Addressing Protracted Ethnopolitical Conflicts: Moving Beyond Description to Basic Dynamics

The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCCR)
Teachers College, Columbia University

Florida Atlantic University

The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR)
George Mason University

Authors:
Dr. Peter T. Coleman, ICCCR, Teachers College, Columbia University
Dr. Robin Vallacher, Florida Atlantic University
Dr. Andrzej Nowak, Florida Atlantic University
Dr. Andrea Bartoli, George Mason University
Dr. Larry Liebovitch, Florida Atlantic University
Abstract
Protracted ethnopolitical conflicts continue to undermine the security, stability and well being of societies worldwide. Today, there are over 30 wars and armed conflicts being waged around the globe, with approximately 40% of intra-state armed conflicts lasting for 10 years or more and 25% of wars lasting for more than 25 years. In these settings, generations of youth are socialized into conflict, a condition we know to perpetuate violence in many forms. In fact, scholars have linked the attacks of September 11th to the socio-political conditions that were festering in hot zones of protracted conflict.

A defining feature of protracted conflicts is that they display remarkable resistance to intervention even in the face of rational considerations that would seemingly defuse the animosities at work. This suggests that the problem of intractability says more about psychology than it does about objective reality. Numerous psychological, social, and political mechanisms relevant to conflict intractability have been identified. Indeed, the challenge of achieving clarity on this problem does not reflect a lack of identifiable factors, but rather an over-abundance. The task before us is to integrate these diverse factors into an account that provides a coherent perspective, yet allows for prediction and a basis for conflict resolution in specific settings.

Approach
The approach outlined in this paper to understanding and addressing protracted ethnopolitical conflict is informed by our research on dynamical-systems theory and conflict. This research has found that qualitative differences in the dominant patterns of social behavior (such as those found in peaceful societies versus hostile or warring societies) can be accounted for by a few basic factors. Accordingly, our research attempts to identify, from scholarship and practice, the fundamental factors which determine and sustain destructive or violent conflict.

Our basic model centers on the idea of attractors. These are relatively stable patterns that are evident in all types of systems (from biological cells to social communities to solar systems) which resist change and which “attract” or pull the state of the system toward its pattern. Think of a whirlpool or a black hole in space which draw-in to their patterns all matter and energy within their field of attraction. We have found that the patterns of social interactions between people and between groups in communities operate according to the same basic principles. This has direct implications for understanding protracted conflict.

Groups and communities typically have only a few qualitatively different attractors operating in their social system (see Figure 1). This means that the potential for peaceful interactions between groups in a community and the potential for other types of relatively stable interaction patterns (disengaged, estranged but tolerant, destructive, etc.) often co-exist in communities all the time as latent possibilities – even when only one type of interaction pattern (such as open hostilities) is evident. These different potential patterns (attractors) are created slowly, incrementally over time – typically through thousands of small interactions between people – and come to exist as potential patterns even when they remain unseen. At any time, the interactions of the community can move from one potential pattern (such as peace) to another (such as war), even when sparked by minor incidents which can shift the pattern from one to another in dramatic fashion. This can be seen both in sudden outbreaks of group violence in
situations of relative peace (such as is occurring in Northern Ireland at the time of this writing) as well as in sudden outbreaks of peace in situations of protracted conflict (such as occurred in Mozambique in the 1990s).

![Diagram of an attractor landscape for community relations](image)

Figure 1: An attractor landscape for community relations with one manifest attractor (the current state of relations - location of the ball), two latent attractors (currently unoccupied potential states), and one repellor (the opposite of attractors such as social taboos – in red).

This basic scenario which distinguishes the current state of communal life from other potential patterns of interaction (with differing degrees of strength and “pull”) sets the stage for our research and for the following set of recommendations for weakening attractors for destructive conflict and promoting strong attractors for peace.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been generated by our multidisciplinary team of scientists (psychologists, anthropologists, complexity scientists, and physicists) and derive from years of scholarship, practical experience, theory development, and empirical testing, including case-based and laboratory research. This research, funded by the James S. McDonnell Foundation, aims to apply new insights from complexity science to working constructively with conflicts that endure and that resist more standard approaches to resolution.

