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# ON THE BLESSINGS THAT CHAOS BRINGS: A CLOSER LOOK AT CONFLICT THROUGH THE LENS OF CHAOS THEORY

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## Abstract

This paper's main argument is that chaos and conflict serve the vital mutual purpose of awakening motivating forces that rattle the status quo. We explore chaos theory's central assertion that disorder is a prerequisite for system renewal, and that chaos propels systems to higher levels of complex functioning through self-organization. We argue that the notion of transformation being proposed by several theories of conflict follows in the same vein. At the core of such theories is the belief that conflict creates the necessary tension that facilitates the process of unfreezing from a current state that one seeks to change. And, that introducing instability in stable lasting conflicts jolts the system, and releases motivation for change. We focus primarily on two conflict theories – conflict dynamic systems perspective, and on constructive controversy theory. Both assert that creating deliberate conceptual conflict results in disequilibrium and raises uncertainty about the correctness of a position and its rationale. Being a necessary condition that leads to novel solutions, the argument is that self-renewing organizations deliberately creates some degree of chaos and conflict through internal shocks that question mainstream assumptions and beliefs, thereby introducing a sense of perceived instability that ultimately leads to change. This paper explores parallels between chaos theory and several conflict models; we propose key properties that each approach shares to a varying degree with theory of chaos. In doing so, we focus on chaotic and conflict states, and the way they can be leveraged for producing positive outcomes for individuals and organizations. We conclude with a set of recommendations and practical implications for the management of chaos and conflict states.

## Introduction

This paper views chaos and conflict as two distinctive but intertwined constructs that carry seeds for change. A state of chaos is likely to trigger conflict, while conflict may contain some degree of chaos. And, both offer opportunities for change by challenging the status quo and facilitating innovation (Coleman, 2014; Marcus, 2014). Events surrounding COVID-19 can serve as an example in support of this view. The pandemic brought about much chaos and conflict in its path, throwing the global economy into a state of chaos and introducing disruption and conflict into the working of governments, companies, and families (Lin & Xiao, 2020, April 24). Yet, the unfolding pandemic also created a sense of urgency for change and innovation (Remuzzi and Remuzzi, 2020). A few manifestations of such a change are the enhanced coordination between governmental bodies for delivery of large scale testing, the innovative approaches adopted by

pharma companies in search for a cure, and the collaboration between private and public sectors for the manufacturing of respirators (Forero & Perez, 2020, April 24).

Chaos theory suggests that when the organization is in the chaotic domain, new stabilities emerge that make a chaotic state a necessary ingredient for ensuring a continuous change and evolvement. Such a state encourages some degree of creative conflicts amongst the system's parts. Challenging and questioning current practices and processes is vital for change and renewal. This line of thinking is aligned with several theories of conflict such as the theory of constructive controversy (Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold, 2014), and with conflict dynamic systems perspective (Coleman, 2014). The common assertion is that chaos and conflict serve the vital mutual purpose of awakening motivating forces that rattle the status quo. Indeed, chaos theory's notion that disorder is a prerequisite for system renewal, and that chaos propels systems to higher levels of complex functioning through self-organization, resembles the notion of transformation being proposed by those very theories of conflict.

For instance, conflict related approaches that are proposed by Marcus (2014) and Coleman (2014) appear to be congruent with this view. Applying Lewin's model of change, Marcus (2014) argues that conflict creates the necessary tension that facilitates the process of unfreezing from a current state that one seeks to change. This initial step is also aligned with Coleman's notion of introducing instability in long-lasting conflicts to jolt the system, and release motivation for change (Coleman, 2014). Further support for the notion of transformation through change is proposed by another conflict model - constructive controversy theory (Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold, 2014). The theory finds merit in creating a deliberate conceptual conflict, resulting in disequilibrium, and raising uncertainty about the correctness of a position and its rationale as a necessary condition that leads to novel solutions, and to other related positive outcomes. In other words, a self-renewing organization deliberately creates some degree of chaos and conflict through internal shocks that question mainstream assumptions and beliefs, thereby introducing a sense of vulnerability and perceived instability that lead to change. And, while the need for stability is essential for a strategy to take root, jolting the organization periodically and for brief periods ensures necessary corrections for continuous evolvement.

Our paper explores parallels between chaos theory and several conflict models with a focus on chaotic and conflict states, and the way they can be leveraged for producing positive outcomes for individuals and organizations. Specifically, we offer a few observations concerning chaos theory's properties, as well as some insight on chaos, conflict, and renewal. In addition, we touch briefly on three conflict resolution approaches - conflict dynamic systems perspective, constructive controversy theory, and the problem solving-decision making model (PSDM) - and explore properties that each approach shares to a varying degree with theory of chaos. We conclude with a set of practical recommendations and implications for the management of chaos and conflict states.

## Chaos Theory: Definition and Purpose

Chaos is a byproduct of turbulent environments characterized by turmoil and instability. Consider the turmoil generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the chaos that ensued affecting governments' responses, supply chains, and disruptions of daily life as a vivid example. Chaos can also be the result of conflicting internal organizational dynamics such as the continuous tension between contradictory visions of management - rational and mechanistic, and unpredictable and disorderly. Reconciling these conflicting visions is essential given that some

management functions, exploitative in nature, like coordination and control seek order and stability, while other dynamic processes that are explorative in nature, such as individual initiative, experimentation, and innovation trigger disruption and drive the organization toward instability (Malka, 2020). The combined effect of these forces, whether internal or external, is likely to create complexity and lead to a chaotic state. Unless properly leveraged, such forces could be taxing to organizations, and particularly so in turbulent environments.

