

# Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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## 11 Waging conflicts constructively

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### Introduction

The contemporary field of conflict analysis and resolution (CAR) derives from many sources, which contributes to its creativity and its breadth (Kriesberg 2008). Workers in the field utilize theories and research from many traditional academic disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, sociology, geography, political science, history, and economics. Some of them also have experience in various interdisciplinary fields, notably peace studies as well as industrial relations and security studies. The experiences of, and reflections by, persons in religious undertakings, international diplomacy, collective bargaining, and legal proceedings also have contributed to the development of the field. Finally, the field has grown so greatly that many workers in it theorize, engage in research, and create new conflict resolution methods as well as apply familiar methods in new settings, which all contribute to the continuing advancement of the field.

The great range of sources and of current work in the field makes for diverse approaches to it. This chapter stresses a constructive approach, which looks at all stages of conflicts, not being limited to considering only the conflict-settling or resolving phases. It also looks at the way conflicts are waged, the quality of the settlements reached, and the equity of the conditions existing before and after overt contestations; it is not limited to the ending of expressed hostility and antagonism. Many people in the field of CAR adopt much of the constructive approach in their work without identifying their approach that way. They may emphasize their interest in conflict transformation, in conflict outcomes and not only in conflict resolution processes, but also in concerns about justice and long-term peace sustainability.

The meaning of the concept *constructive conflict* and, therefore, how and to what degree conflicts can be waged constructively are matters of considerable discussion (Deutsch 1973; Ramsbotham *et al.* 2005). In the context of CAR thinking, conflicts are waged constructively insofar as adversaries maximize mutual benefits and minimize mutual harms. But not all claims for benefits are to be equally regarded. Some partisans in a conflict may already possess greater power, status, or material benefits than their antagonists, but claim and seek even more (Brockner and Rubin 1985). There is no consensus about the grounds for judging such claims as justified or not. There is, however, considerable consensus about unjustifiable harms, and therefore the concept of constructiveness tends to be used in reference to minimally injurious conflicts. In this chapter, the widely shared understandings of human rights and of basic human needs will provide standards to assess constructiveness. Insofar as the means of fighting cause great damage to members of the opposing sides, the conflicts are regarded as destructively waged. Moreover, the

destructiveness is greater insofar as one side imposes injuries on the other side with little differentiation among the opposing side's adherents. Finally, the destructiveness is greater insofar as the conflict is protracted and impacts many people.

No conflict is wholly constructive or wholly destructive; rather, each varies in several ways along this dimension (Kriesberg 2006). Variation arises from the heterogeneity of each side in a large-scale conflict because each side contains leaders, elites, rival leaders, sub-elites, rank-and-file members, loosely associated sympathizers, and many other groupings that have distinctive losses and benefits. What may seem highly destructive to one group may be substantially constructive for another group, even within the same side of a struggle (Colaresi 2005).

The destructiveness of a conflict is often highly asymmetrical, with one side experiencing little harm while inflicting immense injury upon members of the opposing side. This is especially true of genocidal attacks against a whole people. However, the perpetrators of gross atrocities may also suffer significant damages; many of them feel shame, guilt, and mental trauma as well as experiencing severe retribution by members of the previously injured groups.

Furthermore, variation in constructiveness generally occurs in different stages of a conflict. In this chapter, we will focus on three stages: escalating conflicts, settling conflicts, and recovering afterward. For each stage, we will discuss the strategies that partisans and interveners may pursue that contribute to the constructiveness of the processes of waging, settling, and preventing the recurrence of conflicts and also to the equity of the outcomes.

Constructive processes means more than avoiding destructive elements. The adversaries may utilize non-violent and even non-coercive inducements such as persuasive appeals and promises of future advantages in ways that yield mutual benefits. Furthermore, in constructive conflicts, adversaries tend to recognize each other as legitimate entities, and neither threatens the other's existence. They interact to solve the problem they face together – their conflict – by seeking how best to construct a mutually acceptable outcome (Fisher *et al.* 1991). Consequently, the relationship between adversaries may be generally more beneficial after the conflict has ended than before it erupted.

