EIGHT

Conflict: A Social Psychological Perspective

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We live in a period of history where conflicts over natural resources are likely to increase markedly and where hydrogen bombs and other weapons of mass destruction can destroy civilized life. The social need for better ways of managing conflict is urgent. In response to this need, a relatively small number of social scientists—still too few—have been working to provide the knowledge that will lead to more constructive conflict resolution.

In this chapter we seek to provide an overview of the research and theoretical knowledge that have been accumulating about conflict. We believe that the scientific work in this area is contributing to the emergence of a new mode of thinking about conflict, with an array of concepts that highlight some of the central processes involved in disputes and that provide a coherent basis for organizing the details of such processes. As a result, the mystical aura of the inevitability of destructiveness often associated with conflict has been reduced, and new insights about how to manage conflicts more productively at the interpersonal, intergroup, and international levels have emerged.

Our approach to conflict in this chapter is social psychological. We are brash enough to advance the view that the social psychological perspective provides a useful framework for considering the processes involved in conflict, whether the conflict is interpersonal, intergroup, or international. We even go so far as to suggest that what one can study in the social psychology laboratory has conceptual

Note: The writing of this chapter was supported in part from a National Science Foundation Grant (BNS-77-16017).
relevance for the understanding of large-scale conflict processes. We make the scientifically optimistic assumption of a correspondence in social processes across different types of social units. We hope our assumption is a valid one. We are in much the same position as the astronomers. It seems unlikely that we shall ever be able to conduct true experiments with large-scale social events. However, if we are able to identify the conceptual similarities between the large scale and the small, as the astronomers have between the planets and Newton's apple, we may be able to understand, predict, and possibly control what happens in large-scale sociohistorical processes by investigating what occurs in interpersonal and intergroup situations with which we can experiment. In short, we believe that the games people play as subjects in laboratory experiments may have relevance to such important social concerns as war, peace, and social justice.

The social psychological study of conflict is characterized not so much by the nature of the conflicting units it studies (although interpersonal and intergroup conflict are investigated most commonly) as by its approach to conflict. This approach is distinguished by its focus on the interplay between psychological and social processes. It is concerned with the perceptions, beliefs, and values of the conflicting units as well as their actualities; these may or may not correspond. It is concerned with how the social realities of the parties in conflict affect their perceived and experienced realities and how the psychological realities of the conflicting parties affect the development of their social realities.

The social psychological perspective on conflict highlights the possibility of discrepancy between the objective and the perceived state of affairs. Recognition of this possibility suggests a typology of conflicts (Deutsch, 1973) that emphasizes the relationship between the two. Such an emphasis leads to specification of the types of distortion that can occur, including the nonrecognition of real conflicts of interest as well as their displacement and misattribution. This emphasis, in turn, leads to a consideration of what activates the sense of injustice and what turns a latent into a veridical conflict (Deutsch, 1974, 1985). This focus also suggests examination of the social and psychological determinants of the readiness to cope with real conflicts in an undistorted way. The power, internal cohesion, and structure of the parties, as they affect and are affected by the course of conflict between them, are inherent concerns in this perspective.

Social psychological research on conflict during the past twenty-five years or so has largely taken the form of experimental gaming and has mostly been identified as research on bargaining and negotiation. Research in this area has primarily addressed three major, overlapping questions: (1) What are the conditions that give rise to a constructive or destructive process of conflict resolution? In a sense, this question arises from a focus on the cooperative potential inherent in conflict. (2) What are the circumstances, strategies, and tactics that lead one party to do better than another in a conflict situation? This question emerges from a focus on the competitive features of a conflict situation. (3) What determines the nature of the agreement between the conflicting parties, if they are able to reach an agreement? This question is a relatively recent one and has been addressed under the heading of research on the social psychology of equity and justice. In the next three sections, we shall attempt to describe the tentative answers that social psychological research has given to the foregoing questions.
Conditions Determining the Constructiveness of Conflict

In social psychology the question "What are the conditions that give rise to a constructive or destructive process of conflict resolution?" has been most directly addressed in research conducted in our laboratory, which is summarized by Deutsch (1973). This research has employed a variety of experimental games: the Prisoner's Dilemma, the Acme-Bolt trucking game, the Allocation game, the Siegel-Fouraker buyer-seller game, and several intergroup situations. In addition, exploratory field research has been done on the mediation process in labor-management conflict (Kressel, 1971) and in divorcing (Kressel, Morillas, Weinglass, and Deutsch, 1978) as well as on marital conflict (Shichman, 1982).

Our research started with the assumption that the parties involved in a conflict would be more likely to engage in a constructive process of conflict resolution if they had a cooperative rather than a competitive orientation toward one another. Earlier research (Deutsch, 1949a) had demonstrated that a cooperative process is a more productive way of dealing with a problem facing a group than a competitive process. We reasoned that the same would be true in a mixed-motive situation, where conflict could be viewed as a mutual problem facing the conflicting parties. Initial research on trust and suspicion employing the Prisoner's Dilemma game strongly supported this reasoning, as did subsequent research employing other experimental formats. This finding is very important and has considerable theoretical and practical significance.

At a theoretical level, it permitted linkage between a prior characterization of cooperative and competitive social processes (Deutsch, 1949b) and the processes of conflict resolution that would typically give rise to constructive or destructive outcomes. That is, a way was found to characterize the central features of constructive and destructive processes of conflict resolution. This finding—which represented a major advance beyond the characterization of outcomes as constructive or destructive—was not only important in itself but opened up a new possibility: the very significant possibility that we would be able to develop insight into the conditions that initiated or stimulated the development of cooperative-constructive versus competitive-destructive processes of conflict. Much of the research done in our laboratory has been addressed to developing this insight.

Nature of the Issue in Conflict

The likelihood that a conflict will take a constructive or a destructive course depends on the nature of the issue: its size, its rigidity, its centrality, its relationship to other issues, and the level of consciousness of the issue.

Size. As Fisher (1964) has pointed out, conflict size increases as the size of the conflicting units increases. He notes also that conflict size is increased to the extent that (1) the conflict is over principles, rights, and personalities; (2) the resolution of conflict establishes important precedents; (3) the conflict is perceived in win-lose terms; (4) the views and interests of the conflicting parties are discordant; and (5) the conflict is unfocused, nonspecific, and ill defined.

In an experiment on the effects of conflict size, Deutsch, Canavan, and Rubin (1971), using the Acme-Bolt trucking game, found that, as conflict size increased,
cooperation became more difficult, the joint payoffs decreased, and improvement in the joint payoffs over trials increased. The results clearly show that a cooperative process of conflict resolution and the attainment of a mutually satisfying agreement are more likely when conflict size is small. Nevertheless, under certain conditions a large conflict may seem so potentially dangerous that it exerts a strong pressure to reach agreement. To reduce the size of conflict, one may diminish the perceived opposition between the parties in values and interests through emphasizing common superordinate goals (Sherif, 1966) and through the techniques of controlled communication (Burton, 1969), role reversal (Cohen, 1950; Rapoport, 1966), and encounter group exercises (Schutz, 1967). These techniques essentially assume that perceived opposition can be reduced if the conflicting parties can be led to see how much they have in common, if their differences can be seen in the context of their similarities and agreements. They also commonly assume that perceived differences will decrease if misunderstandings are eliminated through improved, open, full, direct communication between the parties. Sometimes, however, the removal of misunderstanding sharpens the awareness of conflicting interests or beliefs, an awareness that had been blunted by benevolent misunderstandings (Johnson, 1967).

It is somewhat surprising that, in the literature dealing with the management of conflict, there has been relatively little focus on what Fisher (1964) calls issue control. Controlling the importance of what is perceived to be at stake in a conflict may prevent the conflict from taking a destructive course. Many conflicts may be defined in a way that either magnifies or minimizes the size of the disputed issues. In general, "here-now-this" conflicts, which are localized in terms of particular, delimited actions and their consequences, are much easier to resolve constructively than conflicts that are defined in terms of principles, precedents, or rights, where the issues transcend time and space and are generalized beyond the specific action to personalities, groups, races, or other large social units or categories. Thus, when a quarrel starts to center on personalities or group membership rather than on specific actions, it usually takes a nonproductive turn. Similarly, when a discussion focuses on rights or principles rather than on what is specifically taking place at a given time and locale, it is not likely to be fruitful. Thus, in the Cuban missile crisis, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would have been ready to negotiate about a fundamental principle such as "freedom" or "communism." Norwithstanding, they were able to negotiate about the much smaller, more focused, and specific issue of the location of seventy-two weapon systems.

