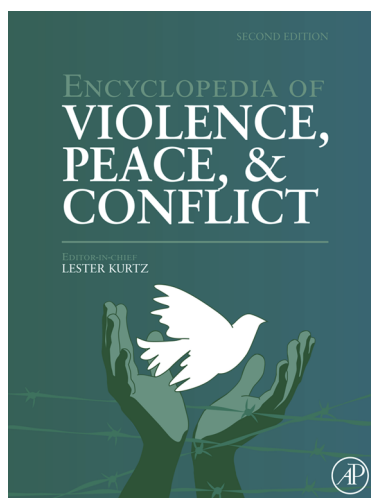


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## Conflict Transformation

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Analyzing Conflict Transformations  
Stages of Transformation  
Underlying Changes

Policies for Transformation  
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### Glossary

**Conflict De-escalation** A decrease in the scope or number of parties engaged and/or in the severity of the means used in a conflict.

**Conflict Resolution, Problem-Solving** The process of concluding a dispute or conflict in which the adversary parties, with or without the assistance of mediators, negotiate or otherwise strive toward a mutually acceptable agreement or understanding, taking into account each other's concerns. It often entails reframing the conflict so that it is regarded as a shared problem.

**Constructive Conflicts** Conflicts are waged constructively insofar as the means are not violent, but rely on persuasion and positive sanctions as well as coercive ones and insofar as the adversaries recognize

each other as legitimate and seek a mutually acceptable outcome of their conflict; that recognition may refer to the entity the leaders purport to represent, but not to the leaders.

**Destructive Conflicts** Conflicts are conducted destructively when the means used are severe and many participants suffer great harm, the scale of conflict expands, one or more sides believes that its survival is threatened, and conflict becomes self-perpetuating.

**Hurting Stalemate** When none of the primary adversaries in a struggle is winning and none expects that the situation will change so as to enable it to triumph, and the situation is unsatisfactory and even painful.

Conflict transformation is an increasingly used term in the fields of conflict analysis and resolution, peace studies, and international relations. It generally refers to a fundamental and enduring change away from a protracted, destructive struggle between adversaries toward a constructive accommodation between them. That changed relationship may be a mutually satisfactory resolution of their conflict and lead to reconciliation between them, or may be embodied in an ongoing conflict but one that is conducted more constructively. Conflict transformation refers to the process of change and also to the relationship resulting from that process. At various points during the transformation process, a conflict may be regarded as having become transformed, although groups may differ about the designation.

Among the many cases of conflict transformation, several large-scale transformations may be cited illustratively. In the United States, labor-management struggles at the end of the nineteenth century and during the early part of the twentieth century were marked by violence and the refusal by employers to recognize trade unions, but these struggles were transformed in the 1930s as collective bargaining became institutionalized. The

African-American struggle to achieve equality of civil rights was particularly intense in the 1960s; consequently, the numerous local struggles in the South and national legislation transformed that struggle. In South Africa, the struggle against apartheid and the disenfranchisement of blacks was transformed in the early 1990s. Internationally, the ending of the Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the late 1980s marked a fundamental transformation, ending with the dissolution of the USSR.

Partly due to the end of the Cold War, during the 1990s, a remarkable decline in interstate and intrastate wars occurred, and many previously protracted violent conflicts were settled through negotiations. For example, Peter Wallensteen analyzed that this was true for the 16 armed conflicts in Africa, in Central America, and elsewhere, which were settled by agreements between 1990 and 1999.

There are, of course, other kinds of fundamental changes in a conflict that are not generally termed 'transformation'. Thus, a conflict may escalate into a great violence after a long period of well-regulated struggle, but in this discussion, 'transformation' refers to a particular kind of conflict de-escalation. Some forms of

de-escalation are not regarded as transformations; for example, the crushing defeat of one side by the other can result in a fundamental de-escalation of the struggle; but that is regarded here as a unilaterally imposed ending of a struggle, not its transformation. However, that does not foreclose a subsequent transformation of hostile relations.

Conflict transformation has structural–behavioral and subjective–attitudinal features, varyingly emphasized by different partisans and analysts. Structurally, the process is a joint one and not a one-sided imposition. It involves a change in the mixture of behaviors, from large components of violence or other coercion to large components of cooperation or exchanges indicating mutual dependence. Subjectively, feelings and beliefs also tend to change, with the adversaries having increased mutual acceptance, and even mutual respect.

### Analyzing Conflict Transformations

Although conflicts have always undergone transformations in human experience, systematic analyses of the phenomenon are recent, and illustrated in publications by Louis Kriesberg, Terrell A Northrup, and Stuart J Thorson; Raimo Vayrynen; Robert A Baruch Bush and Joseph B Fogler; Kumar Rupensinghe; Chester Crocker, Fen O Hampson, and Pamela Aall; and Peter Coleman and others. Beginning in the 1980s, several developments converged to draw attention to the transformation of social conflicts. First, attention to protracted and recurring conflicts had increased, spurred by seemingly intractable ethnic conflicts, often marked with atrocities. Second, the growth in the practice of problem-solving conflict resolution and in research and theorizing about conflict resolution were challenged by such intractable conflicts. Third, some major conflicts that had seemed intractable underwent profound changes, notably the Cold War and the struggle about apartheid in South Africa. The idea of conflict transformation seemed to capture an important but neglected aspect of social conflicts and their resolution.

