

STRATEGIES OF DE-ESCALATION IN REGIONAL CONFLICT

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Louis Kriesberg began his presentation with a review of his work on social conflict and noted that de-escalation appeared to be a neglected area of study. In a brief presentation, three conditions relevant to mediation were put forward: international context, domestic conditions, and adversarial relations. In the international context, three considerations were identified: how does the region fit in the sphere of other powers; how is a particular conflict interrelated with other conflicts (over time and space); and what is the interplay and impact of respective networks of enemies and allies. In addressing the domestic conditions relevant to mediation, Kriesberg warned of the dangers of reifying the state. He argued that the domestic constituency has its own internal dynamics separate from the international environment and few domestic changes are in response to external stimuli. The final condition of adversarial relations included consideration of how adversaries relate to each other and who should be included in a regime--as such, the analytical boundaries of a regime are ambiguous.

Kriesberg then turned to de-escalation strategies. It was argued that any strategy must combine three major components. First, careful consideration must be given to the determination of the major parties in an attempt at settlement. Those parties willing and able to disrupt an agreement were argued to be important inclusions in any de-escalation strategy. Second, the role of inducements must be appreciated and calibrated to suit the situation. It was observed that the workshop had tended to think in terms of force and coercion. However, we must include consideration of the possible benefits that people may see to a settlement. Third, issues must be carefully considered to ascertain the sequence