Whither Ripeness Theory?

by
Dean G. Pruitt

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About the Author

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He is author or coauthor of five books—Theory and Research on the Causes of War; Negotiation Behavior; Mediation Research; Negotiation in Social Conflict; and Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement (now in its 3rd edition)—and of more than 100 published chapters and research-based articles. He has recently published a chapter on "Social Conflict" in the Handbook of Social Psychology, a special issue on the 1993 Oslo negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians in International Negotiation, and a monograph on "Communication Chains in Negotiation between Organizations" in the occasional paper series of the Sabanci University Program on Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

Abstract

Ripeness theory, in its most common version, concerns the psychological states that encourage parties who are involved in severe conflict to move into negotiation—either bilateral or mediated. This monograph first summarizes ripeness theory as it stands today, while drawing on the writings of I. William Zartman, the founder of this field, and several other international relations scholars. Then it presents a critique, which recasts this important theory in conventional psychological terms; uses the language of variables rather than necessary states; and focuses on the psychological states of individual actors rather than on joint psychological states.

The recast theory, which is called "readiness theory," argues that an actor's readiness for conflict resolution is a function of both motivation to end the conflict and optimism about the success of negotiation. This revision appears to (a) fit more historical cases than the original; (b) be more heuristic in the sense of suggesting testable theoretical propositions; and (c) have greater reach, thus casting light on concession making, agreement, compliance, and third-party activation.

Other sections of the monograph discuss preliminaries about the motivation to end conflict; they argue that the motivation to end conflict encourages optimism about the success of negotiation. The final section presents a model of the political processes underlying ripeness, which then builds on readiness theory. The model defines ripeness as the breadth of the "central coalition" of ready individuals and of subgroups, a coalition that spans both sides of the conflict divide.

Foreword

One of the signs of an original and productive idea must surely be that it gives rise to further work to test, refine, and extend its explanatory power, and that this work, in turn, produces not merely intellectual and practical challenges but improvements and adaptations so that the revisions make the original more powerful as an explanation of a broader set of real world problems than was originally the case. Clearly, Professor I. William Zartman's conception of "ripeness" for the resolution of a conflict is one such idea. From its original unveiling in 1985, the concept of there being a set of appropriate conditions for the successful launching of peace initiatives in otherwise protracted and intractable conflicts has led to thinking, analysis, and research into what those conditions might be and whether ripeness is an operationalizable concept, recognizable in the real world and, hence, useful for empirical research.

Dean Pruitt's working paper is a thoughtful example of the work of challenging and extending Zartman's original ideas about "hurting stalemates" and "imminent mutual catastrophes" that lead to a change of expectations and behaviors within parties in conflict. Pruitt suggests an interesting refinement of Zartman's original concept of "ripeness" and poses the alternative of "readiness" as an approach offering more explanatory and predictive power, given that it focuses on reasons other than pain and cost that might motivate leaders and decision makers to think of alternatives to ending a conflict through violence. Without wishing to preempt a reading of the paper, Pruitt suggest that leaders' optimism will also play a crucial role in decisions to take up negotiation. He then discusses how this factor—among a number of others—might play into the launching of a peace process.

Beyond this discussion, Dean Pruitt's paper is an excellent survey of the present state of ripeness theory and its numerous offsprings. It could serve as an excellent introduction to this whole subfield of study. For all these reasons, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the work and to hope that this working paper reaches a wide and appreciative audience.

Christopher Mitchell
April 2004

Whither Ripeness Theory?*

Introduction

Ripeness theory, in its most common version, concerns the thought processes of decision makers who turn to negotiation or mediation in severe conflicts in which the parties have been trying to defeat one another. The core elements of this important theory were developed by I. William Zartman (1989) as a way to explain how internal and international wars move toward resolution and to help mediators decide how to time their entry into such conflicts. In a more recent statement of this core theory, Zartman (2000) specifies two conditions that are necessary, though not sufficient, for rational policy makers to be receptive to negotiation:

(1) A mutually hurting stalemate. Both sides realize they are in a costly deadlock that they cannot escape by escalating the conflict. Such a stalemate is especially motivating if augmented by a recent or impending catastrophe.

(2) A mutually perceived way out. Both sides foresee that "a negotiated solution is possible" (Zartman, 2000,p. 229), that a formula can be found that is "just and satisfactory to both parties (Zartman, 1989, p. 291).[1]

The usefulness of this core theory is illustrated by the 1993 Oslo negotiations that led to establishment of the Palestinian Self-Government Authority (see Pruitt, Bercovitch, and Zartman, 1997). Both sides were experiencing a stalemate. Israel could not reach the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was far away in Tunis, and "The PLO had been politically and economically weakened by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and by the Arab retaliation for the PLO's support of Iraq during the Gulf Crisis, curtailing its capacity to continue an effective campaign against Israel" (Pruitt, 1997, p. 243). Israel was also experiencing severe costs and a sense of hopelessness in trying to contain the First Intifada (a Palestin-

ian uprising) (Aggestam and Jonsson, 1997; Lundberg, 1996); and both sides were aware of an impending catastrophe in the rise of militant Islam. The growing Hamas movement threatened to unseat the PLO as leader of the Palestinians, which would have been a catastrophe for PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (Corbin, 1994). "Israel's new Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin also feared this development and foresaw the possibility that a fundamentalist Palestinian leadership would make common cause against Israel with militant Iran or a revitalized Iraq" (Pruitt, 1997, p. 243). Memory of a recent near catastrophe—Iraqi missile attacks during the 1991 Gulf War—strengthened this concern. Rabin had won the election with the promise that he would negotiate a settlement with the Palestinians, and he quickly learned that this negotiation could be done only with PLO participation (Lieberfeld, 1999).

In addition, optimism about finding a way out grew rapidly in a series of five secret meetings between lower-level personnel. Those meetings occurred at Oslo before the formal negotiations (which consisted of seven more secret meetings) started. Both sides came to see that the other side was serious about wanting to end the conflict, and preliminary concessions from both sides enhanced this impression (Corbin, 1994; Makovsky, 1996).

Recent Additions to Ripeness Theory

Recent additions to ripeness theory, by Zartman and others, address the fact that decision makers are often not very rational. These additions specify (a) impediments to recognizing or acting on objective elements of ripeness and (b) conditions that remove those impediments, thereby allowing a return to rationality.

 "Objective elements of ripeness" can be defined as circumstances under which a well-informed, dispassionate, and rational decision maker would conclude that negotiation is appropriate. It is possible to identify such circumstances in a commonsensical way and thus to test some of the theory's propositions. For example, Mooradian and Druckman (1999) operationalized ripeness as number of casualties in the Nagorno-Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan and showed that a sudden dramatic rise in casualties was followed by successful cease-fire negotiations.

Impediments

Some impediments to recognizing and acting on objective elements of ripeness are a natural part of conflict. There is a prevalent tendency not to give up without a fight (Zartman, 2000), and pride commonly precludes making concessions to bullies. When conflict escalates, negative images of the adversary ordinarily develop. Those images tend to block communication with the adversary and to produce a level of distrust that makes negotiation seem useless (Aggestam and Jonsson, 1997). Anger, a sense of injustice, and the desire for revenge often mount to such a high level that there is no interest in accommodation, despite there being ample reasons for exploring that possibility. These sentiments may lead to the development of a militant ideology that justifies the high cost of resisting the adversary as spiritually redemptive (Zartman, 2000). Escalation may also produce militant leadership, which tends to reject negotiation and to adopt policies that keep the conflict going (Watkins and Lundberg, 1998). Such policies provide leaders and those who work for them with a life of excitement, purpose, and competence besides providing jobs and status that are likely to be lost if peace is established (Coleman, 1997; Pruitt and Kim, 2004).

Zartman (2000) points out that as costs mount, such impediments (which he calls "resistant reactions") tend to rise, making it harder to recognize a ripe moment in severe conflicts than in moderate ones. In severe conflicts, costs must be extreme to outrank pride, negative images, desire for revenge, and militant ideology.[2] Zartman is, presumably, referring to costs that are attributed to the adversary rather than those that come from other sources, such as opportunity costs. An example of the latter is when Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev recognized that the Cold War was bankrupting his country. This conclusion in no way impeded settlement with the West; indeed, it had quite the opposite effect (Stein, 1996).

