

Perceptual distortions during the escalation of conflicts

Escalation step	Cooperation	Perspective divergence	Competition	Struggle	War
Conceptualization of the conflict	Win-win orientation	Bias towards win-lose but win-win still possible	Win-lose (possibly defused by rules of fairness)	Win-lose (increased by threat strategies)	Zero sum orientation. Force as the appropriate means of solving conflict, emphasis on military values, transfer from win-lose to lose-lose
Evaluation of rights and aims	Mutual respect for the rights of all participants and emphasis on common interests	Focus on one's own rights and needs (including common interests), the rights of others, however, vanish from the field of vision	Focus on one's own rights and needs; common interests, however, vanish from the field of vision	Emphasis on one's own rights and needs combined with questioning the rights of the opponent and condemning his intentions.	Idealization of one's own rights and needs, at the same time contesting the rights of the opponent, demonizing of his intentions and denial of common interests
Evaluation of actions	Consideration of the benefits of each of the parties	Focus on one's own benefits (also those resulting from the mutual relationship)	Focus on one's own benefits	Justification of one's own actions and condemnation of those of the opponent	Idealization of one's own actions and demonizing of the actions of the opponent
Emotional involvement	Empathy and mutual trust	Conflict between threat and trust	Focus on threat to oneself, that to the opponent disappears from the field of vision, mutual trust is lost	Emphasis on one's own strength and the danger from the opponent creates a delicate balance between threat and confidence of victory; the threat of the opponent is actively denied; mistrust exists	Balance between threat and confidence of victory continues to exist, mistrust directed also against neutral third parties who attempt to mediate the conflict, outrage at the war turns into outrage at the opponent
Identification offer	Mutual	Self-centered	Dualistic	Antagonistic	Polarized