Conflict Resolution Overview
Louis Kriesberg

THE
OXFORD INTERNATIONAL
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

PEACE

Nigel J. Young

Editor in Chief

VOLUME 1

Abraham Path Initiative–Dunant, Henri

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2010

management, constructive conflict, and conflict transformation. CR does not refer to terminating conflicts by unilateral impositions. Humans have engaged in conflicts since the origin of the species and have waged them using CR as well as other approaches. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, a body of thought and practice began to emerge that explicitly developed ways in which conflicts could be conducted and settled that were mutually acceptable to the antagonists. Here the characteristics of the contemporary CR approach are examined, the field's development is discussed, and the contemporary specializations are reviewed.

The relationship between CR and peace studies, broadly understood, deserves noting at the outset; they are complex, and they are evolving. Ideas associated with peace studies contributed to CR as it began to emerge in the 1950s. Then, in the 1970s, as the CR field rapidly expanded, many of its formulations and practices were incorporated into peace studies. The fields continue to complement each other, with peace workers stressing goals and CR workers stressing constructive ways of struggling for stable and equitable relations.

Core Ideas and Practices

In the CR approach, theories and methods derive from thorough analyses of conflicts that include the multitude of contending parties, their perceived issues in contention, and the available means each party has to affect its adversaries. In the CR approach attention is given to the ways that conflicts are transformed so that they are no longer regarded as contentious relationships in which one side gains only at the expense of the other. Such changes can result from actions of the adversaries, or from mediators and other intermediaries, or from developments in the socio-political environment.

Adversaries often adopt strategies of interaction that emphasize shared concerns or interests based upon shared identities or complementary interests based on interdependencies and thereby reveal mutually acceptable solutions. These interests may be jointly constructed or discovered by mutual listening. Adversaries may also discover complementary interests as they comprehend the other's actual interests that underly the positions initially put forward and by acknowledging their own underlying interests. New options for settling their dispute may be created by joint brainstorming, by packaging trade-offs, or by adding new resources from outside the conflict. They may rely on persuasion as the means of building consensus while reducing or eliminating threats of coercion and injuries. They may change the

An Overview

The term conflict resolution (CR) includes a wide array of ideas and practices, many of which are also included under these terms: dispute settlement, problem-solving negotiation and mediation, conflict mitigation, conflict

structure of their conflict and negotiations by including additional stakeholders in the conflict or by excluding parties that reject possible settlements.

In the CR approach, much attention is given to various intermediary interventions that help adversaries reach agreeable outcomes. They include organizing dialogue circles, providing training workshops, and conducting mediation. Mediation may be carried out by powerful officials or by non-official go-betweens. Mediation includes a wide variety of services: providing a safe, neutral place for negotiators to meet; transmitting information between adversaries who do not communicate or do so poorly; suggesting new options; adding resources; and assuring implementation of agreement elements.

External developments can also help transform conflicts so that they are conducted constructively. Shared threats may become salient, reducing the importance of the conflict in which the adversaries were engaged. By "enlarging the pie" additional resources may become available, making it easier for both sides to obtain more of what they seek, in a non–zero-sum situation. Institutional changes may also provide legitimate procedures to conduct and settle particular kinds of conflicts and to limit coercive confrontations. However, the breakdown of such institutions can result in destructive escalations of violent conflicts.

Conflicts tend to move through several general stages: emerging, escalating, sometimes stalemating, de-escalating, terminating, and recovering (Kriesberg 2007; Lederach 1997). Different conflict resolution strategies and tactics tend to be effective at various conflict stages.

Every conflict is unique and should be approached freshly, but each with certain regards. Familiarity with many strategies and tactics that have made for constructive progress helps partisans and intermediaries to develop novel and effective ways of responding to unique conflicts.