Other impediments result from entrapment in existing policies and programs (Mitchell, 2000). Leaders often become committed to conflicts that turn out to be hard to win at acceptable cost or risk. Their commitments may be emotionally binding and may involve public assurances that are embarrassing to withdraw. They are likely to put forward all sorts of specious arguments to avoid grappling with evidence that mistakes have been made (Ikle, 1991). Another source of entrapment is the need to justify past costs;

there is too much invested in the conflict to quit (Brockner and Rubin, 1985; Teger, 1980). Sometimes, there is also a "forest vs. trees" phenomenon. Leaders are so close to the day-to-day operations of conducting the conflict that they cannot draw back and examine the larger picture. Hence, they fail to see that they are no longer winning or that their costs and risks have moved beyond acceptable levels.

Overcoming Impediments

How can these impediments be overcome, thereby allowing objective elements of ripeness to be recognized and acted on? The literature provides three answers to this question.

Shock Theory. Some authors postulate that there will be a return to rationality when a sudden striking event—a "shock"—jolts the mind and stimulates rethinking (Bercovitch, Diehl, and Goertz, 1997; Mitchell, 2000). Such an event may involve a sudden substantial cost, for example, the loss of American lives resulting from the Vietcong's Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War. Or it may involve a heavy risk, such as confronted by both the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Shocks like those tend to cut through specious rationalizations and undermine the rosy predictions of people who have a stake in continuing the conflict. They force decision makers to think about larger issues such as whether the conflict is worth the sacrifices it produces. Shock theory operates on the assumption, articulated by Stein (1996), that change is most likely to occur when new information arrives suddenly in large batches rather than gradually over a period of time.

Zartman (1989, 2000) anticipates shock theory when he suggests that ripeness is enhanced by a recent or impending catastrophe. But shock theory helps to clarify one mechanism by which such an experience encourages ripeness—the jolt to thinking that stimulates rethinking.

Mitchell (2000) argues that striking positive events can also facilitate recognizing or acting on objective elements of ripeness. For example, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's conciliatory trip to Jerusalem in 1977 was such a big surprise to Israelis that it forced many of them to rethink their negative images and their distrust of Egypt (Kelman, 1985). This rethinking produced optimism about finding a way out that allowed the two countries to enter negotiation.

New Leader Theory. Other authors put forward a "new leader" theory, which suggests that a change in leadership is often needed to pull away from failed policies (Lieberfeld, 1999; Mitchell, 2000; Stedman, 1991). New leaders "cannot be held responsible for the policies (and often the policy failures) of their predecessors, so that change is less costly in political terms" (Mitchell, 2000, p. 89). Furthermore, (a) new leaders are more distant from ongoing operations in the period before they come into office, allowing them to see the forest as well as the trees; (b) they are usually allowed an initial "honeymoon" period in which they can review old policies and drop personnel who are committed to those policies; (c) they may be younger and more flexible than their predecessors; and (d) adversaries are less likely to harbor distrust and resentment against them than against their predecessors, making it easier to get negotiation going. Recent examples of new leaders who managed to escape what looked like intractable conflicts include F. W. de Klerk in South Africa, Yitzak Rabin in Israel, and Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. The new Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), may turn out to be the next example.

Two more points should be made about new leader theory. One is that it is not necessary to have a new leader on both sides of the conflict, as can be seen in the examples just given. The other is that old leaders are sometimes able to look far enough ahead to recognize that a conflict is dysfunctional and, therefore, to take appropriate action. A case in point is Gerry Adams, of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Fein,[3] who gradually moved his organizations toward negotiation between 1988 and 1997 (Mallie and McKittrick, 1996; Moloney, 2002).

Third-Party Intervention. The final answer is that third parties can help leaders recognize and act on objective elements of ripeness (Mitchell, 2000; Zartman, 2000). Third parties usually offer a less-biased perspective than that taken by the disputants, and they are less burdened by prior commitments. They may detect and point out the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate. They may encourage trust and a perceived way out by helping each side see that the other side is willing to make concessions to end the conflict. They may provide de-committing formulas or may coordinate a series of conciliatory statements and moves by the disputants that produce a substantive basis for trust on both sides. An example of the latter can be seen in the run-up to the 1997 Sturmont negotiations in Northern Ireland. Third parties arranged for the IRA and the British government to make a

series of reciprocal conciliatory statements that built confidence in the peace process on both sides (Mallie and McKittrick, 1996; Pruitt and Kim, 2004).

Third parties may provide assistance with negotiation as well. When they detect ripeness, they may arrange meetings and, if necessary, ensure the secrecy of these meetings, as the Norwegians did during the Oslo negotiations. Third parties may serve as channels of communication between the disputants when meetings cannot be held or are in recess. They may co-ordinate concession making by arranging for simultaneous concessions or pressing for reciprocation from a party who has received a concession. And they may help the parties devise integrative solutions or devise such solutions themselves. Without such services, a ripe moment may be squandered because the parties cannot communicate, synchronize their concessions, or locate alternatives that reconcile their interests. More will be said about the role of third parties below.[4]

Readiness Theory

As a psychologist, I am drawn to ripeness theory because it looks at the psychological states of leaders. But my training helps me see two ways of changing the structure of the core theory to make it more useful. One is to look at the motives and perceptions that make up ripeness on each side separately rather than focusing attention on joint states of mind such as a mutually hurting stalemate. The other is to treat those psychological states and their antecedents as variables. The result is "readiness theory" (Pruitt, 1997), in press), which is a modification of ripeness theory that solves some of its problems. In my view, this modification has four advantages: First, it fits more cases of conflict resolution than does the original. Second, it is more heuristic in the sense of allowing construction of novel theoretical propositions. Third, it gives the theory greater reach in the phenomena it seeks to interpret. And fourth, it provides a way to include in the theory some of the political processes that take place within the parties.

Looking at Each Side Separately

If we are to look at the components of ripeness separately on each side of a conflict, we need a name for these components. I suggest the term "readiness." Readiness is the extent to which an individual disputant is interested in negotiation. Ripeness is still a core concept in readiness theory, being

treated as a function of the level of readiness on both sides.[5] Negotiation will only start if there is some degree of readiness on both sides and, hence, some degree of ripeness.[6] The greater the readiness and ripeness, the more likely is negotiation to occur.

Readiness theory—in parallel to core ripeness theory—holds that two psychological variables encourage a party to be ready for negotiation: motivation to end conflict and optimism about the success of negotiation, or simply "optimism."

Motivation to End Conflict.[7] Motivation to end conflict results either from a perception that the conflict is dysfunctional or from third-party pressure. There are three ways a conflict may be seen as dysfunctional, any one or more of which may contribute to readiness:

- A perception that the conflict is not being won or (and this is more motivating) that it is being lost.[8] When such a perception first arises, the disputant is likely to try new tactics, such as escalation, alliance building, or co-optation of the adversary's supporters.[9] But if those tactics also fail, motivation to end the conflict is the likely result. The clearer the failure, the stronger the motivation to end the conflict.

- The perceived cost of the conflict. The greater the perceived cost, the stronger the motivation to end the conflict.

- The perceived risk of continuing the conflict. Perceived risk includes the risk of further alienating the other party, the risk of spiraling escalation, and the risk of running out of resources. The greater the perceived risk, the stronger the motivation to end the conflict.

Third-party pressure to end a conflict can come from mediators, allies, or power balancers (for example, NATO bombing the Bosnian Serbs in 1995). Only strong third parties can apply effective pressure on disputants, but both weak and strong third parties can use the tactics discussed earlier to persuade disputants that a ripe moment is at hand and to help them realize the promise of such a moment (Pruitt, 2000, 2002).

The stronger the third party and the greater its pressure, the more efforts will a disputant make to appear to be trying to end the conflict. This appearance will turn into actual motivation to end the conflict if the third party is persistent and perceptive, and demands real change. An example of third-party

pressure that produced only the appearance of motivational change is when the elder President George Bush pressured Israel into attending the 1991 Madrid Conference and follow-up meetings. "There was no Israeli intention of joining or producing any movement to the process, only to register a presence" (Zartman, 1997, p. 197). An example of third-party pressure that produced actual motivational change is can be seen in the events that led up to the establishment of Zimbabwe. Freedom-fighter Robert Mugabe's main ally, President Samora Machel of Mozambique, persuaded Mugabe to enter negotiations mediated by Britain and then insisted that Mugabe accept the mediator's recommendation that he participate in Zimbabwe's first elections (Stedman, 1991).

The first three antecedents listed above are roughly parallel to ripeness theory's perceived stalemate, felt hurt, and impending catastrophe. Third-party pressure is not a part of core ripeness theory, but arguably it should be. Stedman (1991) makes much of the failure of ripeness theory to explain why Mugabe entered the talks just mentioned despite believing that his army was winning the war for Zimbabwe's independence. Readiness theory avoids this criticism by focusing on motivation to end a conflict—rather than on hurting stalemate—and by making third-party pressure one source of this motivation.