1. **Interrupt coherence.** The world, our relationships, and our conflicts are complex, often contradictory, and always changing. Yet there is a fundamental need in humans for simplicity; for finding a coherent understanding of situations and for achieving consistency in our thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and
relationships. Such coherence provides us with a stable view of the world and a sturdy platform for action. As conflicts intensify and persist, this press for coherence increases, and can result in a hardening of categories; a simplistic sense of right versus wrong, good versus evil, and us versus them. This is what we term a strong attractor for destructive conflict, and is most evident in zero-sum fundamentalist groups who become organized around the destruction of their outgroups. Recognizing this basic human need and tendency for coherence, we argue that structures, processes and people which interrupt simplistic ideologies and dynamics serve a critical role in preventing, changing and ending destructive conflict. This can take many forms, from establishing multiethnic institutions and associations to recognizing and celebrating the multiethnic nature of all human groups.

2. **Create conditions for positive latent attractors to emerge and be sustained internally.** Finding and implementing a solution to a protracted conflict is tantamount to changing the system’s attractor landscape. The idea of latent attractors provides an important new perspective on conflict intervention. In this view, the malignant thoughts, feelings, and actions characterizing a group’s dynamics may represent only the most salient and visible attractor for the group. Particularly if there is a long history of interaction with the out-group, there may be other potential patterns of mental, affective, and behavioral engagement vis a vis members of the out-group, including those that foster positive inter-group relations. With this in mind, identifying and reinforcing latent (positive) attractors, not simply disassembling the manifest (negative) attractors, should be the aim of both conflict prevention and intervention. Thus, the identification and support of constructive forces within the system is a key strategy for increasing the probabilities for peace. There are a wide variety of such tactics including:

- **Support existing networks of effective action:** Virtually every conflict system, even the most dire, will contain people and groups who, despite the dangers, may be able to reach out across the divides and work to foster dialogue and peace but are constrained by the dynamics of the conflict. During times of intense escalation, these people and groups may become temporarily inactive - even going underground - but are often willing to re-emerge when conditions allow, becoming fundamental players in the transformation of the system.

- **Consider employing weak power tactics to avoid strong resistance:** Strong enmity systems, which evidence strong attractors for destructiveness and weak attractors for peace, will often reject out-of-hand most strong-arm attempts to force peace. History has provided countless examples of the failure of strong outside parties to forge a peace in such systems. Nevertheless, sometimes, peace does emerge. Weak power third parties may be able to carefully introduce a sense of doubt or dissonance in an otherwise coherent “us versus them” meaning system. For example, the events involving the NGO The Community of St. Agidio in Mozambique in the 1990s provide us with an excellent example of the utility of “weak power” in creating a sense of possibility for peace in a strong enmity system.

- **Employ discreet negotiation chains:** An increasingly popular tactic employed to initiate peace talks in protracted conflicts is the use of negotiation chains. This is the practice of involving a sequence of actors in the exploration of more formal talks, by allowing each actor to speak directly with another actor with whom they are not constrained politically against speaking, but who has contacts further down the chain with the other side. Thus, talks transpire through a series of encounters, which allow for communications between parties who 1) need to be able to maintain deniability in the talks, and 2) who would otherwise not be able to communicate.
• **Work on increasing positivity away from the pull of conflict attractors:** Recognizing that systems with strong, negative conflict attractors often construct peace-makers as part of the conflict system and position them in one camp or another, some interveners attempt to work constructively by circumventing the conflict. This is an approach employed in some of the work by Ashoka Fellows working in conflict zones, who are typically local people working in innovative ways to help build social capital and provide a sense of efficacy by addressing basic needs in their communities (such as building community latrines in slums, organizing dances for idol youth, etc.).