How a struggle is waged and the terms of its settlement affect subsequent developments; insofar as the benefits are mutual and equitable they are deemed to be constructive. Conversely, conflict outcomes tend to be destructive insofar as one side imposes them unilaterally, with little regard to the interests and needs of most members of the other side. The defeated party then is likely to regard the outcome as oppressive and unjust, requiring redress, and/or as humiliating, requiring revenge. Adjustments are often made after the conflict's termination, sometimes decades or even centuries later.

Conflict outcomes are generally regarded as constructive insofar as the parties view them as mutually acceptable; but who speaks for the parties and in what time frame the outcome is considered complicate the assessment. The interpretations of the interests and needs of the imposed-upon party are not simply those of its proclaimed leaders, particularly if the leaders lack legitimacy. By another criterion, outcomes are constructive insofar as they provide a basis for future relations to be conducted with minimal destructiveness.

This chapter focuses on possible strategies that contribute to waging conflicts constructively, as evidenced by research and experience. The strategies are those undertaken by partisans or by interveners. The partisans may be seeking to change an opponent, or they may be trying to resist an opponent's efforts to adversely change them. The interveners

may be intermediaries seeking to reduce the conflict's destructiveness, or they may be intervening largely to advance their own interests or those of one party in the fight.

Applications of the constructive CAR approach and of the basic CAR methods have expanded greatly, particularly since the early 1980s. These applications, unwitting as well as witting, have contributed to the remarkable decrease in international and domestic wars and other mass violence since the end of the 1980s (Eriksson and Wallensteen 2004; Human Security Centre 2006; Marshall and Gurr 2005; Wallensteen 2002). After the end of the Cold War, the incidence and magnitude of international wars and of civil wars has markedly decreased; this has been true also of violent conflicts between non-state antagonists. Genocides and other mass killings of civilians have also been reduced. Furthermore, combat-related deaths have also declined. International terrorist attacks, however, sharply increased between 2002 and 2005. Also, it is noteworthy that violent conflicts have increasingly been ended by negotiated agreements rather than by one side's defeating the other. These changes are not uniform around the world; during the 1990s mass violence was relatively more widespread in Africa than in other regions, but at the beginning of the twenty-first century it had decreased, while wars and terrorist attacks had increased in South Asia and the Middle East.

How constructive CAR applications may have contributed to the decreases in mass violence will be examined in this chapter. We will also consider how the use or non-use of such methods helps account for the variations in mass violence in different global regions and, over time, at different conflict stages: escalation, de-escalation, and recovery.

### **Escalating conflicts constructively**

Constructive conflict escalations may seem particularly improbable. Escalation is usually understood to mean increasing coercion and injuries inflicted by one side upon another. Nevertheless, escalation can entail relatively little of such destructiveness. This is possible because conflicts can be conducted using non-violent as well as violent coercive inducements, and even by employing non-coercive inducements such as persuasive arguments or promised benefits (Kriesberg 2007b). Various strategies combine such inducements as well as limited violence in diverse ways that change over time. We consider not only strategies that contenders who are challenging a dominant adversary adopt, but also strategies that a dominating party seeking further gains uses against a vulnerable adversary. We will emphasize conflict-waging strategies that are relatively constructive and that tend to foster constructive outcomes, which help overcome the destructive aspects of the earlier relationship and struggle.

To begin, we should recognize that research and experience is growing regarding the application of non-violent action as an escalation strategy that tends to avoid or at least minimize destructiveness. Very influentially, Mohandas Gandhi (1962) developed a principled non-violent strategy that he used to help win India's independence from the British Empire. More secular, pragmatic, and empirically grounded arguments have become the basis for much of the contemporary reasoning about and practice of non-violent methods to wage conflicts constructively. This work provides evidence of how non-violent actions can be effective in achieving improvements in sociopolitical life, and also in resisting aggression (Sharp 2005). Non-violent actions include protest demonstrations, strikes, refusal to comply with oppressive rules, and the formation of alternative or autonomous institutions, reducing dependence on the adversary. Such elements of civil society can then continue to function in sustaining an agreement of accommodation when it is attained.