Since theory and research about conflict transformations is so recent, this contribution does not review their histories. We examine the current analyses of various conflict transformations, the stages of transformation, the underlying sources of transformation, and the policies fostering transformations. This examination draws from relevant evidence and theorizing in many fields, whether or not they have been identified as contributions to conflict transformation work.

The conflict transformation process has many commonalities, regardless of its occurrences in different kinds of conflict. Thus, transformation generally requires that adversaries recognize each other's claims and humanity to a significant degree. The antagonists also begin to regard

their previously conflicting goals as reconcilable. At some time in the transformation process the primary adversaries come to believe that the conflict is irreversibly moving away from destructive conflict and toward an accommodation. During this process, unilateral conciliatory gestures, confidence-building agreements, and partial settlements are likely. The adversaries reduce or cease conduct that tends to cause the other party humiliation and pain.

The process of transformation rarely follows a smooth, uninterrupted course. A few of the many reasons for the likely difficulties and setbacks should be noted. The new conditions that fostered de-escalation and termination may change and undermine the process; the promising terms of the conflict's settlement may appear unacceptable upon closer inspection; and parties to the fight who were excluded from the termination proceedings may obstruct and sabotage the process. The difficulty in making peace between the Israeli government and the PLO, even after the transforming Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993, is illustrative by itself. Rejectionists on each side committed actions to derail the process, including the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by an Israeli Jew, and the suicide bombings of Israeli buses by Hamas supporters prior to the elections of May 1996. This resulted in a new Israeli government, which in the name of security and ethnonationalist claims acted in ways that countered PLO and Palestinian expectations about the ultimate terms of a peace agreement with the Israeli government. Unlike the leaders of the ANC and the Nationalist Party in South Africa, the leaders of the Israeli government and of the PLO were not seeking a common political union, but separation. Therefore, the leaders had little immediate interest in appealing to the constituency on the other side and building a cooperative relationship.

Conflict transformations, moreover, vary in many other fundamental regards. Many variations are reviewed as they occur in different kinds of conflicts, starting from different conflict conditions, and moving toward different kinds of accommodations.

### Kinds of Conflicts

Conflicts vary notably by the social context in which they are waged, by the means used in the struggle, by the issue in contention, and by the units engaged in the struggle. This discussion is organized in terms of the variation among adversaries, but the other kinds of variations are also relevant for understanding conflict transformation, and many will be noted.

#### *Between persons*

Conflicts between individuals are universal, whether in a family, community, or organizational setting. Interpersonal conflicts are often viewed as fights between

two isolated persons in a dyadic relationship but individuals are never wholly isolated in their fights. To some degree each person sees herself or himself as a representative of others, with whom she or he identifies for example, by ethnicity, age, or gender; furthermore, each person is likely to see the other as a representative of particular categories or groups of persons.

Adversaries engaged in a persisting struggle are also generally involved in an enduring relationship. That relationship exists within a larger social system such as a country, family, community, or university whose members usually have common identities and shared interests. Such underlying considerations inhibit a conflict from becoming protracted and destructive; furthermore, other persons in the community, organization, or family system in which the disputants are functioning often try to restore relations that the conflict has disrupted. That is an important basis for transformation, particularly in cultures where individualistic concerns are not prominent.

### ***Between organizations***

Organizations, here, refer to entities such as political parties, corporations, trade unions, churches, and governments. They tend to be clearly bounded and internally differentiated. What is particularly significant about the internal differentiation is that leadership roles usually exist, and their incumbents represent the members in external relations and have the authority to make certain kinds of commitments binding the members. The persons playing these roles must, to some degree, satisfy their constituents as they represent them in contentions with other organizations. This greatly complicates the course of a struggle. For example, leaders often mobilize and commit their constituencies to wage a fight and then feel constrained by constituency pressure from ending it on terms that are acceptable to the opposing sides.

Organizations operating within a society generally compete and struggle with each other within mutually agreed upon rules. For example, trade union leaders and business managers anticipate and conduct recurrent disputes often within an institutionalized conflict management system.

But some organizations based on ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities may make claims that seem to challenge government agencies; a struggle erupts and escalates, using relatively noninstitutionalized methods. Furthermore, many organizations survive beyond the life of any individual members and therefore have the potentiality for fights persisting over generations. Finally, although organizations consist of humans filling social roles, partisans who view each other as formal entities may find it easy to depersonalize each other. Minimizing the humanity of the opponent permits inhumane conduct toward the opponent and gravely hamper de-escalation and problem-solving conflict resolution.

### ***Between communal groups***

Communal groups range from a few persons regularly interacting and sharing a common identity to large collectivities or social categories whose members believe or are attributed to have common interests and fates. Such large-scale groups often have ambiguous membership boundaries and lack an elaborate and differentiated structure. These characteristics make resolving a struggle constructively very difficult. Generally organizations exist that claim to represent these large collectivities or social categories in conflicts; their members tend to develop vested interests in continuing the struggle.

Communal groups often are based on the presumption that members have shared interests derived from their common occupation or location in the labor market. As a result, they may conduct various forms of industrial or class struggles, including revolutions. Interests also may be based on shared values or beliefs and the desire to advance them. Large-scale groups may also arise from shared identities based on ethnicity, religion, language, or other communal identifications, and may wage national liberation struggles.

### ***Between states***

In many ways, the world is organized as a system of independent, sovereign states, with the earth's territory divided into countries ruled by governments. Each government claims exclusive dominion over the affairs within its territory and the right to use force to impose its rule on the people within its territory and against external governments. Of course, such unbridled sovereignty has never been fully realized and in many ways is decreasing. The peoples of the world are ever more economically and socially interdependent and increasingly live in the context of transnational organizations and institutions.