• **Acknowledge or establish superordinate identities and goals:** This is a classic approach to intergroup conflict that involves the identification or development of joint goals and identities in an attempt to establish a foundation of cooperation and eventually trust between parties (Sherif, et. al, 1961; Deutsch, 1973; Worschel, 1987). Even if peacekeeping missions, reconciliation processes, trust-building activities, and cooperative conflict resolution initiatives appear to be largely ineffective in situations locked in an ongoing protracted struggle, they may very well be acting indirectly to establish a sufficiently wide and deep attractor basin for moral, humane forms of intergroup interactions that provide the foundation for a stable, peaceful future.

3. **“Reverse engineer” negative, destructive attractors.** Of course, establishing latent attractors for peaceful relations is only part of the story. The most obvious need in protracted conflict is to quell the current state of violence and contain actively destructive processes. This is often done by introducing peacekeeping troops or other forms of regional or international military or police support. However, even when systems de-escalate and appear to move into a state of peace, it is critical that we recognize that the potential for destructive interactions (destructive conflict attractors) still exists. It is important, then, that we work actively to deconstruct and dismantle the negative attractors. This can be done through a variety of initiatives, including:

   • decoupling positive feedback loops that feed destructive conflicts;
   • introducing negative feedback loops (early-warning systems, cross-cutting structures, international monitoring, etc.) that interrupt escalatory spirals;
   • institutionalizing more nuanced, alternative conflict narratives (through media, textbooks, official accounts, etc.); and
   • limiting the pervasive spread of conflict by allowing movement of the parties (hostilities are more likely to fester when groups are constrained in one location).

3. **Employ feedback loop analysis to identify energy flow in a dynamical-system of conflict.** It can be useful to represent the dynamics of a conflict – in the form of a dynamical network – through feedback loop analysis. Loop analysis is useful for mapping how different events or elements of a conflict relate to one another in terms of the positive and negative feedback loops that can escalate, de-escalate, and stabilize destructive conflicts (See Figure 1 for a depiction of the Mozambique civil war and peace process). Positive feedback occurs when one element (such as a hostile act) stimulates another element (a retaliatory act) along its current trajectory (fueling an escalatory spiral and resulting in a strong attractor for destructive conflict). Negative feedback occurs when an element inhibits or reverses the direction of another element (such as when the presence of peacekeeping troops decreases hostilities). This method of conflict analysis not only captures the multiple sources, consequences, and temporal dynamics of such systems, but it can also help
identify central nodes and patterns in the conflict that are unrecognizable by other means. This method works best when mapping more structured elements of communities (such as relational networks or information flow) but can also work well as a collaborative process involving various stakeholder groups negotiating their respective subjective views of the conflict. Once the system is mapped, you can employ basic measures of network analysis and centrality to locate hubs, energy centers, gateways and leverage points. This can help to both contextualize conflicts, and provide specific insights for intervention.

Figure 1: Feedback Loop Analysis of Mozambique Conflict and Peace

4. **Understand that peace and conflict are not opposites.** Most of us operate under the basic assumption that a thorough understanding of a conflict and its sources will lead us logically to a strategy for addressing it and bringing about peace. However, research on attitudes and emotions has taught us that positive and negative feelings, attitudes, and behaviors are not merely the opposite of each other, but rather are independent dimensions. This means that understanding the key conditions and variables that led a conflict to escalation and stalemate does not necessarily tell us much about what is required for peace. Certainly, a thorough understanding of the problem is required if we hope to contain or reduce the potential for destructive acts in a system. However, this is a necessary but insufficient condition for peace. We also must realize that destructive dynamics have a very different impact on systems than do constructive dynamics;
they have different degrees of stability, varied temporal rates of diffusion, and are associated with a distinct set of pre-existing conditions.