Optimism. Optimism is a sense that it will be possible to locate a mutually acceptable agreement. There is a time dimension to optimism. Some optimism is required for a party to enter negotiation; and as negotiation goes along, this optimism must increase or the party will drop out.[10] Early on, optimism often derives from what Kelman (1997) calls "working trust," a belief that the other side is also motivated to settle the dispute and, hence, that it will work hard and make concessions. However, for optimism to be sustained, the party must eventually see the outlines of a possible agreement—a formula that will bridge the two parties' opposing positions. The greater the apparent distance between the two parties' positions, the less optimism of this kind will there be.

Optimism also depends on a perception that the negotiator on the other side is a valid spokesperson, an individual who can actually commit the other side to an agreement that will be endorsed back home. Early in the Oslo negotiations, Israel tested the chief PLO negotiator, Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala), to find out how much influence he had in his organization. He was asked to arrange for a return of the Palestinian delegation to some Washington talks they were boycotting and for removal of one member of

that delegation. Qurei passed this test, making Israeli Premier Rabin feel optimistic enough to send formal negotiators (diplomats) to the talks and start paying close attention to what was going on (Peres, 1995).

Using Variables and a Compensatory Model

Traditional ripeness theory uses a model of necessary causation; ripeness is necessary but not sufficient for negotiation to begin. But psychologists like me prefer a multiple causal factor model, which treats the antecedents of readiness and ripeness as variables—environmental conditions and psychological states—that can be stronger or weaker and that can affect the likelihood or magnitude of behavior. Thus, one might say, "As readiness (or the components of readiness) become stronger on both sides of a conflict, negotiation is more likely to begin."

Favoring a multiple causal factor model is more than a simple linguistic preference. Treating readiness and its components as variables allows us to use a compensatory model for hypothesis building. In a compensatory model, more of one variable can substitute (that is, compensate) for less of another, which means, for example, that the main source of motivation to end the conflict can differ from party to party and from case to case. Thus, readiness theory allows some parties to be motivated mainly by a belief that they cannot win, others mainly by the cost of the conflict, and still others mainly by the risk of a future catastrophe or pressure from a powerful third party. Such a model fits reality better than ripeness theory, which requires a uniform hurting stalemate for all cases. Here are some examples:

- The perceived infeasibility of winning was the main source of the Israeli decision to negotiate at the end of the 1973 war. The Israelis had won the war and had the Egyptian Third Army surrounded, but U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger pressed them not to destroy this army (Sheehan, 1981). This pressure meant that the Israelis could not make further military progress against the Egyptians, so they agreed to U.S. mediation.

- The cost of pursuing the conflict in lives lost appears to have been the main issue for both sides at the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War (Mooradian and Druckman, 1999).

- The opportunity cost of continuing the Cold War was the main issue for Soviet Premier Gorbachev. He discovered that his country did not

have enough resources both to develop modern industry and to compete with the West in the realm of foreign policy.

- The risk of a future catastrophe was the main issue for both the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Both sides feared that further escalation of the conflict would lead to a nuclear exchange. More recently, the U.S. army stopped its assault on Fallujah in April 2004, a battle the army could clearly have won, because the United States feared that an assault would alienate the people of Iraq and make it difficult to set up a workable indigenous government (Chandrasekaran and Wright, 2004).

- The pressure from a crucial ally was the main issue for Mugabe when he attended the negotiations that led to the founding of Zimbabwe, as mentioned earlier.

If parties differ in the main source of motivation to end a conflict, it should be possible to develop a set of propositions about the conditions under which each source of motivation will be paramount. For example, we might hypothesize that perceived infeasibility of winning is the most important source of this motive in heavily escalated conflicts, where the parties' main goal is to defeat or even destroy each other and where this goal is supported by an ideology of struggle. Costs and risks are likely to be overshadowed by such a goal, and the only effective argument for escaping from the conflict is that the goal cannot be achieved.[11] Another reasonable hypothesis is that in quarrels between friends or friendly nations, the risk of destroying the relationship will be a much stronger source of motivation than in quarrels between adversaries.

Motivation to end a conflict and optimism about the success of negotiation are also, to some extent, compensatory with each other. Surely, some optimism must be present on both sides for true negotiation to start and persist. But more motivation can compensate for less optimism and vice versa. This tradeoff helps to understand two asymmetrical peace processes in which one side's motivation to end the conflict was much stronger than the other's, and the other acted mainly out of optimism that its limited goals would be met:

- In South Africa, on the eve of Nelson Mandela's release, white South Africans became motivated to end the conflict because their prior policy of apartheid had proved unworkable, because they were experiencing

severe costs caused by the embargo from abroad, and because they feared a catastrophe in the form of civil war. Black South Africans were by no means so motivated to end the conflict. While they knew that military victory was unlikely (Lieberfeld, 1999), they could see that the whites had their backs against the wall. They delayed entering negotiation for nearly two years after the release of Mandela until it became clear that the negotiation would produce an assembly based on one-person/one-vote elections (Sparks, 1995). This delay suggests that their main reason for finally entering negotiation was optimism that their goals would be met.

- Gorbachev became motivated to end the Cold War and to negotiate a settlement with the West because he concluded that the conflict was costing more than it was worth. There was no such crisis in the United States, where President Ronald Reagan seemed ready and able to continue the struggle. The United States became willing to negotiate mainly because Gorbachev's unilateral concessions created optimism that U.S. goals would be met.

Such examples suggest an amendment to ripeness theory (in its necessary but insufficient formulation), which holds that a mutually hurting stalemate is not always necessary for development of a ripe moment. A ripe moment may develop if only one side is highly concerned about costs, risks, or the prospect of failure—a one-sided hurting stalemate, as it were—provided that the other side has limited goals. Those concerns may cause the first side to send conciliatory signals and to moderate its goals to a point where the other side becomes sufficiently optimistic for negotiation to start.

Zartman (1989) mentions a metaphor that may apply to the South African case: "The proper moment for (negotiation) occurs when the upper hand starts slipping and the underdog starts rising" (p. 236). However, it is hard to see how this metaphor describes a mutually hurting stalemate. It can take a long time for trends such as these to produce a hurting stalemate—if they ever do.

Here are two hypotheses that are suggested by treating motivation and optimism as compensatory variables: The (a) less trust there is between parties and (b) farther apart and more rigid are the parties' positions (both sources of low optimism), the stronger must be their motivation to end the conflict for negotiation to ensue.[12] These and other propositions based on the same

line of thinking illustrate how ripeness theory can be enriched if we state our concepts in terms of variables and use a compensatory model.

We can develop other testable hypotheses by treating the impediments to ripeness as variables in a compensatory model. For example, we can argue that the more committed a party is to a conflict, the larger must be the hurting stalemate, impending catastrophe, or optimism about the success of negotiation for negotiation to get started. This proposition may help us understand why so many Palestinians failed to support the conciliatory efforts of their prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, in 2003. Most Palestinians felt extreme hostility toward Israel, largely because of decades of Israeli settlement activity and the two previous years of military occupation. Hence, for their optimism to have risen to the point where they supported Abbas, it would have been necessary for Israel to signal a readiness to make far-reaching concessions. Israel sent no such signal (Myre, 2003).

Extending the Reach of Ripeness Theory

Ripeness theory was originally designed to understand the conditions under which decision makers become ready to enter negotiation—either bilateral or mediated. Zartman (2000) has recently speculated that ripeness also encourages the continuation of negotiation once begun. This extension of the theory is reasonable, but why stop there?

A strong philosophical argument can be made for "theoretical imperialism," which is the notion that a good theory should be generalized to as many phenomena as it can plausibly illuminate. This is what Kuhn (1970) calls "normal science." Another way of putting this notion is that good theories are too precious to be wasted on narrow interpretations.

This section explores whether readiness theory—my clarifying derivative of ripeness theory—can help us understand phenomena such as concession making, the likelihood and nature of agreements, compliance with a negotiated agreement, third-party intervention, and disputant entry into informal prenegotiation discussion.

Concession Making and Agreement. In the spirit of theoretical imperialism, we can postulate that as readiness increases, the parties are likely to throw more human resources into negotiation, make more concessions, and take more risks for peace. Hence, an increase in readiness on one or both sides should

enhance the likelihood of agreement. The 1993 Oslo negotiations illustrate all of these points. As mentioned earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin, having become convinced of Ahmed Qurei's status in the PLO, sent a higher-level delegation to the talks and began to pay more attention to them. In addition, a benevolent circle of confidence building produced a crescendo of concessions leading to eventual agreement (Pruitt, 1997, in press).