Under turbulent conditions, the empirical evidence suggests organizations that embraced chaos and complexity in their external environment and internal processes outperformed their competitors (Cvetek, 2008; Mason, 2009; Theodoridis & Bennison, 2009; Nguyen & Kock, 2011). One emerging conclusion is that traditional, bureaucratic, mechanistic management approaches may be suitable for stable environments, but they prove ineffective and failing in turbulent times. At the heart of such a failure is the fixation managers have with regularity, linearity, and predictability, and hence their difficulties in properly anticipating and managing unpredictable events.

Unlike the classical scientific focus on regularity and predictability, chaos theory focuses on randomness and unpredictability. In a sense, chaos theory strives for finding order in apparent disorder (Gleick, 2008; Lartey, 2020a). As such, chaos theory offers managers valuable insight on how to confront unpredictability in their environment and anticipate future challenges, thereby reducing the surprise factor of events in the external environment (Guastello, 2008; Haynes, 2007; Lartey, 2020a; Meek, 2010; Sanial, 2015).

Chaos theory is defined as "a qualitative study of unstable aperiodic behavior in deterministic non-linear dynamical systems" (Kellert, 1993). A system is dynamic if its behavior changes with time. Moreover, it is deterministic if the variables describing it relate to each other in a non-probable way. Thus, the theory focuses on non-linear systems that do not follow predictable and repeatable pathways. Such systems enjoy periods of relative stability disrupted by sudden change that triggers unexpected new patterns of behavior. This cycle is reminiscent of ideas proposed by Mintzberg in his seminal work on quantum theory of change (Mintzberg, 1987; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Being a key property of chaos theory, the notion of systems transformation from one state of dynamic change to another takes place through a bifurcation process, whereby long periods of stability are punctuated by short periods of instability that usher in necessary adjustments in organizations' strategy and operations.

## Chaos Theory: Properties and Building Blocks

Organizations are exposed to forces of stability and forces of instability which push them toward potential chaos. Organizations in a chaotic domain are likely to exhibit the qualitative properties of chaotic systems. Several of these properties are depicted in Table 1. Key among them are dependence on initial conditions, bifurcation, strange attractors, and self-organization.

*Initial conditions* provide the impetus for activities and behavior of a system. Systems are sensitive to changes that occur in their initial conditions. Chaos theory asserts that slight changes in initial conditions may, through positive feedback, have a large effect on outcomes within an organization (Guastello, 2008). This process is also referred to as the Butterfly Effect following Lorenz seminal work on weather related forecasting (Lorenz, 1963). Lorenz, while analyzing weather patterns, discovered that small differences in weather's initial state could produce more severe weather conditions. This sensitivity to initial condition is a key attribute of chaos theory.

Initial conditions may encompass organizational structures, and processes, as well as relationships and behaviors amongst actors.

*Table 1. Chaos Theory: Key Building Blocks.*

| Domain of Interaction | Scope of influence encompassing all possible behavioral consequences. |
|---|---|
| Initial Conditions | Initial state of both organization and actors at the start of a period of change. |
| Strange Attractors | Patterns of behavior of systems and actors. |
| Events and Choices | Internal and external incidents – planned or emergent – that change information and actors' interactions by amplifying initial conditions through feedback loops. |
| Edge of Chaos | Non-equilibrium points at which critical factors concerning systems and actors are poised to force a shift to a strange new attractor. |
| Bifurcation | A point where qualitative change between two states occurs leading to irreversible organizational transformation. |
| Iteration | A cycle of repeating behavior and interaction of strange attractors that provides positive feedback to amplify initial conditions. |
| Connectivity | Relationship network that supports knowledge flow and feedback. |

Changes that take place in response to a chaotic state are referred to as *bifurcations*. A bifurcation point indicates a breakdown in the equilibrium of a system. An abrupt disruption in the structure and direction of a system triggered by an initiated action, a crisis, or a catastrophe (Adams & Stewart, 2015; Lartey, 2020b; Remuzzi and Remuzzi, 2020; Vanderford, 2007). This central property of chaos theory suggests that a bifurcation involves a qualitative change in the behavior of a dynamic system that nears or reaches the edge of chaos, and results in a new alternative state. While such a new state is irreversible per chaos theory, the next bifurcation can result in a shift back to a previous behavioral pattern, yet that pattern may not be the same as the previous occurrence.

*Strange attractors* are organizing agents that promote stability and rein in a system's behavior. Their role is to assist with the re-emergence of new order (Beabout, Carr-Chellman & Alkandari, 2008). Strange attractors' behavior may change at any time and may disrupt the organization's stability by moving the behavior to a new strange attractor. And finally, *self-organization*, the most promising property of chaos theory, is the consequence of a bifurcation whereby disruption gives way to system's renewal and a new structure that emerges from a chaotic state.

