THEORIES OF SOCIAL CONFLICT: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW

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In all historical epochs human societies have wallowed in social conflict. This opening statement sounds a Marxian apocalypse of change, but Marxist or not conflict is a fact of life which we cannot escape. We live in, by, and around--but never without-- conflict. It is as much a part of us as the clothes we wear or the foods we eat. Everywhere and at all times, conflict emerges whenever men interact with one another; it persists even if solidarity among people is at its highest (compare Coser, 1956). It pits persons, families, ethnic and racial groups, formal associations, and countries against one another. The time may not be too far off when the enthralling movie fiction on galactic wars will become a reality, at least in the minds of people who nourish an obsession for conflict. Ubiquity is no doubt a common denominator of all conflicts. This is not to say, however, that they are also inevitable or natural.

The phenomenon of conflict revolts against easy description, analysis and, more so, resolution, despite the advances in modern science and technology. It shows up without prior notice, even at a time when scientists are most prepared to make a forecast of its occurrence. Not only does it engage equals with equals but it also emerges among the unequal, the latter type of confrontation being more common and devastating. It gives hope for victory among struggle groups even in the face of certain defeat. Among the observers, it strikes excitement into their hearts every minute that they watch the conflicting parties. No wonder that conflict is a mix of both condemnation and fascination, which perhaps led Rapoport (1960) to write about the consuming effects and centrality of conflict, as echoed in this statement: "Conflict...is a theme that has preoccupied the thinking of man more than any other, save only God and love."

Examples of social conflict abound, and are familiar to all of us. Wars, riots, demonstrations, strikes, political assassinations, rebellions, nativistic movements, organized crimes, separatist ideologies, protests, conspiracies, revolutions, and related struggles are the types of conflict behavior we categorize as "social" since they address themselves to issues of great importance to survival and continuity of the human race. Not all forms of conflict behavior, however, are covered here.[1] Only those which appear to be regular, repetitive, predictable, organized, and relatively "high-cost" to society and its members deserve recall from the reservoir of conflict research. Where the conflict does not show regularly or with a history of its own it must manifest itself in a visible, long duration of antagonism between and among the affected social units. More of this particular will be discussed later.

The goals of the present paper are to provide a clear conceptualization of social conflict and enhance an understanding of its roots or possible outcomes. More specifically, this modest project will outline a conceptual frame of social conflict as suggested by the literature, and present--along with the grooves of such framework-- major theoretical and empirical models in an effort to discern the underlying conditions of conflict behavior. This object we shall attempt to accomplish by making a quick review of relevant studies into the nature and emergence (or suppression) of social conflicts.

Toward a Conceptualization of Social Conflict

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[1] "Forms" in the present usage simply means classes or categories of conflict, or any aspect of it, rather than imply stages of the process of social conflict. Simmel (1955), had used the term in a different light. In his view of conflict as inevitable and sequential, he proposed four such forms. The first form (or process) is labelled as *competition* when, in the pursuit toward maximization of scarce resources, people do not know one another. When competition becomes personalized and heated, the form becomes *conflict*. When conflict is resolved by any means, the form which emerges is *accommodation*. Finally, a new form replaces accommodation when differences among the partisans disappear, a state of affairs called assimilation or perfect integration. Realize that in current sociological analysis, each of these forms is regarded as a process in itself, conflict being separate and distinct from the others.

Social conflict is a term which needs further qualification and deeper conceptual anatomy than the definition just provided. The concept is admittedly broad for it subsumes a wide range of behavior which vary in scope, substance, meaning, objectives, and means. Thus, no single definition of it suffices. It is perhaps best explained by referencing to its various characteristics, dimensions or results, rather than by putting across a conventional dictionary meaning. Attempts toward conceptualization have been recorded in the literature (e.g., Williams, 1972; Kreps & Wenger, 1973; Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959; Kriesberg, 1973; Fink, 1968; Barnard, 1965; Mach & Snyder, 1957)-- building upon and developing framework from the earlier traditions laid by Karl Marx, Georges Sorel, Georg Simmel, and others before them--and point to the theory that social conflict results from a combination of some or most of the following factors:

1. *Scarcity of valued commodities.* Parties to a conflict, violent or not, seek commonly valued but scarce commodities, and lay differential claims over them. Though these commodities may be widely available, they are not randomly distributed due to monopoly or destructive competition ushered in by the spirit (evil, as others call it) of capitalism. Socially speaking, the most desired commodities are: wealth, prestige, and power--also the triumviral goals commonly pursued by men and around which competition and conflict may be most severe. Acquisition of these socially important goods becomes a paramount concern in society, which individuals learn from agents of socialization at virtually all levels of interaction. Merton (1957) speaks of these as the goals that goad members to strive for upward mobility and success; failure to attain them gives rise to a state of *anomie* (after Emile Durkheim's notion of normlessness) which, in turn, paves the way for the emergence of various types of conflict. Dahrendorf's (1959) well-known thesis of class conflict in industrial societies alludes to the phenomenon of inequality of distribution occasioned by differences in possession of power and authority.

2. *Awareness of conflict.* Incompatibility of interests in the pursuit of commonly desired objects often translates itself into an emergent consciousness on the part of the adversaries. Conflict groups arise and enter into a situation where they become knowledgeable of each other, or at least are conscious of their existence as such. They perceive, or eventually act out, their roles as protagonists and antagonists, as rebels and vanguards of the status quo. Where a

conflict group does not have an opponent, it seeks or creates one (Coser, 1956), otherwise the conflict becomes "unrealistic" (Kriesberg, 1973) and slides into plain competition in which the rule of the game is to outrace, not to eliminate (or injure) the opponent. Knowledge or perception about one's enemy in a conflict situation is a fundamental aspect that the process exists; else no struggle develops even if there is a battlefield, no peace talks prosper on a negotiating table.

3. *Commonality of interests.* Parties are social units or collectivities whose imaginary boundaries are made concrete by the adherence of their members to common beliefs, unified interests, similar ideology, and common culture. Interests, or whatever those commonalities may be called, are the bonds that unite the membership into a brotherhood of sort, such as a conflict group. Like valued commodities, which are aspired objects, interests carve the grooves for group articulation defining the "desirables" despite the differences that set the partisans apart. But unlike valued commodities, they are the essentials of group solidarity and group consciousness which make it clear to the members whom to attack (Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959). It is not necessary that these should be present before the start of any antagonism; they are elements which may develop later to sharpen cleavages between and among conflicting groups.

