Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding
Moving from violence to sustainable peace

Bülen Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen

Edited by Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg

Security and conflict management
Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

This book seeks to examine the causes of escalation and de-escalation in intrastate conflicts.

Specifically, the volume seeks to map the processes and dynamics that lead groups challenging existing power structures to engage in violent struggle; the processes and dynamics that contribute to the de-escalation of violent struggle and the participation of challengers in peaceful political activities; and the processes and dynamics that sustain and nurture this transformation. By integrating the latest ideas with richly presented case studies, this volume fills a gap in our understanding of the forces that lead to moderation and constructive engagement in the context of violent, intrastate conflicts.

This volume will be of great interest to students of conflict management, peace studies, conflict resolution, ethnic conflict and security studies in general.

Bruce W. Dayton is Associate Director of the Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. He also serves as Executive Director of the International Society of Political Psychology.

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Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding
Moving from violence to sustainable peace

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1 Introduction

Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg

This book focuses on challenging organizations that rely in significant measure on violent means of struggle in intrastate conflicts. Our goal is to better understand how these organizations shift away from violent forms of struggle, engage in politics, and then continue in non-violent relations with their former adversary. Such changes have become more common since the end of the 1980s, with violent conflicts more frequently ending through negotiations or by petering out than through the defeat of one side by the other (Human Security 2008). At the same time, a closer look at the data shows that those intrastate conflicts that ended through negotiation or by petering out had a higher probability of reemerging within five years than those conflicts that ended in victories. Non-violent forms of conflict termination may be on the increase, but nearly 40 percent of peace agreements fail within five years (Harbom et al. 2006). What explains these trends? What contributes to the movement of antagonists away from using violent methods of struggle? How are some processes of political engagement sustained while others are not? Each of the chapters in this book offers some clues to help answer these questions by providing new insights about the conditions and context that nurture and sustain constructive forms of conflict transformation.

This book proceeds from three premises. First, we do not assume that governments occupy a morally privileged position. Some challenged groups may be oppressively dominant and maintain their dominance by recourse to violence or the threat of violence, while others are varyingly responsive to the needs and concerns of their citizenry. Second, although the focus of this book is on the transformation of challenging organizations away from reliance on violent struggle, these transformations always occur in the context of a relationship whereby the actions of each side impacts the perception and choices of the other. As such, we see the actions of both challenger groups and the government that they oppose as shaped by changes occurring within and between them. Finally, we regard social conflicts to be an inevitable and essential aspect of social interaction that allows social groups to change and flourish, to challenge norms and values that they judge to be harmful, and to address the distribution of
power at the heart of political processes. Yet the form that social conflict takes does not have to be violent. Groups in conflict can choose to wage their struggle through a variety of non-violent means including forming social movements, entering the political arena, withdrawing cooperation, and enlisting the help of intermediaries. The question, therefore, is not how to avoid conflicts, but rather how to wage conflicts in ways that are constructive rather than destructive (Kriesberg 2007).

Contextual backdrop

Three interesting developments in the frequency, deadliness and duration of intrastate violence are particularly relevant for this volume. First, there has been a world-wide decline in armed violence over the last 15 years. Analysis of data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), for instance, shows that between the early 1990s and 2006 the number of internal armed conflicts decreased from over 50 to fewer than 30, armed conflicts being defined as having at least 25 battle-related deaths per calendar year in one conflict dyad (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2008). This decrease mirrors an overall decline in other types of violent conflict, including interstate armed conflicts and conflicts between non-state entities (Human Security 2008). A similar study conducted by the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), which used over 1,000 battle deaths to define violent conflicts, also shows a decline in interstate wars since the end of the 1980s, and a marked decline in societal wars after a spike in their incidence at the beginning of the 1990s (Marshall and Gurr 2005).

