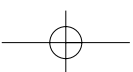
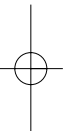
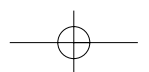
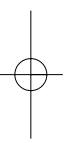




Part IV

Dynamics and Escalation





A System of Conflict Dynamics

7

The dynamics behind conflict progression, comprising emergence, persistence, and transformation, can be revealed by a general systems theory that illuminates elements (geared toward either sustaining or disrupting a status quo), and their relationship to the internal and external environment. In complex systems theory, a conflict path is viewed as more than a simple, static, and dyadic process. While some might depend on a linear system to explain changes, cyclical patterns may better illustrate how seemingly unrelated events and processes conspire to shape outcomes (Gleick, 1987). Each conflict is considered contextually unique, but its main features can be explained by shared common foundations (Golden, 2007).

Society is interlaced by orders created at various levels, but segmented in diverse ways. In considering that conflict systems are not necessarily linear, the course of any event does not always produce controllable and predictable outcomes. In contrast with a fixed structure, adaptive response systems can generate novel and creative outcomes in a complex environment (Jones and Hughes, 2003). This chapter sheds light on action-reaction modes of conflict dynamics, diverse types of behaviour, and contextual variables involved in influencing the patterns of interaction between actors.

System perspectives

Relationships between conflict components can be explained in terms of system processes and their outcomes. Persisting trends in mutual interaction and consistent patterns of behaviour characterize each stage of conflict. The changes in a conflict system move through a cycle of grievance expression-escalation-suppression. An action-reaction process is considered cyclical with

a punctuated equilibrium. With the manifestation of escalation, a latent conflict turns into a crisis. Then the crisis eventually has to be turned back to a latent condition of conflict, for heightened tension is not the normal state of relationships.

A system is imagined as a complex set of interaction patterns, constituting forces beyond the features of individual components. By nature, a system is continuously shifting from one stage to another in the process of adapting to a new situation. Although a dynamic interaction within a given structure changes from moment to moment, it is not chaotic, representing instead *'a set of self-organizing forces that keep the system on track'* (Littlejohn and Domenici, 2001: 218). Thus system dynamics are best captured in terms of an equilibrium representing a succession of identical or similar states.

In general, events activated at an earlier point can come back to affect the original event with a tendency toward greater intensity. For example, additional pressure from a supervisor results in more resistance from employees, eliciting greater directive responses from the boss. On the other hand, the interaction can be *'self-correcting, and perpetuate a steady state'* if the relationships between the boss and employees can be self-regulated without involving patterns of abusive orders and withdrawal (Littlejohn and Domenici, 2001: 219). A complex set of interactional patterns can, of course, be modified as a result of a deviation of the system, subsequently restructuring rules that govern relationships.

Changes can, therefore, be elaborated in terms of any action that causes system disturbance. Equilibrium is a normal state of many dynamic interaction patterns. Some systems are characterized by cyclical repetition of an indefinite sequence of states. Thus conflict may be seen as a movement away from an orderly normal state of relationships regulated by existing norms. The main question that remains, however, is how groups move from harmony and equilibrium to a manifested conflict, and vice versa.

In a system's model, the dynamic paths may all converge into, or diverge away, from the equilibrium point. The loss of equilibrium sparks off movement toward the previous balancing point. When system components lose the ability to interact in equilibrium, parties experience a breakdown in regular interaction patterns. Once a new system emerges, the laws of the old system are not valid any more.

The larger US-Soviet history of between 1945 and 1979 represents the repetition of a particular sequence of events, moving to and from a certain equilibrium point. The Cold War pendulum was vacillating between the opposing poles of containment and détente before the collapse of the Soviet bloc socialist systems. Détente in the early 1970s was followed by an unstable equilibrium, ascribed to unilateral arms build-up, the pursuit of military superiority by President Ronald Reagan and his ideological rhetoric in the early 1980s (rivalling that of the worst days of the Cold War in the late 1940s). The US plan to install intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe and the renewed

nuclear arms race created anxiety and pressure to recover a stable equilibrium.¹ This pressure eventually brought about renewed arms talks and a superpower summit. With the demise of the Soviet system, the old patterns of rivalry were replaced by new rules that govern different dynamics in the relationship between post-Soviet Russia and the United States.

Being accompanied by more than forty years of antagonistic relations, the US-North Korea nuclear weapons agreement in 1994 created a stable equilibrium point at which to open up the possibility of diplomatic normalization. The pendulum swung in the opposite direction in 2000, however, with the election of President Bush and his administration's abandonment of the agreement. A tit-for-tat escalation of conflict between the American and North Korean leadership led to the latter's testing of nuclear weapons in 2006. Since then, the conflict has been moderated only by the renewal of bilateral talks and the withdrawal of US financial sanctions, as an effort to explore a new equilibrium point that restores normalized channels of communication.

These events are denoted by divergence from, and return to, behavioural and normative expectations found in stable relationships. Incompatible, unregulated patterns of interaction are the hallmark of negative relationships represented by disequilibrium. Whereas intractable conflicts are escalated towards a more destructive end, many normal adversarial relationships can be managed through a relatively stable system, oscillating between periods of tension and equilibrium. An action-reaction model suggests not only conditions that facilitate escalation, but also conditions that encourage stability.