4. *Intensity.* This is a dimension of conflict which refers to the degree of occurrence of conflict behavior. Intensity may vary in terms of feelings or behavior of the partisans toward themselves and against their enemies. Kriesberg (1973: 5-6) avers that "feelings may be more or less intense depending upon how strongly committed the partisans are about the goals they wish to reach, how hostile they feel toward each other, and how much they want to harm and injure each other. The intensity of behavior depends upon the means the parties use to attain their aims. They may coerce each other and they may use more or less severe form of coercion." Overtly, the intensity of conflict may be seen in the length of time parties engage each other, the number of skirmishes they stage, and the violence which follows from a mild confrontation when all means fail.

5. *Visibility.* Most behaviors labelled as conflicting have an empirical character, that of being observed. Conflict behaviors which are latent, suppressed, unrecognized--hence, potentially disruptive of social relations--are paid little or no attention due to analytical

problems. Intuitive analysis suggests that they are better placed under the rubric of conditions that give meaning to or justification for conflict behavior. Explanatory factors known under the names of frustration, anomie, alienation, powerlessness, and similar psychological states are some examples which incite groups to violence as an outlet of their grievances. In the absence of conflict as a behavioral outcome or response, these psychological states do not assume the status of conflict in a sociological sense. They are merely signals of potential danger which, when given premature and imprudent notice, may serve the function of a self-fulfilling prophecy,[2] or the advocacy of an apocalyptic transformation.[3] Visibility is thus a criterion for the methodological purpose of making an objective evaluation of social conflict whose parameters are readily specified in ways suggestive of results rather than of possibilities. Works upholding the visibility of conflict are numerous (see Rummel, 1963; Feierabend & Feierabend, 1966; Bwy, 1968; Ridker, 1968; Russett, 1964; Geschwender, 1964), and require no further explanation here.

6. *Motivation.* Every conflict groups has the ulterior motive-- directly or indirectly--to deliver harm, injury, deceit, assault, and destruction to its opponent or to those symbols identified with the adversary. The resulting behavior may range mildly from the attempt of one party to deprive the other of the benefits they both seek, and severely from the behavior to neutralize, maim or eliminate the enemy. Its consequences are not always violent in a physical sense, for conflict may find expression in symbolic means, as in the case of

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[2] The self-fulfilling prophecy, after W.I. Thomas, states that if men perceive things as real, then they are real in their consequences. It gives both the flavor and substance of a "dream comes true" phenomenon when believers, persuaded by its appeal, actually behave toward and work for the realization of a prophecy.

[3] Karl Marx's theory of violent class struggles, which he considers not only inevitable and ubiquitous but also *necessary,* exemplifies this point rather starkly. He developed and "saw" in his theory a radical change of the existing social order. In various instances he exhorted all proletarians to unite in revolution because they had nothing to lose but their chains.

Peyote Indians (Slotkin, 1956) who turn to witchcraft and drug cults as a calculated move to relieve themselves of fear and frustration. Conflict may also manifest itself in an intellectualized fashion where sobriety and reason govern a dialogue between two parties, as in the case of resolving conflict during a process of collective bargaining by peaceful labor groups. Even in a violent subculture, observes Schwartz (1972), major disputes find their way into legal political outlets rather than into the socially approved reactions of reprisal and vengeance.

However varied the manifestations may be, the implicit motivation for conflict is to alleviate the partisans from actual or anticipated discomfort by exhorting each party to remove the perceived cause or blockage of wants and needs (Dollard et al, 1939; Berkowitz, 1972). In others, the motivation is to shy away from conflict with the consequence of repressing anger or releasing pent-up frustrations through activities that indirectly affect the other party.

Another view of the motivation for conflict, an idea which has gained currency recently in studies of conflict resolution and conflict management, is the notion of purposive planning. It says that people premeditate to engage in conflict behavior based on their expectancy of success and retaliatory costs derived from several alternative choices (Markus & Tanter, 1972). Writers (Kriesberg, 1973; Rapoport, 1960) call this variant the "purity" or rationality of conflict, wherein behaviors estimated to yield maximum benefits and minimum cost are most preferred. Conflict is a zero-sum game, a model which assumes that the gains of one party are the losses of the other. Strictly, this view provides an empty space for the psychological moorings of conflict and violence.

7. *Issues.* All conflicts, large and small, revolve around an issue of great concern to the participants. Issues may take the form of a verbal insult to family honor, denigration of cherished cultural symbols, mistaken belief about a group, resistance to dominance, claim for equal or greater share of the "pie," prejudice and discrimination, and more. Kreps and Wenger (1973) offer five general types of issues: economic, educational, political, public affairs, and welfare, which accompany rancorous conflict in a community. Sometimes the issues of conflict are confused with its causes, or the "precipitating conditions" as other writers have called them (Smelser,

1963; Lieberson & Silverman, 1965) as the underlying causes of conflict.[4] Again, the clarion call is sounded for an analytical distinction between causes and issues by sorting out what seem to be integral attributes of conflict from those variables that pertain to the characteristics of the parties in conflict or to the structural features of society that generate conflicting situations. The task is by no means easy and automatic, but a student of the subject must be alert on the theoretical implications of isolating causes from effects.

8. *Scope.* By scope refers to the political and organizational connotation of conflict which brings up the idea of the degree of participation in terms of the number of participants (Kreps & Wenger, 1973), in contrast to the intensity of their involvement. The concept implies the variety of conflict behaviors which show up in different levels of organization, that is, from a small group (e.g., family) to a complex, large organization (e.g., nation), with the number of participants varying positively.

Another inference from the concept focuses on the content of participation. Empirical studies have zeroed in on selected aspects on the participative sphere of conflict; some of them look at it directly, others obliquely. For example, Paige (1958) analyzes riot participation in three American cities in terms of material and moral support accorded to rioters. Mitchell (1969) uses the concept in the same vein to show mass support to the rebel cause during the popular Huk uprising in Central Luzon as the basis for distinguishing conflict towns from peaceful towns. Tilly (1967) speaks of mass action against the bourgeoisie during the outbreak of the Vendee counterrevolution in France in 1793 in his extreme portrayal of the scope of conflict. Finally, other scholars impute government spending to arms buildup as a scope of conflict in international relations.

The eight aspects of, or characteristics just ascribed to, social conflict are mutually exclusive. Neither are they exhaustive enough to suggest that all forms of conflict behavior have been encompassed.

