



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring effective methods of conflict resolution: Strategies and challenges for sustainable peace

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Abstract

Conflicts persistently present substantial risks to worldwide peace and stability, thus requiring the implementation of efficient settlement strategies. The challenges include cultural boundaries, power dynamics, economic conflicts, involvement of non-state actors, and humanitarian considerations, which make the resolution efforts more difficult. This chapter examines various tactics, obstacles, and consequences of conflict resolution to achieve long-lasting peace. It defines fundamental concepts and viewpoints in conflict resolution, which then guide further investigations. The chapter examines diplomatic negotiation, mediation, peacebuilding initiatives, and legal mechanisms as essential tools backed by empirical data and case studies. This research enhances conflict resolution approaches essential for global peace and security by combining theoretical insights with facts.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Sustainable peace, Mediation, Diplomacy, Peacebuilding, Negotiation, Arbitration.

Introduction

In the globalised world today, the impact of conflicts is not limited to any specific region. The world is so interconnected that the whole world faces the wrath of conflict between two parties, either directly or indirectly. The primary reason is the connected economies of nations due to globalisation and advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). A prominent example is the recent Russia-Ukraine War in 2022. The war's repercussions

transcend Ukraine and have a profound impact on global trade, inflation, and economic growth. Conflicts progress via distinct stages: emergence, intensification, reduction, resolution, and maintenance of peace. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these stages enables individuals to properly tackle conflicts. In the present intricate society, novel and advanced dangers necessitate innovative solutions.

Since 1946, there has been a global decline in the total number of deaths caused by conflict. Currently, there is a rise in conflict and violence, with several conflicts being waged by non-state actors, including criminal organisations, political militias, and international terrorist organisations. The United Nations (n.d.) suggests that effective conflict prevention and resolution necessitate collaboration among nations, the private sector, and civil society. Human vulnerability exacerbates global conflicts. Wokocha (2018, p. 217) claims that effective leadership is essential for developing effective human security measures that promote global peace and stability.

Measuring in terms of constant purchasing power parity (PPP), the projected economic cost of violence and war in 2019 came to be \$14.4 trillion. This matches 10.5% of the global GDP, or \$1,895 per person (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2021, p. 9). According to the World Bank (2018), due to violent conflicts, countries lose 2 to 8.4% in annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. Countries with border conflicts suffer from a 1.7% point rise in inflation and a 1.4% point fall in annual GDP.

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Theoretical Framework

Conflict resolution is the formal or informal method used by several parties to achieve a peaceful settlement to their dispute. The process involves conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and the pursuit of mutual consensus. In both homogenous and varied communities, as everyday life increasingly facilitates interactions among individuals with varying origins, cultures, beliefs, morals, ethics, personalities, and goals, interpersonal and other conflicts are natural, inherent, and unavoidable occurrences (Ghaffar 2019, pp. 212–227). Conflict resolution in the realm of international relations pertains to the strategies and approaches employed to settle conflicts between nations and other global entities. These techniques encompass diplomatic endeavours, such as discussions and mediation, alongside economic and military actions. Essentially, it entails the act of alleviating or preserving tensions among states, ensuring that they remain at levels that align with the peaceful pursuit of their individual or collective objectives. The objective is to identify peaceful resolutions that enable opposing factions to peacefully coexist or resolve their basic incompatibility.

Conflict resolution is essential for reducing violence and fostering peace at the global level. To prevent situations from growing into armed conflicts or wars, it is crucial to employ efficient conflict resolution methods when tensions build between countries. Diplomatic endeavours, discussions, and interventions can mitigate conflicts and uphold stability. Violent conflicts inflict catastrophic impacts on civilian populations. Conflict resolution aims to mitigate the negative impact on innocent lives by pursuing peaceful resolutions instead of resorting to military aggression. Wars compromise economic stability as they disrupt economies, trade, and investment. Conflict resolution plays a crucial role in preserving economic stability by averting disturbances and fostering collaboration among states. The resolution of disputes enhances regional security. Stable regions have a lower probability of hosting extremist groups or becoming environments conducive to the growth of terrorism. Countries that actively pursue peaceful methods to resolve conflicts improve their standing in the global community. Collaboration and tactfulness enhance international relations and cultivate confidence between nations.

