

Cambridge University Press  
0521791162 - Using Conflict Theory  
Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Using Conflict Theory

Human conflict – from family feuds, to labor strikes, to international warfare – is an ever present and universal social problem, and the methods to manage it are a challenge for everyone, from average citizens to policy makers and social theorists. *Using Conflict Theory* will educate students about how, under what conditions, and why conflict erupts, and how it can be managed. It is a unique classroom book blending theory and practical application and for students the first to bridge the science of social theory and the art of practice.

The authors extract from classical sociological theory (Marx, Dahrendorf, Weber, Durkheim, and Parsons) and interpret for the student how these theoretical perspectives have contributed to understanding social conflict (its sources, the causes of escalation and deescalation of violence, the negotiations process). The perspectives of contemporary theorists (such as Randall Collins, James Coleman, Joseph Himes, and Hubert Blalock) are also brought to bear on these questions.

Sections on theory are followed by sections applying the theory to actual cases of social conflict, such as the American civil rights movement of the 1960s and the more recent conflict in Bosnia. The cases in these chapters and the contemporary examples that appear throughout the book can be used and easily adapted for discussion in the classroom or community setting. The book features useful, simple graphs, explaining formal theories of conflict, as well as strategies and methods to illustrate how theory is used by practitioners in negotiation and mediation.

The book is designed for classroom use in sociology, politics, international relations, peace studies, and other courses dealing with conflict, change, and social justice. Students will learn to understand conflict dynamics and to develop their own informed idea of how to deal constructively with any conflict they might have to analyze or face in real life.

Otomar J. Bartos is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado. His publications dealing with conflict include *Process and Outcome of Negotiations*.

Paul Wehr is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he cofounded the Conflict Research Consortium and heads the Peace and Conflict Studies program. He is the author of *Conflict Regulation*.

Cambridge University Press  
0521791162 - Using Conflict Theory  
Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# Using Conflict Theory

Otomar J. Bartos  
*University of Colorado at Boulder*  
Paul Wehr  
*University of Colorado at Boulder*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 0521791162 - Using Conflict Theory  
 Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Otomar J. Bartos Paul Wehr 2002

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
 no reproduction of any part may take place without  
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2002

Printed in the United States of America

*Typeface* ITC New Baskerville 10/13 pt      *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [T<sub>B</sub>]

*A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

Bartos, Otomar J.

Using conflict theory / Otomar J. Bartos, Paul Wehr.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-79116-2 – ISBN 0-521-79446-3 (pbk.)

1. Social conflict. 2. Social sciences – Philosophy. I. Wehr, Paul  
 Ernest, 1937– II. Title.

HM1121 .B37 2001      2001043151  
 303.6 – dc21

ISBN 0 521 79116 2 hardback

ISBN 0 521 79446 3 paperback

Cambridge University Press  
0521791162 - Using Conflict Theory  
Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

To Linnycheck  
– *O.J.B.*

To Christiane  
– *P.W.*

# Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	<i>page</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>		xi
<b>1</b> Introduction		1
The Development of Conflict Knowledge		1
Dealing with Conflict Economically and Effectively		6
Theorizing about Conflict		7
Plan of the Book		10
<b>2</b> Understanding Conflict		12
What Is a Conflict?		12
Incompatible Goals		14
Hostility		19
Conflict Action		22
Conclusions		27
<b>3</b> Development of Incompatible Goals		29
Contested Resources		29
Incompatible Roles		37
Incompatible Values		41
Conclusions		47
<b>4</b> Application to the Civil Rights Struggle		50
The African American Struggle for Equality		50
Worldwide Influence of the Struggle		53
Theoretical Analysis		55
		<b>vii</b>

