Types and Sources of Conflict

- Conflicts often stem from two main sources
  - Material Interests
    - Territory, irredentism
    - Resource access
    - Pre-emption, retaliation
    - Economic conflicts
  - Values and beliefs
    - Ideology
    - Religious and ethnic claims
- Two sources are often mixed in practice
Forms of Conflict

- Often as expressions of Power.
  - Persuasion, Influence and Force
- Limitations on force, international norms and costs
- Most conflict takes place without violence, or with limited violence, particularly economic conflicts
- Several sources of escalation
Source of Conflict: Material issues

- Boundary disputes
- Access to resources or transport routes
  - Blockade is considered an act of war under international law
- Economic, trade or investment related conflict.
- Security threats to state
- Prestige and historical claims
Sources of Conflict: Beliefs

- Identity based conflicts
- Identity sourced in
  - Culture
    - Religion
    - Ethnicity
  - Ideology
- Identity used to construct worldviews that ascribe characteristics both to in-group and others.
Identity continued

- Identity-based conflicts often include descriptions of in-group as suffering injustices, and incapable of immoral behavior.
- Others are ascribed to suspect motivation, opportunism and characteristics that defy logic or morality.
- The other is thought undeterred through normal means and often a threat.
Sources of Conflict

- Realist paradigm
  - Conflict over power of state
  - Military or economic (they are the same) issues
  - Rising power, or rising threat of neighbor
  - Identity claims are a means of mobilizing population and gaining credibility for threats or actions.
Sources of Conflict Other Paradigms

- Neoliberal institutionalists
  - Force used in defense of state
  - Identity conflicts are, like realists, used to mobilize resources, but
    - Examples of abusive leaders and
    - Undermine cooperation
  - Multi-lateral institutions can mediate conflicts, raise costs for potential rivals of resort to force.
Conflict: paradigm Power Transitions

- Absent or distracted hegemonic state,
- Proxy war of regional powers in regional hierarchy
  - Afghanistan example
- Conflict caused by unsatisfied challenger state and unaccommodating lead state.
Characteristics of Conflict

- Issues in Contention
- Resources to hand
- Perceptions of self and adversaries
  - Perceptions of resources
  - Perceptions of self
  - Perceptions of rival
- Beliefs about self and adversaries
Perceptions and conflicts

- Beliefs about self and others can aggravate conflicts and make resolution difficult

- Beliefs about opportunities of success costs of loss
  - Relative power, population size, control of state.
  - Belief of existential threat
  - Belief (tied into others) of self-rightness and wrongness or inhumanity of others (god on our side)
Perceptions and Belief Create Room for Conflict

- Power relationships, material interests conflicts may trigger decision-making process
- As before, process may be filled with perception biases like preconception, confirmation bias.
- Perception also informs reference domain.
Mobilization Frames and Modes of Contention

- Mobilization Frames
  - Stories told to frame contentious issues
  - Resonant frame embedded in culture and historical or recent social experience.
  - Often expressed in ideological, religious or ethnic stories of struggle

- Leaders can become “prisoners” of their mobilization frames.
  - Appoint “true believers”
  - Leadership position contingent on frame and behavior accordingly.
Conflict Escalation

- **Sources of Escalation**
  - Belief in advantaged position
  - Risk tolerance (nothing to lose, or chance to win) caused by loss domain.
  - Possibility to expand conflict to area of advantage
  - Draw in other participants to conflict who might bring in resources.
  - Use of irregular forces, practices to undermine rival in another domain of conflict.
Conflict Analysis

- Multi-level analysis can sometime be more effective than realist, or even neo-liberal
- Much conflict is sub-state or “nation” level in multi-ethnic state.
- Perceptions of leaders may not be rational, or may not be motivated by interests of the state.
Conflict Escalation

- Rival perceived as weak, opportunity for greater leverage or seizure of goals
- Challengers frame problem (often driven by perceived threat or relative deprivation) as caused by other groups or states
- Escalation particularly likely if removal of rival is viewed as only solution available.
- Also, escalating threats and force are used to gain leverage in bargaining, and establish credibility of threats.
- Escalation spiral- like DD multi-iteration PD
Dealing with conflict

- Role of institutions
  - Certain institutions established to mediate conflict, facilitate resolution, change costs to actions.
  - Regional Institutions, ASEAN, AU, OAS, NATO, OSCE, United Nations, OIS
  - U.N. peace-keeping role, Security Council, chapter 7- Authorization for Coercive actions, including peacekeeping/peace-making actions.