Action-reaction functions

A system's perspective reflects action-reaction functions that have been applied to the analyses of arms races, which create the vulnerability of each side to destruction by the other. The joint functions of two or more interacting countries can be said to form a system with an equilibrium point at which each side feels that its security interests, protected by military, technological, and economic strengths, are balanced against the other's threats. This equilibrium impinges upon the structure of expectations that are derived from the combined effects of interests, capabilities, and wills.

In understanding changes which affect the maintenance of the equilibrium, we can focus on a self-reinforcing spiral of actions and reactions that might either instigate the initiation of war or spur conciliation. The exchange of the moves and countermoves drives conflict either downwards or upwards. By moving away from mainly adversarial relationships, associated with an overall increase in a range of hostile behaviour, accommodation can be reached at a balancing point.

In an action-reaction process, the behaviour of one party is, in large part, a function of the other's move. The concept of interaction functions was originally formulated from an arms race perspective (Richardson, 1967). This research

originates in the classic work by Quincy Wright (1942), which correlates national interests and respective levels of armaments to the increased likelihood of hostilities.

In the processes of the arms race envisaged by Richardson (1967), one country reacts to increases in an adversary's armament levels by strengthening its own arms expenditures, pushing, in turn, growth in the initiator's military spending levels. The threat of the other party, represented by even higher levels of arms, will cause one party to boost its military strength again. The perceived threats coming from the rapid arms build-up of the opponent are a main factor leading to an upsurge in armaments; the level of responsiveness in military build-up reflects the intensity of the impact of an adversary's armament on one's own perceptions of threats, fears, and grievances.

In the mutually aggravating process of an arms race, therefore, the rate of change in each party's military build-up is a direct result of a combined effect of a rival country's military strength and an accumulation of grievances that sharpens a sense of threat. The level of arms production is checked only by the cost of procuring arms systems, and such internal constraints as limited economic strength, budgetary restrictions, and other indicators of fatigue.

A desire for balance in the dynamics of arms competition is driven by fear of the other's superiority in arms levels. While the perceptions of threat (resulting from feelings of insecurity) are magnified by increasing grievances toward the other party, motivating further arms build-up, each party must be able to afford continuing armaments. The capability to keep up with the other's expenditures is bound to preserve a threat-arms accumulation reaction system. Thus mutual parity in arms procurement is an essential condition for safeguarding equilibrium and deterring all-out war.

The system is regarded as stable if forces tending to recover the equilibrium point effectively counter a disturbance. When the differences in arms procurements are relatively small, disturbances move within a certain range from an equilibrium point. Noticeably, a small deviation does not result in a general war. Gradual and continuous adjustments to arms levels reproduce stable interactions between perceived threats and costs. In contrast, equilibrium in the existing interaction would not be sustained if an arms race were to end in either total disarmament or war.

The failure to attain equal arms development with disparities in economic capabilities produces conditions for disequilibrium. An unstable equilibrium is created by large disturbances from the system's present state. The rising level of threats, following an uncontrolled exchange of hostilities, in tandem with a clear manifestation of opposing interests, is expected to unleash catastrophic events that are beyond defensive reactions. In this situation, predomination of the arms build-up is likely to precipitate overt armed conflict.

The accumulated mutual grievances from each other's threats generate runaway conflict spirals. The ability of parties to intensify a conflict can be constrained by emotional and physical costs. The strength of disequilibrium



factors needs to be overshadowed by braking factors, such as a fear of a possible war, along with the accumulation of goodwill.

If equilibrium in the arms race is not stable, instances of hostilities can have a chain effect, leading to a specific outcome of war. The retention of high levels of arms outweighs goodwill by generating the need to keep pace with the increasing arms competition and heightened threat levels (Richardson, 1967). Large disturbances in the system's state result in a failure to return to the equilibrium point.

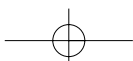
Intense overt conflict is irrevocably tied to the destructive capabilities of parties as well as perceptions of threat and grievances derived from unequal relationships. In order to uphold stable action-reaction dynamics, the conflict system has to balance threats and arms control. In the end, system transformation is essential to de-escalation and conflict resolution.

In parallel to an arms race between rival states, ethnic mobilization accompanied by the collapse of the central authority in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992 to 1995) or militia armaments in Somalia (since 1988) and Liberia (1989 to 1996) demonstrate competition among antagonistic groups for control of the state. Each group may want to take advantage of a window of opportunity to expand its power and exploit the vulnerability of others in an all out competition to capture state legitimacy and material assets (for example, timber and minerals) or infrastructure such as ports. In enduring ethnic rivalries, one group's increased strength creates a sense of insecurity for others, whereas neighbouring groups practice self-help to ensure their security.

Competitive, especially armed, mobilizations generate 'a hostility spiral of action and reaction' (Lobell and Mauceri, 2004: 4). Even a seemingly defensive move is seen as an offensive posture by rival groups. Each hostile action is likely to be reciprocated by an adversary's counter-offensive operations. In total anarchy, ethnic groups seek counterbalance with their opponents' fighting capabilities, believing that offensive strategies are the most effective in pursuing their survival. While each group either implicitly or explicitly takes measures to protect themselves by balancing the rival's strength, the mobilization dynamics result in further escalation of hostile actions without increasing one's own group's security. This process ultimately ends either with the emergence of one dominant group or external intervention to bring stability through new institution building.

