

Conflict, Power and Relative Deprivation- Lit Review

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| <p>During recent decades, power and differences in power resources between parties have often been neglected in the study of conflict (1 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>According to this theoretical approach, conflicts like revolutions and collective violence are primarily responses to an intolerable gap between normative expectations and actual achievements created by cumulated experiences of hardship in a collectivity, i.e. as a result of an increase in relative deprivation (4 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>Its critics have proposed power resources, the mobilization of power resources, and the struggle for power as the central features in an alternative approach to conflict theory and in explanations of conflicts like revolutions and collective violence (5 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>I am in basic agreement with the proponents of the political process model of conflict on the primacy of power resources and the mobilization of power resources in the explanation of conflicts like collective violence and revolutions (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>The purpose of the present paper is to develop a model of conflict which incorporates the central concepts from both the expectation achievement approach and the political process approach (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> |
| <p>In a review of twelve years of conflict research, Converse observes “that power frequently is handled as a factor to be dropped out by assuming that two conflicting parties are roughly equal in “power” (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>This expectation achievement approach to conflict theory is obviously insufficient to the extent that it puts exclusive emphasis on the motivation or wish for improvement among the potential participants as the central factor in conflict and overlooks the actual possibilities for achieving the desired change, the latter being determined</p> | <p>In this alternative political process approach, manifest conflicts like collective violence or revolutions are seen as closely related to and produced by the central political process, in which a collectivity within a population makes claims for certain privileges and this claim is resisted by another</p> | <p>Yet, it seems worthwhile to analyze the role of relative deprivation in the development of conflict (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>The difference in power resources between parties is used as the central independent variable (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> |

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| | <p>primarily by the differences in power resources between the parties concerned (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>collectivity (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | | |
| <p>Instead, explanations of conflict in terms of motivation, ie., in terms of the subjective states and desires of the parties in conflict, have gained considerable vogue among social scientists (3 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>In many situations where the desire for change in a collectivity increases with increasing relative deprivation or hardship, the actual possibilities for alleviating the situation may at the same time be decreasing as a result of the changing balance of power among the parties (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>The process of acquiring control over power resources is seen as a necessary condition for the capacity to contend for privileges (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>This is because any theory of conflict that focuses on mobilization of power resources will at least implicitly have to come to grips with motivational concepts like relative deprivation, since motivational factors are generally accorded a central place in theories of mobilization (7 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Their parties entering into exchange or conflict must, however, not be assumed to have equal access to power resources, an assumption which is often made in exchange analysis (15 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |
| <p>The conflict situations that are of central concern here are those which in one way or another relate to the struggle over how the surplus in society is to be distributed among different parties, ie. How goods and services which are not necessary</p> | <p>The expectation achievement approach to conflict has recently been attacked on theoretical as well as on empirical grounds (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569).</p> | <p>Conflicts are assumed to be most frequent in periods when parties acquire or lose control over power resources (Korpi, 1974, p. 1569-1570).</p> | <p>An analysis of the role of relative deprivation in the development of conflict can also help to clarify in what respects the expectation achievement approach to conflict is inadequate (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Instead the difference in power resources is used as the central independent variable in the present analysis (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |

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| <p>for keeping producers alive and productive are to be distributed in the society (8 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | | | | |
| <p>The basic view taken here is that conflicts of this type are essentially bargaining situations (9 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>For simplicity the analysis here is limited to conflict situations with only two parties (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570). This is of course a simplification since conflicts between two parties often are affected by third parties and other environmental factors (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>The proponents of the political process approach tend summarily to reject motivational concepts like relative deprivation in theories of conflicts as being theoretically unfruitful or empirically unsupported (6 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>More fruitful theories of conflict can be constructed if the notion of relative deprivation is incorporated into models of conflict, where differences in power resources and mobilization of power resources play the central role (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Power resources are the properties of an actor which provide the ability to reward or punish another factor (16 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |
| <p>In such bargaining situations the strategy of conflict adopted by the parties generally involves the use of rewards as well as of punishments over a period of time (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>The introduction of third parties would, however, bring up two so far unreconciled theoretical traditions in conflict theory (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Both short-term and long-term effects of changes in the balance of power between the parties need to be considered (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Utility of reaching deprivation are introduced as intervening variables to relate the effects from changes in the balance of power between the parties to the probability of manifest conflict between them (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Exchange between two actors can be characterized by a going rate of exchange according to which the transactions of the parties are executed (17 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |

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| <p>This implies that conflict should be analyzed as interaction over time (Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>According to the “crisscross” or “crosscutting cleavage” theories, introduction of a third party may decrease the probability of conflict (12 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Another contemporary theoretical tradition, “coalition theory” deals with the process by which three or more actors combine into two opposing camps in the conflict situation (13 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570).</p> | <p>Relative deprivation has been assumed to increase according to three basic patterns (Korpi, 1974, p. 1575):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decremental deprivation occurs in a situation where men’s expectations remain stable but where they receive less and less (usually the result of an increase in the difference in power resources between the actors • If men’s expectations rise while their achievements remain stable, aspirational deprivation is created • Progressive deprivation occurs when a relatively steady | <p>Each actor is also assumed to evaluate the outcomes (the going rate of exchange) in the relationship according to his normative expectations (level of aspiration), which indicates what outcomes in the relationship he evaluates positively and considers to be fair and just (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |

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| | | | <p>improvement in men's social economic conditions generates increasing expectations but is followed by a sharp reversal in the trend of improvement (38 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1575). Progressive deprivation thus generally occurs in situations where the difference in power resources between actors is decreasing. A decrease of this kind in a large difference in power resources is expected to increase the probability of conflict (Korpi, 1974, p. 1575).</p> | |