Readiness theory also speaks to the nature of the agreement reached in negotiation. When readiness is unequal, the side with greater readiness should make more concessions and, hence, be less favored in the final agreement.

Why have ripeness theorists failed to extend the theory to such phenomena? The answer may once again lie in the model of necessary causation that they generally use. For example, there are so many forces that influence concession making—the other party's perceived bottom line, one's own best alternative to negotiated agreement, reciprocity for prior concessions, support or opposition at home, and the like—that readiness or ripeness can hardly be called a necessary antecedent to concession making. However, readiness—viewed as a variable—surely encourages concession making and, hence, agreement, along with many other variables. This is partly because concession making is one way to end conflict, an aim that usually underlies readiness. It is also partly because working trust—a component of optimism—encourages concession making by increasing confidence that the other side will reciprocate one's concessions.

Compliance with a Negotiated Agreement. In the spirit of theoretical imperialism, we should ask whether readiness theory and, hence, ripeness theory help us understand compliance with a negotiated agreement. There are several ways of asking this question, one of which concerns whether readiness at the time of negotiation predicts compliance once negotiation is over. A straightforward answer to that version of the question is that it depends on whether the forces that produced motivation to end the conflict continue after the agreement is reached and whether optimism about the usefulness of the agreement is maintained.

Thus, South African whites complied with the agreement that produced a broadly representative government, because the conditions that motivated them to end the conflict would almost surely have reappeared if they had tried to reverse this decision. Those conditions were the absence of a viable alternative, the prospect of an embargo from abroad, and the fear of a civil

war. Indeed, the last of the conditions became more likely as blacks moved toward control of the army and police. However, in the Middle East, most of the conditions that motivated the parties to reach the Oslo Agreement became weaker or disappeared in the postagreement period. The PLO solved a lot of its financial and political problems when the Palestinian Authority was set up. And the Israelis moved ever farther in time from the trauma of the First Intifada and Rabin's campaign promise to make peace with the Palestinians. All of these changes may help account for the ultimate failure of that agreement.

Third-Party Intervention. A variant of readiness theory is also useful for understanding when and how third parties intervene in a conflict. It can be argued that readiness to intervene, like readiness to negotiate, is produced by motivation to end the conflict and by optimism about the success of negotiation. Third-party motivation to end a conflict arises from costs and risks associated with that conflict. Thus, the United States tried to mediate in the Falkland Islands crisis because the two protagonists—Britain and Argentina—were U.S. allies in the Cold War and because the United States feared for the integrity of that alliance. Third-party optimism is often based on the forces that appear to be affecting the disputants. For example, the Norwegians organized the Oslo talks when it became apparent that both sides were in a hurting stalemate and, hence, were ready to explore the possibility of negotiation (Pruitt, 1997).[13]

Readiness theory also helps us understand pressure for conciliatory behavior by disputants' allies, another type of third party. For example, President Machel of Mozambique encouraged his ally, Robert Mugabe, to enter the 1979 London negotiations that produced the country of Zimbabwe, because supporting Mugabe's army was an economic and political drain on Mozambique. This pressure reached a climax during the negotiations when it became clear to Machel that a settlement was near at hand and, hence, that optimism was warranted. At that point, Machel sent Mugabe a message that "if he did not sign the agreement, he would be welcomed back to Mozambique and given a beach villa where he could write his memoirs" (Stedman, 1991, p. 201).

Embarking on Informal Prenegotiation Discussions. Readiness theory and, hence, ripeness theory can also cast some light on entry into informal prenegotiation discussions. In highly escalated conflicts, formal negotiations are often preceded by a preliminary period in which back-channel or track-two

contacts are made between the parties. The first five meetings of the Oslo process can be viewed as such because Israel was represented by university professors rather than by diplomats. The prenegotiation period was much longer in the Northern Ireland peace process, starting in 1988 and continuing off and on, through indirect channels, until the 1994 IRA cease-fire (Moloney, 2002; Pruitt, 2000, in press). In both cases, the prenegotiation period was kept entirely (Oslo) or largely (Northern Ireland) secret.

Prenegotiation contacts require some degree of readiness to outbalance the risk of looking soft to the adversary or enraging hawks in one's own camp who are intolerant of contacts with the enemy. However, that risk is much lower than in full-scale negotiation, because prenegotiation contacts can usually be kept secret and disavowed if they are discovered or are not successful. Hence, less readiness is needed for prenegotiation contacts. If progress is made and if the level of optimism (and, hence, readiness) rises on both sides, full-scale negotiation may ensue.

Conflict Management versus Conflict Resolution

Ripeness theory and its clarifying derivative, readiness theory, can surely help us understand the development of conflict management agreements, such as the cease-fire at the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War or the withdrawal of the blockade at the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis. But many negotiations go well beyond conflict management, producing substantive settlements that resolve issues that separate the parties. Examples include the Oslo negotiations, which set up the Palestinian Authority; the Northern Ireland peace process, which produced a new government for that province; and the South African peace process, which gave the vote to the majority black population.

It is not clear that ripeness theory and readiness theory are useful in such cases, because hurting stalemates, impending catastrophes, and the like tend to disappear when there is a cessation of hostilities. Hence, the motivation to end the conflict should dissipate at that time. This poses a theoretical challenge: Can the theories be expanded to explain why some negotiations move beyond conflict management to substantive issues?

A straightforward answer to this question is that negotiation will move to deeper issues if and when it becomes clear that simple conflict management will not work, and that the conflict will continue unless deeper issues are

resolved. For example, in the 1990s the IRA made it abundantly clear that a simple cease-fire was not acceptable and that it would not fully stop its military operations until a political settlement was reached. The IRA declared a cease-fire in August 1994. But when the cease-fire did not lead to political negotiations, the IRA called it off and resumed operations by bombing London's Canary Wharf in February 1996 (Mac Ginty and Darby, 2002). Fortunately, in May 1997, the new British government that came into office under Prime Minister Tony Blair, sent signals of a willingness to begin substantive negotiations that would tackle political issues. Shortly thereafter, the IRA announced a new cease-fire , and negotiations about the future of the Northern Ireland government began (Moloney, 2002). A successful conclusion of the far-reaching negotiations cemented the cease-fire.

Stages and Processes Preliminary to Readiness

To make progress in the next decade, ripeness theory will need to become more dynamic—in the sense of specifying the stages and processes by which the components of ripeness arise. It has gone some distance in that direction, especially with new leader and shock theory, but there is a need for much more work. Here are two contributions to a more dynamic theory.

Preliminaries to the Motivation to End Conflict

As mentioned earlier, when leaders perceive that a conflict is counterproductive—that they are not moving toward victory, that costs or risks are mounting, that allies are protesting—their initial aim is to seek a better way to wage the conflict, not to end it. Otherwise, they would have to moderate their goals, which is always hard to do because it means foregoing fantasized gain or creating conflict with constituents whose aims will no longer be pursued. The situation is in crisis, but it is a crisis of tactics not a crisis of strategy.

There are at least three ways to revise the tactics used in conflict; and only if these fail, is negotiation likely to be seen as a worthy objective. One approach is further escalation with the aim of overwhelming the adversary.[14] For example, in 1971, when the British government was unable to stop terrorism with conventional police and military means, it adopted a policy of internment (preventive detention) and imprisoned hundreds of supposed IRA leaders and members with no charges or trials (Taylor, 1997).

A crisis of tactics will produce escalation unless one of the following conditions prevails (Pruitt, 1997; see also Ikle, 1991):

- Further escalation does not seem possible. Thus, at the end of the 1973 war, Kissinger forced Israel to give up hopes of destroying the Egyptian Third Army (Sheehan, 1981). This move left Israel with no option other than negotiation.

- Further escalation is expected to produce unacceptable costs or risks. For example, in Northern Ireland, the 1971 British policy of internment produced so much opposition at home and abroad that it was finally abandoned (Mallie and McKittrick, 1996). Likewise, in the Cuban Missile Crisis—when the risks of a nuclear war became apparent—both sides stopped escalating the conflict and moved toward settlement.

- The adversary's existence or voluntary cooperation is needed for other reasons. That is why escalation is so often avoided or discontinued in intact, meaningful relationships such as successful marriages. After a round or two of escalation, one or both sides pull back from the brink, thus avoiding a runaway spiral (Bradbury and Fincham, 1992). The existence of a common enemy may also trigger this kind of analysis. Each side views the other's existence and cooperation as essential to success in this larger struggle.

