PEACEMAKING IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

METHODS & TECHNIQUES

Revised Edition

I. William Zartman
Editor

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Washington, D.C

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE
1200 17th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-3011
www.usip.org

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Social-Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict

Herbert C. Kelman

Social-psychological concepts and findings have entered the mainstream of theory and research in international relations. Explorations of the social-psychological dimensions of international politics go back at least to the early 1930s (see Kelman 1965 for a review of the earlier history and a series of contributed chapters on various topics in the field; see also Kelman and Bloom 1973; Kelman 1991; Tetlock 1998 for reviews of later developments). Research on foreign policy decision making and the cognitive, group, and organizational factors that help to shape it (see Holsti 1989; Fischhoff 1991; Farnham 1992), negotiation and bargaining (see Druckman and Hopmann 1989; Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim 1994), enemy images (see Holt and Silverstein 1989), public opinion in the foreign policy process (see Russett 1989), deterrence and other forms of influence in international politics (see Stein 1991), and reconciliation (see Bar-Siman-Tov 2004) draws extensively on social-psychological research and theory.

Paralleling these theoretical and empirical developments, a new form of practice of international conflict resolution, anchored in social-psychological principles, has evolved over the past forty years. The approach derives from the pioneering work of John Burton (1969, 1979, 1984). My colleagues and I have used the term *interactive problem solving* to describe the approach (Kelman 1986, 1992a, 1996; Rouhana and Kelman 1994). Ronald Fisher and other scholars in the field have referred to it as *third-party consultation* (e.g., Fisher 1983, 1989) and more recently as *interactive conflict resolution* (Fisher 1997).

Under the latter title, Fisher reviews the history, central features, and procedures of this approach in his contribution to this volume.

This chapter offers a social-psychological perspective on the analysis and resolution of international conflict—a perspective based in social-psychological theory and research that, in turn, informs the practice of interactive conflict resolution described in chapter seven. A social-psychological analysis provides a special lens for viewing international relations in general and international conflict in particular. It is a different lens than that provided by the realist or the neorealist schools of international relations or other more traditional approaches that focus on structural or strategic factors. It may, therefore, help to explain certain phenomena for which other approaches cannot adequately account or introduce dimensions that these approaches have not considered. But a social-psychological approach is primarily designed to complement other approaches rather than substitute for them. It focuses on only some of the dimensions of what is clearly a large, multidimensional landscape.

Thus, I do not advocate a social-psychological theory of international relations or international conflict as a comprehensive alternative theory for the field. What is needed is a general theory of international relations, one in which analysis of the social-psychological dimensions is not merely an appendage, but an integral part. Several assumptions underlie this view.

First, psychological factors are pervasive in international conflict and international relations generally. Psychological processes at the individual and collective levels constitute and mediate much of the behavior of nations. Any general theory of international relations that fails to take them into account is therefore incomplete. Indeed, political analysts and actors invariably make assumptions about such psychological processes—for example, when they talk about risk taking, decision making, intentions, reactions to threats or incentives, or the role of public opinion. Psychological analysis addresses such assumptions explicitly, critically, and systematically.

Second, the most relevant contributions of psychological analysis are at the social-psychological level. To be sure, general psychological processes—such as those concerned with cognitive functioning, reactions to stress, or the behavioral effects of reward and punishment—explain the behavior of decision makers and other individual actors in international affairs; but these individuals act within organized social structures. Social psychology provides the appropriate framework for analyzing such behavior because it focuses on phenomena at the intersection of psychological and institutional processes: social interaction and the relationship of individuals to social systems.

Third, "psychological" is not the opposite of "real." Psychological analysis of a conflict in no way implies that the conflict is unreal, a mere product of

misperception or misunderstanding. In examining the emotional or cognitive processes in a conflict relationship, one does not presume that these processes are unrealistic or irrational. The degree of realism or rationality varies from situation to situation. Indeed, psychological analysis is often concerned with enhancing the realism of perception (e.g., White 1984) or the rationality of decision making (e.g., Janis 1982). On the other hand, psychological analysis is based on the assumption that subjective factors play a role in the perception and interpretation of events. In a conflict relationship, such subjective elements may exacerbate the conflict by generating differences in the way the parties perceive reality and by imposing constraints on the rational pursuit of their interests.

Fourth, though pervasive and important, psychological factors must always be understood in context. International conflict and its resolution must be conceived as societal and intersocietal processes that come about through the actions and interactions of large numbers of individuals who, in turn, function through a variety of groups and organizations and who are propelled by collective moods and states of consciousness with deep historical and ideological roots. Historical, geopolitical, and structural factors provide the context and set the constraints for the operation of psychological factors.

Finally, therefore, the contribution of a social-psychological perspective to understanding international conflict depends on identifying the appropriate points of entry for psychological analysis—those points in a theory of international relations where social-psychological propositions may provide particularly relevant levers for theoretical explanation. But it always must be kept in mind that these are points of entry into a larger theoretical framework that is multidimensional. A parallel assumption, at the level of practice, underlies interactive problem solving or similar social-psychologically based forms of unofficial diplomacy. Such approaches can make significant contributions to conflict resolution and ought to become integral parts of a comprehensive model of diplomacy. They do not, however, provide an alternative to official diplomacy or a substitute for binding negotiations. Their value depends on identifying the appropriate points of entry into the larger diplomatic process where they can make a relevant contribution—for example, by providing opportunities for nonbinding exploration of options or creative reframing of issues.

Proceeding on the above assumptions, this chapter undertakes two tasks. It begins with a discussion of several propositions about the nature of international conflict that flow from a social-psychological perspective and that have clear implications for conflict resolution. It then describes social-psychological processes characteristic of conflict interaction that contribute to the escalation and perpetuation of conflict and that must be reversed if the conflict is to be resolved.

THE NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

A social-psychological perspective suggests certain propositions about the nature of international conflict that expand on the view of the phenomenon emerging from more traditional approaches, such as the realist school of international relations. The four propositions discussed in this section are particularly relevant to existential conflicts between identity groups—conflicts in which the collective identities of the parties are engaged and in which the continued existence of the group is seen to be at stake. Thus, these propositions apply most directly to ethnic and ideological conflicts, but they also apply to more mundane interstate conflicts insofar as issues of national identity and existence come into play—as they often do.

- First, international conflict is a *process driven by collective needs and fears*, rather than entirely a product of rational calculation of objective national interests on the part of political decision makers.
- Second, international conflict is an *intersocietal process*, not only an interstate or intergovernmental phenomenon.
- Third, international conflict is a a *multifaceted process of mutual influence*, not only a contest in the exercise of coercive power.
- Fourth, international conflict is an *interactive process with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic*, not merely a sequence of actions and reactions by stable actors.

Thus, without denying the importance of objectively anchored national interests, the primacy of the state in the international system, the role of power in international relations, and the effect of structural factors in determining the course of an international conflict, a social-psychological perspective enriches the analysis of international relations in a variety of ways: by exploring the subjective factors that set constraints on rationality; by opening the "black box" of the state as a unitary actor and analyzing the processes within and between societies that underlie state action; by broadening the range of influence processes (and, indeed, of definitions of power) that play a role in international politics; and by conceiving of international conflict as a dynamic process, shaped by changing realities, changing interests, and changing relationships between the conflicting parties.

Conflict as a Process Driven by Collective Needs and Fears

International or ethnic conflict must be conceived as a process in which collective human needs and fears are acted out in powerful ways. Such conflict is typically driven by nonfulfillment or threats to the fulfillment of basic needs.

These needs include not only obvious material ones, such as food, shelter, physical safety, and physical well-being, but also psychological needs, such as identity, security, recognition, autonomy, self-esteem, and a sense of justice (Burton 1990). "Need," as used here, is an individual-level concept; needs are attributes of individual human beings. But insofar as these needs become driving forces in international and intergroup conflict, they are needs of individuals articulated through important identity groups. The link of needs to groups—their collective aspect—is an important and almost ubiquitous feature of human needs. The fulfillment of needs takes place to a considerable extent within the context of groups of different sizes. The ethnic group, the national group, and the state are among the collectivities that serve as important vehicles for fulfilling and protecting fundamental needs.

Closely related to these basic needs in intergroup conflict situations are fears about the denial of such needs—fears focusing, for example, on perceived threats to security or identity. In protracted conflicts between identity groups, such fears often take on an existential character, turning the conflict into a struggle over group survival. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, can be described as an existential conflict between two parties, each of which sees its very existence as a national group at stake in the conflict (Kelman 1987, 2001).

Identity, security, and similarly powerful collective needs, and the fears and concerns about survival associated with them, are often important causal factors in intergroup and intercommunal conflict. The causes of conflict generally combine objective and subjective factors, which are related to each other in a circular fashion. Conflicts focusing, for example, on issues such as territory and resources almost invariably reflect and further magnify underlying concerns about security and identity. But, whatever their role in the causation of a conflict, subjective forces linked to basic needs and existential fears contribute heavily to the conflict's escalation and perpetuation. Such needs and fears create a resistance to change even in situations in which both parties, or significant elements of both parties, have concluded that it is in their best interests to end the conflict. Despite this perceived interest, the parties are often unable to extricate themselves from the escalatory dynamic in which they are caught up.

Exploration of collective needs and fears is particularly helpful in understanding why it is so difficult for parties to change course in conflicts that have become increasingly destructive and detrimental to their interests. Although the parties may recognize that it is to their advantage to find a negotiated solution, they are afraid to go to the negotiating table. Or, having reluctantly gone to the table, they are afraid to make the necessary concessions or

accommodations for the negotiations to move forward. They worry that once they enter negotiations, or—having entered negotiations—once they make certain concessions, they will find themselves on a slippery slope: that they will inexorably be moving, concession after concession, toward an outcome that will leave their very existence compromised. In short, the sense that their identity, security, and existence as a national group are at stake contributes heavily to their resistance to negotiation or to accommodation in the course of negotiations.

The role of such existential fears and needs is more pronounced in ethnic conflicts than in the kinds of interstate conflicts with which traditional theories of international politics have been concerned. But collective needs and fears play a part in all international conflicts and lie behind what are usually described as national interests—essentially the interests perceived by elites who control the operative definition of the national interest. These perceptions are heavily influenced by objective factors. The fact that a state, for example, lacks certain essential resources, or has an ethnically divided population, or has no access to the sea, obviously plays a role in how the elites define the state's interests. But such objective factors always combine with subjective factors to determine how different segments of a society perceive state interests and what ultimately becomes the national interest as defined by the dominant elites. The subjective determinants of perceived national interests are the collective needs and fears of the society, as interpreted by the political leadership and other elites.

