
The USIP Learning Agenda: An Evidence Review

Track 2 Dialogues

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Introduction

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is seeking to develop an evidence base for different peacebuilding tools available to experts and practitioners. This evidence review provides a “meta-synthesis” of unofficial dialogue efforts and a revised contingency model for practitioners to refer to when engaging in dialogue design and facilitation. Such models indicate what form of dialogue might be useful under what circumstances and with what participants. The revised model here builds upon the one developed by Ronald Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly.¹ While their model only included forms of peacemaking interventions such as mediation and problem-solving dialogue, this model also includes other types of dialogue and extrapolates them across conflict stages and phases of peacebuilding.

The value of dialogue as an engagement tool for conflict resolution and peacebuilding has long been recognized. In 2016, USIP commissioned Nike Carstarphen and Ilana Shapiro to review over 100 dialogue projects funded by the institute to help practitioners better understand the process and effects of “transfer”—“or how dialogue effects on participants are spread or transmitted beyond that group to influence other groups, practices, or policies, and make broader changes in society.”² This comprehensive study emphasized the widespread use of dialogue as one of the main forms of intervention in conflict situations. The report highlighted the changing nature of dialogue projects, with a significant shift from macro-level (structural) engagements toward more meso-level (relationship) engagements, where the emphasis is on working with “grassroots leaders and individuals through bottom-up and middle-out change approaches.”³ While the study provided important evidence on dialogue projects, it also provided valuable lessons learned and recommendations for designing and implementing dialogue focused on transfer and for supporting the process of grant making by donor organizations and agencies. In contrast, this evidence review provides a meta-synthesis of dialogue approaches, a **typology of intergroup dialogue**, and a **revised contingency model** for USIP practitioners to use while planning their dialogue projects. In this sense, the paper focuses on what practitioners know about dialogues and how this existing evidence can inform decisions about dialogue design under different conditions. While the revised model is based on available evidence on dialogue effectiveness, it is still prescriptive and tentative in some areas. Because some evidence is dubious and there is a lack of evidence on some aspects of effectiveness, additional research is needed to test and further improve the model.

Although dialogue has been widely used in different types of conflict resolution and peacebuilding engagements, there is still significant ambiguity around the term *dialogue*, and a lack of clarity and focus on this particular tool contributes to the challenges of project design and implementation. Pernille Rieker points out that the term *dialogue* often is applied

to describe different levels of engagement from formal political negotiations and back-channel communications to grassroots meetings and bottom-up policy approaches.⁴ Similarly, Sarah Maddison points to continuous confusion and lack of conceptual clarity around the term *dialogue* and stresses that often very different types of communications and meeting formats are labeled as “dialogue.”⁵ This lack of conceptual clarity, coupled with the wide use of dialogue as a tool in many intractable conflicts, impacts methodological and design choices, creating a situation where the tool’s application can exacerbate the conflict instead of providing the conflict parties with opportunities to move away from it.

Recognizing the profusion of dialogue engagements in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, different scholars and practitioners have attempted to categorize dialogues and review dialogue approaches, outcomes, and measurements of effectiveness. Marianne Bojer and colleagues conducted a comprehensive review of dialogue engagements in South Africa, focusing on “dialogue methods applicable to face-to-face gatherings of groups of people meeting to address collective social challenges.”⁶ In their book, *Mapping Dialogue*, they acknowledge that tools used in such engagements are very diverse and can be applied to relatively small groups (up to 20 people) as well as large groups (up to several thousands of people, almost at the national level). Regarding dialogue for social change, the authors emphasize two important dimensions: the *purpose* and *context* of the dialogue. Centrality of the purpose and context was recognized as a typology category for dialogue by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).⁷ Based on these two dimensions, the design of the dialogue, the particular tools needed, and the facilitation approach can be different.

Similar to Carstarphen and Shapiro’s study, an empirical study by Adrienne Dessel and Mary Rogge reviewed the literature on intergroup dialogue and emphasized the need for improving and furthering the evaluation of dialogue project outcomes.⁸ A decade later, Keri Frantell and colleagues conducted a similar empirical review of intergroup dialogue engagements, with the aim of understanding what the current state of intergroup dialogue research and practice was and where the field had moved since Dessel and Rogge recommended more rigorous evaluation processes for intergroup dialogue outcomes.⁹ Frantell and colleagues’ research supported previous findings that placed a major emphasis on understanding participant outcomes, while facilitator experiences were largely left out. Although the authors acknowledged some of the improvements made in the field since 2008, they noted that “there are still many areas for both practitioners and researchers to attend to.”¹⁰

This evidence review focuses on intergroup dialogue (IGD) as a tool for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In the first section, we briefly discuss the characteristics, forms, and purposes of dialogue and the different definitions and levels of dialogue application. We then present a broad typology of dialogue, highlighting four core dimensions and several specific types such as democratic, intergroup, intercultural, and interfaith. Some sample typologies of dialogue are included in the discussion. We end the section with a review of

available empirical evidence on the effectiveness of dialogues. Next, we discuss in detail the concept and typology of intergroup dialogue. For the purposes of conceptual clarity and usefulness and the applicability of our recommendations, we focus on IGD only in situations of interactable identity-based intergroup conflict. We highlight three distinct conceptual types—pure, problem-solving, and agonistic—and discuss the definitions, processes, and purposes of each type. The third section presents a contingency approach for dialogue interventions. We discuss contingency models for third-party interventions and present a revised model that focuses on peace interventions in relation to the stages of conflict escalation and de-escalation. The model prescribes different types of intergroup dialogue depending on the stage of the conflict and the level of escalation/de-escalation. Example dialogue interventions at the various stages are presented in boxes to illustrate and support the model.

Methodology

The primary aim of the evidence review was to create a typology of intergroup dialogue and develop a contingency model that will help practitioners with their decision-making process. The following central question guided the review: What is the existing evidence on the effectiveness of intergroup dialogue, and how can it support the development of a contingency approach to dialogue design? To answer this question and then develop a contingency model for dialogue design, we conducted a meta-synthesis that would allow us to capture the already existing scholarship on intergroup dialogue in depth. As a qualitative method, a meta-synthesis brings together insights from different but related qualitative and quantitative studies. In broader terms, it integrates research that has used diverse methodologies, oftentimes across different contexts. A meta-synthesis identifies “key themes, concepts, or theories that provide novel or more powerful explanations for the phenomenon under review.”¹¹ As an interpretive method, meta-synthesis allows the introduction of new dimensions to the conceptualization of some core issues in dialogue design and implementation. It also helps deepen our understanding of the effectiveness of dialogue as an intervention mechanism and reveals areas for future research.

To make the scope of the review manageable, pragmatic, and useful, we focused the meta-synthesis on intergroup dialogue only. There are certainly different dialogue formats, but intergroup dialogue is a process that allows groups and individuals to explore a wide range of divisive issues, such as race, politics, and religion, that can lead to social conflict. Also, even though dialogues as a mode of intervention can be conducted at different stages of the conflict life cycle, for this meta-synthesis, we focused on intergroup dialogue in situations of escalated, intractable, identity-based intergroup conflict.

Review of Dialogue

With the proliferation of dialogue engagements in the conflict and postconflict contexts, scholars and practitioners recognize the need for developing descriptions and categorizations of different types of engagements to specify what each is trying to achieve. Given the high level of ambiguity around the term *dialogue* itself, there have been multiple attempts to identify the basic characteristics of the general method of dialogue and the various forms and types of dialogue.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

Dialogue is often described in the context of a particular focal issue, level of engagement, and stage of the conflict. Nonetheless, there are common characteristics of dialogues regardless of the wide variation in practice.

First, dialogues rely on “structured social interaction” among participants from conflict parties. Dialogue is thus known as a method of “interactive conflict resolution” because the interaction follows a structured design and a process logic, and it is usually facilitated by a skilled and impartial third party.¹² Interactive conflict resolution encompasses a number of methods—including dialogue, problem-solving workshops, and training—that bring together informal representatives of conflict parties in constructive conversation.¹³

The optimal conditions for effective interaction have been established by decades of research on the “social contact hypothesis.” Contact among representatives of adversarial groups should involve a friendly environment with high acquaintance potential, participants of equal social status, cooperation toward a common task, interdependence, and support from norms and institutions.¹⁴

Second, dialogues aim to be transformative.¹⁵ The theory of change will differ from one dialogue initiative to another, but all dialogues aim to transform the attitudes and behaviors of the participating individuals first and then those of the communities and society via these participating individuals.¹⁶ Hence, determining the theory of change for a dialogue program involves multiple levels of analysis. Lack of contact between individuals from distinct social groups promotes bias, prejudice, delegitimization, and dehumanization of the other, where segregation builds over time in the conflict. Institutionalized lack of contact reinforces negative attitudes and beliefs about the out-group, further solidifying the boundaries between the in-group and the out-group.¹⁷ The human relations movement in psychology advanced the theory that if lack of contact reinforces intergroup bias, prejudice, and dehumanization, then carefully designed contact between the members of identity groups can be used to reverse these effects.¹⁸ As members of identity groups interact, their preconceived notion of the other is challenged, commonalities across groups are revealed while accentuated differences are minimized, and members of each group begin to humanize each other.¹⁹

Third, dialogue goals typically include increasing mutual understanding and respect between the sides, going beyond a zero-sum view of the conflict, generating empathy and trust, and stimulating joint decision-making and problem-solving. And these goals are usually seen as sequential phases of a dialogue process.²⁰ For example, as outlined in the ARIA framework,²¹ in the first phase (antagonism/blame), parties formulate different points of view in an antagonistic manner. In the second phase (resonance), they reflect on underlying needs, fears, and concerns and recognize these in each other; the goal is to identify shared interests and needs. In the third stage (invention), parties begin to solve problems and jointly develop ideas that address substantive issues. The last stage (action) is the planning of steps to be taken by the group.

Yet, despite the above common characteristics, dialogues have many different forms and purposes in practice.

VARIOUS FORMS

Dialogues vary based on the size of the participant group. The dialogue format may be small-group interactions (for example, track 2 or problem-solving workshops with typically 15 to 20 participants) or large-group interactions (for example, national dialogues, political dialogues, or future-search or public-visioning dialogues involving hundreds and even thousands of people).

Dialogues vary depending on the source that authorizes them. A dialogue process may be mandated officially (for example, national dialogues facilitated by the United Nations) or may be organized unofficially/informally (for example, community dialogues facilitated by community peacebuilders).