Second, these decreases in the incidence of armed conflicts may well be celebrated, but they do not signify global peace and harmony. Using a longer time frame, the incidence of armed conflicts defined by 25 or over battle deaths per year or by over 1,000 battle deaths rose steadily starting in 1946, until the declines began around 2000. The levels of violence found in 2006 may be impressive by 1990 standards, but are still equal to those found in the mid-1950s; with the occurrence of armed conflict in 2006 roughly twice what it was in 1946 (Harbom et al. 2006). The difference is not so great if the large increase in the number of independent countries that occurred during this period is taken into account, which raises the number of countries within which and among which violent conflicts can occur (Gleditsch 2008).

Finally, new outbreaks of conflicts often are the result of a recurrence of a conflict that was once thought to have ended. Uppsala’s Conflict Data Program in collaboration with the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) has published a database describing peace agreements between 1989 and 2005, which includes data on the success or failure of those agreements over periods of one and five years (Harbom et al. 2006). Analyses of these data reveal that between 1989 and 2005, 40 percent of the
conflicts ending in peace agreements had seen a return to violence within five years. These data further show that conflicts ending with “full peace agreements” (the whole incompatibility is settled) were far more likely to hold than those ending in “partial agreements” (agreements where only a portion of the incompatibility is settled) and partial agreements more likely to hold than “peace process agreements” (agreements where the parties agree to initiate a process to settle the incompatibility). In addition, agreements that included particular provisions were much more likely to be sustained than those without those provisions. Agreements including provisions for elections, for example, failed 38 percent of the time, while those without failed 45 percent of the time. Only 12 percent of peace agreements that included provisions for local government, short of autonomy, failed within five years, while 49 percent of those without such provisions failed in the same time frame.

Data about trends in violent conflict provide an interesting backdrop to the study of peacebuilding following intrastate conflict. Such data do not, however, fully explain why intrastate adversaries engage in violent forms of conflict to begin with, why violent opposition movements sometimes choose to terminate their activities peacefully, and why some processes of political engagement succeed while others fail. We know, for instance, that between 1989 and 2005 more violent intrastate conflicts ended without a formal peace agreement than did with a peace agreement (Human Security 2006). We also know, as outlined above, that close to 40 percent of all conflicts observed between 1946 and 2005 returned to violence at some point after termination was achieved (Harbom et al. 2006). We do not know, however, the reasons that protagonists in these cases chose to end the violent phase of their struggle or why peace processes were successfully sustained in some cases, but not in others.

This book seeks explanations for such transformations by using case studies, supported by theories about the causes of conflict escalation and de-escalation, to uncover the processes and dynamics that lead protagonists to turn either toward or away from non-violent means of opposition. Included in the volume are two types of chapters. First, we include a set of thematic chapters that identify critical factors that facilitate, nurture, and sustain the movement of opposition groups from violence to peace, among them: political leadership, globalization processes, intermediaries, the representation of “the enemy” in public speech acts, the impact of the “street,” and the de-militarization of politics during interim post-conflict periods. Second, we include a set of cases where protagonists have changed their strategies away from reliance on violent means and toward other modes of contestation, even for a brief period.

Each chapter is a product of several months of interaction among contributing authors, including a workshop on the transformation of organizations using violence held at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University and a subsequent roundtable discussion at the 2008 International Studies
Association annual meeting. Despite our work together, the authors in this book are by no means unified in their assessment of the most important factors that contribute to intrastate conflict de-escalation. Some contributors stress the importance of material dynamics to conflict transformation processes, while others focus on social-psychological dynamics or leadership style. Yet cross-cutting themes and commonalities can be seen across the chapters. The first of these relates to changes to the structural or material conditions that underlie conflict dynamics. Several cases and thematic chapters show how improving the economic conditions of communities, expanding the educational and employment opportunities available to individuals, and liberalizing access to political power within formal political structures, make it less likely that opposition movements will pursue their aims through violence. Other chapters and cases show how, those communities facing high levels of structural violence, lacking economic or educational opportunities, and facing institutionalized disparities in access to power often suffer from the emigration of skilled workers, a deepening of the conflict cycle, and an increase in militancy on the part of the population.