The reliance on non-violent actions has grown since the early 1980s, as exemplified in South Africa, the Philippines, Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Serbia, Ukraine, and Thailand.

Other constructive methods to wage and to end conflicts significantly utilize non-coercive inducements, including persuasion and promised benefits. Members of either contending side can try to persuade their antagonists of the rightness of their cause, and influence the antagonists to believe that they will not suffer by yielding a measure of what they seek. Members of either side may try to frame the conflict so that they and their opponents regard themselves as sharing many common interests and values, which would be increased by cooperation. For example, Nelson Mandela and the other leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), as they struggled to end apartheid and achieve equality for all South Africans in the political process, tried to reassure whites that their individual and collective economic and political rights would be respected and protected (Mandela 1994).

In addition, members of one side may accord opponents decent regard, access to greater opportunities, and shared power and resources. Admittedly, persuasive arguments and proffered benefits are more available to the dominant side in a conflict. They constitute "soft power," which is varyingly available even to the seemingly weaker entities as well as to the stronger side (Nye 2004). Particular arrangements between adversaries may result in a mutually acceptable coengagement without one side simply coopting the other. The increasingly integrated and interdependent character of the world enhances and diffuses greater soft power capabilities.

The constructive conflict approach also calls attention to the destructive potential of various escalating strategies, whose use should be applied with careful precision or avoided entirely. Challengers with relatively little coercive capability who resort to violent strategies are likely to provoke destructive retaliatory actions, which defeat them (Gamson 1990). Nevertheless, in some circumstances, the challengers' provocation may be intended to produce an overreaction by the adversary that will win them support and create a revolutionary situation (Debray 1967; Fanon 1966). In the 1960s, this strategy became attractive among those seeking revolutionary change, partly thanks to the success of Fidel Castro and his small revolutionary group, which took power in Cuba in January 1959. The Cuban government forces, under the direction of Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, the self-appointed president, had resorted to increasingly harsh and indiscriminate countermeasures against the Castro-led group. Batista thereby antagonized many segments of the Cuban population, became isolated, and abandoned power. After that experience, many government officials learned to avoid indiscriminate repression; they relied more on precise operations and sought to isolate the challengers. For many years, leftist radicals in several countries conducted violent political operations, but they generally failed to produce a revolutionary situation.

In some ways, the September 11, 2001, attacks by Al Qaeda did provoke extraordinary responses by the US government that expanded Al Qaeda's prominence and reach, and also weakened the US position in the Middle East. Thus, after the seeming success in overthrowing the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the US went on to oust Saddam Hussein and his regime in Iraq, which, however, provided an opportunity for Al Qaeda to draw fighters to Iraq. Belatedly, the US government closed down its military bases in Saudi Arabia, which addressed a main Al Qaeda grievance. A more measured counterterrorism strategy would probably have been more effective in keeping international support for the United States and isolating Al Qaeda.

Nevertheless, the Al Qaeda reliance on violent attacks on non-combatants as its primary strategy, its insistence on a narrow interpretation of Islam, and its assertion of extreme goals will undoubtedly preclude long-term triumph. Those qualities are opposed by recent globalizing developments. Given its features, Al Qaeda is unlikely to adopt a more constructive approach without a fundamental transformation. Moreover, it is susceptible to being marginalized and diminished by robust counterterrorism strategies based upon a constructive CAR approach.

The difficulties encountered by President George W. Bush and his administration in escalating the struggle against Al Qaeda illustrate two problems that advocates of a constructive conflict approach warn against, and for which they suggest possible solutions. First is the danger of overreaching, of expanding goals too far and too fast, which results in defeats (Kriesberg 2007a). This danger often arises at the moment when victories are won. Recognizing this danger is a step in avoiding it, as is doing a careful analysis of long-term consequences of alternative courses of action. The second danger is entrapment, whereby commitments are heightened in order to make good on past investments of time, money, or lives (Brockner and Rubin 1985). Consequently, a destructive conflict may be perpetuated in the vain hope of making past sacrifices seem worthwhile. Again, recognizing this danger can help protect against it, by setting limits to escalation at an early stage of a conflict or formulating procedures to assess when entrapment may be arising and to avert it.

