

Case Studies and Conflict Resolution

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Political leaders have engaged in international conflict resolution for millennia, yet it is only relatively recently that scholars have developed explanatory and prescriptive theories about this important phenomenon. World War I generated some preliminary research, but it was Cold War fears and the 1962 Cuban missile crisis in particular that led to the emergence of an academic field of conflict resolution.¹ With the decline in the frequency of interstate war in the six decades since World War II, and with the sharp increase in civil war and “identity wars” between communal groups after the end of the Cold War,² the interdisciplinary study of conflict resolution has broadened from a primary focus on interstate conflict resolution to a concern with conflict resolution in intra-state and intra-group conflict.³

Scholars have approached the study of conflict resolution through a variety of methodologies, including interactive conflict resolution and simulations, large-n data analyses, formal modeling, and historical case studies. My focus here is on case study analysis,

which has been the subject of intensive methodological discussion and debate during the last decade in political science, sociology, and related disciplines. Indeed, scholars in the social sciences have increasingly come to see case study approaches as a genuine *methodology*, on par with statistical methodology, with standards and rules of inference that good work in the field is expected to satisfy. Thus, a brief review of the current state of the art in case study analysis will serve as a useful guide to conflict resolution theorists working in disciplinary settings that have become increasingly demanding in terms of methodological self-consciousness and sophistication.

Beyond a brief review of the literature on case study methodology, I have a second aim in this chapter: I look more specifically at the question of crisis management, both to illustrate the application of methodological principles and to suggest the kinds of substantive propositions that have emerged from the case study literature. I focus in particular on the two leading crises of the 20th

century, the July 1914 crisis and the Cuban missile crisis.

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Given the proliferation of scholarship on case study methodology (Brady and Collier, 2004; George and Bennett, 2005; Zartman, 2005; Goertz, 2006; Bennett and Elman, 2006; Gerring, 2007; Blatter and Blume, 2008), a complete review is not necessary here.⁴ I do not deal with the question of the definition of case study and case study method, other than to say that the increasing emphasis on theory has led to the widespread shift away from the definition of a case as a temporally and spatially bounded series of events, to the conception of a case as an *instance* of something else, of a theoretically defined class of events. George and Bennett (2005: 5, 17), building on (George, 1979), define a case as “an instance of a class of events,” and a case study as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events.” Thus, a standard question for any case study is “what is this a case of?”

The theoretical orientation of contemporary case study research leads to discussions of the various roles of case studies in theory development, and to case selection criteria that advance those theoretical aims. I focus on these issues in the next two sections.

Types of case studies

One can identify several types of case studies, and also a variety of ways of classifying them. Let me suggest the following classification, which is based on the theoretical purpose or function of case studies. It represents a combination of categories proposed by Lijphart (1971) and Eckstein (1975), which have been quite influential.⁵ These are ideal types, and in practice many case studies combine several of these aims

(1) *Atheoretical/idiographic* case studies are descriptive studies of individual cases that

aim to understand and interpret a single case as an end in itself rather than to develop broader theoretical generalizations. They are fundamentally inductive. The scholar does not use any specific hypotheses or theoretical framework to guide the study. Instead, she lets the facts “speak for themselves,” so that the interpretation emerges in a “bottom up” fashion from the case. The study may be guided by implicit theoretical preconceptions – as in fact all empirical studies are to one extent or another – but the point is that such preconceptions are implicit rather than implicit.

(2) *Theory-guided/idiographic* case studies also aim to explain and/or interpret a single case, but that interpretation is explicitly structured by a theory or well-developed conceptual framework that focuses attention on some theoretically specified aspects of reality and neglects others.⁶ This is analytic history rather than total history.

As the social sciences have shifted in a more theoretical direction in the last few decades, theory-guided explanations of individual cases – what Van Evera (1997) calls “case explaining” case studies – have replaced atheoretical explanations of individual cases. Even more common and more influential, however, are case studies that are explicitly designed to contribute to the construction and testing of theoretical generalizations about a broader class of behavior.

(3) *Hypothesis generating* case studies have more explicit theoretical purposes. They examine a particular case or perhaps several cases for the purpose of developing more general theoretical propositions, which can then be tested through other methods, including large-n methods. By permitting an intensive examination of individual historical episodes, case studies can contribute to theory development by suggesting additional causal variables, causal mechanisms, and interaction effects. They also help to suggest important contextual variables, thus to identify the scope conditions under which particular theories are valid. These are all important steps in the theory-building process.