Similarly, it can be assumed that all conflicts represent a combination of rational and irrational factors. Ethnic conflicts, though often portrayed as uniquely irrational, resemble conflicts between states and even between superpowers in that regard. Moreover, across cases within each type of conflict, the mix of rational and irrational elements may vary. Some ethnic conflicts may be preponderantly rational, just as some interstate conflicts may be preponderantly irrational.

In all international conflicts, the needs and fears of populations are mobilized and often manipulated by the leadership. Collective needs and fears are typically linked to individual needs and fears. For example, in ethnic conflicts characterized by a high level of violence, the fear of annihilation of one's group is often (and for good reason) tied to a fear of personal annihilation. Insofar as these personally tinged collective needs and fears are mobilized, they become the focus of collective action within a society. The mobilization and manipulation of collective needs and fears vary in the degree of demagoguery and cynicism they involve, but they are always seen as necessary tasks of leaders in a conflict situation. Furthermore, though mobilized and often manipulated,

collective needs and fears must be viewed as real and authentic reactions within the population.

What does this conception of conflict as a process driven by collective needs and fears imply for conflict resolution? First, it follows from this view that genuine conflict resolution must address these needs and fears. If a conflict is to be resolved, in the sense of leading to a stable peace that both sides consider just and to a new relationship that is mutually enhancing and contributes to the welfare and development of the two societies, the solution must satisfy the fundamental needs and allay the deepest fears of the affected populations. The objective of conflict resolution is not to eliminate the conflict entirely, which is neither possible nor desirable as a general goal (because conflicts are potentially constructive forces within a society or region and serve as the basis for essential social change); rather, it is to eliminate the violent and otherwise destructive manifestations of conflict. But even these destructive elements cannot be made to disappear overnight in conflicts that have been pursued for many years—in some cases, for generations—and are marked by accumulated memories that are constantly being revived by new events and experiences. Conflict resolution does not imply that past grievances and historical traumas have been forgotten and a consistently harmonious relationship has been put in place. It simply implies that a process has been set into motion that addresses the central needs and fears of the societies and establishes continuing mechanisms to confront them.

From a normative point of view, the ultimate criterion for a successful, mutually satisfactory solution of a conflict is that it address the fundamental needs of both parties. Thus, what negotiation theorists mean by a win-win solution in a protracted conflict between identity groups is a solution that has, in fact, spoken—however imperfectly—to such needs and the fears associated with them: a solution in which neither side is required to sacrifice what it considers to be a vital need and both are reassured with respect to their deepest fears. It is in the search for such solutions that justice enters the picture in nonadversarial approaches to conflict resolution, such as interactive problem solving. Problem-solving workshops, for example, are governed by a no-fault principle, which eschews efforts to establish who is right and who is wrong from a legal or a moral standpoint. Although the parties' differing views of rights and wrongs must be discussed because they contribute significantly to the dynamics of the conflict, the assumption is that the parties cannot find a solution by adjudicating these differing views. Rather, they must move toward a solution by jointly discovering mutually satisfactory ways of dealing with the issues that divide them. Insofar as they arrive at a solution that addresses the fundamental needs of both parties, justice is being done—not

perfect justice, but enough to ensure the prospects for a durable peace. Thus, commitment to a solution that is responsive to the basic concerns of the two parties is the operationalization of justice in a problem-solving approach (Kelman 1996).

An interesting implication of a human-needs orientation, first noted by John Burton (1988), is that the psychological or ontological needs on which it focuses—needs such as identity, security, or recognition—are not inherently zero-sum. One party need not gain its identity or security at the expense of another. In fact, much of the new thinking about security, exemplified by the concept of common security, is based on the proposition that each party's security is enhanced by the security of the other. Similarly, in a context of mutual recognition, the identity of one is enhanced by the identity of the other (Kelman 1987, 358). In intense conflicts, of course, there is a strong tendency to see these needs as zero-sum and to assume that one's own security and identity can be protected or enhanced only by depriving the other of security and identity. But because these needs are not by nature mutually exclusive, addressing them may offer possibilities for a mutually satisfactory solution. If the parties can probe behind their incompatible positions and explore the underlying needs that engender these positions, they may be able to shape an integrative solution that satisfies both sets of needs. Once such underlying needs have been addressed, issues such as territory or resources—which are more inherently zero-sum in nature (although also susceptible to creative reframing)—can then be settled through distributive bargaining.

A final implication of the view that conflict is driven by collective needs and fears relates to the question of when the individual becomes the appropriate unit of analysis in international relations. Though the needs and fears that drive conflict are collectively expressed and must be satisfied at the collective level, they are experienced at the level of individual human beings. To address such needs and fears, therefore, conflict resolution must, at some stage, provide for certain processes that take place at the level of individuals and the interaction between individuals. One such process is realistic empathy (White 1984), or taking the perspective of the other, which is essential to any effort to move toward an accommodation that takes into account the needs and fears of both parties. Empathy develops in the interaction between individuals, and it is in the minds of individuals that the perspective of the other has to be represented somehow. Creative problem solving is another example of a process essential to conflict resolution that takes place in the minds of individuals and in the interaction between them as they move from analyzing the causes of a conflict to generating new ideas for resolving it. Insight and learning are further examples of individual-level processes that

need to be part of a larger effort at conflict resolution. Problem-solving workshops and similar conflict-resolution activities provide a setting in which such processes can occur. They contribute to the larger process of conflict resolution by creating, through the interaction between the participating individuals, new insights and ideas that can be exported into the political debate and the decision-making processes within the conflicting societies. Thus, a problem-solving workshop can be thought of as a laboratory—indeed, as a workshop in the literal sense of the word—where a product is being created for export. Essentially, workshops represent a special microprocess that provides inputs into the macroprocess of conflict resolution.

Conflict as an Intersocietal Process

A focus on the needs and fears of the populations involved in conflict readily brings to mind a second social-psychological proposition: that international conflict is not merely an intergovernmental or interstate phenomenon, but an intersocietal phenomenon. The conflict, particularly in the case of protracted ethnic struggles, becomes an inescapable part of daily life for the members of the opposing communities. The conflict pervades the whole society and its component elements—not only when it takes the form of explicit violence, but even when the violence is muted. Thus, analysis of conflict requires attention not only to its strategic, military, and diplomatic dimensions, but also to its economic, psychological, cultural, and social-structural dimensions. Interactions along these dimensions, both within and between the conflicting societies, shape the political environment in which governments function. Intrasocietal and intersocietal processes define the political constraints under which governments operate and the resistance to change that these produce. For example, leaders' attempts to respond to public moods, to shape public opinion, and to mobilize group loyalties often feed the conflict and reduce the options for conflict resolution.

A view of conflict as a process that occurs between two societies immediately prompts us to examine what happens within each society. In particular, this view alerts us to the role of internal divisions within each society. Although theories of international relations often treat states as unitary actors, the societies that states or other political organizations represent are never monolithic entities. Every political community is divided in various ways, and these internal divisions often play a major role in exacerbating or even creating conflicts between such political communities. The course of an intergroup conflict typically reflects the intragroup conflicts within both conflicting groups, which impose constraints on the political leaders. Leaders pursuing a policy of accommodation must consider the reactions of opposition elements,

who may accuse them of betraying the national cause or jeopardizing the nation's existence. They also must be responsive to the anxieties and doubts within the general population, which opposition elements foster and from which they draw support. In all these ways, internal divisions introduce severe constraints on efforts at conflict resolution.

Although the intersocietal nature of conflict contributes to its perpetuation, it also creates certain necessities and opportunities for conflict resolution. The internal divisions within each society do indeed impose serious constraints on decision makers in the pursuit of peaceful solutions, but they also provide them with potential levers for change. Such divisions challenge the monolithic image of the enemy that parties in conflict tend to hold and enable parties to deal with each other in a more differentiated way. They can come to recognize that even in a community mobilized for violent conflict, there may be elements amenable to an alternative approach who are potential partners for negotiation. This reality provides the opportunity, for example, of forming coalitions across conflict lines—coalitions between elements on each side that are interested in negotiation. Indeed, problem-solving workshops and related activities can be conceptualized as part of a process of forming precisely such a coalition (Kelman 1993). A coalition across the conflict line, however, must of necessity remain an uneasy coalition. If it becomes overly cohesive, its members will lose their ability to influence the political decision making within their respective communities. By becoming too closely identified with their counterparts on the other side, coalition members might become alienated from their own conationals, lose credibility at home, and hence forfeit their political effectiveness and ability to contribute to another important precondition for conflict resolution: the development of a new consensus for a negotiated solution within their own community. If coalitions across conflict lines remain sensitive to the need to maintain the members' separate group identities and credibility at home, they represent a potentially effective way to capitalize on the divisions within the conflicting societies in the interest of conflict resolution, peacemaking, and, ultimately, building a new relationship between the former enemies.

Another implication of an intersocietal view of conflict is that negotiations and third-party efforts ideally should be directed not merely to a political settlement of the conflict in the form of a brokered political agreement, but to its resolution. A political agreement may be adequate for terminating relatively specific, containable interstate disputes, but it is inadequate for conflicts that engage the collective identities and existential concerns of the societies involved. Conflict resolution in this deeper, more lasting sense implies arrangements and accommodations that emerge out of the interactions

between the parties themselves, that address the needs of both parties, and to which the parties feel committed. An agreement that is not widely accepted within the two societies is unlikely to lead to a durable peace. What is required, in short, is a gradual process conducive to change in structures and attitudes, to reconciliation, and to the transformation of the relationship between the two societies—the development of a new relationship that recognizes the interdependence of the conflicting societies and is open to cooperative, functional arrangements between them. The real test of conflict resolution in deep-rooted conflicts is how much the process by which agreements are constructed and the nature of those agreements contribute to transforming the relationship between the parties (Kelman 1999a).

Finally, a corollary of an intersocietal analysis of conflict is a view of diplomacy as a complex mix of official and unofficial, formal and informal efforts with complementary contributions. The peaceful termination or management of conflict requires binding agreements that can be achieved only at the official level. But insofar as we think of conflict as not only an interstate but also an intersocietal affair, many different sectors of the two societies must be fruitfully involved in a more elaborate, integrated process of diplomacy. In this context, unofficial, noncommittal interactions can play a complementary role by exploring ways of overcoming obstacles to conflict resolution and helping to create a political environment conducive to negotiation and other diplomatic initiatives (Saunders 1988).

Conflict as a Multifaceted Process of Mutual Influence

Much of international politics entails mutual influence, whereby each party seeks to protect and promote its own interests by shaping the behavior of the other. Conflict occurs when these interests clash: when attainment of one party's interests (and fulfillment of the needs that underlie them) threatens, or is perceived to threaten, the interests (and needs) of the other. In pursuing the conflict, therefore, the parties engage in mutual influence, designed to advance their own positions and block the adversary's. Similarly, in conflict resolution—by negotiation or other means—the parties exercise influence to induce the adversary to come to the table, to make concessions, to accept an agreement that meets their interests and needs, and to live up to that agreement. Third parties, too, exercise influence in conflict situations by backing one or the other party, mediating between them, or maneuvering to protect their own interests.