Dialogues also vary based on the nature of the participants involved.²² High-level dialogues involving officials in a quasi-official capacity are called track 1.5;²³ dialogues with mid-level unofficial participants, such as academics, journalists, or experts, are called track 2;²⁴ and dialogues with grassroots and community participants are called track 3, or people-to-people dialogues.²⁵

Dialogues can also be outcome-focused or relationship-focused, depending on the goals and objectives.²⁶ Outcome-focused dialogue is designed to generate proposals that can be used or adopted in official track 1 processes, whereas relationship-focused dialogue is primarily designed to build relationships, trust, empathy, and mutual understanding among adversaries in order to prepare the groundwork for a widely supported peace. In their survey of more than 100 USIP-funded dialogue projects, Carstarphen and Shapiro used a similar but more nuanced categorization. They described relationship-focused dialogues as being “bottom-up and out” and outcome-focused/high-level dialogues as being “top out and down.”²⁷ An example outcome-focused initiative from the literature is the dialogue involving high-level unofficial representatives of Israelis and Palestinians that resulted in the 2003 Geneva Accord. This

initiative's concrete outcome was a "final status" plan for the Israel/Palestine conflict based on a two-state solution.²⁸ Over 30 percent of the dialogue initiatives surveyed in Carstarphen and Shapiro's study were outcome-focused.²⁹

A well-known example of a relationship-focused initiative is the Seeds of Peace dialogue that provided the space for young Israelis and Palestinians as well as Indians and Pakistanis to interact at a summer camp; during their time there, they learned about each other and built friendships.³⁰ More than half the dialogue initiatives surveyed in the USIP-funded study were relationship-focused.³¹ Esra Cuhadar and colleagues found similar results to the USIP survey from examining a wide range of Israeli-Palestinian and Turkish-Armenian dialogues.³² Grassroots-level and relationship-focused dialogues were higher in number than the other type.³³

BROAD TYPOLOGIES

One of the first and most often-cited dialogue typologies was developed by the UNDP within the framework of the Democratic Dialogue Project conducted in Latin American countries and the Caribbean.³⁴ Based on small-group and plenary discussions with dialogue practitioners, the UNDP put together a dialogue typology to capture knowledge that can help with the development of other dialogue efforts.

The UNDP identified three core dimensions of a dialogue typology: *purpose* (what the dialogue intends to achieve), *context* (under which conditions the dialogue unfolds—the stage of the conflict), and *outputs* (the dialogue's main outcomes). Developing the typology further, the UNDP identified subcomponents based on variations that emerge from each dimension. The purpose of dialogue can be divided into two subcomponents: the scope of the purpose and the role that dialogue plays within each particular conflict context. The scope of dialogue can include dealing with critical events, addressing challenges/problems of the times, and/or promoting long-term change. At the same time, dialogue can be an instrument, a philosophy or modus operandi for a group, or a part of strategic discussion. Within the purpose of dialogue, these different subcomponents can overlap to create meaningful engagement. For example, in Argentina, the Catholic Church and the UNDP organized a dialogue to address the different sets of crises simultaneously unfolding in the country. And in this case, the dialogue became an instrument to deal with the critical events of that moment.

Similar to the UNDP analysis, Bojer and colleagues also emphasize the purpose and context of dialogue as key dimensions that determine not only the selection of specific tools and formats of dialogue design but also the success of the overall dialogue approach.³⁵ They identify 11 possible purposes that a dialogue process can have, ranging from general awareness and the creation of a shared vision to innovation and problem-solving. While they acknowledge that different tools can be applied in more than one specific purpose situation, they also emphasize that their typology allows practitioners and facilitators to select the best-suited tool, and at the same time, be aware of additional ones that could support a particular

approach. In concurrence with the UNDP's identification of context as an important core dimension, Bojer and colleagues emphasize a range of situational factors that frame the overall context in which conflict is occurring. However, unlike the UNDP analysis that focuses almost exclusively on conflict characteristics that define the context, such as the stage of the conflict, Bojer and colleagues add depth by including other important characteristics such as the dialogue group size, qualifications of the facilitator, and the nature of participant relationships (for example, based on power and class along with generational and cultural diversity).

In addition to the UNDP and Bojer typologies, one can outline a much broader typology of dialogue that emphasizes a fourth core dimension: the distinct *focal issues* that different forms of dialogue are trying to address. Democratic dialogue is defined as a “*cross-institutional process for addressing complex societal problems or challenges that cannot be addressed by any single institution.*”³⁶ It is also seen as a type of engagement that aims to strengthen democratic institutions by “seeking to transform conflictive relationships so as to prevent crises and violence and therefore, contribute to enhance [sic] democratic governance.”³⁷ Mirna Cuentas and Anaí Mendez argue that the goal of democratic dialogue is to bring about a transformation, not just a simple exchange of ideas and information.³⁸ Dialogue becomes a process that fosters a systematic understanding of the problem and strengthens positive relationships between the participants.

The transformative dialogue approach was developed by Erik Cleven and Judith Saul and builds on the transformative theory developed by Robert Bush and Joseph Folger.³⁹ They view transformative dialogue as a peacebuilding engagement tool that goes beyond the known and traditional approaches of dialogue facilitation. The foundational element within the transformative dialogue approach, as defined by the authors, is the practitioners' ethical relation to conflict parties that takes priority over the conflict analysis, definitional categories, and even peace and reconciliation. The authors argue that the ethical relation to conflict parties requires the intervenor to ask questions about the real agency of the participants: “Does the intervention allow people themselves to determine whether or not to participate in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, or dialogue processes, who to engage with, and what the process should look like?”⁴⁰ In addition, transformative dialogue “posits a different relationship between conflict analysis and practice.”⁴¹

Intergroup dialogue also falls within the currently existing range of broad typologies. Intergroup dialogue is a process that relies on conversational patterns and serves as a bridge between the individual and collective consciousness.⁴² Intergroup dialogue can occur during a one-time meeting or over a series of meetings where, through facilitated group experiences, the participants are provided with a “structured opportunity to explore attitudes about polarizing societal issues.”⁴³ This form of dialogue often focuses on race relations. Dessel and colleagues further define intergroup dialogue as “a process designed to involve individuals and groups in an exploration of societal issues about which views differ, often to the extent that polarization and conflict occur.”⁴⁴ Dialogue creates a safe but at the same time, shared

communal space where the participants can express their views and even anger about the injustice. In this context, the dialogue uses constructive language and active listening skills and aims to develop shared understanding.

One recent type of intergroup dialogue that has emerged as an alternative to outcome-focused and relationship-focused transformative dialogue is agonistic dialogue. In describing this alternate way to transform relationships in divided and postviolent societies, Maddison emphasizes that the agonistic nature of dialogue is focused on engaging rather than resolving the conflict in some final sense.⁴⁵ Agonistic dialogue does not try to resolve the deeper and more insidious drivers of intractable intergroup conflict, including exclusive identities, power differences, and historical injustices, but it does provide a space to engage across these deep differences through the sharing of viewpoints, narratives, values, and emotions without the need to achieve consensus. Thus, it facilitates increased understanding between former enemies so that they can develop nonviolent strategies and enter into a transformed relationship based on democratic pluralism. To be implemented effectively, agonistic dialogue needs to be at an intensive level of engagement, focused on the relationship, and sustained over a considerable period of time.

Other scholars approach intergroup dialogue from an educational point of view and stress that intergroup dialogue builds on the social justice and diversity education tradition and expands on the dialogue process by adding a dimension of cross-group interaction. This form of intergroup dialogue centers on the critical-dialogue approach and emphasizes the following three components: (1) critical analysis and understanding of difference and dominance, (2) discursive engagement across differences, and (3) sustained and conjoint community building and conflict engagement.⁴⁶

Intercultural dialogue has also been gaining significant attention in the post 9-11 world, particularly as a way to address conflict and disagreement between immigrant communities and host countries in Europe and to facilitate conflict-resolution processes in Afghanistan and elsewhere. As defined by the Council of Europe in 2008, intercultural dialogue is “an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s global perception.”⁴⁷

Finally, interfaith/interreligious dialogue is another form of dialogue engagement that is focused on the religion and spiritual convictions of the participants. Reina Neufeldt defines interfaith dialogue as an “engagement between people of different faith traditions communicating about faith and issues of common concern.”⁴⁸ Darren Cronshaw adopts South African missiologist David Bosch’s definition and approach to a religious dialogue, which describes dialogue as a “meeting of hearts.”⁴⁹ According to Bosch, dialogue does not presuppose that people have to leave their convictions “at the door” but rather be willing to listen and learn about the deepest convictions of others and be willing to share or, in religious language, “to proclaim” one’s own life, experience, and spirituality.

Evidence on the Effectiveness of Dialogue

As is the case for other practice tools in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the success of dialogue is not conceptualized in a straightforward or one-dimensional way. Success can mean different things to different groups and stakeholders involved in the process. While it is not possible to develop a unified conceptualization of success, highlighting how success is defined in different contexts might provide useful insights for practitioners as they approach a particular dialogue design. Conceptualization of effectiveness and success of the dialogue process largely depends on a particular dialogue type that is being considered. For example, in regards to democratic dialogue, Roel von Meijenfeldt argues that successful dialogue processes involve “basically empowering people to get into the game of working or shaping their own future.”⁵⁰ The emphasis in this case is placed on the ownership of key stakeholders to move forward with the necessary democratic reforms in their communities. Often, a dialogue process is considered effective and successful if it contributes to the desired change. Bettye Pruitt and Philip Thomas emphasize that dialogues produce different levels of change that are interconnected and interdependent.⁵¹ They recognize that while conveners and facilitators of a dialogue process often like to see more tangible outcomes that go beyond personal transformations and improved personal relationships to include concrete actions—such as policy initiatives, constitutional reforms, treaties and formal agreements, and others—these tangible changes “must be grounded in a deeper change on a personal level.”⁵²

Bojer and colleagues cataloged a comprehensive and diverse set of tools that facilitators and practitioners can select and apply in various dialogue settings. Yet, the authors were cautious about overstating the applicability and effectiveness of each tool, owing to there being an “infinity of different contextual situations.”⁵³ For dialogue to be effective and successful, they argue that the purpose of, and need for, the dialogue and the profiles of participants (the foundations of dialogue) must be determined first; and only after this happens, should practitioners move forward with “designing content, process, and physical requirements” for the dialogue process.

