CDSn4001: Conflict Analysis

Defining conflict

October 13, 2020
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Agenda

- What is conflict?

- What is *not* conflict?

- What is the relationship between conflict, violence, and peace?

What is a conflict?

- "a situation in which actors use conflict **behavior** against each other to attain **incompatible goals** and/or to express their **hostility**" (Bartos and Wehr 2002).

Incompatibility of goals

- Can evaluate in two ways:
  1) Ask: Is it logically impossible for both parties' goals to be achieved simultaneously?
  2) Use payoff matrices

Payoff matrices

	Conflict Parties	
	Husband	Wife
Goals		
Four children	−3	10
No children	4	−8

Payoff matrices

	Conflict Parties	
	Workers	Managers
Goals		
Wage: $20 per hour	7	−3
Wage: $10 per hour	−4	8
Solvency of the firm	2	5

Goals vs Interests

Goals: alternatives that have a positive payoff

Interests: all the outcomes from all possible alternatives that have positive payoffs

- Incompatible interests are negatively correlated (i.e., when the party's payoff for an outcome is high, the opponent's payoff is low).

Payoff matrices: advantages

- Identify incompatibility
  - two goals are incompatible if one has a positive payoff only for the party and the other only for the opponent.
- Consider conflicts in which there are more than two alternatives.
- Allow for distinguishing between goals and interests.
- Determine the extent to which the goals are incompatible (e.g., zero-sum game).
- Determine whether an agreement is possible.
- Determine what agreement is "best" for both sides.
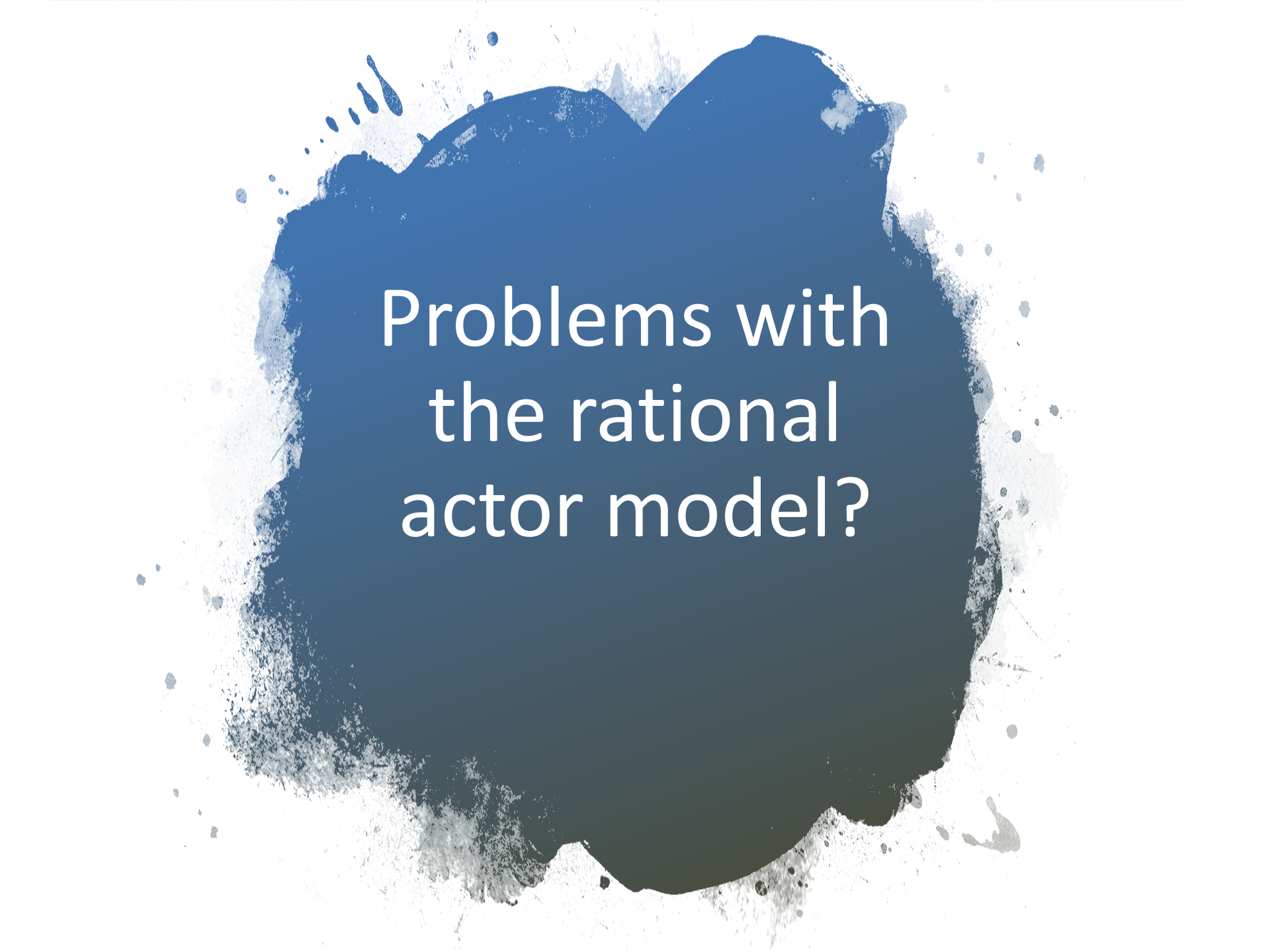
Payoff matrices: disadvantages?