Second, this book speaks to the general importance of transforming the cognitive and emotional dynamics that sustain intergroup violence. Violent conflicts occur, in part, because of social-psychological processes related to dehumanization, stereotyping, and the application of negative attributions to the motivation of one’s adversary and positive attributions to the motivations of one’s own side. These social-psychological dynamics can be exacerbated by lack of contact over time or through the leaders’ use of inflammatory references to past grievances and loses. Evidence in this volume suggest that re-humanizing one’s enemy and/or creating a superordinant identity among conflicting parties can help to create conditions where peacemaking is possible. By extension, the absence of contact across groups only serves to concretize negative stereotyping and dehumanization and makes more likely the use of violence to achieve political objectives.

Third, changes to the internal politics within one or both sides appear to frequently shift opposition movements toward or away from violent tactics. All challenging organizations, as well as the governments they challenge, experience significant levels of internal heterogeneity and fractionalization. These internal political dynamics play an important role in determining their strategic choices for contestation with adversaries. The results of these dynamics, which include the splitting of the movement into different factions, expected or unexpected leadership transitions, or changes in the way that decisions are made within the group, have a great effect on their reliance on, resort to, or renunciation of violence. Several of the cases presented in this volume illustrate, for instance, how the splintering of opposition organizations may weaken them while also complicating negotiations. Other cases show how changes in group leadership become a critical factor in either advancing peace processes or undercutting them.
Fourth, this volume suggests that the actions of external parties often have a powerful impact on the trajectory of conflicts. The parties in intra-state conflicts frequently depend upon the resources of external actors to sustain their activities. This external support is not, however, endless. Diaspora communities, which often provide substantial material support for opposition movements, may shift in their attitudes toward armed struggle and begin to pressure those that they are supporting to engage in peace processes. Similarly, opposition movements or governments may gain or lose the support of those states that are acting as their patrons. This was true, for instance, in Guatemala where long-standing US support for the hard-line policies of the government gave way to new policies as the strategic interests of the US shifted in the 1990s. Such shifts are most evident after the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. After this global transformation, support for proxy wars dropped sharply as the US and the Soviet Union disengaged from several conflicts.

Finally, evidence from this book suggests that constructive engagement often occurs because of the changing prospects of military defeat or of military victory. In some cases the opposition movements shift away from violence and embrace processes of political incorporation because of defeat or near defeat. In other cases the application of violence by the opposition group had the effect of bringing state actors to the negotiation table. That violence is sometimes an effective tool for conducting and managing a conflict may be an uncomfortable reality for practitioners of peacebuilding and constructive conflict transformation. Yet this conclusion points to one of the most important questions raised by this volume: when can some kinds of violence be constructive?

Of course, ending intrastate conflicts is only the first half of what is most often a long and difficult process of achieving a sustainable peace. This volume also suggests that fragile peace agreements easily relapse back to violence if they are not accompanied by post-conflict social integration, economic development, committed leadership, and the demilitarization of politics. Sustainable peacebuilding, in other words, requires transformation across multiple fronts including changed attitudes and perceptions, changed behaviors, and changes to the structural inequalities that provide uneven benefits within political systems.

Overview of chapters

The first eight chapters in this book examine the dynamics and processes that account for constructive engagement in intrastate conflicts. These thematic chapters begin with Kriesberg and Millar’s analysis of the primary adversaries in a conflict and the strategies they adopt as they escalate and de-escalate their struggle against each other. Kriesberg and Millar examine the relevant internal features of each side in the conflict and also the way
each adversary’s actions affect the opponent’s choices of methods of struggle in the course of the conflict.

In the second thematic chapter, Margaret G. Hermann and Catherine Gerard examine how learning about leadership can help us gain access to knowledge about the processes occurring within the groups and organizations of interest to us in this volume.

Elham Atashi then argues that current models, practices and analyses of peacebuilding tend to focus on changes at the leadership level and neglect what happens to people in the streets. Consequently, she notes, post-conflict societies can be plagued by an “uneven peace,” that is, a situation in which the benefits of the peace process are not shared by all. Uneven peace agreements, in turn, reduce the likelihood of achieving a sustainable peace as marginalized groups at the local level continue to fight on, even in the context of a negotiated settlement.