Cockell (2000, pp. 15–34) claims that effective conflict resolution is crucial for global stability and human security, as it can prevent the outbreak of armed hostilities and reduce the human cost of protracted conflicts. Kazansky and Andrassy (2019, p. 1468) opine that it is a multidisciplinary approach that draws on various fields, including psychology, sociology, and political science. Conflict resolution mechanisms, such as peacebuilding and peacekeeping, can help maintain peace and security (Wani, 2011, p. 114). Reducing violence and advancing stability also depend on

investments in citizen security, justice, and employment. Consequently, a peaceful and safe global environment depends much on the efficient settlement of conflicts.

Strategies of Conflict Resolution

Diplomatic Negotiation

Diplomatic negotiation is the skilful practice of identifying shared objectives and achieving consensus among parties with conflicting interests. Proficient diplomats employ discourse and negotiation to discover mutually agreeable resolutions. Essentially, it revolves around establishing connections through formal arrangements. Diplomatic negotiation is an intricate and diverse procedure employed by nations and international organisations to peacefully resolve problems and effectively manage relationships. Diplomacy is a non-violent alternative to combat, in which states work to advance and protect their interests. Over four centuries, the practice of diplomacy has changed to incorporate international institutions that establish guidelines for the process of negotiation (Meerts, 2015, p. 403). Negotiations have a crucial role in maintaining the order of the international system and preventing conflicts. Effective negotiations rely on following international frameworks that guarantee confidence and compliance. Warfare and negotiation are two interconnected strategies that can be seen as opposite ends of a spectrum. Therefore, negotiation can be characterised as a method of conducting conflict peacefully. The instruments mentioned are crucial for effectively handling conflicts both between and within states (Meerts, 2015, p. 117). Diplomatic conversations have been crucial in resolving disputes throughout history. Here are a few noteworthy instances:

The Camp David Accords (1978)

The Camp David Accords, signed on September 17, 1978, were instrumental in establishing peace between Israel and Egypt. US President Jimmy Carter mediated discussions between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The Accords led to the formation of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979 (Monsen, 2018). This treaty marked the initial instance of such an agreement between Israel and any of its Arab counterparts. The Accords also established a comprehensive structure for achieving a more extensive state of tranquillity throughout the region. Israel relinquished control of the Sinai Peninsula, which it had occupied since the Six-Day War in 1967, and returned it to Egypt as stipulated in the treaty (McNamara, 2019).

Dayton Accords (1995)

The Dayton Accords were executed on December 14, 1995, by the presidents of Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia, therefore concluding the most intense war in Europe since World War II. This battle led to more than 100,000 fatalities and displaced over 2 million people. The Dayton Accords created

separate Serbian and Muslim-Croat governmental units inside a cohesive Bosnian state. The deal was praised for ceasing hostilities; yet, it failed to address the deep-seated tensions in the area. The Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović, described the deal as akin to «consuming a bitter yet beneficial remedy» (Alfred, 2017).

Good Friday Agreement (1998)

The Good Friday Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, concluded the protracted political and sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland between formerly irreconcilable adversaries. Per the agreement, Republicans, who support Northern Ireland's inclusion in the Republic of Ireland, and Unionists, who want continued union with Great Britain, have essentially achieved a compromise to uphold their divergent views over the territory's future status.