The modes of interaction

Sanctions are often regarded as legitimate and acceptable methods of coercion in the international political system. The transmission of threats specifies the negative consequences faced by parties who defy the demands of a coercive opponent. Hostilities, war, or other negative forms of social influence are contrasted with persuasion and incentives (Franck, 2006). While a negative mode of action involves economic or diplomatic sanctions that are intended to



increase costs or to take away benefit, positive measures focus on rewards or recognition.

The attributes of interaction may consist not only of a mode of behaviour, but also different levels of intensity in movements (incremental versus sudden introduction of sanctions) and directions of a particular measure (an increase or decrease in punitive action). The degree of severity and consistency of sanctions produce diverse interpretation and reciprocal action over time. The consistently increasing harshness of sanctions is likely to signal the demand for capitulation rather than a move toward conciliation. The increasing or decreasing pressure can be employed in a manner that bears a direct relationship to the other party's compliant or defiant acts.

Different degrees of positive inducements, ranging from diplomatic recognition, humanitarian relief and economic assistance to military aid, can be employed as an appeasing influence strategy. Economic incentives such as lower import tariffs and free loans have often been aimed at inducing a favourable response and fortifying ally relationships. In its pursuit of the war on terrorism, US economic assistance has, for example, been granted to Pakistan and strategically important Central Asian countries.

The initiation of a negative mode of behaviour (such as violent acts as well as hostile statements) tends to be easily reciprocated through retaliatory measures. The transmission of coercive messages may have undesirable repercussions with uncontrolled consequences via escalation. To prevent a run-away acceleration of violence, coercive action needs to be applied gradually, with a greater magnitude, in specific areas. The effects of threats and punishment as a mode of influence generally focus on the costs originating from non-compliance. This strategy is contrasted with a promise made to engender trustworthy perceptions and deliver good intentions.

In most conflict interactions, the imposition of pain is combined with the remuneration of benefits (Mitchell, 1999). Whereas coercion is likely to constitute a dominant form of escalatory action, the mixture of both collaborative and coercive strategies is typically associated with conflict diminution. Even with the introduction of de-escalatory measures, bullying and intimidation tactics may not completely disappear if pressure needs to be put on adversaries to act. When a conflict is controlled to bring about settlement, the ratio and frequency of conciliatory behaviour increase vis-à-vis those that are coercive.

Threats and coercion may be accompanied by persuasive efforts made through the promise of rewards. For example, the USA and its European allies promised limited types of nuclear technology to Iran in return for Teheran's freeze on uranium programmes. When Iran declined the proposal, Western powers threatened to initiate UN-sponsored sanctions. In the post-conflict settings of Mozambique and El Salvador between 1992 and 1994, guerrilla forces temporarily ceased a continuing demobilization process when the governments did not take promised measures, such as changes in election rules and land reform, respectively.

In antagonistic relationships, sanctions may serve as a means of communication to constrain an adversary's behaviour. On the other hand, the unmanaged expression of hostile intentions inadvertently instigates the rival party's misperceptions. The prevalence of an aggressive mood in one country is likely to invite similar reactions from the other. Prior to the Six Day War of 1967, both Arabs and Israelis were reacting to each other's intense emotional fever for war.

The same action causes different consequences, depending on the opponents' perceptions. Provocative behaviour by one side generally brings about the other's harsh response intended to deter continuing provocation. Even if stronger reactions entail a risk of inciting further escalation through a negative spiral, it might be feared that modest reactions are seen as a lack of will to challenge an aggressor. The breach of normal expectations, accompanied by extreme violence, sets off a malignant spiral of escalatory acts. Witnessing atrocities encourages vindictive behaviour against enemies.

High-stakes competition, especially in conjunction with an ability to inflict pain on adversaries, most likely rouses voices for excessive concessions. While conciliatory counter-proposals can be made to meet, at least partially, an adversarial demand, this might not soften the stiff position of the opponent who feels a sense of victory and seeks total capitulation. The concessions proffered unconditionally by one side may generate expectations of continued gains from the other, who may not want to believe in, or be convinced of, a limit on what can be promulgated. If the adversary's goal is confined to low antagonistic interactions, they can be placated through friendly gestures and symbolic recognition of their claims.

Prior to the abandonment of antagonistic measures, competitive behaviour may increase temporarily in signalling the possibility of a return to a tough stance, commensurate with an adversary's future strategies. Aggressive moves for short-term gains can be misinterpreted, however, unintentionally producing retaliatory reactions. The hard question becomes how to avoid provoking the other side into an escalatory track while adopting contentious tactics in a measured manner to strengthen one's negotiating position.

The other's intention can be misconstrued due to the multiple functions of communication methods. Whereas specific actions may have been taken to shape the opponent's interpretations of the situation, these may also have to be considered in terms of the morale of one's own constituents. The efforts to send out both conciliatory and harsh messages to multiple types of audience often bring about misunderstandings and unintended reactions. Ambiguous meanings can be crafted to show intransigence to the domestic audience, while intimating an intention to lower hostilities toward adversaries. Even though the tough messages are constructed for public consumption and to allay domestic critics, they can proliferate ill feelings and enmity in the enemy camp.