Of course, at a given time, with available resources, and in particular relationships, transformational redefinition may not be possible for a particular conflict. Each specific conflict, however, is usually embedded within, overlays, or is otherwise linked over time and space to additional conflicts. Changes in any of these other conflicts can help transform the particular conflict that is the focus of attention. For example, its salience may rise or fall, depending on the changes in the salience of linked conflicts. Thus, the competing leadership factions within one camp may change in their relative dominance, and with that, the intensity of the conflict with an external adversary may change.

Development

The contemporary CR approach developed from the synthesis of a wide range of experiences in waging and ending conflicts and from a diverse set of intellectual forbearers. Four periods of CR development are discussed here: 1914–1945, when ideas and actions laid the groundwork for the emergence of the CR field; 1946–1969, a period of early efforts and basic research; 1970–1985, when the CR field crystallized and expanded; and 1986–2006, a time of differentiation and institutionalization of the field.

1914–1945. Widespread revulsion at the devastation and deaths in World War I resulted in initiatives intended to prevent such wars in the future. Many nongovernmental groups (NGOs) advocated pacifism, in some cases based on religious convictions. Other organizations, drawing upon Marxism, argued that capitalist imperialism was the underlying cause of such wars and advanced socialist and communist programs as solutions. The Soviet Union and associated organizations advocated this view, but interpreted it to serve the interests of the Soviet leaders, which helped to discredit this analysis. More conventionally, many governments joined together and established the League of Nations, and several agreements such as the Kellogg–Briand Pact, were signed in an effort to avert wars. However, the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy and the recognition of the totalitarian character of Stalinism in the Soviet Union made these efforts seem inadequate. In actuality, governments and publics tried to deal with conflicts in traditional ways, advancing their narrow interests and relying upon military force. The results were the wars in Spain and in China that culminated in World War II.

Other developments during this period were precursors to peace research and conflict resolution. They included scholarly research and social innovations that pointed to alternative ways of thinking about and conducting conflicts, including wars. These included studies of arms races, of war frequencies, and of peace making, notably by Lewis Fry Richardson, Quincy Wright, David Mitrany, and Pitirim Sorokin. Other scholarly work examined the bases for conflicts generally, for example, research on psychological and social-psychological processes by Kurt Lewin, John Dollard, and others. Labor–management relations was an important arena of conflict in which theories and practices developed, influencing CR's evolution. Mediation and arbitration

grew as an important part of collective bargaining; Mary Parker Follett influentially wrote about labor-management negotiations that would produce mutual benefits.

1946–1969. Between 1946 and 1969, the ground was prepared for the coming of the CR field. National liberation movements in the de-colonization process were the source of CR-relevant practices, and the Cold War also motivated the creation of alternative strategies and ways of thinking. Indian independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, achieved by nonviolent resistance, modeled methods of constructive escalation. Strategies of nonviolent struggle and associated negotiations were further developed in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1960s. Also, Soviet–American negotiations about arms control and other issues were aided by high-level, non-official, regular meetings, starting with the Pugwash conferences in 1957 and the Dartmouth conferences in 1960.

A variety of scholarly endeavors emerged during this period that became the bases for the CR field. These included the collection and analyses of quantitative data about various kinds of international relations, focusing on variables affecting interstate wars, cooperation and security, as illustrated in the work of J. David Singer (*Research Origins and Rationale*), Karl Deutsch, and others (*Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*). The logic of game theory has demonstrated how individually rational conduct can be collectively self-defeating. Important research and theories have focused on ways that conflicting relations can result in mutually beneficial outcomes (e.g., by Muzafer Sherif and by Charles E. Osgood). Some academics began conducting problem-solving workshops with officials or often with non-officials from countries in conflict; thus, John W. Burton, in 1965, organized a productive workshop with official representatives from Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

Conflict resolution and peace research institutions and journals were initiated during this period. In 1959, the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution was established at the University of Michigan in the United States and the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) was established in Oslo, Norway. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* began publication in 1957 at the University of Michigan, and the *Journal of Peace Research* began publication in 1964, based at the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway.