Mediation and Third-Party Intervention

Military conflicts represent the most extreme and violent manifestation of a dispute. Conflicts between nations and within governments frequently originate from religious and/or ethnic motivations, disputes over resource access, or a combination of other factors. The frequency of third-party engagement in these types of conflicts is increasing. Clayton and Dorussen (2021, p. 151) claim that since the 1980s, and particularly after the end of the Cold War, the practice of mediating and sustaining peace in conflicts within a single state has been more prevalent. Mediation is currently considered to be the most prevalent method of conflict resolution during times of violence. Mediation is a process in which individuals involved in a conflict seek the help of a neutral third party to settle their disagreements without using violence or legal intervention. Clayton and Dorussen (2021, p. 152) also claim that disputants who desire to maintain control during discussions and foreign actors who want a cost-effective method to impact a conflict are attracted to the nonbinding aspect of mediation.

The recent military confrontation between Hamas and Israel, the ongoing violent conflict in Syria, the unresolved dispute in Ukraine, and the ongoing hostilities in African nations such as South Sudan and the Central African Republic are just a few instances of conflicts that have involved and continue to involve third-party intervention. The EU and its member countries, including Germany, are significantly involved, and in certain cases, even taking the lead, in these disputes (Knoop, 2014, p. 1). The majority of mediation involves the involvement of a third party to aid with talks. When conflict becomes intense and the parties involved struggle to communicate directly, mediators can intervene by facilitating contact between them. For instance, in 2014, Egypt acted as a broker and facilitator to bring Hamas and Israel together and negotiate a cease-fire agreement without a specified duration. Some other examples of

mediation are (Shonk, 2024):

- The Cyprus conflict throughout the 1970s and 1980s prompted the United Nations (UN) to designate a series of mediators to facilitate dialogue between Greece and Turkey, the principal parties engaged in the hostilities in Cyprus. The mediators facilitated the negotiation of the conditions for a ceasefire and the establishment of a demilitarised area, referred to as the Green Line, between the two settlements.
- The Norwegian government acted as a mediator in the 2002 peace discussions between the Sri Lankan government and the separatist organisation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), during the Sri Lankan civil war. The discussions culminated in a ceasefire agreement and the commencement of a peace initiative, however hostilities resumed thereafter.

Peacebuilding Initiatives

Peacekeeping is a conflict resolution technique including the deployment of multinational soldiers to a battle zone to monitor a ceasefire, protect civilians, and facilitate the implementation of a peace accord. Peacekeeping forces include military personnel, law enforcement officials, and civilian workers from many nations. These forces are authorised and managed by international organisations like the United Nations (UN) or regional bodies like the African Union. Peacekeeping missions are a potent means of ending conflicts since they can effectively uphold a truce, safeguard people, and facilitate the execution of a peace deal. Nevertheless, peacekeeping operations can present intricate and demanding situations due to the necessity of collaboration among conflicting parties. Furthermore, the directives and guidelines governing the actions of peacekeeping personnel are frequently influenced by political factors.

Some of the notable peacekeeping operations are:

The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC)

It was deployed in the early 1960s to restore order during the Congo Crisis. This peacekeeping mission was one of the first and biggest, with the main goal of ensuring stability in the recently established Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG)

It played a crucial role in overseeing and supporting Namibia's transition to independence from South Africa during the late 1980s. It supervised the process of conducting elections, the reduction of military presence, and the creation of democratic systems.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)

This mission played a pivotal role in bringing an end to the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002). It successfully disarmed insurgent factions, facilitated diplomatic talks to achieve

peace, and made significant contributions to the process of rebuilding and restoring stability in the aftermath of the conflict.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

UNMISS, which was founded in 2011, operates in South Sudan to tackle ethnic conflict and the South Sudanese Civil War. The primary objectives of this initiative are to safeguard civilians, oversee the observance of human rights, and assist in peace negotiations.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

It was in operation from 2003 until 2018. Its main objective was to assist Liberia in its post-civil war reconstruction efforts. It contributed to the stabilisation of the country, the disarmament of combatants, and the promotion of peacebuilding.