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[4] Smelser (1963: 16) used the phrase to mean the events that justify or confirm the fears and hatreds in a generalized belief. These events may initiate or exaggerate the conditions influencing the outburst of collective violence.

It goes without saying that the categories under which conflict is presumed to exist are a heuristic information which is meant to denote the multi-dimensionality of conflict. Each dimension is a candidate subject for analysis itself. But more importantly, our effort to specify the conceptual limits of conflict is a rewarding exercise from a methodological standpoint because it tells us in advance what is there to be explained which, in turn, guides us on the selection of theories relevant to an accounting of conflict or any of its aspects. For a brief review of this nature, the consolidated picture shown above may serve as a checklist for students who can now walk through the exciting, though muddled and themselves conflicting, studies of social conflict.

Studies of Social Conflict or Conflict of Social Studies?

Having discussed the concept for definitional clarity, we may now turn to the second aim of the paper, that is, to review representative studies of social conflict with the hope of extracting from them the dominant theories permeating the literature. Constraints imposed by space, however, prevent us from scanning at any length the considerable number of works which have appeared during this generation.[5] The most we can do is to present from a wide selection of studies those which seem to be typical of prevailing thoughts.

By studies, we mean the general notion of published works which follow the scientific principles of research and theorizing. Without belaboring this point, studies and research are used interchangeably throughout this paper, although at first glance the former would sound more general and embracing. At the risk of oversimplification, some notes are in order with respect to the

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[5] Published studies of conflict since 1945 may suffice for the establishment of a library just on this subject. According to one source, the *Peace Research Abstract Journal* (a publication of the International Peace Research Association based in Canada) publishes each month some 700 abstracts in conflict and peace research. The same source indicates that in one survey conducted in 1969, the number of studies reviewed came to nearly 50,000 abstracts of peace research and international relations literature.

qualifier "scientific." *Scientific* is not a mere religious observance of the cardinals of science or obedient recital of the canons of evidence and force of logic. It is a matter of agreements reached by researchers on what to observe, how to do the observing, and interpreting what findings emerge therefrom. Newcombe and Newcombe (1969), who wrote extensively on peace research around the world, have this to say:

> By scientific we mean that any researcher, *anywhere* in the world, dealing with the *same* problem and using the *same* technique, should arrive at the *same* findings if he is equally competent and if all relevant factors are known. For example, a Communist Russian and a Capitalist Canadian practising either chemistry or peace research, at the same time, and using the same techniques, should produce the same findings. This would not be the case if each were to sit down in his own country and write a position paper recommending a course of action which his government should take with respect to Canadian-Russian relations.

The facts of conflict studies, however, are not altogether neat and generalizable to all situations. This is so because consensus and coherence of approach to the subject leave much to be desired. In part, the predicament inheres in differences about the way social conflict is conceptualized. In another, it is a problem generally recognized in the social sciences where standard field operations, use of similar instruments, and uniformity in all methodological and theoretical exercises--those whole gamut of norms and invocations which men attribute to science--have yet to reach a point acceptable to most scholars (see Andreski, 1974). Thus we suspect whether it is technically appropriate to speak now of studies of social conflict or to counter that the literature is plagued by conflict of social studies.

Theory-building and hypothesis-testing studies are not exempt from the nagging problem of dissension;[6] they all explain conflict phenomenon according to the eyes that see it. Theories, as a tool of science, are like lenses which the scientist uses to look at things. They enable him to see more clearly the color, shape and even movements of those specimens which are put under observation. But more importantly, it is his eyes, not the lenses, which visualize the objects' true form and shape. Jointly, the eyes and the lenses make the objects appear as a reality, which neither one can do alone.

The essence of this anecdotal comparison is to drive home the message that theories, as objective explanations of events, are not independent of the perception of particular scientists who happen to use them. Choice of any one theory is almost always influenced by personal backgrounds or training, not to mention those factors which are outside of the scientist's control. This is not to say that the scientist is necessarily biased. It is simply that he exercises free will, the freedom to select from a vast fund of experiences and skills known to him what theory might be the most convenient and handy explanation under the circumstance. Thus theories of conflict come under the broad (perceptual) tags of psychological, economic, political, sociological, etc., which all point to the kinds of eyes that see them.

As this paper is not concerned with the mechanics of formal theory construction it will not spell out in detail the assumptions on which the theories build upon, neither will it lay the abstract and empirical operations needed for testing them.

Theories of Social Conflict

Theories of social conflict are abundantly available in the literature. Their explanatory power and effectiveness vary,

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[6] Commenting on theory construction in one such field, sociology, Dixon (1973: 26) lamented the rift not only in the methods of social inquiry but in the nature of the discipline itself, the role of ideological commitment and the nature of human action. He argued that sociology, in spite of its century of relative academic respectability, is still in a "pre-paradigmatic" stage.

depending upon the phenomenon of conflict under review as well as upon the circumstances under which they are applied. Many of them have been formulated to account for, in an *ex post facto* way, incidents in history, while few have been used for the present or future occurrences of conflict. Yet most of the theories are a far cry from the expectation of formal theories in the sense that they lack conceptual clarity, provide no logical consistency, and offer no systematic procedure of substantiation against facts. This is not to denigrate these theories, for no doubt they have merits of their own, but to call attention to the fact that their utility is evaluated according to some specified criteria, foremost of which is whether they yield results that contribute to knowledge and understanding of conflict in cross-cultural settings.

As the theories of the subject are plentiful, so are the hypotheses or propositions they imply. Williams (1972) made an estimate that the number of hypotheses and empirical generalizations alone will not be less than 500. Rummaging through the literature and summarizing these isolated explanations will certainly prove to be tedious and cumbersome. The summative impasse is overcome by a conventional taxonomy, where related theories and hypotheses are grouped together similar to existing classifications (see Gurr, 1970; Hudson, 1970; Johnson, 1972; Larsen, 1973; Green, 1975), but goes beyond the narrow reportage typical of a confining discipline.

For our purposes, we classify in brief compass ten general groups of models or theories on conflict: (1) instinctive, (2) frustration-induced, (3) reinforcement, (4) personality, (5) decision-making, (6) equilibrium, (7) culture-induced, (8) diffusion, (9) developmental, and (10) ecological.[7] The classificatory scheme suggests some overlapping of categories; in fact, it does have this

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[7] Models and theories are distinguished here following Forcese and Richer (1973: 38-45). "A model is an imitation of an abstraction from reality that is intended to order and to simplify our view of that reality while still capturing its essential characteristics." On the other hand, a theory consists of a set related of propositions together with a definition of the rules of correspondence between and among these propositions and a specification of the rules of operations for clarifying the concepts implied in the model.

overlapping. Mutual exclusivity may be attained only by reducing the number of categories, but it demands a high price--the loss of valuable information.