The role of case studies in generating hypotheses, and particularly in refining and sharpening them, is enhanced by the close interaction of theory and data in case study analysis (and in some other forms of inquiry as well). The starting point is a theory, which the analyst uses to interpret a case, and evidence from the case is then used to suggest important refinements in the theory, which can then be tested on other cases or perhaps even on other aspects of the same case.⁷ The more explicit and precise the theory guiding inquiry – including the selection of the historical case(s) to provide maximum leverage on the theory and the construction of the appropriate case study research design – the more useful the evidence in providing feedback on the theory, and the more efficient the hypothesis-generating process.

A good example is George and Smoke's (1974) analysis of deterrence in American foreign policy, which is organized sequentially in terms of theory specification, application of the theory to historical cases, and reformulation of the theory based on the cases. Another example, involving multiple authors, is Zartman's (1995) collection of comparative case studies on the ending of civil wars. The theoretical lessons generated by the study were the product of an ongoing dialogue between the conceptual framework guiding the project and evidence from specific cases.

(4) *Deviant case studies* focus on empirical anomalies in established theoretical generalizations in order to explain those anomalies and in the process refine the existing theory that failed to predict the anomaly, by identifying omitted variables, interaction effects, or alternative causal paths, or by specifying the scope conditions under which a particular theory is valid. Thus, deviant cases aid in the hypothesis generating function of case studies. A deviant case strategy can be usefully combined with statistical methods, in that some of the most significant deviations from the regression line in a statistical analysis are ideal cases for selection for more thorough examination by case studies.

(5) *Theory-testing case studies*. In addition to their essential role in the explanation of individual historical episodes and a contributory role in the generation of hypotheses, case studies can also be used to test hypotheses and theories. The basic requirements are that the hypotheses to be tested are explicitly stated and expressed in a form that leaves them open to empirical falsification, and, ideally, that the researcher specifies in advance the kinds of evidence that would falsify the hypothesis.⁸ Lijphart (1971: 692) suggests the categories of *theory-confirming* and *theory-infirming* case studies. I combine these into a single theory-testing category.

As early work in case study methodology acknowledged (Campbell, 1975; Lijphart, 1971), a potentially serious problem confronting the theory-testing role of case studies is the combination of many variables and a relatively small number of cases – the low N/V ratio. This often makes it difficult if not impossible to attribute changes in the dependent variable to changes in the theoretically specified independent variables and not to the effects of extraneous variables. The problem of how to make causal inferences in small-n research, when the number of variables generally exceeds the number of cases, is a central question in case study methodology.

The comparative method⁹ is often defined as a strategy for conducting research of naturally occurring phenomena in a way that aims to control for potential confounding variables through careful case selection and matching rather than through experimental manipulation or partial correlations (Frendreis, 1983: 255). The problem, of course, is finding sufficiently matched cases to justify this inference. I return to this issue, along with a discussion of alternative research designs for theory testing in small-n research, in the next section, after first completing this typology of case studies.

(6) *Plausibility probes*. Many qualitative methodologists have followed Eckstein (1975) in suggesting plausibility probes as a distinct category of case studies. The aim is nomothetic, since presumably what is being

probed is the match between the details of a particular case and some broader theoretical proposition. The design, however, involves something less than a fully fledged test of a theoretical proposition. Plausibility probes, like pilot studies in experimental or survey research, are intermediate steps between hypothesis construction and hypothesis testing. They enable the researcher to refine the hypothesis or theory, or to explore the suitability of a particular case as a vehicle in testing the theory, before engaging in a costly and time-consuming research effort, whether through the massive collection of quantitative data or through extensive fieldwork. While plausibility probes can serve a useful function, they are best conceived of as one stage of a multi-stage research design, of necessity followed by more thorough research based on a more rigorous design.

I have suggested several different objectives of case studies. It is important to be explicit about the specific objective of a specific case study, because different theoretical (or descriptive) purposes require different kinds of case study research designs. If the aim is the idiographic one of explaining a particular case, whether through an inductive analysis or an analysis driven by an explicit theoretical framework, then case selection becomes somewhat less critical, since theoretical imagination becomes more important than establishing scientific control over extraneous variables. A hypothesis-testing case study, however, has a different set of requirements, including a carefully matched set of cases to maximize control over extraneous variables.