Issue Rigidity. Issue rigidity may be determined by the nature of the issue as well as by the parties' attitudes. Certain issues (such as power or status) are more conducive to rigid definition than others. When the parties perceive no alternatives or substitutes for their expected outcomes or for the methods of achieving them, the conflict becomes rigidly defined. Issue rigidity is, of course, increased when the conflicting parties freeze themselves into positions (Fisher and Ury, 1981), through cognitive rigidity or the lack of cognitive resources for conceiving of alternatives, and by self-limitations that a change in one's position is a humiliation or loss of honor.

Centrality of the Issue. The more an issue threatens one's well-being, self-esteem, image, honor, reputation, position, or power, the more central and intense the conflict is, the more intangible the issues it creates, and the more irreconcilable the conflict becomes (Rubin and Brown, 1975). The Israeli-Arab conflict, for exam-
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ple, is over highly central, rigidly defined issues around rights and principles, determined by political, historical, economic, and psychological causes. The resulting difficulty of achieving a solution that is satisfactory to both parties has culminated in five wars in the Middle East, with the prospect of still more to come (Bar-Tal, 1983).

The Number of Issues. A larger number of issues are more difficult to resolve—other factors held constant—than a smaller number. Consider, for example, the negotiation of a civil aviation agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1961 the United States refused to sign the agreement, treating it as a part of the then pending Berlin confrontation. In 1968 both the United States and the Soviet Union were ready to treat the aviation agreement as a separate issue, unrelated to Berlin; consequently, they signed the agreement (Fisher, 1969).

When multiple issues are involved, a constructive resolution is more likely if the issues are considered simultaneously rather than sequentially (Pruitt, 1981). Kelley (1966) found that dealing with the issues singly or on a subset basis made it more difficult to reach an agreement over all the issues. Reaching agreement on one item before settling the others declined over sessions, while reaching a total agreement on all items in their entirety increased over sessions and was preferred by most bargainers. Kelley concludes that treating the issues as a package rather than on a one-by-one basis allows the generation of more alternatives and increases the number of options to reach an overall agreement. Similarly, Froman and Cohen (1970) found that bargaining over multiple issues at one time led to more equitable and higher joint outcomes and required fewer steps. They conclude that negotiating each issue separately raises the level of conflict in the system and is less efficient than negotiating the issues as one set. Others (for example, Fisher, 1969), on the other hand, advocate fractioning the objectives into smaller components and dealing with them one at a time rather than in an overall confrontation. Dividing up a problem increases the likelihood of reaching an agreement, limits disagreement to specific issues, increases the chances of achieving the objectives, and reduces the risks of war in international conflicts.

Rubin and Brown (1975) suggest that the effectiveness of the two opposing approaches may depend on the number of issues. When the number of issues under dispute grows from few to many, formulating subsets of issues or breaking down the conflict into a number of issues may facilitate a constructive course of conflict and reaching agreement. As the number of issues in contention increases, the pressures toward differentiating them are likely to increase as well, and the fractioning of the issues so that they are smaller and specific—"issue control" (Fisher, 1964) or into "package deals" (Ikle, 1964)—promotes the resolution of conflict.

A question related to the number of issues refers to the order of dealing with multiple issues and is answered by two opposing viewpoints. One advocates considering the more important issues first, assuming that reaching agreement on the major issues will promote agreement on more trivial ones. The other approach advocates considering the less important issues first, assuming that the cooperation and recognition of common interests will facilitate the resolution of more major issues. It seems likely that both approaches have merit, each being more appropriate under certain conditions but not under other conditions. Empirical assessment of the circumstances leading to greater effectiveness of one or another approach is lacking, so that the question is left open for investigation.
Consciousness of the Issue. Conflict that is denied or unacknowledged may be either displaced or repressed and thus be more difficult to resolve. Acknowledgment of a conflict does not automatically lead to engagement in an attempt to resolve it, since the conflict may still be avoided for various reasons. Avoidance serves as a defense against confrontation with the other party; and it precludes a mutually satisfying resolution, inhibits the development of the relationship, and reduces the possibility of learning more about and understanding the other party. Avoidance may also lead to displacement of the issue to other areas (Coser, 1956), which, in turn, may decrease the likelihood of resolving the other conflicts and may impair the relationship between the parties.

Motivational Orientation

Motivational orientation refers to one's attitudinal disposition toward another. Deutsch (1973) distinguishes among three basic types of motivational orientations: cooperative—the person has a positive interest in the welfare of the others as well as in his own welfare; individualistic—the person has an interest in doing as well as he can for himself and is unconcerned about the welfare of the others; and competitive—the person has an interest in doing better than the others and in doing as well as he can for himself.

The effects of cooperative, individualistic, and competitive orientations—induced by experimental instructions—on the development of trust or suspicion were investigated in a Prisoner's Dilemma game (Deutsch, 1958, 1966a). In addition to motivational orientation, the influence of psychological simultaneity of choice and of communication availability was explored. The data indicate that in all experimental conditions a cooperative orientation leads to cooperative choices and expectations that result in mutual gain, whereas a competitive orientation leads to competitive choices and expectations that result in mutual loss. The choice-expectation patterns of the individualistically oriented subjects are much more influenced by the specific experimental treatments, so that, under conditions of full psychological simultaneity and of opportunity for two-way communication, the tendency of individualistically oriented subjects to choose cooperatively is increased. It can be concluded that a cooperative orientation will produce trusting and trustworthy behavior even when the situational facilities do not encourage it—for example, when no communication is permitted and when one has to choose without knowledge of the other person's choice. On the other hand, even when situational facilities are encouraging, a competitive orientation will result in suspicious and/or untrustworthy behavior. Trusting relationships can be developed under an individualistic orientation if external circumstances provide support for mutual trust—for instance, if the individual is given an opportunity to commit himself to a cooperative agreement through communication and an opportunity to know what the other person chooses.

The effects of motivational orientation on bargaining have been studied in several ways: varying the experimental instructions (Crawford and Sidowski, 1964; Deutsch and Lewicki, 1970; Griesinger and Livingston, 1973; Summers, 1968; Willis and Hale, 1963), manipulating the reward structure (Crombag, 1966; Gallo and Dale, 1968; Jones and Vroom, 1964; Krauss, 1966; Raven and Echhus, 1963; Rubin, 1971b; Shapira and Madsen, 1969; Wallace and Rothans, 1969), measuring the
subjects' attitudes before the bargaining sessions begin (Benton and others, 1969; Kelley and Stahelski, 1970a, 1970b), and introducing varied payoff matrices (Araroff and Tedeschi, 1968; Horai and others, 1969; Komorita and Mechling, 1967; Lindskold, Bonoma, and Tedeschi, 1969). After reviewing this research evidence, Rubin and Brown (1975, p. 213) conclude that "regardless of the particular method by which motivational orientation has been varied, it appears that a cooperative motivational orientation leads to more effective bargaining than an individualistic, and especially than a competitive motivational orientation."

Kenman (1983) suggests altering the dangerous Soviet-American relations by reducing the intense competitive orientation of the two nations through fostering cooperative activities. The collaborative approach includes courses of action such as restoring the full confidentiality and civility of communication between the two governments, gradually approaching the elimination of nuclear weapons, and, finally, taking advantage of those areas where possibilities for collaboration and mutuality of interests between the two nations exist, such as in the scientific and cultural fields or in the area of environmental problems.