5. **Take time seriously.** The recognition that conflict and peace arise and develop within complex, non-linear systems suggests that we *learn to attend to temporal patterns and trends, not specific outcomes*. This has two major implications for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. First, it is important to recognize that a system’s state (the current situation) and its attractors (potential stable patterns in a system) change on different time scales. Manifest conflicts can evidence dramatic changes in their states – from relatively peaceful states to violent ones, or from intensely destructive states to peaceful. However, such changes in the current state of the conflict should not be confused with changes in the underlying attractor landscape. Attractors tend to develop slowly, incrementally over time as a result of a host of relevant activities. It is critical that we appreciate and take into account these time-scale differences. Second, the effects of different interventions are likely to have different temporal patterns. For example, Table 1 provides an overview of different initiatives for mobilizing constructive change in situations of protracted conflict, organized around two dimensions: type of change initiated and level of intervention. Each initiative is associated with a distinct temporal pattern. We need to be cognizant of this when designing and implementing such initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systemic Change Initiatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Episodic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Top-down</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- peacekeeping</td>
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<tr>
<td>- police actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- intelligence gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle-out</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- community leader crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>- support</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bottom-up</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- direct humanitarian aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>- teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>- socializing</td>
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<td>- treatment for trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Radical</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- policy changes</td>
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<td>- control the ecology</td>
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<td>- frame-breaking outsiders</td>
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<td>- issue framing</td>
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<td>- mid-level Influentials</td>
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<td>- procedural changes</td>
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<td>- strategic Initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ashoka initiatives</td>
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<td>- adjust local rules, timing, location</td>
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6. **Read feedback:** Make more decisions. Research suggests that well-intentioned decision-makers who set an early course for improving communities often fail because they do not adjust their decisions in response to critical feedback. Indeed, initiatives uninformed by feedback are destined to do more harm than good. The most effective decision-makers are those who are able to continually adapt; by remaining open to feedback they can reconsider their decisions and alter their course if necessary. These leaders make more, not fewer, decisions as their plans unfold, and ultimately are able to enhance the well-being of the communities with which they work. The implications of this analogy for analyzing and responding to feedback in situations of ongoing conflict are straightforward. Stakeholder-intervener teams implementing change strategies must remain prepared to change strategies, tactics, key indicators, and even members of
the stakeholder team as the system evolves. Effectiveness comes from flexibility not rigidity.

**Discussion of the Problem**

A study of international conflicts between 1945 and 1995 identified 18 cases of intractable interstate relationships that produced 75 militarized and violent conflicts which resisted hundreds of attempts at resolution and posed serious threats to regional or international security (Bercovitch, 2005). Indeed, enduring conflicts have been linked to one half of the interstate wars since 1816, with 10 out of 12 of the most severe international wars emerging from protracted destructive relations (Bennett, 1996). The seeming immunity to resolution has led many scholars to label such conflicts *intractable* (cf. Coleman, 2003).

Several lines of research are devoted to conflict intractability. Such labels as deeply-rooted conflict (Burton, 1987), protracted social conflict (Azar, 1986, 1990), moral conflict (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997), and enduring rivalries (Goertz & Diehl, 1993) have been used to depict conflicts of this nature. Kriesberg (2005) stresses three dimensions that distinguish intractable from tractable conflicts: their persistence, destructiveness, and resistance to resolution. Most conflicts don’t begin as intractable, but become so as escalation, negative sentiment, and hostile cognitions and interactions change the quality of the conflict. They can be triggered by a wide variety of factors and events, but often involve such issues as moral and identity differences, high-stakes resources, and/or struggles for power and self-determination (Kriesberg, 2005; Coleman, 2003, 2006). Not surprisingly, these circumstances often lead to incalculable human suffering, including destruction of vital infrastructure, division of families and communities, extreme violence, dislocation, and trauma (see Cairns & Darby, 1998; Coleman, 2000).