The typical influence process in international conflict relies on a mixture of threats and inducements, although the balance between negative and positive incentives varies considerably from case to case. Political analysts and

decision makers often rely heavily, if not exclusively, on the use and threat of force to exert influence on adversaries. Thus, the U.S.-Soviet relationship during the Cold War was framed largely in terms of an elaborate theory of deterrence—a form of influence designed to keep the other side from doing what you do not want it to do (see George and Smoke 1974; Jervis, Lebow, and Stein 1985; Schelling 1963; and Stein 1991). In other conflict relationships, the emphasis may be on compellence—a form of influence designed to make the other side do what you want it to do. Such coercive strategies are part of the repertoire of influence processes in all domains of social life, but they entail serious costs and risks, and their effects may be severely limited. For example, they are likely to be reciprocated by the other side and thus lead to escalation of the conflict, and they are unlikely to change behavior to which the other is committed.

Thus, the effective exercise of influence in international conflict requires broadening the repertoire of influence strategies, at least to the extent of combining "carrots and sticks"—of supplementing the negative incentives that typically dominate international conflict relationships with positive incentives (see, e.g., Baldwin 1971; Kriesberg 1981, 1982). Positive incentives may take the form of economic benefits, sharing essential resources, international approval, integration in regional or global institutions, or a general reduction in the level of tension. They are particularly effective if they meet the other's interests or respond to the other's security concerns that are at the heart of the conflict, and if they are part of a concerted strategy that invites reciprocation. An example of an approach based on the systematic use of positive incentives is Osgood's (1962) Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT) strategy. In his 1977 trip to Jerusalem, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat used a variant of this strategy by undertaking a unilateral initiative based on the expectation (partly prenegotiated) of Israeli reciprocation (Kelman 1985). But unlike the GRIT strategy, which starts with small concessions and gradually builds on them, Sadat's strategy in effect started at the end: "He made a massive, fundamental concession by accepting the basic principles of Israel's position . . . in the anticipation that negotiations would fill in the intervening steps" (Kelman 1985, 216). GRIT, the Sadat initiative, and other strategies based on positive incentives have the potential of transforming a conflict into a new relationship in which both parties' needs and interests are met and continuing differences are resolved by peaceful means.

The view of influence as a multifaceted process emphasizes positive inducements as a useful complement to the negative inducements that predominate in international conflict—as a strategy that often entails smaller short-term risks and greater long-term benefits than the use or threat of force.

But it goes further: it also provides a framework for identifying the *types* of positive inducements that are most likely to be effective. Effective use of positive incentives requires more than offering the other party whatever rewards, promises, or confidence-building measures seem most readily available. It requires actions that address the fundamental needs and fears of the other party. Thus, the key to an effective influence strategy based on the exchange of positive incentives is responsiveness to the other's concerns. The parties influence each other by actively exploring ways in which they can help meet each other's needs and allay each other's fears. Responsiveness also implies sensitivity to the other's constraints. It requires that both parties explore ways to help each other overcome the constraints within their respective societies against taking the actions that each wants the other to take. Responsiveness to the other's needs and fears is a fairly common form of influence in normal social relations. It is not, however, a strategy that parties in conflict are normally inclined to use, because it requires them to explore and carry out actions designed to benefit the adversary.

The advantage of a strategy of responsiveness is that it alerts parties to ways of exerting influence on the other through their own actions—through positive steps (not threats) that are within their own capacity to take. The process is greatly facilitated by communication between the parties to identify actions that are politically feasible and perhaps not even especially costly to one party, but are likely to have an impact on the other. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a strategy of responsiveness depends on careful adherence to the principle of reciprocity. One-sided responsiveness cannot sustain itself for long.

A key element in an influence strategy based on responsiveness is *mutual reassurance*, which is particularly critical in any effort to resolve an existential conflict. For example, how can the parties to such a conflict be induced to come to the negotiating table and, once there, to make the concessions necessary to reach an agreement? For parties afraid that negotiations and concessions might jeopardize their national existence, mutual reassurance is a major motivating force—along with a mutually hurting stalemate and mutual enticements.

Negative incentives clearly play a significant role. The negotiation literature suggests that parties are often driven to the table by a mutually hurting stalemate, which makes negotiations more attractive than continuing the conflict (Zartman and Berman 1982; Touval and Zartman 1985, 16). Thus, one way of inducing an adversary to negotiate is to make the conflict more painful through the use of threats, military pressure, or other coercive means. But reliance on such negative incentives has many liabilities: it may push the parties to the table, but does not necessarily make for productive negotiations

once they get there; and it may reduce the likelihood of achieving an agreement that is mutually satisfactory and desirable. Therefore, negative incentives must at least be complemented by positive ones through what Zartman has called "mutual enticement" (see, e.g., Zartman and Aurik 1991).

But parties engaged in existential conflicts are afraid to move to the negotiating table and make concessions even when the status quo has become increasingly painful and they recognize that a negotiated agreement is in their interest. They worry that negotiations may lead to ever more costly concessions that will ultimately jeopardize their security, their national identity, and their very existence. To advance the negotiating process under such circumstances, it is at least as important to reduce the parties' fears as it is to increase their pain.

Mutual reassurance can take the form of acknowledgments, symbolic gestures, or confidence-building measures. To be maximally effective, such steps need to address the other's central needs and fears as directly as possible. When President Sadat spoke to the Israeli Knesset during his dramatic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, he acknowledged that in the past Egypt had rejected Israel, refused to meet with Israelis, refused to exchange greetings. By clearly acknowledging the past hostility and thus validating the Israelis' own experiences, he greatly enhanced the credibility of the change in course that he was announcing. These remarks helped to reassure the Israeli public that his offer was sincere and not just a trick to extract concessions that would weaken Israel's position in the continuing confrontation.

At the opening of this visit, Sadat offered a symbolic gesture that had an electrifying effect on Israelis: as he stepped off the plane, he engaged in a round of cordial handshakes with the Israeli officials who had come to greet him. The refusal of Arab officials to shake the hands of their Israeli counterparts had been profoundly disturbing to Israelis throughout the years of the conflict. It symbolized Arab denial of Israel's legitimacy and the very humanity of its people. Sadat's gesture spoke directly to this deep hurt and signaled the beginning of a new relationship (cf. Kelman 2005).

Confidence-building measures may consist of any acts that respond to the other's demands or accrue to the other's benefit. Again, however, they are particularly effective when they address major grievances and demonstrate sensitivity to the other's fundamental concerns. Thus, for example, the dismantling of settlements or the closing of military installations and withdrawal of Israeli troops anywhere in the occupied territories—even if they are limited in scope—are concrete indicators to Palestinians that the peace process might ultimately lead to an end to the occupation and thus reassure them that their leaders have not embarked on a course that threatens their national aspirations.

Acknowledgments often have a powerful psychological impact in opening the way to negotiation and accommodation, even though they are verbal statements that may not be immediately translated into concrete actions (Pearson 1990). "Acknowledgment" in this context refers to a party's public acceptance or confirmation of the other party's view of its status, its experience, its reality. Thus, one party may acknowledge the other's humanity, nationhood, national rights, suffering, grievances, interpretation of its history, authentic links to disputed lands, or commitment to peace. Such acknowledgments do not constitute acceptance of the other's position or accession to its claims, but at least they serve to recognize that there is some legitimacy to these positions and claims and some basis for them in the other's experience. Acknowledgments have such a potentially powerful impact because the history of a conflict is often marked by the systematic denial of the other's experience, authenticity, legitimacy, and even membership in the human family. These denials create profound fear and insecurity because they undermine the very foundations of the other's claim to nationhood and challenge the other's right to national existence. Acknowledgment of what was heretofore denied is thus an important source of reassurance to the recipients, because it signals that the other side, having accepted the legitimacy of their claims, may indeed be ready to negotiate an agreement that addresses their fundamental concerns. Under these circumstances, the parties are likely to feel safer about entering negotiations, despite the risks and uncertainties, and to make significant concessions. An example of this kind of acknowledgment was Israel's and the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) mutual recognition in the September 1993 Oslo Accords, which helped create a breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations (which, at the time of this writing, are unfortunately derailed).

Apart from persuading the parties that their fundamental concerns will be addressed in the negotiations, acknowledgments may play a more subtle role in reassuring parties that it is now safe to end the conflict even if major concessions are required. Acknowledgments do this insofar as they confirm the parties' "national narratives." A central element of the Palestinian narrative, for example, is that the establishment of Israel constituted a profound injustice to the Palestinian people, who were displaced, dispossessed, dispersed, and deprived of their society and their future. An Israeli acknowledgment of that injustice, by confirming the Palestinians' national narrative, might allow them to let go of the conflict and accept a compromise solution even though it would not fully remove the injustice they feel. Ultimately, the acknowledgment would vindicate the Palestinians' view of history, thus providing a justification for accepting a pragmatic approach so they can end the struggle and go on with their lives. By contrast, a central element of the Israeli national

narrative holds that the establishment of Israel was an act of historical justice that enabled the Jewish people to return to its ancestral homeland after centuries of dispersion and persecution. A Palestinian acknowledgment of the Jewish people's historic roots in the land, by confirming the Israelis' national narrative, might enable them to let go of their claim to exclusive ownership of the land and accept a formula for sharing it with the Palestinians. Again, the acknowledgment would vindicate their view of history and thus provide a justification for accepting the reality of the Palestinian presence and putting an end to the conflict.

In sum, acknowledgments provide reassurance at the levels of both security and identity. By signaling acceptance of the other's legitimacy, each party reassures the other that negotiations and concessions no longer constitute mortal threats to its security and national existence. By confirming the other's national narrative, each reassures the other that a compromise does not represent an abandonment of its identity, which is articulated by its national narrative.

Acknowledgments with the capacity to reassure the other are difficult to formulate because national narratives of the conflicting parties typically clash. In confirming the narrative of the other, each party risks undermining its own narrative. Therefore, the parties often need to "negotiate" their acknowledgments with each other (perhaps in the context of a problem-solving workshop)—that is, engage in a joint process of formulating statements that will reassure the recipient without threatening the issuer (Kelman 1992b, 2001). The effectiveness of other forms of mutual reassurance, such as symbolic gestures and confidence-building measures, may be similarly enhanced if they are generated through such an informal "negotiation" process, in which the impact on the recipient and the constraints of the issuer can be considered jointly and balanced. A critical criterion for the maximal effectiveness of acknowledgments, gestures, and confidence-building measures is careful adherence to the principle of reciprocity. Reassuring the other is rarely cost free; the reassurance involves some concession—or at least is perceived to do so—and it often generates some domestic criticism. Thus, it is important that reassurance occur in a context in which the initiator receives a visible return. Reciprocity itself is a source of mutual reassurance in that it signals to the parties that their concessions will not simply be pocketed by the other, but are likely to advance their own interests.