Referring again to COVID-19, we can view the pandemic evolution and ensuing dynamic processes and outcomes through the prism of key features of chaos theory. *Initial conditions* are critical in understanding how a microscopic virus spread from one initial person to infect millions and cause colossal damage to global economies. The chaotic state that ensued led communities, cities, and central governments to introduce radical changes, or *bifurcations,* primarily in daily practices and behaviors.  Such changes indicate a breakdown in the equilibrium of entire systems affecting the economy, health services, and social behaviors. The abrupt disruption caused by the COVID catastrophe has forced massive structural and procedural adjustments. Leading such efforts are *strange attractors,* change agents in the form of COVID taskforces. In the U.S., taskforces were headed at the federal level by the Vice President, and at

state level by the governors. These organizing agents' main task was to introduce a measure of stability and predictability in U.S. government and state operations, leading to *self-organization,* that ultimately culminates in a new order. The new order manifests itself in promising new vaccines, new governmental structures and capabilities, and replenishing inventories as the U.S. continues to emerge from the chaotic state. This continuous self-organization phase is well reflected in private-public partnerships, innovation in medical testing, pharmaceutical alliances, revised supply chains, and improved coordination between federal and state governments.

Thus, an analysis using chaos theory, seeks to identify events involving decision choices, relationship shifts, and drivers of behaviors towards strange attractors. Taken together, chaos theory's properties shed light on paradoxical dynamics characteristic of chaotic circumstances, the unpredictability and disorder of a chaotic state, and the re-organization and renewal that emerges in the aftermath of a chaotic event.

Such a cycle is well documented in numerous works that investigated large scale disasters such as the events of September 11, and particularly events associated with Hurricane Katrina (Adams & Stewart, 2015; Beabout, Carr-Chellman & Alkandari, 2008; Vanderford, 2007). One emerging notion shared by these studies is that even in a state of chaos, whether by design or by default, organizations can re-organize, transform, and rebuild.

## Chaos and Conflict

Guastello (2008) provides perhaps one of the most vivid images of the link between chaos and conflict using oscillators, pendula and what is known as the three-body problem. In doing so, he highlights pathways that link attractors with unpredictability, and bifurcation with self-organization. All, of course, are key properties of chaos theory with implied relevance to conflict.

Guastello proposes three basic pathways for a system to experience conflict and turn chaotic. One way follows the application of what is referred to as the three-body problem. Consider an attractor field with three attractors each with a different strength representing different positions on a given issue. The probability for a conflict occurs when a new position enters the field. It is then pulled in different and unpredictable directions and is likely to attract attention from at least two directions. Thus, a bilateral agreement, for instance, may not resolve a conflict if there are three or more interest groups. Furthermore, the odds of parties revising their positions in favor of a solution often increases as the number of interest groups increases. And, chaos is just about guaranteed in the case of four parties with four different positions (Guastello, 2008).

Guastello's first pathway can be best illustrated by the multi-lateral nuclear agreement between world superpowers and Iran. There were multiple parties to the agreement – The U.S., Russia, France, UK, Germany, China, and Iran - representing seven attractors with varying strength led by the U.S. as the dominant power. Each country had its own interests and goals that were not compatible with those of other parties; goals ranged from allowing Iran to continue its nuclear effort under supervision, to curtailing its ability altogether. It took years to bridge the multilateral conflicting positions and negotiate a time-bounded temporary agreement that masked the conflict rather than resolved it. The twists and turns that were characteristic of the lengthy negotiation process reflected the chaotic state steaming from shifting interests and positions, and an overall sense of uncertainty and risk. As Guastello asserted, the odds of parties revising their positions in favor of a solution often increases as the number of interest groups increases. Chaos abounded with seven parties and varying positions that required an exhausting negotiation

process, and that necessitated offering various inducements to Iran. An alternative in the form of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Iran existed, but as suggested by Guastello, a bilateral agreement would have not been able to resolve the conflict given the large number of interest groups involved. There were five other parties with self-serving competing interests, in addition to the U.S. and Iran, with each one eying a larger piece of the pie: Iranian oil and investment opportunities for their own companies.

A second pathway involves what Guastello calls coupled oscillators. Using a vivid image of a set of three pendula, when the first pendulum oscillates, the middle one moves faster with a motion that is complex, while the third pendulum swings chaotically. Now, consider for example, a network of three organizations that are part of the same supply chain. If one organization, represented by the first pendulum, is dominant and exerts more power than the other two organizations, the latter may experience some level of entropy. Moreover, the supplier that is represented by the third pendulum, is more likely to be negatively affected by the unpredictable chaotic motion it finds itself in. This organization may experience little control over its environment within the supply chain coupled with a heightened level of uncertainty and risk.

Here too, the Iran nuclear agreement can be used to illustrate the coupled oscillators and pendula as a second pathway to chaos and conflict. With Russia and China willing to cooperate but reluctant to impose a settlement that antagonized the Iranians, it was left to the U.S. to do the heavy lifting with the tacit support of the European powers. The U.S. is the dominant power, thus representing the first pendulum, the Europeans represented the second pendulum, and Iran facing the world powers represented the third pendulum. The U.S. forced the nuclear issue to the forefront by imposing severe economic sanctions on Iran, hence pressuring all parties to the negotiation table. Its pendulum, using Guastello's image, oscillated forcefully in one direction propelling the European pendulum to move forward faster toward the negotiation table. Iran, represented by the third pendulum and exposed to crippling sanctions, experienced a heightened level of entropy, and was negatively affected by the unpredictable chaotic motion it finds itself in when facing what it perceived as a unified front of world powers against its nuclear aspirations. It is likely to assume that the Iranian regime felt a significant amount of uncertainty and risk that ultimately propelled it to accept an agreement.

