

*To peacemakers everywhere,
and especially to those whose
pioneering work in the 1950s
and 1960s inspired us to
write this book*

Contemporary Conflict Resolution

*The prevention, management and
transformation of deadly conflicts*

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Polity Press

Introduction

The international community is faced with a wave of new conflicts. Taken together they amount to nothing less than an epochal watershed: a time that future historians may describe as the moment when humanity seized – or failed to seize – the opportunity to replace obsolescent mechanisms for resolving human conflict.

Michael Renner

Conflict resolution as a defined specialist field has come of age in the post-Cold War era. It has also come face to face with fundamental new challenges.

It started in the 1950s and 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, when the development of nuclear weapons and the conflict between the super-powers seemed to threaten human survival. A group of pioneers from different disciplines saw the value of studying conflict as a general phenomenon, with similar properties whether it occurs in international relations, domestic politics, industrial relations, communities, families or between individuals. They saw the potential of applying approaches that were evolving in industrial relations and community mediation settings to conflicts in general, including civil and international conflicts.

A handful of people in North America and Europe began to establish research groups to develop these new ideas. They were not taken very seriously. The international relations profession had its own categories for understanding international conflict, and did not welcome the interlopers. Nor was the combination of analysis and practice implicit in the new ideas easy to reconcile with traditional scholarly institutions or the traditions of practitioners such as diplomats and politicians.

Nevertheless, the new ideas attracted interest, and the field began to grow and spread. Scholarly journals in conflict resolution were created. Institutions to study the field were established, and their number rapidly

increased. The field developed its own subdivisions, with different groups studying international crises, internal wars, social conflicts and approaches ranging from negotiations and mediation to experimental games.

By the 1980s, conflict resolution ideas were increasingly making a difference in real conflicts. In South Africa, for example, the Centre for Intergroup Studies was applying the approaches that had developed in the field to the developing confrontation between apartheid and its challengers, with impressive results. In the Middle East, a peace process was getting under way in which negotiators on both sides were gaining experience of each other and of conflict resolution through problem-solving workshops. In Northern Ireland, groups inspired by the new approach had set up community relations initiatives that were not only reaching across community divides but were also becoming an accepted responsibility of local government. In war-torn regions of Africa and South-East Asia, development workers and humanitarian agencies were seeing the need to take account of conflict and conflict resolution as an integral part of their activities.

By the closing years of the Cold War, the climate for conflict resolution was changing radically. With relations between the superpowers improving, the ideological and military competition that had fuelled many regional conflicts was fading away. Protracted regional conflicts in Southern Africa, Central America, and East Asia moved towards settlements. It seemed that the UN could return to play the role its founders expected.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought to a close the long period in which a single international conflict dominated the international system. Instead, internal conflicts, ethnic conflicts, conflicts over secession and power struggles within countries became the norm. These reflected not so much struggles between competing centres of power, of the kind that had characterized international conflict for most of the 350 years since the peace of Westphalia, but the fragmentation and breakdown of state structures, economies and whole societies. At their extreme, in parts of Africa, the new wars witnessed the return of mercenary armies and underpaid militias which preyed on civilian populations in a manner reminiscent of medieval times.

In this new climate, the attention of scholars of international relations and comparative politics turned to exactly the type of conflict that had preoccupied the conflict resolution thinkers for many years. A richer cross-fertilization of ideas developed between conflict resolution and these traditional fields. At the same time, practitioners from various backgrounds were attracted to conflict resolution. International statesmen began to use the language, international organizations set up Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and Conflict Prevention Centres. A former President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, became one of the most active leaders of a conflict resolution non-governmental organization (NGO). A former Foreign Minister of the USSR, Eduard Shevardnadze, set up an organization to address ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union. The

Nyerere Foundation was established with comparable aims for Africa. Overseas development ministries in several countries set up conflict units and began funding conflict prevention and resolution initiatives on a significant scale. How to achieve a peaceful settlement of disputes between states was a familiar theme in the international relations and strategic studies literature and had always been part of the stock-in-trade of international diplomacy. Less familiar was the challenge to statist international organizations of managing non-state conflicts.

A greater degree of impact, however, also brought greater scrutiny, and the development of searching critiques from different quarters. Conflict resolution had always been controversial, both in relation to outside disciplines, and internally amongst its different protagonists and schools. It also drew persistent fire from critics at different points on the political and intellectual spectrum. On the one hand, realists saw conflict resolution as soft-headed and unrealistic, since in their view international politics is a struggle between antagonistic and irreconcilable groups, in which power and coercion were the only ultimate currency. Might not lasting peace more often result from decisive military victory than from negotiated settlement? And might not third party intervention merely prolong the misery? The ideological preconceptions of some of those working in the peace research and conflict resolution field were regarded as compromising, and the attempt to combine 'scientific' academic analysis with a normative political agenda as intellectually suspect. From a different angle, neo-Marxists and radical thinkers from development studies saw the whole conflict resolution enterprise as misconceived, since it attempted to reconcile interests that should not be reconciled, failed to take sides in unequal and unjust struggles, and lacked an analysis within a properly global perspective of the forces of exploitation and oppression. Beneath this lay the fundamental question whether any value is worth fighting for at all. Other critics were less prepared to reject conflict resolution outright, but were sceptical of overblown claims made for the field, and unconvinced that methods developed within a western setting could overcome their cultural boundaries and offer useful tools in very different cultures and political systems. They also questioned whether the models of conflict resolution that were developed during the Cold War still have application to post-Cold War conflicts.

This last criticism was the most searching. Are we witnessing a fundamentally new kind of conflict, to which previous ideas do not apply? If modern conflicts are becoming neo-medieval struggles between warlords, drug barons, mercenaries and militias who benefit from war and have found it their only means of making a living, of what value will be efforts to resolve conflicts between them peacefully? Can conflict resolution apply in situations such as those that have prevailed in Bosnia, where ethnonationalist leaders whipped up ethnic hatred and courted war in order to serve their own political purposes? Is conflict resolution based on values of liberal internationalism which fail to grasp that the new conflicts

are a by-product of the impact of westernization and liberal internationalism on the rest of the world?