Communication Process

The communication process is another of the factors determining whether the conflict will take a cooperative or a competitive course; the cooperativeness or competitiveness of the bargaining process influences, in turn, the use and characteristics of the communication. A competitive process tends to produce ineffective and impoverished communication, characterized by misleading, deceptive, and unreliable information; lack of verbalization of relevant thoughts and feelings; use of espionage to obtain information that the other is unwilling to give; little trust in information provided by the other; and increased likelihood of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. A cooperative process, on the other hand, is characterized by open and honest exchange of relevant information, where each participant is interested in informing and being informed by the other. The sharing of information enables the parties to get to the core of their knowledge and resources. The communication process between Japan and the United States during 1941 provides an example of a deceptive, misleading, and unreliable exchange of information between competing powers (Goldston, 1978), as does the process between the Soviet Union and the United States at the start of the Cuban missile crisis.

Some investigators report increased cooperation and bargaining effectiveness when there is availability of communication as opposed to its total absence (Bixenstine and Douglas, 1967; Bixenstine, Levitt, and Wilson, 1966; Deutsch, 1958; Scodel and others, 1959; Shure, Meeker, and Hansford, 1965; Terhune, 1968; Wandell, 1968). Krauss and Deutsch (1966), however, did not find that merely providing bargainers with the opportunity to communicate improved their bargaining effectiveness, and they suggest that the use of communication channels will be determined by other factors—for instance, the bargainers' motivational orientation, the personalities of the participants, and situational factors such as the availability or nonavailability of threat and the induction of trust or suspicion (Rubin and Brown, 1975).

In a study of the conditions of communication (that is, instances where communication was permitted and where communication was not permitted),
Deutsch (1958) found that, in contrast to both the cooperative and the competitive orientations, the behavior resulting from an individualistic orientation is very much influenced by situational determinants. The opportunity to commit oneself to a cooperative agreement through communication and the opportunity to know what the other is doing as one decides what to do facilitate considerably the development of mutual cooperation between individualistically oriented subjects.

How can communication opportunities be used to elicit mutual trust between the parties and, thus, facilitate a cooperative process of conflict resolution? A study designed to answer this question (Loomis, 1959) revealed that communication is likely to be effective in inducing trust in individualistically oriented people to the extent that the following basic features of cooperation are explicitly communicated: expression of one's cooperative intention, expression of one's cooperative expectations, expression of one's planned reaction to violations of one's expectations, and expression of a means of restoring cooperation after a violation of one's expectations has occurred. Thus, explicit communication of a cooperative system that specifies mutual responsibilities and procedures for handling violation and restoring cooperation may facilitate the development of trust.

The effects of both threat potential and the availability of communication (permissive communication) were investigated in a series of studies (Deutsch and Krauss, 1960, 1962; Krauss and Deutsch, 1966). In one study the Acme-Bolt trucking game paradigm was employed to test the effects of bilateral communication (both parties permitted to talk) combined with three levels of threat (“no threat,” “unilateral threat,” and “bilateral threat”). The results indicated that only threat had a significant effect and that the permission to communicate had no effect on the ability to reach agreement. It seems, then, that the opportunity to communicate does not necessarily result in an amelioration of conflict; indeed, the opportunity to communicate does not necessarily result in communication at all. Actually, little communication occurred; most subjects did not utilize their opportunity to communicate. Apparently, “the competitive orientation induced by the threat potential . . . was sufficiently strong to overcome any possible amelioration effects of communication. In the no-threat condition, where competitiveness is at a minimum, the advantage gained by the use of communication to coordinate effort was offset by the time consumed by talking” (Deutsch, 1975, p. 232). Thus, in a highly competitive situation, communication was infrequent and often failed to ameliorate conflict. A similar finding is reported by Scodel and his associates (1959) and by Wandell (1968), and such a finding is consistent with Kee’s (1970) conclusion that communication is more deceptive and threatening when bargainers are induced to be suspicious rather than trusting.

Testing the effect of compulsory communication, Krauss and Deutsch (1966) found that only in the unilateral-threat condition (where only one of the bargainers had a weapon that could be used as the basis of threat) did the communication produce better outcomes. In the bilateral-threat condition (where both bargainers had weapons), the compulsory communication could not overcome the competitive orientation and thus did not have an ameliorating effect. In the no-threat condition (where neither bargainer had a weapon), the communication produced no effect.

As the results of these experiments indicate, the effects of communication must be considered in conjunction with motivational orientation. Thus, communication may be employed to coordinate effort or to intensify the competitive process
through threats and insults. How, then, can communication be structured to increase bargaining effectiveness? Structuring may be introduced through a third party, through the experimenter's instructions, or through the development of rules that regulate the bargaining behavior. Krauss and Deutsch (1966) investigated the effects of the researcher's instructions on bargaining effectiveness. They compared the effects of untutored communication (where the researcher stressed the importance of communicating but did not specify the content of the communication) and of tutored communication (where the researcher instructed the subjects to negotiate a fair solution under a bilateral-threat condition). The investigators found that tutored communication facilitated better payoffs, whereas untutored communication did not improve the bargaining outcomes. The instructions induced more cooperation among the tutored subjects by providing them with an authoritative direction to utilize communication to reach a fair solution that would be acceptable to both sides.

Another way of structuring communication is through prescribing the manner in which communication is to occur (including the timing and the content of communication) during the bargaining. As to the timing of communication, Krauss and Deutsch found that postdeadlock communication was more effective than predeadlock communication. Evidence related to the structure of the content of communication is provided by Loomis's (1959) finding that the more complete the communication, the more likely it is to induce cooperative bargaining. A similar result is reported by Radlow and Weidner (1966), who found more cooperation in a message condition (where the message's content prompted a cooperative definition of the situation) than in a no-message condition. Other studies (Cheney, 1969; Gumpert, 1967; Hornstein, 1965) suggest that the availability and use of competitive messages, such as warnings, threats, or punishments, is likely to introduce elements that may reduce bargaining effectiveness (Rubin and Brown, 1975).

In sum, the availability of communication channels does not guarantee their usage or the improvement of bargaining outcomes. Factors such as motivational orientation and the influence of third parties determine whether or not communication takes place and the way it is utilized. Burton and his associates (Burton, 1969, 1979) and Kelman and his co-workers (Kelman, 1972, 1976, 1979; Kelman and Cohen, 1979; Cohen and Azar, 1981; Cohen and others, 1979) have developed "problem-solving workshops" to foster effective communication between people from nations that are involved in international conflict. The workshops seem well based in social psychology, but little evidence for their effectiveness exists as yet.

The Crude Law of Social Relations

Most of the results of the studies described in the preceding pages seem explainable by "Deutsch's crude law of social relations," which states that the characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of interdependence of social relationship (cooperative or competitive) tend also to elicit that type of social relationship. Thus, cooperation induces and is induced by a perceived similarity in beliefs and attitudes, a readiness to be helpful, openness in communication, trusting and friendly attitudes, sensitivity to common interests and deemphasis of opposed interests, and orientation toward enhancing mutual power rather than power differences. Similarly, competition induces and is induced by suspicious and
hostile attitudes; the use of tactics of coercion, threat, or deception; attempts to
enhance the power differences between oneself and the other; poor communication;
lack of awareness of similarities in values; and increased sensitivity to opposed
interests.

In other words, if one has systematic knowledge of the effects of cooperative
and competitive processes, one will have systematic knowledge of the conditions
that typically give rise to such processes and, by extension, to the conditions that
determine whether a conflict will take a constructive or destructive course. Deutsch's
(1949a, 1949b) theory of cooperation and competition is a theory of the effects of
cooperative and competitive processes; hence, from the crude law of social relations,
it follows that this theory provides insight into the conditions that give rise to
cooperative and competitive processes.

The crude law is crude. It expresses surface similarities between "effects" and
"causes"; the basic relationships are genotypical rather than phenotypical. The
surface effects of cooperation and competition depend on the underlying type of
interdependence ("positive" and "negative") and type of action ("effective" or "bun-
gling"), the basic social psychological processes involved in the theory ("substitut-
ability," "cathexis," and "inducibility"), and the social medium and social context
through which these processes are expressed. Thus, the manner in which "positive
cathexis" is expressed in an effective, positive interdependent relationship will
depend on what is appropriate to the social medium and context; that is, presumably
one would not seek to express it in such a way that one's partner would be
humiliated or embarrassed as a result. Similarly, the effectiveness of either coop-
eration or competition as an initiating or inducing condition of a cooperative or
competitive process depends not on its "phenotype" but rather on the inferred
"genotype" of type of interdependence and type of action. Thus, in most social
media and social contexts, "perceived similarity in basic values" suggests the pos-
sibility of positive linkage between oneself and the other. However, this same "sim-
ilarity in basic values" may induce a negative relationship if we both seek something
that is in scarce supply and available only to one of us. Also, although threats are
mostly perceived in a way that suggests a negative linkage, a threat that seems
intended to compel a person to do something that is good for him or that he feels
he should do can suggest a positive linkage.