Specific expectations and standards about acceptable and unacceptable contentious behaviour may differ among the parties. Words and acts ought to be

interpreted in the specific context of past and present events. Every action does not have the same value. In fact, some can be intentionally ignored or dismissed. For instance, even after the North Koreans detonated nuclear weapons in the autumn of 2006, the USA and Japan declared, as part of efforts to reverse their adversary's claim to a nuclear power status, that they do not recognize the ownership of nuclear bombs by Pyongyang as a factual matter.

Even in escalation, implicit or explicit sets of rules may emerge to inhibit excessive conduct intended for total destruction. In the midst of a violent struggle, tacit communications can be devised to constrain each other's attempts at further escalation. Without official acknowledgment, the Israeli military refrained from bombing Beirut's main commercial centre, during the 2006 Lebanese war, in part, due to Hezbollah's threat of retaliatory rocket attacks in Tel Aviv.

A threat mode of action

Threats can be designed to force the other party to abstain from particular actions or to push them to pursue new policies that favour the threatening party. Compliance with another's threats and accompanying demands hinges, in part, on the likelihood of the actual implementation of the impending actions in the event of defiance. The threats are seen to be more credible if the imminent attack appears to be well prepared for causing real harm. Credibility also rests on the actor's reputation for adhering to their own words with a show of determination (Patchen, 1988).

The cost of acting on a threat has to incorporate vulnerability to counteraction by the target. Even though the United States has the military capability to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, the American government is less inclined to employ force because of their vulnerability to destructive counterattacks. The price of actually carrying out the threatened military strikes needs to be compared to the cost of not doing so.

In response to coercive steps, the target party has multiple choices, ranging from unconditional or partial compliance with the demand, ignorance by inaction to defiance with a counter-threat. The recipient of the threats may choose to placate an adversary with an alternative reward, opt for conditional compliance in return for the satisfaction of their own demand, or simply counter the other's threat with their own. When the threatening side is unlikely to accept any response short of unconditional and outright compliance, threats and counter-threats can be further escalated as far as to war. Serbian rejection of the Austro-Hungarian empire's key demands, in the aftermath of the June 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, set a chain effect into motion. The series of fast-moving events finally spiralled into World War I.

Compliance to demands under intimidation is more likely if the punishment is of high magnitude, if a low cost for concession making is worthwhile evading the reprisal, and if other means are available by which to achieve the goals



to be abandoned. Power differentials make compliance inevitable in order to end the current pain and to avert an imminent, even larger one. The target may choose to respond to low-level coercion, instead of waiting for the infliction of much more severe retribution if the current loss is considered a less costly option in the long run.

Threats, especially carrying excessive demands, can be a gamble if they push an adversary into a corner. The target of deterrent threats is less likely to yield if it has to give up its vital needs without any alternative routes to satisfaction. In particular, the appeal of compliance would not be great without the availability and attractiveness of alternative options after the desertion of one's objectives.

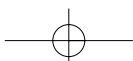
Resistance is likely to come from concerns relating to the precedent-setting effect of yielding under coercive pressure. This anxiety increases if the issues at stake are repetitive in nature and so likely to be brought up again. In addition, compliance under coercion is likely to be discouraged if what has to be conceded carries value of a high magnitude.

The intrinsic costs originating from accepting the threat terms take account of a reputation for being firm as well as damage to status, self-esteem, and pride. The price of complying with a public threat can be particularly difficult to absorb due to a loss of face. Such harm to one's standing can result in the encouragement of new demands and threats even from other adversaries fighting on different issues.

Giving in or making a concession might be taken to be evidence of general weakness for opponents who are inclined to issue further challenges. The outcome of the current conflict can then set expectations about future resolve. For instance, Germany adopted more assertive strategies and invaded Poland in September 1939, after the Munich crisis of 1938 that ended with Hitler's partial annexation of Czechoslovakia.

A target may defy the threat despite possible vengeance, or even send out a counter-threat as an attempt to discourage the adversary from carrying out the original plan. Furthermore, pre-emptive action can be taken against the warning party in order to neutralize their coercive capabilities. A high cost of compliance with the threats and also the perceived illegitimacy of the attached demand are likely to augment a prospect for such defiance. Since the counter-coercion needs to be backed up by necessary force, not every actor is capable of forceful resistance or counter-retaliation.

In general, threats are made under the assumption that the target will react rationally to make an objective calculation of costs and benefits. The opponent's response may, however, become unpredictable, with the involvement of miscalculations, especially under the stress arising from having few options but highly destructive outcomes besides capitulation. In this situation, policy making is more likely to be dictated by emotion than rational considerations (Gordon and Arian, 2001). Even though a high level threat is successful in creating fear, it fails to engender an attitude change. The magnitude of threats should, therefore, be adaptable to the target of influence.



The nature of threats ought to differ according to the target's strength and the odds of resistance. For example, the US threats of trade sanctions against Iran would have a different leverage from those targeted toward China. The threat of a sanction (for instance, the imposition of high tariffs) would be effective if the positive incentives (the continuing benefit of trade relationships) exist for compliance with the demand (the protection of property rights).

Behavioural, psychological, and organizational dimensions

The situation of each conflict stage is configured by particular behavioural and psychological parameters. At the same time, the perception of structural conditions by parties is likely to mirror changes in the dynamics of conflict. The situational variables in antagonistic interactions elucidate the definitive effects of confrontational actions. The mitigation of a conflict is typified by a transition from violent to non-violent strategies.