An influence strategy based on responsiveness to each other's needs and fears and the resulting search for ways of reassuring and benefiting each other has important advantages from a long-term point of view. It does not merely elicit specific desired behaviors from the other party, but it can contribute to a creative redefinition of the conflict, joint discovery of mutually satisfactory

solutions, and transformation of the relationship between the parties. In terms of my earlier distinction among three processes of social influence (Kelman 1961; Kelman and Hamilton 1989; see also Rubin 1989), a strategy of mutual responsiveness is likely to have an impact that goes beyond compliance, inducing changes at the level of identification and potentially at the level of internalization.

Positive incentives per se have an advantage over negative incentives in that they create an atmosphere more conducive to negotiation and provide greater opportunities for building a new relationship. But if promises, rewards, and confidence-building measures are offered randomly—essentially as "bribes"—without reference to the recipient's underlying needs and fears, they are likely to induce change only at the level of compliance (i.e., a relatively unstable change in public behavior without accompanying changes in private beliefs).

On the other hand, if positive incentives are used as part of a systematic strategy of responsiveness and reciprocity, they help develop a working trust and a valued relationship between the parties—a relationship that can be described as a pragmatic partnership. The relationship becomes an incentive in its own right, in that the parties will be inclined to live up to each other's expectations in order to maintain and extend their new relationship. In this case, the resulting influence can be said to be at the level of identification: the parties are likely to change not only their public behavior, but also their private attitudes and beliefs—at least as long as the relationship remains salient. Identification-based attitudes, however, tend to develop alongside the old attitudes without being fully integrated into a new worldview. Thus, the new relationship remains vulnerable to changes in interests, circumstances, and leadership, which may trigger the old attitudes—including fundamental distrust of the other—in their full force (Kelman 2004, 2006).

As parties develop a relationship based on responsiveness and reciprocity, they become better able to approach their conflict as a shared dilemma that requires joint efforts at analysis and problem solving. A joint problem-solving approach is conducive to agreements that are inherently satisfactory to the parties because they meet their fundamental needs, and are lasting because they create a sense of ownership and commitment. The negotiation and implementation of such agreements can be characterized as changes at the level of internalization: changes in behavior and beliefs that are congruent with the parties' own values and are relatively stable and enduring. The gradual transformation of the parties' relationship, which makes these changes possible, becomes a key element of the mutually satisfactory and stable (i.e., "internalized") outcome of a successful negotiation.

Change at the level of internalization becomes more likely insofar as the process and outcome of negotiations include significant elements of reconciliation. Reconciliation, as defined here, goes beyond conflict resolution in that it represents a change in each party's identity (Kelman 2004). The main feature of that change in identity is removal of the negation of the other as a central component of the group's own identity—i.e., revision of each group's narrative so that it can accommodate the identity of the other. "Reconciliation, with its attendant change in the group's identity and revision of its narrative, becomes possible only if the core of each group's identity is confirmed in the process" (Kelman 2006, 23). This is the essence of the process of "negotiating" the mutual acknowledgment of the other's identity (Kelman 1992b, 2001). If the groups can overcome the negative interdependence of their identities—the negation of each other's identity—they can build on the positive interdependence of their identities that often characterizes groups living in close proximity to each other (Kelman 1999b). As a consequence, their new relationship will be less vulnerable to situational changes.

Conflict as an Interactive Process with an Escalatory, Self-Perpetuating Dynamic

Conflict is an interactive process, in which the parties change as they act and react in relation to each other. In intense conflict relationships, the natural course of the interaction tends to reinforce and deepen the conflict, rather than reduce and resolve it. The interaction is governed by a set of norms and guided by a set of images that create an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic. This dynamic can be reversed through skillful diplomacy, imaginative leadership, third-party intervention, and institutionalized mechanisms for managing and resolving conflict. But in the absence of such deliberate efforts, the spontaneous interaction between the parties is likely to increase distrust, hostility, and the sense of grievance.

The needs and fears of parties engaged in intense conflict impose perceptual and cognitive constraints on their processing of new information, with the resulting tendency to underestimate the occurrence and the possibility of change. In normal human relations, social interaction is the way in which people determine what others need and expect, assess the occurrence and possibility of change in these needs and expectations, and adjust their own behavior accordingly. By accommodating to each other's needs and expectations, both participants are able to advance the achievement of their respective goals. An essential feature of social interaction is the effort to take account of the other's purposes, perceptions, intentions, and expectations by implicitly taking the role of the other on the assumption that the other has a mind like

one's own, with similar kinds of purposes, perceptions, intentions, and expectations. In intense conflict relationships, this ability to take the role of the other is severely impaired. Dehumanization of the enemy makes it even more difficult to acknowledge and gain access to the other's perspective.

The inaccessibility of the other's perspective contributes significantly to some of the psychological barriers to conflict resolution described by Ross and Ward (1995). The dynamics of conflict interaction tend to entrench the parties firmly in their own perspectives on history and justice. Conflicting parties manifest particularly strong tendencies to seek out evidence that confirms their negative images of each other and to resist evidence that counters these images. Thus, interaction not only fails to contribute to a revision of the enemy image, but actually helps to reinforce and perpetuate it. The combination of demonic enemy images and virtuous self-images leads to the formation of mirror images (see, e.g., Bronfenbrenner 1961; White 1965), which greatly contributes to the escalatory dynamic of conflict interaction, as exemplified by the classic pattern of an arms race. When one side increases its arms and takes other actions that it considers defensive, the other interprets these steps as preparation for aggression and proceeds to increase its arms—presumably in defense against the other's intended aggression. The first side, however, interprets these steps in turn as preparation for aggression and further increases its arms, which further persuades the second party of the other's aggressive intentions—and thus a conflict spiral is set into motion. Interaction guided by such mirror images of enemy and self creates self-fulfilling prophecies by inducing the parties to engage in the hostile actions they expect from one another.

Self-fulfilling prophecies are also generated by the conflict norms that typically govern the interaction between parties engaged in an intense conflict. Expressions in word and action of hostility and distrust toward the enemy are not just spontaneous manifestations of the conflict, but are normatively prescribed behaviors. Both leaders and publics operate under norms that require them to be militant and unyielding vis-à-vis the other side, accuse the other of misdeeds, remain suspicious of their intentions, and deny all justice to their cause. Political leaders assume that their public's evaluation of them depends on their adherence to these norms and may go out of their way to avoid appearing weak or gullible. These tendencies are reflected in the leaders' tactical and strategic decisions, the way they approach negotiations with the other side, their public pronouncements, and, ultimately, the way they educate their own publics. For the public, in turn, adherence to these norms is often taken as an indication of group loyalty; those who acknowledge that there may be some justice on the other side or propose a conciliatory posture may expose themselves to accusations of treason or at least naiveté.

In short, the discourse in deep-rooted conflicts is marked by mutual delegitimization and dehumanization. Interaction governed by this set of norms—at the micro- and the macrolevels—contributes to escalation and perpetuation of the conflict. Parties that systematically treat each other with hostility and distrust are likely to become increasingly hateful and untrustworthy.

The dynamics of conflict interaction create a high probability that opportunities for conflict resolution will be missed. As realities change in the international, regional, or domestic environment, the parties in a long-standing conflict may well become amenable to compromise. There may be possibilities for resolving the conflict in ways that are mutually satisfactory—or at least preferable to continuing the struggle. But parties caught up in the conflict dynamics, whose interaction is shaped by the norms and images rooted in the history of the conflict, are systematically constrained in their capacity to respond to the occurrence and possibility of change. The nature of their interaction makes it difficult to communicate the changes that have occurred on their own side or to notice the changes on the other side, and to explore the possibilities for change that would serve both sides' interests. Conflict resolution efforts, therefore, require promotion of a different kind of interaction, capable of reversing the escalatory and self-perpetuating dynamics of conflict: an interaction conducive to sharing perspectives, differentiating enemy images, and developing a language of mutual reassurance and a new discourse based on the norms of responsiveness and reciprocity.

The remainder of this chapter discusses in somewhat greater detail the social-psychological processes that contribute to the escalation and perpetuation of international conflict; the chapter concludes with a comment on how these processes might be reversed in the interest of conflict resolution.

Social-Psychological Processes Promoting Conflict

The four propositions about the nature of international conflict discussed so far—especially the view of conflict as a process driven by collective needs and fears—suggest the important role of social-psychological factors in *generating* conflict. But social-psychological analysis can be particularly helpful in explaining why and how, once a conflict has started, powerful forces are set into motion that promote the *escalation* and *perpetuation* of that conflict. The role of social-psychological processes in creating or intensifying barriers to conflict resolution is most apparent in deep-rooted conflicts over identity and security. By the same token, social-psychological analysis, in helping to identify and understand these barriers, can also suggest ways of overcoming them.

The discussion of social-psychological factors that promote international and ethnic conflict focuses on two sets of processes introduced in the preceding

section: normative processes and perceptual processes. The term "normative" is used to refer to social processes that provide expectations, support, and pressure to hold on to the conflict, affirm it, and engage in conflictive behavior. The term "perceptual" is used to refer to cognitive processes that help to interpret and organize conflict-related information, particularly information bearing on the image of the enemy and each party's self-image in relation to the conflict. Normative and perceptual processes are clearly interrelated. As we shall see, for example, the normatively prescribed behavior in a conflict relationship is heavily influenced by the image of the enemy; and the enemy image, in turn, is itself normatively prescribed. Nevertheless, these two sets of processes are conceptually separable and provide a convenient basis for organizing the discussion of social-psychological processes. What both sets of processes have in common is that they create a dynamic that inhibits the perception and occurrence of change: despite changing circumstances and interests, parties engaged in an intense conflict tend to underestimate the degree to which change has taken place and further change is possible, and to act in ways that reduce the likelihood of change in their relationship.

The normative and perceptual processes that promote conflict can best be understood in the context of the four propositions about the nature of international conflict presented in the first part of the chapter:

- First, conflict norms and images are rooted in the collective needs and fears that drive the conflict.
- Second, given its intersocietal nature, conflict is shaped by the norms and images at the level of both the political leadership and the general public and by the mutual effect of these two levels on each other.
- Third, conflict norms and images severely limit the range and character of influence processes employed by the parties.
- Finally, and most directly, the conflict norms and images on both sides create the escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic that characterizes conflict interaction.