The first five models appear psychological and the rest structural, at least in substance. The former are mostly conceptualized in the context of the actors, the latter on environmental level. We now take up the theories singly.

1. *Instinctive theories* are those explanations of conflict behavior which argue that aggression owes its roots from deep-seated (often unconscious) drives. Freudian psychology gave these theories their seminal form when it dwelt on the deep, dark and mysterious forces in man that urge him to destroy or hurt others (Freud called this drive by an exotic term, *thanatos*), indeed an act of sadism (see Strachey, 1951). However, the death instinct, as aggressive conflict is also called, has been dismissed as a concept by modern-day psychoanalysts due to its non-scientific overtones. In its stead, the instinctive explanation has found more glamour in another substance in recent writings, such as those of Lorenz (1966), which take instinct as an adaptive mechanism, not as an expression of aggressiveness resulting from childhood traumas or sexual conflict, but as an innate force which disposes man to behave aggressively for survival. Another writer (Moyer, 1973) offers a physiological model based on the supposition that the "brain contains inborn neural systems that, when active in the presence of particular stimuli, result in aggressive behavior toward those stimuli." He points out findings derived from experiments showing that such part of the brain, once stimulated chemically or electrically, would excite even normal persons toward violence.

Johnson (1972: 210-211) describes the Freudian and Lorenzian notions of aggressive drive as a hydraulic model, sometimes irreverently referred to as the "flush-toilet model." The model implies the building up of aggressive tendencies, like urine in the bladder, until they finally have to be released for cathartic therapy. The instinctive theories are criticized for three major flows: failure to develop a systematic theory, insistence on ignoring or selecting from the scientific literature, and presentation of evidence that is of questionable value.

2. *Frustration-aggression models.* In contrast to the instinctive explanations, conflict is more favorably viewed in the literature as one emanating from frustration, cramp, annoyance and similar displeasurable experiences. The theories that invoke this analysis are numerous and wide-ranging, which at more times than one have appeared outside of the domain of classical psychological studies. Disaffection was firmly bedded in Marx's polar analysis of the progressive degradation of the industrial working class and increasing wealth of the rich bourgeoisie as modern technology brought in more productive capital. The case exemplifies both absolute and relative deprivations, which Marx predicted would reach up to point and eventually culminate in mass revolt, for a radical transformation then would be necessary to erase the enormous differences.

After Marx, the frustration theory has undergone revisions. The first systematic attempt toward theorizing began in the 1930s, when Dollard and his associates (1939) reformulated the concept following the tradition of stimulus-response (S-R) analysis. Their basic postulate of the frustration-aggression theory is that frustration *always* leads to some form of aggression. Frustration arises when a goal is blocked, prompting the discontented person to adopt aggression as a means to eliminate the blockage or source of frustrating experience.

Since then, the theory has been re-interpreted (or misinterpreted) and developed to account not only for individual acts of violence but also for societal disturbances, such as insurrection, revolution, and other forms of civil strife. Drawing inspiration from Marx and de Tocqueville, Davies (1962, 1969) develops a strikingly unique theory of frustration, called the J-curve model of revolution, which proposes that "revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal." This is so because improvements, no matter how slow, generate a continuing expectancy of need satisfaction for people who have experienced them. When the actual state of socio-economic development abruptly declines, the expectancy still rises somewhat, leaving in its wake an intolerable gap between the "ought" and "is" and causing widespread despair. The substance of this theoretical formulation is also articulated, in varying degrees of emphasis, in the works of Stouffer et al. (1949),

Brinton (1952), Bienen (1968), Oberschall (1973), Hoffer (1964), McNeil (1964), and Ridker (1962), among others. Lerner's (1958) familiar concept of "rising tide of expectations" and its derivative, "revolution of rising frustrations," dramatize discontent as a function of the disparity between man's aspirations and what is capable of attainment.

An excellent synthesis of the frustration-induced hypotheses is found in Gurr (1968, 1970), who reconceptualized the psychogenic instigations to civil violence in a theoretical construct called relative deprivation (also see Stouffer et al., (1949). Jointly taken with other social variables (e.g., social facilitation, social control), deprivation is taken as a potent theory for determining the likelihood and magnitude of collective strife, such as turmoil, conspiracy, internal war, and related forms of political violence. The outlines of the theory, in Gurr's words (1970, 12), are these:

> The primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicization of that discontent, and finally its actualization in violent action against political objects and actors. Discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic, instigating condition for participants in collective violence. The linked concepts of discontent and deprivation comprise most of the psychological states implicit or explicit in such theoretical notions about the causes of violence as frustration, alienation, drive and goal conflicts, exigency, and strain.

A cursory examination of the relative deprivation theory will reveal that Gurr does not speak of social conflict in a general sense, nor does he intend to use the theory for it. Its major criticisms, aside from being too psychologically oriented, are the absence of a time dimension and the presence of "modern" bias with its inordinate emphasis on modern communications media and modern guerrilla warfare which makes the theory more useful for prediction than for *ex post facto* analysis (Morales, 1973, 86).

3. *Reinforcement Models.* Another competing explanation, though often regarded as psychological, are the models based on reinforcement, known variously as learning theory, exchange theory,

and social behaviorism.[8] The early proponents of reinforcement models are John Watson, Clark Hull and B.F. Skinner, among others. However these theories may be called, they all posit a model of man (see Kunkel & Nagasawa, 1973) which includes testable propositions in the following areas of concern: (1) the establishment of behavior, (2) the maintenance of behavior, (3) the extinction of behavior, and (4) the modification of behavior, usually a combination of (1) and (3).

The basic postulate is that most behavior patterns are learned, maintained, extinguished, and modified by means of differential reinforcement and punishment. In short, behavior can be "conditioned" or will be emitted as a conditioned response to situational stimuli. But in contrast with classical psychological analysis, the stimuli exclude those state variables coming from the actors, such as motives and perceptions, and go beyond the usual types of concrete reinforcers (money, status, and power) for even persons themselves may be viewed by an actor as reinforcers. Methodologically, Deutsch and Krauss (1965) point out that reinforcement models arose as a revolt against the subjective procedures of introspectionism and the mentalistic concepts which are not directly observable, thus eluding reliable measurements.