The patterns of interaction, associated with a particular conflict phase, impinge on certain psychological and structural conditions. Behaviour is adjusted to various periods of perceptual change in relation to themselves and the opposition. Adversarial behaviour is unlikely to be moderated in a meaningful manner if each contestant desires to keep up coercive strategies with the goal of domination. Various types of action and strategies can be accounted for by the intensity of a fight.

The different degrees of coercive power have an impact on choices of actions, thus altering the dynamics of contest. Besides a value commitment to non-violence, the use of threat or the actual exercise of force become asymmetrical if there is imbalance in the capacity to reciprocate the other's aggressive behaviour. In asymmetrical situations, the stronger party is in a position to dictate its favoured settlement terms. While extreme power inequality is likely to motivate the superior party not to make concessions, the worst escalation is more likely to happen in the moderately unequal balance of power (Pruitt, 2005).

The imposition of a unilateral solution may be met with violent resistance under normal circumstances, especially when the weaker party in possession of their own means of reprisal lacks alternatives for redress. The more important the issue is, the more difficult it is for the parties to give up their struggle, even in disadvantageous situations. Through persuasion, each party may attempt to convince the other to assent, by arguing that its desired goals can serve the interests and values of the other party. The loss of capacity and will to continue to fight eventually lead to the contraction of goals.

The degree of power to impose one's own will differs according to the types of issue in contention. Protagonists have diverse levels of ability to control agendas in different issue areas. The extent of asymmetry in issue salience has an impact on each party's decision on whether to fight. The achievement of a particular goal is probably more critical to one side than the other. The other

side's coercion is more likely to be endured with a greater will of resistance if vital interests are at stake, containing a high magnitude of grievance. The pertinence of the issues in contention, embedded in a historic struggle, inspires a highly committed fight in the longer time horizon.

The commitment to the exchange of coercive actions during escalation and stalemate is based on a balance between a party's ability to endure the costs and its perceived potential for victory. A weak party's strong will and capacity to resist raises the cost to a more powerful party with the consequence of drawing out a struggle. Dominant parties may refuse to change their positions unless they notice that the conflict cannot be won without unbearably heavy costs.

Mounting costs can test social, psychological, and military resilience in intense conflict situations. Each party has a different degree of ability to absorb costs. The infliction of pain has a limited effect when the other side has already anticipated some cost and has been prepared for that. If an adversary perceives pain to be an investment, the higher price to be paid for the sacrifice only strengthens their resolve. In such situations, therefore, reversing the other's decision through heavier coercive tactics is likely to be counterproductive.

Gross asymmetry in psychological and organizational resilience is contrasted with asymmetry in military power. In the 2006 war in Lebanon, Israel had far superior military power, but, despite a high-tech Israeli military assault, Hezbollah demonstrated more resilience, in absorbing higher conflict costs than generally expected, forcing Israel to retreat after its re-entry in southern Lebanon. In the 1991 Slovenian War, local, irregular militia groups had far superior morale, in contrast with that of their counterparts in the Yugoslav army. Without a big stake in the fighting, many of the Yugoslav soldiers, composed of diverse ethnic groups, initially mistook the military operation as an exercise. In addition to the lack of a clear direction or goal for the war, the federal government easily gave up the war in ten days, granting independence to the breakaway republic.

The trajectory of a conflict's intractability is shaped by the effects of grievances in psychological commitment and mood as well as the level of incompatibility in the goals and methods adopted to dominate others. Psychological changes at each stage of conflict can be explained in terms of not only perceptual variables but also emotional intensity. A collective trauma can result in the development of shared emotions such as fear and hate. Indeed, deep feelings of animosity and rage contribute to destructive behaviour. In conflict mitigation, a reduced level of enmity and hostility is necessary for the control of coercive action.

Not only social and psychological, but also organizational developments generate new conflict dynamics. New perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of solidarity can emerge along with the development of new organizational culture. Group activities are adapted to the acquirement of new members, technologies and tasks (McGrath and Argote, 2001). The strategies of conflict may

count on the prevailing cultural and institutional patterns as well as the capabilities of the adversaries. Organizational ability for a continued struggle is limited by fatigue, derived from difficulties in the recruitment of new members and internal cleavages. The exhaustion of organizational will and capacity saps the desire to pursue even a once sacred goal.

Organizational behaviour

Parties with diverse sizes, membership structures, and goals have different organizational inclinations and skills in adopting particular methods of struggle (Hogg, 2001). Resistance groups in civil war situations may rely on economic sabotage, destruction of government installations and attacks on government security forces. In contrast, many civic organizations are purely committed to strategies of non-violent mobilization with open, horizontal organizational structures. Greenpeace and other environmental advocacy groups have rallied a great number of protesters in an effort to bring public attention to global warming and the loss of species. The Tibetan government in exile has remained committed to non-violence even though the Chinese government killed several thousand peaceful protesters in 1957 and has continued to use highly coercive and repressive tactics, including torture.

Broad-based non-violent movements can be contrasted with terrorist organizations, characterized by the tight, cell-like leadership structure which carries out relentless violence against any enemy targets. A relatively small group is more adapted to upholding violence as a strategy to challenge state authority, even though violent means do not enhance their cause. It is very difficult to negotiate with terrorist groups that refuse to give up mostly violent tactics, especially because their goal is illusive and is not amenable to compromise.