Normative Processes

A variety of interaction processes occurring at the mass and elite levels within societies engaged in conflict play an important role in the evolving course of the conflict: formation of collective moods, mobilization of group loyalties, decision-making processes, negotiation and bargaining processes, and processes of structural and psychological commitment. All these processes are governed by a set of powerful social norms that, in an intense conflict relationship, typically encourage actions and attitudes conducive to the

generation, escalation, and perpetuation of conflict, and inhibit the perception and occurrence of change in the direction of tension reduction and conflict resolution.

Formation of Collective Moods. Public opinion on issues relating to a protracted conflict (and on foreign policy issues generally) is marked by shifts in collective mood. At different times, the general mood may be characterized by optimism or pessimism, defiance or resignation, anger or conciliation. Moods may shift dramatically in response to major events. Thus, for example, within the Israeli public, the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995 created, along with national shock and mourning, a mood of determination to continue the peace process that had cost the prime minister his life. Several months later, in February and March 1996, the series of deadly bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv shifted the public mood in Israel to one of widespread wariness about the course of the peace process. Such moods have a significant effect on political leaders' sense of how far they can go in the pursuit of peace or what they must do to demonstrate their continued commitment to pursue the conflict.

Periodic shifts in collective mood underscore the general role of public opinion as both a resource and a constraint for political leaders in the foreign policy process. Public opinion may work both ways: public support can be a valuable resource in the leaders' pursuit of an aggressive policy as well as in their search for peaceful alternatives. Similarly, public opposition or skepticism may constrain leaders from taking hostile initiatives as well as from making conciliatory moves toward the enemy. In an intense, protracted conflict, however, the prevailing norms are more likely to encourage leaders to choose hostile actions over conciliatory ones. Leaders find it easier to mobilize public support for escalatory than de-escalatory steps; in fact, according to conventional wisdom, leaders at times initiate external aggression in order to distract the public from internal failures and boost their popular support. By the same token, leaders are more constrained in the pursuit of conciliatory policies than in the pursuit of aggressive policies—or at least they believe they are. The relationship between leadership and public opinion is often circular: decision makers play an important role in shaping public opinion about a conflict, framing the issues, and defining the limits of acceptable action. Public opinion then takes on a life of its own, and at some future time, when the leaders contemplate a change in policy, they feel constrained by the very views they previously helped shape. When they pronounce, rightly or wrongly, that "our public will never accept" this or that action, they may well be referring to actions that they themselves had publicly declared unacceptable earlier.

Apart from transitory moods, certain pervasive states of consciousness underlie public opinion in a society engulfed in a deep-rooted conflict. These states of consciousness reflect the existential concerns and the central national narratives that are widely shared within the population. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, an underlying theme in both peoples' national consciousness is a profound concern, rooted in their respective historical experiences, about survival of the group and loss of the homeland. At the heart of Israelis' strong emphasis on security is their experience of rejection by their neighbors, who have regarded the establishment of Israel as an illegitimate intrusion of outsiders into the region—in contrast to the Israeli narrative of returning to the ancestral homeland after centuries of exile. The resulting sense of vulnerability is magnified by the Jewish historical memories of exclusion and persecution, culminating in the Holocaust. At the heart of Palestinians' strong emphasis on independent statehood is their experience of displacement, dispossession, dispersion, and occupation, and the resulting sense that they have been stripped not only of their homeland but of their identity as a people. The historical trauma at the center of Palestinian consciousness is *al-naqba* (the catastrophe), the Palestinians' term for the war of 1948 and its consequences for their society.

In most intense, protracted conflicts—for example, in the former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East—historical traumas serve as the points of reference for current events. There is no question that ambitious, often ruthless, nationalist leaders manipulate memories in order to whip up public support for their projects. But the fact remains that these memories—and the associated sense of injustice, abandonment, and vulnerability—are part of the people's consciousness and available for manipulation. Moreover, although political leaders may be cynical in using these public sentiments for their own purposes, they generally share the existential concerns that underlie pervasive states of national consciousness. Differences between leaders and publics—and, for that matter, between hawks and doves—diminish in importance when threats to group survival and identity are touched off.

The effect of such collective moods is to bring to the fore powerful social norms that support escalatory actions and inhibit moves toward compromise and accommodation. When fundamental concerns about survival and identity are tapped, national leaders are more prone to resort to hostile speech and action, and, if necessary, to go to war in defense of what they see as their society's threatened values and way of life. And they do so in the full expectation that the public will support them, despite the risks entailed. By contrast, these pervasive moods—especially when aroused by dramatic events, such as bombings or expulsions—inhibit the readiness to take risks for peace. This

tendency appears consistent with the proposition derived from prospect theory that people are more reluctant to take risks for the achievement of gains than the avoidance of losses (see Levy 1992). Pervasive existential concerns within a society create a strong inclination to remain vigilant, distrust the enemy, and avoid any action that might weaken the nation's defenses. When these existential concerns are at issue, the prevailing norms support extreme caution. Political leaders, the general public, and even the political opposition reinforce one another in adhering to the old, established formulas. Change itself comes to be seen as dangerous; there is great reluctance to experiment with the nation's very existence.

Beyond contributing to escalation and inhibiting change in the direction of conflict resolution, the activation of collective fears about national survival and identity may lead to the extremes of violence and hostility that have marked some of the recent ethnic conflicts. Unscrupulous and fanatical leaders, taking advantage of opportunities to expand their power and fulfill their nationalist ambitions—such as the opportunity presented to Serbian leaders with the breakup of Yugoslavia—may manipulate collective memories of humiliation and revive old fears (and manufacture new ones) to instigate and justify hostile acts, which may set an escalatory process into motion. With active incitement by the leadership, a new set of norms takes over, whereby members of the other group—including former neighbors—come to be seen as the reincarnation of historic enemies who are planning to dominate one's own group, destroy its way of life, and annihilate its members. Harassing, expelling, and killing them thus come to be seen as justified acts of self-defense and patriotic duty. Small steps, even the silence of bystanders who may not approve of what is happening but are not prepared to take an active stand against the conflict norms that have taken hold, may initiate a continuum of destruction (Staub 1989) that ends with the kind of ethnic cleansing and genocide witnessed in Bosnia and elsewhere. Such actions are planned and orchestrated by political leaders who believe—or persuade themselves, along with their citizenry, to believe—that they are saving their people from imminent destruction. And they are carried out at various levels of command, with varying mixtures of motivation: obedience to authority, conformity to social pressures, and immersion in the collective sense of threat to national and personal survival and hostility against the purported source of that threat.

Mobilization of Group Loyalties. Public support is an essential resource for political leaders engaged in a conflict relationship. Leaders need assurance that the public is prepared to accept the costs and risks that their policies will inevitably entail. Furthermore, assurance of public support enhances the

credibility of the threats and promises leaders issue to the other side. The primary means of gaining public support is the mobilization of group loyalties.

The arousal of nationalist and patriotic sentiments is a powerful tool in mobilizing public support. The display of national symbols evokes a strong emotional reaction, developed in the course of early and continuing socialization, which often translates into automatic endorsement of the policies and actions the leadership defines as necessary. When leaders invoke national security and national survival as the issues at stake in the conflict, people are often prepared to make enormous sacrifices that cannot be entirely understood in terms of rational calculations of costs and benefits. The nation generates such powerful identifications and loyalties because it brings together two central psychological dispositions: the need for self-protection and the need for self-transcendence (Kelman 1969, 1997).

In principle, group loyalties should be just as available to mobilize support for policies that entail risks for the sake of peace as for aggressive policies that entail risks of war. In practice, however, the dynamics of intense conflict generally favor efforts to mobilize support for intransigent, hostile actions. An appeal to defend the nation against an imminent attack is more compelling than an appeal to seize a promising opportunity. This phenomenon represents a special case of the central observation of prospect theory: where the expected utilities are equal, people tend to be risk-acceptant to avoid losses and risk-averse to achieve gains (see Farnham 1992; Levy 1992). Also, an appeal to defend the nation against imminent attack elicits almost unanimous response among members of the population. Even doves are not immune to such appeals in the short run, although they may believe that conciliatory policies are more conducive to national security and survival in the long run. On the other hand, an appeal to take advantage of an opportunity for peace holds no attraction to that segment of the population that equates peace with surrender. Furthermore, proposals for aggressive actions can more easily rely on the vocabulary of nationalism, which characteristically marks off the in-group from the out-group to the detriment of the latter. Proposals for conciliatory actions, even if they are in one's own interest, may offend nationalist thinking simply because they are seen as extending some benefits to the enemy or acknowledging a degree of justice in the enemy's positions.

A central element of group loyalty is adherence to the group's norms. In an intense conflict relationship, these norms call for a militant, unyielding, uncompromising, and suspicious attitude toward the enemy. There is a special taboo against any position that implies that the enemy may not be as implacable as had been assumed or may be undergoing change. Those who take such positions expose themselves to the charge that they are being naive, if

not treasonous, weakening national unity and resolve, and opening the way to surrender. Militancy and intransigence become the measures of loyalty. Those most militant and unyielding become the reference points against which all positions are evaluated. Hence, particularly in situations of perceived national crisis, the militants wield disproportionate power and often exercise a veto over official actions and policies. They impose severe constraints on the ability of leaders to explore peaceful options. Even the society's dovish elements are constrained and cautious in their analyses and proposals, lest they expose themselves to the accusations of endangering national security and survival.

When national security and survival are seen to be at stake in a society, there are strong pressures to conform to the dominant conflict norms. Dissent is considered an act of disloyalty under these circumstances and is often penalized by exclusion, rejection, and ostracism. To dissent at a time of national crisis is seen as tantamount to excluding oneself from the group, to separating one's fate from that of fellow members—a cardinal sin in the nationalist doctrine. One of the dualities of nationalism is the readiness to accept fellow nationals unconditionally, as long as they identify themselves as part of the group, but to reject them totally if they are seen as separating themselves from the group. The resulting inhibition of dissent on matters that touch on national security and survival may create a state of pluralistic ignorance that further intensifies conformity: because people with reservations about the dominant policy are reluctant to speak out, and those who do speak out are quickly marginalized, potential dissenters are discouraged from expressing their views because they see themselves as a tiny minority confronting a near-unanimous consensus.

In sum, processes of group loyalty in a conflict situation create barriers to change in the relationship. The criteria by which loyalty is measured, the disproportionate power of the militant elements in setting the national agenda, and the suppression of dissent undermine the exploration of peaceful alternatives and reduce the options for conflict resolution. The militants on the two sides reinforce each other by creating self-fulfilling prophecies—a phenomenon described more fully in the discussion of perceptual processes below. Each confirms the other's worst expectations and creates realities that extend and intensify the conflict.