The state system, nevertheless, makes protracted and destructive conflicts possible: many states control resources that enable them to fight on and on and peoples are socialized to be loyal to their state and hostile to its rivals and enemies. But even such intractable interstate conflicts become transformed, as happened between France and Germany, after the World War II.

### ***Linkages among conflicts***

Many struggles are conducted between different kinds of units. For example, conflicts frequently are waged between states and challenging organizations or between groups within organizations. The asymmetries in some ways hamper reaching a mutual accommodation; for example, one side may be able to so dominate the other that it simply imposes its will or one side does not accord legitimacy to the other. On the other hand, the variety of units may enable those who think their conflict can be accommodated to do so, bypassing those who are relatively intransigent.

Every conflict is interlocked with many others. Often several lines of cleavage dividing antagonists coincide and reinforce each other, making their conflict more likely to be intense and difficult to resolve; this is the case when ethnic, class, and regional cleavages in a society coincide. Conflicts also may cross-cut each other and from the vantage point of the partisans in one of those conflicts that conflict may be more salient to one side than to the other. Shifts in the salience of one conflict can contribute greatly to the transformation of another conflict, as when adversaries find themselves confronting a common enemy of greater threat and subordinate their antagonism in order to fight against the shared enemy number one; thus, antagonistic social classes in a society tend to unite against a foreign attacker.

This contribution gives particular attention to the transformation of intractable conflicts between large-scale entities. Illustrative material is drawn from the transformation in relations between whites and blacks in South Africa, between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the state of Israel. Unsuccessful efforts to transform such conflicts, as in the conflict between the US government and transnational organizations such as al Qaeda will also be discussed.

### **From Varied Circumstances**

Conflict transformation refers to fundamental constructive changes in conflicts marked by long-lasting enmity and waged in a destructive fashion. Conflicts are protracted and destructive to varying degrees and the processes of transformation vary accordingly.

#### ***Long lasting***

Many conflicts persist for very long periods, some for generation after generation, as was the case between the French and Germans. Many of these protracted struggles come to be regarded as intractable, their intractability often marked by failed efforts to resolve them. Members of antagonistic sides consider their goals to be irreconcilable, believe the opponents to be inherently hostile, and some of them have vested interests in continuing the fight.

#### ***Destructive***

Destructive conflicts are marked by three characteristics. They result in extensive physical and mental damage to humans, often to noncombatants as well as combatants. In addition, they are frequently waged in ways that tend to evoke feelings of rage and hate, and the desire for revenge. Finally, how they are waged tends to create enduring obstacles to eventual reconciliation. On the other hand, conflicts may be waged in a relatively constructive fashion, as discussed by Morton Deutsch and Louis Kriesberg. Conflicts are never wholly destructive or constructive,

but are complex and ever-shifting mixtures of both qualities.

#### ***Combinations***

Conflicts can be protracted, and marked by recurrent escalations, but not be conducted destructively. Thus, class or ideological conflicts may be waged for generations, but conducted through legitimate political institutions using electoral procedures. Long-standing labor-management conflicts may also be waged without recourse to destructive means, for example, when conducted in institutionalized ways through collective bargaining.

Conflicts that are both protracted and destructive are characterized by developments that sustain the struggle. Thus, leaders of one or more adversary may arouse their followers by demonizing the other side, calling them evil. Some leaders may justify inhumane actions against the enemy by characterizing them as sub-human animals. The injuries and atrocities committed by one side against the other tend to perpetuate the struggle between them, as exemplified in many conflicts related to ethnic antagonisms, marked by feelings of humiliation and wishes for vengeance.

### **To Varied Accommodations**

Conflict transformation varies not only by the stage of a conflict when the transformation movement begins, but also by the kind of new relationship toward which the partisans are striving. One possibility is that the conflict ends, with one side's conversion, dissolution, or assimilation. A transformed conflict, however, need not mean that the adversaries no longer are in any conflict. The adversaries may engage in disputes, waged constructively; they may be embedded in a highly integrated relationship and conduct the disputes according to institutionalized conflict management procedures. These possible relations may be understood in terms of two dimensions: the degree of integration and the degree of unilateral dominance.

#### ***Degree of integration***

The integration between adversaries varies in the degree to which their members are mutually dependent on each other and their members interact with each other. Parties with high interdependence and interaction are highly integrated behaviorally. The cessation of a struggle may be associated with high levels of integration and also with a subjective sense of common interest and identity. Former enemies may even become significantly reconciled with each other. For example, after generations of enmity and recurrent wars, the French and German peoples and governments have established an enduring relationship in which war between them seems impossible. That relationship was fostered by building institutions that

helped generate complementary and common interests, beginning with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952.

At the other end of the continuum, the parties may become more independent of each other after a violent conflict between them. The acceptance of increased separation marks their new relationship. For example, the people of East Pakistan, with the assistance of India, forced their independence from Pakistan and established Bangladesh in 1971.

### **Degree of unilateral domination**

Often, one side in a conflict largely imposes fundamental changes in their relations with their erstwhile adversaries, for example, when one side forces the other to accede to its rules about the relationship, as occurred with the American Civil War. However, we are concerned here with those changes that in large degree are mutuality constructed. The mutuality may occur primarily as a result of internal changes in one of the parties, or to a new balance of power between the adversaries, or to changed views of their relationship as a result of changes in the social context.