Some organizations advocate violence as a means of taking a strategic advantage, or due to a lack of peaceful means by which to achieve their goals. Non-violence and violence strategies have even been used by the same organizations in different situations against different adversaries. While Hezbollah prefer guerrilla warfare tactics against the Israeli troops, they have been restrained from armed tactics against their domestic opponents. In March 2007, they set up tent towns in central Beirut as part of their sit-in protest to demand the resignation of a pro-Western government, even controlling the temptation to retaliate against killings of their members and other provocative actions by adversarial groups. This avoidance of violent tactics by Hezbollah can be, in part, attributed to efforts to conserve their capabilities to fight with a much more onerous foe.

In principle, non-violent resistance has been used to change a dominant party's behaviour by generating public sympathy and support for the cause of the oppressed. In applying moral pressure on the dominant power to recognize injustice, non-violent engagement counts on clear communication of intentions for persuasion (Sharp, 1973). Non-cooperation and civil resistance is juxtaposed

against violent, malignant strategies of government oppression. Violence can be rejected on the grounds of a moral or religious principle.

Non-violence may also be a more practical means by which to overcome a physical power imbalance, in that it can lower the costs of a struggle for a weaker party that is not adapted to militant strategies. Unfortunately, however, non-violent struggle against the government's continuing coercive tactics did not ease the degree of suppression in Burma and China, though it has helped to inspire international support for the causes of human rights and self-determination (Kriesberg, 1998). The success of non-armed, persuasion strategies is contingent on the existence of a viable civil society as well as freedom of the press and reasonably well informed public opinion. Non-coercive strategies can be more easily embraced in societies with relatively little repression, and less government control over dissent and opposition groups.

Political and normative dimensions such as the quest for justice play an important role in conflict analysis to the extent that moral opinions provide constraints on a powerful party's ability for non-discriminatory destruction. A subordinate group yearning for justice may refuse to accept the status quo and continue to struggle for the recognition of their moral cause. Escalation via non-violent struggles may take account of a strategy of transforming asymmetric conflict for subordinate groups. The attitude of a dominant party may fluctuate under the weight of moral and political costs brought about by sufficient external pressure.

Internal, external, and contextual variables

Not only internal but also external dynamics shift with the evolution of adversarial interaction. The overall characteristics of conflict dynamics can be determined by any combination of 1) internal changes in the contending parties, 2) the predicament in the inter-party relationship, and 3) an overarching context. Various compositions in the modification of these three components may either strengthen or weaken negative conflict dynamics.

Intra-party changes such as the emergence of a new leadership may instigate an adjustment in inter-party dynamics. The effects of positive changes within a party can be constrained by a negative external environment. For instance, efforts to bring stability to the Central African Republic have been hampered by the spill-over of armed conflicts in neighbouring countries such as Sudan. Therefore, modifications in one component such as intra-party level decision-making structure (considered favourable to de-escalation) can be negated by an opposing movement toward escalatory directions made at an external level (Putnam, 1988).

Internal changes might take place in either one of the parties, or both. A negative attitude on one side may have contagious effects on the other. The hawkish positions of one party resonate in the other's switch toward hard-line

views. This relationship dynamic would, in turn, make it more difficult for conciliatory positions to be formed within each party. Moreover, forces external to the party may lay more road blocks across the path toward settlement. The overall outcome of conflict dynamics hinges on how stabilizing and destabilizing forces balance each other out.

If one party is ready for change, while the other is not, positive initiatives may be cancelled out or undercut by adverse actions. If one party's action toward intensification of conflict is stronger than that of the other, the other party's efforts toward de-escalation are likely to be outbalanced. Overall, the nature of interaction between parties can be subscribed to communication patterns, content of messages, the level of incompatibilities in each other's activities, and the number of adversarial groups (Ellis, 2006).

External influence

Conflict transformation might arise from adaptations in external dimensions as well as internal dynamics. Internal support of escalatory moves can be mitigated by an opposite external effect towards the weakened military capabilities of adversaries. On the contrary, an external environment, related to military and economic support for war efforts, can further fuel the underlying force of self-perpetuating conflict spirals.

In a struggle with a dominant party, weaker parties may be empowered by both technical assistance and moral encouragement. If external intervention on behalf of a weaker party is designed to redress asymmetric power relations, it can compel a stronger party to cease escalatory tactics. External pressure on the parties who refuse to negotiate will, however, be more effective if there are organizational or psychological changes within each party such as a rising level of fatigue combined with deteriorating capabilities to fight.

The regional or international context has an impact on inter-group dynamics, for example, in civil wars. In the Cold War period, many internal conflicts started off because of, or were aggravated by, the US administration's political and military backing of corrupt authoritarian governments or right-wing military dictatorships worldwide from Chile and Guatemala to Zaire. In 1954, a CIA-organized covert operation toppled the democratically elected President of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, who was known for being socialist in leaning. The increasingly autocratic rule of the newly installed military government set off an armed insurrection that turned into 36 years of civil war. In September 1973, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger masterminded the Chilean coup d'état that overthrew the democratically elected Marxist president of Chile, Salvador Allende, whom the Nixon Administration feared supported the Soviet Union. The subsequent military dictatorship by General Augusto Pinochet instituted a brutal campaign against the leftist political parties, which led to the execution of around 3,000 people, the incarceration of 27,000, and the torture of a great many others.