A second approach to revising one's tactics is co-optation, making concessions to segments or allies of the opponent in an effort to separate them from the opponent. Thus, in 1983, the whites who ruled South Africa set up special legislatures for the Indians and the Coloreds in an effort to separate them from the black majority. When this effort failed, they attempted to form a political alliance with Inkatha, a Zulu political party that was supporting the key demands of the main African political organization, the African National Congress (ANC) (Lieberfeld, 1999). Only when this second tactic failed did they move toward negotiation with the ANC. Co-optation is not always a failure. It was successful on the University of Chicago campus at the time of the 1970 student disturbances. During a sit-in by campus radicals, the university's President Edwin Levi announced the formation of joint student–faculty committees in every department to discuss student grievances and to make changes in policies. So many students became involved in these committees that attendance at the sit-in declined

markedly, and the radicals finally abandoned it as a failure (Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim, 1994).

A third approach to revising one's tactics is coalition building, seeking allies in an effort to build military or political strength. For example, because internment and other forms of escalation failed to defeat the IRA in Northern Ireland, the British and Irish governments signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, which sketched out a common strategy for containing the conflict (Mac Ginty and Darby, 2002). In response to this setback, Sinn Fein—the political arm of the IRA—accelerated efforts to form a common front with other nationalist groups, a further case of coalition building (Moloney, 2002; Taylor, 1997).

The main point of this section is that motivation to end a flagging conflict develops—as a last resort—if tactical innovations such as escalation, co-optation, and coalition building seem unpromising or do not work. Only then will there be a crisis of strategy that may lead to conciliatory initiatives aimed at ending the conflict.

There is an occasional exception to this rule of last resort, in that coalition building can sometimes be a way station to negotiation. If a coalition partner is less militant than the disputant, the price of an alliance may be moderation of demands and a pledge to seek accommodation—if not at first, then after the ally has suffered for a while because of its involvement in the conflict. Thus, in the negotiations that established Zimbabwe, Mugabe's ally, President Machel of Mozambique, pushed Mugabe into negotiation and then into agreement (Stedman, 1991). The same thing happened in Northern Ireland after the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. The Irish government pushed its new British allies toward accommodation, and a variety of nationalist groups that Sinn Fein was courting made a similar effort with Sinn Fein (Mallie and McKittrick, 1996; Moloney, 2002).[15]

When extremists try to win elections, they are engaged in coalition building with the voters they are trying to impress. This effort can be a moderating force if the voters tend toward moderation. Thus, the fact that Sinn Fein was trying to win elections at times reduced the number of IRA attacks (Moloney, 2002). Also Sinn Fein's electoral setbacks after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement may have contributed to that organization's efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict (Taylor, 1997).

Impact of Motivation on Optimism

So far in this monograph, motivation to end conflict and optimism about the success of negotiation have been treated as independent entities that have a joint effect on various outcomes. However, both theory and case material suggest that those variables are intimately related, in that motivation to end conflict often encourages the development of optimism. At least five mechanisms produce this effect, which can be seen in a number of historical peace processes.

One mechanism is that motivation to end a conflict ordinarily requires scaling down one's goals and aspirations. Unless one gives ground on the issues of greatest importance to the other party, there will be no agreement and, hence, no way to escape the conflict. Because less-ambitious goals imply less divergence of interest, this scaling down should encourage greater optimism about the success of negotiation, on one or both sides.

A second mechanism is that strong new motives often produce information gathering with results that challenge old views and stereotyped perceptions. Severe conflicts usually produce well-entrenched, heavily distorted "enemy" images of the adversary, which keep the conflict going (Pruitt and Kim, 2004; White, 1984). "They are the aggressors and all they understand is force. Hence, we must fight them wherever we can, and make no concessions for fear of being seen as weak." Such perceptions help to justify our aggressive role in a conflict, but they are antithetical to optimism about the success of negotiation. When motivation to end a conflict develops, such perceptions are likely to come under scrutiny because they offer no way out. New information is gathered; and if those perceptions are wrong, as is often the case, they are likely to be challenged and changed (Pruitt and Olczak, 1995).

Stein (1996) reports that Mikhail Gorbachev and Anwar Sadat gathered information of this kind at a time of crisis in their conflicts with the West and with Israel, respectively. As they examined those conflicts, both concluded that they had poor prospects for future success at acceptable costs. In Stein's words (p. 102):

> The evidence suggests that both leaders were motivated to learn and to change their images of their adversary. Both searched for new information: Gorbachev from experts in academic institutes and

government and from American interlocutors, and Sadat through intermediaries and then through secret meetings between high-level Egyptian and Israeli leaders. Both leaders were receptive to the information that they received, largely because they were motivated to change existing images and policies.

A third mechanism is that there is a certain amount of wishful thinking or grasping at straws in such a search, which means a selective tendency to find evidence that the other party is reasonable or is also motivated to end the conflict. Wishful thinking is akin to a phenomenon discovered by Kunda (1987) that people tend to highlight evidence that good things are going to happen to them and downplay evidence that they are vulnerable to misfortune. An example of grasping at straws can be seen in a book about the 1993 Oslo negotiations by Mahmoud Abbas (1995), foreign minister of the PLO. It will be recalled that the PLO leadership was desperate for some sort of solution, as a result of losing much financial support and after the rise of Hamas. Abbas reports the reactions of the PLO leaders when they learned that a well-connected Israeli university professor (Yair Hirschfeld) was interested in talking with them. Optimism rose precipitously, and Chairman Arafat sent one of his closest lieutenants, Ahmed Qurei to the talks. Similarly, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, U.S. President John F. Kennedy fixed attention on the only conciliatory statement made by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and replied to it in a conciliatory fashion (Allison, 1971).

A fourth mechanism is that when a party becomes interested in ending a conflict, it will often "test the waters" by sending conciliatory signals or making secret contacts with the other side. Such initiatives are often small and ambiguous at first—a spoken hint or roundabout contact—so that the conciliatory intent can be denied if the other side does not respond in a conciliatory fashion (Mitchell, 2000). But if people on the other side are also so motivated and seeking new information, they are likely to notice the initiative, take it seriously, and reciprocate, thereby enhancing the first party's optimism enough to encourage it to launch a stronger conciliatory initiative. A conciliatory spiral then ensues and optimism flourishes.

Examples of such conciliatory initiatives abound. Toward the end of the Berlin Airlift, Kremlin watchers in the United States noticed that a Soviet statement had omitted some of the usual invectives against the West. The U.S. government, which was highly motivated to end the conflict, sent a message through diplomatic channels inquiring whether this omission had

been intentional. The answer was "yes," thus producing enough optimism on the U.S. side to propose negotiations (Jervis, 1970). Similarly, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, an American newsman, John Scali, carried a conciliatory message from the Soviet government to the United States, which was taken seriously and reciprocated by American authorities (Young, 1968). Gorbachev and Sadat exhibited the same kind of behavior when they became motivated to end their conflicts and began casting about for a method. Continuing the above quote from Stein (1996, pp. 102–3):

> Both began with a small change in image, moved tentatively to small actions, accepted feedback, learned, and initiated a new series of actions that generated further feedback and change. Gorbachev and Sadat ultimately became confident that their adversaries would reciprocate their acts of reassurance…. In both cases, enemy images changed.

The fifth mechanism is that a party's motivation to end a conflict will often be noted by third parties, who become more optimistic about resolving the conflict and, hence, take initiatives to bring the parties together. If the other side is likewise so motivated, the third parties are likely to coordinate a series of conciliatory gestures or arrange for an exchange of messages through a chain of intermediaries. Such efforts should enhance optimism on both sides, leading eventually to full-scale negotiations. This process is what happened during the late 1980s and early 1990s in Northern Ireland. Noting some readiness to adopt a new strategy on the part of the IRA/Sinn Fein leadership, John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), a moderate nationalist political party, and Father Alec Reid of the Roman Catholic Church arranged for reciprocal conciliatory statements to be made by both sides (Mallie and McKittrick, 1996) and transmitted conciliatory messages to the British government, which reciprocated in kind (Moloney, 2002; Pruitt and Kim, 2004).

In summary, I have described five mechanisms that begin to operate when the motivation to end a conflict develops. Those mechanisms encourage optimism about the success of negotiation and produce a rethinking of enemy images and hostile feelings that might otherwise cause highly escalated conflicts to persist indefinitely (Pruitt and Kim, 2004; Pruitt and Olczak, 1995). Thus, as is often the case, strong motivation trumps perceptions and feelings that would otherwise have a chokehold on behavior. All five mechanisms have the potential to start a benevolent circle that leads to negotiation

and to an exchange of concessions once negotiation gets started. Optimism also develops in other ways, such as through direct contact with people from the other side, as happens in problem solving workshops. But the motivation to end conflict is an important source of this perception.