Existing scholarly research offers evidence on the effectiveness of dialogues, especially relationship-focused and outcome-focused dialogues. Numerous studies and reviews also focus on measuring the impact of dialogue on individuals’ viewpoints and attitudes. Research that employs the contact hypothesis reveals that intergroup dialogue interactions facilitate attitudinal change through three interconnected processes: *learning-related*, *behavioral*, and *affective*.⁵⁴ The basic premise of the contact theory is that personal face-to-face interaction helps reduce prejudice and creates a conducive environment for the development of empathy and understanding. While this hypothesis has been guiding dialogue interventions for some time, a recent review finds that the “prejudice reduction effect of dialogue intervention is slightly weaker compared to other [intervention] approaches” designed to address intergroup

bias and prejudice.⁵⁵ Scholars also caution against overemphasizing the positive impact of contact for grassroots interventions, suggesting that interactions of two distinct groups might result in increased in-group bonding. Alexandra Scacco and Shana Warren conclude that “grassroots-level intervention which induces contact between members of religious groups in conflict has little effect on intergroup prejudice but leads to increased generosity across treatments and a reduction in discriminatory behavior in heterogeneous classroom setting.”⁵⁶

According to the research, most dialogue efforts appear to have produced positive transformation in participating individuals in the cognitive and affective domains. While some studies assessed the cognitive changes,⁵⁷ few also measured the impact of the affective and behavioral changes.⁵⁸ As a result of relationship-focused dialogue, empathy and trust usually increase.⁵⁹ Drawing on social-psychological research, some communication and decision-making literature on dialogue interaction provides additional evidence about cooperative interaction schemes that pave the way for attitudinal change among dialogue participants.⁶⁰ In addition, scholars and practitioners sometimes refer to the “crude law of social relations” to showcase and support the positive communication climate that dialogue interaction generates, which perpetuates itself once successfully established.⁶¹ Zorn and colleagues conclude that the intergroup dialogue process has a positive impact on “how people think about themselves, the other group, and the substantive topic of the dialogue.”⁶² But scholars do not know *how* dialogue helps build trust at the individual level. For instance, Anna Ohanyan and John Lewis document an increase in trust after a Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue, but very little is known about why and how this happened.⁶³ Scholars also do not know whether trust is more useful in triggering macro-level sociopolitical change than empathy, or whether both are equally essential to motivate change agents.

Furthermore, several studies that focused on whether changes in attitudes are sustainable found contradictory results.⁶⁴ Scholars are still debating the sustainability of effects, the effects’ impact on core conflict narratives, and their generalizability to the whole out-group beyond individuals in dialogue, as well as whether the effects can be achieved under all circumstances, including during ongoing violence. Some of the evidence suggests that positive outcomes of dialogue are reversed after participants return to their homes and after a period of time, especially if the conflict continues.⁶⁵ Randomized, controlled experiments are the preferred way to assess changes in the individuals participating in dialogue. However, the use of this more rigorous design has been limited.

Evidence concerning the effectiveness of outcome-focused (problem-solving) dialogue mostly focuses on the impact of dialogue at the meso and macro levels—whether the dialogue results in a *transfer* of jointly articulated solutions whereby they become part of policy-making, negotiations, or public opinion. This evidence is mostly based on single case studies, but some comparative case studies have been completed.⁶⁶ In recent years, a lively debate has developed on how transfer takes place, focusing on strategies used by dialogue actors and the conditions that create successful transfer outcomes.⁶⁷ A number of studies have documented

that problem-solving workshops make numerous contributions to negotiations at the cognitive and relational levels. They help produce various artifacts (for example, maps) and identify cadres of people and experts for negotiations. They allow for the emergence of non-zero-sum and complex thinking about the conflict, fresh and creative ideas and insights, perceptions of possibility concerning negotiation flexibility, and the rise of networks of experts and negotiators as inputs into the negotiations.

Research conducted on the transfer of outcomes from problem-solving dialogues mostly involved workshops with high-level participants, often as part of a pre-negotiation strategy.⁶⁸ Because of the problem-solving nature of these dialogues, transfer was primarily assessed by whether or not the decision-making and policy-making processes in a conflict and its negotiation were influenced. Scholars argue that the closer the participants are to decision makers, the greater their impact will be on the negotiations.⁶⁹ However, a growing number of empirical studies on the transfer process have shown that this relationship is not straightforward and that other conditions affect the likelihood of success. Herman Kraft pointed out an autonomy dilemma that exists in problem-solving dialogues with influential participants: while closeness to official actors grants access to privileged information and elevated levels of influence, it puts the brakes on critical thinking and quality of analysis.⁷⁰ Recent research highlights the range and variety of transfer mechanisms and strategies used by parties and practitioners. Other than the selection of influential participants, third-party mediators in the peace process were found to be highly effective in the transfer process. Cuhadar finds that the role of the United States and other mediators was key in transferring some of the insights from problem-solving workshops to track 1 negotiations in the Israel/Palestine case.⁷¹ In addition to official mediators, Agha and colleagues argue that including a high-level insider politician, as a political mentor or chaperone of the dialogue, is essential.⁷²

Keashly and Fisher, as well as Susan Allen Nan, argue that the timing of the problem-solving dialogue and the coordination capacity between official and unofficial actors are critical factors.⁷³ Fisher, in a comparative case study of a number of well-regarded problem-solving dialogues, identified conditions that facilitate transfer by looking at the nature of the conflict, the power balance between the adversaries, the stage of the conflict, and the culture of conflict.⁷⁴ In his study of problem-solving dialogues in Southeast Asia, David Capie argues that a transfer is most likely during times of change when decision makers are in search of new ideas that can address the needs of the moment.⁷⁵ Cuhadar's comparative study of four Israel/Palestine track 2 processes—where she controlled variables related to the nature of the conflict and the type of problem-solving dialogue methodology—also identified conditions in which transfer is more likely.⁷⁶ Similar to Capie, she found that an asymmetrical transfer (in other words, a transfer to only one conflict party), as well as a lack of willingness of decision makers to push for problem-solving dialogue insights during the negotiations, are important obstacles in an effective transfer process. When a transfer is asymmetric, regardless of the closeness of participants to the decision makers, its success is hampered. In addition to

insights and creative ideas, other outcomes transferred from problem-solving workshops to negotiations and public opinion include improved relations built on trust and the preparing of public opinion for negotiations.⁷⁷

Some argue that problem-solving dialogues are most effective at the pre-negotiation stage, as they enable parties to develop ideas before making a commitment to an official negotiation process.⁷⁸ Saunders argues that circum-negotiation is as important as pre-negotiation because dialogues can be used by the parties to smooth out or put back on track stalemated official negotiations.⁷⁹ Dialogues are also widely used in the post-agreement implementation phase to sort out implementation challenges.⁸⁰ More recently, problem-solving dialogues have been used throughout the peace process in tandem with other inclusive negotiation practices.⁸¹

Evidence on the effectiveness of agonistic dialogues is much more limited, largely because the concept of agonistic dialogue is a more recent development. To be effective, such dialogues need to be *sustained* (in other words, not single events) and *intensive* to “facilitate deeper connections between participants.”⁸² The authors further argue that a key element of effective agonistic dialogue is the presence of wider politico-institutional support, which helps build legitimacy around the process. In addition, agonistic dialogues need to be locally owned—that is, they “should be driven and shaped by actors with knowledge of the relevant socio-cultural and historical context relevant to the conflict and have the legitimacy and trust of conflict actors.”⁸³

Typology of Intergroup Dialogue and a Contingency Model

Amid the profusion and diffusion of dialogue processes that have arisen over the past 20 years, intergroup dialogue has been applied to specifically address destructive and intractable conflict between identity groups that employ violence (either direct or structural) in pursuit of their goals. These contenders are typically politicized groups within states, and one of them is often in control of the government, producing a majority/minority situation in which the groups compete for resources, power, and domination. The minority group typically experiences exclusion, discrimination, and oppression, such as in Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan. This type of conflict was initially captured in the social science literature through a model of protracted social conflict developed by Edward Azar and through the definition and description of ethnopolitical conflict provided by Ted Robert Gurr.⁸⁴ At the same time, these conflicts can also cross state boundaries when both of the parties constitute a recognized government, such as in the countries of India and Pakistan or of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The destructive power of ethnopolitical conflict is produced by the intersection of distinct social identities, supported by cognitive and normative distortions; and the clashing of incompatible political, economic, and social goals. The human and economic costs, usually borne mainly by the minority, are enormous and continuous, and it is therefore understandable that the peace and conflict-resolution

field has devoted a great deal of effort in working to develop ameliorative methods, including dialogue, to help de-escalate and resolve such conflicts.

Among the existing forms of IGD, it is possible to discern three distinct types or variants that differ in the ambitiousness of their goals, in their primary focus, in their utility at different levels of conflict escalation and de-escalation (different contexts), and typically in the societal level and influence of their participants. Although some core characteristics of these types are similar (for example, openness and honesty), and the types essentially build on one another, the primary focus or emphasis of them differs as conflicts escalate or de-escalate and peacebuilding begins. The relationships between the three types of dialogue and stages of escalation and de-escalation/peacebuilding are described in the next section of this paper. The discussion below focuses on the clear distinctions among the three types: pure, problem-solving, and agonistic.⁸⁵

Pure dialogue is directed toward increasing understanding, respect, and trust between members of distinct identity groups (defined in racial, religious, cultural, or other terms) that are experiencing difficulties of varying magnitude in their intergroup relationships. The dialogue is designed to increase participants' understanding of their own assumptions, perceptions, and viewpoints as well as those of the other group. While there may be attempts to identify commonalities and common ground or activities, there is no attempt to directly resolve the intergroup conflict. In sum, the focus or emphasis is on developing more positive attitudes toward the out-group, in the hope that this will help improve intergroup relations and public opinion. Some practitioners call pure dialogue "relationship-focused dialogue" or "people-to-people dialogue." The participants in pure dialogue are typically drawn from the grassroots level of society; although in some instances, influential participants such as religious leaders may be involved. Below are some illustrative definitions of pure dialogue:

Intergroup dialogue is a facilitated group experience that may occur once or may be sustained over time and is designed to give individuals and groups a safe and structured opportunity to explore attitudes about polarizing societal issues.⁸⁶

Intergroup dialogue is a small group intervention that offers sustained, usually face-to-face contact between people from social identity groups with a history of tension between them (e.g., people of color and white people).⁸⁷

Problem-solving dialogue incorporates the processes of pure dialogue and builds on increased understanding and trust to then have participants interact cooperatively in addressing a common social problem, which in the focus taken here, is a destructive and intractable intergroup conflict. This form of problem-solving dialogue, in addition to exchanging perspectives and narratives, engages the participants in a mutual analysis of the sources, dynamics, and effects of the intergroup conflict. It then moves on to joint problem-solving to develop options orientated toward a peaceful resolution. Problem-solving dialogue sometimes focuses on

practical or “functional” issues, such as ecological challenges, that constitute a common problem for conflict parties. Some practitioners called problem-solving dialogue “outcome-focused dialogue.”