This book argues that, on the contrary, the developing tradition of thinking about conflict and conflict resolution is all the more relevant as the fixed structures of sovereignty and governance break down. All over the world, societies are facing stresses from population growth, structural change in the world economy, migration into cities, environmental degradation and rapid social change. Societies with institutions, rules or norms for managing conflict and well-established traditions of governance are generally better able to accommodate peacefully to change; those with weaker governance, fragile social bonds and little consensus on values or traditions are more likely to buckle. Strengthening the capacity of conflict resolution within societies and political institutions, especially preventatively, is a vital part of the response to the phenomena of warlordism and ethnonationalism. We argue that conflict resolution has a role to play, even in war zones, since building peace constituencies and understandings across divided communities is an essential element of humanitarian engagement. We argue that conflict resolution is an integral part of the work towards development, social justice and social transformation, which aims to tackle the problems of which mercenaries and child soldiers are symptoms. We argue for a broad understanding of conflict resolution, to include not only mediation between the parties but efforts to address the wider context in which international actors, domestic constituencies and intra-party relationships sustain violent conflicts. Finally, we argue that although the theories and practices of conflict resolution we deal with spring from western roots, every culture and society has its own version of what is, after all, a general social and political need. The point is not to abandon conflict resolution because it is western, but to find ways to enrich western and non-western traditions through their mutual encounter.

In making these arguments, we recognize that conflict resolution itself is changing and developing, as it must, to deal with the changing nature of conflict. Our main purpose is to foster an understanding of contemporary conflicts and to indicate how the practice and thinking of contemporary conflict resolution is changing in response. In doing so, we aim to offer a picture of the range of organizations and individuals that are involved in the field, not only in international organizations and NGOs but also in political parties and at grass-roots level in societies in conflict. We will review the theories and practices of conflict resolution, pointing to the new methods and approaches, the difficulties and dilemmas they face, and the broadening scope of their application.

Introduction to Conflict Resolution

First, we briefly introduce some of the classical ideas that have shaped conflict resolution thinking and practice and are still foundations of the field. We give a fuller account of their development in chapter 2.

Classical ideas

Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change. It is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints. But the way we deal with conflict is a matter of habit and choice. It is possible to change habitual responses and exercise intelligent choices.

Conflict approaches

One typical habit in conflict is to give very high priority to defending one's own interests. If Cain's interests clash with Abel's, Cain is inclined to ignore Abel's interests or actively to damage them. Leaders of nations are expected to defend the national interest and to defeat the interests of others if they come into conflict. But this is not the only possible response.

Figure 1.1 illustrates five approaches to conflict, distinguished by whether concern for Self and concern for Other are high or low. Cain has high concern for Self and low concern for Other: this is a 'contending' style. Another alternative is to yield: this implies more concern for the interests of Other than Self. Another is to avoid conflict and withdraw: this suggests low concern for both Self and Other. Another is to balance concern for the interests of Self and Other, leading to a search for accommodation and compromise. And there is a fifth alternative, seen by many in the conflict resolution field as the one to be recommended where possible – high regard for the interests both of Self and Other. This implies strong assertion of one's own interest, but equal awareness of the aspirations and needs of the other, generating energy to search for a creative problem-solving outcome.

Win-lose, lose-lose, win-win outcomes

What happens when the conflict approaches of two parties are considered together? Parties to conflicts are usually inclined to see their interests as diametrically opposed. The possible outcomes are seen to be win-lose (one wins, the other loses) or compromise (they split their difference). But there is a much more common outcome in violent conflicts: both lose. If neither is able to impose an outcome or is prepared to compromise, the

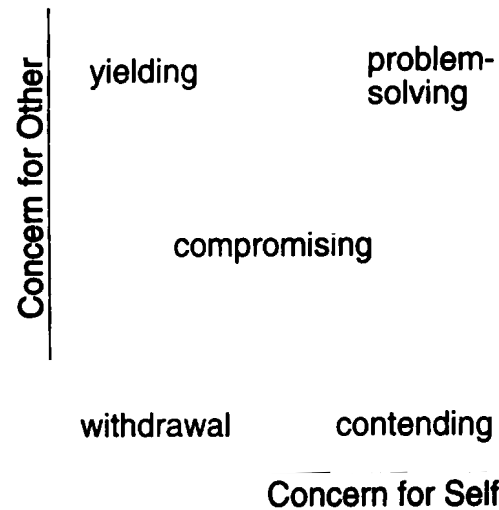


Figure 1.1 Five approaches to conflict

conflictants may impose such massive costs on each other that all of the parties end up worse off than they would have been had another strategy been adopted. In conflict resolution analysis this is found to be a much more common outcome than is generally supposed. When this becomes clear to the parties (often regrettably late in the day), there is a strong motive based on self-interest for moving towards other outcomes, such as compromise or win-win. The spectrum of such outcomes may well be wider than conflictants suppose.

Traditionally, the task of conflict resolution has been seen as helping parties who perceive their situation as zero-sum¹ (Self's gain is Other's loss) to re-perceive it as a non-zero-sum conflict (in which both may gain or both may lose) and then to assist parties to move in the positive-sum direction. Figure 1.2 shows various possible outcomes of the conflict between Cain and Abel. Any point towards the right is better for Abel, any point towards the top is better for Cain. In the Bible, the prize is the Lord's favour. Cain sees the situation as a zero-sum conflict: at point 1 (his best outcome) he gets the Lord's favour, at 2 (his worst) the Lord favours Abel. All the other possibilities lie on the line from 1 to 2 in which the Lord divides his favour, more or less equally, between the two brothers. Point 3 represents a possible compromise position. But it is the other diagonal, representing the non-zero-sum outcomes, that is the more interesting from a conflict resolution perspective: the mutual loss that actually occurred, at 0, when Abel was slain and Cain lost the Lord's favour, and the mutual gain that they missed, at 4, if each had been his brother's keeper.