Decision-making Processes. There are historical instances of creative decision making in dangerous crisis situations—such as the Cuban missile crisis (Allison 1971; Lebow 1981)—but conflict norms generally impose serious burdens on the decision-making process. Decision makers in a conflict

situation are often inhibited in the search for alternatives and the exploration of new possibilities, particularly when they are operating in an atmosphere of crisis.

A major source of reluctance to explore new options are the domestic constraints under which decision makers labor. In view of the political divisions within their society, they are constantly looking over their shoulders to make sure they are not opening themselves up to disabling attacks from the opposition. In an intense conflict situation, adherence to the conflict norms tends to be seen as the safest course of action. For reasons already discussed, decision makers are likely to see themselves most vulnerable if their policies and actions move toward compromise or even communication with the adversary. Because hawkish opposition elements are often effective in appropriating the definition of group loyalty and national security and are able to appeal to the collective memories and fears of wide segments of the population, they tend to exercise stronger constraints on policy than do dovish opposition elements. Cautious decision makers assume that they are less vulnerable domestically if they stay with the conflict's status quo, adhere to a discourse of hostility and distrust vis-à-vis the other side, or threaten escalatory actions than if they take steps toward accommodation and compromise.

The search for alternatives and the exploration of new options in response to changing realities are further inhibited by institutionalized rigidities in the decision-making apparatus. Decision makers and decision-making bureaucracies operate within a certain framework of assumptions about the choices available to them, the effectiveness of different strategies, and the expectations of different constituencies; such assumptions are rarely questioned and therefore reduce the range of options that are likely to be considered. In long-standing conflicts, these decision-making frameworks are shaped by the prevailing conflict norms. Thus, decision makers may take it for granted, for example, that the two parties' interests are inherently incompatible, that the other side responds only to force, or that their own public demands a militant posture. Operating under unquestioned assumptions of this kind, decision makers are unlikely to recognize the occurrence and possibility of change and to initiate policies aimed at resolving the conflict.

Furthermore, decision-making bureaucracies tend to operate with certain established procedures and technologies; the actions they consider are those that they are equipped to carry out. In conflict situations, the discourse, skills, and technology for pursuing the conflict are much more readily available than those geared toward resolving it. The prime example is the military establishment, which has the weapons systems, personnel, and operational plans in place and is ready to go into action when the need arises. Decision makers

are, therefore, more inclined to resort to military options at moments of crisis than to less developed and untried alternatives.

Finally, the microprocesses of action and interaction in crisis decision making inhibit the exploration of new options. At the individual level, the stress that decision makers inevitably experience in situations of crisis—when consequential decisions must be made under severe time pressures—has the effect of limiting the number of alternatives they consider and impelling them to settle quickly on the dominant response. In intense conflicts, the dominant response, dictated by the habits and norms of the conflict, is likely to be aggressive and escalatory (Holsti 1972; Lebow 1987). At the level of decision-making groups, crisis decision making often leads to what Janis (1982) calls "groupthink" processes. To maintain the cohesiveness of the group, the members studiously avoid any actions that might break the evolving consensus. Thus, they are reluctant to raise questions, offer criticisms, or propose different approaches and alternative solutions to the problem. The group's members reinforce each other in affirming the correctness and righteousness of the course of action on which their deliberations are converging. The decision-making process under these circumstances is much more likely to produce policies and actions that perpetuate and escalate the conflict than innovative ideas for conflict resolution.

Negotiation and Bargaining Processes. Negotiation is possible only when both parties define the situation, at least at some level, as a win-win, mixed-motive game. To engage in the process, each must be able to conceive of some outcome that would be better than the status quo. Thus, negotiation is based on the parties' recognition that they have both competitive and cooperative goals. They are competing in that each is trying to maximize interests that are—or at least are perceived to be—incompatible with the other's interests; but they must cooperate in order to continue the "game" and eventually achieve an agreement that advances both their interests. Even in a narrow bargaining process that focuses strictly on the distribution of fixed, limited resources, the parties have a common interest in consummating the exchange. They must cooperate in devising an outcome that gives each party enough to make the agreement worth its while.

Win-win solutions are particularly difficult to attain in protracted identity conflicts. Depending on the circumstances, a mutually satisfactory outcome might be devised by fractionating the conflict (Fisher 1964), which may help the parties move gradually toward an overall settlement by first achieving agreements on a series of less contentious issues; transcending the conflict as they focus on superordinate goals that can be achieved only through joint

efforts (Sherif 1958); or redefining the conflict and reframing the issues in ways that make them amenable to solutions that address the needs and fears of both parties (Kelman 1996). Ultimately, success in negotiating a win-win solution depends on mutual responsiveness, as described in the earlier discussion of influence processes. In effect, while pursuing its own interests, each party must actively seek out ways in which the adversary can also win and appear to be winning. But this is precisely the kind of effort that is discouraged by the conflict norms; the approach to negotiation is dominated by zero-sum thinking. Success in how much one's own side is winning and appears to be winning is often measured by how much the other side is losing and appears to be losing.

At the microlevel, negotiators around the table serve as instructed representatives. In an intense conflict, they evaluate their performance by the forcefulness with which they present their own case and by their effectiveness in warding off pressures to compromise. They are not in a listening mode; they are unlikely to pay attention to what the other side needs and how they could help the other side achieve its goals. Indeed, to do so would violate the conflict norms and might subject the negotiators to criticism from their own constituencies and particularly from the domestic opposition that they are "soft" on the enemy and selling out the national cause. Nor are they likely to present their own positions in ways that convey what they need and how the other side can help them achieve it. The interaction does not usually allow the parties to learn something new or to gain a better understanding of the other's perspective. Rather, it tends to confirm old images and to keep the conflict alive. Clearly, it does not contribute to the search for ways in which each party can help the other make valuable and visible gains. Such a search is further undermined by public reports on the progress of negotiations. To appeal to its own constituencies, each side may stress how much it is winning—at the other side's expense. Such pronouncements impose further burdens on the continuing negotiations. In this respect, secret negotiations have a considerable advantage, although their disadvantage is that they usually offer no opportunity to prepare the public for the changes in the relationship that are being negotiated.

At the macrolevel, the overall strategy for negotiations is often marked by zero-sum thinking. Even when the parties recognize their common interest in negotiating certain specific issues, they tend to keep an eye on how the negotiations may affect their relative power advantage. They want to make sure that, at the end of the day, their own position will be strengthened and the adversary's will be weakened. Such strategic considerations may undermine the purpose of the negotiations. A strategy that weakens one's negotiating partners may reduce both their incentive for concluding an agreement and

their ability to mobilize their own public's support for whatever agreement is negotiated. It is a strategy that limits the other's opportunity to make valuable and visible gains.

As a description of international negotiations in general, the picture presented here is exaggerated, to be sure. Skilled and experienced negotiators know that if the process is to succeed, the other side must achieve substantial and visible gains and its leadership must be strengthened. But the norms governing political behavior in long-standing conflicts strongly encourage zero-sum thinking, which equates the enemy's loss with one's own gain. As a result, even when the parties have concluded that negotiations are in their own best interest, their actions inside and outside of the negotiating room often undermine the process, causing delays, setbacks, and repeated failures.

Processes of Structural and Psychological Commitment. Conflict creates certain structural and psychological commitments, which then take on a life of their own (see Pruitt and Gahagan 1974; Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim 1994). The most obvious sources of commitment to the conflict and its perpetuation are the vested interests in the status quo. A conflict of long standing and significance to a society—such as that in Northern Ireland (see George 1996)—inevitably becomes a focal point for the lives of various individuals, groups, and organizations within that society. They benefit in a variety of ways from the existence and prosecution of the conflict; ending it threatens to deprive them of profit, power, status, or raison d'être. Such vested interests can be found, for example, in the armaments industry, the military establishment, paramilitary and guerrilla organizations, defense-related research laboratories, and political groups organized to pursue the conflict. A vested interest in maintaining the conflict may also develop, to different degrees, in individuals whose careers are built around the conflict, including political leaders who have played a prominent role in pursuing the struggle and "conflict professionals"—scholars, writers, and journalists who have specialized in chronicling, analyzing, and perhaps even resolving the conflict.

There is another source of commitment that is based not on a vested interest in maintaining the conflict as such, but on an interest in forestalling a compromise solution. Two rather different examples can be cited from the Israeli-Palestinian case. Israeli settlers in the occupied territories generally have been opposed to the peace process because they are convinced that a negotiated agreement would spell the end of their settlement project. Many Palestinians in the refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria opposed the Oslo peace process because they saw it as leading to an agreement that would not address their particular needs and grievances.

Vested interests do not necessarily manifest themselves in a direct, calculated way. There are, of course, those who deliberately undermine efforts at conflict resolution because they do not want to give up the power and privilege that depend on continuation of the status quo (although even they may persuade themselves that they are acting for the good of the nation). In many cases, however, the effects of vested interests are indirect and subtle. People's commitment to the perpetuation of the conflict may motivate their interpretation of ambiguous realities and their choice among uncertain alternatives. Thus, they may be predisposed to dismiss changes or possibilities of change on the other side that might make negotiations promising, and they may be risk-averse in evaluating initiatives for peace but risk-acceptant in their support for aggressive policies that might lead to war.

Vested interests and similar structural commitments to the conflict are bolstered by psychological commitments. People involved in a long-standing and deep-rooted conflict tend to develop a worldview that includes the conflict as a central component. Elements of this worldview may be passed on from one generation to the next, and attitudes and beliefs about the conflict may become firmly embedded in the entire structure of one's thinking and feeling. In this way, people become committed to the continuation of the conflict because ending it would jeopardize their entire worldview; it would force them to revise the way they think and feel about significant aspects of their national and personal lives. Resistance to change is likely to be more pronounced the more elaborate the cognitive structure or ideology in which the view of the conflict is embedded, because changing this view would have wider ramifications.

The image of the enemy is often a particularly important part of the worldview of people engaged in an intense conflict; it has implications for their national identity, their view of their own society, and their interpretation of history. Thus, for Palestinians to revise their view of Israelis as Western intruders in the Middle East who will eventually leave just as the Crusaders did, or for Israelis to revise their view of Palestinians as implacable enemies committed to the destruction of Israel, raises many troublesome issues about their own past, present, and future. Images of the enemy are therefore highly resistant to change and contribute to the escalatory and self-perpetuating dynamic of conflict.

Perceptual Processes

Perceptual and cognitive processes play a major role in the escalation and perpetuation of conflict, and create barriers to redefining and resolving the conflict despite changing realities and interests. Two perceptual processes

that characterize mutual images of parties in conflict can account for this effect: the formation of mirror images and the resistance of images to contradictory information. When both parties, in mirror-image fashion, perceive the enemy as harboring hostile intentions in the face of their own vulnerability, their interaction produces a self-fulfilling dynamic; under these circumstances, it is difficult to discover common and complementary interests. Further, conflict-based interactions—within and between the parties—inhibit the perception and the occurrence of change in the other, and thus the opportunity to revise the enemy image. These two processes are discussed in this section.