The next three chapters examine different processes that are instrumental in the enduring transformation of violent conflicts. Bruce Dayton examines how parties that are not primary adversaries may or may not intervene to help transform large-scale violent conflicts. Dayton provides a theoretical framework for intermediary activities in violent intrastate conflict, considers the conditions and contexts that lead armed groups to engage with intermediaries, and concludes with observations about the prospects and limits of intermediary activities in transforming organizations that use violence.

Bradford Vivian’s chapter addresses two closely related questions: In what forms do public appeals to collective memory foster peace and political reconciliation? And by what principles can we recognize their more destructive varieties, which perpetuate conflict and hostility? Vivian’s chapter adopts a rhetorical approach to the subject of collective memory; analyzing how particularly influential speakers persuade target audiences to act upon those visions of the past (either violent or peaceful) that they construct in their public discourse. He argues that transforming collective perceptions of the past – and consequently of the present and future – can establish vital preconditions for motivating antagonists to participate in conflict resolution.

Next, Terrence Lyons cautions against an overemphasis on elections as the most important event in achieving sustainable peace. Lyons uses numerous case examples to demonstrate that democratization processes must be accompanied by broader efforts to demilitarize politics in post-conflict societies and that to be successful, such demilitarization processes need to begin during transitional periods from violence to peace.

The final two thematic chapters focus on the societal and the global contexts. Gavan Duffy argues that intrastate political conflicts concern groups’ perceptions of their own security. Accordingly, Duffy examines recent efforts to apply the security dilemma analysis, borrowed from neorealist international relations scholarship, to intrastate conflicts. He argues
that such analyses have limited usefulness because they lack generality and also because they consider only the threats that groups perceive and not their perceived opportunities. Analysis based on political opportunity structures is described and illustrated by reference to several conflicts. Duffy discusses the implications of the political opportunity framework for conflict transformation and indicates pathways to peaceable conflict outcomes that are inconceivable from within the security dilemma framework.

In the last thematic chapter, Galia Golan and Adir Gal examine the global context and how it contributes to conflict transformation or obstructs it. This chapter provides an examination of the many ways that globalization contributes to the constructive transformations of violent intrastate conflicts and the moderation of violent opposition groups. Among the variables considered are the media, diaspora communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the transnational private sector; each of which have expanded their capacity to impact intrastate conflicts because of globalization dynamics. The authors caution, however, that globalization entails many developments that may produce negative effects as well as positive ones.

The final eight chapters in this book are case studies. Not all the case studies examined are “success” stories. Even the most constructive conflict transformations have some limitations and exhibit regressive episodes. On the other hand, even the conflicts that have failed to be enduringly transformed do include some interludes without violence. Furthermore, some factions or subgroups within one or more of each side may have withdrawn support for employing violent methods, and adopted non-violent means of struggle.

The eight case studies in this book differ in the extent to which adversaries relying heavily on violence change and engage in non-violent political processes. As the diverse cases illuminate, such transformations sometimes come about as result of victories and of defeats. Interestingly, attributions or claims of success or of failures are often ambiguous and disputed.

The cases vary in other significant ways. One is the content of the issue of contention and the goals the adversaries formulate. In many cases the adversaries struggle for dominance or at least a strong voice in a shared political system, differing in the magnitude of the change they seek. The struggle may be related to the way the adversaries define themselves, by class-based ideological differences, by ethnic or other communal identities, or by organizational or gang claims for political power for themselves. In varying ways this is true for Brazil, Mozambique, Guatemala, South Africa, and Nepal. In other cases, the adversaries struggle about separating from each other and forming independent entities, as in Spain, Sri Lanka, and Palestine–Israel. This difference is also related to variation between conflicts waged in the context of the ideologically-oriented Cold War and in the context of post-Cold-War era.
Finally, the cases vary in the degree and nature of the violence used by each side in a conflict. The repression in Guatemala by the government was particularly vicious and bloody. The fighting in Sri Lanka was and is deadly, due to government and challengers’ actions. Beliefs about the effectiveness and the virtue of violence, of killing and dying for the cause affect the recourse to violence. For example in the 1960s and 1970s, some elements of the revolutionary left believed that violence could be used to create a revolutionary situation (Fanon 1966; Debray 1967). This was influential for groups in the Basque Country, Brazil, and the Middle East. That glorification of violence contributed to the use of terror, which was counterproductive. The recent celebration of the use of violence, of martyrdom and even of suicidal violence in terror attacks, is prone to the same counterproductive consequences of the earlier period (Fontan 2008). On the other hand, the growing adoption of non-violent strategies of resistance can assist in making effective and sustainable conflict transformations (Sharp 2005).