Although the crude law is crude, it is a synthesizing principle that integrates
and summarizes a wide range of social psychological phenomena. Not only do the
typical effects of a given relationship tend to induce that relationship, but any of
the typical effects of a given relationship tend to induce the other typical effects of
that relationship. For example, among the typical effects of a cooperative relation-
ship are positive attitudes, perception of similarities, open communication, and an
orientation toward mutual enhancement. One can integrate much of the literature
on the determinants of positive and negative attitudes in terms of the other associ-
ated effects of cooperation and competition. Thus, positive attitudes result from
perceptions of similarity, open communication, and so on. Similarly, many of the
determinants of "effectiveness of communication" can be linked to other typical
effects of cooperation or competition. And so on.

The crude law is crude, so it can be improved. Its improvement requires a
linkage with other areas in social psychology, particularly social cognition and
social perception. Such a linkage would enable us to view phenotypes in their
social environments in such a way as to lead us to perceive correctly the underlying genotypes. We would then be able to know under what conditions "perceived similarity" or "threat" will be experienced as having an underlying genotype different from the one that is usually associated with its phenotype.

Finally, from the crude law, one would expect that any relationship would normally intensify. For example, if a relationship were more cooperative than competitive, it would move increasingly in a cooperative direction, and the intensity of cooperation would increase. Undoubtedly, this intensification does occur to some extent, but it tends to be limited. What are the influences restricting such a process? It seems likely that there are both external and internal constraining factors. Externally, the involvement and pull of other simultaneous relationships and overlapping situations tend to prevent and contain what might be termed an obsessive intensification of any particular relationship. Internally, there seem to be normal pathologies that develop in most types of relationships; these appear to curb the unceasing intensification of the relationship.

**Malignant Social Conflicts**

In the preceding pages, we have sought to provide theoretical and research insights into the conditions that give rise to a constructive or destructive process of conflict resolution. In this section we consider a particular form of destructive conflict, one characterized by a "malignant social process" (Deutsch, 1983). In a malignant conflict, the participants become enmeshed in a web of interactions and defensive-offensive maneuvers that worsen instead of improve their situations, making them more insecure, vulnerable, and burdened. Pathological disputes have a tendency to expand and escalate so that they become independent of their initiating causes. In such a dispute, the conflict processes themselves serve to perpetuate and intensify the conflict.

Deutsch (1983) has described a number of key elements (all of them evidenced in the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union) that contribute to the development and perpetuation of a malignant process: (1) an anarchic social situation, (2) a win-lose or competitive orientation, (3) internal conflicts (within each of the parties) that express themselves through external conflicts, (4) cognitive rigidity, (5) misjudgments and misperceptions, (6) unwitting commitments, (7) self-fulfilling prophecies, (8) vicious escalating spirals, and (9) a gamesmanship orientation, which turns the conflict away from issues of what in real life is being won or lost to an abstract conflict over images of power. Several of these are described below.

**Anarchic Social Situation.** There is a kind of situation that does not allow the possibility of "rational" behavior because the conditions for social order or mutual trust do not exist. The current security dilemmas facing the superpowers particularly result from their being in such a situation. In such "nonrational situations," an individual or a nation often will attempt to increase its own welfare or security without regard to the security or welfare of others, and the attempt will prove to be self-defeating. Consider, for example, the United States decision to develop and test the hydrogen bomb, in order to maintain military superiority over the Soviet Union, rather than to work for an agreement to ban testing of the H-bomb and thus prevent a spiraling arms race involving this monstrous weapon
(Bundy, 1982). This decision led the Soviet Union to attempt to catch up. Soon both superpowers were stockpiling H-bombs in a nuclear arms race that still continues in different forms.

United States leaders believe that if the Soviets had been the first to develop the H-bomb, they would have tested it and sought to reap the advantages from doing so. They were probably right. Both sides are aware of the temptations for each to increase security "by getting ahead." The fear of "falling behind," as well as the temptation to "get ahead," leads to a pattern of interactions that increases insecurity for both sides. Such situations, which are captured by the Prisoner’s Dilemma game, have been extensively studied by social scientists (see Alker and Hurwitz, 1981, for a comprehensive discussion). When confronted with such social dilemmas, an individual or a nation can avoid being trapped in mutually reinforcing, self-defeating cycles only if it attempts to change the situation so that a basis of social order or mutual trust can be developed.

**Competitive Orientation.** If the participants in a conflict see it as a win-lose, competitive struggle, the resulting social process will tend to perpetuate and escalate the conflict. Communication between the parties will be unreliable and impoverished, enhancing the possibility of error and misinformation and reinforcing preexisting stereotypes and expectations toward the other. It will appear that the solution of the conflict can be imposed by one side or the other only by means of superior force, deception, or cleverness; the attempts to create and maintain a power superiority will change the focus from the immediate issue in dispute to the more abstract issue of power for its own sake. A suspicious, hostile attitude will develop, which increases the sensitivity to differences and threats while minimizing the awareness of similarities. Behavior will be permitted that would be considered outrageous if directed toward someone like oneself. Since neither side will be likely to grant moral superiority to the other, the conflict will escalate as one side or the other engages in behavior morally outrageous to the other.

**Internal Conflicts.** Although competition is a necessary condition for malignant conflict, it is not a sufficient one. Malignant conflict persists because internal needs require the competitive process between the conflicting parties. There are many kinds of internal needs for which a hostile external relationship can be an outlet: It may provide an acceptable excuse for internal problems, which can be seen as caused by the adversary or by the need to defend against the adversary; it may provide a distraction, so that internal problems appear less salient; it can provide an opportunity to express pent-up hostility arising from internal conflict through combat with the external adversary; it may enable one to project disapproved aspects of oneself (which are not consciously recognized) onto the adversary and to attack them through attack on the adversary; it may permit important parts of one’s self—including attitudes, skills, and defenses developed during conflictual relations in one’s formative stages—to be expressed and valued because the relations with the present adversary resemble earlier conflictual relations. When an external conflict serves internal needs, it is difficult to give it up until other means of satisfying these needs are developed. There is little doubt that the conflict between the superpowers has served important internal functions for the ruling establishments in the United States and the Soviet Union.

**Misjudgments and Misperceptions.** Impoverished communication, hostile attitudes, and oversensitivity to differences—typical effects of competition—lead to
distorted views that may intensify and perpetuate conflict; other distortions and egoistic biases commonly occur in the course of interaction. Many of these misperceptions function to transform a conflict into a competitive struggle—even if the conflict did not emerge from a competitive relationship. (See Jervis, 1976, for an excellent discussion of misperception in international relations.)

**Unwitting Commitments.** In a malignant social process, the parties not only become overcommitted to rigid positions but also become committed, unwittingly, to the beliefs, defenses, and investments involved in carrying out their conflictual activities. The conflict then is maintained and perpetuated by the commitments and investments given rise to by the malignant process itself. Thus, for example, in explaining his opposition to an American proposal shortly before Pearl Harbor, Prime Minister Tojo said that the demand that Japan withdraw its troops from China was unacceptable. As quoted in Jervis (1976, p. 398): “We sent a large force of one million men to China and it has cost us well over 100,000 dead and wounded, [the grief of] their bereaved families, hardships for four years, and a national expenditure of several tens of billions of yen. We must by all means get satisfactory results from this.”

