Preface

The editor's need for structure once led him to divide up the world into the "good guys" and the "bad guys" regarding the study of conflict. The good guys tend to view man as inherently good, and their explanations of conflict take on a Marxist perspective: conflict results from structural inequalities and institutional constraints on individual freedom; remove such frustrating conditions as inequality of property, for example, and one is able to eliminate conflict.

The bad guys tend to view man himself as inherently bad, and their explanations of conflict take on a Dostoevskian perspective: conflict results from man's tendency to imitate the actors in the Original Sin drama; conflict does not result from structural conditions in society but from an individual's tendency to maximize his value until he confronts other maximizers. Remove frustrating conditions such as the other value maximizers, and man will simply take even greater advantage of the situation than before.

Where condemnation and elimination of unjust institutions is an effective strategy for conflict resolution to the Marxist, it is different for the Dostoevskian. That is, acknowledgement of guilt by an individual and consequent punishment constitute effective strategies of conflict resolution for the latter. Present-day manifestations of the Marxist and Dostoevskian approaches are in the liberal and conservative approaches to law and order. Liberals often suggest that the elimination of unjust practices, such as inequality of opportunities, should lead to a peaceful resolution of conflicts. Conservatives, on the other hand, assert that the elimination of injustice frequently whets the appetites of formerly

oppressed groups, who then initiate new demands, which may lead to higher levels of confrontation later.

The Marxist and Dostoevskian approaches also manifest themselves in the scholarly disciplines trying to discover knowledge about social conflict. Those scholars who view conflict as harmful (the good guys) seek its causes; often in order to eliminate it. Those scientists who see conflict as beneficial (the bad guys) explore its effects, frequently in order to maximize these consequences of conflict. Social scientists such as psychologists and sociologists once generally fell into the "explain conflict to reduce it" camp, while economists and *some* political scientists were in the "acknowledge conflict to use it" category. With the increased militance of the 1960s, however, there has evolved a convergence among many students of conflict, irrespective of discipline. Presently, there is a greater awareness in both camps as to the need to synthesize elements from each for an overall understanding of conflict processes.

The current volume reflects the goal of a synthesis of approaches for a more general explanation of conflict processes than before. In addition, such general knowledge should be of relevance to both managers and strategists—i.e., those who desire to manage conflict and those for whom conflict is a means to their ends. The six essays in this volume taken together approximate a synthesis of approaches. The generally formal, mathematical style allows one to see the cross-cutting elements of synthesis in the essays more readily than would be the case in ordinary verbal representations.

The essay by Gregory Markus and Raymond Tanter presents a conflict model that explicitly synthesizes complementary approaches. The Markus-Tanter paper describes a formal decision model which gives some but not principal attention to the limitations of rational action. Closely linked to this work is the piece by Clinton Fink, which provides a formal explication of violence-prevention strategies implied by a utility maximization model of conflict. Joseph Firestone's essay explicates a phase model of riot processes. As in the Markus-Tanter and Fink papers, Firestone asserts that an examination of both social-psychological and strategic motives are necessary to understand conflict interaction. The Firestone work adds a new dimension to the issue, in that he discusses the interplay of psychological and strategic motives as a riot progresses through different phases.

The paper by Clifford Anderson and Betty Nesvold goes beyond the earlier pieces in explicating a relevant psychological mechanism: operant learning. In addition, Anderson and Nesvold combine a learning and a utility approach to generate propositions for use in explaining turmoil

within nations. They then employ a longitudinal design to evaluate their hypotheses. Drawing on a similar data base, Ivo and Rosalind Feierabend develop some of the points raised in the other essays. Employing a longitudinal design, the Feierabends examine governmental coercion in an effort to assess its impact on social change, an issue of considerable interest to conflict strategists and managers.

Finally, Charles Wolf, Jr., provides an important reminder that *political* constraints may impose limits on a strategic model. That is, it is often necessary to use limited means to achieve one's objectives. If unarticulated, such limits may result in a combatant not being able to anticipate that failure is preferable to victory achieved at excessive costs. Thus, the formal models addressed in the other essays may need to take into account political as well as psychological and sociological considerations in a synthesis for a full explanation of conflict processes.

The relevance of the following essays does not depend upon whether one is a strategist or a manager. If the tentative knowledge presented here is valid, moreover, this volume could make a contribution to conflict resolution or its use in goal achievement. That is, the issue may help answer the question posed in the title: why fight?

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