- Role of third-party states
  - Reflective of institutions, often with participation- Oslo accords, etc.
Roles of third parties

- Provide “good offices”
  - Space for direct communication between rival parties.
- Provide monitoring, oversight of agreements, elections etc.
- Alter the perceived payoffs for conflict that separate groups may have.
  - Peacemaking operations can threaten military, increase costs of defection- often taken on by hegemonic or great states
  - Economic sanctions linked to activities can undermine gains from land seizure.
Third Parties Continued

- Neutral third parties provide opportunity for influence, and address of specific grievances, that may reframe conflict, and open possible solutions.
- Third parties can bring resources to bear on solving structural political and economic problems that prevent future conflict.
- Peace-keeping and Peace-making are distinctively different, but often mistaken and shifting roles.
  - Peacekeepers primarily monitor negotiated peace.
  - Peacemakers are heavily armed forces to remove actors, or increase costs of use of force in a conflict.
  - Violations of treaties put peacekeepers in a peacemaking role, and in danger.
Actors in conflict

- Most conflict between the collapse of Soviets and U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was within states or included at least one sub-state participant.
- Lifting of repressive regimes, failure of states, particularly satellites of powers, created opening for new actors.
- Sub-state Ethnic, tribal, political leaders no longer constrained by “rules of the game” either a lack of functional state, or collapse of mechanisms for making claims.
- Neighboring states, or sub-state actors are often drawn in, or intervene in anticipation of instability.
- International institutions
- Regionally Powerful states.
War-making

- Different Forces structures
- Army, Navy, Marine-type, Air Force, Intelligence Irregular (special forces)
- Assymetrical warfare
  - Irregular and special forces
  - Irregular forces can be militias, paramilitary, guerilla, terrorist, special forces
  - Proxy war, to destabilize local allies of regional rival- Afghanistan
There are different levels of WMD
In past used to refer primarily to Nuclear weapons
Atomic weapons are not banned by treaty because they are targetable, and lead states possess them.
Biological and chem. weapons banned because they are of limited effectiveness (chemical weapons) effects spread, and linger (biological) killing combatants and non-combatants alike.
Nuclear Weapons

- Unique
  - Only can be built by state amassing resources to project.
  - Very unlikely to be given by a state to a terrorist organizations in a “sneak attack”
  - Possible unconventional delivery systems.

- Severe consequences for use.

- Functional primarily as a deterrent, especially in the context of a state lacking accurate long-range delivery systems.
Dr. Strangelove: Deterrence

- Deterrence
- Historically defensive
  - Nuclear forces changed ideas.
- Seeks to alter payoffs, perceived payoffs for extreme defection by rivals.
  - Move from PD to chicken payoff structure.
    - DC>CC>DD>CD to DC>CC>CD>DD where both lose from defection.
- Nuclear deterrence can form single iteration games.
Types of Deterrence

- **General Deterrence**
  - Protect homeland, prevent or retaliate attacks on own state.
  - For Mutual G-D, cities must be vulnerable, retaliatory capability safe.

- **Extended Deterrence**
  - Attack on ally treated as an attack on self.
  - Extended immediate deterrence is revealed during a crisis, when attacker threatens, and third state extends deterrent threats. Failed to extend threat in Iraq I.

- **Minimum deterrent force**
  - The smallest amount of force (nukes etc.) needed to deter actions
MAD MAD MAD world

- Mutually assured destruction theory
  - Offensive capabilities expensive and threatening
  - Offensive abilities offered plausible first strike tactics, and incentives for pre-emption
  - Agreement to reduce ABM programs, permitted smaller arsenals.

- Credibility of MAD questions, would we really destroy the world? Chicken and Schelling’s steering wheel.
  - Flexible response…escalation trigger.
Deterrence

- Can be conventional or WMD
- Often requires expensive conventional forces.
- WMD can offer deterrent.
- Implications of MIRV’s, Bunker Busters and Star Wars.
  - Target Rogue states;
  - Security Dilemma?
Collective Security

- Institution to prevent aggression by states against other states.
- Alliance to support international system of states and preserve sovereignty.
- Difficult to execute because of numbers of states involved and differing state preferences.
  - Realists argue they are non-functional b/c don’t address core state security issues for strong states.
Collective Security

- Operates on the idea that the threat of massive force by other states will deter aggression.
- Balancing of Power Institution against states that violate non-aggression norms.
- Also used against states or groups that violate international norms of internal behavior.
Blowback

- From dangerous back blast caused by firing a weapon.
- Coined as description of the results of covert US intervention in Iran in 1953, and subsequent interventions.
- US covert support of a British plan to remove elected Prime Minister and assert the rule of the Shah Reza Shah Pahlavi.
- Us and British supported a coalition of royalists and religious actors to push Shah out of power.
- Snubbed democrats and delegitimized “liberal” democratic leaders, and the undermined US moral authority in dealing with Iranians.
Blowback

- Is essentially the product of policy that backfires, either immediately or with a delay.
- Conceptualized as the result of pursuing short-term security considerations at the cost of espoused ideals.
- Some policies are attractive for apparent simplicity and intuitive nature. However, often the world is not so simple.
- The concept rests in the idea that forms of power other than force are as important- or more important in a world of trade and connections.