**Dynamical-systems Research on Intractable Conflicts.**

In 2006, our international team of scholar-practitioners was funded by the James S. McDonnell Foundation to develop a theory of enduring conflicts from the perspective of complex systems. The project applies the principles and methods of dynamical systems theory to what is arguably the most complex and dynamic of all social phenomena: protracted social conflict. The project is being conducted by a multidisciplinary research team consisting of 1) a specialist in the study of intractable conflict (Peter T. Coleman); 2) two social psychologists with expertise in the application of dynamical systems to cognitive, interpersonal, group, and societal phenomena (Andrzej Nowak and Robin Vallacher); 3) a physicist with expertise in formal descriptions and the modeling of system dynamics (Larry Liebovitch); and 4) a social anthropologist (and practitioner) who specializes in international conflict and genocide prevention (Andrea Bartoli). The grant was awarded to test, validate, and revise a theoretical framework of dynamical system theory from the results of case studies, laboratory experiments, and computer simulations. To date this project has resulted in a variety of scholarly publications and conference presentations. In addition, we are currently conducting an extensive program of research in our labs at Columbia University, Florida Atlantic University, and George Mason University, assessing the dynamics of constructive and destructive processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral attractor dynamics) in protracted conflicts.

**Attractors and the Collapse of Complexity**

Our theory proposes that it is the *collapse* of complexity that promotes intractability in a conflictful relationship. When distinct issues become interlinked and mutually dependent, the likelihood of finding a solution that
satisfies all the issues is correspondingly diminished. In effect, the activation of a single issue activates all the issues. If a border incident occurs between neighboring nations with a history of conflict, for example, there is likely to be a reactivation of all the provocations, perceived injustices, and conflicts of interest in the past. The parties to the conflict thus are likely to respond disproportionately to the magnitude of the instigating issue. Even if the instigating issue is somehow resolved, the activation of other issues will serve to maintain and even deepen the conflict.

The loss of complexity in the perception of issues is apparent at the level of individual functioning. Theory and research have identified factors such as stress, anxiety, and ego involvement that can impair cognitive processes. Under heightened threat to one’s safety, for example, people’s cognitive processes tend to promote overly simplistic, rigid, black-and-white perceptions, thoughts, and judgments (cf. Osgood, 1983). In a study of 50 Polish politicians, for example, Golec & Federico (2004) found that a high level of political thinking—which correlates with a high level of cognitive complexity, integrative complexity, tolerance for ambiguity, and moral development—is associated with a tendency for cooperation and compromise in political conflict. A low level of political thinking, in contrast, is associated with a simple, dualistic view of the conflict and with a competitive and destructive orientation (Conway, Suedfeld, & Tetlock, 2001). An increase in emotional intensity tends to reduce the use of cognitive resources and hence promote a simplified view of the situation that results in a more competitive approach to the conflict. People who score high in cognitive complexity, however, are less vulnerable to the influence of emotions on their orientation toward conflict situations than are those who score low on political thinking.

There is a clear link between the loss of issue complexity and the development of fixed-point attractors. Interpersonal and inter-group relations are typically complex and multi-dimensional, with the various mechanisms operating at different points in time, in different contexts, with respect to different issues, and often in a compensatory manner. The alignment of separate issues into a single dimension, however, establishes positive feedback loops, such that the issues have a mutually reinforcing rather than a compensatory relationship. All events that are open to interpretation are ultimately construed in the same fashion and promote a consistent pattern of behavior vis a vis other people and groups. The common state toward which diverse thoughts and behaviors converge represents a fixed-point attractor for the system. In effect, the attractor “attracts” a wide variety of mental and behavioral states. Even an unambiguous event that runs counter to the attractor can over time be assimilated to the attractor. A peaceful overture by the outgroup, for instance, could be seen as insincere or as a trick if there is a high level of mistrust regarding the outgroup.

This perspective provides a new way to conceptualize and investigate intractable conflict. Conflicts are usually described in terms of their intensity (e.g., amount of violence), but this feature does not capture the issue of intractability. Even conflicts with a low level of intensity can become protracted and resistant to resolution. We propose instead that intractable conflicts evidence strong attractors for negative states and lack attractors for positive states. Knowledge of the attractor landscape of a system—the ensemble of sustainable states for both positive and negative interactions—is thus critical for understanding the progression, transformation, and de-escalation of intractable conflicts. Accordingly, attempts at conflict resolution are likely to fail if they do not work toward the achievement of sustainable positive states. They may result in a temporary ceasefire, but not in long-term co-existence. If no sustainable states exist, the first step at intervention should be directed to
changing the ensemble of sustainable states. Only after such change has occurred can the system be effectively moved to a benign or positive state.