Problem-solving dialogue has come to encapsulate the classic problem-solving workshop created and elaborated by a number of early contributors to the peace and conflict-resolution field, including John Burton, Herbert Kelman, Ronald Fisher, and Christopher Mitchell.⁸⁸ This workshop approach has been extended by additional models, including track 2 diplomacy, sustained dialogue, and the ARIA framework.⁸⁹ The classic problem-solving workshop brings together mid- to high-level influentials to engage in facilitated dialogue, conflict analysis, and problem-solving and to develop ideas and options that can be fed into policymaking or the public discourse through a challenging process known as transfer.⁹⁰ Below are some illustrative definitions of problem-solving dialogue that focus on intergroup conflict:

(D)ialogue is understood as carefully-facilitated conversation and exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge between parties and stakeholders to develop avenues that can contribute to resolving conflict and preventing the outbreak of new violence.⁹¹

(In) the problem-solving approach, . . . adversaries are brought together to articulate common definitions of their problem and generate joint solutions that may serve the separate self-interests of each side.⁹²

Agonistic dialogue incorporates and builds on problem-solving dialogue (and the diagnoses and options to manage and resolve the identified issues) by focusing on deeper and more insidious drivers of intractable intergroup conflict, including exclusive identities, power differences, and historical injustices. Agonistic dialogue therefore broadens the zone of productive confrontation—from clarifying and confronting issues as the parties bring them forward to analyzing and addressing the structural inequities and gross violations of human rights that fuel the deepest and most traumatized levels of the conflict.

Calls for agonistic dialogue began partly in response to Oliver Ramsbotham’s assertion that the radical disagreement at the heart of destructive and intractable intergroup conflicts has not and cannot be effectively addressed by the existing methods of conflict resolution, such as pure dialogue for mutual understanding.⁹³ According to Ramsbotham, agonistic dialogue is the interaction between enemies in intractable conflicts, during which the parties directly engage each other’s assertions in what is often described as the “war of words.”⁹⁴ While this antagonistic form of interaction can be seen as a dead end for conflict resolution, Ramsbotham contends that agonistic dialogue can be transformed into strategic dialogue and engagement (both within and between conflict parties) that can open up new avenues toward resolution. Strategic dialogue involves interactions within each party to assess their current situation, develop their strategic goals, and identify the means to achieve those goals. With

the involvement of third parties, the parties can then engage in strategic exchanges to address their conflict. In subsequent analyses, Ramsbotham contends that nonantagonistic agonistic dialogue is conceivable and aspirational, even though antagonism and agonism (struggle) are not easy concepts to separate in practice.⁹⁵

Similar to Ramsbotham, Maddison contends that agonistic dialogue is particularly suited to address intergroup conflict in divided societies and is complementary to the functioning of democratic pluralism.⁹⁶ In contrast to Ramsbotham's definition of adversarial agonistic dialogue, however, she believes that agonistic dialogue to address intractable conflicts needs to embody the typical characteristics and norms of respectful dialogic interaction. It also needs to go beyond the usual approach of having participants analyze a shared problem and hopefully reach consensus on its resolution. It needs to allow for the articulation of contrasting narratives, viewpoints, and values without the need to achieve consensus. Thus, agonistic dialogue needs to effectively address the emotionally explosive issues of identity, justice, and power, so that nonviolent strategies and acceptable arrangements become part of the ongoing intergroup relationship. In this context, distinct identity groups remain in competition for societal benefits, but needs and grievances are managed in a constructive manner. Note that these outcomes are compatible with assertions by those in the conflict-resolution field that conflict is a driver of positive social change and that conflict between identity groups in the same political system is never truly resolved. Below are some illustrative definitions of agonistic dialogue:

Agonistic dialogue (is) a pragmatic approach to dialogue by highlighting shifting relationships of power, identity, and vulnerability, while simultaneously paying explicit attention to questions of justice and social and material needs.⁹⁷

(A)n agonistic model of dialogue, in which the structural power inequalities and privileges people bring into dialogical spaces are explicitly addressed, not only at a personal emotional level but also in terms of divergent historical and political analyses.⁹⁸

Table 1 summarizes the nature of these three distinct but cumulative types of dialogue in relation to the core dimensions of dialogue articulated earlier. In the context row, the table indicates the levels of escalation and de-escalation, or phases of peacebuilding, at which the types of dialogue are most applicable and useful. (For more detail, see the following discussion on the contingency model of interventions.)

A CONTINGENCY APPROACH TO IGD INTERVENTION

Contingency thinking to guide methods of third-party intervention is now fairly established in the field of conflict resolution, and specific models have been developed that link different

Table 1. Types of Dialogue in Relation to Dimensions of Dialogue

Dimension	Pure Dialogue (relationship-focused)	Problem-Solving Dialogue (outcome-focused)	Agonistic Dialogue (ontological security-focused)
Context/Escalation Level	Discussion	Polarization/segregation	Destruction
De-escalation Level/ Peacebuilding Phase	Normalization/social peacebuilding	Stabilization/structural peacebuilding	Reconciliation/ cultural peacebuilding
Goal/Purpose	Clarify issues	Confront issues	Explore radical disagreement
	Increase understanding, respect, and trust	Create options for solutions	Address inequality and historical injustice
	Improve relations	Transfer outcomes to policymaking and political discourse	
Focus/Emphasis	Viewpoints	Mutual conflict	Historical analysis
	Attitudes toward out-group	Analysis and problem-solving	Structural changes
Participants	Group members at various levels (often the grassroots level)	Influentials at the mid- or high level	Influentials at various levels (often at the mid- or high level)

interventions to the state of the conflict being addressed, in particular to the level of escalation or violence.⁹⁹ These models link the application of a particular method (for example, mediation, track 2 diplomacy, problem-solving workshops, or peacekeeping) to the stage of the conflict by prescribing what is seen as the most effective intervention at a given level of the conflict and then by specifying what the next intervention should be to de-escalate the conflict. The complementarity of different interventions is seen as a strength of the approach, especially between unofficial and official methods. In terms of interventions, the models provide for a mix of unofficial (for example, problem-solving) and official (for example, power mediation) methods and therefore have relevance to tracks 1, 2, and 3 of conflict management work.

Contingency thinking was initially developed in the field of organizational conflict management. Friedrich Glasl proposed a model of conflict escalation with nine stages and then

linked them to six common strategies of third-party intervention.¹⁰⁰ At the international level, Louis Kriesberg proposed four stages of de-escalation and then outlined a broad set of mediating activities, specifying which one or ones would be most useful at what stage.¹⁰¹ The contingency approach has generally been accepted in the field of conflict resolution, evidenced by its acknowledgment in leading textbooks.¹⁰² The contingency model proposed by Fisher and Keashly has received considerable attention in the literature.¹⁰³ It has also been subjected to more rigorous assessment through a comparative case analysis based on Fisher's rationale:

The rationale is that conflict is a mix of objective and subjective elements, with the latter gaining in importance as conflict escalates, and that both aspects must be dealt with to achieve resolution. Also, various interventions are differentially equipped to deal with the subjective and objective elements, and methods can therefore be matched to levels of escalation where they can play the most useful lead role in intervening. Other interventions would then follow in sequence to de-escalate the conflict toward resolution, although the application of simultaneous interventions was also envisioned.¹⁰⁴

Two indicators can signal when a given intervention would be appropriate to help control an intergroup conflict. The first is when a conflict is becoming more intensive, evidenced by the appearance of symptoms from higher conflict stages (such as sporadic outbreaks of violence). The second is when ongoing conflict behaviors by the parties, such as the use of threats, maintain the intensity of the conflict and could trigger further escalation. Thus, interventions may be matched to situations of increasing escalation at a given stage or to a stable level of escalation.

Fisher and Keashly's model delineates four stages of conflict escalation: discussion, polarization, segregation, and destruction. The stages are distinguished by a number of dimensions, including the nature of communication and interaction between the parties, perceptions of the out-group and of the intergroup relationship, the predominant issues, the perceived potential outcomes, and the perceived appropriate method of managing the conflict. Fisher and Keashly describe how changes occur within each of the dimensions as the conflict escalates up the four stages.¹⁰⁵ In terms of communication and interaction, the parties move from relatively civil discussion and debate to less direct interaction, then from the interpretation and misinterpretation of actions to the application of threats, and then, ultimately, to no direct communication coupled with the use of violence. In terms of perceptions and images, accuracy and positivity give way to stereotypes that create good versus evil images and that ultimately contribute to the dehumanization of the enemy. Concurrently, the nature of the relationship between the parties moves from one of respect and trust to a sense that the other party is still important, then to a situation of disrespect and mistrust, and then, ultimately, to a sense of hopelessness. In terms of the perceived central issues in the conflict, the focus moves from interests that can be negotiated to concerns about the basic relationship, then to the frustration or denial of basic human needs, and finally, to the existential issue of

the survival of one or both parties. In terms of outcomes that are perceived as possible, the parties shift from a joint-gain perspective to one of compromise, then to a win-lose perception of outcomes, and ultimately, to a lose-lose perspective in which each party is willing to lose as long as the other loses more. Concurrently, the ways of managing the conflict shift from mutual decision to distributive negotiation, then to defensive competition, and finally, to an intention to annihilate the opposition.

Once the stages of escalation are outlined, a number of pacific methods of third-party intervention (conciliation, consultation, pure mediation, power mediation, arbitration, peace-keeping) are then placed in relation to the stages where they can serve the most effective role—either as a lead intervention or a follow-up intervention to de-escalate the conflict toward discussion and negotiation by the parties themselves. The characteristics of the escalation and contingency model will become clearer later in the section, as the model is revised here in this paper to better capture the nature of destructive intergroup conflict and to include the types of dialogues (pure, problem-solving, and agonistic) that are being prescribed and provided today in the context of the broader processes of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Fisher and Keashly’s four-stage model of conflict escalation developed for the original contingency approach was designed to identify characteristics of conflict that can provide cues as to the most appropriate lead intervention at a given level of escalation.¹⁰⁶ The model drew from several descriptions of conflict escalation available in the literature, particularly Glas’s nine-stage model of the escalation of conflict in organizational settings and Quincy Wright’s four-stage model of escalation in international conflict.¹⁰⁷ Table 2 depicts Fisher and Keashly’s model, but the dimension of group “identity” is added to represent its growing importance in the analysis of intractable intergroup conflict.