## **Stages of Transformation**

Transformations often seem abrupt, but they generally occur over an extended time, as the adversaries move step by step toward a new relationship. The transformation generally occurs through cumulative small changes, as many factors converge toward a new mutually acceptable accommodation. The transformation processes include several steps, varying in duration and irreversibility.

### **Exploratory**

As a conflict persists, some events raise doubts about the advisability of persisting in the conflict. The costs of waging the struggle tend to mount, and often the burdens are borne disproportionately by different groups within each side. In very large, highly differentiated conflict units this is especially likely. Consequently, in large groups, in societies, and in large organizations, some factions often express dissent as the struggle persists. Alternative courses of action, including various paths of de-escalation are discussed, and factions may advocate a new line of action. As the ostensible goals of the struggle remain out of reach, members of the constituency may shift away from supporting escalation or even persistence and move toward supporting policies of de-escalation.

Members of one side, in the early stages of conflict transformation may explore the possibility of moving toward an acceptable accommodation. For example, peace feelers are tentatively put forward to test whether

the other side might accept what is offered as part of the conflict's resolution. Such overtures are often made indirectly and with ambiguity so that they can be denied if rejected. The reasons for such tentativeness are obvious. The adversary leaders making such probes may fear that if the response is rebuffed, their constituents will view the attempt as naive and foolish or be interpreted by the other side's leaders as a sign of weakness, and consequently increase their demands.

Low-ranking or unofficial representatives of the opposing camps, therefore, often conduct de-escalating probes. The side they represent, if the response is not acceptable, can disown them. Intermediaries, who may intervene at the request of one side or by their own initiative, provide another vehicle for such feelers. They often represent interested parties such as international organizations or governments that are not engaged in the struggle, but they may also have little stake in the conflict's outcome. In any case their explorations are easily repudiated, if they fail to reveal enough common ground to undertake further explorations and negotiations.

### **Initial Signals and Actions**

Tentative probes may be dismissed as tricks or discounted as not representing the position of authoritative representatives of the other side. To be effective, they generally need to be followed by relatively unambiguous words and deeds. An important body of literature has emerged on these matters, much of it related to ways of transforming antagonisms such as the Cold War. Two general strategies have received considerable attention: graduated reciprocation in tension (GRIT) reduction and tit-for-tat. According to the GRIT strategy, as developed by Charles E. Osgood, mutual tension and fear can be interrupted and de-escalation begun by one side announcing that it is making a concession, inviting reciprocation, but persisting with additional cooperative moves, even if they are not immediately reciprocated. According to the tit-for-tat strategy, as analyzed by Robert Axelrod, cooperative relations tend to develop and to be sustained if one side initiates a conciliatory move and then matches the other side's conciliation with conciliation and coercive act with coercive act.

In addition to public gestures and actions, high-level representatives of the opposing sides sometimes hold secret meetings. Often they are the prelude to a dramatic public event taking a large step toward mutual accommodation, enabling that event to be taken and ensuring that further steps will follow. For example, prior to Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, the Egyptian deputy premier, Hassan Tuhami and the Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Dayan, met secretly in Morocco and discussed possible peace arrangements.

### Reaching Agreements or Understandings

Accommodations between adversaries in protracted conflicts tend to develop by a gradual transition and transformation, often marked by agreements about specific issues in dispute. Explicit agreements are useful in settling some matters of contention, in fostering mutual understanding, commitments, and trust, and in reducing fears and antagonisms among each side's constituencies.

Policymakers and analysts have given special attention to confidence-building measures (CBMs). These are agreements directed, for example, to provide antagonists with assurances that neither side will take surprise military actions against the other or that neither side will pursue policies preparing for such actions. Such CBMs played an important role in providing stability and security in Europe and fostering the transition ending the Cold War, as analyzed in Louis Kriesberg's *International Conflict Resolution*.

### Implementation and Institutionalization

The transformation of protracted conflicts requires that agreements reached are carried out and not violated. Adherence to agreements and the perception of adherence are enhanced by establishing mutually agreed upon monitoring and verification procedures. In addition, joint commissions or other bodies may be created to review any disputes about the interpretation of the accords made, as was done for some American–Soviet arms control agreements.

It is also helpful to formulate treaties and other agreements that have self-sustaining qualities. This may mean constructing them so they foster vested interests in sustaining the accords reached, at least for some segments of each side's constituents. This is particularly significant for the integration of former fighters, after the fighting has formally ended.

Finally, intermediaries often play a crucial role in sustaining an agreement once it has been reached. They can help monitor it and assist in its implementation, for example helping to plan for and to conduct elections and to demobilize former armed fighters. This has been notably important in El Salvador and Namibia, as discussed in the work by Roland Paris.

### Underlying Changes

New mutual accommodations are reached by diverse courses, which many factors converge to shape. Analysts emphasize different factors, whether those are primarily within one of the adversary parties, in the relationship between them, or in the social context of the adversaries. Analysts also differ in the importance attributed to large-

scale trends and impersonal forces or to the policies pursued by specific persons. Finally, they differ in the importance attributed to power relations and other structural conditions or to ideas and other subjective factors. To review the theories and evidence pertaining to these varying emphases, each source of change will be considered. Then, short-term and long-term policies will be reviewed as they are directed to each arena of possible change.