A system may be characterized by multiple attractors, but when the system is at one of them, the others may not be visible to observers, perhaps not even to the participants. These latent attractors may be highly important in the long run, however, because they determine which states are possible for the system when conditions change. By specifying possibilities for a system that have yet to be observed or experienced, the concept of latent attractor goes beyond the traditional notion of equilibrium (e.g., Abraham & Shaw, 1992). Critical changes in a system might not be reflected in the observable state of the system, but rather in the creation or destruction of a latent attractor representing a potential state that is currently invisible to all concerned.

The potential for latent attractors has implications for intractable conflict (Coleman et al., 2006, 2007; Nowak et al., 2007). Such factors as objectification, dehumanization, and stereotyping of the outgroup can promote intractable intergroup conflict (Coleman, 2003; Kriesberg, 2005), for example, but their impact may not be immediately apparent. Instead, they may create a latent attractor to which the system can abruptly switch in response to a provocation that seems relatively minor, even trivial. By the same token, efforts at conflict resolution that seem fruitless in the short run may create a latent positive attractor for inter-group relations, thereby establishing a potential relationship to which the groups can suddenly switch if other conditions permit. A latent positive attractor can promote a rapid de-escalation of conflict, even between groups with a long history of seemingly intractable conflict. This possibility is consistent with recent work on the dynamics of social judgment (cf. Latané & Nowak, 1994). In contexts of high personal importance, thoughts and feelings tend to sort themselves categorically, with each category corresponding to a different value (very positive and very negative). If the person’s judgment changes, it does so in an abrupt, nonlinear, qualitative manner rather than in a slow, linear, and incremental fashion.

Implications of Attractor Dynamics for Resolving Intractable Conflicts

From the perspective of dynamical systems, there are two general strategies for transforming the malignant relationship between parties to a conflict. First, one can attempt to deconstruct the attractor maintaining negative thoughts, feelings, and actions. This does not mean, however, that one should attack the validity or value of parties’ mental and behavioral tendencies directly. To the contrary, research on the dynamics of social influence indicate unequivocally that this frontal approach is destined to backfire, producing strong reactance and a deepening of the negative attractor (Vallacher, Nowak, & Miller, 2003). Effective deconstruction of the attractor can be achieved, however, by focusing attention on specific (lower-level) elements comprising the attractor (Vallacher & Wegner, in press). By isolating specific thoughts and feelings, the system’s complexity is restored. And because of the press for system integration, the parties to the conflict are susceptible to new ideas and plans that restore coherence to their respective mental, affective, and behavioral states. This scenario of deconstruction and emergence has proven successful in a variety of influence domains, and may provide an important new strategy in the resolution of intractable conflict.

The second strategy follows from the distinction between manifest and latent attractors. As noted earlier, conflict and peace are not endpoints of a single dimension but rather often co-exist as separate dimensions. In dynamical terms, the co-existence of malignant and (potential) peaceful possible relations is tantamount to the
co-existence of two attractors constraining the dynamics of the parties to a conflict. Although effort should be devoted to the deconstruction of the negative attractor (in the manner outlined above), attention should also be devoted to strengthening the positive attractor for inter-group relations. There may be little immediate effect of fostering opportunities for positive relations between the groups, but such efforts plant the seed for a possible transformation should conditions change in a way that destabilize existing mental, affective, and behavioral patterns. If such a seed is not planted, it cannot take root even if the negative attractor is somehow discredited or otherwise destabilized. A dynamical system does not change unless it has a new space to occupy. A latent attractor essentially represents a new space for inter-group relations. The issue, in short, is not negativity and positivity per se, but rather the emergence and maintenance of coherence.