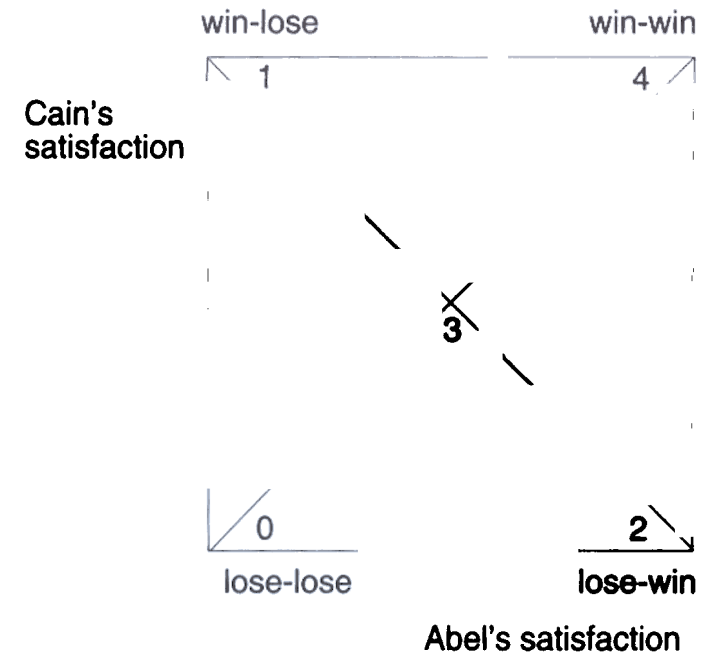


Figure 1.2 Zero-sum and non-zero-sum outcomes

Prisoner's Dilemma and the evolution of cooperation

Prisoner's Dilemma is a simple representation in game theory, which clearly illustrates the tendency for contending strategies to end in lose-lose outcomes. Two players (prisoners accused of crime) each have two choices: to cooperate with each other (remain silent) or to defect (inform on the other). The choices must be made in ignorance of what the other will do (they are kept in separate cells). The possible pay-offs are given in table 1.1. It can be seen that, whatever choice the other may make, each player considered singly gains a higher pay-off by choosing to defect (if the other cooperates, defection earns 5 points rather than 3; if the other defects, defection earns 1 point rather than 0). So the only rational course is to defect. But this is not the best outcome for either, since, whereas mutual defection earns 1 point each, mutual cooperation would have earned both of them 3 points. So the individually rational choice turns out to deliver a mutual lose-lose outcome. The collectively rational choice is for both to cooperate, reaching the elusive win-win outcome (point 4 in figure 1.2). But if both could communicate and agree to go for mutual cooperation, how can each guarantee that the other will not subsequently

Table 1 Prisoner's Dilemma

	Cooperate	Defect
Cooperate	3, 3	5, 0
Defect	0, 5	1, 1

defect, tempted by the 5-point prize? In this kind of social trap, self-interested parties can readily get stuck at lose-lose outcomes.

The trap depends on the game being played only once. If each move is part of a sequence of repeated games, there are possibilities for cooperative behaviour to evolve. In a well-known series of experiments, Axelrod (1984) invited experts to submit programs for a Prisoner's Dilemma competition run on computer. A spectrum of 'nice' and 'nasty' strategies was submitted and each was tested in pairs against all the others in repeated interactions. The surprise clear overall winner was a simple strategy called 'Tit-for-Tat' (submitted by the conflict resolution analyst Anatol Rapaport), which began by cooperating on the first move, and thereafter copied what the other had done on the previous move. The repeated overall success of Tit-for-Tat shows, in Dawkins's phrase, that, contrary to a widely held view about competitive environments of this kind (including Darwinian natural selection), 'nice guys finish first' (1989, 202-33). Tit-for-Tat is not a push-over. It hits back when the other defects. But, crucially, it initially cooperates (it is 'generous'), and it bears no grudges (it is 'forgiving'). Its responses are also predictable and reliable (it has 'clarity of behaviour'). For the 'evolution of cooperation' to get going in a mêlée of competing strategies, there must be a critical if at first quite small number of initially cooperating strategies, and the 'shadow of the future' must be a long one: interaction must not be confined to just one game (for example, with one player able to wipe out another in one go). But, so long as these conditions operate, even though 'nasty guys' may seem to do well at first, 'nice guys' come out on top in the end.² Natural selection favours cooperation.

So taking account of the future relationship (for example, between two communities which will have to live together) is one way out of the trap. Another is to take the social context into account. Imagine, for example, that the prisoners know that there is a gang outside, who will punish them if they defect and reward them if they cooperate. This can change their pay-offs and hence the outcome. A similar change occurs if instead of considering only their own interests, the parties also attach value to the interests of each other: social players are not trapped.

Positions, interests and needs

How can the parties reframe their positions if they are diametrically opposed, as they often are? One of the classical ideas in conflict resolution is to distinguish between the positions held by the parties and their underlying interests and needs. For example, two neighbours quarrel over a tree. Each neighbour claims that the tree is on his land. No compromise is possible: the tree cannot be sawn in half. But it turns out that the interest of one neighbour is in using the fruit of the tree, and the interest of the other is in having the shade. So the interests are not irreconcilable after all. Interests are also often easier to reconcile than positions, since there are usually several positions that might satisfy underlying interests and some of these positions may be mutually compatible. Matters may be more difficult if the conflict is over values (which are often non-negotiable) or relationships, which may need to be changed to resolve the conflict, although the same principle of looking for a deeper level of compatible underlying motives applies. Some analysts take this to the limit by identifying basic human needs (for example, identity, security, survival) as lying at the roots of other motives. Intractable conflicts are seen to result from the denial of such needs, and conflict can only be resolved when such needs are satisfied. The hopeful argument of these analysts is that whereas interests may be subject to relative scarcity, basic needs are not (for example, security for one party is reinforced by security for the other). As long as the conflict is translated into the language of needs, an outcome that satisfies both sides' needs can be found.

For example, Woodhouse is aggrieved that, although he is the author with the best ideas, his name comes only third on the list of authors. He therefore demands that Miall and Ramsbotham change their names to Woodhouse by deed poll. But they refuse to do so, because of their interest in personal glory and fame (see figure 1.3). Enter Woodhouse's daughter. She points out that if the deadlock persists, they will be unable to publish a book together, which is a common underlying need. They must find a way to acknowledge their equal participation in the text. By shifting to a new position that reflects their underlying needs, the conflict is resolved.

Third party intervention

In the previous example, Woodhouse's daughter plays the role of a third party, and her intervention changes the dynamics of the conflict. Where two parties are reacting to one another's actions, it is easy for a spiral of hostility and escalation to develop through positive feedback. The entry of the third party changes the conflict structure and allows a different pattern of communications, enabling the third party to filter or reflect back the messages, attitudes and behaviour of the conflictants. This intervention may dampen the feedback spiral.