**Self-Fulfilling Prophecies.** Merton (1957), in his classic paper “The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy,” has pointed out that distortions are often perpetuated because they may evoke new behavior that makes the originally false conception come true. The spurious 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 (for example, the anxious student who, afraid that he might fail, worries so much that he cannot study, with the consequence that he does fail). It also contributes to our understanding of social pathology (prejudice and discrimination against blacks, for example, keeps them in a position that seems to justify the prejudice and discrimination).

So, too, in international relations. If the policy makers 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 side’s response will justify the initial move. The dynamics of an arms race has the inherent quality of *folie à deux*, wherein the self-fulfilling prophecies mutually reinforce one another. As a result, both sides are right to think that the other is provocative, dangerous, and malevolent. Each side, however, fails to recognize that its own policies and behavior have contributed to the development of the other’s hostility. If each superpower could recognize its own part in maintaining the malignant relations, that recognition could lead to a reduction of mutual recrimination and an increase in mutual problem solving.

The United States and the Soviet Union are entrapped in the pathological social process described here, giving rise to a web of interactions and defensive maneuvers, which, instead of improving their situations, make them both feel less secure, more vulnerable, more burdened, and a threat to each other and to the world at large. This pernicious process is fostered and maintained by anachronistic competition for world leadership; security dilemmas created for both superpowers by competitive orientations and the lack of a strong world community; cognitive rigidities arising from archaic, oversimplified, black-and-white, mutually antagonistic ideologies; misperceptions, unwitting commitments, self-fulfilling prophecies, and vicious escalating spirals, which typically arise during the course of
competitive conflict; gamesmanship orientations to security dilemmas, which turn a conflict from what in real life is being won or lost to an abstract conflict over images of power, in which nuclear missiles become the pawns for enacting the game of power; and by internal problems and conflicts that can be managed more easily because of external conflicts.

**Deescalating Conflict**

One of the techniques that can be employed to deescalate conflict and reestablish trust, once an impasse or a deadlock has been reached, is Osgood's (1962) Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction (GRIT). This procedure consists of a graduated series of announced deescalation steps, action, and reciprocation. One party begins the GRIT process by announcing some steps it is going to take to reduce tension and destructiveness; it then takes the step and explicitly states its expectation that the other party is also interested in replacing escalation with constructive strategies. If the other reciprocates in response to the tension-reducing initiative(s), then the first party starts another round of such initiatives, and so on. Reviewing the literature, Lindskold (1978) concludes that the GRIT strategy has much research support.

Another approach to preventing destructive conflict is the method of principled negotiation, developed by Fisher and Ury (1981). This method of deciding issues on their merits may serve as an alternative to hard or soft positional bargaining, which involves successive taking and giving up of a sequence of positions. Principled negotiation consists of four elements: separating the people from the problem, focusing on interests rather than positions, generating a variety of options for mutual gain, and basing the outcomes on some objective criteria independent of the parties' positions. Although, as yet, there has been little research on the method of principled negotiation, it seems entirely consistent with the existing theoretical and research literature.

Third parties may also serve to limit the escalation of conflict. Rubin and Brown (1975, p. 56) indicate that third parties generate pressures toward agreement, which "may emanate from the mere knowledge of their present and/or future involvement, from their specific attributes (such as personality and reputation), and, most directly, from the interventions which they initiate. These pressures push bargainers in two primary directions: toward deference to norms of fairness, social responsibility, reciprocity, and equity of exchange; and toward the search for alternatives to their preferred positions." For third-party interventions to be effective, however, the bargainers must have sufficient trust and confidence in the third party's ability to function in his role as mediator (Kressel, 1971; Rubin and Brown, 1975).

The mere knowledge of the availability of a trusted third party as a factor facilitating the bargaining process deserves a special note. Whereas a concession initiated by the bargainer may be perceived as a sign of weakness to be exploited by the adversary, a concession suggested by a third party may reduce a bargainer's accountability for the concession and, thereby, ameliorate negative evaluations of him by the opposing party as well as by his own constituency (Johnson and Tullar, 1972; Kerr, 1954; Pruitt, 1971; Rubin and Brown, 1975; Stevens, 1963; Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, 1973; Walton, 1969; Walton and McKersie, 1965).

Psychological research, as well as everyday phenomena, indicates that third-
party interventions are often helpful in reaching an effective conflict resolution. Pruitt and Johnson (1970) found that intervention by a mediator enabled bargainers to make larger and more frequent concessions without viewing themselves as weak for having conceded. Pruitt and Johnson attribute the results to the face-saving function of the mediator. The above findings are corroborated by Podell and Knapp (1969), who report that subjects perceived their programmed robot opponent as being more willing to make concessions and as less weak when the concessions were preceded by an intervention from a mediator than when a mediator was not present. Both Pruitt and Johnson's and Podell and Knapp's results indicate that concessions initiated by oneself are interpreted more as a signal of weakness than concessions initiated by a third party.

Third parties can serve many functions when intervening in a resolution of conflict: (1) focusing the attention of the parties on the objective issue in contention, rather than on their personal feelings, by separating the people from the problem; (2) clarifying the parties' intentions and expected gains and costs; (3) exploring alternative solutions through directing the discussion to interests as well as through facilitating a creative generation of options; (4) allowing all or both parties to save face; (5) facilitating communication between opposing parties; (6) regulating the costs of conflict; (7) regulating public intervention or interference; (8) identifying and promoting the use of additional resources; (9) establishing and reinforcing norms of equity, fairness, and justice in the bargaining situation; and (10) legitimizing one's position when one's request reflects the view of an impartial third party (Deutsch, 1973; Fisher and Ury, 1981; Kerr, 1954; Kressel, 1971; Rubin and Brown, 1975; Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, 1973). Walton (1969) categorizes the interventions of third parties as (1) those affecting the structure of the confrontation (for example, the site, time constraints, and audiences) and (2) those affecting the dialogue process (for example, the agenda and communication channels).

Summary of Findings

We have presented a survey of some of the experimental research and theorizing bearing on the important question of what determines whether a conflict will take a constructive or destructive course. In our view, significant progress has been made in providing a preliminary answer to this fundamental query. First of all, constructive and destructive processes of conflict resolution have been equated with cooperative and competitive processes, respectively; and, second, investigators have demonstrated that the typical effects of a cooperative (competitive) process tend to induce a cooperative-constructive (competitive-destructive) process of conflict resolution. Since we have well-established theoretical and research knowledge of the typical effects of cooperative and competitive processes, we have an answer to the question heading this section.

Thus, if one wants to create the conditions for a destructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical characteristics and effects of a competitive process: poor communication, coercive tactics, suspicion, the perception of basic differences in values, an orientation to increasing power differences, challenge to the legitimacy of the parties, and so on. On the other hand, if one wants to create the conditions for a constructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical effects of a cooperative process:
good communication, the perception of similarity in beliefs and values, problem-centered negotiations, mutual trust and confidence, informal friendly contacts, information sharing, and so on. Moreover, if one examines the roles of mediators and conciliators and similar third parties, one can describe their essential functions as seeking to produce constructive conflict resolution by creating the conditions that characterize an effective, cooperative problem-solving process. Knowledge of these conditions, in effect, provides an intellectual framework for third-party interventions.

Methods of Securing Advantage over Adversaries

Most of the important theoretical work by social scientists in relation to the question “What are the circumstances, strategies, and tactics that lead one party to do better than another in a conflict situation?” has been done not by social psychologists but by economists, political scientists, and those concerned with collective bargaining. Notable contributions have been made by Chamberlain (1951), Schelling (1960, 1966), Stevens (1968), Walton and McKerlie (1965), Kahn (1969), Jervis (1970, 1976), and Snyder and Diesing (1977). Earlier, Machiavelli ([1513] 1950) and Potter ([1948] 1965) had described useful strategies and tactics for winning conflicts. Machiavelli emphasized methods of using one’s power most effectively so as to intimidate or overwhelm one’s adversary; Potter showed his readers how to play on the good will, cooperativeness, and politeness of an opponent so as to upset him and make him lose his “cool.” More recently Alinsky (1971) has described a “jujitsu” strategy that the “have-nots” can employ against the “haves” and outlined various tactics of harassing and ensnaring the “haves” in their own red tape by exerting pressure on them to live up to their own formally stated rules and procedures.