The case of Mozambique examined by Andre Bartoli, Aldo Civico and Leone Gianturco exemplifies outcomes in which the primary adversaries do reach a negotiated settlement, after a stalemate in which neither side was able to overcome the other. The Mozambique case exemplifies how a peace processes can utilize local traditions and culture in combination with external assistance to achieve peace, a new shared identity, and a sustainable political system.

In South Africa, as analyzed by Tom Lodge, the Afrikaner government and the whites generally accepted equality in political rights for all South Africans, as insisted upon by the African National Congress (ANC) leadership and by the blacks. This outcome was not violently imposed; indeed violence was recognized by large numbers of people on all sides as likely to ultimately fail and have shared destructive consequences. Lodge discusses the many developments that converged to provide the reassurances needed for a mutually acceptable sequence and shows how the ANC’s own transformation into a mass party helped it to curb the expectations of its followers.

Thania Paffenholz examines the conflict in Nepal where, after ten years of People’s War and two years of political maneuvering, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) achieved their main political demands and the reintegration of the CPN into political life began. Paffenholz suggests that the CPN’s history as a political actor in Nepal helped to facilitate their reentering the political arena in 2006. She also notes that the consistency of their strategic plan, as well as the high-level of flexibility and pragmatism within the movement, significantly contributed to their transition from revolutionary movement to political actor.

Kenneth Serbin examines a low-intensity conflict between revolutionary guerrillas and an authoritarian regime and specifically how Ação Libertadora Nacional (ALN, or National Liberating Action), the largest guerrilla
group to resist the Brazilian military regime (1964–1985), made the transition from violence to participation in democratic politics. Although the ALN was militarily defeated, many of its members entered the political mainstream during Brazil’s transition to democracy and occupied high governmental posts. The study examines variables such as the restoration of civilian rule and elections, but also the individual and collective efforts of a generation of revolutionaries struggling to overcome the authoritarian legacies and violence of both the right and the left.

The case of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG), as discussed by Michael Allison, is interesting in that the revolutionary challengers were so defeated, that they have been unable to be an effective political force after turning to electoral politics. Guatemala’s civil war was both the longest and bloodiest of the Central American conflicts with an estimated 200,000 Guatemalans killed or “disappeared” between 1960 and 1996. For almost 15 years, the URNG struggled against a government that launched a genocidal campaign against the URNG and both its actual and its potential base. After ten years of negotiations, the URNG and the government of Alvaro Arzú of the National Advancement Party (PAN) brought an end to the war through the signing of the Firm and Lasting Agreement in December 1996 in Guatemala City. Since the conclusion to the country’s civil war and the transformation of the URNG into a political party, it has remained a marginal player in Guatemalan politics.

Juan Gutierrez examines how the Basque people have gained much autonomy and Euskadi ‘ta Askatasuna (ETA) has become small and isolated, yet persists in some acts of violence. He provides an overview of the rise of the ETA and discusses the factors that help to explain why the Basque nationalist conflict has been waged violently, why processes of political accommodation have moved forward, and why those processes have been only partially successful.