Case study designs for theory testing

Variations on Mill's methods

The comparable-cases strategy is closely related to John Stuart Mill's (1875/1970) *method of difference*, which focuses on cases that have different values on the dependent variable and similar values on all but one of the possible causal variables. Since the values of alternative causal variables are

constant, they cannot explain the variation in the dependent variable and hence can be eliminated as sources of causation, leaving the one independent variable that co-varies with the dependent variable. Mill's *method of agreement* focuses on cases that are similar on the dependent variable and different on all but one of the possible independent variables. Independent variables that vary across cases do not co-vary with the dependent variable and hence can be eliminated as potential causes. The basic logic of the two designs is the same – to identify patterns of co-variation and to eliminate independent variables that do not co-vary with the dependent variable (Frendreis, 1983).

Przeworski and Tuene's (1970) description of "most different" and "most similar" systems designs (see also Meckstroth, 1975) follows similar inferential logic. A *most different systems* design identifies cases that are different on a wide range of explanatory variables but similar on the dependent variable, while a *most similar systems* design identifies cases that are similar on a wide range of explanatory variables but different on the value of the dependent variable.¹⁰

As many critics have pointed out, a potentially serious problem in the application of Mill's methods and of most similar and most different systems designs is the difficulty of identifying cases that are truly comparable – identical or different in all respects but one. The less perfectly matched a set of cases, the weaker the causal inferences that can be drawn. Even if well-matched cases can be found, however, another problem remains. Mill's methods work fine for bivariate hypotheses involving a single explanatory variable, if the researcher can find matched cases and if she can assume that measurement error is low. Those methods work well enough for additive models in which there are multiple causes but no interaction effects, though the number of cases required to incorporate sufficient controls may become cumbersome. Mill's methods are much more problematic, however, in situations involving complex causation involving interaction effects, and particularly if there are several different sets of

conditions that may lead to the same outcome (Ragin, 1987; Lieberman, 1992).

It is useful to distinguish between cross-case designs and within case designs, and between longitudinal designs and various forms of cross-sectional designs. Longitudinal, within-case comparisons of hypothesized relationships at different points in time within the same case are particularly powerful. They are essentially “most similar” systems designs because the dependent variable of interest changes over time; hypothesized explanatory variables change, but many other variables are constant, including political history, culture, institutions, geography, and other variables that change only slowly (if at all) over time. This facilitates the identification of the small number of variables that vary with the dependent variable of interest.

Good examples of such longitudinal designs include Touval’s (1982) study of nine attempts at mediation in the Arab-Israeli conflict and Stedman’s (1991) comparative study of mediation in the war in Zimbabwe. One can also combine cross-case and within-case designs, in order to impose more controls. Snyder’s (1991) study of imperial overextension, for example, combines comparisons among the behaviors of different states, different individuals within the same state but in different bureaucratic roles, and the same individuals within a given state over time.

Process tracing

Mill’s methods and related varieties of matching case selection strategies are basically correlational, and examine whether a particular set of conditions is associated with hypothesized outcomes while holding constant as many other factors as possible. George and Bennett (2005), building on George (1979), refer to within-case comparisons of hypothesized relationships at different points in time within the same case as the “congruence method” and include it within the methodology of structured, focused comparison.

Another approach to within-case analysis, one that is quite common in the practice of case study research but that was often

neglected in early efforts to formally describe case study methodology, is *process-tracing* (George, 1979; George and Bennett, 2005). Process tracing follows a different logic than correlational methods. It tries to uncover the intervening causal mechanisms between conditions and outcomes through an intensive analysis of the development of a sequence of events over time.¹¹ Process tracing is particularly useful for exploring the perceptions, expectations, and political interactions of actors inside the “black box” of decision-making.¹²

Process tracing can be useful for several different theoretical tasks. It is often essential for a complete description and explanation of a particular historical episode. It can also contribute to hypothesis construction. Many propositions about bureaucratic politics, for example, originate in Allison’s (1971) intensive study of the Cuban missile crisis. Process tracing can also contribute to the testing of certain theoretical propositions. One of the implications of the democratic peace proposition, for example, is that political leaders differ in their perceptions of democracies and autocracies, and that these differences have a significant impact on behavior. Such perceptions are usually better explored through small-n case study methods than through large-n statistical methods. To take another example, validations of prospect theory propositions on loss aversion and risk behavior, which are central to conflict resolution behavior, require the identification of actors’ reference points. Case studies provide the most efficient way of determining reference points.¹³