Social psychologists have just barely begun to tap and test the rich array of ideas about strategies and tactics for winning conflicts, or for increasing one’s bargaining power and effectiveness, that exist in the common folklore as well as in the social and political science literatures. Summaries of the relevant social psychological research on bargaining and negotiation can be found in Deutsch (1973); Druckman (1973, 1977); Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma (1973); Krivohlavy (1974); Rubin and Brown (1975); Chertkoff and Esser (1976); Morley and Stephenson (1977); Magenau and Pruitt (1978); and Pruitt (1981). This research has provided some support and some qualification of preexisting ideas about bargaining strategy and tactics. We shall briefly discuss research relating to “being ignorant,” “being tough,” “threats and promises,” and “bargaining power.”

“Being Ignorant”

Common sense suggests that one is better off if one is informed rather than ignorant. However, Schelling (1960) has advanced the interesting idea that in bargaining it is sometimes advantageous to be in a position where one is or appears to be ignorant of his opponent’s preferences. Research (Cummings and Harnett, 1969; Harnett and Cummings, 1968; Harnett, Cummings, and Hughes, 1968) provides experimental support for Schelling’s idea. In several different bargaining situations, a bargainer who did not have complete information about his opponent’s
bargaining schedule began bargaining with higher initial bids, made fewer concessions, and earned higher profits than bargainers with complete information. When a bargainer is ignorant of what the other wants, or appears so, he may justify to himself and to the other a relative neglect of the other’s interests; neglecting the other’s interests when they are known is a more obvious and flagrant affront. During World War II, the Allies’ claimed ignorance of the genocide of the Jewish population of Europe saved them the cost involved in an attempt to stop the Holocaust.

The bargaining tactic of “ignorance,” as well as other such tactics as “brinksmanship” or “appearing to be irrational,” can be characterized in terms of the bargaining doctrine of “the last clear chance.” The basic notion here is that a bargainer will gain an advantage if he can appear to commit himself irrevocably, so that the last clear chance of avoiding mutual disaster rests with his opponent. A child who works himself up to the point that he will have a temper tantrum if his parents refuse to let him sit where he wants in the restaurant is employing this doctrine. So is the driver who cuts in front of someone on a highway while appearing to be deaf to the insistent blasts of the other’s horn. Such tactics do not always work; they seem most likely to do so when the situation is asymmetrical (one party can use the tactic but the other cannot) and when the opponent does not have a strong need to improve or uphold his reputation for “resolve” or “toughness.”

“Being Tough”

“Bargaining toughness” has been defined experimentally as setting a high level of aspiration, making high demands, and offering fewer and smaller concessions than one’s opponent. Those who advocate a tough approach reason that offering few concessions reduces the opponent’s aspiration level and, consequently, increases the payoff of the tough bargainer. Those who oppose the tough strategy argue that toughness induces one’s opponent to be tough as well. Thus, Kennedy could not appear soft on Vietnam because of Khrushchev’s toughness toward China at the time. In contrast, making concessions decreases mistrust and increases the likelihood of reaching agreement. For example, through conceding to the United States around the turn of the century, Britain succeeded in strengthening its friendship with the United States (Jervis, 1982).

While some experiments support the effectiveness of the tough strategy (Benton, Kelley, and Liebling, 1972; Chernoff and Conley, 1967; Komorita and Bremner, 1968; Pilisuk and Skolnick, 1968; Pruitt and Johnson, 1970), the overall literature (see Magenau and Pruitt, 1978) points to a more complex conclusion: Lower initial demands and high concession rates facilitate reaching an agreement (Bartos, 1974; Benton, Kelley, and Liebling, 1972; Hammer, 1974; Harnett and Vincelette, 1978); however, extremely low initial demands and fast concessions may impede agreement because they may lead the other to expect more than the concession maker is ultimately willing to yield. Using the American course of action during the Cuban missile crisis, Jervis (1982) illustrates how a state that acts in a risk-taking manner in a situation where toughness is not anticipated can be expected to act even more boldly in less constrained situations. By the same token, if a state makes concessions on issues that are more important to it than to its adversary and/or in situations in which it has power advantages, it can be expected to be even more appearing in situations that are less conducive to the state’s being tough.
Pratt (1981) proposes an inverted U-shaped relationship between a bargainer's demands and his gains. Bargainers with low demands will reach agreement but will achieve low profits; bargainers with high demands will fail to reach agreement; and bargainers with moderate demands will achieve agreement at a good level of payoff. Thus, "toughness plays a dual role and has contradictory consequences. On the one hand, toughness decreases the likelihood of an agreement, while, on the other hand, it increases the payoffs of those who survive this possibility of a failure" (Bartos, 1970, p. 62). Evidence for this conclusion comes from three studies (Bartos, 1974; Benton, Kelley, and Liebling, 1972; Chertkoff and Conley, 1967).

Similar to the distinction between tough and soft approaches to bargaining is Walton's (1964) differentiation between two strategies of social change, one involving power tactics and the other focusing on attitude change through the establishment of friendliness and trust. Walton suggests that the two seemingly contradictory strategies can be integrated into a broader strategy of social change through alternating between the two strategies, carrying out the two strategies by different subgroups, selecting power tactics with the least negative impact on attitudes, or selecting attitudinal tactics that direct least from the power strategy.

**Threats and Promises**

Threats and promises are means of social influence that affect the other's behavior through linking an externally imposed incentive (negative or positive) to the relevant alternatives. Thus, threats offer punishments and promises offer rewards as a basis for social influence (Deutsch, 1973; Kelley, 1965; Rubin and Brown, 1975; Sawyer and Guetzkow, 1965; Schelling, 1960). Research evidence shows that the use of promises tends to increase the likelihood of reaching a mutually satisfying agreement, while the use of threats tends to reduce this likelihood. Thus, bargainers who use promises tend to behave more cooperatively and more effectively (Cheney, Harford, and Solomon, 1972; Radlow and Weidner, 1966), achieve higher joint profits (Lewicki and Rubin, 1974), and have higher earnings (Rubin, Lewicki, and Dunn, 1973) than bargainers who use threats (Cheney, Harford, and Solomon, 1972; Deutsch, 1964b; Deutsch and Solomon, 1959; Lewicki and Rubin, 1971). Furthermore, promisers are viewed more favorably than threateners (Dunn, 1972; Evans, 1964; Heilman, 1972; Lewicki and Rubin, 1971), and threateners tend to evoke hostility in the other (Gumpert, 1967; Smith and Anderson, 1972). Threats are more likely to be perceived as hostile and coercive and to produce negative reaction when they are compelling (that is, when they specify what the target should do) rather than deterrent (when they specify what the target should not do) (Schelling, 1966) and when they are illegitimate rather than legitimate (Hover and others, 1972).

The main advantage of a high magnitude of threat or reward is that it may produce immediate overt compliance (Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, 1973). The main disadvantage is that it may alienate those subjected to it. A tendency to alienation is affected by the type of power used and by the legitimacy of its use. Illegitimate use of threat or reward is most likely to elicit resistance and alienation because it may be experienced as a violation of one's rights to autonomy and self-respect. Alienation reduces one's trust and thus makes one less receptive to noncoercive forms of influence. Coercive power may produce immediate compliance; nevertheless, in the long run, it is costly and consumes the user's resources.
Rubin and Brown (1975) assume that promises and threats are likely to be used to the extent that a bargainer believes he cannot successfully exert influence otherwise (Kelley, Beckman, and Fischer, 1967; Rubin, 1971a; Shomer, Davis, and Kelley, 1966; Smith and Anderson, 1972). Threat is most likely to occur when the threatener is either individually oriented or competitively oriented and, thus, has no positive interest in the other person's welfare; when the threatener expects the threat to be effective; or when the threatener expects not to be worse off as a result of the use of threat.

In spite of the negative effects that threats may have on bargaining (Borah, 1968; Deutsch and Krauss, 1960; Deutsch and Lewicki, 1970; Gallo, 1966; Gumpert, 1967; Hornstein, 1965; Kelley, 1966; Shomer, Davis, and Kelley, 1966), threats do not inevitably lead to a reaction of hostility and counterthreat. The use of and the response to threats depend on its following major characteristics: legitimacy, credibility, magnitude, clarity and precision of contingencies involved, and costs and benefits to the user (Deutsch, 1978).