In the next chapter, by Nigel Parsons, Palestinian oscillation between armed struggle and diplomacy is examined up to and through the Oslo process, wherein the state of Israel incorporated the PLO into restructured governance arrangements for the indigenous population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Parsons places armed struggle in the context of a dispossessed refugee people reconstituted through violence and sees the perpetuation of armed struggle as a function of the PLO’s long-term inability to translate diplomatic success into political gain. He attributes the temporary de-escalation of the conflict via Oslo to institutional imperatives on the part of the PLO, socio-structural change to Palestinian society, and shifts in the international order. Ultimately Parsons sees the failure of a sustainable peace process to be a consequence of incorporation without accommodation.

In the last chapter, Camilla Orjuela analyzes how tentative agreements also have proven unsustainable in Sri Lanka. Orjuela focuses on how the leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and Vellupilai
Prabhakaran in particular, has found the transition from fighter to peacemaker highly difficult. After reviewing the escalation of violence and eventual attempts at peacemaking in 2002, Orjuela then turns to the main dynamics that impact attempts at peacemaking.

Conclusion

The chapters in this book compel us to reflect on the complexities of resorting to violence in societal conflicts. Many workers in the fields of conflict resolution and peace studies tend to argue against the use of violence and give relatively little attention to different kinds and degrees of violence. Other analysts as well as those engaged in large scale conflicts generally take violence and the threats of violence for granted as an inherent part of major societal conflicts, sometimes with regret and sometimes with exhilaration. Given the evidence in this volume and elsewhere, a third perspective deserves consideration. In this perspective, extreme violence is recognized as having many unanticipated and negative consequences for the parties in a conflict. Those consequences, however, can be mitigated by greatly limiting its usage and combining it with a broad array of other methods of struggle.

All the primary adversaries in the cases examined here used some kinds of violence in various degrees and contexts. Using violence often failed to yield the desired goals, prolonged the fight, and hampered recovering from the conflict. Sometimes, however, it seems to have contributed to achieving some of the objectives that at least one party in the conflict desired. That still leaves open the possibility that alternative non-violent strategies or more limited violence, in scope or duration, would have been even more effective.

Certainly, the reliance on violence and its possible effectiveness depend, like any approach, on the goals being sought. Extreme goals, denigrating the enemy and its members’ needs, tend to be associated with extreme methods of conducting a conflict and are more often unattainable than more modest goals. This suggests that adopting goals and methods that do not threaten the survival, identity, or dignity of the opposing side will tend to increase prospects for constructive engagement. Evidence for this can be noted in many of the chapters.

The contributions in this book identify many of the great variety of kinds of violent and non-violent ways to wage fights: what they are, how they are implemented and what their effects are. Violence includes deadly attacks on noncombatants intended to terrorize a population, drive people away and de-stabilize a government. The attacks may be implemented by non-governmental underground or above ground organizations, and also by governments or units within governments. It also includes massive governmental repression in which persons who may be or may become opponents are disappeared, villages are emptied, demonstrators are shot down,
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and people are closely monitored. It includes narrowly targeted and executed violence, conducted by police and legally circumscribed judicial procedures, which are widely believed to be legitimate. Finally, violence can also be considered to be structural, in the sense that some people under existing institutional arrangements suffer conditions below a basic standard of living while other people do not (Galtung 1969).

Vast arrays of non-violent and non-coercive ways are used by people to resist aggression and oppression and to increase equality, security and freedom. They include persuasive rhetorical efforts based on shared values and beliefs and persuasive demonstrations of cooperative possibilities and benefits. They include many forms of non-violent but coercive campaigns of resistance and of non-cooperation. A wide variety of persons and groups within and beyond the opposing sides affect the transformation of a violent conflict. Leaders play crucial roles at each stage of a conflict’s escalation and de-escalation. However, rank and file members of each side generally are needed to sustain a struggle and to reach and maintain a mutually acceptable agreement (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). In addition, groups that are not members of any organization directly engaged as partisans in a fight also contribute to conflict transformation by helping to limit destructive methods of struggle and by helping sustain an accommodation that is reached.