The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)

In 1951, the Security Council adopted Resolution 91 and created UNMOGIP with the purpose of monitoring and documenting any breaches of the ceasefire. Located in the Kashmir area, it is a unique instance of a peacekeeping operation that continues to function throughout times of interstate conflict, even while there are active hostilities between India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP, 2017).

From 1946 to 2013, there were a total of 439 occurrences of conflict termination. Clayton and Dorussen (2021, p. 158) noted that mediation and peacekeeping often coincide during cases of conflict termination, especially in the last year of the conflict. The utilisation of mediation in dispute terminations increased from 25% before 1989 to 35% between 1989 and 2013. Peacekeeping is less frequent than mediation in both periods, yet it nonetheless occurred in a significant 8% of all terminations before 1989 and 19% of terminations since 1990.

Legal and Arbitration Mechanisms

Another entity that can serve as an arbitrator between warring parties is a Court of Justice or Tribunal. An illustrious illustration of this is the territorial disagreement between Argentina and Chile regarding the Beagle Channel, a natural maritime passage located near the southernmost tip of South America. A bilateral Arbitration Tribunal was established to resolve the border dispute between the two nations. In 1971, the Tribunal issued a ruling on the border, which was mutually recognised by both sides. However, in 1978, the Argentine Junta declared the judgment to be «null and void.» Pope John Paul II acted as a mediator, and as a result of his intervention, both countries signed a treaty that definitively resolved the border problem. This demonstrates that a third party can consist of either an individual with a distinct character or a collective of distinguished, esteemed, and trustworthy individuals.

Notable instances of third-party engagement in African crises include Thabo Mbeki's role in Sudan and Kofi Annan's involvement in West Africa. The African Union has created a dedicated entity, known as the «Panel of the Wise,» to serve as an impartial mediator in cases of conflict. This panel is responsible for facilitating conflict resolution and negotiating peace accords between opposing groups.

During arbitration, a neutral third party carefully considers the arguments presented by both parties and then issues a conclusion, which may either be legally binding or non-binding. When considering the participation of external parties in conflict resolution, mediation, or arbitration, the UN holds a prominent position. This is due to the authority granted to the UN, specifically its Security Council, by the UN Charter in Chapters VI and VII to address global peace. In the past, we have witnessed numerous interventions by the UN aimed at either restoring peace or providing assistance to peacekeeping efforts carried out by national or international entities. These interventions were authorised by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Several of these actions are now ongoing, particularly very conspicuously on the African continent, such as in Sudan and other regions of Africa.

Challenges in Conflict Resolution

Effective peace-making and prevention in global conflict resolution are contingent upon a comprehensive awareness of the numerous obstacles involved. Various parties in regions affected by conflict have distinct interpretations and prioritizations of challenges. North African developments encompass various factors such as political stability, Islamic extremism, limited political representation, economic disparity, and the dynamics of their relationship with Israel. The constant shifting of these objectives makes it challenging to reach a consensus. In numerous autocratic regimes, the government's viewpoint on difficulties often diverges substantially from that of its citizens. Regimes place a high importance on maintaining stability and addressing any threats to their authority, while citizens tend to prioritise having a political voice and addressing issues of economic inequality.

Cultural and Societal Barriers

Several cross-cultural differences in norms, attitudes, and beliefs greatly influence the preferred tactics for resolving conflicts. Unless there is a clear understanding of potential differences in beliefs and subsequent conflict resolution solutions, the underlying conflict can worsen (Gomez & Taylor, 2017). Cultural disparities exert a substantial impact on the tactics employed to resolve conflicts, particularly in negotiations involving different cultures. When addressing cultural differences, it is crucial to refrain from depending on preconceptions. Instead, concentrate on cultural archetypes—typical patterns of behaviour or ideals within a community. Japanese negotiators have a greater

frequency of silence intervals during discussions compared to Brazilians, yet there is still variation within each cultural group (Shonk, 2023). Gaining knowledge of these subtle distinctions can result in improved negotiation results.