Adding Political Process to the Theory

A persistent criticism of ripeness theory is that it lacks a political dimension (Haass, 1990; Hancock, 2001; Stedman, 1991). The theory is almost entirely focused on leader decision making, which is a useful way station. But to become really powerful, the theory needs to incorporate the internal political processes that influence—and often override or substitute for—leader decision making. This amendment is especially important when decision making is decentralized or when there are sharp differences of outlook among people who can influence the course of the conflict.

Readiness theory allows us to analyze those political processes by looking at the readiness for negotiation of the various factions that make up a polity rather than looking only at leader readiness. This requires that we first do a political spectrum analysis and then erect on it a central coalition model.

The Political Spectrum

Figure 1 shows a political spectrum consisting of the politically active members of two groups that are in conflict. One group is represented on the left of this spectrum and the other on the right. Each group is divided into three somewhat arbitrary subsections. Hawks are at either end of the spectrum, doves are on both sides of the midpoint, and moderates are between the hawks and doves.

Hawks are assumed to differ from moderates and especially from doves in many ways. They have more extreme goals, feel the issues in the conflict

Figure 1. Political spectrum running from Party I's hawks to Party II's hawks.
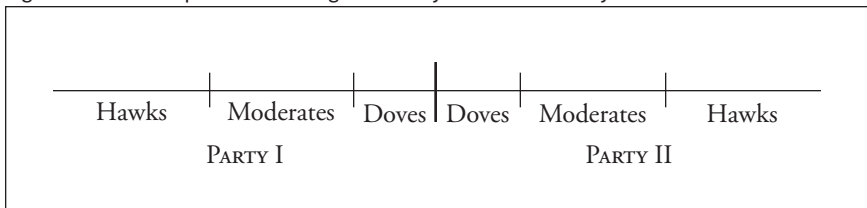
more deeply, and are less willing to make concessions. They are also more alienated from the other side and are more likely to take risks to achieve their goals. Hawks are often well organized and may be well armed, making them more powerful within their own party than their numbers would otherwise allow. The Israeli right wing (including many of the settlers) and the Palestinian Hamas are good examples of these hawkish extremes. A member of the Israeli right wing assassinated the dovish Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin; and dovish Palestinians tread lightly for fear of civil war with Hamas.

There is a profound social distance between the hawks on either side of a conflict. They have sharply contrasting values and narratives and often are unwilling to meet each other. By contrast, doves on either side share some perspectives and may be in contact with each other in an effort to understand the nature of the conflict and to move it in a peaceful direction.

The number of people who can be classified into each subgroup—and, hence, the location of the boundaries between the subgroups—differs from era to era. Thus, immediately after the Oslo talks, there were many more doves on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than there are today, because optimism about a peaceful settlement of the conflict was much greater then.

If they are militant and armed, hawks often use violence against the other side. If their numbers are small and they lack access to instruments of the state, this violence will usually take the form of terrorism, as in the activities of the IRA in Northern Ireland and Hamas in Israel and the Israeli settlements. A cycle of violence (conflict spiral) will then ensue, as the other side retaliates against those activities and as the terrorists strike again in retaliation against the retaliation. This dynamic commonly pushes ever larger numbers of moderates into the ranks of the hawks on both sides. Such a cycle has been going on between the Israelis and Palestinians since the year 2000, and the population of hawks on either side has become uncomfortably large.

A readiness analysis needs to be done separately for each segment of the political spectrum.[17] Readiness for negotiation is always greatest for the doves and smallest for the hawks, This is partly because hawks tend to have a singularity of purpose that makes them more immune to high costs and risks. To hawks, loss of home, family support, and even their own lives may

be less important than the success of their cause. Furthermore, hawks are likely to be less optimistic about the success of negotiation because of the extremity of their demands and their lack of trust in the other side. Hence, they usually oppose negotiation and often act as spoilers to destroy a negotiated agreement if one is reached (Stedman, 2000).

Nevertheless, hawks do at times develop a readiness for negotiation and become involved in talks that create an agreement they find acceptable. Extremists are like everybody else in their response to perceived infeasibility. If they conclude that their strategy is not working, they look in other direction, which is what happened to the PLO in the early 1990s, when they lost their most important allies and the bulk of their funding and when they came face to face with a potent political challenge from Hamas. They needed Israel to bail them out, which led to negotiation.

Political pressure from allies and moderates can also encourage extremists to embrace negotiation. For example, Egyptian and Jordanian pressure on Palestinian militants contributed to the brief Middle East cease-fire in the spring of 2003 (Kifner, 2003).

Moderates prefer not to put pressure on extremists, because it endangers group unity and can lead to assassination of moderate leaders or even to civil war. But they will apply pressure if the conflict becomes sufficiently counterproductive and/or if negotiation looks sufficiently hopeful.

Pressure from moderates is particularly effective if hawks need support from moderates. An example is what apparently happened to IRA/Sinn Fein after the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. When voters and other supporters started to desert them, they began to search in earnest for a common front with more moderate nationalist groups (Mallie and McKittrick, 1996). Having an intelligent and perceptive leader in Gerry Adams, who was able to look far into the future, also helped IRA/Sinn Fein overcome the normal impediments to seeing that their cause was in danger.

History suggests that terrorists who have the support of more moderate groups around them are extremely hard to defeat by military means. The British tried for years to destroy the IRA and finally turned to tactics that made enough concessions to the moderates to draw off a substantial amount of the IRA's political support. This tactic may well be the method of choice for defeating terrorists, because it forces them to seek moderate support and

thus become part of the normal political process. Lyons (2002) has argued that internal war cannot be permanently solved unless the latter transition takes place.

The Central Coalition

Political spectrum analysis affords a useful base for building a political model of ripeness. A conflict is ripe for resolution to the extent that there is a broad central coalition of people who are ready for negotiation across the political spectrum. The better organized or armed the extremists are on either side, the broader must be the coalition on that side, so as to incorporate or neutralize the extremists and thus prevent them from spoiling the negotiation or the agreement.

Figure 2 shows what is meant by a central coalition. The horizontal axis in this graph is the political spectrum that was shown in Figure 1. The vertical axis is the level of readiness experienced by members of the spectrum. As mentioned earlier, readiness is greatest among the doves and least among the hawks. Point X on the vertical axis can be thought of as a threshold above

Figure 2A. Central coalition: A broad central coalition, with a high probability of negotiation and agreement.
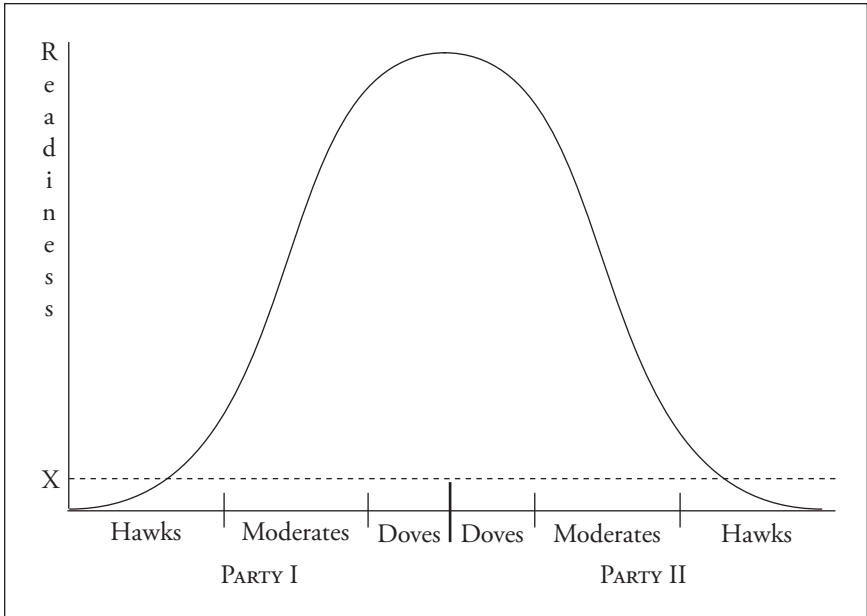
which readiness is sufficient to produce some form of political expression. All of the people above that threshold can be thought of as members of the central coalition. Figure 2A shows a highly ripe situation. The central coalition is quite broad, encompassing large numbers of people on both sides of the conflict. With a coalition this large, negotiation becomes quite likely; and if the coalition persists, a lasting agreement is likely to be reached. Figure 2B shows a much narrower central coalition, with a much-diminished level of ripeness. There are fewer doves, and only the doves are above threshold, many of them barely so. The ranks of the hawks, whose readiness for negotiation is close to zero, has become much larger, and most moderates do not feel a need to end the conflict or to start negotiation.