The transformation of a violent conflict requires engaging in many different strategies in a sequence of changing combinations of complementary strategies. No single strategy is good for all participants throughout the course of a conflict’s transformation. What set of strategies among which actors will prove effective in transforming a violent conflict depends upon a wide range of conditions and perceptions of those conditions among relevant players. We trust that this book assists the great variety of persons affected by a violent conflict, whether as partisans, intermediaries or onlookers, to better understand the conflict and its consequences and to act more effectively to transform the conflict. We believe that the variety of cases and ways of contending examined in this book will expand the repertoire of responses that persons affected by a violent conflict can make. We also trust that this book will prompt more reflection and research about the circumstances and policies that tend to prevent the eruption of violent conflicts, to contain and limit their escalation, to more quickly end them and to help sustain and improve constructive relations among former antagonists.

Note

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References

This chapter examines the choices that particular organizations make as they contend against each other. We examine the various goals adversaries set, the strategies they adopt to progress toward them, and how and why such choices are made. Because the choice of objectives and the means to attain them impact each other, both are discussed. The focus throughout is on non-violent strategic choices.

Conflict circumstances

Resource asymmetry is evident in most conflicts and profoundly affects the equity of their resolution (Mitchell 1995). Asymmetry is often discussed as the relative capacity to exercise coercion, particularly violence, and although this is important in many struggles, it is never all important. Noncoercive capacities also can be decisive, such as the commitment to a struggle, as evident in the Vietnam War. Conflicting partisans have access to and actualize different resources as group capacities, which then impact each side’s choice of strategies. Adversary groups therefore differ in their capacities to use both noncoercive and coercive inducements to affect each other’s conduct.

The resources available to a party in any particular conflict environment are social, economic and demographic. Social resources may include relationships with allies and external powers, strong leadership, cohesive identity, or perceived legitimacy. Such resources affect the conflict when actualized as organizational capacities, but may be used either for violent or non-violent strategies. Strong leadership, for example, may influence the capacity to conduct long and costly military operations, such was the leadership of George Washington, but it may also be required, as in the case of Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King, for a campaign of non-violence.

Likewise, economic resources can be utilized to purchase weapons, hire mercenaries, train troops, or to build defensive or offensive infrastructure. Alternatively they can be used to import supplies during a boycott, support striking workers, hold anti-war rallies, or build monuments to peace.
Finally, demographic resources can be actualized to struggle for various ends. The character of a population, whether large or small, well or badly educated, homogenous or heterogeneous, young or old, is influential; but it does not dictate a particular strategy of conflict. A large, young population may be turned to peaceful protest just as it is to violent rioting.

Most conflict resources persist over time, but some change significantly and quickly. Thus, states that regard as criminals the leaders of a challenging organization may kill or imprison them, depriving that organization of a critical resource. In 1992, for example, the Peruvian government captured Abimel Guzmán, the primary leader of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminosa), greatly diminishing the capacities of that organization (Thomas and Casebeer 2004: 49). In 1999, the Turkish government imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which contributed to modifying their conflict (Radu 2001).

Similarly, many partisans throughout the world suddenly lost important external support when the Cold War ended, staunching the flow of arms and money from the US and the Soviet Union. What might previously have been considered long term resources in these environments were suddenly eliminated, and affected parties were forced to change strategies or even goals.

Significantly, perceptions of relative resources and the anticipation of future changes can also have large effects on a party’s goals and strategies. White South Africans, anticipating becoming a smaller proportion of the population, had reason to move toward an accommodation sooner rather than later. Similarly, many Jewish Israelis, foreseeing a growing Palestinian population, favored a territorial separation that could preserve a predominantly Jewish Israel.

It is therefore insufficient to view power differences only in terms of relative coercive capabilities and the ability to exercise them (negative sanctions). Power is also based on non-coercive inducements (Boulding 1989). One set of such inducements result from a capacity to promise benefits to reward desired conduct (positive sanctions). Noncoercive inducements can also be based on persuasive arguments derived from shared norms and values or on shared identities based on ideology or religion. In actuality, power is exercised in various combinations of these inducements, depending in part upon organizational capacities and characteristics.

Organizational characteristics

Four qualities characterizing contending organizations are particularly relevant for the matters analyzed in this volume. They are: structure, ideology, relations with other organizations, and attachment to violence. The internal and external factors affecting these features will be discussed,
taking into account the effect of resource availability and decisions regarding their actualization.