Table 2. A Revised Model of Escalation

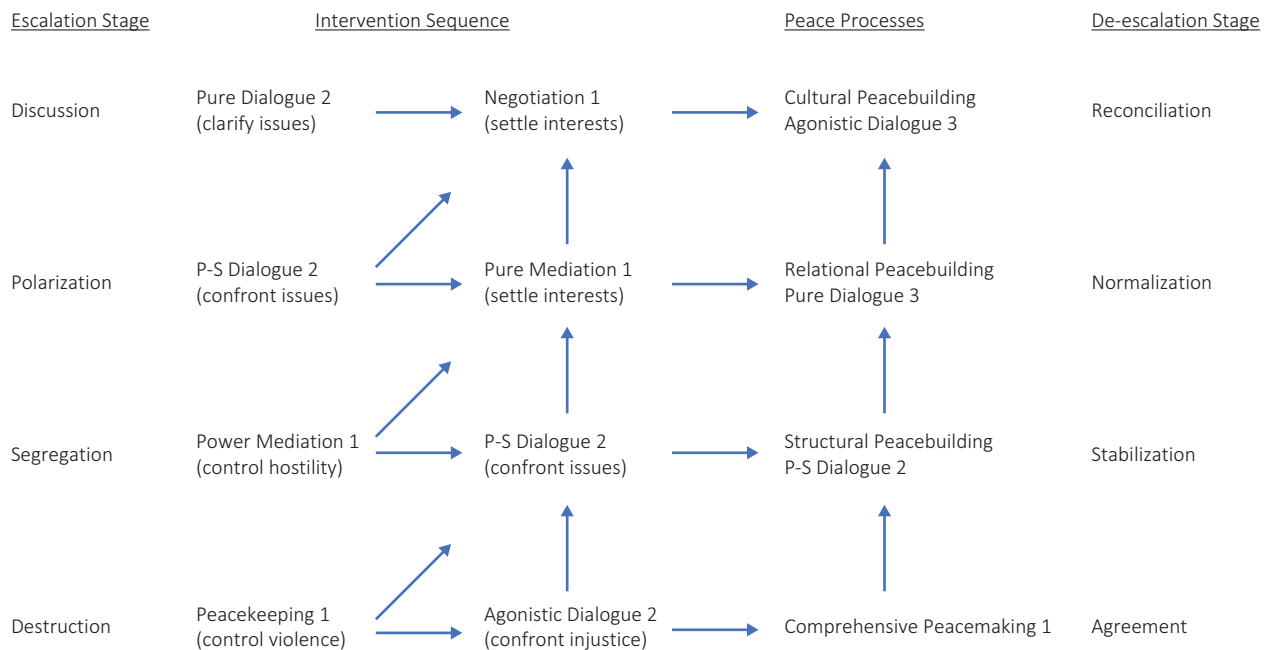
Escalation Stage	Communication/ Interaction	Perceptions/ Relationship	Issues	Identity	Outcome/ Management
Discussion	Deliberation/ debate	Accurate/trust, respect	Interests	Distinct/ common	Joint gain/ mutual decision
Polarization	Less direct/ deeds not words	Stereotypes/other important	Relation-ship	Polarized	Compromise/ negotiations
Segregation	Little direct/ Threats	Good vs. evil/ distrust, disrespect	Basic needs	Separated/ contrasting	Win-lose/ competition
Destruction	Nonexistent/ direct attacks	Other nonhuman/ hopeless	Survival	Negated	Lose-lose/ annihilation

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Fisher and Keashley, “Third Party Consultation as a Method of Intergroup and International Conflict Resolution,” 235.

The ladder of escalation described by Fisher and Keashly is relatively easy to discern from the table.¹⁰⁸ The dimension of identity was added in this paper to acknowledge that social identity processes in intergroup relations and conflict have gained increasing explanatory prominence over the past 30 years.¹⁰⁹ Identity is seen as a basic human need, and its frustration and denial is one of the central drivers of destructive and intractable intergroup conflict. In the revised model, at stage one, the two parties are seen as holding distinct social or national identities that are mutually acknowledged, along with a common identity that typically relates to the overarching political system that they share. As conflict escalates, threats to identity trigger a polarization process in which differences between identity groups are exaggerated while similarities are diminished. This process continues into stage three, when separated and contrasting identities become predominant and the identity of the other is seen as increasingly negative. At the highest stage of escalation, the parties hold reciprocal negated identities, whereby allegiance to the in-group's identity demands that the out-group's identity be negated and denied so that its claims and grievances are delegitimized.¹¹⁰

Fisher and Keashly's model is further expanded in Figure 1 to incorporate third-party interventions in relation to the three types of IGD described earlier in this paper (pure,

Figure 1. Contingency Model of Dialogue Interventions in the Context of Peace Processes



Source: Adapted, with permission, from Fisher and Keashly, "Third Party Consultation as a Method of Intergroup and International Conflict Resolution," 237.

Note: The numerals (1, 2, or 3) beside each form of intervention indicate whether it is usually carried out in the official track (1) or the unofficial track (2) or by civil society at the grassroots level (3). The processes of peacebuilding typically involve the engagement of actors from all three tracks. "Problem-solving" is abbreviated as "P-S."

problem-solving, and agonistic). The revised model indicates which peace process is most appropriate at each stage of escalation following the related third-party intervention. In addition, the model includes the stages of de-escalation that are related to each peace process, which overall can return the intergroup relationship to a state of normalcy or even improve the relationship if full reconciliation is achieved. Thus, the model places dialogue interventions in the context of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The identification and nature of the peace processes and de-escalation stages are largely drawn from the hourglass model of conflict escalation and resolution provided by Ramsbotham and colleagues.¹¹¹ In particular, their model includes the de-escalation stages of agreement, normalization, and reconciliation, as well as the structural and cultural forms of peacebuilding. Their comprehensive and balanced model is linked to a detailed description of each peace process and de-escalation stage, as well as to commentary on stabilization and social peacebuilding, which are included in the revised contingency model but not in the hourglass model.

In following the model from left to right, at each stage of escalation, conflict management/resolution strategies can arrest the escalation of a conflict and return it to a state of negative peace (absence of violence or contentious behavior). However, to obtain conditions of positive peace (well-being, equity, justice), the forms of peacebuilding need to follow the conflict-management/resolution interventions in order to move down the stages of de-escalation to reconciliation.

The revised contingency model showcases the appropriateness and utility of the three types of intergroup dialogue. At the same time, it illustrates the important distinction between pure mediation (facilitating a negotiated agreement) and power mediation (employing leverage to get an agreement) that has now become a common understanding in the field. Of course, this model is still a simplified portrayal of very complex processes and relations in the domains of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Nonetheless, the model provides a rationale for leveraging dialogue interventions to help prevent conflict escalation and support peacemaking and peacebuilding. Each level of escalation and de-escalation is discussed in turn below to explain the contributions of the types of dialogue in relation to other interventions and processes.

At the first stage of discussion, the relationship between the parties has not markedly deteriorated, and the focus is on disagreement over substantive issues, such as the distribution of resources or access to opportunities for minority group members. Perceptions and images are relatively accurate and positive, although the parties might come from a divided society comprised of distinct identities and influenced by historical injustices. As a discussion of the issues transforms into adversarial debate and animosity, there is an opportunity for pure dialogue at all levels and in all sectors of society to increase intergroup understanding and respect. For example, the UNDP in Guyana led the implementation of a pure dialogue and training program to build social cohesion in a multiethnic society where identity-group differences were fueling tensions that were escalating to political violence (see Box 1). Essentially, pure dialogue is a mechanism for reducing miscommunication, clarifying issues and

BOX 1. Arresting Escalation Moving Out of the Stage of Discussion: The Guyana Social Cohesion Program

Guyana is a small country on the northeast coast of South America that gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1966. Since then, the country has experienced ongoing ethnic violence among the multiethnic population, which includes Indo-Guyanese (50 percent), Afro-Guyanese (38 percent), and a number of minority ethnic groups. Tension and violence during election periods has been particularly acute, with the two major ethnic groups generally aligning with different political parties. Disputed election results and violence in 1997, along with a failure to institute power sharing, culminated in a sense of national crisis. Following the 2001 elections, the opposition boycotted Parliament, and a wave of protest and violent crime ensued. Ethnic and political tensions began to threaten interethnic peace and impede economic and social development. The conflict was thus showing indicators of escalation and movement from the discussion stage to polarization; the indicators included adversarial public interaction, stereotyping, and contrasting perceptions between the two major ethnic groups.

In response to the crisis, the UNDP in Guyana, in cooperation with other partners and the government, launched the Social Cohesion Program (SCP). The multifaceted, multisectoral program of dialogue and training was designed to increase the Guyanese people's capacity for constructive interaction to reduce interethnic tensions. The SCP, implemented from May 2003 to December 2006, identified the basic problem in Guyana as animosity and mistrust between ethnic groups and, in turn, a lack of respectful, effective communication and constructive interaction. Political leaders needed to engage in dialogue to remove communication barriers, increase trust and understanding, and build capacity for problem-solving. The program therefore aimed to explore the basis for cooperation in an informal atmosphere, with no pressure for agreements to address policy concerns or resolve structural issues.

Based on this unofficial and facilitative orientation, the SCP carried out 14 projects with a variety of participants, including political leaders, trade unions, the Ethnic Relations Commission, the business community, youths, and local communities. The various projects primarily comprised small-group workshops that used a mix of dialogue and capacity building to sensitize and empower participants. The SCP worked hard to achieve local ownership through transparency (an open, participatory approach) and to shift its program components to engage additional constituencies. It thus provided a diverse range of activities that had multiple effects in a variety of areas.

Interviews and observations assessed the changed perspectives and new skills that participants gained, which varied to some degree depending on the specific project. In

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BOX 1. (continued)

addition to engendering more positive attitudes and reducing stereotyping, the program helped develop a sense of hope among participants that their goals could be achieved through constructive interactions and cooperative behavior. Additional positive effects were observed at levels both within and between organizations in terms of activities that were undertaken, the public discourse, and the functioning of the government. Thus, the SCP provided the Guyanese with dialogue and other tools to more effectively address public issues and envision a more constructive way of interacting. Although the program did not generate a social movement to improve political party behavior, subsequent elections up to 2015 were peaceful, and the emergence of new parties and coalitions showed a trend away from ethnicized party competition. The country also entered a new period of increased economic and social development, although negative symptoms of ethnic tension continued to occur.