1970–1985. Between 1970 and 1985, CR took shape as a field and grew quickly, in a social context that was changing in several relevant ways. The Cold War entered a period of détente, followed by conflict intensification in 1979–1985. The détente of the early 1970s was marked by U.S.–Soviet arms control agreements, cultural exchanges, and negotiated accommodations in Europe. However, those relations deteriorated and, in the early 1980s the antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified, exacerbated by supporting antagonists in wars in Afghanistan, Central America, and Southern Africa. The American society and many other societies were undergoing profound changes that were manifested in the social movements in the 1960s around issues including equal rights for minorities, women, the poor, and protection of the environment.

Building on earlier CR developments, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) arose to meet new needs, especially in the United States. ADR enlists community-based centers that provide mediation services for various civil disputes, including marital divorce. They are staffed largely with volunteers and professionals, often lawyers, trained in mediation skills. CR applications were also used in this period in a wide variety of negotiations, in business transactions, in organizational management, in multi-lateral conferences, and in international conflicts. Theories and methods of negotiation yielding mutual benefits flourished, with *Getting to YES* (Fisher and Ury) being particularly influential.

Although negotiation and mediation seemed to be the core of CR research and practice, other areas of research and application were also developing, for example, for getting adversaries to the table and for deciding who should be there. Earlier in the conflict cycle, increasing attention began to be given to initiating conflict de-escalation and conflict transformation. The quality and durability of the agreements that are reached and recovery after mass violence are also areas on which more attention was focused.

Important new centers for CR and peace work became established, and new sources of financial support emerged. In 1970 the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt was established in Germany; and in 1971 Uppsala University in Sweden established a Department of Peace and Conflict Research. In 1973, the Department of Peace Studies was founded at the University of Bradford, United Kingdom. In 1982, the Carter Center was established in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, and Search for Common Ground

was established in Washington, D.C. In 1984, the United States Institute of Peace was founded by the U.S. Congress. A major grant-funding program to foster academically based CR theory-building centers was begun by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in 1984.

1986–2006. Since 1985, the CR field has continued to grow into a body of knowledge and experience that has spread around the world. Training in CR is becoming more institutionalized, and its ideas are diffusing more widely in the United States and in many other countries. Consequently, the CR approach is having an increasing impact upon the way conflicts are conducted, and it is also being affected by the changing character of large-scale conflicts.

Among the many fundamental global changes that have occurred since 1985, a few have particular relevance for the evolution of the CR field. The Soviet Union began a domestic restructuring that led to the end of the Cold War in 1989 and to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Major societal conflicts relating to ethnic and other communal differences spiked, and the UN, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and other international organizations became much more active and effective in intervening in large-scale conflicts and adopting many conflict analysis and resolution practices. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s, many more conflicts have ended with negotiated agreements, and the overall incidence of interstate and intrastate wars has declined, as examined in the *Human Security Report* and in the work of Peter Wallensteen, Monty Marshall, and Ted R. Gurr.

CR work relating to de-escalation, particularly pertaining to the Cold War, was a focus for research, policy advocacy, and practice in the 1980s. This included the negotiation and implementation of confidence-building measures, for example, agreements between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries for advance notification of military exercises. It included the research (and advocacy) by European peace and conflict researchers about how the military postures of NATO and the Warsaw Pact were mutually threatening; they studied the possibilities of non-provocative defense strategies and convincingly conveyed those ideas to Soviet officials. All this contributed to the end of the Cold War with the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, who implemented a graduated reciprocation in tension-reduction (GRIT) strategy, proposed by Osgood (1962), which Ronald Reagan recognized and significantly reciprocated.