*Crucial case studies*¹⁴

Eckstein (1975: 113–23) suggested that *crucial case studies* can be useful for the purposes of testing certain types of theoretical arguments – where predictions were precise and where measurement error was low. Two important types of crucial case studies are *most-likely* or *least-likely* case research designs. Each implicitly adopts a Bayesian perspective, and basically weights the evidence from a particular case as a

function of prior theoretical expectations (McKeown, 1999). If one's theoretical priors suggest that a particular case is quite unlikely to be consistent with a theory's predictions – either because the theory's assumptions and scope conditions are not fully satisfied or because the values of many of the theory's key variables point in the other direction – and if the data supports the hypothesis, the evidence from the case provides a great deal of leverage for increasing our confidence in the validity of the theory. Similarly, if one's theoretical priors suggest that a theory is highly likely to be confirmed, and if the data do not support the theory, that result can be quite damaging to a theory. The logic of least-likely case design is based on the “Sinatra inference” – if I can make it there, I can make it anywhere. Similarly, the logic of most-likely case design is based on the inverse Sinatra inference – if I cannot make it there, I cannot make it anywhere (Levy, 2002: 442).

Allison's (1971) application of his three models of foreign policy decision-making to the Cuban missile crisis provides a good example, though he did not explicitly use the language of most-least-likely case analysis. Allison argued that the conventional wisdom in foreign policy analysis held that politics stopped “at the water's edge,” particularly in acute international crises involving serious and immediate threats to vital national interests. As perhaps the most extreme threat to US national security interests, the Cuban missile crisis was a most-likely case for the “rational unity actor model” of foreign policy decision-making, and simultaneously a least-likely case for alternative organizational process and governmental politics models of decision-making. By showing that the evidence contradicted many predictions of the rational unitary actor model but fit many of the predictions of the organizational process and governmental process models, Allison (1971) made a strong argument for the limitations of Model I and the potential applicability of Model II and Model III.¹⁵

This discussion of most- and least-likely case study research designs, in conjunction

with our earlier discussion of the role of case studies in testing hypotheses positing necessary or sufficient conditions, demonstrates that a small number of case studies, and possibly even a single case study, can be quite valuable for the purposes of testing certain types of theoretical propositions, if the theory takes a particular form, and if cases are selected in a way that maximizes leverage on the theory (Dion, 1998). A hypothesis positing a necessary condition for a particular outcome can be severely damaged by a single case in which the condition is absent but the outcome nonetheless occurs, and a hypothesis positing a sufficient condition for a particular outcome can be severely damaged by a single case in which the condition is present but the hypothesized outcome is absent. In addition, a theory can be severely damaged if it can be demonstrated that the theory is invalid in a case where theoretical expectations lead us to think it is an easy case for the theory.

Having briefly surveyed the literature on types of case studies and types of research designs for hypothesis testing, let me turn to the substantive questions of crisis management, a subset of conflict resolution, and explore the contributions of case studies to the development and testing of a theory of crisis management.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Crisis management is often defined as an attempt to avoid war while maintaining one's vital interests (George, 1991a).¹⁶ Thus, crisis management has dual objectives, and there is a tension between them. If political leaders make too many concessions in an attempt to avoid war, they may sacrifice vital interests. If they refuse to compromise at all, they risk escalation to war. Crisis management involves a delicate balance between these two objectives.¹⁷

Scholars began to think seriously about systematizing a theory of crisis management after the Cuban missile crisis. Perhaps the most useful theory is the “provisional theory”

provided by George (1991a), who aimed to explain the behavior of actors and to provide a useful guide for policy makers. George identified both political and operational requirements for crisis management. Political requirements include the limitation of objectives pursued in the crisis and the limitation of the means employed on behalf of those objectives. George (1991a: 24) recognized, however, that avoiding war does not always take priority over maintaining or even advancing one's interests, that actors are often willing to go to war to secure or advance their interests, and that not all wars result from a failure of crisis management. He knew that in addition to identifying the strategies most conducive to successful crisis management and the conditions that facilitated those strategies, a theory of crisis management also had to explain when political leaders made no effort to manage a crisis to avoid war. Thus, he emphasized the importance of actors' incentives to avoid war, their opportunities for doing so, and their level of skills.