Legitimacy. One's influence is more likely to be seen as legitimate when promises rather than threats are used, because threats are viewed more as an infringement on one's rights to autonomy and independence. However, under certain circumstances threats may be perceived as legitimate when the threatened individual makes no claim to the rights of free choice and self-determination and grants the other the right to set the terms of the relationship; when the threat is directed at an illegitimate action; when the threat derives from justified needs or claims; and when the threat is consistent with the adversary's values and principles (Deutsch, 1973). President Kennedy's demand that the missiles be withdrawn from Cuba looked legitimate for several reasons. First, it sought to restore the balance of force in the hemisphere, which had been violated by Russia's actions. Second, the demand was unanimously supported by Latin American countries. This legitimation facilitated the Soviets' compliance with the demand. From an individual, group, or nation who seeks to establish or maintain an image of legitimacy, more legitimate threat is likely to be more credible and, consequently, more effective. Making a threat legitimate may be accomplished through legitimizing both the content and the process of implementing the threat. A good strategy for legitimizing threat is to relate it closely in time, place, and theme to the demand when the demand is clearly a legitimate one (Fisher, 1969).

Credibility. A threat or promise made by a source will be credible as a function of the perceived strength and reliability of the source's desire to influence, the perceived capability of the source to implement his threat or promise at an acceptable level to himself, his perceived commitment to implement it, and its appropriateness to what he desires. In other words, the determination, capability, intentions, and appropriateness of the source of influence are important in building his credibility and prestige. An example of a credibility problem goes back to World War II. Having adopted a policy of appeasement, Britain and France did not come across as credible in their threat to Hitler that they would not only go to war over Poland but also fight to the end (Jervis, 1976). Another factor that affects credibility is the degree to which the source's actions have matched his words in the past. Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma (1973, p. 239) define threat credibility operationally as "the proportion of times a source backs up his threats by punishing target's noncompliant acts over all those occasions when such noncompliance occurs," and
summarize research that reveals that immediate compliance varies as a direct function of threat credibility or of both threat credibility and magnitude.

**Magnitude.** The magnitude of a threat or promise affects not only the degree of compliance but also the perception of the credibility and legitimacy of the attempted influence. Thus, a threat or a promise that is perceived as credible or legitimate will have a stronger influence the greater its magnitude. However, the credibility of a threat or a promise will decrease as its magnitude increases, particularly if a less costly incentive would be sufficient. Threats or promises that are disproportionate in magnitude may be viewed as illegitimate or inappropriate even if credible and, consequently, elicit resistance to comply.

The influence of the magnitude of promises or threats on their affective consequences was investigated by Raven and Kruglanski (1970). They contend that a larger as opposed to a smaller threat may seem a sign of respect for one's opponent. As to promises, a small promise may convey some degree of liking for the other, while too large a promise may be seen as a bribe (Rubin and Brown, 1975).

**Clarity and Precision of the Contingencies Involved.** The communication of a threat or a promise may be either explicit or tacit. An explicit communication precisely states the contingencies involved and takes the form of "If you do/don't Y, I will do/not do X" while a tacit communication does not spell out the contingencies and takes the form of "I will do/not do X" (Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, 1973). The likelihood of influencing the other is greater when the contingencies involved in the threat or a promise are clearly and specifically designated (Fisher, 1969). A general and ambiguous statement of the contingencies involved impairs the credibility and legitimacy of the message, creates the impression that one has little power to implement it, and decreases the effectiveness of the threat or the promise. However, when the source is not certain of his own intentions or when he doesn't really want to implement his threat or promise, he may prefer to communicate tacitly rather than explicitly (Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, 1973).

**Costs and Benefits to the User.** Generally, the costs of carrying out a threat—including the other's resistance and counterpunitive action—are higher than those involved in making one. Thus, carrying out a threat incurs costs to both parties. The disadvantages of implementing a threat are usually not fully considered or precisely estimated before the threat is made, but the source is tempted to implement the threat—while attempting to justify it—in order to maintain his credibility. The bombing of North Vietnam from mid-1965 to mid-1967 cost the United States more than the monetary value of destruction inflicted on North Vietnam during that period. Had the Americans considered the North Vietnamese perception of the bombing—that it was costing the United States more than it was costing them—they might have better understood why the bombing failed to exert its intended influence (Fisher, 1969).

The tendency to respond with resistance or counterthreat to a threat derives, in part, from an attempt to save face on the part of the threatened party. Face-saving behaviors are most likely to occur during aggressive or competitive encounters in which the target has suffered a public loss of self-esteem and status. In an attempt to restore its self-esteem and social esteem, the target may take costly retaliatory actions, motivated by the desire to deter the current threatener as well as future opponents, who are likely to use threat if the target does not alter its image as weak and compliant (Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma, 1973).
Tedeschi and his associates (1973, p. 141) have summarized the results of the research on threats and promises as follows: "Threats seldom improve and almost always decrease a bargainer's outcomes if his adversary is similarly armed and the values are important to both parties. Yet, when threats are available, bargainers are tempted to use them."

**Bargaining Power**

Power, or the ability to influence, has been experimentally defined in the context of bargaining in the following ways: (1) the relative dependence of the bargainers, (2) the relative power of each party to elicit concessions from the other party or to inflict harm upon the other, (3) the relative desirability of the alternatives to bargaining that are available to each of the bargainers, and (4) the relative time pressure on each bargainer to reach an agreement.

Common sense would suggest that a bargainer is likely to be better off if he has more power than his adversary. The results of social psychological research indicate that the situation is more complex than it seems at first impression. The research evidence (Magenau and Pruitt, 1978; Rubin and Brown, 1975) indicates that agreement is relatively easy to reach and the outcomes to the parties are high when bargaining power is equal (Aranoff and Tedeschi, 1968; Baranowski and Summers, 1972; Borah, 1963; Deignan, 1970; Foley and Tedeschi, 1971; Kelley, Beckman, and Fischer, 1967; Komorita and Barnes, 1969; McClintock and others, 1973; Pepitone and others, 1970; Sheposh and Gallo, 1973; Solomon, 1960; Swingle, 1970; Swingle and MacLean, 1971). When bargaining power is somewhat unequal, a power struggle often ensues as the bargainer with more power tries to assert superior claims and as these are resisted by the bargainer with lesser power; the result of this struggle is that agreement is difficult to reach and the bargainers have low outcomes. When bargaining power is markedly unequal, the differences in bargaining power are more likely to be accepted as legitimate and lead to quick agreement, with the advantage going to the more powerful bargainer (Hornstein, 1965; Rubin, 1971a). However, if the less powerful bargainer does not believe that the differences in power provide a legitimization of relatively low outcomes to him, he will resist what he considers to be greed and exploitation; agreement here also will be less likely and outcomes will be low.

**Summary of Findings**

From this brief and very incomplete survey of some of the experimental research bearing on the strategy and tactics of waging conflict, it is evident that social psychological research has given some support to rather surprising tactics (such as "being ignorant") and has raised some doubts about common assumptions regarding the advantages obtained from "toughness" as a strategy, from "coercive tactics," and from "superior bargaining power." Although the experimental research on bargaining has produced interesting results, social psychologists have not yet developed a systematic theory of social influence. Our descriptive categories for classifying the various strategies and tactics employed in competitive bargaining have not gone beyond the excellent early work of Walton and McKersie (1965). We have not developed miniature theories of seduction, coercion, blackmail, or bluffing,
and we lack sufficient empirical knowledge of these “black arts” to provide a curriculum for a school for scoundrels. Partly, our deficiency in these respects reflects a tendency to neglect theorizing and to favor research—a tendency that is characteristic of much of social psychology. Partly, it results from our insular tendency to ignore related work in other areas of social psychology—for example, Jones’s (1964) work on ingratiation, Freedman’s (1966) work on “the foot-in-the-door” technique, and Moscovici’s (1976) approach to social influence and social change.