**Structural features**

The distinction between state and non-state entities is often based on their structural differences, but this can be exaggerated. States are often regarded as having clear boundaries, clearly defined members (citizens), and clearly recognized decision-making procedures, yet they vary in these regards. Conversely, while non-state entities may tend to have fewer of such attributes, many have them to a significant degree.

Both differ in the extent to which rank-and-file members follow the directions of their official leaders, the degree to which particular groups of supporters influence or direct the official leaders, and the degree to which rivals can mobilize and direct people they regard as their constituents. Both state and non-state actors may sometimes incorporate armed groups, functioning somewhat autonomously, and leaders of both tend to make broad claims about who they represent and can control. For example, government officials, who may or may not have been acting independently of their official leaders, have been known to operate in cooperation with armed militia groups in South Africa, Colombia, and Guatemala. Such failures of command structures within state hierarchies are similar to splits within non-state armed groups such as Hamas.

The internal structure of the adversaries may also vary greatly over time as the circumstances of the conflict change. Thus, the increase in international governmental and non-governmental organizations increasingly affects the structure of contending parties through the provision or restriction of resources that influence their strategies. For example, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) contributed to the largely peaceful transitions and transformations among and within the countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics (McMahon 2007; Möller 2007). Similarly, expanding transnational linkages can strengthen some groups in particular countries, affecting the structure of societal and organizational political processes and relative influence. Expanding diaspora communities, which sustain relations in their former homelands, may provide economic and social resources that further influence the group’s structural characteristics there, as discussed by Galia Golan and Adir Gal in their chapter in this volume.

**Ideologies**

The diverse groups in each adversary camp often have some sense of shared identity. Members of each group try to define both themselves and the other. They may define themselves exclusively and believe they have certain rights relative to other persons within or outside their own camp.
These identities may not be precisely formulated and articulated, or be contradictory and shifting as circumstances change. Yet some aspects of these identities can become dominant within an ideology and drive the choice of violent strategies.

Some ideologies are highly institutionalized, incorporated in legislation and with special agencies dedicated to their maintenance. This is the case, for example, in states that are constituted to embody or to serve a particular religion, ethnicity, or political ideology. They also may be vigorously challenged by minority groups who object to the subordinate treatment they suffer. Alternatively, secular democratic governments may be challenged by organizations to establish a state that gives priority to an exclusive religious, ethnic, or political ideology. Such matters are prone to conflicts that are waged violently, such as in Afghanistan during the 1980s, but can also be waged peacefully, such as the Hizbut Tahrir movement for a global Caliphate, active in over 40 countries (Cornell 2002).

Additionally, changes in major ideologies, norms, and belief systems can significantly impact the ideologies of local organizations. The break-up of the Soviet Union not only ended Soviet material assistance to Marxist governments and revolutionary movements, it also reduced the adherence to Marxist ideologies and the concern among others about their threat. Conflicts became more frequently couched in ethnic and religious terms. In this way different ideological characteristics became salient, as one ideological resource was replaced by another.

**Relations with other organizations**

As highlighted above, each organization in a conflict is affected by its interaction with other organizations in the conflict environment, including its primary adversaries, organizations allied with the adversaries, and non-engaged third parties. Furthermore, each side usually consists of a coalition of organizations, each with internal factions and sub-groups. It is useful to keep this complexity in mind, even if a particular subunit is the primary one in the choice and employment of strategies.

The autonomy or dependency, for example, of a particular conflict unit in relation to supporting, allying, and ruling organizations affects its leader’s options. An adversary may be highly dependent upon an outside government for material support and adhere to the goals and interests of that outside government in order to maintain its assistance. This was evident during the Cold War for the organizations relying greatly on American or Soviet support. Global economic and technological developments have greatly contributed to increasing inter-dependence and transnational linkages. For example, the increasing scope of international trade and investment, combined with increased capital mobility, enhances governmental interdependence, while also increasing vulnerability to policies of major