Interveners can contribute to constructive escalation by utilizing various strategies that can help limit or end destructive escalations. One strategy is to stop the external support that enables adversaries to continue or even intensify a violent struggle. Outside parties, including governments and diaspora groups, often support the armed struggle by the side in a conflict with which they share interests or identities, and therefore halting that aid helps transform a destructive conflict. Thus, the end of the Cold War stopped military and other assistance by the Soviet and American governments to opposing sides in many countries in Central America, Africa, and elsewhere, hastening conflict settlements there.

Furthermore, international organizations, notably the United Nations (UN), can impose arms embargoes or sanctions that help limit conflict escalation or inflict severe burdens on one side, which may help bring about a conflict settlement (Cortright and Lopez 2000, 2002). Such international actions contributed greatly to the transformation of the US–Libyan conflict between the early 1980s and the early 2000s (Kriesberg 2006). Peacekeeping interventions can also help antagonists end a war, domestic or international, with greater assurance that security will be provided and agreements will be implemented. The end of the Cold War enabled the UN to become much more active and effective in such undertakings.

A variety of other strategies relate to intermediary policies conducted by representatives of governments, international governmental organizations, and diverse non-governmental organizations. They may counsel and assist government officials and their challengers to take actions that help prevent destructive escalation of a conflict. Thus, the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), has the authority to intervene in response to a crisis related to national minority issues that threaten international peace. For example, in the 1990s the HCNM helped avert escalating conflicts and resolve them consistently with international norms by quiet mediation regarding the language and education rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the citizenship rights of ethnic Russians in the newly independent Estonia (McMahon 2007; Möller 2007).

## **Settling conflicts constructively**

A constructive ending of a conflict, particularly after it has become highly destructive, depends upon the convergence of many factors, often in an extended sequence of changes. The factors occur within one or more of the adversaries, in their relationship, and in the external environment; they may combine so as to influence adversaries to reduce and even end their hostile acts against each other, and to construct a mutually acceptable accommodation, whether directly negotiated or not.

### ***Internal factors***

Conventional thinking among partisans in a fight generally attributes destructive persistence in a conflict to the enemy's character, asserting that the enemy is aggressive by nature, has evil leaders, or adheres to a hostile ideology. Indeed, internal features of one (or more likely more than one) adversary often hamper a constructive settlement of a conflict. In large-scale conflicts, some groups within each side frequently have a vested interest in the struggle; furthermore many members of each side often believe that any settlement acceptable to the enemy would be unacceptable to them (Crocker *et al.* 2005).

Political ideologies and religious beliefs at times have been used to justify one group's subjugation of another. However, at times, political or religious beliefs also help mobilize resistance to such antagonistic practices. Moreover, the people fighting against oppression may formulate goals that are inclusive and do not threaten to destroy or subjugate their oppressors. This was notably the case in the ANC's struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the Southern Christian Leadership Council's fight for civil rights in the US.

Sociocultural patterns and vested interests of groups within countries and other large-scale entities do not always support aggressive and militant policies, which tend to generate destructive escalations. Particular socialization practices and educational experiences can foster empathy and reliance on non-coercive ways of interacting socially (Ross 1993). There may also be groups with an interest in pursuing strategies of engagement and collaboration with others who are members of adversarial entities; these may be business organizations, professional associations, diaspora communities, or groups sharing religious or ideological beliefs. They are the source of connections that provide channels of influence and bases of leverage, which can bring about changes in one side by members of another side in a conflict. Even in the Soviet-American Cold War such connections were used and had great impact in the transformation of Soviet society and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kriesberg 1992).

### ***Relational factors***

How adversaries interact and the structure of their relations profoundly affect the way conflicts are transformed and ended. People can have commercial, familial, and other interests and concerns regarding relations with a possible adversary that limit support for policies that would disrupt and damage those connections. Considerable research exists about the relationship between wars and the level of international trade; there is strong evidence that the likelihood of wars is lower between countries with higher levels of trade (Mansfield 1994).