The bulk of studies on reinforcements has dealt with experiments among animals, whose aggressive tendencies are either controlled or simulated akin to the Pavlovian notion of conditioning, and extrapolated the resulting analysis to human aggression. Research in recent years, however, has tended to focus on man, but often expunged from his natural setting (Berkowitz, 1969). Splinter theories of reinforcement have emerged under such names as role-modelling, identification, role-taking, or simply behavior imitation (Bandura, 1969, 1970), but more generally come in accordance with B.F. Skinner's reward-punishment format. For example, Bandura and Walters (1963) have noted that in a particular culture children are surrounded by aggressive models. The boys are rewarded for reproducing the aggressive behavior of adults and are punished in some ways for displaying submissive behavior. In another study

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[8] Exchange theory is conceptually different from learning theory by virtue of the former's constant reference to dyads and groups rather than to activities of individuals (Homans, 1961).

(Berkowitz & Le Page, 1967) guns are found to be facilitators of aggressive conduct, presumably because they evoke situational cues or are associated with violence and bloodshed.

Other studies have focused on one or more aspects of reinforcement theory, such as on the effect of punishment in deterring conflict behavior. Dollard et al. (1939) propose that punishment might have two effects, one to inhibit aggressive responses, the other to interfere with these responses. Some writers are of the opinion that severity of punishment may suppress aggression, others suggest that mild punishment can be more effective than severe or no punishment, while still others show that punitive action can only temporarily inhibit aggressive acts as they may be displaced. Smelser (1963) has discussed at great length the effects of social control in the occurrence or non-occurrence of mass behavior, as well as the conditions under which violent conflicts are more likely. Also important to note is the attempt of Gurr (1970: 238-250) to summarize extant studies on deterrence and sanctions on political violence, which lead to the hypothesis that "regime coercive control varies curvilinearly with the severity of regime-administered negative sanctions, control being lowest when severity is at intermediate levels."

The most critical limitation of the reinforcement models is the facile assumption that human behavior is mechanistic, responding automatically to reward or punishment.

4. *Personality Theories.* So broad is the coverage and meaning of personality that practically all psychological theories can be subsumed under personality theories. Our label of what constitutes personality, however, would only apply to selected aspects of human functioning (e.g., perception, motivation, attitudes) as organized structures which shed light on differences in conflict behavior. It focuses on the enduring personality traits or types for which theories suggest some underlying predispositions toward conflict on the part of the actors possessing them--with little or no stimulation from external forces except those which are necessary in shaping these traits.

Discussion of personality theories is not complete without reference to Freud's oedipal complex, Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, Murray's theory of motivation (based on needs, of which

aggression is one), and Catell's trait approach to personality analysis, among others. Empirical research linking personality types and conflict, however, is scant. The few studies have been concerned with correlations between specific personality attributes, or general personality patterns, and behavioral tendencies or attitudes. Special homage must be paid to the familiar works of T.W. Adorno and his colleagues (1950) who have studied "authoritarianism" in conjunction with a variety of behavior and attitudes ranging from political and economic beliefs to attitudes toward war and peace. They picture the authoritarian as a rebel in his own right but at the same time he is quick to submit to authority or obey orders consistent with his ethnocentric feelings toward others, especially the minority (compare Stagner, 1961). The central feature of the authoritarian is repression of strong hostility originally directed at parents and displacement of aggression toward others. Studies have corroborated Adorno's theory of the authoritarian personality as a potent variable in the prediction of anti-Semitic and anti-Black attitudes (Klein, 1963), and shows up even in dreams where highly authoritarian persons express their hostility toward their enemies, particularly against members of an "outgroup" (Meer, 1955). These findings point to one essential theme: the authoritarian personality is a pathological mechanism.

A parallel and equally significant development in personality theory is the concept of alienation (see Seeman, 1959, 1971: Wagner, 1975). MClosky and Schaar (cited in Wegner, 1975) view alienation as a reflection of authoritarian and neurotic personality characteristics apart from the objective structure of social relationships. Thus, alienated persons are simply malcontents or social misfits. Alienation is not a personality type per se, but rests on a view of human nature as a set of basic needs the non-fulfillment of which results in feelings of estrangement from one's self or from society as a whole. Usage of the term by early writers, notably Karl Marx, holds that alienation is a key to the critique of industrial bourgeois social order-- transforming workers into a class of passive, estranged, and exploited individuals. The basis of alienation is clearly one of objective conditions, that is, in relation to control of the means of production.

Recent application of the theory of alienation, however, departs from the Marxian usage by bringing it within the scope of social science (Wegner, 1975) through an analysis of the subjective contexts within which it finds more relevance. It begins from the

premise that alienation is a problem of the relationship between social structure and personality. Seeman (1971) isolated the varied meaning of the term into six types: (1) individual powerlessness, (2) meaninglessness, (3) normlessness (cynicism), (4) cultural estrangement, (5) self-estrangement, and (6) social isolation. Studies confirm that one or more of these forms of alienation explain mass behavior, such as wildcat strikes, political apathy and intergroup prejudice, drug addiction, civil riot, and hippie culture, among others.

5. *Decision-making models.* Whereas the foregoing models introduce the innate, natural, impulsive, and patterned responses to conflict, other views have it that conflict passes through the calculating and analytical behavior of men who weigh their moves before they plunge into a conflict situation. The latter approach conceives of the actors and parties as rational decision-makers who consciously and intelligently act out conflict roles according to well-planned strategies (see Rapoport, 1960, 1970; Boulding, 1962; Markus & Tanter, 1972; Fink, 1972).

Explicit in this point of view is that decision-makers, usually or always the leaders, are aware of the several alternatives open to them and to their opponents. From this array of choices they wittingly select the one which gives them the maximum benefit. Under the assumption that the actor engages first in a cost-benefit analysis of fighting, and that all relevant parameters of conflict are known *a priori,* the decision-making models are explored mathematically; using the concept of game or the game theory. Here, the actors are guided by the value of every tactical move, from which the payoff for success or failure can be estimated. Actual information about the possible outcomes, however, is unknown except those strategies which are likely to be adopted by the opponents. This why the decision-making process is likened to a game, and the conflict yields only victors or losers, as in a zero-sum game, even if there are coalitions of parties.