Woodhouse's daughter is an example of a 'powerless' mediator – her

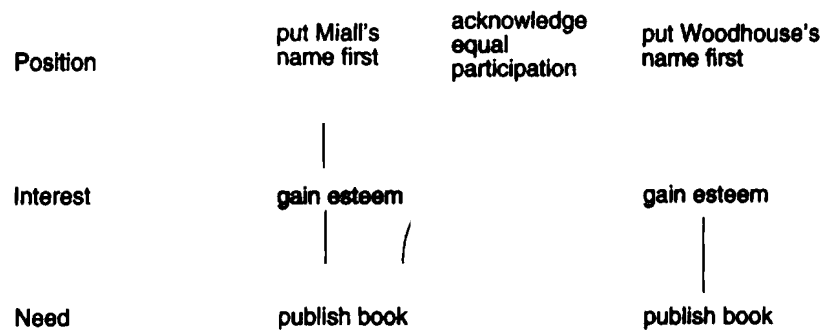


Figure 1.3 Positions, interests and needs

communications are powerful, but she herself brings to bear no power resources of her own. In other situations there may also be powerful third parties whose entry alters not only the communication structure but also the power balance. Such third parties may alter the parties' behaviour as well as their communications by judicious use of the carrot and the stick (positive and negative inducement); and they may support one outcome rather than another. Of course, by taking action, powerful third parties may find themselves sucked into the conflict as a full party. Figure 1.4 illustrates how third parties may act as arbiters (with or without the consent of the conflict parties), or may try to facilitate negotiations or mediate between the parties (coercively or non-coercively).

Three faces of power

It may seem strange to call Woodhouse's daughter 'powerless', when she has provided the impetus to resolve the conflict. This is because the term 'power' is ambiguous. On the one hand it means the power to command, order, enforce – coercive or 'hard' power. On the other, it means the power to induce cooperation, to legitimize, to inspire – persuasive or 'soft' power. Hard power has always been important in violent conflict, but soft power may be more important in conflicts managed peacefully. Kenneth Boulding (1989) calls the former 'threat power' ('do what I want or I will do what you don't want'). Following earlier theorists of management-labour negotiations, he then further distinguishes between two forms of soft power: 'exchange power', associated with bargaining and the compromising approach ('do what I want and I will do what you want'), and 'integrative power' associated with persuasion and transformative long-term problem-solving ('together we can do something that is better for both of us'). Conflict resolvers try to shift emphasis away from the use of threat power and towards the use of exchange and integrative power (see table 1.2).

Third parties such as politicians and governments may use all these

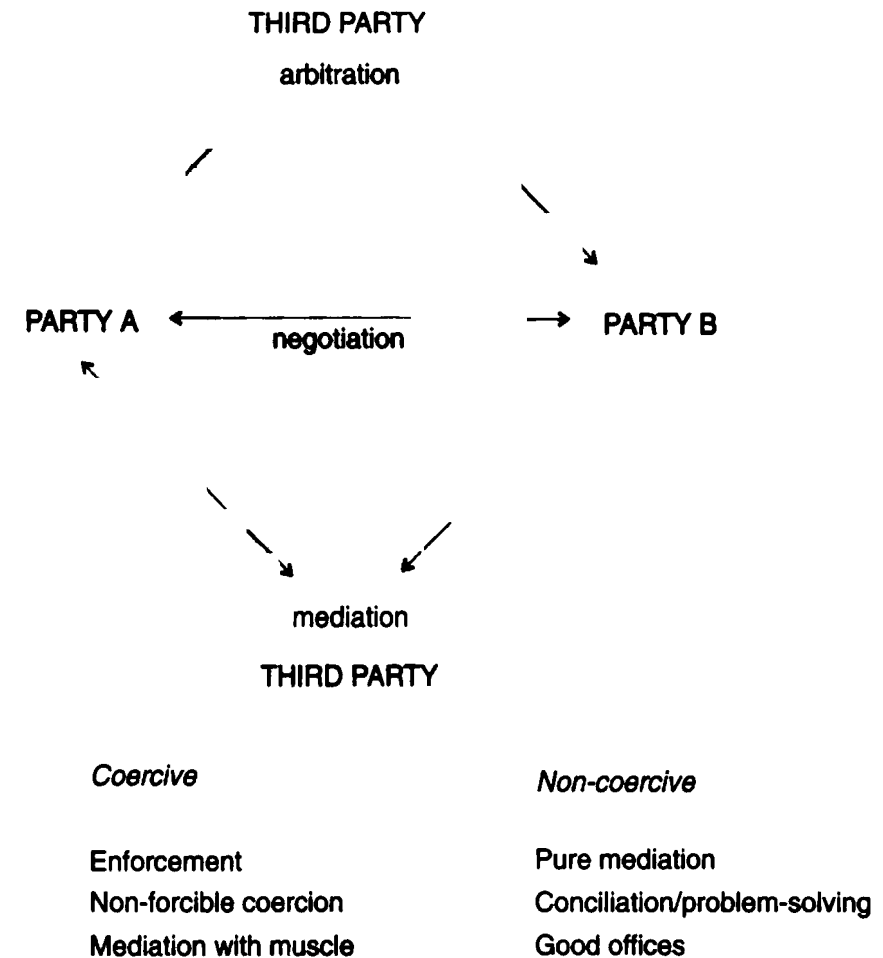


Figure 1.4 Coercive and non-coercive third party intervention

forms of power. In terms of third party intervention (see figure 1.4) it is helpful to distinguish between powerful mediators, or 'mediators with muscle', who bring their power resources to bear, and powerless mediators, whose role is confined to communication and facilitation. Track I diplomacy involves official governmental or inter-governmental representatives, who may use good offices, mediation, and sticks and carrots to seek or force an outcome, typically along the win-lose or 'bargaining' line (between the points 1, 3 and 2 in figure 1.2). Track II diplomacy, in contrast, involves unofficial mediators who do not have carrots or sticks.

Table 1.2 Three faces of power

<i>Threat power</i>	<i>Exchange power</i>	<i>Integrative power</i>
Destructive	Productive	Creative
productive	destructive	productive
creative	creative	destructive

The entries in the bottom two rows indicate that, in Boulding's words, 'None of these categories will be perfectly clear. They are what all mathematicians call 'fuzzy sets', so that each contains elements of the other two types of power.'