Adversaries having high mutual regard and shared understandings tend to avoid escalating their conflict destructively. If the opponents treat each other as legitimate and

are responsive to each other, then problemsolving modes of conducting their emerging conflicts are likely. This is supported by the well-researched empirical generalization that democratic societies rarely if ever make war on each other (Russett 1995; Russett and Oneal 2001). Democratic dyads are much less likely than non-democratic dyads to engage in any kind of militarized dispute. A plausible explanation of the finding is that the leaders and peoples of democratic societies tend to recognize important common values, shared norms, and common interests. Legitimacy is probably granted to the policies each government pursues, and they have shared understandings about how conflicts are to be managed without recourse to violence or threats of violence.

Developments in the fields of peace research and of conflict resolution demonstrate one way adversarial military postures may be structured to prevent or limit destructive conflicts. Beginning in the 1970s, peace researchers in West Germany, Denmark, and elsewhere examined the military strategies adopted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and by the Warsaw Pact members. The peace researchers showed how, while purporting to be defensive, each side's military readiness to move forward and carry the war into the other side's territory was naturally regarded by its opponent as threatening. The researchers developed plans for restructuring military forces that would provide effective defense without being provocative. Western peace researchers discussed these ideas in Moscow and they influenced changes in Soviet conduct, resulting in the Cold War's transformation and termination (Dragsdahl 1989; Evangelista 1999).

De-escalation can occur by reframing a conflict so that the goals in a conflict are less antagonistic and a settlement can be more readily reached, a strategy that is salient in the CAR approach. One way such reframing may occur is by increasing the salience of other conflicts, including ones that confront the adversaries with a common enemy or problem. Or one party in a fight may come to think that a new enemy must be given higher priority and try to de-escalate the fight with the former enemy number one. Thus, in the 1970s, when the hostility between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the USSR increased, each downgraded its hostility toward the United States. At the same time, the US government was interested in making some accommodations with the PRC and USSR and have them reduce support to North Vietnam, which might help achieve an "honorable" exit from the war in Vietnam.

A "hurting stalemate" together with the prospect of a better option is a proximate condition for the transition from a protracted destructive conflict toward a mutually agreed upon accommodation (Zartman 1989). In a hurting stalemate, neither side believes it can defeat the adversary in a conflict and the resulting stalemate is painful to sustain. If a way to an acceptable solution seems feasible, exploratory steps may be taken to follow that path. The option may have been long available, but appears newly attractive under the circumstances of a hurting stalemate. Or the option may be newly available thanks to changes within one or more sides or to changes introduced by new parties becoming engaged in the conflict, as occurred when the Republic of Ireland became directly engaged in the British efforts to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland.

At the core of the CAR approach are ideas and evidence about problemsolving negotiation as a process to constructively settle specific disputes. Contributors to the CAR field point to the value of converting a conflict to a shared problem that the adversaries are facing, and separating the person from the problem (Fisher *et al.* 1991). Various strategies have been developed to increase the likelihood that mutually acceptable settlements are reached and implemented. These include constructing possible options acceptable to key

players in the opposing sides. This may entail bringing in additional parties or excluding rejectionist groups in order to undertake negotiations.

Various methods can be employed that help make the negotiations efficient and effective once undertaken. Successful negotiators tend to assess their own underlying interests and priorities and the options they have if they fail to reach an agreement. They try to learn what the other side's interests may be, perhaps underlying their stated positions. Learning is aided by asking questions to discover what those interests may be. They work together to envision solutions that might satisfy at least some of their underlying interests. They also develop procedures to settle future disputes about interpreting the agreements that are reached. If negotiations reach an impasse, a change in the negotiating format may allow progress to be made, by shifting the level of the respective negotiators, by restructuring the agenda, or by including facilitators or mediators.

Negotiation options are certainly conditioned by the goals of the adversaries. Substantive negotiations are not feasible if either side is seeking the other's destruction. Sometimes this has hampered attempts at negotiations between the US government and the North Korean and the Iranian governments, ostensibly about nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and in Iran. During the George W. Bush administrations, there has been some ambiguity about the US goal being regime change in North Korea and Iran or a change in the regime's policy. One side may refuse to enter negotiations when it believes that the would-be negotiating partner seeks its destruction, as has been true at times in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Of course, opposing sides are never unitary, and negotiations may be pursued between some elements or groups from the antagonistic sides that seek a settlement while rejectionists and spoilers try to thwart an agreement. Furthermore, informal explorations may be pursued by intermediaries, as discussed in the next section.