In 1985–1988, officials in international and national agencies and persons working in nongovernmental organizations adopted elements of the CR approach and played important roles in many of the peacemaking and peacebuilding undertakings of the 1990s and afterward. Their work includes consulting and training in order to help establish and maintain institutions and norms that help avoid the eruption of violent conflicts. Another area of significant CR applications by governments, IGOs, and NGOs, is in the aftermath of violent conflicts. This includes help in implementing agreements, fostering reconciliation, and building institutions that enable conflicts to be handled constructively.

Simultaneously, research and theory building is increasing, with greater attention to the effectiveness of various kinds of CR interventions. Training in CR is also increasing in many professional fields: law, public administration, business management, diplomacy, and military affairs. Graduate degree programs expand, particularly at the M.A. level, and a few at the Ph.D. level. The first American doctoral programs specifically in conflict resolution were established in 1987 at George Mason University, a few years later at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, United States, in conflict analysis and resolution, and in 2005 at the University of Manitoba, Canada (Peace and Conflict Studies). Many institutions of higher education worldwide, such as Bradford (UK), have started certificate programs associated with master's degree and doctoral programs.

Differentiation

CR has expanded in so many ways that specialization by workers in the field is necessary for most endeavors. This may be in terms of the role played by the conflict resolvers, by the scale of the conflicts, by the social system within which they occur, by the stage of the conflicts, or by a combination of these factors.

In terms of conflict, CR workers give increasing attention to preventing the emergence of destructive conflicts. One body of study and practice in this area is about designing and building procedures and institutions to handle conflicts in ways adversaries find legitimate and satisfactory, without recourse to destructive escalation. For example, relevant work is underway on participatory governance, citizen engagement in rule making, and devising appropriate political settings. In addition, some conflict resolvers specialize in developing networks, dialogue circles, curricular materials, television programs, and workshops to increase contact

across possible adversarial cleavages, to increase mutual understanding across such lines, and to put CR methods into practice. Finally, other workers in this field emphasize the development of common interests and identities across partisan lines.

Some CR workers focus on activities related to stopping destructive conflict escalation. This includes training and advocating for methods of struggle that may reduce the likelihood of violent escalation, such as the use of nonviolent sanctions. It also includes various intermediary campaigns: exploring settlement options, providing mediating services, and halting support for the adversaries, as well as isolating and limiting their escalation of violence.

Finally, many conflict resolvers provide assistance in a great variety of programs contributing to enduring and equitable peace during the post-settlement and post-violence periods. These include aiding in implementing agreements, assisting in building peace-sustaining institutions, and fostering various aspects of reconciliation between former antagonists.

Assessment

CR covers a wide array of issues, is studied and practiced from a great many perspectives, and is often referred to as an approach or as a multi-disciplinary field of work, rather than as a discipline in itself. As it has evolved and diffused, CR has taken on a large variety of special foci of research and practice. This differentiation is likely to continue to increase.

Persons working in the CR field pursue many different kinds of activities, including researching, theorizing, consulting, training, advocating policies, and implementing CR ideas in ongoing conflicts. The interplay among persons pursuing those various activities is generally seen as useful, even essential, to CR's further advancement.

There is evidence that utilization of the CR approach contributes to averting and stopping large-scale destructive conflicts. The notable increase in peace agreements and the perceived decline in wars since the end of the 1980s may be partly attributable to the increasing use of CR methods, whether consciously or unwittingly undertaken. Recourse to large-scale targeting of civilians and wars in the Middle East at the beginning of the twenty-first century may seem to contradict those trends. The various non-state Salafist Islamic organizations, the U.S. government headed by George W. Bush, and many other state and non-state actors have failed to utilize the CR approach and to recognize new

developments associated with globalism and the end of the Cold War. The failure to draw upon possible CR practices contributed to the unforeseen, destructive escalations and great losses for many people in each camp of adversaries.

[*See also* Conflict Analysis; Constructive Conflicts; De-escalation in Conflict, Theory of; Dispute Resolution, Alternative Forms of; Mediation, Formal; *and* Peacebuilding.]

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LOUIS KRIESBERG