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| <p>The term conflict here refers to manifest conflict i.e. to interaction between parties with incompatible interests (10 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1570) which primarily entails punishments.</p> | <p>Since the outcomes in exchange relationships known to an actor through personal or vicarious experiences have resulted from the prevailing balance of power in these relationships, we can assume that through a process of learning the actors will also have their aspiration levels strongly influenced by the perceived difference in power resources between them (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> | | <p>A common cause of hardships experienced by many groups of society is probably that their command over power resources relative to that of other groups in society is slipping. In spite of their high motivation to achieve improvements and a high degree of relative deprivation, collectivities losing power are less likely to enter into conflict (Korpi, 1974, p. 1575).</p> | <p>If bargaining fails to bring the going rates close enough to the aspiration level of an actor, exchange may still take place, but the result might also be a termination of the relationship or a conflict (21 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> <p>In the latter case the use of punishments can be viewed as an attempt by one of the parties to change the going rate of exchange (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |
| <p>Viewing conflicts as a part of bargaining situations suggests the possibility of carrying out the analysis within the framework of an exchange approach and of utilizing some of the concepts from exchange theory (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> | <p>We can also assume that the stronger actor will use his power to “engineer consent” and to influence the weaker party to accept as legitimate the going rate of exchange in the relationship (23 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1571-1572).</p> | | <p>A rapid improvement in the power position of the weaker party will increase his level of relative deprivation more than a gradual improvement will; it will thus bring about some additional increase in his utility of reaching the goal and to some extent also in the probability of</p> | <p>As in the political process approach, conflict here becomes a natural byproduct of the bargaining processes and of attempts to alter exchange rates (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571).</p> |

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| | | | mobilization (Korpi, 1974, p. 1576). | |
| Conflict is thus the continuation of bargaining by other means (Korpi, 1974, p. 1571). | The equally important process by which a party acquires control over new resources or loses control over some of its resources, affects the difference in power resources or the balance of power between the actors concerned, i.e. the basic independent variable in the present model (Korpi, 1974, p. 1572). | | The basic proposition stated by Gurr (42) is that variation in relative deprivation strongly affects the potential for collective violence and thereby also the potential and magnitude of political violence (Korpi, 1974, p. 1576). | In order to facilitate the presentation and understanding of the power balance model discussed here, the variables assumed to affect the probability of mobilization of an actor's power resources are outline in Figure 1 (Korpi, 1974, p. 1572). |
| The balance of power model does, however, attempt to refine the political process model of conflict by specifying the mechanisms through which changes in the power balance between parties affect the probability of conflict between the parties (Korpi, 1974, p. 1572). | Let us further introduce a probabilistic element into the perception of the difference in power resources, but make the assumption that on the whole the actual difference in power resources tends to be correctly perceived by the parties (29 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1572). | | Davies's theory deals only with progressive deprivation and states that it is the decisive factor behind the outbreak of revolutions (Korpi, 1974, p. 1576). | As stated above, the basic independent variable here is the actual difference in power resources between the parties. We assume that before taking action, a rational actor will attempt to assess the difference in power resources between himself and his opponent (Korpi, 1974, p. 1572). |

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| <p>In a situation of potential conflict the anticipated costs of reaching the goal will to a large extent depend on how the other party is expected to react (Korpi, 1974, p. 1572-1573).</p> | <p>Hypothesis 2- We can thus assume a positive relationship between the difference in power resources an actor perceives between himself and his adversary and his expectancy of success (Korpi, 1974, p. 1572).</p> | | <p>Gurr's theoretical tenet that increases in relative deprivation will lead to increases in the probability of conflict, does not make a distinction between different types of relative deprivation. Apparently Gurr assumes that all three types of relative deprivation have roughly the same effects on the probability of conflict. In this respect his theory is inadequate (Korpi, 1974, p. 1576).</p> | <p>In several countries it has thus been observed that the frequency of strikes shows a cyclical variation, which tends to be positively related to the trade cycle and negatively to changes in the level of unemployment (50 as cited by Korpi, 1974, p. 1577).</p> |
| <p>For manifest conflict to occur, one of the parties has to initiate conflict through a punishing move against the other party, who has to retaliate (Korpi, 1974, p. 1574).</p> | <p>We have assumed that the probability of manifest conflict between the two parties depends on the probability that they both mobilize power resources at the same time (Korpi, 1974, p. 1574).</p> | | <p>Only increases in progressive deprivation will be associated with a strong increase in the probability of conflict (Korpi, 1974, p. 1576).</p> | |
| <p>The probability of manifest conflict is thus low when parties have</p> | <p>When the difference in power resources between the actors is</p> | | | |

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| <p>greatly unequal power resources but will normally increase when the difference in power resources begins to decrease (Korpi, 1974, p. 1574).</p> | <p>very large, the probability that the stronger party makes a punishing move against the weaker is high, as is the probability that the stronger party will defend himself against an attack from the weaker party (Korpi, 1974, p. 1574).</p> | | | |
| | <p>In contrast to the expectation achievement approach to conflict, the power balance model of conflict outlined here indicates that we can not expect a generally positive correlation between relative deprivation and conflict (Korpi, 1974, p. 1576).</p> | | | |
| | <p>In a situation where an already weaker party is losing power resources the probability for conflict is therefore normally expected to be lower than in a situation where the weaker party</p> | | | |

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| | is gaining power resources (Korpi, 1974, p. 1577). | | | |