By the admission of two of the proponents (Markus & Tanter, 1972), it is made clear that these models ignore the importance of psychological factors (e.g., frustration, predisposition, etc.) and deal only with the concrete conditions of human conflict. Where these conditions are not objectively present, subjective states are assigned specific probabilities and the whole exercise is transformed into decision-making under risk, that is, each decision entails a

probability statement about alternative outcomes (Markus & Tanter, 1972). In theory and in practice, the scenario of conflict is visualized as that of a game only if all the strategies available to each of the parties can be listed.

The elegance of these models make them especially suited to theoretical analysis of future conflicts through simulation (Gustzkow, 1971), and games of arms race and international warfare, but rarely have they found their way to *ad hoc* explanation of conflicts in history. Despite such elegance, however, the models have their own pitfalls. Outside of a true game and beneath the laboratory where they have been tested, human variables have remained largely untapped or are assumed to be simpler than what they are. The rules in actual conflict are far more difficult to formulate and impose, more so to follow, than the rules in parlor games, tic-tac-toe or chess. While actual conflict behaves in an objective and static structure, it also has its own dynamics which in practice more easily outlive the rules, puzzle the partisans, and elude the scientists who study them. Finally, the models take for granted the role of the masses as followers, or presume that leadership is all that matters in decision-making without regard to the interaction process that molds decisions along the grooves of egalitarianism.

6. *Equilibrium models.* Still another groups of theorists sought for explanation of conflict in the degree of balance or imbalance in society, under the assumption that conflict groups are generated by onerous inequities in the social structure, such as the wide disparity in wealth, power, and prestige among people in the same system. Disequilibrium exists not only objectively but also subjectively, and is found in the levels of individuals, groups and nations (see Galtung, 1964). Regardless of how and where it appears, a discrepancy of whatever kind pushes the affected individuals into making critical demands; it also provides the conditions of strain conducive to internal instability (Smelser, 1963; Soefranko and Bealer, 1973). The result gives a semblance of frustration, or a process of "balancing" the uneven sectors of social life as groups indulge in conflict to make their demands known and bring about desired changes.

Mention of imbalance, incongruity, disparity and similar terms floods the literature of social conflict (Merton, 1957; Kriesberg, 1973). On the societal level, the lack of fit among vital institutions

(e.g., economic, political, and social) engenders severe maladjustments which may lead to the upsurge of crimes and violent conflicts. For example, urbanization without an accompanying industrialization will impose strain on the system, causing widespread economic dislocations. Similar problems occur when the rate of education grows faster than the level of the economy, thus leaving behind a large surplus of unemployed labor.

On the individual level, research (see Lenski, 1954; House, 1975; Geschwender, 1968) has turned up voluminous evidence on the unwanted consequences of a special type of imbalance, status inconsistency, in which persons who rank high on some dimension of status (e.g., education, income, occupation) occupy low positions in another dimension (e.g., minority status, prestige). Galtung (1964) made a succinct case over why this is so. Disequilibrated ranks tend to produce among individuals a disposition toward aggression, such as when "topdogs" (people who are high in some status ranks) are combined with "underdogs" (the same people who now score low in other status ranks). Aggression becomes a likely response when some means of rectification have been tried and have failed and when the culture has a history of aggression itself. The literature on status incongruence, however, suggests that behaviors other than aggression may ensue among affected individuals, such as the adoption of isolationist attitudes (Geschwender, 1968), right-wing extremism (Rush, 1967), and development of schizophrenia (Eitzen & Bair, 1972), among others. It has remained unclear, however, when or how a person suffering from lack of status crystallization becomes a rebel, a demonstrator, or a passive bystander. Criticisms also attacked the poor methods used in identifying types of inconsistency and the paucity of statements on what references people use in defining their own situations as unjust (Nelson, 1973; Meyer & Hammond, 1971).

7. *Cultural Theories.* Conflicts, with or without violence, roam not only in the minds of men but also spring from particular environments which encourage or inhibit them. According to this view, conflict behaviors are imposed on individuals by the strength of cultural factors, such as the norms, values, and traditions. Entry into the arena of conflict may or may not have anything to do with motives and characteristics of the adversaries, but it is facilitated by the contours of group norms and group pressures.

Since biblical times, various societies have provided the normative patterns and social justifications for different kinds of struggles, ranging from oral arguments to heated fights between opponents. For example, Hobsbawn (1959) has richly documented the development of traditions of banditry and violence among the southern European peasantry. Violence against outsiders is sanctioned in several primitive tribes, such as one in New Guinea studied by Zegwaard (1959), since observance of violent norms (e.g., killing an opponent) confers power and prestige to a member, provided the victim is not a member of the family. or clan. Among the war-prone Yanomano of the Brazilian highlands, Chagnon (1968: 84) discovers that socialization into violence begins at home, initiated by parents who approve of their children to be fierce and rarely punish them for attacks on parents or aggression against hapless girls in the village.

The violent subculture models, as the cultural explanations are sometimes called (see Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967), have also been utilized as approaches to "civilized" and urban societies. In the United States, Frantz (1969) talks of the frontier tradition and its attractiveness to violence, Brown (1969) of the American vigilante. tradition, and Gastil (1971) of the violence in the American Deep South. Most of Asia and Latin America have also been associated with a persisting tradition of lawlessness and aggression owing to a strong cultural emphasis on vengeance, violent retaliation, use of force as a manly act--all exacerbated, as it were, by the presence of "outside" models (American, Soviet, and Chinese) which sustains and provides continuing inspiration to revolutionary struggles.

8. *Diffusion theories.* Another group of theories has it that violence and conflict spread to an area where none existed before, even where the basic conditions for their emergence are inexistent. This view is captured in the fashionable "domino" theory which observers invoke to have validity in countries plagued by threats of invasive power from outside. The theory assumes, as in the case of French Indochina, that the downfall of a strategic country (South Vietnam) in the hands of communists would signal the topple of all other countries in contiguous regions, falling in unison like the line of dominoes (cited in McNoll, 1976). While its repercussions were (and probably still are) dreaded, the theory is yet to be vindicated in the minds of policy advocates who proposed a tenacious support to these

countries, and will have to stand the test of time if and when such countries will eventually succumb to the grips of communist ideology.