### Internal

Many fundamental changes occur within each party in a conflict that affect whether the conflict persists destructively or begin to be transformed. Often, the leading persons of one or more sides advocate varying perspectives toward an external antagonist. Consequently, a change in the leadership of one of the adversaries often provides an opportunity to explore and realize new steps that contributes to a conflict's transformation. The new leader is less identified with or committed to the old policies and in addition, the opposing side may assume that the new leadership provides an opportunity to de-escalate the conflict. This is illustrated by the changes that were implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev for the Soviet Union and by Henderik de Klerk for the whites of South Africa.

A change in leadership often reflects a shift in the prevailing views among the people and elites of the conflict party toward supporting a de-escalating transformation of the struggle. The shift may occur as doubts rise about the likelihood of prevailing if the policy of confrontation continues. The cost of persevering may come to be seen as too great to be borne for what is increasingly unlikely to be won. The shift in prevailing views may also involve a re-evaluation of the importance or even the correctness of what is being sought. A kind of creeping conversion may spread among the constituents of one or both sides. In many ways, this happened among the whites of South Africa, who lost the moral certainty that apartheid was right. Internal changes are affected by and in turn influence changes in the relations between adversaries, as discussed next.

### Relationship and Interactions

As a conflict persists, the balance of resources and burdens between the adversaries change and are experienced differently. An influential argument made by I. William Zartman is that conflicts begin to move toward resolution when the adversaries are in what they regard as a hurting stalemate and a better option seems possible. A hurting stalemate arises when neither side anticipates defeating the other and the current circumstances are highly unsatisfactory. Movement toward de-escalation and transformation

also requires, by this reasoning, that the antagonists can envisage an attainable better option.

A turnaround in the dynamics of conflicting interactions occurs as members of the opposing sides come to believe that neither escalation nor staying the course will produce the desired outcomes. Furthermore, other outcomes can then appear as more acceptable than persisting in trying to win all that was earlier sought. Movement toward transformation generally entails the concurrence in such developments by the opposing sides. Often, however, when leaders on one side are ready for turning in a de-escalating direction, the other side is not, and the overtures by the other side are not recognized or are exploited. As discussed later, various strategies and tactics may be used to overcome these difficulties.

### **Social Context**

Adversaries always wage their conflicts within a larger social context that is in constant flux. Three kinds of changes in the social environment may foster transformation of a given struggle. First, conflict linkages may change as other conflicts become more or less salient for the adversaries. Second, the overall social system may change in structure, norms, or other patterns. Third, other parties may increase or decrease their interventions.

### **Conflict linkages**

Members of each side in any struggle are engaged in many other conflicts and they may also regard their struggle with each other as embedded within a larger conflict. The increased salience of a new common enemy may reduce the primacy of the struggle they are waging against each other, allowing for a transformation of that conflict. However, internal struggles within the adversaries may become more salient as an external threat declines.

Another kind of change in conflict linkage occurs when a conflict that is superimposed on another becomes dormant or is resolved. That can facilitate the transformation of the other conflict. This happened for many regional and civil conflicts after the Cold War ended. For example, in South Africa, the anti-Communism rationale for the governing National Party's hostility to the African National Congress (ANC) was undermined with the end of the Cold War, as was a justification for waging wars in neighboring countries. Moreover, the ANC's reassurances about the economic policies it would pursue if it gained political power seemed more credible under the new conditions. Furthermore, the expectations of the US government's support of the South African government were reduced. Consequently, South Africa's government could then recognize the need and see the possibility of reaching an accommodation with the ANC.

### **Systemic patterns**

Many global social, economic, and cultural changes impact intrastate and interstate conflicts, often facilitating their transformation. For example, the increasingly integrated global economy meant that the sanctions against South Africa were becoming more and more burdensome to the peoples of South Africa. The growing international recognition of human rights claims and the propriety of intervening in domestic affairs to protect such claims also helped undermine white South Africans' sense of legitimacy for apartheid.

### **Intervention**

Actors who are not one of the primary adversaries often play crucial roles in transforming a conflict. They often apply pressure to one side or give aid to another, thus hastening a conflict's resolution by making an accommodation seem necessary. Furthermore, since external support for waging a struggle often prolongs a conflict, stopping such assistance contributes to the adversaries' acceptance of a mutual accommodation. Thus, the end of the Cold War and external support for opposing sides contributed to transforming the lengthy and brutal civil wars in Central American countries and in Africa.

Intervention also takes the form of providing mediating services that enable the adversaries to construct new options, thus helping to transform their conflict. This too is illustrated in the ending of the Central American civil wars. For example, in the 1980s, several Central American countries were racked by long-lasting and interlocked conflicts, making it difficult to settle any one of them in isolation. A large move toward resolution was made by the accord reached among the presidents of the five Central American countries, meeting in Esquipulas, Guatemala, as analyzed by Terrence Hopmann and by Paul Wehr and John Paul Lederach. Sometimes called the "Arias Plan," recognizing the great contributions of the president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, the Plan included three components to be implemented simultaneously and according to a fixed time schedule. The formula included ending the violent conflicts, promoting democracy, and fostering economic integration.

Since the early 1990s, governmental and nongovernmental organizations have greatly expanded peace-building activities, following international and domestic wars. The work goes beyond humanitarian relief and reconstruction assistance to include aid in institution building and reconciliation. Such aid is often crucial in achieving equitable and enduring accommodations.

### **Policies for Transformation**

Many persons and organizations undertake efforts that foster conditions conducive to transforming a protracted



and destructive conflict. The policies tend to differ for each stage of the transformation process: exploring possible transformations, initiating actions, reaching understandings, and implementing agreements. The policies may be directed at changing internal characteristics of one of the adversaries, the relationship between them, or their external context; effective strategies often combine efforts in all three areas.