Source: from Boulding, 1989, 25

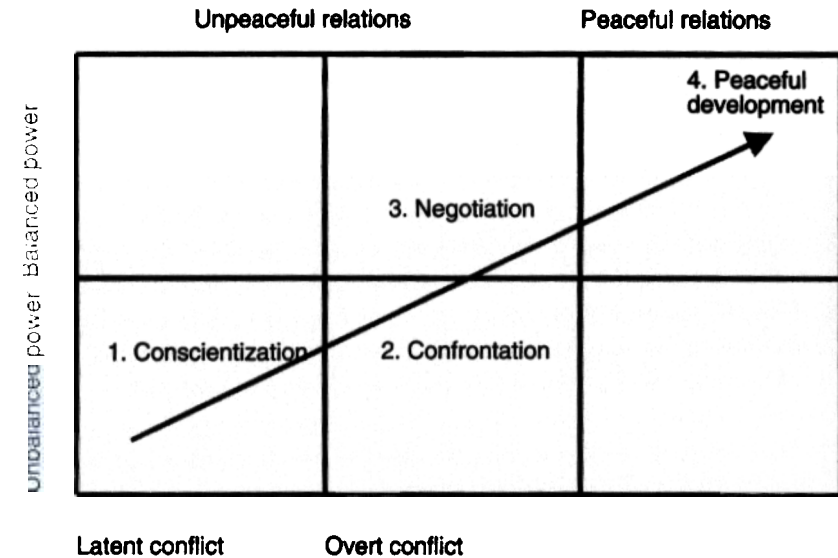
They work with the parties or their constituencies to facilitate agreements, encouraging the parties to see their predicament as lying along the lose-lose to win-win line (between points 0, 3 and 4 in figure 1.2) and to find mutually satisfactory outcomes.

Symmetric and asymmetric conflicts

So far we have been considering conflicts of interest between relatively similar parties. These are examples of *symmetric* conflicts. Conflict may also arise between dissimilar parties such as a majority and a minority, an established government and a group of rebels, a master and his servant, an employer and her employees, a publisher and his authors. These are *asymmetric* conflicts. Here the root of the conflict lies not in particular issues or interests that may divide the parties, but in the very structure of who they are and the relationship between them. It may be that this structure of roles and relationships cannot be changed without conflict.

Classical conflict resolution, in some views, applies only to symmetric conflicts. In asymmetric conflicts the structure is such that the top dog always wins, the underdog always loses. The only way to resolve the conflict is to change the structure, but this can never be in the interests of the top dog. So there are no win-win outcomes, and the third party has to join forces with the underdog to bring about a resolution.

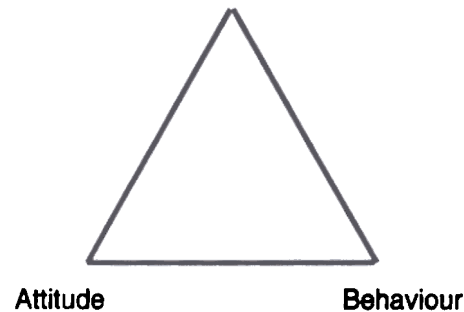
From another point of view, however, even asymmetric conflicts impose costs on both parties. It is oppressive to be an oppressor, even if not so oppressive as to be oppressed. There are costs for the top dogs in sustaining themselves in power and keeping the underdogs down. In severe asymmetric conflicts the cost of the relationship becomes unbearable for both sides. This then opens the possibility for conflict resolution through a shift from the existing structure of relationships to another.



Source: from Curle, 1971 and Lederach, 1995

Figure 1.5 Transforming asymmetric conflicts (I)

The role of the third party is to assist with this transformation, if necessary confronting the top dog. This means transforming what were unpeaceful, unbalanced relationships into peaceful and dynamic ones. Figure 1.5 illustrates how the passage from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships may involve a temporary increase in overt conflict as people become aware of imbalances of power and injustice affecting them (stage 1, education or 'conscientization'), organize themselves and articulate their grievances (stage 2, confrontation), come to terms in a more equal way with those who held a preponderance of power over them (stage 3, negotiation) and finally join in restructuring a more equitable and just relationship (stage 4, resolution). There are many ways in which this can be approached without using coercion. There is the Gandhian tactic of 'speaking truth to power', influencing and persuading the power-holders. Then there are the tactics of mobilizing popular movements, increasing solidarity, making demonstrations of resolve, establishing a demand for change. Raising awareness of the conflict among those who are external or internal supporters of the top dog may start to weaken the regime (as did for example the opponents of apartheid in South Africa). The unequal power structure is unbalanced; it is held up by props of various kinds; removing the props may make the unbalanced structure collapse. Another tactic is to strengthen and empower the underdogs. The underdogs may



Source: Galtung, 1969

Figure 1.6 The conflict triangle

withdraw from the unbalanced relationship and start building anew: the parallel institutions approach. Non-violence uses soft power to move towards a more balanced relationship.

The conflict triangle

In the late 1960s Galtung (1969; 1996, 72) proposed an influential model of conflict, that encompasses both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts. He suggested that conflict could be viewed as a triangle, with contradiction (C), attitude (A) and behaviour (B) at its vertices (see figure 1.6). Here the contradiction refers to the underlying conflict situation, which includes the actual or perceived 'incompatibility of goals' between the conflict parties generated by what Mitchell calls a 'mis-match between social values and social structure' (1981, 18). In a symmetric conflict, the contradiction is defined by the parties, their interests and the clash of interests between them. In an asymmetric conflict, it is defined by the parties, their relationship and the conflict of interests inherent in the relationship. Attitude includes the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves. These can be positive or negative, but in violent conflicts parties tend to develop demeaning stereotypes of each other, and attitudes are often influenced by emotions such as fear, anger, bitterness and hatred. Attitude includes emotive (feeling), cognitive (belief) and conative (will) elements. Analysts who emphasize these subjective aspects are said to have an expressive view of the sources of conflict. Behaviour is the third component. It can include cooperation or coercion, gestures signifying conciliation or hostility. Violent conflict behaviour is characterized by threats, coercion and destructive attacks. Analysts who emphasize objective aspects such as structural relationships, competing material interests or behaviours are said to have an instrumental view of the sources of conflict.³

Galtung argues that all three components have to be present together in a full conflict. A conflict structure without conflictual attitudes or behaviour is a latent (or structural) conflict. Galtung sees conflict as a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes and behaviour are constantly changing and influencing one another. As a conflict emerges, it becomes a conflict formation as parties' interests come into conflict or the relationship they are in becomes oppressive. Conflict parties then organize around this structure to pursue their interests. They develop hostile attitudes and conflictual behaviour. And so the conflict formation starts to grow and develop. As it does so, it may widen, drawing in other parties, deepen and spread, generating secondary conflicts within the main parties or among outsiders who get sucked in. This often considerably complicates the task of addressing the original, core conflict. Eventually, however, resolving the conflict must involve a set of dynamic changes that involve a de-escalation of conflict behaviour, a change in attitudes, and transforming the relationships or clashing interests that are at the core of the conflict structure.