The central coalition model can be applied to the Middle East conflict, with Israel as Party I and the Palestinians as Party II. Before the Oslo talks, the central coalition was intermediate between that shown in Figures 2A and 2B, but it was possible to start negotiation and conclude an agreement because the leaders on both sides were part of the central coalition. Besides, the negotiation was kept secret from most hawks and moderates. The Oslo

Figure 2B. Central coalition: A narrow central coalition, with little chance of negotiation or agreement.
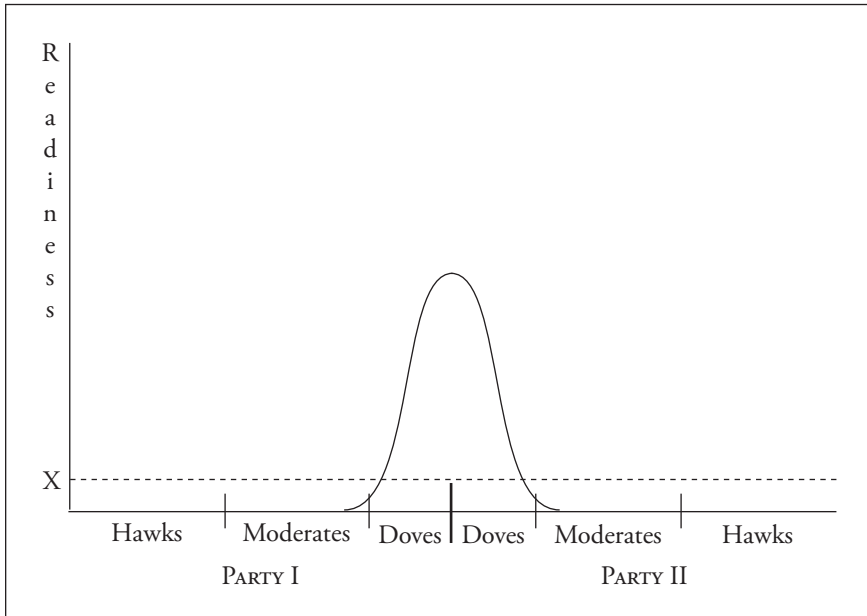
accords, once revealed, had enough promise to be popular on both sides, and there was broad support for further negotiations about the details of those accords. The situation approximated that of Figure 2A, with doves and moderates sufficiently enthusiastic about the peace process that hawks kept relatively quiet for a while.

Figure 2B might represent the period between 2000 and 2004 in which support for negotiation all but disappeared. Why did this happened? Both sides were hurting even more than before and the risks were greater, which should have encourage readiness for negotiation. However, negotiation did not materialize. Several possible reasons for this can be put forward:

1. As mentioned earlier, the original motivation to end conflict eroded on both sides as the PLO solved its financial and political problems and as Israel moved farther away from the trauma of the First Intifada and Rabin's campaign promise to make peace with the Palestinians. Furthermore, Israel became more confident of U.S. support in any conflict with the Palestinians.

2. The central coalition was not broad enough to prevent extremists on both sides from resuming their aggressive behavior. Israelis moved ahead with the settlements, and Palestinians launched occasional terrorists attack. Those actions eroded optimism on both sides and caused the central coalition to become still narrower.

3. The final status issues to which the negotiation turned in 2000 (the final boundaries, the future of the settlements, the status of Jerusalem, and the right of return) were harder to solve than those confronted at Oslo, because the parties were much farther apart in their preferences. This situation further eroded optimism about negotiation, especially among the Palestinians, whose unrealistic expectations had not been challenged by their leaders.

4. Palestinians launched the Second Intifada, which at first involved mild attacks by unarmed young people but eventually led to lethal terrorist tactics. Israel responded by shooting demonstrators, reoccupying much of the West Bank, sending military raids into Gaza, and severely curtailing the movement of Palestinians. The result was conflict spiral in which each side aggressed against the other in response to the other's recent aggression.

5. The result was profound pessimism about further negotiation. Neither side trusted the other to engage in honest negotiation or to stick to an agreement, and there seemed to be no way to restart serious talks.

Paul Arthur (1999) applies a variant of the central coalition model to the two most prominent peace processes of recent years: those in Northern Ireland and in South Africa. Citing work by Guelte, he uses the terms "negotiating middle" and "strong center" where I use the term "central coalition," describing this entity as "an alliance focused around the mutual recognition that settlement must be achieved come what may" (p. 484).

Arthur argues that Northern Ireland lacked a strong central coalition in the 1970s and 1980s. Hence, efforts to settle the troubles were constantly being overwhelmed by actions from the extremes. However, this situation changed in 1988 when conversations began between Gerry Adams of IRA/Sinn Fein and John Hume of SDLP, the moderate nationalist political party.[17] Eventually, a broad central coalition emerged, which is shown in Figure 3. This coalition embraced three major Northern Ireland players—IRA/Sinn Fein,

Figure 3. Central coalition at the time of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland. (Note: The coalition did not include the Democratic Unionist Party at the far right of the spectrum.)
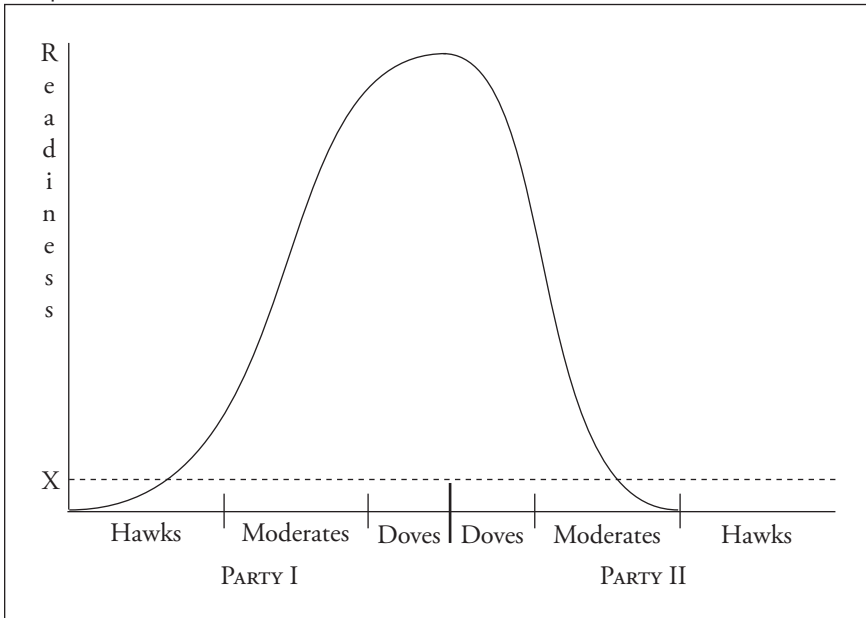
SDLP, and the Ulster Unionist Party (a moderate unionist party) plus three extraterritorial players—the governments of the Irish Republic and Britain and a highly placed group of Irish-Americans who sought and received help from President Bill Clinton.[18] This coalition was broad enough on the nationalist side to isolate and defeat armed holdout remnants of the IRA. A much larger group of unarmed extremists remained outside the coalition on the unionist side—principally the Democratic Unionist Party, led by Ian Paisley—but they were in a minority among unionists, preventing them from blocking the Good Friday Agreement, which emerged from negotiations between members of the central coalition.[19]

With regard to South Africa, Arthur argues that Mandela and de Klerk were able to forge a central coalition in 1992 that was strong enough and broad enough to defeat more extreme elements politically.

Central coalitions tend to be fragile, especially when first organized. Speaking only of coalitions between doves, Kelman (1993) argues, on the basis of his experience with problem solving workshops, that "a coalition across the conflict line will always be … uneasy" (p. 241). Members of these coalitions belong to their own communities. Hence they have differing perspectives, may use language that alienates people on the other side, tend to distrust each other, and experience a threat to their own self-image and their credibility at home if they become too close to doves on the other side. If coalitions of doves are fragile, how much more fragile must be the larger coalitions that are usually needed to achieve a lasting agreement. The glue of trust is thin indeed when hawks or moderates view their counterparts across a recent battleground. And the result may be worse than useless if this glue comes undone and the central coalition falls apart, because misplaced trust makes people doubly vigilant for deception in the future.