Source: Michael Lund, "Can Dialogues Change the Course of a Small Nation? The Social Cohesion Program in Guyana," in *Across the Lines of Conflict: Facilitating Cooperation to Build Peace*, ed. Michael Lund and Steve McDonald (Washington, DC, and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Columbia University Press, 2015), 85–132.

differences, and finding common ground. This dialogue could encourage and support negotiations and policymaking to address grievances and settle interests and could help lead to cultural peacebuilding that would bring about multicultural societies in which reconciliation processes could successfully deal with historical injustices as well as improve current relations.

In the second escalation stage of polarization, relationship qualities come into question as mistrust and disrespect increase at the same time that perceptual and cognitive distortions begin to contaminate intergroup attitudes and images. Direct and accurate communication decline as narratives begin to shift in the direction of radical disagreement. The stage is thus set for problem-solving dialogue between influentials to air their grievances as a prelude to mutual conflict analysis designed to share perspectives, diagnose sources, and clear up misperceptions and misattributions. Joint problem-solving can be focused on policy and other options that will help deal with issues and prevent further escalation. Transfer activities by participants can be directed toward changing behavior and policy to improve the relationship and also toward influencing public opinion in constructive ways. Box 2 illustrates the use of problem-solving dialogue to address polarization between Estonians and Russians following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Reducing the subjective drivers of polarization can pave the way for negotiation or pure mediation to manage the substantive issues that are the main sources of the conflict. At the same time, pure dialogue at various levels of society could continue to support social peacebuilding to bring about normalization and ultimately lead to cultural peacebuilding and reconciliation.

BOX 2. Preventing Escalation Beyond Polarization: Psychopolitical Dialogues in Estonia

Estonia is one of three Baltic states with a mixed history of sovereignty. From 1920 to 1940, Estonia was independent, but in 1940, it was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Over the next 20 years, its ethnic composition changed markedly, with the share of the Estonian population being reduced from almost 90 percent to about 60 percent through the inclusion of Soviet Russians. Following Estonia's independence in 1991, the economy became unstable, and ethnic tensions between Estonians and Russians escalated. The new state moved to establish its national identity, while the Russian-speaking population experienced heightened fears regarding their rights and security. Estonians resented Russians for their domination during the Soviet period, and as a result, Russians experienced significant economic problems and feared expulsion. Numerous issues revolved around Estonians' need for recognition and control, Russians' need for acceptance and reassurance, and both parties' need for security. Numerous questions abounded regarding citizenship, language laws, voting rights, the contested border with Russia, and Russian troop withdrawals. Actions by the new government increased the Russian minority's insecurity, such as the need to pass a demanding Estonian language test in order to achieve citizenship. A 1993 Law on Aliens escalated the conflict to a boiling point, creating serious relationship issues and polarized identities indicative of the second stage of escalation. Even though the prime minister made a number of conciliatory moves, the Russian minority protested government actions in a variety of ways.

Multiple official international organizations made contributions to de-escalating the interethnic tensions in Estonia during the 1990s, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Council of Europe, and various national governments. In concert with these interventions, an unofficial dialogue program was organized by the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction at the University of Virginia and the Carter Center. Following the model of psychopolitical dialogues developed by Vamik Volkan, the program conducted a series of workshops in 1992 and 1993 to bring together influentials from the three Baltic states and Russia to discuss the conflict issues. The program then focused solely on the conflict in Estonia and held six additional workshops with approximately 30 participants each from 1994 to 1996.

The psychopolitical dialogues engaged both unofficial influentials and official actors from the conflict parties. A combination of private small-group sessions and plenary events were held to facilitate analysis of the conflict and open avenues toward resolution. The intention was to create a safe space for dialogue so that the workshops could serve a catalytic function to diagnose barriers to peaceful relationships and to identify

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BOX 2. (continued)

possible solutions to ethnic and national problems. In terms of outcomes, the organizers listed positive changes in participant attitudes and dialogue skills, input to the Estonian government on how to deal with minority issues, and the development of ideas for actions to improve ethnic relations. The program reportedly improved interethnic understanding, built relationships across communities, and generated some helpful approaches to the issues. As a direct result of the dialogues, three community-level projects for improving interethnic relations were developed and funded through the organizers for a period of two years, although two continued longer. Overall, the program of dialogue illustrates how such interventions can help prevent further escalation of serious ethnopolitical conflict.

Source: Susan H. Allen, "Estonia: Psychopolitical Dialogue Contributing to Conflict Prevention," in *Across the Lines of Conflict: Facilitating Cooperation to Build Peace*, ed. Michael Lund and Steve McDonald (Washington, DC, and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Columbia University Press, 2015), 53–84.

At the third stage of segregation, the interaction between the groups has escalated to the point that basic needs for security and identity are threatened and issues related to other needs such as distributive justice and participation in decision-making continue to be unaddressed. To control the growing hostility, defensive competition, and spiraling of escalation, power mediation is the recommended lead intervention if it is available in an effective form. Problem-solving dialogue could follow or run concurrently with power mediation or be instituted on its own to help groups analyze and confront the growing issues of concern. Policy options could be developed that would enable structural peacebuilding and, in turn, lead to the stabilization of the situation. Additional interventions and peace processes appropriate at lower levels of escalation would be implemented to transform the conflict and the relationship to one of sustainable peace. Box 3 demonstrates how the application of problem-solving dialogue alongside power mediation helped produce a constitutional agreement in the Moldova-Transdnistria conflict. (The agreement still awaits ratification.)

When the conflict reaches the fourth stage of destruction, the parties are engaging in violence to achieve their goals and believe that their very existence is threatened. At this point, it is necessary to stop the violence to prevent a deepening of the conflict's intractability and an increase in the human cost. Thus, peacekeeping is the recommended lead intervention to control the violence, separate the parties, and maintain a ceasefire agreement. The more comprehensive the peacekeeping intervention, the more it will set the stage for successful and comprehensive peacemaking. Thus, a number of immediate issues in the aftermath of warfare need to be managed, including humanitarian relief; the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of armed combatants; the provision of law and order; and the availability of

BOX 3. Contributing to Mediation Following Segregation and Destruction: The Moldova-Transdnistria Conflict

The Eastern European state of Moldova was formed out of a Soviet Republic in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and immediately experienced internal conflict between Moldova proper, consisting primarily of Romanian speakers, and a smaller region across the Dniester River, dominated by a slim majority of Russians and Ukrainians. When Moldova declared independence, this region also did so, declaring itself the Transdnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR); a brief civil war then ensued until it was concluded by Russian and Ukrainian “peacekeeping” forces. While the lingering conflict is mainly over the question of political sovereignty and the status of the TMR, cultural and economic issues also divide the two parties: Moldova proper is oriented toward Western Europe, while the TMR is oriented toward Soviet-style institutions and ties with Russia. The TMR also has most of the country’s industrial capacity. Following the intervention of peacekeeping at the stage of destruction, the conflict de-escalated to the stage of segregation and became the focus of power mediation in 1993, through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now called the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE), with the involvement of Russian and Ukrainian representatives.

A series of problem-solving dialogues began in 1993 following a visit to the region by a scholar-practitioner from the (then-named) Centre for Conflict Analysis (CCA) at the University of Kent and a colleague from Northern Ireland who was involved in community development work in Moldova. At the invitation of the two governments, the organizers carried out three workshops over a three-year period that brought together influentials and some officials, including negotiators, in an unofficial capacity. These sessions provided a continuing analysis of the state of the conflict and focused on the primary issue of the TMR’s status, as well as on other issues identified by the parties, including official languages, education matters, and official currencies. Along with emotional ventilation, the mutual conflict analysis enabled the participants to develop a shared understanding of the conflict and options for its resolution. Thus, the workshops involved thinking about how the conflict might be approached in track 1 talks, particularly on constitutional options.

Subsequently, the organizers (now the CCA and the Foundation for International Security) hosted a series of four workshops from 1998 to 2000 with many of the same participants, along with constitutional experts who could provide insights on various cases and alternatives in the search for a mutually acceptable arrangement. In addition, the OSCE ambassador joined the facilitation team, thus providing a direct link between official and unofficial thinking on the conflict. These sessions resulted in a “common state” document

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BOX 3. (continued)

that spelled out the arrangements for two distinct and coequal states; each state was to be given control over specified areas (for example, security, customs, borders) but then share a constitutional structure that guarantees citizens' rights under one Moldova. This document, which was acceptable to all participants, was incorporated in a memorandum accepted by both parties' representatives and the OSCE at a subsequent conference in 2000. Unfortunately, it was not subsequently ratified by the parties. However, most of the ideas in the common state document were carried forward in later constitutional proposals drafted during OSCE negotiations—although agreement has again proven elusive. The conclusion is that when track 1 talks were faltering, track 2 dialogue provided a forum that produced useful options for resolution to the mediation process. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to reach agreement due to difficult geopolitical factors.

Source: Andrew Williams, "Second Track Conflict Resolution Processes in the Moldova Conflict, 1993–2000: Problems and Possibilities," in *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*, ed. Ronald J. Fisher (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 143–60.

essential services. While peacekeeping could be followed by either power or pure mediation, the revised contingency model moves in a new direction to emphasize the potential of agonistic dialogue. This dialogue includes and builds on pure and problem-solving dialogue to engage the parties as distinct identities and adversaries but also as groups that might choose to interact within the same political and economic system.

Agonistic dialogue is designed to allow for greater expression of the radical disagreement that divides the parties and to explore the more intractable issues of power asymmetry and historical injustices that are typical of intractable identity-group conflict. Agonistic dialogue between influentials could provide support for, and make a contribution to, comprehensive peacemaking by dealing with subjective elements down to the darkest levels of hatred and trauma. At the same time, the inclusion of problem-solving in agonistic dialogues could continue to deal with issues that emanate from the frustration and denial of basic human needs. A comprehensive agreement should resolve both substantive and subjective issues and lead to the various forms of peacebuilding, thereby eventually de-escalating the conflict through stabilization, normalization, and, ultimately, reconciliation. The work of Harold Saunders, Randa Slim, and their colleagues in the former Soviet Republic of Tajikistan serves as an example of agonistic and problem-solving dialogue that contributed to the resolution of the conflict and the path toward reconciliation (see Box 4). Ramsbotham and Maddison, who are proponents of agonistic dialogue, identify Saunders's work as constituting the type of dialogue that can help resolve intractable identity-group conflict due to its sustained and relational nature and its focus on the most difficult issues, such as power, identity, and injustice.¹¹²

BOX 4. Sustained (Agonistic) Dialogue Contributing to Comprehensive Peacemaking in Tajikistan

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan in Central Asia declared its independence in September 1991, triggering a complex power struggle in the context of a multidimensional conflict involving different ethnicities and regional and clan-based groups and various communist, democratic, and Islamic ideologies. The internal conflict escalated into a civil war in early 1993 that ultimately resulted in over 100,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees from the small population of 5.5 million people. The violence was controlled through a Russian peacekeeping operation that began in September of 1993.