A third pathway to chaos, suggests Guastello, involves a bifurcation mechanism and a control parameter capable of raising a system's level of entropy that is associated with unpredictability and risk. Consider for instance, a system that is pressured to change in the face of new market dynamics and mounting competition. As the pressure for change increases, the system will tend to oscillate rather than stay stable. Further pressure turns the oscillations more complex, shifting among multitude of behavioral patterns that are more chaotic. For clarification, the concept of bifurcation asserts that a party or a system is initially stable, but as pressure to change increases, the system will tend to oscillate between its old pattern of behavior and a new one. Further pressure overcomes the system's control parameter and leads to chaos with workflow and communication becoming more complex and inconsistent. At this phase, the system tends to be self-organized and regain stability.

Using the Iran nuclear agreement to illustrate Guastello's third pathway, the current turn of events triggered by the U.S. pulling out of the agreement, brings the relationships of the world powers with Iran to a boiling point and sharpens the conflict between Iran and the U.S. The current economic pressure that the U.S. exerts on Iran, as it seeks to revise the nuclear agreement's terms, is so crippling that it forces the Iranian's economic and political systems to

oscillate rather than stay stable, and results in shifting behaviors among regime actors and the populace. Such behaviors are reflected in Iran's widespread civil demonstrations, as well as in the conflicting views expressed by the radical versus moderate ruling camps. Iran today appears restive and in a chaotic state. Further pressure from the European powers may force the system to oscillate between its old belligerent behavior and a new one that is more moderate. In the meantime, as one can observe, it is possible that the additional U.S. sanctions imposed recently on Iran may overcome Iran's internal "control parameter," thus resulting in more chaos and inconsistent communications and messages. As chaos theory suggests, such a chaotic state may ultimately lead to a positive change, self-organization, and transformation.

   Guastello's pathways suggest that chaos and conflict are intertwined with change, and thus are an integral part of organizations' existence. They shape and are shaped by market dynamics and by a multitude of intra-party interactions. One should consider present day organizations' exposure to numerous stakeholders, extensive internal interactions, and the scale of exchanges taking place in their external ecosystem. Tackling adequately future challenges will depend on organizations ability to react properly to outside pressure, on the adequacy of internal processes for mitigating risks and associated costs, on the organization's ability to manage chaos and conflict, and on assuredly regaining stability.

## Conflict Theories and Chaos

Three conflict theories with varying degrees of shared properties with chaos theory are of interest and are briefly discussed: Conflict dynamic systems perspective (Coleman, 2014), constructive controversy (Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold, 2014), and the PSDM model (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2014). We limit our commentary to the very essence of each theory by focusing only on those aspects that are relevant to the thrust of our paper.

### Conflict Dynamic Systems Perspective

   Conflict dynamic systems perspective, also referred to as dynamical systems theory, is one approach that offers insight into systems' change and resistance to change, and by extension, to the study of conflict as well (Coleman, 2011; Vallacher, Nowak, Coleman, Bui-Wrzosinska, Leibovitch, Kugler, and Bartoli, 2013). Coleman (2014) views conflict as being largely about change, a view that is in line with Marcus' (2014) argument that change triggers conflict more often than not, and with his assertion that conflict serves the vital purpose of awakening motivating forces that shake the status quo. Exploring the persistence of long-term conflict, Coleman (2014) utilized conflict dynamic systems perspective for investigation of non-linear progression of conflict, and particularly intractable conflict. He likened deeply rooted conflict to epidemic; it grows slowly at first but quickly develops and spread exponentially, turning into a massive event of great magnitude. This characteristic is reminiscent of the butterfly effect, a key attribute of chaos theory. Both approaches refer to this process as a non-linear change.

   Building on unique properties of conflict dynamic systems, Coleman charts a path for the dynamic process that ensues as conflict develops. Accordingly, "interrelated problems begin to collapse together and feed each other through reinforcing feedback loops, which eventually cross a threshold and become self-organizing…. these conflict systems become attractors. Strong, coherent patterns that draw people in and resist change." (Coleman, 2014, p.724). It appears that like the vital role that attractors play within a chaotic context, conflict related attractors serve a

socio-psychological purpose. They support a coherent view of conflict, its history, legitimacy, and inter-intra relationships that exist between the parties, and they provide some measure of stability for action by enabling parties to promptly respond as circumstances change. Reflecting on attractors' vital role, Coleman (2014) proposes that deep conflict, particularly an intractable one, is governed by strong attractors for negative dynamics and weak attractors for positive dynamics. Being cognizant of the attractors' landscape, whether positive or negative, is thus important. And, as vital is the awareness of initial conditions that exist between the parties to the conflict. For instance, isolate issues that coalesce together, have the capacity to create a chain reaction whereby a single issue triggers all other issues, thus further exacerbating the conflict. Under such an escalation, finding an acceptable solution that encompasses all issues is less likely even if the triggering issue is addressed.