Hostility

- "antagonism, opposition, or resistance in thought or principle"
- Rational vs irrational behaviour

Rationality

1) consider possible actions/determine possible alternatives;

2) consider the likely consequences of each action/determine outcomes linked to alternatives;

3) evaluate each set of consequences/assign payoffs;

4) choose the action with the most desirable consequences/choose the alternative with highest payoffs.

Rational choice theory in IR

- A methodological approach that explains individual and collective outcomes in terms of individual goal-seeking under constraints (e.g., technological, political social, etc.)
- Assumes that actors are purposive
- Unit of analysis: strategic interactions
- Pragmatic view of theory (i.e., there are multiple ways of approaching the same problem)
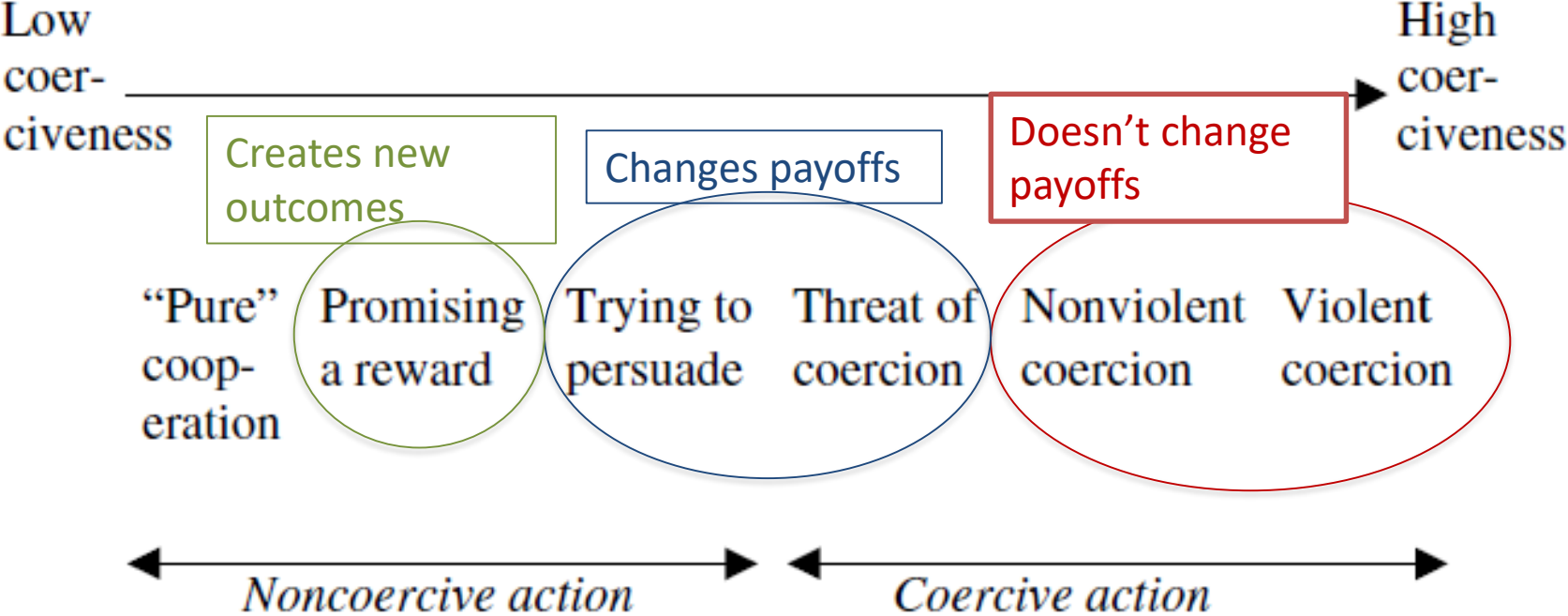- Uses simplification, generalization, formalization

Problems with the rational actor model?

