as to prevent accidental firings. But does this harm us? Clearly, it helps them if their children have available the Sabin polio vaccine. But does this harm us?

George F. Kennan has recently pointed out: "It is not too much to say that the entire Communist bloc is caught today in a great crisis of indecision over the basic question of the proper attitude of a Communist country toward non-Communist ones. The question is whether to think of the world in terms of an irreconcilable and deadly struggle between all that calls itself Communist and all that does not, a struggle bound to end in the relatively near future with the total destruction of one or both, or to recognize that the world socialist cause can be advanced by more complicated, more gradual, less dramatic and less immediate forms, not necessitating any effort to destroy all that is not Communist within
our time, and even permitting, in the meanwhile reasonably extensive and profitable and durable relations with individual non-Communist countries.

None of us will fail to note that a parallel question tortures public opinion and governments in the West. There can be little doubt that our answer to the question of whether Communist and non-Communist countries can exist together peacefully will be an important influence in determining how the Communists answer it. If we continue to maintain the quixotic notion that the Communist governments of Eastern Europe, Cuba, China, and for that matter, the Soviet Union are likely to disappear in some violent internal convulsion, will we influence them to choose the less belligerent answer? Or will they be better influenced by a policy which accepts the reality of the Communist governments and adopts the view that we are willing to participate in any and all forms of mutually beneficial interactions including normal diplomatic contacts, cultural and scientific exchanges, trade, and so forth. Which policy provides a more promising prospect of a relaxation of the severity of the Communist regimes and a weakening of the barriers that separate their people from contact with the outside world? Which policy is more likely to promote the growing individualism and diversity among the Communist nations? The answers are obvious. Yet so many seem frightened by the idea of cooperation with the Communists; the very phrase sound subversive.

For many, appeasement and cooperation are equated. They seem to feel that the only credible stance toward someone who might have hostile intentions is a self-righteous, belligerent counter-hostility. There is, of course, an alternative stance: one of firmness and friendliness. It is possible to communicate both a firm, unwavering resolve not to allow oneself to be abused, intimidated, or defenseless and a willingness to get along peacefully and to cooperate to mutual benefit.

other words, willingness to cooperate does not imply willingness to be abused.

"Firmness" in contrast to "belligerence" is not provocative and, thus, while aborting the development of vicious spirals does not abort the development of cooperation. It is, of course, difficult to resist the temptation to respond with belligerence to the belligerent provocations of some of the Communist nations. It requires a good deal of self-confidence to feel that one does not have to demonstrate that one is "man enough" to be tough nor that one isn't "chicken". It is just this kind of firm, non-belligerent, self-confident, friendly attitude which appears to be most effective in reforming aggressive delinquents.

Can we adopt such an attitude? Our defensiveness is rather high, suggesting that we don't feel confident of ourselves. Our defensiveness comes from two sources. First, we have too high a level of aspiration. Throughout most of our history, we have been in the uniquely fortunate position of having pretty much our own way in foreign affairs. Initially, this was due to our powerful isolated position in the Americas and since World War II we have been the leading world power. We face a loss of status. It seems evident that we can not remain in the unique status we have become used to. We can no longer be isolated from the physical danger of a major war nor can we remain the uniquely, powerful nation. We have to adjust our aspirations to the changing realities or suffer a constant frustration. A second root of our national defensiveness is a lack of confidence in our ability to maintain ourselves as a thriving, attractive society that can cope effectively with its own internal problems. The fact is that we have not been coping well with economic growth, unemployment, civil rights, the education of our children, the rebuilding of our cities, the care of our aged.

....I have now come full circle. Conflict is more likely to take the form of lively controversy rather than deadly quarrel when the disputants respect themselves as well as the other. The process of reforming another, of inducing an opponent to adhere to fair rules of competition, often requires self-reform.
"Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be."

Thomas à Kempis

"The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips."
Footnotes


12. A. Etzioni in *Winning Without War*, 1964, Doubleday, has developed these ideas at some length. My presentation is indebted to Etzioni's but differs in some of its details.