Applying attributes of conflict dynamic systems to conflict resolution, Coleman proposes to leverage instability as an opening act, embrace complexity, be cognizant of initial conditions, seek meek power as conflict is circumvent, leverage visible and invisible attractors, and re-stabilize the parties' interactions and course of action through feedback and adaptation.

**Theory of Constructive Controversy**

Constructive controversy views a deliberate discourse that involves a thorough examination of the pros and cons of critical actions as vital and necessary. Such examinations are designed to synthesize novel solutions as a product of creative decision making (Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold, 2014). Johnson, et al., suggest that "engaging in the constructive controversy procedure skillfully provides an example of how conflict creates positive outcomes." (p.102). For instance, constructive controversy theory suggests that a position and its rationale be challenged by opposing views, thus resulting in a conceptual conflict, disequilibrium, and uncertainty about the correctness of the position and rationale. This process generates a healthy dose of epistemic curiosity that in turn triggers active searches for new information and additional perspectives. The process culminates in synthesis and integration of ideas that produce a superior joint reasoned judgement encompassing the multitude of expressed views of all the participants (Johnson, et al., 2014).

Unlike chaos theory's view of disorder and randomness, this advocacy-based inquiry procedure is orderly and rational and yields some valuable benefits according to Johnson, et al., (2014). For one, it leads to higher quality decisions and solutions to complex problems. In addition, controversy is conducive to a more frequent use of higher-level reasoning strategies and involvement in controversy, often tends to result in attitude and position change.

**The PSDM Model**

In its core, the problem solving and decision making (PSDM) model, emphasizes a rational approach to cooperative conflict resolution (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2014). While rationality and linearity stand contrary to chaos theory's core idea and attributes, they do stand at the heart of the PSDM model. Being cognizant of decision-making biases that interfere with rational thinking is important. Among such biases, Weitzman and Weitzman (2014) list irrational escalation of commitment to an initial course of action; assuming a zero-sum-game approach; basing judgement on irrelevant information; and, viewing the conflict in negative terms thus emphasizing losses rather than gains.

Being aware of the negative effects of those potential biases, PSDM aims at minimizing them by employing a deliberate multi-step linear process – a four-phased problem solving and decision-making process. Weitzman and Weitzman (2014) suggest that it should be viewed as a foundation for a broader conflict resolution process. The model's phases are: the diagnosis of the conflict; identification of alternative solutions; evaluation and selection of a mutually acceptable solution; and a commitment to, and implementation of the decision.

Conditions that encourage problem solving and persuasion strategies are shaped by a psychological climate characterized by cohesion, fairness, recognition of success, and openness to innovation (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2014). Being cognizant of such conditions is important, but so is the mastery of problem-solving techniques such as expanding the pie, logrolling, and bridging. The authors explain that pie expansion entails creating more of a resource to be divided, while logrolling involves conceding on issues that each party considers less important for the purpose of creating good will. And, bridging involves creating new options to meet critical interests. In a word, collaboration and cooperation are likely to help overcome bias, and utilizing one or more of the mentioned techniques helps in reaching a win-win outcome.

Shelton and Darling (2004) contend that reaching a win-win outcome is difficult to achieve through a linear process, given that conflict resolution is a paradoxical process, and given that each party seeks a solution that may initially appear to be diametrically contrary to the other. Still, a win-win resolution demands the ability to overcome such divergent positions, making the adoption of a joint problem-solving and decision-making approach, as proposed by PSDM and theory of constructive controversy, an irreplaceable and a necessary option.

## Chaos and Conflict Theories: Shared Attributes

By sharpening the similarities and differences between the mentioned theories of conflict and chaos, we hope to gain a better understanding of shared aspects and establish a foundation in support of practical implications for managers and conflict resolution practitioners. We attempted to capture our key arguments in Tables 2 and 3. Specifically, Table 2 depicts areas of congruency within and across the reviewed theories. With a few exceptions, Table 2 suggests multiple areas of agreement amongst our theories around specified properties. And, Table 3 captures succinctly, but with more clarity, key attributes that are shared by chaos and conflict theories. Thus, commenting briefly on a few shared aspects appears warranted.

First, conflict dynamic systems' notion of leveraging instability is tantamount to the infusion of chaos into a system as advocated by chaos theory. Conflict, and more so a deeply rooted one, favors conditions characteristics of closed systems such as keeping the status quo, and rejecting change. Opening such system requires the introduction of deliberate shocks in the form of new terms and conditions that are meant to jolt the system and destabilize it. Both conflict dynamic systems perspective and chaos theory view the initial step of purposefully creating fissures in the system as a necessary condition for realignment of conflict landscapes, followed by transformation and system renewal.

*Table 2. Chaos and Conflict Theories: Congruency Window*

| Properties | Conflict Dynamic Systems Perspective | PSDM Model | Constructive Controversy Theory | Theory of Chaos |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sensitivity to initial conditions | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| System/cognitive shocks by design | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Behavioral attractors | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Cycle of change | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| System re-organizing, and renewal | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Non-linear tendency; randomness | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Core benefits: Positive value and outcomes | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Information exchange | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Second, embracing complexity in the face of chaos and instability is shared by both theories; it is designed to strengthen actors and parties' tolerance of contradictions and ambiguity, and discourage oversimplification of chaos and conflict related issues. Within the context of conflict, Coleman, Vallacher, Nowak, Coleman, Bui-Wrzosinska, and Bartoli (2011) suggest using conflict and feedback-loop mapping as a means for enhancing complexity. Conflict mapping depicts the history and evolution of the conflict, its trajectories, and its broader networks, thus shifting parties' attention away from the immediate pressing context.