Conflict action vs conflict behaviour

- *Conflict action*: parties guided by rational considerations
  - Intent generally clear, involves some element of planning
- *Conflict behavior*: parties are assumed to be rational or nonrational

Coerciveness of conflict action

Types of conflict

- **Structural** (i.e., conflict of interest)
  - Vertical relations – there is always conflict, because it is built into the structure; the periphery states are denied opportunity to pursue goals
- **Actor** (i.e., conflict of values)
  - Horizontal relations – conflict can come and go (actors are capable of formulating and pursuing goals)

Center S_1

Periphery S_2
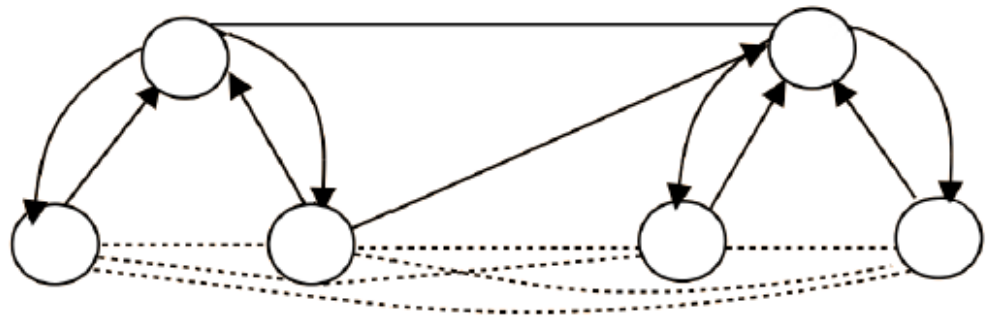
What is NOT conflict?

- Is competition a type of conflict? Bartos and Wehr argue that actors in competition seek what belongs to a third party rather than what belongs to an opponent. Therefore, competition is not conflict. Do you agree? Why (not)?

- Other: Pure cooperation? Equity? Peace?

What is violence?

- "the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is" (Galtung 1969)
  - when this is *avoidable*, violence is present
- Needs a subject, an object, and an action (or does it?)
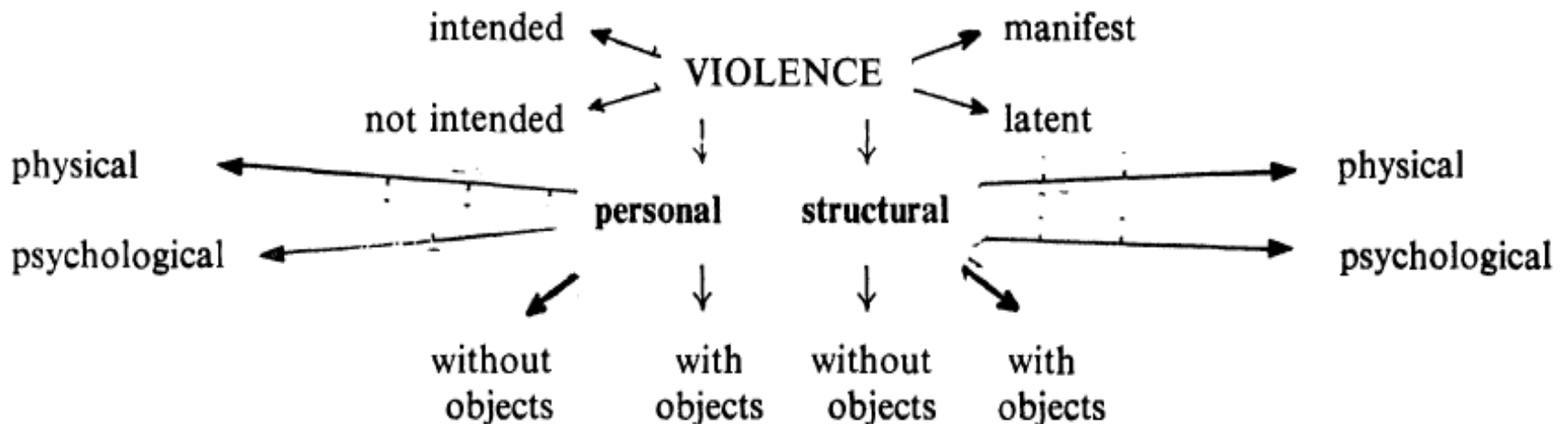
Peace