### Effecting Internal Changes

Many efforts to transform a conflict, understandably, are attempts to influence one or more of the primary adversaries. So transformation often begins when members of one side recognize that they can initiate transformation by their own actions. Such policies may be long term as well as short term.

#### Long term

In considering transforming policies by an adversary party, it is important to recognize that policies are made not only from the top down, but also laterally, and from the grass roots, as discussed by John Paul Lederach. We begin by noting policies undertaken by the elites that may promote a transformation process. Such policies from above include leaders mobilizing popular support for de-escalation. In social systems with heterogeneity in the elite ranks, some of them may offer alternative policies to initiate and to foster de-escalation and conflict transformation. Those alternatives may be offered for discussion within the confines of the ruling group, or they may be set forth to gain constituent support. In the latter case the advocates may win office to carry out de-escalating policies or they may be regarded by the opposing side's leadership as receptive to a de-escalating deal. Top-down policies may also be directed at the opposing side's rank-and-file, encouraging them to pressure the other side's leadership to de-escalate the struggle.

At the middle-rank leadership level, policies of education and providing information about the other side are often usefully undertaken. Many analysts believe that the demonization of the enemy through schooling, the mass media, and other channels must be interrupted in order to enduringly transform intractable conflicts. Efforts to improve the image portrayed of the other side therefore have some immediate benefits for de-escalation, even aside from possible long-term effects.

Grass roots efforts also play a long-term role in conflict transformation by affecting members of each of the adversary sides. This includes the kind of socialization children experience in their families. There is evidence that harsh socialization can generate diffuse anger that tends to be displaced or otherwise expressed in hostile behavior toward external targets; raising children lovingly, therefore, is a contribution to later transformations because

more adults will be available to seize the opportunities to make them happen.

#### Short term

Some policies bringing about immediate internal changes that affect external conflicts are significantly undertaken from the top down, and individual leaders often play critical roles in bringing about these changes. For example, undoubtedly, Mikhail Gorbachev, as the leading figure in the Soviet Union in the late-1980s, initiated profound changes that set the stage for ending the Cold War. He promoted openness for organizational activity from below and public discussion of many issues; he convinced military and other Soviet elite groups that reducing the antagonisms of the Cold War were necessary for modernization and was possible to undertake safely; and he advocated an acceptance of universal standards of human rights and the rule of law. All this helped prepare Gorbachev's constituents for accommodation with the West and also provided powerful signals to the West that a transformative accommodation was possible.

The formulation and implementation of such policies also required the activities of leaders at the middle rank. Many leading Communist Party members, Soviet intellectuals, high-ranking government officials, and other middle-level leaders supported the choice of Gorbachev to head the Communist Party and to reform the Soviet system. Some of them used the opportunities then created to press for even faster and more fundamental reform. The transformation of the Soviet Union had a dynamic of its own and went farther and faster than its originators anticipated, thus it resulted in irreversible changes and the end of the Cold War.

Grass-root leaders, at the local level or in the lower ranks of organizations, often contribute to the transformation of a conflict, and even to the initiation of the transformation process. They may arouse and mobilize opposition to the struggle being waged by the larger society or organization to which they belong. Their actions include demonstrations and protests against destructively waged struggles. For example, peace movements often play critical roles in halting a conflict's escalation or speeding de-escalation. They also can play crucial roles in implementing and sustaining agreements that have been reached.

### Effecting the Relationship

Policies directed at altering the relationship between the adversaries can greatly contribute to transforming a protracted destructive conflict. Such policies may be long term and short term, and they may be pursued by intermediaries or by members of the opposing sides themselves.

**Long term**

The goal of many long-term policies to change adversary relations vary in the degree of integration or separation that is sought and also, very importantly, in the degree to which the accommodation is mutually accepted. Several specific policies with implications for a mutually accommodative transformation are worth noting. They too may be undertaken and pursued from the top down, laterally, or from below.

Policies to increase the well-being and power of the relatively weaker side tend to reduce the underlying conditions sustaining an intractable conflict. But not all such policies always serve to interrupt or limit destructive conflicts. Thus, when the leaders of a dominant group offer some redress to the less advantaged, there is the risk of evoking a backlash from their core constituents. Furthermore, the members of the disadvantaged community may have their expectations raised only to have them fail to be fulfilled, and consequently feel more frustrated than before. Thus, too, when members of a communal group, feeling that they are disadvantaged, pressure members of what they regard as the relatively advantaged communal group to improve their conditions, the members of the advantaged group are likely to feel threatened. This means that to effectively limit destructive conflicts, such policies should be carefully crafted and conducted in concert with other long-term policies.

Strengthening shared identities, such as American or Nigerian, may help limit communal conflicts within the United States or Nigeria. But here too, that may be experienced as domination by one communal group of others, as the effort to create a Soviet identity was felt by many in the former Soviet Union to be barely disguised Russian chauvinism. One solution to this dilemma is to frame the overarching identity in inclusive terms, and actualize that view in practice. Thus, national identity may be presented in nonethnic terms; for example, in the United States, being American is ideally open to anyone born in the country or who immigrates and swears to uphold the constitution. Insofar as some American citizens do not experience that as the reality, due to ethnic, racial, or other discrimination, the common identity is denied.