As is illustrated in the global war on terrorism, all factors (related to parties, goals, issues, scope, and domains of conflict) are interrelated. Ethnic conflicts, combined with competition between radical and moderate Islamic groups, began to draw US attention, because the extremist groups may become potential allies for al Qaeda or other terrorist networks. The conflict in Somalia, ignored for the last ten years by external powers, now has a new dimension as a result of US suspicions that the fall of Mogadishu to religiously oriented groups might provide a breeding ground for terrorists. The Bush administration even militarily supported the Ethiopian government's invasion of Somalia, in January 2007, to nullify the military victory of the radical Islamists in an effort to bring moderate groups back to the control of the country.

Many casualties in African civil wars were, in part, attributed to the availability of small arms flowing from neighbouring countries that experienced internal violence (Lobell and Mauceri, 2004). Funding for internal violence comes from the existence of international black markets that permit rebel forces to profit from the illegal sales of timber, diamonds, and other minerals. The system of antagonistic inter-group relations is often interlinked to external forces that have vested interests in prolonging the conflict rather than undercutting destructive dynamics.

Inter-group dynamics

The rivalry between opposing blocs of protagonists has driven decades of conflict in Somalia, Burundi, Sudan, and Nepal. In these and other divided countries, settlement has been hampered by the necessity to involve multiple actors who are not necessarily representing broad constituents. In Nepal, the dissolution of the government by King Gyanendra in February 2005 and the imposition of a state of emergency united all of the established opposition political parties and eventually contributed to his loss of traditional monarchical power in April 2006. This helped Maoist guerrilla groups reach agreements with the coalition of various political parties that began to run the government.

The fate of many ethnic and political conflicts rests on more than two parties which may form different alliance or complementary relationships on a united front against a common enemy. Opposing blocs may try to take superiority or keep up with a balance in the power struggle by recruiting diverse new allies. In opposing one dominant group, all others may build a natural alliance simply for the sake of their survival. Many opposition organizations may coalesce to develop joint forces in bringing down an authoritarian government. In a civil protest against an autocratic state, varied political parties often work together with the single aim of political change.

The rebel movements, composed of disparate, ethnic contingents, may build up a unitary force against the existing political establishment, dominated by a single elite faction or ethnic group. But once the shared enemy is gone, fresh conflicts flourish among former allies. The major ethnic groups joined the

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to topple the Mengistu regime. Since the government's fall in 1991, the movements representing the region of Eritrea successfully sought independence in 1993, but the 1999 border clashes between Ethiopia and Eritrea evolved into a year-long war. Meanwhile, the EPRDF was battling with two major opponent blocs, many members of which used to operate under a broad umbrella of the previous rebel movements. In particular, the opposition groups consisting of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy and the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces protested the denial of victory in the 2005 parliamentary elections ascribed to the ruling party's fraud.

Intra-party dynamics

External conflict either exacerbates or undermines internal dissension, depending on the existing level of group loyalty among members. The means chosen in pursuing goals are generally adaptable to a group's internal structure. In its struggle against the Serbian government, the Kosovo Liberation Army, for example, had vastly different political ideologies, tactics and relationships with its constituents compared with those political groups that advocated non-violence.

Internal party divisions often centre on who is genuinely representing the community. In-fighting creates an obstacle to the negotiated solution of a larger conflict, but at the same time, a protracted intra-group struggle erodes the will to fight external enemies, contributing to subsiding violence. There are always complicated relationships between those engaged in armed struggles and those who seek political solutions.

Tamil guerrilla forces removed voices for compromise with the violent eradication of a moderate political leadership (who shares the same ethnic constituent base), further aggravating the Sri Lankan conflict. In contrast, the Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA), engaged in a bloody campaign against government institutions and personnel, has lost wide support among the constituent population due to the success of moderate nationalists in gaining concessions for regional autonomy from the Spanish government. In the Kosovo conflict, the Albanian community has been politically represented by those who advocated non-military solutions, undercutting the power of armed resistance groups heavily oriented toward intimidation tactics with an ethno-nationalist ideology.

The nature of a struggle has an impact on the group's identity, morale, and self-respect as well as on a general level of material well-being. The degree of commitment to a conflict, and types of strategy and tactic selected for the struggle can have lasting implications for group cohesion and values. The use of violence by oppressed groups is often ascribed to self-affirmation of their identity and esteem especially in a situation within which non-violence is not feasible (Fanon, 2004).

The impact of a conflict on each contending party differs, depending on group structures such as the degree of membership unity and the extent of centralized control. Each party has unique decision-making procedures and rules related to power distributions and diverse methods of regulating internal divisions.² Morale may decrease, due to an unfavourable trend in the balance of power between parties, accompanied by a loss of battles or international isolation. Low morale, following economic sanctions or destruction in war, sways the mood of the rank and file, in tandem with the loss of confidence in the leadership, demanding an adjustment of goals.

A struggle with outside enemies has unforeseen consequences within each society or group. The need to engage in extreme struggles may effectively justify the expansion of hierarchical control. In addition, further centralization of decision-making power is frequently rationalized in such instances as a major socio-economic crisis that has dire implications for survival. A group involved in a political, military battle with a much stronger adversary calls for stronger membership commitment and blind loyalty. Militant or revolutionary forces engaged in unconventional strategies necessitate a hierarchical, command system based on absolute obedience (Cosser, 1964).