Diffusion may also take the form of transfer, not in a geographic sense, but from within. Here, the meaning of diffusion is one of escalatory conflict which breaks out in a series of progression. Viewed in this light, Le Bon (1952) puts on it a high premium in his analysis of crowd behavior as a "contagious" process. Diffusion is also acknowledged significant in Hudson's (1970) hypothesis of "violence-begets-violence," in Spiegel's (1971) stage theory of race riots, and in Firestone's (1972) more elaborate theory of the riot process. Historical explanations of political instability (see Tanter, 1966; Anderson & Nesvold, 1972) impress upon us the recurring or cyclical nature of conflict where a previous level of disorder offers a good predictor of succeeding disorders. Such kind of contagion is endemic in the social system, although it appears tautological. Previous hostilities are taken as significant in acquiring similar behavior patterns in conflict, which show a continuous process without the prospect of letting up. Where this is the case, peace is a temporary price. It occurs intermittently or alternately with periods of unrest, each cycle bringing in an era of quietness only to be followed by years of sporadic outbursts of conflict.

The mass media, although presumed to play a positive role in the reduction of conflict-prone tendencies (Roperos, 1979), can create a hostile atmosphere for the transfer of strife elsewhere. In analyzing Black Rebellions in America, Gans (1969: 47) has made a strong case for the appearance of violence through the mass media. Says he: "The mass media diffuse information about rebellions to other cities, but this is not sufficient to encourage additional ghettos to rebel. Rather, the knowledge that a rebellion is going on elsewhere, particularly in a nearby city, raises tension levels in the ghetto..."

9. *Change / Developmental models.* All revolutionary struggles purport to bring about change--overthrow of a repressive and totalitarian regime, setting up of a new politico-economic arrangement, imposition of a new mode of living--but seldom do they completely achieve their avowed goals. As such struggles are always change-oriented, there is no mistaking that change (or the emotionally charged term, development) does inaugurate much of their stirring and protestations. For it is at the onset of radical transformation or

rapid development when the most pestering conflicts surface,[9] rather than when change is at a standstill and development at its highest (Feierabend et al., 1969). Tradition has come under constant danger of losing out in favor of the irresistible, modern patterns of thought and behavior. Status quo is attacked by new forces, or is rejected by some men who claim that "enough is enough" and that a new order has to be tried, much as the vanguards of status quo resist the threats to their hegemony.

Sociological lessons abound on the relationship between specific types of change and violent responses. One such example we owe to Ogburn and Nimkoff (1950: 514), who give a brilliant analysis of technological change and the origin of war, as follows:

> An invention has a succession of effects, attached more or less as the links of a chain follow one another. The cotton gin seems to have increased the number of slaves, making it possible to increase the planting of cotton, which had the effect of stimulating trade with England; the best policy for which was free trade. The economic system of the South, where Cotton was King, then led to conflict with the economic system of the North, based upon a protective tariff favoring infant industries, and ended in the War Between the States.

A second illustration comes from historical sociology on the bloody European experience (Lodhi & Tilly, 1973) where imposed

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[9] This analysis has a striking similarity with that of Hoffer (1964: 4-5), who says:

> We are told that revolutions are set in motion to realize radical changes. Actually, it is drastic change which sets the stage for revolution. The revolutionary mood and temper are generated by the irritations, difficulties, hungers, and frustrations inherent in the realization of drastic change. Where things have not changed at all, there is the least likelihood of revolution.

changes, such as taxation, met violent resistance from organized groups. Crimes and various forms of collective attack in 19th Century France, however, did not conform to fluctuations in urbanization and urbanity, negating the "tension argument" inferred from these natural changes.

Theorists have argued with persuasion that conflict is born in and possibly is nurtured by change. But change by and of itself does not induce conflict and violence. It is the by-product that does, resulting in dislocation that throws people out of their niche and engenders social chaos. An insightful explanation is offered by Olson (1963) who points out that rapid economic growth can significantly increase the number of (economic) "losers," that is, the people whose standard of living has fallen despite the increase in average per capita income of the entire population. Feierabend et al. (1969) discuss seven unique patterns of change and their theoretical connections with the concept of "systemic frustration," the latter leading nations to the corridor of conflict. They argue, as do the frustration-aggression theorists, that the gap between modern aspiration and social achievement (which is widest during the transitional process of modernization) brings forth intolerable discontent which makes political instability possible. Modern countries are found to be predominantly stable, transitional countries highly unstable, and traditional countries also unstable but by a less striking ratio than their transitional counterparts. The rate of (socio-economic) change is also correlated with levels of political unrest where countries with lowest socioeconomic rate of change show a trend toward stability while those with the highest rate of change are beset by increasing instability (Feierabend et. al., 1969: 626-639).

In a subsequent cross-national study, Feierabend et al. (1973) validated the need-achievement hypothesis as a predictor, not of economic development, but of coerciveness of regime and political unrest. They discovered that changes in need-achievement scores are positively and significantly correlated to these two disorder variables, suggesting that an increase in achievement motivation "heralds a rapid rate of socioeconomic change which, in the short run, increases the level of political unrest within societies."

10. *Ecological models.* Finally, we shall outline the ecological explanations of conflict in human societies as well as in animals. A spate of studies has been observed among animals, little among

individuals. But the few ecological studies on social conflict are significant for two reasons. First, they provide interesting data on the effects of environment on the genesis and eruption of hostilities. And second, they help develop a better understanding of the role of psychological and socio-cultural factors when taken in conjunction with the environmental characteristics. Alone, ecological analysis is a fruitful line of inquiry although it falls · into its own trap of mistakes when used without prudence (see Robinson, 1950).

The logic of ecological reasoning is old. Like the change and imbalance models, it views human action toward conflict as precipitated by imperfections in the "natural" order, or by the conduciveness of the terrain. Such stance is elaborately articulated by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, who developed in the 1920s a technique of spot-mapping deviants by the ecological areas where they are most likely to be found (Clinard, 1966). Technically called the "concentric zone" model, which divides a theoretical urban community into five districts, it accounts for myriad behaviors and activities. The theory suggests that deviants tend to reside with high concentration on the transitional zone, an area of presumably high rate of social disorganization owing to rampant poverty, crowding, illiteracy and disease. Two major problems of the Park and Burgess model, however, are that few cities ever completely figure in a series of concentric circles, and that the transitional zone sweepingly assumes a high level of "disorganized" social life. Whyte's (1955) study of "street-corner" gangs negates the latter premise in that he found well-organized associations living in slum areas and socially adjusted to the decadence characteristic of their habitat.

A third criticism may be added on the problem of identification of offenders. "White-collar" criminals, concealed and legally less known as they actually are, reside in the outer districts, thus reversing the pattern predicted by the concentric theory (Clinard, 1966) but in no case repudiating the logic of the ecological argument.