In the context of the civil war, Harold Saunders and Randa Slim worked with other American and Russian colleagues from the Dartmouth Conference to bring together influentials from the government and opposition sides to engage in dialogue, analysis, and problem-solving. The effort followed the five-stage model of sustained dialogue. While the participants focused mainly on issues and grievances, the moderators were guided by the model to probe the dynamics of the intergroup relationships that were the source of the problem and required changes to bring about resolution. The rationale of the model was that only participants in the conflict are able to design and transform their relationship and related practices in order to resolve their differences peacefully.

Dialogue sessions started in March 1993 and occurred six times over the following year, producing a joint memorandum on the negotiating process and paving the way for UN-mediated negotiations (which began in April 1994). Three participants from the dialogue became members of the two negotiating teams, helping to produce a peace agreement that was signed in June 1997. Among other things, the peace agreement established a commission on national reconciliation based on a memorandum that the dialogue had produced in 1995. Five participants of the dialogue served on the commission from 1997 to 2000. The commission helped oversee implementation of the peace agreement, which included power sharing and an amnesty law for combatants. In 2000, members of the dialogue helped found the Public Committee for Promoting Democratic Processes in Tajikistan to work toward peacebuilding in the wake of successful peacemaking. The committee's work included setting up dialogue groups in various regions of the country, holding public forums on major national issues, and providing workshops through the Ministry of Education to help university professors develop courses in peacebuilding.

To transfer the insights and options to the official level, the moderators and participants in the dialogue engaged in various activities to influence the policies and practices of the conflict parties. The joint memoranda on negotiations and on reconciliation were provided to the official actors, and some participants joined the official processes, while

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BOX 4. (continued)

others briefed government and opposition leaders on the dialogue products useful to them. As the dialogue continued through three or four meetings a year, participants took outputs into the government and political party offices where they worked. As a direct means of transfer from unofficial to official tracks, the lead moderator produced an analytical memo on every meeting that was shared with UN headquarters and the US Department of State and often with the UN mediation team. A high degree of complementarity existed between the dialogue and the official mechanisms—not only during work toward a successful peace agreement and national reconciliation but also while tackling the challenge of remaking an autocratic government system into a participative and democratic one.

Source: Harold Saunders, “Sustained Dialogue in Tajikistan: Transferring Learning from the Public to the Official Peace Process,” in *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*, ed. Ronald J. Fisher (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 127–41.

As Ramsbotham and colleagues point out, peace agreements to end violent armed conflicts have increased significantly since the end of the Cold War, but they are still not the most frequent outcome.¹¹³ The challenge is that to achieve a successful agreement, “competing ideologies, interests and identity groups have to be permanently accommodated by the adaptation of existing power structures in a wide variety of ways.”¹¹⁴ This requires a comprehensive agreement in the wake of the highest level of escalation (destruction) in order to resolve and manage the myriad issues that have fueled the conflict and its escalation. A successful peace agreement creates the potential for, and sets in motion, a progression of de-escalation interactions and outcomes that reduce the intensity of the conflict. In many ways, de-escalation involves going back down the ladder of escalation for all dimensions that define the stages of escalation. However, this movement is not as simple as reversing course, because de-escalation efforts must now deal with sources of resistance left over from the prosecution of the conflict, including persistent hostile attitudes, self-perpetuating group norms, and changes in organizations and institutions—all of which are designed to degrade, disempower, and control the enemy.¹¹⁵ Thus, the strategies and mechanisms for rebuilding societies and relationships must flow from a comprehensive agreement into various forms of peacebuilding that will eliminate both direct and structural violence and achieve “positive peace by creating structures and institutions of peace based on justice, equity, and cooperation.”¹¹⁶

Following successful peacekeeping to control violence, a long list of tasks must be completed through postconflict peacebuilding in order to achieve some return to stability and normalcy.¹¹⁷ Ramsbotham and colleagues include these and other tasks under the rubrics of structural peacebuilding and stabilization, which they see as following peacekeeping and

peacemaking.¹¹⁸ Structural peacebuilding is largely captured within the concept of state building—that is, “the attempt to (re)build self-sustaining institutions of governance capable of delivering the essential public goods required to underpin perceived legitimacy and what it is hoped will eventually become an enduring peace.”¹¹⁹ In a similar vein, Charles Call defines state building as “actions undertaken by international or national actors to establish, reform, or strengthen the institutions of the state and their relation to society.”¹²⁰ This work takes place in several key sectors of society and is designed to result in a phase of intervention/de-escalation stage of stabilization in which the domestic political situation is well enough established so that power can be handed over to a host government by the international actors who initiated the peacekeeping, peacemaking, and postconflict peacebuilding activities.¹²¹

Along with all the physical or technical activities that are part of structural peacebuilding, the contingency model prescribes problem-solving dialogue as an effective mechanism to help parties deal with implementation issues that inevitably arise. This dialogue would need to be a hybrid form and would need to involve influentials from the two parties along with technical experts who can find cooperative and mutually satisfactory ways of dealing with implementation difficulties. Cuhadar demonstrates this type of technical problem-solving dialogue through her documentation of post-Oslo workshops involving Israeli and Palestinian water experts; the dialogues led to positive transfer effects to negotiations and to policy within and between the two parties (see Box 5).¹²² Even though this conflict suffers from the lack of a comprehensive agreement, the analysis shows how problem-solving dialogue can contribute to the resolution of implementation issues.

BOX 5. Problem-Solving Dialogue with Israeli and Palestinian Water Experts Supporting Structural Peacebuilding/Stabilization

The Israel/Palestine conflict has been one of the world’s most protracted conflicts, lasting for decades and, with periodic outbreaks of violence, reaching the destruction stage numerous times. Between 1991 and 2001, however, the conflict went through a significant de-escalation phase, particularly with the onset of the Oslo Peace Process in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1995. These developments resulted in significant movement toward a two-state solution. A gradual approach to negotiations was adopted, and almost all issues were left to be finalized in the “final status talks” (but those talks failed by 2002). One of the final status issues was the management of scarce water resources in the region, especially of the transboundary underground water aquifer, which provides the bulk of fresh water. While most of the recharge area of the mountain aquifer is within the West Bank, water from the western and northeastern basins flows toward Israel, and water from the eastern basin flows toward the Jordan River, thus

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BOX 5. (continued)

creating interdependence between the Israelis and Palestinians and a need for joint management to maintain the quality of water.

Two problem-solving dialogues on water were held, led by local nongovernmental organizations with international support. The Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) water initiative was founded in the early 1990s, with the aim of providing a dialogue forum for Israeli and Palestinian water experts to engage in problem-solving and to help them explore ideas, options, and solutions that would meet the interests of both parties. The number of participants changed from one meeting to another, but the size of the group grew in time from single digits in the early 1990s to more than 20 in the mid-1990s. The dialogue continued until the late 1990s. The Truman Center-Palestine Consultancy Group (Truman-PCG) water initiative targeted the difficult issue of the shared mountain aquifer. The goal was to conduct policy-oriented dialogue on the management of the aquifer in order to contribute to the final status negotiations. The initiative brought together a group of influential policy people working on water, as well as hydrologists from both sides. The dialogue took place between 1994 and 2002.

The impact of these problem-solving dialogues on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process was traced. It was concluded that the many innovative ideas and insights generated during the water dialogues helped enhance the negotiators' understanding. For example, IPCRI meetings helped elaborate on the "minimum water requirement" and resulted in a draft "regional water master plan." Likewise, the Truman-PCG project came up with various types of joint management structures for the shared aquifers that would meet both Israeli and Palestinian needs. The second problem-solving dialogue on water contributed to structural peacebuilding and stabilization, because the key outcome of this dialogue was an institutional mechanism for the joint management of shared aquifers that, in turn, inspired the related article in the 1995 Oslo agreement and the operationalization of the Joint Water Committee, a by-product of that agreement. The technical members of the official negotiation teams were affiliated with the problem-solving dialogue and were well connected to political negotiators in 1995.

Impacts of the two problem-solving dialogues were not limited to transfer effects to the negotiations. Especially in the early 1990s, Palestinian participants acquired data, technical skills, and new knowledge through these meetings; at that time, there was no official Palestinian water institution, and the Palestinian water community was inexperienced compared to the Israeli one. Thus, one important achievement of the dialogues for structural peacebuilding was improved human capital on the Palestinian side, enabling several Palestinians to participate in multilateral negotiations.

Source: Esra Cuhadar, "Assessing Transfer from Track Two Diplomacy: The Cases of Water and Jerusalem," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 5 (2009): 641–58.

In their hourglass model of de-escalation, Ramsbotham and colleagues cast normalization as a de-escalation stage between agreement and reconciliation. They also cast normalization as the third and final phase of postconflict peacebuilding operations.¹²³ They point out that in the phase of normalization, social and cultural peacebuilding becomes more important than structural peacebuilding, as it is needed to bring about a sociocultural transformation that provides public support for all of the policies and institutions that structural peacebuilding has generated. In the contingency model, the peace process of social or relational peacebuilding is directly linked to the de-escalation stage of normalization. The essential element of this work is to both repair and improve the relationship qualities that enable distinct identity groups to operate successfully within the same political and economic system, assuming that it has been determined by the peace agreement. In other words, the characteristics identified in the first escalation stage of discussion need to come to characterize the nature of the relations between former enemies, because the enemies now need to become partners. To help bring this about, pure dialogue should be implemented at all levels and in all sectors of society, complemented by public activities and policies that support integration and multiculturalism. Box 6 describes the use of pure dialogue in the Northern Ireland conflict to slowly instill understanding, trust, respect, and appreciation of diversity in the fabric of that divided society.