### *External factors*

The rapidly increasing integration and interconnections in the world affect local, societal, and international conflicts. Major contentious events in almost any locality are becoming more visible to people in much of the rest of the world, and they increasingly affect people elsewhere; all of this expands the role of external factors in each conflict's de-escalation and settlement as well as its eruption and escalation. External intervention is made more likely by the great increase in the number and level of activities of transnational governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Accompanying these structural developments, various norms and conventional understandings support interventions that are intended to advance moral claims and often to limit and stop human rights atrocities.

These developments buttress the argument for the effectiveness of relatively constructive multilateral rather than unilateral policies. Multilateral practices have greater legitimacy and are more likely to be effective because their usage is more likely to employ multidimensional methods and be applied at many levels. Furthermore, a multilateral approach is less likely than a unilateral one to result in violent practices at an early stage of conflict escalation. The increase in negotiated settlements of violent conflicts since the late 1980s is partly explained by the greater international reliance on multilateral practices during that period. Unilateral practices, for example in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah eruption of violence, are more often counterproductive for many antagonists.

Mediators can play crucial roles in helping adversaries move toward constructive conflict transformations. They can transmit information between adversaries about each other, indicating what agreements might be reached. Mediators can also provide needed



resources and services to improve the likelihood that agreed-upon settlements will be honored. Mediators may be officials representing governments or international governmental organizations, such as the UN or the OSCE in Europe. Mediators may also be unofficial go-betweens, conducting track two diplomacy (Davies and Kaufman 2002; McDonald 1991). The numbers of national and transnational organizations have been increasing very greatly in recent years, and they provide many intermediary services that help mitigate destructive qualities of conflicts. This growth has resulted in part from the funding by national governments and international governmental organizations of peacebuilding activities and of recovery from the aftermath of mass violence (Fischer 2006).

Increasingly, shared norms about protecting human rights and avoiding gross human rights violations help set standards for settlements that will be regarded as equitable (Babbitt forthcoming). In addition, people increasingly hold norms and have expectations about the importance of popular engagement in settling conflicts; and widespread civil engagement does contribute to the durability of agreements (Saunders 2005).

### **Building peace after destructive conflict**

The character of the relations between the adversaries after their destructive engagement has been transformed or terminated clearly affects the durability of their new accommodation. Too often, the coerced termination of a conflict, even if it is a formally negotiated agreement, sets the stage for renewed struggle in the short term. The accommodations that may contribute to long-term constructive relations have increasingly been examined by workers in the fields of peace studies and of constructive CAR. Thus, accommodations that are regarded as just by the former antagonists tend to be durable. Durability is enhanced insofar as there is a high degree of interdependence between the former adversaries.

One set of strategies that contributes to durable constructive accommodations pertains to developing institutions that foster interdependence, generating vested interests in cooperation, increasing cultural and social interactions, and establishing or raising the salience of superordinate goals. A wide variety of research supports the effectiveness of these strategies. Experiments in social psychology have illustrated that having a common goal can overcome contentions within a group (Sherif 1966). Establishing organizations that fulfill functions for disparate, even contending, entities can set in motion expansions of such organizations as they meet related functions (Mitrany 1966). Consequently, those organizations bind the disparate entities into increasingly close unions, as happened notably in integrating France and Germany and other European countries after World War II (Haas 1958). Other work examines the role of dense interpersonal communications in the development of international security communities (Deutsch *et al.* 1957). Many structural and normative conditions converge to create stable peace among states (Boulding 1978; Kacowicz *et al.* 2000). Those conditions are not static, and constructive strategies can foster them internationally. Similar conditions and strategies apply to building stable peace within countries.

Some strategies are primarily directed at building norms and institutions that provide procedures for managing disputes and redressing grievances. They include training in negotiation and mediation, which is increasingly provided by educational institutions and by transnational NGOs. The promotion of democratic political systems is one of the important approaches in these regards, but the evidence indicates that establishing a well-functioning democracy entails more than holding elections (Lyons 2002; Paris 2004).