Even if political leaders on both sides have incentives to avoid war, a peaceful outcome is not guaranteed, and George (1991a: 25) constructed a list of "operational" principles or requirements for successful crisis management. These criteria are somewhat redundant, and I consolidate and reorganize them. The most basic requirements are that political leaders on each side must maintain top-level civilian control of military options, select military actions that advance political objectives, and coordinate military and diplomatic actions. Although George does not explicitly build on Clausewitz (1832/1976), it is clear that Clausewitz's conception of war as fundamentally political runs throughout George's work on crisis management, coercive diplomacy, and deterrence. George repeatedly emphasizes the importance of a political-military strategy, and not a military strategy alone. This involves defining military objectives and setting the appropriate level of acceptable costs and risks as well as making decisions for war, and it also applies to military alerts, deployments,

and low-level actions. At the same time, however, George qualifies his prescriptive theory by emphasizing the potential dangers of micromanagement, which can interfere with military efficiency, prolong warfare, and increase costs. George emphasizes that political leaders must understand the trade-off between political control and military efficiency in order to make the appropriate tradeoffs.

This general emphasis on the control of military force by political leaders for the purposes of advancing the broader political objectives of the state lead George to suggest a number of more specific operational requirements of crisis management. In order for political leaders to be able to tailor their military actions to specific political objectives, they must possess a range of military options commensurate with those objectives. They must select military actions and threats of force that are appropriate to limited crisis objectives. Their military actions should signal their limited objectives and their interest in negotiating a way out of the crisis, and make it clear that they do not seek a military solution or are about to resort to large-scale warfare. Political leaders should create pauses in the tempo of military actions, in order to slow down the momentum of events, reduce the danger of loss of control, and signal their interest in managing crisis to avoid war. They should select diplomatic and military options that leave the opponent a way out of the crisis that is compatible with its fundamental interests. This includes face-saving compromises.

A number of scholars have used George's (1991a) framework in their own case study analyses of crisis management. Here I focus on case studies of the two leading interstate crises of the 20th century: the July 1914 crisis and the Arab-Israeli crisis of 1967 and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

July 1914 crisis

In applying George's crisis management framework to the July 1914 crisis, Levy

(1990–91) asked whether the outbreak of war was due to a failure of crisis management or to a more basic conflict of fundamental interests. Employing a modified rational choice framework, he identified four possible outcomes of the crisis initiated by the assassination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand: a negotiated settlement between Austria and Serbia; a local war in the Balkans between Austria and Serbia; a continental war resulting from the intervention of Russia, Germany, and then France; and a world war resulting from the intervention of Britain. Levy rank-ordered the preferences of each of the European great powers (plus Serbia) over these possible outcomes, argued that they were stable over the course of the crisis, and then noted an interesting puzzle: each of the major actors preferred a negotiated settlement to a world war, yet the outcome of the crisis was a world war.

Levy identified a series of critical decision points in the escalating crisis, and at each of these key points identified the choices available to each of the major actors, the international and domestic constraints on their actions, and the available information. He concluded that nearly all the decisions by each actor at each critical decision point were basically rational given actors' interests and constraints. Moreover, each choice further narrowed the range of choices available at subsequent decision points, increased the costs of failing to match the escalatory actions of other states, and further narrowed the very limited opportunities for actors to manage the crisis to avoid war.

The key actor was Germany, who continued to encourage Austria to initiate a war in the Balkans. Germany hoped would eliminate the ongoing threat to the internal stability of Germany's only great power ally in Europe and precipitate a diplomatic realignment in Europe, thus eliminating the encirclement of Germany by the Franco-Russian alliance at a time that Russian power was growing rapidly. If that diplomatic alignment failed to materialize, Germany was willing to adopt a strategy of preventive war to defeat Russia and its French ally before that

combination grew too strong for Germany by 1917.