The image of a demonised enemy helps to submerge internal differences, in that group members believe that internal divisions jeopardize the chances for their survival in the face of a vilified enemy. On the other hand, an internal discord over strategies, in the absence of a unifying leadership, can be exposed and aggravated in the midst of an uphill battle, eventually serving the demise of the group's campaign. During the Algerian civil war, for example, the split between the two main rival Islamist rebel groups, namely, the Islamic Salvation Army and the Armed Islamic Group, in 1994, undercut their capacity to arrange an efficient campaign against the military-run government, contributing to the struggle's cessation by 2002.

Contrary to this, however, well coordinated insurgent groups demonstrate an ability to share information, techniques, infrastructure sometimes with reorganization or more centralized management of their relationships. After experiencing internal divisions with the creation of new splinter groups, in the Second Sudanese War, thirteen opposition groups set up the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in June 1989. This was instigated by the necessity to work out collective agendas and strategies against the newly established regime of Omar Hassan al-Bashir who seized power in a military coup. In ending the civil war, the NDA successfully negotiated with the government and signed a peace agreement in June 2005. Similarly, after almost the two decades of fighting, four principal left-wing guerrilla forces in the Guatemalan civil war were combined to establish the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) in 1982. This group conducted effective negotiations with the government in 1995.

The ability to fend off the external pressures is reinforced by a strong sense of group loyalty. Identities play an important role in the translation of grievances

into mass sentiment as well as the formulation of goals and methods. When the commitment to the cause is not strong, for instance, in the US wars in Vietnam and Iraq, mounting costs, especially accumulated by unlimited war spending and human suffering, are likely to be an important source of internal discord. In autocratic states, defeat or failure to fight effectively against external enemies emboldens opposition, raising questions as to the legitimacy of oligarchic control.

Internal discord can be put aside again by revitalizing popularly accepted beliefs or myths. Any overt expression of dissent is accused of interfering with the pursuit of collective goals, being condemned by group members. Pacifist opposition to a total war has been suppressed even in Western democratic societies. World-renowned philosopher Bertrand Russell, for instance, was imprisoned for his pacifist activities against World War I in 1916. If continuing struggles rely on the recruitment of new members and volunteers, tolerance and inclusiveness might be needed to expand a constituency base.

Besides members' total conviction of their shared future, unity, discipline and loyalty cannot be insisted upon or retained without a strong leadership capable of keeping the group together especially during the discouraging moments. The costs of maintaining coercive strategies, especially for a large population, are generally unpopular if the sacrifice is made without the promise of a tangible reward, either psychological or material, or if it exceeds what people originally estimated. Dissension is subdued with even such means as execution to artificially craft support under an authoritarian leadership, but universal values or nationalist ideologies are more emphasized in democratic relationships.

Internal decision making structure

Decision-making can be protracted with a more diverse input in the development of options. The influence of individuals and groups in the course of a larger conflict can be undermined by decision-making procedures. In fact, weak group cohesiveness, internal rivalry, and differences in intra-party belief systems may complicate the development of official positions. In winding down the El Salvadoran civil war in the early 1990s, the UN and external mediation yielded a successful result, in part, owing to a united negotiating position of opposition guerrilla forces and their ability to impose internal discipline. On the other hand, ending a civil war was more challenging in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, because of a loose coordination of multiple rebel groups, their different interests, and a lack of self-control needed to abide by the agreements.

Intra-party decision-making structures become more complex in state bureaucratic institutions. State behaviour, in part, illustrates an outcome of a complex negotiation of policymaking organizations. The top leadership may also have to consider the levels of economic strength, resource base, and popular



support as well as an appropriate type of fighting. The economic burden and rising casualties are borne disproportionately within a group. Internal bargaining entails difficult balances among disperse factions, subsequently nailing down common denominators in a variety of institutional interests. The existence of perceptive leadership helps overcome political and personal differences that drive internal factions apart (Gerzon, 2006).

Leaders have a diverse set of relationships within their collective entity during the course of a conflict. The types of relationship between the elite and constituencies by and large determine the extent of leadership power to formulate group strategies and goals. The capacity to keep up escalation comes from internal solidarity as well as a strong resource base. In addition, the leadership's flexibility to explore better relations with adversaries comes from success in the minimization of internal resistance and the preservation of trust among key constituencies.

The low degree of internal unity and the existence of extreme or militant factions present the leadership with a challenge to overcome factional divisions. Hawks are more likely to ameliorate internal divisions with their daunting tactics against even other group members. The necessity for internal negotiations between the elite and its followers, as well as between different factions, can protract the final settlement. Such crucial decisions on ending or continuing a struggle may have to await not only the shifting balance between hawks and doves but also the political leadership's effectiveness in the persuasion of key constituents.

Notes

1 Reflecting on the public fear of nuclear war in November 1982, ten-year-old American Samantha Smith sent a letter to the Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, pleading with him to work toward peace. Her visit to the Soviet Union, in 1983, upon the invitation of Mr Andropov served as one of the prominent incidents which helped reverse a dangerously low point in US–Soviet relations.

2 The course of external conflict can be affected by the outcome of internal power struggles. External negotiation becomes more complicated if there is a challenge to the leadership with the ascending demand of radical factions. The US pursuit of al Qaeda has become more tricky, for example, as related to Pakistani President Musharraf's wishes to avoid clashes with tribal group leaders in the lawless region of western Pakistan, where terrorist suspects are believed to reside.