Increasingly, policies instituted from the top down as well as advocated from the middle and grass-roots leadership levels are directed at improving individual and collective rights of communal groups and their members. They help provide standards of conduct that contribute to formulating generally acceptable conflict outcomes, thus fostering conflict transformation. Support for such policies is to be found among groups whose members feel at risk, but among members of other groups as well. Furthermore, they provide a basis for external actors to intervene and help shape the relationship in a mutually acceptable manner. For example, the Organization on

Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities, based in The Hague, The Netherlands, convenes meetings, makes visits, advises, and through other procedures helps develop legislation, norms, and practices relating to minorities in member countries of the OSCE, including Kazakhstan, Estonia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Coercion may contribute to modifying an opponent's conduct and help to transform the conflict, if the coercion is precise and is combined with plausible benefits as well. Carrot and stick strategies often are employed in traditional politics and diplomacy. They appear to have been effective even in transforming the US–Libyan conflict from the violent overt and covert attacks during the presidency of Ronald Reagan to the normalization of relations in the administration of President George W. Bush. Many steps were taken to yield that result, including the UN sanctions following US and French indictments of Libyan agents for the bombings of American and French commercial airliners and the negotiated arrangements for the trial of two agents, all in the context of the US seeking particular changes in Libyan policies but not regime change. Further steps included the cessation of Libyan weapons-of-mass-destruction programs and reopening of commercial petroleum relations.

Finally, some policies are aimed at increasing the interaction between members of the opposing sides. This tends to enhance mutual understanding and dependence. Soviet–American cultural exchanges, for example, were initiated and conducted at several levels of leadership in the two societies. For members of each side, the exchanges tended to undermine the demonization of the people in the other side. The establishment of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOS), bringing together people engaged in the same occupational, humanitarian, or recreational activity, is another way bonds are created between members of adversary countries. Similarly, within a society, organizations based on a particular interests or identities, may include members with diverse and cross-cutting concerns. Such relations contribute to recognizing the diversities within the other side in a conflict, and so increase the conflict de-escalation.

In addition, dialogue groups, interactive problem-solving workshops, and other nonofficial ways of bringing representatives of adversarial sides together are often undertaken by middle-rank persons, for example from the academic or religious worlds. Through such experiences, representatives of adversarial sides are better able to analyze the conflict, reach better mutual understanding, imagine solutions, and develop relationships that become relevant for official negotiations, as examined by Herbert Kelman. The initiators of such policies are often based outside of any of the adversarial camps.

**Short term**

Many short-term policies can improve the relationship between adversaries, when partisans or interveners seek to de-escalate a struggle. One fundamental element, as a destructive conflict becomes transformed, is mutual recognition and reassurance. This generally takes many steps. Often, a significant step is mediated or direct conversations at the personal level between leaders of the opposing sides, who come to see each other as full human beings.

In addition, public events at which the mutual recognition or gesture of reconciliation is celebrated demonstrate and deepen the commitments previously made. For example, the well-choreographed handshake between Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin at the signing of the Oslo Accords on 13 September 1993, in Washington increased their and their peoples' commitment to the Accords. Such ceremonies increase the visibility and grass-roots support for the move toward transformation. However, as the collapse of the Oslo peace process demonstrates, a transformation process can be reversed without continuing determined mutual efforts to sustain it.

In the case of conflicts within a society, actions taken by middle-range or grass-roots leaders from opposing sides to solve immediate tasks at the local level can serve as a superordinate goal, and so help overcome the antagonisms of the conflict, as analyzed by Muzafer Sherif. Widely shared common goals may be the basis for top-down policies of mutual accommodation. For example, in Malaysia, the conflict between the Malay and Chinese communities erupted in riots in 1969, but has been managed by policies of accommodation, including affirmative action policies. These policies have been premised and sustained by the widely shared desire to improve earnings and not allow ethnic struggles to disrupt economic progress.

In the case of conflicts involving different societies, efforts to find and advance superordinate goals generally need to be undertaken from the top down. The ideas, however, may be formulated and advocated by middle-range leaders. The efforts may pertain to regional developments relating to water or to particular industries. For example, the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 played a crucial role in the transformation of Franco-German enmity.

Middle-rank leaders frequently provide alternative channels of communication between high-rank leaders and other middle-rank leaders of the opposing sides. This can be important in the early stage of conflict transformation, when the possibilities of conflict de-escalation and transformation are being explored. This was the case, for example, in the arrangements for meetings, outside of South Africa, by Afrikaner students and business leaders with ANC officials, as facilitated and analyzed by Henderick van der Merwe. Later, when negotiations are

underway, such unofficial channels, sometimes called Track II diplomacy, help the transformation process by generating new options to overcome barriers.

**Affecting the Context****Long term**

Partisans as well as external actors may undertake policies to modify the social context sustaining a seemingly intractable conflict. One policy is to reframe the conflict and locate it in a changed context. High-ranking leaders may be able to institute policies that change the context as a way of achieving their goals and transform a conflict that they despair of winning. For example, Anwar Sadat, soon after succeeding Gamal Nasser as president of Egypt, in 1970, began to orient Egyptian policy away from an alliance with the Soviet Union toward the United States. By moving the Egyptian–Israeli conflict from being overlaid by the Cold War, to lie within the Western side, he thought the United States would help resolve the Egyptian–Israeli conflict on terms he could accept. This did contribute in many ways to the transformation of that protracted struggle.