Formation of Mirror Images. Social psychologists writing about U.S.-Soviet relations (Bronfenbrenner 1961; White 1965) first noted the phenomenon of mirror image formation as a characteristic of many conflict relationships. Both parties tend to develop parallel images of self and other, except with the sign reversed; that is, the two parties have similarly positive self-images and similarly negative enemy images. The core content of mirror images is captured by the good-bad dimension: each side sees itself as good and peaceful, arming only for defensive reasons and fully prepared to engage in open give-and-take and compromise. The enemy, by contrast, is seen as evil and hostile, arming for aggressive reasons and responsive only to the language of force.

A typical corollary of the good-bad image in protracted conflicts is the view that the other side's aggressiveness is inherent in its nature: in its ideology (e.g., Zionism or PLO nationalism), in its system (e.g., capitalist imperialism or communist expansionism), in its religion, or in its national character. On the other hand, if one's own side ever displays aggressiveness, it is entirely reactive and defensive. In the language of attribution theory, the tendency on both sides is to explain the enemy's aggressive behavior in dispositional terms and one's own in situational terms (see Jones and Nisbett 1971). To perceive the enemy's evil action as inherent in its nature is tantamount to demonization and dehumanization of the other, with all the dangerous consequences thereof. Once a group perceived as threatening one's own welfare is excluded from the human family, almost any action against it—including expulsion, dispossession, torture, rape, genocide, and ethnic cleansing in its various forms—comes to be seen as necessary and justified (see Kelman 1973).

Another common corollary of the good-bad image—one that derives from the virtuous self-image—is the assumption on each side that the enemy knows very well "we" are not threatening them. Our own basic decency and peacefulness, and the provocation to which we have been subjected, are so obvious to us that they must also be obvious to the other side (see the discussion of naive realism in Ross and Ward 1995). Thus, the assumption is that they see

us as we see *ourselves*—when in fact they see us as we see *them*. As I argue below, this feature of the mirror image process contributes significantly to the escalatory dynamic of conflict interaction.

Another, though less common element of the mirror image is the "evil-ruler" image, which White (1965, 1968) describes in the context of U.S.–Soviet relations. A distinction is made between the masses and the elites on the "enemy's" side: the people are basically decent but have been misled, brainwashed, or intimidated by their rulers. By contrast, there is complete harmony between rulers and citizens on "our" side. A related element, often found in mirror images—as, for example, in the Israeli-Palestinian case—is the view that, in contrast to the genuine unity on one's own side, the enemy's unity is artificial and sustained only by its leaders' effort to keep the conflict alive.

Apart from such generic features of mirror images, which arise from the dynamics of intergroup conflict across the board, mirror images in any given case may reflect the dynamics of the specific conflict. Thus, a central feature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the years has been mutual denial of the other's national identity, accompanied by efforts to delegitimize the other's national movement and claim to nationhood (see Kelman 1978, 1987). Other mirror images that have characterized the Israeli-Palestinian and other intense ethnic conflicts (such as those in Bosnia and Northern Ireland) include:

- mutual fear of national and personal annihilation, anchored in the view that the project of destroying one's group is inherent in and central to the other's ideology;
- a mutual sense of victimization by the other side, accompanied by a tendency to assimilate the images of the current enemy to the image of the historical enemy and the current experience of victimization to the collective memories of past experiences; and
- a mutual view of the enemy as a source of the negative components of one's own identity, such as the sense of humiliation and vulnerability.

Although mirror images are an important and central feature of the dynamics of conflict, the concept requires several qualifications, particularly because it is often taken to imply that conflicts are necessarily symmetrical—an idea vehemently rejected by the parties engaged in conflict. The mirror image concept implies that *certain* symmetries in the parties' reactions arise from the very nature of conflict interaction, and that it is important to understand them because of their role in escalating the conflict. There is no assumption, however, that *all* images of self and enemy are mirror images. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, both sides agree that Israel is the more powerful party (although Israelis point out that their conflict has been

not only with the Palestinians but with the entire Arab world and much of the Muslim world). Furthermore, there is no assumption that the images on the two sides are equally inaccurate. Clearly, the mirror image concept implies that there is some distortion, because the two views of reality are diametrical opposites and thus cannot both be completely right. It is also presumed that there is probably some distortion on each side because both sides' perceptions are affected by the conflict dynamics. This does not mean, however, that both sides manifest equal degrees of distortion.

A third qualification is that the mirror image concept does not imply empirical symmetry between the two sides. There is no assumption that the historical experiences or the current situations of the two sides are comparable on all or even the most important dimensions. To take one dimension as an example, many conflicts are marked by asymmetries in power between the parties, which have significant effects on the parties' perceptions of the conflict (Rouhana and Fiske 1995). Finally, the mirror image concept does not imply moral equivalence in the positions of the two parties. To note the symmetry in the two sides' perceptions of their own moral superiority is not to postulate moral symmetry in their claims or their actions. Thus, for example, one can point to many mirror images in the relationship between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia and still make the moral judgment that it was the Serbian side that committed genocide.

With these qualifications in mind, one can trace the common tendency among parties in conflict to form mirror images to the dynamics of the conflict relationship itself. Since each party is engaged in the conflict and subject to similar forces generated by that engagement, parallelism in some of their images is bound to develop. Parallel images arise out of the motivational and cognitive contexts in which parties in conflict generally operate. Motivationally, each side is concerned with "looking good" when blame for the conflict events is being apportioned; political leaders, therefore, feel a strong need to persuade themselves, their own people, the rest of the world, and future historians that the blame rests with the enemy—that their own cause is just and their own actions have been entirely defensive in nature. Cognitively, each side views the conflict from its own perspective and—painfully aware of its own needs, fears, historical traumas, grievances, suspicions, and political constraints—is convinced that it is acting defensively and with the best intentions. Furthermore, each side assumes that these circumstances are so self-evident, they must be equally clear to the enemy; signs of hostility from the enemy must therefore be due to its aggressive intent.

When both sides are motivated to deflect blame from themselves and are convinced that their own good intentions are as clear to the other as to

themselves, mirror images are formed. Mirror images increase the danger of escalation, as illustrated in the earlier discussion of arms races. They produce a spiraling effect because each side interprets any hostile action by the other as an indication of aggressive intent against which it must defend itself, but its own reactions—whose defensive nature, it assumes, should be obvious to the enemy—are taken by the other as signs of aggressive intent. The effect of mirror images is accentuated insofar as the enemy's ideology or national character is perceived to be inherently aggressive and expansionist, because this essentialist view provides a stable framework for explaining the other's behavior. In addition to their escalatory effect, mirror images tend to make conflicts more intractable because the sharp contrast between the innocent self and the aggressive other makes it difficult to break out of a zero-sum conception of the conflict.

The concept of mirror images may be a useful tool in conflict resolution. Under the proper circumstances—such as those that problem-solving workshops try to create—the parties may gradually come to recognize the conflict-induced parallelisms in their views. The first and relatively easy step is to discover that one's own actions are perceived differently by the other side than they are by oneself. This discovery can open one up to the possibility that the reverse may be true: that one's perceptions of the other's actions may be different from the other's self-perceptions. Thus, the parties may gain access to each other's perspective and insight into the effects that such two-directional differences in perception can have on the course of the conflict. Such discoveries may encourage the parties to focus on the need for mutual reassurance about each other's intentions and set a de-escalatory process in motion.

Resistance of Images to Contradictory Information. Conflict images are highly resistant to new information that challenges their validity. The persistence of these images inhibits the perception of change and the expectation of future change that might create possibilities for conflict resolution, and thus helps to perpetuate the conflict.

A great deal of social-psychological theorizing and research has addressed the general phenomenon of the persistence of attitudes and beliefs in the face of new information that, from an observer's point of view, is clearly contradictory—information that should at least call the existing attitudes into question but is somehow neutralized or ignored. This is not to say that attitudes never change; indeed, there is considerable evidence that individuals' and societies' attitudes constantly change—sometimes gradually, sometimes drastically—in response to new events and experiences. But change always occurs in the face of some resistance: the continuing struggle between

forces for stability and forces for change is one of the hallmarks of attitudes. Resistance is motivated in the sense that people tend to hold on to their attitudes because those attitudes perform certain important functions for them. Beyond that, however, resistance is built into the very functioning of attitudes: since attitudes help shape our experiences and the way new information is organized, they play a role in creating the conditions for their own confirmation and for avoiding disconfirmation. Research has focused on several types of mechanisms that account for resistance to contradictory information: selectivity, consistency, attribution, and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

The concepts of selective exposure, selective perception, and selective recall all point to the fact that our attitudes help determine the kind of information that is available to us. Our political attitudes, for example, determine the organizations we join, the meetings we attend, and the publications we receive. Consequently, we are more likely to be exposed to information that confirms our views than to information that contradicts them. We also tend to seek out confirmatory information because we enjoy it more, trust it more, and find it more useful—for example, to support our position in subsequent discussions. Furthermore, we are more likely to perceive the information to which we are exposed in a way that is congruent with our initial attitudes, because these attitudes create expectations for what we will find and provide a framework for making sense of it. Finally, we are more likely to remember confirmatory information because we have a preexisting framework into which it can be fit and because we are more likely to find it useful. These selectivity processes also operate in interpersonal and intergroup relations. We are less likely to communicate with people whom we dislike; as a result we have less opportunity to make new observations that might conceivably lead to a revision in our attitudes (Newcomb 1947). Similarly, our initial attitudes—sometimes based on first impressions or group labels—create expectations that affect our subsequent observations and provide a framework for how we perceive the person's behavior and what we recall about it.

Cognitive consistency has received a great deal of attention in experimental social psychology. Among the different models explored in numerous studies, the two most influential ones have been Heider's (1958) theory of cognitive balance and Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. The general assumption of the various consistency models is that inconsistency between different cognitive elements (e.g., between feelings and beliefs about an object, between our attitudes and our actions, or between our attitudes and the attitudes of important others) is an uncomfortable psychological state. It creates tension, which we seek to reduce by whatever means are most readily available to restore consistency.

The role of consistency mechanisms in reaction to new information is rather complex. Inconsistent information is often an important instigator of change in attitudes and behavior, provided the information is compelling and challenging and situational forces motivate the person to seek out new information. At other times, however, consistency mechanisms serve to reinforce selective exposure, perception, and recall: people screen out information that is incongruent with their existing attitudes and beliefs and thus maintain cognitive consistency. This reaction is especially likely when the existing attitudes are strongly held and have wide ramifications—as is the case with enemy images.