Third, sensitivity to initial conditions is another central tenet that is shared by both theories. Sensitivity to initial conditions appears to be equally important within the context of conflict and especially a deeply rooted one. Research suggests that the initial encounters between parties to a conflict shape the exchanges that follow. Such sensitivity is manifested in situations where even slight differences in initial conditions result in far larger differences between parties to a conflict (Leibovitch, Naudot, Vallacher, Nowak, Bui-Wrzosinska, and Coleman, 2008). From a conflict dynamic systems perspective, the existing emotional reservoirs of the conflict – namely, the ratio of positive experiences to negative experiences of each party to the conflict - also matters. Thus, an initial excess in positive experiences is likely to offset negative ones, and hence the importance of creating attractors for constructive relations between the parties down the road (Kugler, Coleman & Fuchs, 2011).

Fourth, visible and latent attractors play a critical role in shaping a system's state as conditions change. Like their role in a chaotic state, attractors in a conflict can experience a rapid change in their states due to social processes, and the shift from one attractor pattern to another. For instance, during a less destructive conflict state, positive attractors are visible and negative attractors are latent. However, during a destructive conflict, negative attractors are visible while positive attractors are latent (Coleman, 2014). A latent positive attractor argues Coleman has the potential of triggering a de-escalation of conflict, that can lead to a resolution between parties.

Thus, strengthening attractors that promote positive relations between disputants is a promising strategy for effectively managing conflict.

Finally, regaining stability following systems reorganizing and renewal is an additional shared property by both chaos theory and conflict dynamic systems perspective. But, unlike chaos theory's adherence to non-linear processes, dynamic adaptivity as a stabilizing process within the conflict dynamic systems perspective introduces rational decision-making and problem solving into conflict systems. According to Coleman (2014), regaining stability in relations between parties to a conflict requires a fairly structured process of defining core issues, exploring more than a single solution, demonstrating flexibility in decision making, willingness to change course, and being open to feedback. In short, adopting adaptivity.

Much like conflict dynamic systems approach, theory of constructive controversy appears to share a key assertion with chaos theory. Both theories support the notion that introducing conflict in organizations, to capitalize on its constructive potential and positive outcomes, should be structured and supported. Constructive controversy relies on argumentative clash to erupt and evolve amongst participants. Thus, enabling new ideas and a cognitive change to surface much like the chaotic states that give way to new order and transformation. However, unlike the non-linear change that is characteristic of chaos theory, constructive controversy employs a rational, linear driven decision-making process much like the PSDM model of conflict resolution (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2014). This process, an advocacy-based inquiry procedure, calls for researching a position, advocating that position, analyzing, and critically evaluating opposing views, reversing perspectives, synthesizing, and integrating all views, and summarizing them into a joint position (Johnson & Johnson, 2007).

While chaos theory shares significant attributes with both conflict dynamic systems and constructive controversy, it has little in common with the PSDM model. In fact, from a pure decision-making perspective, they appear contradictory. PSDM is driven by a linear and a structured process, and views accurate information gathering and rational data assessment as a prerequisite to sound decision making. Chaos theory, on the other hand, focuses on non-linear unpredictable phenomena that adhere to non-known rules. It is congruent with the assertion of bounded- rationality whereby human's information processing abilities are limited. As such, chaos theory stresses discontinuity while rejecting the need for accurate data and complete information as a pre-condition for decision making. In a word, it considers them unrealistic and unobtainable given that events do not necessarily resemble past occurrences.

And yet, notwithstanding the core difference between PSDM and chaos theory's approach to decision making, and despite the appearance of the four phases of the PSDM model as rational and orderly, the PSDM process is not strictly linear as Weitzman & Weitzman (2014) suggest. Often, it necessitates regressing back to an early phase before moving forward to the next phase. The possibility of regressing back is similar to the quality of a bifurcation shifting back to a previous behavioral pattern under the theory of chaos. Here too, a regression back does occur often despite the theory's attribute of irreversibility.

And, like chaos theory's key assertion concerning change, PSDM too views conflict as an opportunity for change and growth. Furthermore, much like the connectivity and information exchange that are central to chaos theory, PSDM considers information sharing and mutually acceptable solutions as the hallmark of the problem-solving approach. Cooperative problem-solving approaches in mediation, argues Weitzman & Weitzman (2014) are indeed essential.

Taken together, the sheer number of common properties that emerges from our discussion points to a high degree of congruency between the theories in question, with implications for

both organizations and practitioners alike. Our discussion suggested that chaos and conflict are intertwined with change, and thus are an integral part of organizations' existence.