A related idea due to Galtung (1981) is the distinction between direct violence (children are murdered), structural violence (children die through poverty) and cultural violence (whatever blinds us to this or seeks to justify it). We end direct violence by changing conflict behaviours, structural violence by removing structural contradictions and injustices, and cultural violence by changing attitudes.

Conflict dynamics

This model then sees conflict formations arising out of social change, leading to a process of violent or non-violent conflict transformation, and resulting in further social change in which hitherto suppressed or marginalized individuals or groups come to articulate their interests and challenge existing norms and power structures. Figure 1.7 shows a schematic illustration of phases of conflict, and forms of intervention that may be feasible at different stages. A schematic life-cycle of conflict sees a progression from peaceful social change to conflict formation to violent conflict and then to conflict transformation and back to peaceful social change. But this is not the only path. The sequence can go from conflict formation to conflict transformation and back to social change, avoiding violence. Or it can go from conflict formation to violent conflict back to the creation of fresh conflicts.⁴

New developments in conflict resolution theory and practice

A new pattern of conflicts is prevailing in the post-Cold War period, which is evoking a fresh pattern of responses. The main focus used to be on international wars; now it is on internal conflicts. Much of the theory of conflict resolution developed in response to symmetric conflicts; now

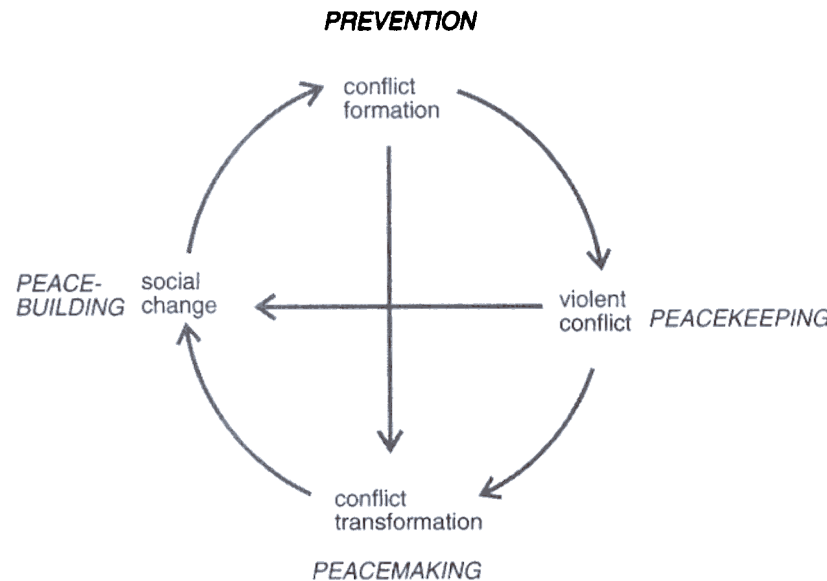
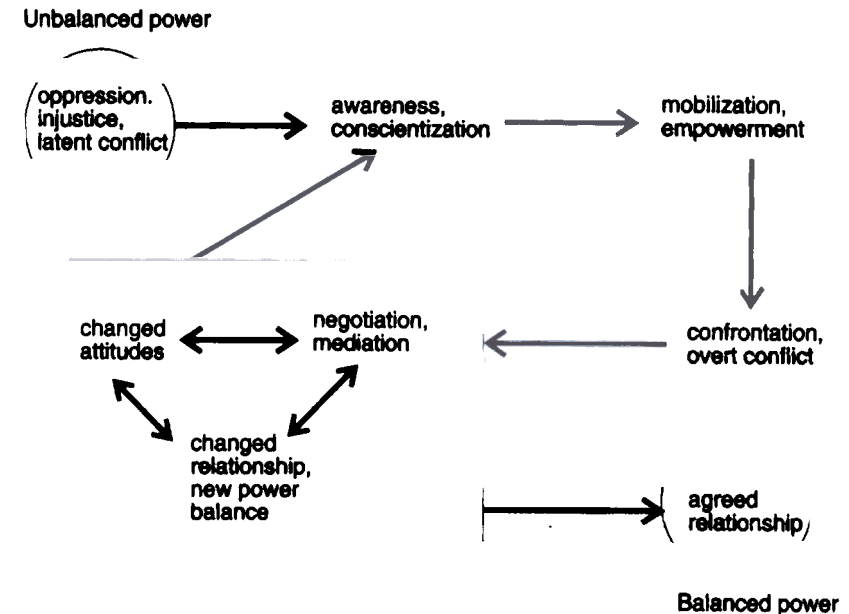


Figure 7 Conflict dynamics and conflict resolution

asymmetric conflicts are dominant. International wars have typically been Clausewitzian affairs, fought out by power centres which use organized force directed against enemy forces in order to break the opponent's will to continue. But many post-Cold War conflicts are post-Clausewitzian, involving fragmented decision-making and disorganized forces directed against civilian populations. International conflicts were conducted between sovereign states; internal conflicts reflect breakdowns in states, which implies the disappearance of the structures through which internal power balances are organized and the appearance of 'holes' in the international fabric of sovereign states.

In response there has been a differentiation and broadening in the scope of third party intervention. Whereas classical conflict resolution was mainly concerned with entry into the conflict itself and with how to enable parties to violent conflict to resolve the issues between them in non-violent ways, the contemporary approach is to take a wider view of the timing of intervention. It suggests that efforts to resolve conflict should begin before armed conflict has broken out. They should be maintained even in the heat of battle and are applicable to peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention. They are still needed to assist parties to settle violent conflicts. And they continue to be relevant into the post-settlement phase, when peacebuilding must address the continuing issues in conflict (see figure 1.7).

