

The geography of conflict: introduction

J. DAVID SINGER

University of Michigan

In the three years since this *Journal* first appeared, conflict has been examined at a number of levels: intrapersonal, small-group, labor-management, interindustry, interracial, and international. And, with a few exceptions (7, 8), such conflict has been approached primarily from a behavioral¹ point of view, with the emphasis on personality, attitude and ideology, and communication. It is not that the social or institutional environment has been ignored; this aspect of the ecology of conflict has received more than adequate attention. But what *has* received relatively little attention has been the physical environment. The total result of such an emphasis might well be to convey an implication of individual or group autonomy—the notion that the only variables exercising any appreciable impact on the behavior of the actors are the internal characteristics, the external behavior, and the social setting of the individuals and groups involved.

Aware of the limitations of such an approach, and its incompleteness as a framework for the study of social conflict, the editors decided to devote a special issue to the role of geography² in the generation and resolution of intergroup conflict. The

purpose here is to examine and emphasize those variables which are only partially, if at all, subject to human modification. Such environmental dimensions as climate, topography, land-sea configurations, and distribution of flora, fauna, and mineral resources impose considerable limitations on man's total autonomy. He may accept such limitations fatalistically, he may attempt to adapt to them, or he may seek to modify or rearrange these natural phenomena in order to broaden his range of alternative responses to the environment. But, in each case, the individual or the group is by no means completely the master of his destiny—there are certain "givens" to which man must adjust one way or another.

In an effort to illustrate the nature and significance of the environment as an independent variable in social conflict, we have sought a broader range of papers than one might ordinarily expect to find in a special issue devoted to some single topic. The four articles in Part I are all attempts to locate and identify the place of geographical considerations in the study of social conflict and the role of geography vis-à-vis the other disciplines involved in such research. The Koch, North, and Zinnes paper first offers a general model of goal conflict among na-

¹ The word "behavioral" is not used here in the restricted sense in which Duncan and Schnore (3) use it but rather in the broader sense, merely implying unconcern with physical and geographical variables.

² What we subsume under the rubric of "geography" is never altogether clear, but the papers by Kristof and Hartshorne should help dispel some of the ambiguity.

tions and concludes with a scheme by which geographical dimensions of such conflict might be systematically analyzed. The next two papers represent an effort to ascertain the relationship between politics and geography. The Kristof article provides us with a comprehensive analysis of the development of geopolitics (5), concluding with some pertinent observations as to its dangers and limitations. The Hartshorne contribution, in a somewhat similar vein, seeks to explore the place of political geography in the social sciences and offers us a broad survey of contemporary thinking on the state of the discipline. This section concludes with Konigsberg's summary and critique of the literature, classical and contemporary, on the role of climate in society.

The papers in Part II represent an effort to examine the man-milieu relationship³ in two distinct geographical and social settings. Murphey's is macroscopic in approach, dealing with the entire range of economic problems facing the populations of South Asia. Here the focus is upon national aggregates, seeking rapid social change via technological innovation, and confronted with a stubborn array of formidable geographical limitations. On the other hand, Jones reports on a pair of limited populations in urban and rural Ireland; he examines the ways in which religious differentiation and attempts to formalize that differentiation via territorial redistribution have interacted to both generate and mediate Protestant-Catholic conflict.⁴

³ This expressive phrase is borrowed from the title of one of the most valuable theoretical approaches to political geography yet published: Harold and Margaret Sprout's *Man-Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics* (9).

⁴ This paper is reminiscent of Walter Firey's excellent study of thirteen years ago (4).

Then, in Part III, we have three papers which seek to relate certain geographical variables to international conflict. Here the emphasis is upon the physical components of national power and the fashion in which that power base, in turn, influences and limits the goals and strategies of the national state. In the paper by Dunn, we find a critical analysis of the policies by which the United States has sought to acquire the raw materials upon which that state's military power is heavily dependent.⁵ The following study by Magathan illustrates the intricate fashion in which West German military organization is affected by such environmental factors as population age and skill distributions, technological levels, political divisions, and the strategic location of the state in contemporary international politics.⁶ Next, German offers us a tentative and flexible formula by which national physical power may be continuously assessed, concluding with a contemporary ranking based on this formula.

The final part of this issue is, appropriately, devoted to the Sprouts' paper on the geographical aspects of international politics in today's rapidly changing world. In it, we are reminded of the tremendous significance of the phenomenology of political geography; the impact of environment may be great, but the way in which that environment ultimately affects international politics is primarily a result of the way in which statesmen and publics perceive, evaluate, and respond to the physical world.

The message, while not trumpeted, is clear. The man-milieu combination has

⁵ As to whether or not there is even any relevance in the acquisition of such potential-oriented acquisition see Brodie (1) and Knorr (6).

⁶ For a fascinating study of the historical background provided by German geopolitics see Andrew Gyorgy's World War II study (5).

made a shambles of those natural barriers which once offered safety to advantageously located states; the bulwarks of ocean, mountain, jungle, and desert have been vitiated by military technology, and, as in the past, the weaponry of defense has lagged behind the weaponry of attack. Today the lag is so great that strategies of defense have been corrupted into strategies of reprisal. No longer is the plan one of repulsing the aggressor but one of retaliating against him with a destructiveness even greater than that initiated. The changes which man has wrought in his environment and the implications of such modification strongly suggest that the territorial state as an instrument of physical security is as obsolete as the medieval castle. The crucial question is whether, having wrestled successfully with his environment, man will now demonstrate his ability to readapt his political institutions to the new geography in such a fashion as to make survival possible. The probability is low, but the peace-oriented social scientist cannot flinch from this formidable task. There is too much at stake.

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