

Centre for Resolution of International Conflicts, CRIC, January 2013

Summary

The prevention and resolution of violent conflicts can be promoted by developing clear analytical tools and techniques for engagement, particularly targeted at two phases of conflict: the role of the past in protracted conflicts and third party possibilities for breaking spirals of escalation. A defining mark for the CRIC project will be an ambition to develop a synthesised theoretical understanding of conflict, particularly through a distinct conceptualisation of the social dynamics of emotions. The microsociology of emotions enables a renewed grasp of the threshold where conflicts turn violent. Contrary to common belief, violence is actually 'difficult', and the limited number of pathways around the barrier of so-called 'confrontational tension/fear' allows targeted efforts to prevent a conflict from turning violent (or if not fully so, to channel it through the situations known to produce the kind of violence that is least atrocious and escalatory). To make conflict expertise relevant in practice, the sociology of knowledge will be mobilised to understand why different bodies of expertise are followed or ignored by practitioners. The evolving nature of authoritative knowledge creates new conditions for interaction between scholarship, the public, decision makers and parties to a conflict. Thus CRIC will research four aspects of conflict resolution: 1) development of conflict theory, 2) collective memory in protracted conflicts, 3) third party options during escalation of conflict and 4) sociology of expertise. Regionally, it will concentrate on the Levant and the Horn of Africa in order to systematically explore potential cross-fertilisation of lessons and comparative insights. Concrete organisational formats for joint development of solutions by scholars and practitioners will be tested. Through research and innovation, CRIC will enable interested parties – governmental and non-governmental - to better contribute to peaceful resolution of international conflicts.