A study reveals that Mexicans prefer social influence and negotiation over US participants in conflict resolution. Collectivism mediates this difference, affecting the likelihood of using these strategies. Gomez and Taylor (2017, p. 33) claim that fairness perceptions also strongly influence US participants' preference for negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy. Studies indicate that cross-cultural dealmaking generally results in inferior outcomes when compared to negotiations done inside the same cultural context. The primary reason is that cultures are distinguished by distinct behaviours, communication methods, and conventions. When engaging in cross-cultural negotiations, we each bring unique viewpoints to the negotiation process, which might lead to possible misunderstandings.

Political and Power Dynamics

Conflict resolution is an intricate domain where political and power factors significantly influence the obstacles encountered. Conflict-affected nations and entities outside of those nations may hold differing perspectives on difficulties. North African developments exemplify divergent concerns, including political stability, Islamic radicalism, and economic disparity. Conflict-affected nations and external entities frequently hold contrasting perspectives on difficulties. North African developments exemplify divergent concerns, including political stability, Islamic radicalism, and economic disparity. Power dynamics in political systems govern the allocation and application of power. Authority battles are unavoidable and have a significant influence on the acquisition, preservation, and relinquishment of political authority (FasterCapital, 2024).

Power disparities within expansive organisations can result in feelings of animosity and fury. It is essential to rectify these disparities, whether they are perceived or actual, to achieve conflict resolution. The role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is subject to discussion, particularly regarding its perception as either a means of dispensing justice or as a Western imposition, particularly in the context of Africa (Grono, 2011). Power disparities within expansive organisations can result in feelings of animosity and fury. It is essential to rectify these disparities, whether they are perceived or actual, to achieve conflict resolution.

Economic and Resource Conflicts

Conflicts and limited resources have a complicated relationship. Political, social, economic, and ecological problems all affect environmental shortage and may lead to violence in specific circumstances. Percival and Homer-Dixon (1998, p. 279) claim environmental resource shortage is frequently cited as a contributing element, rather than

the exclusive cause, of conflict. Vesco et al. (2020) illustrate that both abundance and resource scarcity are associated with a higher probability of conflict. The correlation's direction and strength are contingent upon the nature of the resources and whether climate variables are accounted for. Civil conflicts in nations such as Angola, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have revolved around lucrative commodities such as diamonds, timber, minerals, gold, and oil (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). Additional conflicts, such as those in Darfur and the Middle East, revolve around the exertion of authority over limited resources like arable land and water (Matthew et al., 2009, p. 8).

Role of Non-State Actors

Rebel organisations, militias, warlord-led organisations, criminal networks, and non-state armed entities may all disturb, impede, or completely stop attempts at peace and state-building, hence fuelling a return of violence. Murray (2021, p. 187) claims that the involvement of armed organisations in peace agreements, along with the ambiguous legal status of non-state actors in international law, presents several significant unresolved issues. By concentrating on improving or reconstructing state structures and institutions, international attempts in peacebuilding and state-building endanger the position of most of these non-state armed participants in the war. Nevertheless, the objective of establishing competent state institutions would generally restrict the ability of non-state armed groups to operate freely and achieve their political and/or economic objectives.

Therefore, international peacebuilding and state-building projects constitute a danger to these people, who are more prone to resist than to support any action that would improve or restore the state's exclusive authority over the use of force. This pattern of behaviour is evident in nearly every instance of international involvement, spanning a wide range of countries, including Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Hofmann & Schneekener, 2011, p. 3).