BOX 6. Dialogue Fostering Social Peacebuilding and Normalization in Northern Ireland

The long-standing conflict in Northern Ireland is an archetypal identity-group conflict, with pro-British, largely Protestant unionists supporting the status quo, and largely Catholic nationalists seeking a different political arrangement. From the late 1960s to the late 1990s, communal violence known as “the Troubles” resulted in the loss of over 3,000 lives and untold injuries as paramilitaries associated with the two parties launched bombings and other violent attacks. As a result, societal cohesion was damaged; and the country became highly segregated in the residential, educational, and social domains. Feelings of mistrust, fear, prejudice, and hatred toward the other community became commonplace, along with a sense of victimization that was particularly strong in the nationalist minority due to a history of marginalization. In 1998, a peace agreement ushered in a return to mostly peaceful relations, but the country still has a deeply divided society, characterized by intercommunal mistrust and resentment, political polarization, and severe communal segregation.

From a transitional justice point of view, Nevin Aiken draws on three forms of reconciliation identified in the literature that appear to help establish peaceful

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BOX 6. (continued)

relations following resolution. *Distributive reconciliation* involves “sustained attempts to reduce structural and material inequalities and limit perceptions of inequitable power relations between former antagonists.”¹²⁴ *Instrumental reconciliation* involves “interventions designed to engage former antagonists in sustained cooperative interaction, through which they can begin to transform their relationship with one another.”¹²⁵ *Socioemotional reconciliation* involves “interventions designed to confront directly the emotional and perceptual legacies of past conflict by way of breaking down obstacles to reconciliation caused by existing feelings of victimization, guilt, distrust and fear between groups.”¹²⁶

In Northern Ireland, distributive reconciliation has figured prominently in addressing the legacy of the conflict through reforms, new institutions, and various laws in several areas including human rights, economic inequity, housing and employment discrimination, inequality in education, and bias in the criminal justice system. Aiken maintains that inequity is no longer a primary source of conflict but that more work is still needed. These interventions have established a baseline for other forms of reconciliation to build on. In contrast, socioemotional reconciliation has been limited to a range of piecemeal initiatives, and progress toward full reconciliation has been very difficult.

The majority of peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by the government, civil society, and grassroots organizations have focused on instrumental reconciliation; the initiatives have included employing dialogue and positive intergroup contact to build understanding, trust, and cooperation. The government created the Community Relations Unit to address communal division through providing support for district councils and local projects. The unit primarily engages people in intercommunal dialogue and interaction to promote understanding, respect, and appreciation of cultural diversity. The government also created the Community Relations Council, an independent body, to support local organizations through grants, research and training, and advice on issues of communal division. Partly in response to these developments, a wide range of local organizations have emerged that focus on cross-community initiatives.

Research indicates that this community relations approach anchored in intercommunal contact and dialogue is improving intergroup perceptions and intercommunal relations. The initiatives have not only decreased intergroup anxiety, threat, bias, and prejudice but also increased trust, understanding, and tolerance. In addition, group identities are less polarized and oppositional, and there is less support for political violence. Continuing work in instrumental reconciliation may be necessary to develop adequate understanding and trust so that socioemotional reconciliation can be effectively implemented.

Source: Nevin T. Aiken, “Learning to Live Together: Transitional Justice and Intergroup Reconciliation in Northern Ireland,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 2 (2010): 166–88.

The final de-escalation stage of reconciliation is linked with cultural peacebuilding in the hourglass model, and this pairing has been replicated in the revised contingency model.¹²⁷ According to several scholars, “reconciliation involves reestablishing harmony and cooperation between antagonists who have inflicted harm in either a one-sided or reciprocal manner,”¹²⁸ and it is seen as “a longer-term process of overcoming hostility and mistrust between divided peoples.”¹²⁹ Achieving reconciliation following significant violence between identity groups can be an extremely difficult and multifaceted challenge, but there are many forms of cultural peacebuilding available that involve the arts, music, or other areas. In addition, symbolic gestures, public acknowledgments and apologies, and common institutions can play helpful roles.

The revised contingency model suggests that agonistic dialogue workshops involving pure (communication) and problem-solving dialogue—as well as dialogue that confronts the deeper issues of injustice, inequity, and human rights abuses—can be helpful in bringing about reconciliation between former enemies. Fisher notes that the perceptual, cognitive, and interactive processes that occur in workshops help lay the groundwork for reconciliation, but that transferring these outcomes to the public level is a challenge.¹³⁰ Maddison contends that agonistic dialogue that engages adversaries with deep differences linked to identity and history can help create greater understanding and transform the conflict so that the groups can interact effectively within a pluralist democratic society.¹³¹ The example case in Box 7 illustrates how agonistic dialogue was useful in Indonesia to return relations between ethnoreligious groups to a peaceful state following outbreaks of serious intercommunal violence.

BOX 7. Agonistic Dialogue Supporting Communal Reconciliation in Indonesia

In 1998, after 30-plus years of authoritarian rule under the Suharto regime, Indonesia entered a period of decentralization and democratic reform. But the transition led to considerable destabilization and conflict. In many regions, violent communal clashes broke out between different ethnoreligious groups, largely defined by their Muslim and Christian identities. In the Poso district of Central Sulawesi Province, intergroup violence began in 1998, and reoccurred in several phases until 2001. The conflict escalated along religious lines and came to involve combatants from various religious groups residing both inside and outside of the province and the country. In addition to injuries and the loss of life, religious buildings were destroyed and entire villages burned. Religious identities became polarized, and religious communities became geographically segregated. As to be expected, individuals from the various sides held different views on the sources of the violence, expressed different motivations for engaging in violence, and had different experiences in the conflict.

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BOX 7. (continued)

In 2001, a peace agreement was brokered in conjunction with military action to suppress the violence. Leaders of the central government were involved, along with national and regional religious and political elites, including some from Poso. The accord was supported by the National Human Rights Commission and generally by civil society organizations. Among other items, the agreement spoke to restoring law and order, respecting different religious practices, repatriating displaced persons, and rehabilitating the economies of the affected areas. In line with structural peacebuilding, the agreement set up working groups to support implementation of the accord—although these groups largely took a top-down approach and did not do much to improve intergroup relations and build trust among antagonists. At the same time, the military conducted security operations, signaling a shift away from violent methods of addressing the conflict. Complementing state efforts at stabilization, civil society and religious organizations became highly involved in intercommunal and interreligious dialogue over a period of several years to build peace from the bottom up.

Many of these efforts at relationship building and reconciliation can be regarded as agonistic dialogue, in that they worked to shift the perception of others as enemies to seeing them as adversaries—people who hold different and contrasting views that are nonetheless respected in the political space. The dialogues in Poso brought together ex-combatants to share experiences and grievances in closely facilitated interactions, without the expectation of achieving a consensus on understanding the past. Participants explained their reasons for engaging in the conflict and how other dynamics had fueled the violence, including military inaction. Over time, these sessions were extended to members of the broader community; participants shared their experiences of hardship and loss and recognized those of the other group, thus acknowledging different narratives of the conflict. In line with the core tenets of agonistic dialogue, the intercommunal sessions organized in Poso were *sustained* over several years, were *intensive* interactions with close facilitation and structure, and were designed to improve *relational* understanding. The agonistic dialogues—along with many other interreligious, political, economic, and security activities—made important contributions to conflict transformation and reconciliation. By the end of 2007, communal relations in Poso were relatively peaceful.

Source: Sarah Maddison and Rachael Diprose, “Conflict Dynamics and Agonistic Dialogue on Historical Violence: A Case from Indonesia,” *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 8 (2017): 1622–39.

Conclusion

Dialogue is a broad area of practice without a clear definition and with multiple methodologies. Partly in recognition of this reality, we conducted a meta-synthesis of evidence on dialogue types and dialogue effectiveness. After carrying out a literature review, creating a broad typology, and reviewing the types of dialogue described by practitioners and scholars, we assessed three essential types used especially for addressing intractable, identity-based intergroup conflicts. We also outlined four core dimensions of these dialogue types: the context (escalation level), the goal/purpose, the focus/emphasis, and the type of participants. Finally, based on these dimensions, we developed a revised contingency model that specifies under what conditions each type is likely to be most effective.

The first type, pure dialogue, aims to increase understanding, respect, and trust between members of distinct identity groups (defined in racial, religious, cultural or other terms) that are experiencing difficulties of varying magnitude in their intergroup relationships. This type of dialogue does not seek to resolve particular aspects of the conflict. However, the second type, problem-solving dialogue, builds on pure dialogue by aiming to resolve specific issues of the conflict. Problem-solving dialogue in general brings together multiple stakeholders to analyze and develop new options for addressing a common problem. In the case of destructive intergroup conflict, the participants are unofficial representatives of the conflict parties who are encouraged to see the conflict as a shared problem requiring resolution. In addition to exchanging perspectives and narratives, problem-solving dialogue engages the participants in a mutual analysis of the sources, dynamics, and effects of the intergroup conflict and then moves on to joint problem-solving to develop options oriented toward a peaceful resolution. The third type, agonistic dialogue, builds on the first two. It aims to address deeper and more insidious drivers of intractable intergroup conflict, including exclusive identities, power differences, and historical injustices. Agonistic dialogue therefore broadens the zone of productive confrontation—from clarifying and confronting the issues as the parties bring them forward to analyzing and addressing structural inequities and gross violations of human rights that fuel the deepest and most traumatized levels of the conflict. Overall, the typology provides a realistic and manageable categorization of three major forms of dialogue represented in the current literature, with the limitation that there is less information on the actual practice of agonistic dialogue.

While there is adequate evidence on the effectiveness of pure and problem-solving dialogue, evidence is lacking on the effectiveness of agonistic dialogue and the complementary use of the three types. Thus, more research is needed before making any declarations. The revised contingency model presented in this paper is based more on what the three types of dialogues claim to achieve, rather than robust empirical evidence on what each has achieved. The model provides a map that shows which type of intergroup dialogue is most appropriate

for the specific conflict-escalation stage. Types of dialogues are also placed in relation to other tools used for de-escalation in peace processes such as mediation and the various forms of peacebuilding. As with the original contingency model, such an idealized representation of a complex reality may not align so readily with neat stages of escalation/de-escalation and distinct types of intervention and peacebuilding. Thus, practitioners should regard the model as a tentative tool or guide to reflect on the appropriateness of their dialogue approach for a particular stage of conflict escalation or de-escalation. We suggest gathering additional data to pilot-test the contingency model, especially through conducting case studies and comparative analyses to ascertain how the different types of dialogue may usefully support various forms of peacebuilding in the concurrent stages of de-escalation.

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Notes

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