Attribution theory has been another central focus for research on social cognition. This theory addresses the ways in which people explain their own and others' behavior—how they assess the causes of behavior. One of the key distinctions in the field has been between dispositional and situational attributions: the perceived cause of a particular action may be placed in the actor's character and underlying nature, or in situational forces (Jones and Nisbett 1971). When observing the behavior of others, people have a strong tendency to make dispositional attributions—to commit what has been called "the fundamental attribution error" (Ross 1977). On the other hand, when explaining the causes of their own behavior, people are much more likely to make situational attributions, because they are aware of the many pressures and constraints that affect their behavior at any given time and place. As it turns out, however, in both interpersonal and international relations, these attributional tendencies depend on the nature of the actor and the action. When people explain their own behavior or that of friends and allies, they tend to make dispositional attributions for positive acts and situational attributions for negative acts; when they explain the behavior of enemies, they are inclined to do the reverse (Heradstveit 1981; Rosenberg and Wolfsfeld 1977; Rouhana 1997). Thus, attribution mechanisms—like consistency mechanisms—promote confirmation of the original enemy image. Hostile actions by the enemy are attributed dispositionally and thus provide further evidence of the enemy's inherently aggressive, implacable character. Conciliatory actions are explained away as reactions to situational forces—as tactical maneuvers, responses to external pressure, or temporary adjustments to a position of weakness—and therefore require no revision of the original image.

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy refers to the effect of expectations about another person or group on the other's actual behavior. Our expectations are communicated, perhaps subtly and unconsciously, in the way we approach others in the course of interaction. In doing so, we often create conditions that cause others to behave in line with our expectations—to take on the roles in which we have cast them (Weinstein and Deutschberger

1963). For example, a party that enters negotiations with the expectation that the other side will be unyielding may be particularly tough in its own demeanor and present proposals that the other is bound to reject, thus living up to the original expectations and confirming the original attitudes. When the interaction between conflicting parties is characterized by mirror images and mutual expectations of unprovoked hostility, it produces self-fulfilling prophecies that escalate the conflict, as described earlier.

The mechanisms that account for resistance to disconfirming information—selectivity, consistency, attribution, and self-fulfilling prophecy—are particularly powerful in a conflict relationship for several reasons. First, images of the enemy and conflict-related self-images are central aspects of the national consensus. The earlier discussion of the normative processes that operate in a society engaged in an intense conflict points to the strong social pressures toward maintaining uniformity of opinion, especially in a crisis atmosphere. These pressures prevail in both small decision-making groups and the larger society. Softening the image of the enemy breaks the consensus and invites accusations of disloyalty. The militant elements resist a revision of the enemy image because they see it as weakening the national resolve, lowering defenses, and signaling a readiness for hazardous compromise. Their objections may have a broad appeal because the assumption that the risks of underestimating the enemy's hostility are more dangerous than the risks of overestimating it (and thus underestimating the opportunities for peace) is widely shared—and only the former invokes the charge of disloyalty. In sum, the mechanisms of resistance to disconfirming information are reinforced by normative pressures in a conflict situation.

Second, enemy images are especially resistant to disconfirmation because, in a conflict relationship, the opportunities for taking the perspective of the other are limited, and the capacity for doing so is impaired. In normal social interaction, participants' mutual attitudes often change in response to new information they acquire and/or evaluate by taking each other's perspective. However, interaction among parties in conflict—if it occurs at all—is governed by the conflict norms. Under these circumstances, the empathy required for taking the other's perspective is difficult to achieve and is, in fact, frowned upon. As a result, each party's analysis of the enemy's society is dominated by its own perspective. In the Arab-Israeli case, for example, both parties tend to overestimate how much the other knows about their own intentions and concerns: parties' estimates of what the other knows are based on what they themselves know (an important source of the escalatory effect of mirror images, as noted earlier). Other consequences of looking at the other primarily from one's own perspective are:

- a lack of differentiation among various strata and segments of the other society and a tendency to categorize it in terms of one's own concerns (e.g., pro-PLO versus anti-PLO Palestinians, Zionist versus anti-Zionist Israelis) rather than the society's internal dynamics;
- a self-centered view of the other side's opposition groups, equating them with supporters of one's own cause (which is bound to lead to disappointment once one discovers that even the dovish opposition elements have not switched sides); and
- a self-centered view of the other's ideology that perceives the destruction of one's own national existence as the entire meaning and sole purpose of the other side's national movement.

These and similar failures to take account of the other's perspective reduce the impact of potentially new information. Lacking the appropriate context, the parties may not notice or adequately appreciate the varieties, changes, and signs of flexibility in the other side's views.

Third, the resistance of enemy images to disconfirmation is magnified by strong beliefs concerning the unchangeability of the enemy. Such beliefs are typically part of the mirror image, which regards the enemy's hostility as inherent in its ideology and character (i.e., the mirror image attributes such hostility to dispositional causes). Thus, for many years, both Israelis and Palestinians insisted that there had been no real change in the enemy's position, only tactical maneuvers; that view changed over the years—especially after the Oslo agreement in 1993—but, with the failure of the Camp David talks in 2000 and the outbreak of the new intifada, it reemerged in full force. One reason for underestimating the amount of change on the other side is that the two parties use different anchors in assessing movement. The side taking a given action measures the amount of change it represents in terms of how far it has moved from its original position; the other side measures it in terms of how close it has come to its own position. Thus, in the Palestinian view, the 1974 decision of the Palestine National Council to accept a "national authority" on any part of Palestine that is liberated represented a major change—one that was bitterly contested and divided the movement, because it was seen as a step toward a two-state solution. Israelis, however, saw no significance in this move because it was still a long way from recognizing Israel and ending the armed struggle. To take a more recent example, Israelis perceived Prime Minister Barak's offer to the Palestinian side at the 2000 Camp David talks as very generous, because his concessions went considerably further than those made by any previous Israeli government. Palestinians, however, perceived the offer as inadequate, because it did not meet their minimal requirements

for a viable Palestinian state and for a final settlement of the conflict (Kelman 2007).

Not only do parties in conflict—starting from different reference points—find it difficult to perceive change in the enemy, they often believe that there will not and cannot be any change in the enemy's position. They give greater credence to history and formal documents than to the ongoing and evolving political process. They therefore consider it dangerous or even treasonous to propose that the enemy has changed or will change, and see no way to exert influence and encourage change other than by force—"the only language the enemy understands." Such beliefs are not easily penetrated by new information suggesting that there has been change in the enemy camp and that further changes are in the offing.

Despite all the reasons why conflict images are particularly resistant to contradictory information, they are not immutable. Social-psychological evidence suggests that they can change, and historical evidence shows that they do change. The challenge for scholars and practitioners of international conflict resolution is to devise the means to overcome their resistance to change.

CONCLUSION

Social-psychological analysis can contribute significantly to the study of international relations by providing a framework for conceptualizing change in the world system and in the relationships among its various components. To be sure, powerful forces—historical, geopolitical, structural, and institutional—lend stability and continuity to the interests of nation-states and their alliances, and hence to the conflicts that result from the clashes of interests between such states or alliances. Indeed, as the preceding section argues, social-psychological processes contribute in their own way to the resistance to change characteristic of international conflict by entrapping the parties in a pattern of interaction with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic. Nevertheless, despite the forces that continually feed conflicts and keep them alive, international conflict is in essence a dynamic phenomenon. The relationships between nations have always been subject to change, but in recent decades change has become more rapid and all-encompassing. Technological, demographic, economic, and environmental factors have contributed to the creation of new interests, new alliances, new actors, and new institutions at the national, international, and global levels. These changing circumstances represent many possibilities, not only for generating new conflicts but also for resolving old ones.

By focusing on the social-psychological dimensions, one can often gain insight into the causes of change, the impact of change, and the ways of

promoting change at the level of the national and international systems, precisely because it becomes possible to approach these systemic processes at a different level of analysis. The psychological processes by which decision makers and political elites define national interests and frame the issues in conflict, by which the public develops a collective readiness for pursuing war or pursuing peace, and by which both leaders and the public on the two sides in interaction with each other create an atmosphere and discourse conducive to mutual hostility or mutual accommodation illuminate the precise ways in which changes in public policy and state action may be resisted, facilitated, or deliberately induced. The motivations, cognitions, and emotions characterizing the behavior and interaction of individual actors at any given time are, of course, heavily determined by the necessities and opportunities created by events and changes at the macrolevel. But analysis of these microlevel processes in turn provides a basis for understanding and predicting when and how change at the macrolevel is likely to occur and what kind of change it is likely to be, and for creating the conditions that promote change in the direction of conflict resolution.

Creating these conditions requires a reversal of the social-psychological processes that promote conflict, through changes in the habitual ways of thinking, acting, and interacting in any given conflict and, indeed, in the international system as a whole:

- expanding collective consciousness to include a shared vision of a peaceful world;
- redefining the criteria for group loyalty;
- counteracting the pressures that make militancy and aggressive posturing the politically "safest" course for decision makers to follow;
- moving from zero-sum thinking to a win-win approach in negotiation and bargaining;
- creating structural and psychological commitments to a peaceful, cooperative relationship;
- breaking the conflict spirals initiated by mirror images; and
- developing communication patterns to allow new information to challenge old assumptions.

Promoting such changes is the task of diplomacy in all its varieties, of public education, and of institutional development. It is not an easy task, but the possibilities for change are always present, given the dynamic character of international conflict.

Conflict resolution efforts must be geared toward discovering the possibilities for change, identifying the conditions for change, and overcoming the

resistances to change. Such an approach to conflict resolution calls for best-case analyses and an attitude of strategic optimism (Kelman 1978, 1979), "not because of an unrealistic denial of malignant trends, but as part of a deliberate strategy to promote change by actively searching for and accentuating whatever realistic possibilities for peaceful resolution of the conflict might be on the horizon. Optimism, in this sense, is part of a strategy designed to create self-fulfilling prophecies of a positive nature, balancing the self-fulfilling prophecies of escalation created by the pessimistic expectations and the worst-case scenarios often favored by more traditional analysts" (Kelman 1992a, 89).

The barriers to conflict resolution are strengthened by the escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic that characterizes the interaction between conflicting parties. To overcome these barriers requires the promotion of a different kind of interaction, one that is capable of reversing this conflict dynamic. At the microlevel, problem-solving workshops and similar approaches to conflict resolution can contribute to this objective by encouraging the parties to penetrate each other's perspective, to differentiate their image of the enemy, to develop a de-escalatory language and ideas for mutual reassurance, and to engage in joint problem solving designed to generate ideas for resolving the conflict that are responsive to the fundamental needs and fears of both sides. At the macrolevel, reversal of the conflict dynamic depends on the establishment of a new discourse among the parties, characterized by a shift in emphasis from power politics and threat of coercion to mutual responsiveness, reciprocity, and openness to a new relationship.

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