Future Directions and Recommendations

Emerging Trends in Conflict Resolution

The nature of conflict and violence has undergone significant changes over time. Since its establishment 75 years ago, the United Nations has witnessed a tremendous transformation, including war and bloodshed. The current state of international collaboration for conflict prevention and resolution is experiencing significant strain (United Nations, n.d.). Contemporary conflicts frequently involve non-state actors rather than nation-states, and they generally result in fewer casualties. The prevalence of gender-based attacks is on the rise worldwide, and there is a growing awareness of the detrimental effects of interpersonal violence,

especially violence against children, on development. The development of technology has sparked worries regarding the use of deadly autonomous weapons, cyber assaults, militarised automated programmes, unmanned aerial vehicles, and the live transmission of terrorist acts. There is an increasing prevalence of criminal activities related to data breaches and ransomware attacks.

In 2017, the number of persons who died as a result of homicides exceeded the number of deaths caused by armed wars and terrorist acts, reaching nearly 500,000 globally. Countries in the Americas exhibit the highest homicide rates, including 37% of the worldwide aggregate, although constituting merely 13% of the global population (United Nations, n.d.). Political instability fosters organised crime, deliberate assaults on law enforcement, and acts of violence against women, journalists, and migrants. Political violence now transcends low-income states and has emerged as a worldwide issue. Social media platforms serve as a means of both engaging in dispute communication and as a venue for conflict management. Online conflict management is becoming more pertinent in the fields of education, training, and professional application (Jameson & Hannah, 2022). The dynamic shifts in the global power structure, the process of establishing democratic systems, the increasing interconnectedness of nations, collaborative efforts to provide security, assertions of cultural identity, and the evolving concept of sovereignty all have significant implications for the techniques employed in resolving conflicts.

Implementing Technology

Technology has a crucial role in resolving conflicts, particularly in today's interconnected globe. Technology can facilitate the identification and monitoring of potential conflict zones. Technology enables the collection of data and expedites decision-making processes for governments (Fritsch, 2017). It offers an extra perspective on government conduct and global disputes. Advancements in satellite photography, surveillance, and communication technology enable governments to effectively watch and respond to one another's operations. Baltay (2020) illustrates that Artificial intelligence systems can process and examine environmental data, trends of climate change, and the availability of resources. These observations can assist in forecasting the impacts of conflict and directing proactive actions.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Governments and organisations must have unambiguous and all-encompassing policies and procedures for resolving conflicts. These should encompass escalation mechanisms, official grievance procedures, and guidelines for resolving issues. Consistently evaluate and appraise the efficacy of these policies, collecting input. Governments and international

agencies must take proactive measures to prevent and settle problems before they escalate into violence. Cultivate a setting that actively discourages hostility. Promote transparent communication, collaboration, and harmonious cooperation among nations and groups (WEF, 2018). Conflict prevention is of utmost importance. The process entails the identification of peaceful methods to resolve tensions and address antagonistic mistrust to prevent its escalation into violence. If we want to establish global peace, then the superpowers need not interfere and encourage conflicts in other nations for their interests. The scenarios of Syria and Afghanistan are recent examples.

Conclusion

Since the Cold War ended, there has been a notable rise in the utilisation of non-violent methods for managing conflicts. The United Nations plays a crucial part in this, with mediation and peacekeeping being the principal approaches used by the international community to address and resolve violent conflicts (Clayton & Dorussen, 2021, p. 163). However, the scenario of today's warfare and conflicts has changed drastically. Thus, there is an urgent need for reforms at the international level, too. The proper management of conflicts and violence is of its utmost importance, as we all know, at what scale the destruction could be.

The long ongoing conflicts in the African continent, the Middle East, and the rather new Russia-Ukraine War 2022 and Israel-Hamas 2023 are all the reality of the present damage humans can inflict on one another. A timely and even prior conflict resolution is necessary for a secure future. If only the present world and human life are saved, then only the world can focus on the future ahead. Climate change needs more attention today as it is showing the seeds for future conflicts, and if the resources are not adequate, the conflict will be for their very own survival, and it would be nearly impossible to resolve the conflict then. The governments and non-state actors need to be on the same ground and come together and work not only for today but also for a peaceful tomorrow.

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