These two strategies clearly can (and should) work in tandem. Thus, simultaneous efforts should be devoted to the reverse engineering (deconstruction) of the negative attractor and the creation of a latent attractor for positive relations that can become manifest under conditions of ripeness. Our empirical and computational efforts to date suggest that such a two-pronged strategy may provide the key to transforming conflicts that heretofore seemed intractable.

**Call to Action and Conclusion**

The problems associated with protracted ethnopolitical conflicts are currently salient as special representatives, diplomats, the US Military, the C.I.A. and policy makers work to address the volatile situations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Israel-Palestine, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, the Republic of Congo, and other states and regions struggling with ongoing violence and instability. This work is complex, dangerous, daunting and critically important, and should benefit from any available models or tools at their disposal. The research findings from our labs, and from those of others working in complexity science, are beginning to offer promising insights and tools for constructive approaches to these intractable problems. This work holds great potential, but must go further.

What is required at this stage is an investment in a concerted effort to bring together scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers from a variety of disciplines to work to understand such conflicts beyond the level of case-based descriptions, to get at the essence of their underlying dynamics. This level of understanding is critical for bringing about fundamental change in such “frozen” systems of conflict. Collaborative, multidisciplinary work of this nature requires a common language or integrative platform to facilitate communication and coordination across the legendary disciplinary and theory-practice divides. Dynamical-systems theory, a scientific paradigm employed from cellular research to astrophysics, provides such a platform.

**About the Authors**

This paper was written by Dr. Peter T. Coleman, PhD, Director of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution and Associate Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Coleman was the first recipient of the Early Career Award from the American Psychological Association, Division 48: Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence, co-edits *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (2000; 2006), and has authored over fifty journal articles and chapters; Dr. Robin R. Vallacher, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Florida Atlantic University and Research Affiliate at the Center for Complex Systems, Warsaw University. Dr. Vallacher has published 5 books and uses experimentation and computer simulations (cellular automata, attractor neural networks, coupled dynamical...
systems) to investigate the dynamism and complexity associated with such phenomena as self-regulation, social judgment, close relations, inter-group conflict, and the emergence of personality from social interaction; Dr. Andrzej Nowak, PhD is Professor of Psychology at the Warsaw School for Social Psychology, where he is Director of the Institute of Social Psychology of Informatics and Communications. He is also Professor of Psychology at University of Warsaw, where he directs the Center for Complex Systems at Institute for Social Studies, and Associate Professor of Psychology, Florida Atlantic University. Dr. Nowak has published five books, and his primary focus is on the dynamical approach to social psychology; Dr. Andrea Bartoli, PhD is currently Director of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason and was the founding director of the Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University. He is the coeditor of Somalia, Rawanda, and Beyond: The Role of International Media in Wars and International Crisis (Italian Academy for Advanced Studies 1995). Dr. Larry Liebovitch, PhD is a Professor at Florida Atlantic University in the Center for Complex Systems and Brain Sciences, the Center for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and the Departments of Psychology and Biomedical Science. Over the last 25 years he has used complex systems, including fractals, chaos, neural networks, and other nonlinear methods to study molecular, cellular, physiological and psychological systems which have provided insights into the structure and motion of ion channel proteins in the cell membrane, the timing of heart attacks, the spread of electronic and biological infections, the spatial pattern of artifacts found in archeological sites, the network of gene regulation mediated by protein transcription factors, and mathematical models of the conflict between people.

About the ICCCR

The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR) at Teachers College, Columbia University is an innovative center committed to developing knowledge and practice to promote constructive conflict resolution, effective cooperation, and social justice. We partner with individuals, groups, organizations, and communities to learn to resolve conflicts constructively so they may develop just and peaceful relationships. We work with sensitivity to cultural differences and emphasize the links between theory, research, and practice. More information at:

International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution
Teachers College, Columbia University
Box 53, 525 W 120th Street
New York, New York 10027-6696
Location: I.C.C.C.R., Box 53, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027
Phone: (212) 678-3402
Email: ICCRDB@tc.edu

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