Repeated British attempts to manage the crisis, including the famous "Halt-in-Belgrade" proposal, were rejected by German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg because he preferred a local war and even a continental war to a negotiated settlement, and because he was reasonably confident that Britain would stand aside in a continental war, or at least stand aside long enough for Germany to achieve an irreversible advantage in the war. This was a critical misperception. Like a modest number of other misperceptions, however, it was not unreasonable given the information available at the time. Britain had not joined the Franco-Russian defensive alliance, made any commitment to intervene in a war on the continent, or made any effort to deter Germany from war against either France or Russia. Even Britain's allies in Paris and St. Petersburg had no idea what Britain might do in the event of war, and British Foreign Secretary Edward Grey himself was not certain if he would be able to secure a vote for military intervention from the Cabinet. Thus, Germany's critical misperception can hardly be described as lacking in any rational basis.

Once German leaders learned (late on July 29) that Britain would probably intervene in the war, they reversed course, tried to hold Austria-Hungary back, and even threatened to abandon its Austrian ally if it did not accept the Halt-in-Belgrade plan. By that time, however, it was too late. After Austrian-Hungarian leaders had taken the politically difficult decisions to issue the ultimatum, declare war, and begin mobilization, they felt they could not reverse course without undermining Austrian credibility, upsetting a coalition of domestic political interests that had been very difficult to construct, and breaking a serious psychological commitment.

The primary explanation for the escalation to war, Levy argues, was not the failure of political leaders to manage the crisis, but the lack of incentives to manage the crisis to begin with, given the structure of power and alliances and the interests of the actors (as they

defined them) in place at the onset of the crisis. His case study shows that the actors in 1914 faced a social dilemma, like the Prisoner's Dilemma but involving a number of choices by different actors at different decision points. The structure of the situation in conjunction with actors' preferences induced each actor to make choices that were rational when they were made but that narrowed the range of future choices and led through a process of entrapment in escalating conflict to outcomes all actors would have preferred to avoid.¹⁸

Cuban missile crisis

George (1991b) used his framework to explain the peaceful outcome of the Cuban missile crisis, which he regarded as a case of highly successful crisis management. After noting the incentives that Kennedy and Khrushchev each had to avoid war, particular given the incalculable costs of escalation, George emphasized the limited nature of Kennedy's objectives – to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba, and not to overthrow the Castro regime or to eliminate Soviet influence from Cuba (as some of his advisors recommended).¹⁹ The means employed, particularly by Kennedy, were also limited.²⁰ The US blockade strategy avoided the likely escalatory effects of the air strike or invasion options, and it also served as a signal of both resolve and a willingness to find a way out of the crisis. Kennedy tried to create pauses in military movements (refraining from a military response to the Soviet downing of an American U-2 over Cuba, ordering that the blockade be moved in closer to Cuba to delay the time to a naval confrontation), in part because he recognized that the possibility of maintaining presidential control over the crisis would rapidly decline if there was a military incident. Also important was Kennedy's willingness to offer Khrushchev a face-saving way out of the crisis (the no-invasion pledge and eventual withdrawal of US missiles in Turkey).

As for Khrushchev, while many have regarded the initial Soviet decision to place

offensive missiles in Cuba as quite risky, George proposed a more nuanced interpretation Building on George and Smoke (1974: 489, 527–30), he introduced an additional dimension by distinguishing between actors' perceptions of the magnitude of the risks and their assessment of the controllability of the risks through the evolution of the crisis.²¹ In some (but not all) cases where leaders anticipate that a particular course of action runs high risks later in the crisis, they may nevertheless be willing to embark on that course of action if they are confident that they can manage and control those risks as part of a strategy of limited probes or controlled pressure. There is some evidence in support of the wider validity of this proposition. In their case studies of a number of instances of failures of deterrence, George and Smoke (1974: 527) found that in nearly all their historical cases "the initiator tried to satisfy himself before acting that the risks of the particular option he chose could be calculated and ... controlled by him so as to give his choice of action the character of a rationally calculated, acceptable risk."²²

George (1991b) also examined the bargaining dimensions of the interactions between Kennedy and Khrushchev, and in doing so suggested an interesting line of interpretation and some interesting theoretical propositions that went beyond his "principles of crisis management." He acknowledged the lack of theory or evidence suggesting that there is an optimal combination of coercion, persuasion, compromise, and positive inducements that is likely to lead to successful crisis management, though he argued that coercive or bullying strategies are not optimal under most conditions (Leng, 1993). George stressed, among other things, the importance of the sequencing and timing of different actions. He argued that while Kennedy was quite willing to be conciliatory toward Khrushchev, the president also believed that it was essential to begin with coercive threats and actions at the onset of the crisis, in order to demonstrate his own credibility and reverse any image of weakness in the mind of the adversary. Only then was he willing to discuss concessions.