- absence of personal violence and absence
of structural violence - negative and positive peace
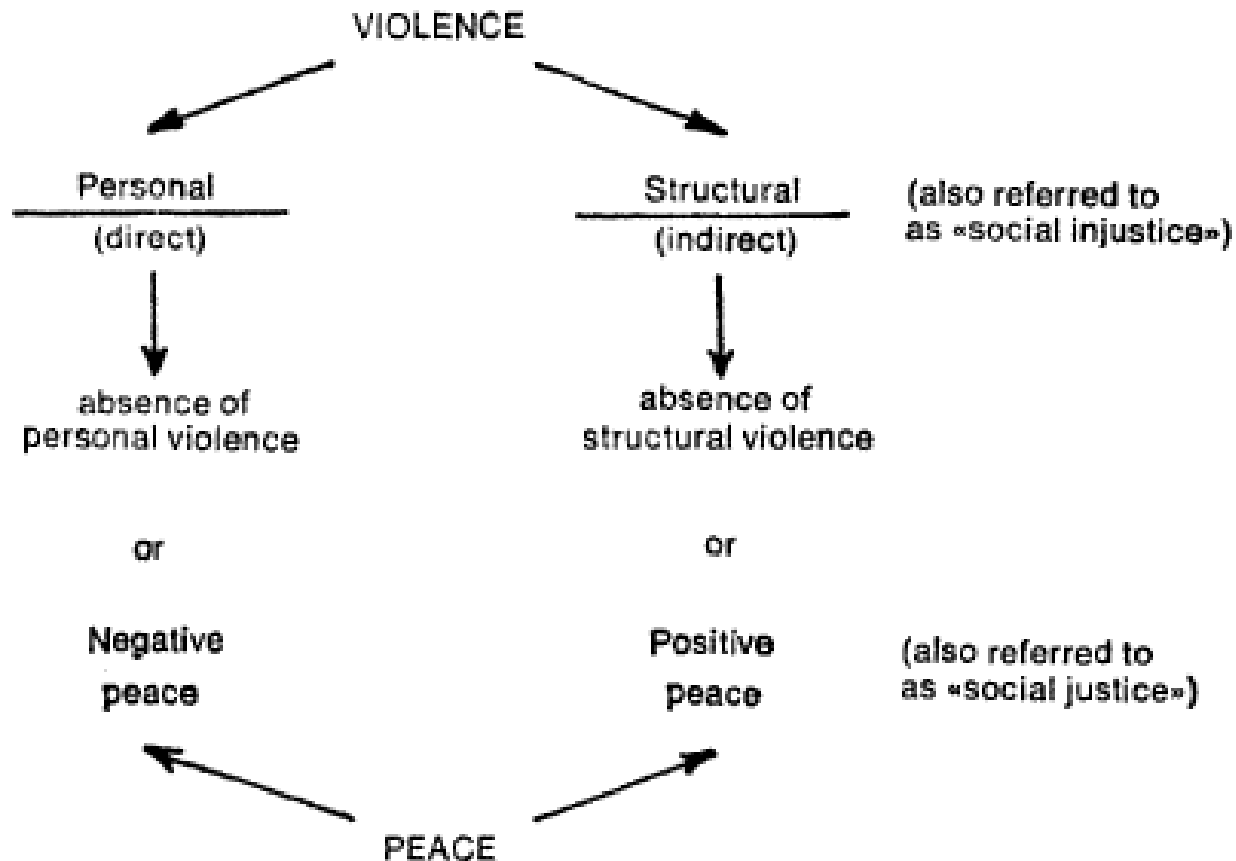
Some after-thoughts

- What is the relationship between conflict and violence in the study of conflict?

  - Is violence always conflict and conflict always violence?

- Does peace mean absence of threat?

- Can we apply the same concepts and/or metrics to the study of inter- vs intrastate violence?