Recent empiricism in the ecological basis of social conflict has incorporated salient aspects of the environment more familiar to ecologists. A stochastic study of the Huk Rebellion (Mitchell, 1969), for example, featured the importance of ethnic dominance (proportion of Pampango speakers) in the recruitment of rebel

membership in the contested areas, and showed how the nature of the terrain (presence or absence of swamps and mountains, and area planted to sugar cane) sustained the Huk ideology during the 1960s. Observers (van den Muijzenberg, 1973; Salmon, 1968) also take a special note of the geographic and cultural linguistic confines within which the insurrectionary forces of the Huks operated, although factors other than these two are acknowledged to be as important.

Other Dimensions of Conflict Research

Origins, or more appropriately "causes," of conflict are by far the most heavily studied and about which data are now amassed in large quantities to provide some understanding of human aggression. More research, however, is still needed in trying to explicate the diverse forms of conflict (e.g.,) international vs. domestic, group vs. society, individual vs. family, etc.) at different levels of aggregation, and in bridging the chasm between one form and another to be able to generalize onto a large perspective of conflict phenomena. So much has been known, for example, in the laboratory about the effects of frustration on aggression. But will the conditions thereat hold up in international wars or in internal conflicts? While there are innovative attempts along this direction (e.g., Gurr, 1968; Feierabend et al., 1969; Davies, 1969), they are faced with methodological problems on the measurement of variables from aggregate data. Here, the theoretical fallacies of so-called "ecological analysis" are feared, and the only way to allay such fears is to demonstrate similar results for the same theory among individual actors.

A recent interest in the study of conflict has been raised by practical concerns for the effective management of war in terms of preventing its occurrence. This new focus is an offshoot of conflict studies to get at the underside of violence through promotion of peace, harmony, and conciliation. Our review have not touched upon peace studies at all, as the obverse of conflict is not necessarily peace. For there are also models of peace just as there are theories of war. The Gandhian approach to non-violence (peace) is entirely a different calculus when compared to the analysis of violent conflict as currently used in the western literature.

It may be inquired whether certain forms of social conflict diminish with increasing gratification of basic human wants, as

brought about by economic development. Some evidence from western societies (Tilly, 1969) suggests that while urbanization and industrialization decrease the magnitude of primitive violence, they also give rise to new and wider scope of modern protests staged by formal (not communal) associations without resorting to violent means. Can such experience be duplicated in developing countries where violent conflicts are a typical expression?· What is the threshold of industrialization sufficient to scale down such conflicts? These are relevant questions for peace research which still await further exploration.

Theory and research in the subject do not seem to go together as a student of conflict may realize. Certain theories remain as such ·without documentation and empirical studies, much as some research undertakings benefit least from the guidance of important theoretical insights. The disjuncture between these two has led to a weak corpus of knowledge for the emergence of a "school" in many a social science discipline like Sociology (Barnard, 1950; Bottomore, 1970) which has yet to evolve its own paradigm for the meaningful study of social conflict. That a discontinuity exists is quite evident when writers formulated their own theoretical pieces only to see no complementation in terms of empirical follow-ups. Since the time Coser (1956) restated into propositions Simmel's ideas of social conflict, no research has verified why conflict should be particularly more violent and periodic in intimate groups than in less organized ones. None has also validated Dahrendorf's (1959) neo-Marxian theory of· class conflict which asserted that the intensity of struggle might be due to the superimposition of political conflict upon industrial conflict.

Concluding Remarks

This paper is a modest attempt toward a stock-taking inventory of prevailing, scattered thoughts in the literature of social conflict. It began with a conceptual frame for analytic dissection of the concept of conflict, based on common usage of others, to make it definitionally clear. It proceeded with the review of the major theories to see the patterns of analysis adopted by writers in explaining their views of conflict behavior and emergence of struggle groups.

It is apparent that social science does not have a conflict paradigm which researchers use as a universal standard to go by. For a long time, it was fashionable to refer to the Marxian theory of class conflict as a useful guide to understanding the dynamics of warfare and as clue to the radical changes that may transform society from one type to another. While the analysis may. have served the purposes of a grand model of conflict, new realities disappoint the portentous expectations of Marx. Observations in modern, industrial societies imply that the likelihood of violent class conflict is quashed by rapid social mobility. A new, if sober, type of conflict tends to replace the old and destructive forms, and continues apace in institutionalization as cultural differences vanish and cultural pluralism, triumphs.

The main obstacle of developing a theory lies in the multidimensional character of social conflict, compounded as it were by the lack of agreement on the specification of appropriate unit of analysis and use definite variables. The latter are defined by a particular orientation of the "model of man" (e.g., cruel, kind, rational mechanistic, etc.). As a result, several theories and models have come up; some are complementary while others are contradictory. Within psychology, we have identified at least three dominant explanatory views of the roots of human aggression and conflict: one invokes that conflict is innate, the second argues that it is due to frustration, and the third maintains that it is shaped by rewards and punishment.

Outside of the individual niche, the environment is blamed for disturbances propagated by conflicting parties. Culture is identified as the culprit because it produces the behaviors that result in unwanted deviations. The windfall of change is also taken as responsible, although not wholly, for the imbalances in the social structure that lead to unstable relations among groups of people. In another sense, imperfections in the system are attributed to geographical differences which expose some men to a higher probability of crimes due to poverty, illiteracy and disease but cushion others from these onerous social problems.

The variety of studies on the disruptive features of conflict has indicated, or better yet confirmed, public condemnation of violence and the parties who advocate its use for the attainment of certain goals. A solitary voice from the wilderness, however, raises an objection against this popular thinking. Simmel and Coser have advanced an analysis, though largely hypothetical, that conflict can

be functional (meaning, it has positive contributions) by helping establish group unity and cohesion where these twin characteristics are
absent, instead of tearing society apart with the mere presence of internal antagonism. They argue that it is not conflict per se which causes the destruction but the rigidity of the system which allows conflicts to accumulate and to be channeled along one major axis once they are finally expressed.

Social science is yet to synthesize, develop, and test a theory of social conflict which is more flexible than the confining nature of a particular discipline. For a meaningful and valid theory respects no boundary circumscribed by the narrow or parochial limits of an endeavor only known to some. This does not mean that it should use every bit of information available but that it must be less than eclectic. Above all, a theory of conflict is amenable to practical applications, where research findings are utilized to the best advantage and for the common good.

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