*Table 3. Chaos and Conflict Theories: Shared Attributes*

| Properties/Theories | Conflict Dynamic Systems Perspective | PSDM Model | Constructive Controversy Theory | Theory of Chaos |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Open Systems Principles | Open system open mind; values flow of information; interaction with other systems. | Seeks new info. from various sources; open exchanges lead to informed positions & behavioral change. | Flow of info. is critical; open exchanges lead to open mind & novel solutions. | Values flow of information & exchanges with its environment. Iteration leads to bifurcation. |
| View of Conflict/chaos | Awakens motivating forces; rattles the status quo; pre-requisite for renewal. | Inevitable, accepted, managed; opportunities for change. | Cognitive conflict is essential; facilitates novel solutions; enables new ideas. | Challenges the status quo; a condition to be encouraged; leads to transformation. |
| Initial Conditions | The nature of initial encounters shapes exchanges that follow; existing emotional reservoirs of the parties' matter. | Determines the depth of the problem; help define direction for a solution and for relevant decision making. | Opening position of parties determines conceptual conflict; dictates strength of opposing views. | Great sensitivity to initial conditions; Butterfly Effect matters; small changes lead to major effects. |
| Linearity | A win-win outcome is difficult to achieve through a pure linear process. Deeply rooted conflict calls for non-linearity view. | This model calls for a multi-phase linear process all through. | A linear and a rational approach to a cooperative conflict resolution. | Focuses on non-linear unpredictable phenomena; adhering to non-known rules. |
| Attractors | Conflict related attractors serve socio-psycho purpose; assist with emergence of new order. | No specified role. | No specified role. | Patterns of b'vior; agents that promote stability; facilitate transformation. |
| Bifurcations | A qualitative behavior change; reflects a breakdown in equilibrium. | No specified role. | No specified role. | Responses to chaotic state; disruption gives way to renewal. |
| Self-Organization | Part of cycle of change; leverage instability, embrace complexity, seek latent positive attractors, re-stabilize interactions, and reorganize around course of action. | Not specified but alluded to: the parties re-organize after joint problem-solving and decision making. | Not specified but alluded to: disequilibrium culminates in synthesis and integration of ideas, and reorganization of positions. | A final phase that is part of cycle of change; internal shocks leads to change and systems self-organization and renewal. |
| Feedback | Feedback-loop mapping is a critical ingredient for enhancing | Continuous feedback from parties is a critical ingredient of PSDM process. | Feedback drives the examination of pros and cons of critical issues and actions. | Connectivity as an attribute of the theory, ties relationship network together |

| | complexity/depicting conflict evolution. | | | and is guided by knowledge flow and feedback. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Collaboration | Conflict related attractors serve socio-psycho purpose through collaboration. | Collaboration is at the heart of a joint problem-solving and decision-making approach. | The active search for new information and perspectives can only be done via joint effort and collaboration. | Collaboration is a necessary condition for effective functioning of an open system. |

Chaos and conflict ought to be positively considered as they carry a value and a promise for change and transformation that ultimately lead to renewal for organizations; such a change may manifest itself in the quality of relationships and interactions amongst individuals and groups. Avoiding either concept means a loss of opportunities for change and evolvement. Referring to the calamitous pandemic is unavoidable when searching for an event that amplifies our central theme and concluding message. COVID-19 catastrophe has left death and disruption in its path that may alter the way people live and work indefinitely. Yet, as predicted by conflict and chaos theories, the conflict that ensued and the chaos befallen world economies have spurred promising change and renewal processes that are still unfolding. For one, the race in search for a cure propelled the healthcare industry to  higher level of cooperation and collaboration; it compelled governments to better coordinate testing related services and restock on medical gear and equipment, and it gave impetus to new diagnostic discoveries and medical innovation on a global scale. COVID-19 has darkened our skies, but it also brought about the coming together of communities despite the imposed work from home and social distancing. And, it may have made us all better prepared for another global pandemic (Malka and Tiell, 2021).

## Recommendations and Practical Considerations

Our discussion yields several practical recommendations and implications that are applicable to organizations and individuals alike. The message to managers is straightforward: Chaos and conflict offer opportunities for change by challenging the status quo and by facilitating innovation. Therefore, embrace them! Furthermore, do not despair - as even in a state of conflict and chaos, whether by design or by default, organizations and disputants can re-organize, transform, and rebuild new systems and relationships.

Thus, consider both chaos and conflict and remember that they should be viewed as a condition to be encouraged. Keep in mind that harmonious groups and organizations are prone to becoming static, rigid, and less responsive to innovation and change. Be cognizant of the possibility that such a state, if persistent, will ultimately lead to stagnation and entropy. And so, capitalize on chaos' and conflict's constructive potential by purposefully creating fissures in the system as a necessary condition for realignment of conflict landscapes.

### Considerations for Organizations: The Chaos Perspective

- *Considering the benefit of being a healthy process*. Chaotic behaviors and changes caused by non-linear dynamics, systems breakdowns, and bifurcations are considered healthy processes that should be encouraged.

- *Considering the benefit of being an open system*. Chaos theory suggests that organizations are open systems capable of self-organizing. As such, they possess and employ self-corrective mechanisms capable of fighting stagnation and promoting renewal and transformation. Being an open system, implies being a learning organization with the capacity to absorb and process external information for adaptation.
- *Considering the benefit of being a catalyst for change*. The impetus for change and revitalization are systems breakdown triggers by isolated peripheral events, or by key actor who creates a chaotic state by design as a catalyst for change. Chaos theory fosters disturbances of system equilibria as a means for stopping entropic decline. Thus, organizational actors are encouraged to induce periodic system shakeups as corrective measures for change and renewal.
- *Considering the benefit of being an early warning alert*. Nonlinear relationships and randomness that characterizes systems transactions and interactions ought to be dealt with and managed by non-linear chaos approaches. As such, chaos theory can explain chaotic changes and trends, and predict future patterns of 'order out of order.' It is seen as an early warning alert system for organizational actors, suggesting that chaotic states can surface anywhere and anytime.
- *Considering ethical aspects*. Chaos theory may promote deliberate state of chaos, and as such, it can be an instrument of manipulation and control raising ethical questions that should not be ignored by organization actors (Farazmand, 2003). Furthermore, due to the butterfly effect in its core, and the unpredictability inherent in chaotic changes, it becomes difficult to predict directly related consequences, as well as secondary ones that may ensue.