In response to these prevailing patterns of asymmetric conflict, Curle's

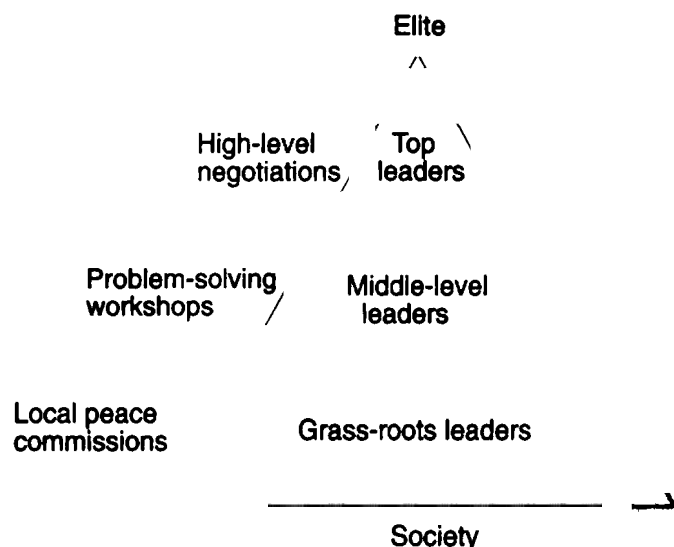


Source: from Francis, 1994

Figure 1.8 Transforming asymmetric conflicts (II)

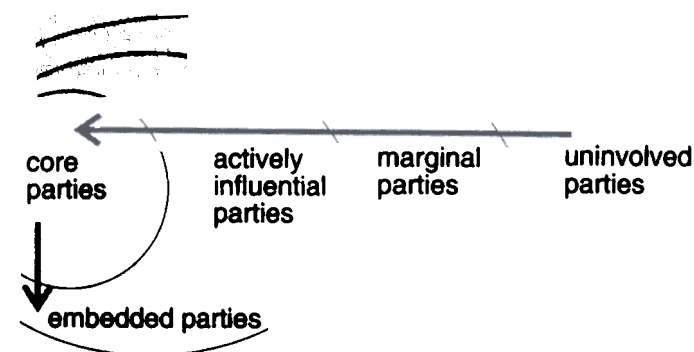
original model of conflict transformation (figure 1.5) has been further developed (see figure 1.8). The asymmetry inherent in situations of unbalanced power and unsatisfied needs is reduced by increased awareness, mobilization and empowerment, leading to open confrontation where necessary before moving on to the negotiation of a new relationship and changed attitudes. Further mobilization and confrontation may follow, or the transformation of conflict resolution capacities may have reached far enough to accommodate future social and political change peacefully within agreed institutionalized processes. The elements bounded by the large box in figure 1.8 are those that are traditionally seen as conflict resolution, but they can be seen to play a complementary part in a larger process of transforming asymmetric relationships (van der Merwe, 1989, 1-8).

Moreover, given the varied sources of contemporary conflicts and complex political emergencies, responses are required at different levels. Changes in the context of conflict may depend on international and regional arrangements, conflicts within or over the state may demand structural change at state level, the conflict between the parties will still require resolution at the relational level, and cultural change at all levels may be necessary for the transformation of discourses and institutions



which sustain and reproduce violence. Greater emphasis is now placed on integrating the different levels at which peacebuilding and conflict resolution need to work within affected countries, with particular emphasis on the significance of 'bottom-up' processes (see figure 1.9).

Linked to this, there has been a shift from seeing third party intervention as the primary responsibility of external agencies towards appreciating the role of internal third parties or indigenous peacemakers. Instead of outsiders offering the fora for addressing conflicts in one-shot mediation efforts, the emphasis is on the need to build constituencies and capacity within societies and to learn from domestic cultures how to manage conflicts in a sustained way over time. This implies supporting domestic peace constituencies, developing domestic institutions and eliciting from those in conflict what approaches are socially and culturally acceptable. Encarnacion et al. (1990) have suggested a helpful model here. Instead of using the blanket term 'third parties', with its implication of externality and detachment, they distinguish a spectrum of agents ranging from 'uninvolved parties', through 'marginal concerned parties' to 'actively influential concerned parties'. The further a party is placed from the centre of the conflict, the lower will be its interest and commitment (see figure 1.10). Uninvolved outsiders may become progressively more involved and finally become core parties themselves in a widening of the conflict. Conversely, Encarnacion et al. introduce the idea of 'embedded parties', that is to say, individuals or groups who may emerge from within



Source: from Encarnacion et al., 1990, 45

Figure 1.10 The gradient of conflict involvement

the situation (from the core parties) but wish to play the role of a concerned party in facilitating or expediting moves towards conflict resolution.

Behind all this lies an increased sensitivity to the culture question in general, as discussed briefly at the beginning of this section, and the hope that if the conflict resolution field has in the past been too narrowly western, it may in future become the truly cooperative cross-cultural venture that its founders conceived it to be.

The implication of this broadening in the scope and application of conflict resolution approaches has been to see the need for a complementary range of third party interventions. They should be multitrack instead of either Track I or Track II, addressing elites and grass roots, operating at structural-constitutional as well as at relational-community levels, with cooperation between involved international and internal agencies and a sustained commitment to the conflict in question over time. The increased emphasis on the importance of indigenous resources and local actors suggests the addition of what might be termed Track III peacemaking (see figure 1.11).

Terminology

Before we introduce the conflicts that we are concerned with in this book and the types of agent capable of responding creatively to them, we need to clarify how we are using the terms 'conflict' and 'conflict resolution'. The terminology is often confusing, with the same terms used in different ways both within the academic literature and in general usage.