Nature of Agreements

In addition to the types of factors discussed in the preceding section, two compatible ideas have been advanced in answer to the question “What determines the nature of the agreement between conflicting parties if they are able to reach an agreement?” One of these ideas is related to “perceptual prominence”; the other, to “distributive justice.”

Schelling (1960) has suggested that perceptually prominent alternatives serve a key function in permitting bargainers to come to an agreement. These alternatives acquire their salience because of their perceptual uniqueness, simplicity, or “good form,” Schelling (1960, p. 70) has pointed out: “Most bargaining situations ultimately involve some range of possible outcomes within which each party would rather make a concession than fail to reach agreement at all . . . . The final outcome must be a point from which neither expects the other to retreat; yet the main ingredient of this expectation is what one thinks the other expects the first to expect, and so on . . . . These infinitely reflexive expectations must somehow converge on a single point, at which each expects the other not to expect to be expected to retreat.” A perceptually prominent agreement—for example, “a 50-50 split,” “equal concessions”—provides an obvious place to converge and to stop making or expecting further concessions. Research has provided some support for Schelling’s idea (see Pruitt, 1981, for a summary).

Homans (1961, 1974) has suggested that the principle of distributive justice plays a role in determining how people will decide to allocate the rewards and costs to be distributed between them. Although Homans was not primarily concerned with conflict or bargaining, it is evident that his conception of distributive justice does not exclude them. He has emphasized one particular canon or rule of distributive justice, that of “proportionality” or “equity.” In a just distribution, rewards will be distributed among individuals in proportion to their contributions. “Equity theorists,” such as Adams (1963, 1965; Adams and Freedman, 1976) and Walster (Walster, Walster, and Berscheid, 1978) have continued Homans’s emphasis on the rule of proportionality and have elaborated a theory and stimulated much research to support the view that psychological resistance and emotional distress will be encountered if the rule of proportionality is violated. Other social psychologists—Deutsch (1974, 1975), Lerner (1975), Leventhal (1976), and Sampson (1969)—have stressed that “proportionality” is only one of many common canons of distributive justice. Amplifying Rescher’s (1966) list of principles, Deutsch (1979) has described eleven rules of distributive justice that are widely used in different contexts; others have listed even more.

Among the many possible distribution rules, several have been particularly prominent and have been the foci of political ideologies:
1. Need ("to each according to need")—the utopian idea of distributive justice advocated by Communist theorists. This principle is commonly invoked in relation to the goods that are requisites for physical survival: food, shelter, medical care, and responsible parenting of children.

2. Equality ("to each equal shares")—the egalitarian value of democratic theorists. Sometimes the stress is on "equal opportunity" (each should have equal access to resources), and sometimes it is on "equal outcomes" (each should have the resources necessary to overcome whatever handicaps would prevent equal outcomes). This principle is often invoked in relation to liberties and rights in the political and socialization-education spheres and is commonly expected in solidarity-communal relations.

3. Contribution ("to each according to contribution")—the value appealed to by meritocratic theorists as well as by Marxists ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his work") during the socialist transition period from capitalism to communism. This principle is frequently employed in the economic sphere for the allocation of honors, resources, and consumer goods.

4. Effort ("to each according to effort or sacrifice")—the principle espoused by the Puritan ethic. It is commonly applied in the socialization and religious spheres for the allocation of praise and recognition.

5. Justified self-interest ("to each according to what can be legally obtained"). Power, position, one's market value, and the like, can be used to take as much as possible for oneself as long as one does not act illegally. This principle underlies the ideology of the competitive, free-enterprise system and is usually invoked in political and economic spheres.

We are beginning to know a little about what makes a given rule of justice stand out as saliently appropriate in a given situation of conflict. A number of social psychologists (Deutsch, 1975; Lamm and Kayser, 1978; Lerner, 1975; Leventhal, 1976; Mikula and Schwinger, 1978; Sampson, 1975) have articulated hypotheses about factors favoring the selection of one or another rule, and have begun to do related experiments. Deutsch (1985), for example, has applied and elaborated his crude hypothesis of social relations (the typical consequences of a given type of social relation tend to elicit that relation) so that it is relevant to the question of what rule of justice will predominate in a group or social system. Specifically, economically oriented groups will tend to use the principle of equity (contribution); solidarity-oriented groups, the principle of equality; and caring-oriented groups, the principle of need. He has then characterized typical effects of economically oriented relations, solidarity-oriented relations, and caring relations and has hypothesized that these different kinds of typical effects will elicit different principles of distributive justice.

Thus, among the typical consequences of an economic orientation (Diesing, 1962) are (1) the development of a set of values including maximization, a means-end scheme, neutrality or impartiality with regard to means, and competition; (2) the turning of man and everything associated with him into commodities—including labor, time, land, capital, personality, social relations, ideas, art, and enjoyment; (3) the development of measurement procedures that enable the value of different amounts and types of commodities to be compared; and (4) the tendency for economic activities to expand in scope and size. The crude hypothesis advanced above would imply that if a social situation is characterized by impersonality,
competition, maximization, an emphasis on comparability rather than uniqueness, and largeness in size or scope, then an economic orientation and the principle of equity are likely to be dominant in the group or social system. Specific experimental hypotheses could readily be elaborated: The more competitive the people are in a group, the more likely they are to use equity, rather than equality or need, as the principle of distributive justice; the more impersonal the relations of the members of a group are, the more likely they are to use equity; and so forth. Results in our laboratory as well as in the laboratories of other investigators (for example, Mikula, 1981) are consistent with the crude hypothesis.

Summary of Findings

We have briefly considered two types of factors that influence the nature of the agreement conflicting parties are likely to reach: factors affecting the perceptual prominence of alternative possibilities of agreement and factors influencing whether the agreement will be perceived as just. Our discussion has not been extensive because there has not yet been much relevant research. It should be apparent, however, that if a conflict is experienced as having been resolved unjustly, it is not likely that the conflict has been adequately resolved.

Conclusion

In this chapter our objective was to provide a social psychological perspective on conflict. We believe that this perspective has relevance to intergroup and international disputes, as well as to interpersonal conflicts created in the experimental laboratory. A number of key conclusions emerging from this orientation have general relevance to conflict.

1. Few conflicts are intrinsically and inevitably win-lose conflicts. A common tendency is to misperceive conflicts of interest, as well as other conflicts in which the parties have become invested in their positions, as being "win-lose" in nature.

2. If the conflict is not by its nature a win-lose conflict, one should develop and maintain a cooperative problem-solving orientation, which focuses on the interests of different parties (and not their positions) and seeks a solution that is responsive to the legitimate interests of both sides. Various procedures for fostering the development of such an orientation have been described by Johnson and Johnson (1982), Fisher and Ury (1981), and many others.

3. A full, open, honest, and mutually respectful communication process should be encouraged, so that the parties can clearly express and comprehend one another's interest with empathetic understanding; such a process will discourage the misunderstandings that lead to defensive commitments and to a win-lose orientation. In recent years a highly developed social psychology technology has emerged for fostering such a communication process and for reducing the misunderstandings and provocations that often characterize the communications between parties in conflict (see Burton, 1969, 1979; Kelman, 1972, 1979).

4. A wide range of options for potentially solving the problem of the diverging interests of conflicting parties should be developed. Many techniques and procedures—such as "brainstorming" and "synectics"—are now available to help people increase the variety, novelty, and range of alternative possibilities available
to them as they attempt to solve problems. (For a discussion of procedures for stimulating creativity, see Stein, 1974, 1975.)

5. A sophisticated awareness should be developed of the norms, rules, procedures, and tactics—as well as the external resources and facilities—available to support "good-faith" negotiations and deter "dirty tricks," "refusals to negotiate," and "exploitativity" on the part of any of the negotiators involved in conflict. The point is that there are resources and effective procedures for dealing with many of the common problems and impasses that often lead a conflict to degenerate into a destructive process. There are potentially helpful third parties—counselors, mediators, conciliators, and arbitrators. There are often effective ways of inducing someone to negotiate despite an initial reluctance. And so on.

Let us conclude by stating that, although there has been significant progress in the study of conflict, the progress does not yet begin to match the social need for understanding conflict.

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