George basically accepted the rationale behind Kennedy's strategy, and argued that had he begun with a purely diplomatic strategy without coercive threats, he would have reinforced Khrushchev's image of Kennedy as weak, lead to less compromising behavior by Khrushchev. That would have prolonged the crisis and increased the likelihood that it would have escalated to risky military action.

CONCLUSIONS

I had two aims in this chapter on case studies and conflict resolution: to summarize some of the recent literature on case study methodology, and to examine the role of case studies in the development of theory about crisis management. With respect to case study methodology, I suggested a modification in conventional typologies of case studies, and focused on the theoretical purposes for which case studies are designed to serve. I also examined alternative research designs for facilitating use of case studies to test theories. I emphasized that different case study designs are more or less useful depending on the theoretical aims of the study, and that many designs are best conceived as stages in an overall research program. While I accept the conventional wisdom that for many theoretical purposes many cases are better than fewer, as long as the cases all satisfy the theoretical criteria guiding the study, I argued that for the purposes of hypothesis testing as well as hypothesis construction, a small number of cases or even a single case study can be extremely useful. With respect to hypothesis testing, this is particularly true for hypotheses that posit necessary or sufficient conditions or for situations in which cases satisfy "most-likely" or "least-likely" criteria based on theoretical priors.

I then turned to case studies of crisis management, with particular attention to George's (1991a) provisional theory of crisis management and its application to the July 1914 crises and to the Cuban missile crisis.

I argued that World War I provides a useful reminder that crises can escalate to war not only because of the failure of crisis management, but also because the structure of preferences and international and domestic constraints sometimes create few incentives for leaders to try to manage the crisis. I argued that the Cuban missile crisis is a classic case of a crisis that could have escalated out of control but that was successfully managed by political leaders.

NOTES

1 On the evolution of the field, see Kriesberg (1997).

2 On changing patterns of warfare, see Holsti (1996); Human Security Centre (2005); Marshall and Gurr (2005); and Harbom, Högbladh, and Wallensteen (2006).

3 For useful reviews, see Galtung (1965), Zartmann (1985, 1995), Azar and Burton (1986), Burton (1990), Kriesberg (1992), Bercovich (1996), Carnegie Commission (1997), Fisher (1997), Stern and Druckman (2000), Malone and Hampson (2001), and Wallensteen (2002).

4 Case study methods are a subset of qualitative methods, which include interpretive ethnographic studies, archival analysis, elite interviews, macrohistorical analysis, intensive analyses of particular historical episodes, "qualitative comparative analysis" based on Boolean and fuzzy set methods (Ragin 1987, 2000), alternative conceptions of causation (Goertz and Levy, 2007), and a range of other topics. My focus here, following most but not all of the expanding literature on case study methodology in the fields of international relations and comparative politics field (e.g., George and Bennett, 2005: 18–19), is on comparative and case study methods that aim to produce causal explanations and to develop a set of cumulative generalizations about the social world. I exclude postmodern narratives and other qualitative work that rejects the possibility of causal explanation, while incorporating other forms of interpretive or discourse analysis that accepts the goal of causal explanation and the possibility of generalization.

5 Verba (1967) distinguished between configurative and disciplined configurative analyses. Lijphart (1971: 691) distinguished among atheoretical, interpretive, hypothesis-generating, theory-confirming, theory-infirmiting, and deviant case studies. Eckstein (1975: 96–123) suggested a similar typology: configurative-idiographic, disciplined configurative, heuristic, and crucial-case studies based on most-likely and least-likely designs, and also plausibility probes.

6 Idiographic refers to the aim of inquiry (the explanation of an individual case), and not whether the inquiry is theoretical or not. Theory can be used to structure an idiographic case study (Levy, 2001).

7 The revised hypothesis cannot, however, be tested against the same data that was used to generate the hypothesis to begin with (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994; George and Bennett, 2005).

8 Critics of case-study research often complain that case studies are so pliable that researchers' can interpret any outcome as consistent with their theoretical argument. One motivation for the growth of qualitative methodology is to eliminate whatever remnants of that research practice still existed. For an example of a case study that begins with a falsifiable interpretation, suggests evidence that would falsify the argument, and in fact uncovers that evidence and concludes that the hypothesized interpretation was false, see Gochal and Levy (2004).