By *conflict* we mean the pursuit of incompatible goals by different

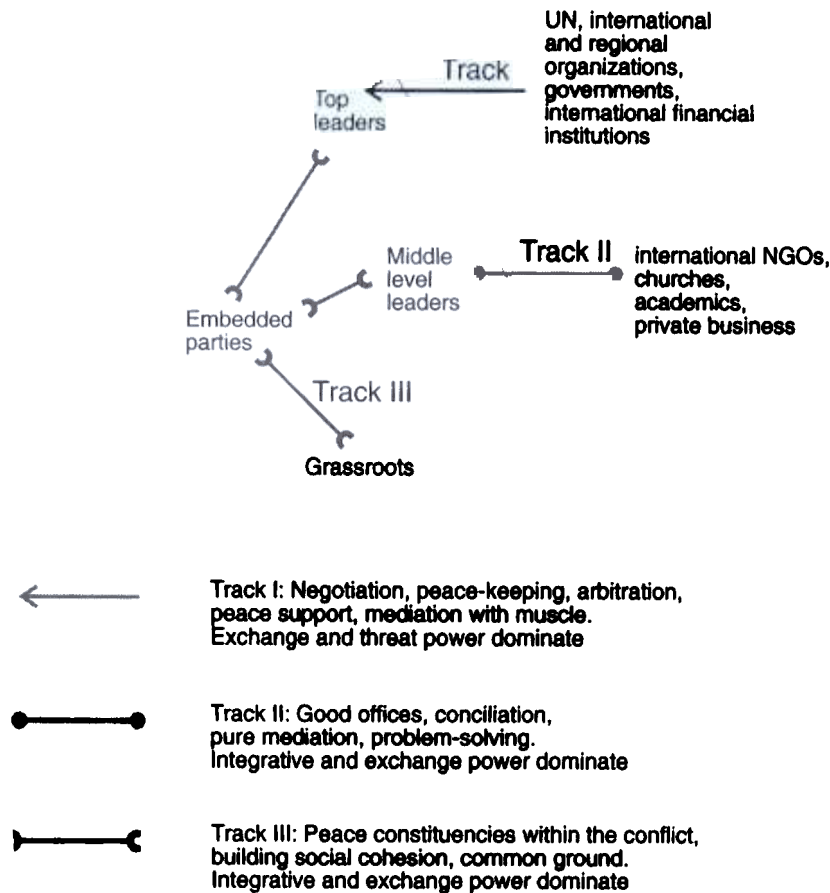


Figure 1.11 Multitrack conflict resolution

groups. This suggests a broader span of time and a wider class of struggle than armed conflict. We intend our usage here to apply to any political conflict, whether it is pursued by peaceful means or by the use of force. (Some theorists have distinguished between disputes about negotiable interests that can be settled by compromise, and more deep-seated conflicts that involve human needs and can only be resolved by removing underlying causes.)

Armed conflict is a narrower category, denoting conflicts where parties on both sides resort to the use of force. It is notoriously difficult to define, since it can encompass a continuum of situations ranging from a military overflight or an attack on a civilian by a single soldier to an all-out war

with massive casualties. The research community has identified a number of thresholds and rules for deciding what to count. We will consider these definitions in the next section of this chapter.

Violent conflict, or *deadly conflict*, is similar to armed conflict, but also includes one-sided violence such as genocides against unarmed civilians. We mean direct, physical violence. We acknowledge the strong argument in peace research for broadening the concept of violence to include exploitative social relations that cause unnecessary suffering, but prefer to use the now well-known term 'structural violence' for this.

Contemporary conflict refers to the prevailing pattern of political and violent conflicts in the post-Cold War world; *contemporary armed conflicts* refer only to those that involve the use of force.

Conflict settlement means the reaching of an agreement between the parties which enables them to end an armed conflict. It puts to an end the violent stage of conflict behaviour. This suggests finality, but in practice conflicts that have reached settlements are often reopened later. Conflict attitudes and underlying structural contradictions may not have been addressed.

Conflict management, like the associated term *conflict regulation*, is sometimes used as a generic term to cover the whole gamut of positive conflict handling, but is used here to refer to the limitation, mitigation and containment of violent conflict.

Conflict resolution is a more comprehensive term which implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed, and resolved. This implies that behaviour is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer hostile, and the structure of the conflict has been changed. It is difficult to avoid ambiguity since the term is used to refer both to the process (or the intention) to bring about these changes, and to the completion of the process. A further ambiguity is that conflict resolution refers to a particular defined specialist field (as in 'conflict resolution journals'), as well as to an activity carried on by people who may or may not use the term or even be aware of it (as in 'conflict resolution in Central America'). Nevertheless, these two senses of the term are tending to merge.

Conflict transformation is a term which for some analysts is a significant step beyond conflict resolution, but which in our view is a development of it. It has particular salience in asymmetric conflicts, where the aim is to transform unjust social relationships. It is also used in the understanding of peace processes, where transformation denotes a sequence of necessary transitional steps. It implies a deep transformation in the parties and their relationships and in the situation that created the conflict. As was indicated in figure 1.7, we see conflict transformation as the deepest level of change in the conflict resolution process.

Negotiation is the process whereby the parties within the conflict seek to settle or resolve their conflicts. *Mediation* involves the intervention of a third party; it is a voluntary process in which the parties retain control over the outcome (pure mediation), although it may include positive and

negative inducements (mediation with muscle). *Conciliation* or *facilitation* is close in meaning to pure mediation, and refers to intermediary efforts to encourage the parties to move towards negotiations, as does the more minimalist role of providing good offices. *Problem-solving* is a more ambitious undertaking in which conflict parties are invited to reconceptualize the conflict with a view to finding creative, win-win outcomes. *Reconciliation* is a longer-term process of overcoming hostility and mistrust between divided peoples.

We use *peacemaking* in the sense of moving towards settlement of armed conflict, where conflict parties are induced to reach agreement voluntarily, for example as envisaged in Chapter VI of the UN Charter on the 'Pacific Settlement of Disputes' (Article 33). *Peacekeeping* (traditionally with the consent of the conflict parties) refers to the interposition of international armed forces to separate the armed forces of belligerents, often now associated with civil tasks such as monitoring and policing and supporting humanitarian intervention. *Peace-enforcement* is the imposition of a settlement by a powerful third party. *Peacebuilding* underpins the work of peacemaking and peacekeeping by addressing structural issues and the long-term relationships between conflictants. With reference to the conflict triangle (see figure 1.6), it can be suggested that peacemaking aims to change the attitudes of the main protagonists, peacekeeping lowers the level of destructive behaviour, and peacebuilding tries to overcome the contradictions which lie at the root of the conflict (Galtung, 1996, 112).

Finally, it is worth noting that the aim of conflict resolution is not the elimination of conflict, which would be both impossible and, as is made clear in Curle's model of the transformation of asymmetric conflicts (see figure 1.5), sometimes undesirable. Rather, the aim of conflict resolution is to transform actually or potentially violent conflict into peaceful (non-violent) processes of social and political change. This is an unending task as new forms and sources of conflict arise.