Nevertheless, the success of several peace processes in recent years shows that broad central coalitions can be built and maintained over a period of time. Leadership is clearly a crucial element of this enterprise. If a political or community leader supports negotiation, the central coalition will be larger on the leader's side, especially if he or she is popular and has a reputation as a patriot who can be trusted not to compromise the interests of the group (Aggestam and Jonsson, 1997). In addition, the closer to the hawkish extreme such a leader stands, the more people that leader will bring into the central coalition. Thus, the moderate Kennedy could probably not have restored relations between the United States and China because of difficulty

persuading the hawks that the restoration was a good idea, but the hawkish Nixon had the credentials to do so. Mandela may be the very best example of a highly popular and trusted leader with sufficient hawkish credentials to bring most members of his group into the central coalition. Paradoxically, his many years of imprisonment by white South Africans made him an ideal ally for white South Africa when the central coalition was formed.

Third parties are equally important in the construction of a broad central coalition. Tireless efforts by intermediaries such as John Hume and Father Alec Reid in Northern Ireland are often necessary to bring top leaders into the coalition.[20] And people who promote reconciliation at lower levels of society can provide those leaders with the support they need to move in this direction.[21] Third-party responsibilities by no means end at the point where an agreement is reached, because compliance with the terms of an agreement usually requires maintenance of the central coalition.

Central coalition theory is still quite underdeveloped, relying more on dramatic case studies than on carefully constructed theory and research. But this theory seems promising as a way to add a political dimension to ripeness theory.

Conclusions

Ripeness theory has been almost entirely the province of international relations theorists, and my paper retains the same focus in virtually all of its examples. However, this theory (and, hence, its restatement in the form of readiness theory) is potentially useful for understanding the resolution of all forms of conflict.

By restating ripeness theory in terms of variables that pertain to individual actors, readiness theory fits more historical cases than does the original theory. It also becomes more heuristic, in part because it allows use of a compensatory model and in part because it can be extended to make predictions about more outcomes, including concession making, agreement, compliance, and third-party intervention. However, there is a price to giving the theory so much flexibility: it becomes less parsimonious. The original core theory asserted that the conjunction of just two conditions—mutual hurting stalemate and perceived way out—is necessary (though not sufficient) for conflict to move into negotiation. The revised theory has many more moving parts—perception that the conflict is not being won, perceived cost

of the conflict, perceived risk of continuing the conflict, third-party pressure, working trust, central coalition building, and the like—and, hence, lacks the pristine simplicity of the original.

I believe that this reduced parsimony is not a serious problem. The history of most scientific fields involves a movement toward greater complexity as more is learned about the subject under study. Furthermore, theory building often entails tradeoffs; and a theory that accounts for more phenomena and is more heuristic is preferable to one that is more parsimonious.

None of what is written in this paper is intended to denigrate the important contribution made by the original theory, which has inspired many policy makers and scientists, including me. The aim of my proposed revision is not to go off in a new direction but to make further progress in the original direction.

Readiness theory shares two limitations with ripeness theory: it focuses on two-party conflicts despite the increasing prevalence of conflicts involving multiple players, and it is a lot better at explaining past peace processes than at predicting the timing or character of future events. These limitations are significant but are not atypical in the early stages of theory building. Clearly, there is much more room for development in this theoretical tradition.

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Notes

1. Zartman based his theory on several historical peace processes. Most ripeness theorists accept his core theory while adding one or another amendment. Three ripeness theorists have gone in other directions that will not be discussed in this paper: Coleman (1997), Druckman and Green (1995), and Haass (1990).

2. These notions are related to the three stages of conflict escalation postulated by Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (1999). In the first stage, the parties retain positive relations with each other, and violence is low or nonexistent. In the second stage, violence has escalated and produced a security dilemma and resistant reactions. In the third stage, a hurting stalemate has arrived. The authors postulate that mediation will be more successful in the first and third stages than in the second.

3. The IRA and Sinn Fein will usually be called by the single name "IRA/Sinn Fein" in this paper, because of their overlapping leadership.

4. Ripeness theory has been criticized as tautological, that is, self-evident (Aggestam, 1995; Kleiboer, 1994). This criticism is surely not the accurate for the recent additions just described, which yield many testable propositions. And even core ripeness theory can withstand this criticism, because it contrasts sharply with reconciliation theory, which argues variously that conflict moves toward resolution as a result of contact and communication (Hewstone and Cairns, 2001); superordinate goals (Sherif et al., 1961; Sherif and Sherif, 1969); problem-solving workshops and other forms of interactive conflict resolution (Fisher, 1997; Gopin, 2002; Kelman, 2002; Lederach, 1997; Rouhana, 2000; Saunders, 2000); or intervention by mediators (Kressel, Pruitt, and Associates, 1989; Rubin, 1981). The Mooradian and Druckman (1999) study showed that ripeness theory can be distinguished operationally from the mediation form of reconciliation theory. They found clear empirical evidence favoring ripeness theory, but their study can hardly be said to "prove" ripeness theory because it involved only one case, the Nagorno-Karabakh War.

5. Kriesberg (1987) uses the term "readiness" in the same sense when he says that "Ripeness must entail some readiness on the part of the primary adversaries to de-escalate their conflict with each other"(p. 376). Kleiboer (1994) uses the term "willingness" where I use "readiness."

6. Bert Spector (private communication) has pointed out that this formulation raises the issue of coordination in the development of readiness. It often occurs that as readiness for negotiation develops on one side (because it sees itself as in trouble), it disappears on the other side (because it sees itself as beginning to win). The theoretical challenge here is to specify the conditions under which readiness develops simultaneously on both sides. Neither ripeness theory nor readiness theory provides an adequate response to this challenge at present.

7. In a previous publication (Pruitt, 1997), I used the term "motivation to achieve de-escalation" where now I use the clearer term "motivation to end conflict." I also spoke of "motivational ripeness" when both parties are so motivated, but this term may not be needed.

8. This formulation avoids Stedman's (1991) criticism of ripeness theory that "hurting stalemate" fails to capture the "desperate crisis" faced by a party that perceives it is losing a war (p. 206).

9. This theme will be developed further in a later section.

10. I am talking here about genuine negotiation, in which the party tries in good faith to find an agreement, not sham negotiation, which the party enters to buy time or to make a good impression on a third party.

11. Ripeness theory's emphasis on perceived stalemate (i.e., the perceived infeasibility of winning) may be due to the fact that Zartman and other theorists in this area have mainly studied severely escalated conflicts.

12. Indirect evidence for hypothesis (b) can be seen in Druckman's (2001) finding that turning points in the direction of agreement are usually produced by external events (e.g., leadership changes, third-party interventions) in security negotiations and by internal events (e.g., procedural changes, new ideas) in political and trade negotiations. External events are presumably more motivating than internal events and, hence, more likely to erode the rigid stances than are ordinarily taken in security negotiations.

13. Readiness theory does not help us understand the Norwegians' motivation for intervening. Watkins and Lundberg (1998) argue that this motivation sprang from "a generous long-term effort to promote peace, democracy, and the development of human rights in the Middle East" (p. 129) rather than from costs or risks produced by the conflict.

14. This approach is implied in Zartman's (2000) definition of a hurting stalemate as a situation in which both sides realize they are in a costly deadlock that cannot be escaped by escalating the conflict.

15. Moloney (2002) cites as an example that the Irish Republic insisted that the IRA/Sinn Fein drop its demand for a socialist state as a quid pro quo for its help.

16. Based on ideas presented by Arie M. Kocowicz at a WIN meeting at the School for Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, on June 27, 2003.

17. Arthur attributes these conversations to Hume's initiatives, but there is reason to believe that they were also actively sought by Adams in response to the growing political isolation of IRA/Sinn Fein.

18. The extraterritorial players can be thought of as doves in the middle of the political spectrum, who (along with internal doves like Hume) were in active contact with one or both sides over a period of years, thereby helping to build a central coalition and to locate a political solution.

19. In recent days, this central coalition has become somewhat frayed as a result of defections on the unionist side. The cease-fire holds, but the Northern Ireland provincial government that was put in place by the Good Friday Agreement is no longer in operation, and the province is again administered from London. At present, the fate of this carefully constructed central coalition is somewhat in doubt.

20. Third parties often work in pairs, with the intermediary who is working with one side talking at times to the intermediary who is working with the other side (Watkins and Lundberg, 1998). The resulting structure takes the form of a communication chain (Pruitt, 1994, 2003, in press). When there are multiple groups to bring on board, more than two mediators are often needed (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, 1999).

21. Fitzduff (2002) describes thousands of reconciliatory initiatives that were taken at the institutional and individual levels of Northern Ireland society in the years leading up to the Good Friday Agreement.

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