Finally, some strategies are particularly relevant in the aftermath of protracted destructive

conflicts in which gross human rights violations have occurred. They notably relate to fostering reconciliation, often understood to include advancing justice, truth, security, and mutual respect (Kriesberg 2004; Lederach 1997). Not all aspects of reconciliation, so conceived, can be advanced at the same time by everyone on all sides of destructive conflict. Different dimensions may be realized over an extended period of time by increasing numbers of people in the opposing camps. The increased recognition of the importance and propriety of reconciliation in recovering from past oppression and destructive conflicts reflects and contributes to the recent global changes noted throughout this chapter.

One set of strategies includes specific ways to advance justice by compensating victims of past injustices, and punishing perpetrators of gross atrocities. Justice is also served by establishing laws and institutions to avoid future injustices, for example by instituting affirmative action programs and laws against discrimination. Adversaries tend to believe different accounts about their relationship and having been victimized by the other; recognizing each other's view of the past and developing a commonly shared truth about the past are important steps toward reconciliation. In recent years, official commissions have been instituted to investigate past atrocities and make public what had happened; sometimes this is part of a process to hold particular perpetrators responsible for specific human rights abuses.

Security is a major aspect of reconciliation. It is a widespread concern for people recovering from earlier oppressive conditions and gross human rights violations. Those persons who suffered abuses need assurances that they are safe from the recurrence of such treatment. There is a serious related issue that poses a dilemma in many circumstances. Members of the country or community that is identified as having committed atrocious acts may themselves be harmed by those who had been victimized. The desire for revenge and retribution is often felt and sometimes acted upon, perpetuating destructive cycles of violence (Scheff 1994). Well-written laws and their implementation in judicial proceedings can help resolve these dilemmas; frequently, external intervention can also be greatly helpful. The final aspect of reconciliation, respect, can be part of a fundamental resolution of the ethical and pragmatic concerns relating to these issues.

The idea of achieving mutual respect among people, even when atrocities have occurred, is a broader concept than the one that is often treated as the primary and fundamental aspect of reconciliation: forgiveness. The concept of forgiveness is particularly important in Christian thought, and sometimes is expressed without requiring apologies. Often, however, forgiveness is regarded as a response to the acknowledgment of wrongs that are regretted with feelings of remorse. Even without such sentiments and actions, people may accept each other's humanity and respect their basic rights.

Various positions along these four dimensions of reconciliation complement each other under particular circumstances, but different combinations of positions are inconsistent in other circumstances. The degree of reconciliation actualized tends to differ at the individual and collective levels and among different groups on each side. Reconciliation is never fully realized for all people for all time.

## **Conclusions**

Conflicts often must be waged in order to win greater justice, safety, or economic wellbeing; but those concerns are likely to suffer if the conflict is waged destructively rather than constructively. There are many ways that conflicts can be fought and ended constructively so as to overcome oppression and injustice and yet avoid producing destructive

counterproductive consequences. Constructive options are more likely to be employed if evidence about them is gathered and awareness of their potential becomes more widespread. The likelihood of their adoption would increase if thoughtful analyses preceded escalatory steps. Frequently, too few options are considered in policy discussions; thus, stark alternatives are often posed: do nothing or take violent or other coercive action.

Knowledge about and experience with waging conflicts constructively are growing and spreading. Moreover, the methods of struggling constructively complement and are congruent with many global events and trends. These convergent developments help account for the notable declines in wars and other forms of mass violence after the end of the 1980s. Awareness of these achievements, however, is still limited.

The increase in terrorist attacks and in wars in South Asia and the Middle East at the outset of the twenty-first century might seem to belie the growing effectiveness of the constructive CAR approach. However, in a way they help to confirm the validity of that approach (Kriesberg 2007b). The disregard of the strategies of that approach has contributed to the current large-scale destructive and counterproductive consequences for many countries and organizations. This suggests that constructive strategies that are congruent to the contemporary world would help avoid disasters and have significant beneficial effects.

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