	Conclusions	62
	Letting Theory Inform Action	63
<b>5</b>	Emergence of Overt Conflicts	70
	Conflict Solidarity	70
	Conflict Resources	78
	Typical Beginnings	79
	Conclusions	80
	Application to Interpersonal Conflicts	82
<b>6</b>	Application to a University Conflict	83
	Goal Incompatibility	83
	Emergence of Overt Conflict	88
	Making Conflict Emergence Productive	93
<b>7</b>	Escalation and Deescalation	98
	Main Ingredients of Escalation	98
	A Model of Escalation	103
	Escalation Due to Changing Conditions	110
	Deescalation Due to Changing Conditions	113
	Conclusions	117
	The Civil Rights Struggle Revisited	119
<b>8</b>	Application to Conflict in Bosnia	122
	The Bosnian Conflict	122
	Theoretical Analysis	134
	The Bosnian Conflict Reconsidered	143
<b>9</b>	Making Conflict Work Economically	148
	Preventing Serious Conflict	148
	Moving toward Cooperation	157
	Controlling Escalation	162
	Conclusions	171
<b>10</b>	Understanding and Managing Conflicts	174
	Understanding Conflicts	174
	Becoming a Skilled Conflict Actor	180
	Routes to Careers	185
	<i>Appendix: Prelude to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia</i>	188
	<i>Notes</i>	196
	<i>References</i>	205
	<i>Index</i>	213

## Figures and Tables

### Figures

1.1	A Causal Proposition	<i>page 8</i>
1.2	A Theory of Conflict Behavior	10
2.1	Coerciveness of Conflict Action	27
3.1	Possible Causes of Goal Incompatibility	30
3.2	Causes of Incompatible Goals	48
4.1	Main Causes of Goal Incompatibility in the Civil Rights Conflict	63
5.1	Homans's Theory of Free Communication	71
5.2	Causes That Lead to Open Conflicts	81
6.1	Causes of Incompatible Goals in the University Conflict	87
6.2	Causes of Conflict Action by Chicano Sociologists	93
7.1	Escalating toward an Equilibrium	107
7.2	Party's Strong Tendency to Escalate Causes Opponent to Escalate As Well	108
7.3	When Party Starts Deescalating, Opponent Follows	110
7.4	Original Causes That Contribute to Escalation	117
7.5	Feedbacks Leading to Escalation	118
7.6	Feedbacks Leading to Deescalation	119
8.1	Map of Former Yugoslavia	124

<b>8.2</b>	Serb Escalation and Deescalation during the Bosnian Conflict	130
<b>8.3</b>	Main Reasons for Goal Incompatibility in the Greater Serb–Bosnian Conflict	136
<b>8.4</b>	Reasons for the Greater Serb Attack	137
<b>8.5</b>	Reasons for Early Serb Escalation	142
<b>8.6</b>	Feedbacks Amplifying Serb Escalation	143
<b>8.7</b>	Feedbacks Leading to Serb Deescalation	144
<b>10.1</b>	Coerciveness of Conflict Action	175
<b>10.2</b>	Conflict Careers Map	183

### Tables

<b>2.1</b>	Incompatible Interests of Wife and Husband	15
<b>2.2</b>	Incompatible and Compatible Goals of Workers and Managers	16
<b>2.3</b>	An Example of a Zero-Sum Conflict	17
<b>2.4</b>	A Revised Version of a Husband-Wife Conflict	24
<b>3.1</b>	Values of Communities and Industrial Systems	46
<b>10.1</b>	Compatible and Incompatible Goals of Workers and Managers	176
<b>10.2</b>	Some Theory-Based Methods	181
<b>10.3</b>	Specialized Training: Where Conflict Professionals Learn	184
<b>10.4</b>	Practice Domains: Where Conflict Professionals Work	186



## Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK is a result of years of teaching and research. Many thanks are due our students whose comments and ideas helped us separate the important from the trivial, the certain from the dubious. We also thank the University of Colorado for a facilitating grant, our colleagues, the Department of Sociology, and Nancy Mann, Senior Instructor with the Editing Service of University of Colorado's Writing Program, for her editorial work on our manuscript. We owe much to our spouses for their encouragement and support. Finally, we are indebted to each other for patience, trust, and good humor, all essential for conflict moderation and productive behavior.