9 After early debates, the literature on case study methodology now equates the comparative method with the analysis of a small number of cases (Collier, 1993: 105).

10 Note that Mill defines agreement or difference in terms of values on the *dependent* variable, whereas Przeworski and Tuene (1970) define similar and different in terms of *explanatory* variables. Thus, Mill's method of agreement is equivalent to a most different systems design, and Mill's method of difference is equivalent to a most similar systems design. Scholars often confuse these different terminologies.

11 The logic of inference is much more similar to what philosophers of history call *genetic explanation* (Gallie, 1963; Nagel, 1979: 564–68) than to explanations based on covering-laws and deductive-nomological logic (Hempel, 1942).

12 Experimental methods may be superior for testing many of these hypotheses, but it is often difficult to generalize from highly controlled laboratory settings that cannot fully replicate the stakes and emotions inherent in the world we are trying to explain. This problem of "external validity" has always plagued the application of experimental methods to the study of international relations and conflict resolution.

13 Prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) posits that people "frame" choice problems around a reference point, give more weight to losses than to comparable gains as defined by that reference point, and engage in risk-averse behavior with respect to gains and risk-acceptant behavior with respect to losses. It helps to explain why people fight to keep territory and other things they would not have fought to gain in the first place, why threats are more effective in deterring people from improving their positions than in coercing them to accept losses from their reference point, and why they often take enormous risks to eliminate losses – even at the risk of incurring

even greater losses. For applications to international relations, see Levy (2000).

14 I treat crucial case studies as a design that serves the hypothesis-testing function of case studies, rather than as a distinct type of cases studies, which is more common in the literature.

15 Another example of a most-likely case design is Ripsman and Levy's (2007) analysis of the absence of a "preventive war" against Germany in the 1930s. If ever conditions were ripe for preventive action against a rapidly rising and threatening adversary, it was in the mid-to-late 1930s with Hitler's Germany. On preventive war, and how it differs from preemption and other sources of better-now-than-later logic, see Levy (2008).

16 Scholars often define crises as situations involving a threat to basic values, a high probability of involvement in military hostilities, and a finite time for response (Brecher, 1980: 1). Crisis management can also be applied to intra-war crises, where it involves an attempt to avoid war or limit or control the escalation of violence. Although the literature on crisis management focuses on interstate conflicts (Williams, 1976; George, 1991a), it can also be applied to crises involving rebel groups or non-state actors.

17 Thus, I define crisis management in terms of the de-escalation of conflict (Kriesberg, 1992), rather than in terms of the more permanent elimination of the conflict of interests between parties (Burton, 1987: 7–8). See also Stern and Druckman (2000: 44) and Maoz (2004: 17–18).

18 On entrapment, see Brockner and Rubin (1985). For a summary of recent interpretations suggesting that Germany was in fact not so adverse to a world war, see Lieber (2007). If correct, this would further reinforce the argument that the outbreak of World War I was not a failure of crisis management, but undercut the argument about entrapment in an escalating conflict.

19 George (1991b) contrasted Kennedy's behavior with Truman's behavior in the Korean War – escalating both his objectives (unifying the two Koreas by military force) and the means for achieving them (permitting MacArthur to march north toward the Yalu).

20 George (1991b) acknowledged some brinkmanship behavior that violated the "limited means" criterion (such as the anti-submarine warfare activities of the US navy), but noted that it reminded each side of the risks of provoking the other and of an inadvertent escalation, and that it ultimately contributed to de-escalation.

21 George's (1991b) multidimensional conception of risk contrasts with standard treatments in the literature, which generally assume that risk is a unidimensional variable and which treats actors in terms of their degree of risk aversion or risk acceptance. For formal decision theorists, risk orientation is simply the shape of the utility function (concave downward for risk aversion, linear for risk neutrality, and convex for

risk acceptance). Prospect theorists posit an S-shaped value function with varying risks as a function of losses and gains (Levy, 2000).

22 The "tried to satisfy himself" phrasing suggests another hypothesis about the psychology of risk – that risk does not shape motivation but is endogenous to it, and that a highly motivated actor will subconsciously adjust its risk assessment (or perhaps consciously, if it wants to convince other decision-makers) so as to justify an action it wants to take.

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