Another kind of top-down reframing of a conflict may be seen in the shift by President Richard M. Nixon to detente with the Soviet Union and improved relations with the People's Republic of China in the early 1970s; this was part of a strategy to end the war in Vietnam on terms acceptable to his administration. Reframing can also occur when the parties directly engaged in the conflict transformation process are changed. Thus, the transformation of the conflict in Northern Ireland was aided by the engagement of the Republic of Ireland in the negotiation process.

A major context-changing policy is to establish new institutional structures that consist of many members, including adversaries. For example, during the Cold War, NATO and Warsaw Pact negotiations about European relations were ultimately successful in reaching the Helsinki Accords in 1975 when the negotiations were conducted in a broader setting that included European countries that were members of neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact. That setting was the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later the OSCE). The development of the institutions of Western Europe helps ease national conflicts within European countries because of their emphasis on regions and because increasingly decisions about various matters are made in the headquarters of European institutions and not wholly in the country capitals.

The external context is an important source of intervention to transform a conflict. Partisans and/or external agents may try to arouse attention from others in the world to act so as to help transform the conflict. For example, they may seek to expose human rights abuses,

killings, and other forms of oppression so that official and nonofficial action may be taken to stop such repression. The mass media are an increasingly important agency for calling attention to erupting destructive conflicts. Such attention helps spur intervention by external actors, often undertaken from the top down. Within each country, government officials often take actions to control industrial, ethnic, and other conflicts. Increasingly, this is also true for external official intervention in ethnic and other conflicts in foreign countries.

### Short term

The preceding discussion is also relevant for short-term policies. Once the conflict has become protracted, policies are generally focused on ending the violence that is being committed. External sanctions and arms sales limitations can affect the balance of power and reduce the prospects of a future imposed settlement. That tends to foster movement toward a negotiated settlement.

External actors can also provide resources that make a mutual accommodation less risky than it otherwise would appear to be. For example, the US government provided benefits that gave some reassurance to Israel and Egypt upon their signing a peace treaty in 1979. This support was crucial for implementing and sustaining the treaty.

Many policies, particularly by intermediaries, are intended to provide services that facilitate communication and problem-solving work between adversaries. This includes using informal, nonofficial channels to transmit information about each side's views of the other. It also includes top-down policies by officials who try to reconfigure a conflict, changing the combination of stakeholders. For example, the 1991 Madrid conference on peace in the Middle East was part of a process brokered by US Secretary of State James A. Baker, that ingeniously combined three negotiating fora, each with a different set of parties: a brief multilateral conference of the primary adversaries, bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians, and regional negotiations about shared problems.

### Conclusions

The transformation of conflicts is neither the result of immutable, large-scale forces nor of the actions of a few brave and wise persons. Several circumstances converge and interpretations of those new circumstances transform a conflict. It is not the result of one party imposing its will, but neither is force and coercion irrelevant.

Even protracted, destructively waged conflicts often become transformed in a mutually acceptable manner. This is generally the consequence of a confluence of changing conditions within one or more of the adversary sides, in their relationship, and in their social context. In

some cases, changes in one of these sets of conditions are especially important; but changes in the other conditions also make contributions to the transformation process. People in various positions within each of the contending sides, or even outside them, must take advantage of those new conditions to actually transform the conflict. In varying degrees, conflicts are transformed by policies intentionally conducted by some of the partisans in the struggle and/or by external agents. Although undertaken, the process is not irreversible; thoughtful and persistent work by many people is needed to sustain the process of transformation.

All policies are affected by value preferences. They are directed to achieve purposes that are deemed desirable by those conducting them. In actuality, everyone has many goals and any given policy implies an ordering of their relative priority. Thus, in transforming a destructive conflict, many people generally want to reduce or to stop killings, to achieve a just outcome as they conceive it, to achieve an enduring accommodation, to have the wrongs they experienced in the past acknowledged, and to attain many other objectives. No policy can maximize the attainment of all such goals simultaneously, although they may be advanced sequentially.

Conflict outcomes are never fully symmetrical. One side's goals may be less realized than another's, and its members must accommodate to the current realities. The accommodation, nevertheless, can include the attainment of some of what each stakeholder had wanted. Even new, shared goals may take on high priority and be the source of shared gratification. The transformation of the conflict in itself can sometimes be the cause of celebration and pride by most of the people who had previously been engaged in a struggle they had waged too destructively for too long.

*See also:* Cold War; Conflict Management and Resolution; Conflict Theory; Diplomacy; International Relations, Overview; Peace Culture; Peaceful Societies; Social Theorizing About War and Peace; United Nations, The

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## Conformity and Obedience

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### Glossary

**Authoritarianism** A set of beliefs about authority. High authoritarians rely upon authority, defer to it, and support a hierarchical social structure.

**Cohesiveness** A set of relationships among individuals that includes liking, acceptance of common goals with voluntary effort toward them, and willingness to sacrifice to maintain the group as an integral unit.

**Conformity** Behavior that matches that of one or more others.

**Frame of Reference** A set of related beliefs that operates as a standard for the assessment of information and evaluation of behavior.

**Obedience** A response that is consistent with the requests or demands of another.

**Social Facilitation** Increased rate of response on the part of a member of a species in the presence of conspecifics.

**Social Norm** A standard or typical belief or point of view held by a group.

Conformity and obedience are intrinsic components of most social behavior including group violence. Conformity represents behavioral uniformity within a collectivity while obedience identifies behavior that implies

hierarchical distinctions. Both frequently result from coercive forces that undermine individual expression. Both simplify the social environment and therefore reduce anxiety for many. Conformity may reduce intragroup conflict.