**Considerations for Conflict Resolution: The Conflict Perspective**

- Be aware of the resemblance between the processes leading to a constructive conflict resolution and successful change efforts. Remember that resistance abounds in both processes, thus harnessing the energy of resistance forces is more critical than displacing it.
- Leverage instability as an opening act and embrace complexity. Be cognizant of initial conditions and leverage visible and invisible attractors. Seek to stabilize the parties' interactions and course of action through feedback and adaptation.
- And yet, strive to keep parts of the system stable, as an increased level of induced instability may be overwhelming to parties in a conflict. Regaining stability in relations between parties to a conflict requires defining core issues, exploring more than a single solution, demonstrating flexibility in decision making, willingness to change course, and being open to feedback. In short, adopting adaptivity (Coleman, 2014).
- Be cognizant of attractors' landscape. A latent positive attractor has the potential of triggering a de-escalation of conflict, that can lead to a resolution between the parties. Thus, strengthening attractors that promote positive relations between parties to a conflict is a promising strategy for effectively managing conflict.
- Embrace a cooperative problem-solving approach in mediation by encouraging the parties to leverage the dynamics associated with collaboration. Collaboration enables the crafting of joint solutions for resolving friction and destructive conflict.

A final thought: Decades before the emergence of Covid-19, Levy (1994) illustrated how small disruptions taking place in a supply chain end up inflicting major unpredictable challenges for companies. Such supply chain disruptions led to the idling of production lines and to a significant reduction in revenues and increase in production costs. Levy concluded that applying chaos theory to firm operations is promising and should be expanded and used as a framework for predicting and coping with unpredictable events. The still unfolding events triggered by Covid-19, make Levy's conclusion more relevant today than ever. When considering the pandemic's unpredictability and associated costs, the single most important lesson for organizations and managers is that employing yesterday's tools for forecasting is insufficient, and that long-term planning does not ensure stability or sustainability. Dramatic events like Covid-19, coupled with complex external developments such as new technologies, changing demographics, and market competition necessitate operational flexibility, adaptation, and a new managerial mindset. The fixation with stability ought to be replaced with an approach that is more suitable for today's complex and unpredictable environment. Chaos theory is one such approach that should be further explored and adopted by organizations and their managers.

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# BUILDING PEACE IN IRAQ:
# A PROPOSAL FOR PEACEBUILDING WORKSHOPS

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## Abstract

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the relationship between Sunni and Shia populations has been deeply damaged. To improve these relationships and establish peace between these two communities, we suggest implementing peace workshops throughout the country. Our proposed workshops aim for grassroots level communication that would identify the needs and concerns of both communities while increasing dialogue and collaboration and providing avenues for conflict management. The purpose of these workshops would be to provide opportunities for communication, which we hope will increase understanding and empathy between these groups, help to improve perceptions within these divided communities, and provide peaceful mechanisms for resolving conflicts.

## Introduction

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraq has struggled to maintain peace and security. The historical context of this conflict provides an important backdrop that frames the peace process in Iraq. Within this historical context, this paper outlines a process for implementing peace workshops for Sunni and Shia communities in Iraq. While international organizations have implemented some workshops in Iraq, these events have been very limited in length, scope, geography and inclusion. We propose a more comprehensive peace workshop program that provides extensive opportunities for communication between groups, which we believe will increase understanding and collaboration between Sunni and Shia communities, help to improve perceptions within these divided communities, and provide peaceful mechanisms for resolving conflicts.

### Historical and Current Context

The historical and current context of Iraq must be considered before any type of peace workshop can be implemented. The 'divide-and-rule' tactics used by colonial powers helped create sectarian tensions in Iraq, particularly as the majority Shia group became a marginalized

majority and the minority Sunni became advantaged, dominating the political and economic system of Iraq, particularly during Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime (Haklai 2000: 20; Harzing & Ruysseveldt 2004: 224;Brancati 2004; O'Leary 2002).

The complex sectarian situation in Iraq was complicated further by the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States. Two problems were paramount, the lack of security and the exclusion of the Sunni population from the decision-making process, which further politicized religious identities and increased tension and disunity between the two groups (Diamond 2004; Dodge 2006; Baram 2005; Nore & Ghani 2009 Paris & Sisk 2009). Overall, the de-Ba'thification effort was too wide, excluding Iraqi professionals whose skills would have been essential in transforming the future state and creating security during the transition, as well as increasing dissatisfaction and discontent among the population (Diamond 2004; Nore & Ghani 2009).

Since the removal of Saddam Hussein, the political process has been either slow or insufficient, with military and police training lacking organization and planning and new officers lacking sufficient equipment (Nore & Ghani 2009: 106; Diamond 2004: 38). Moreover, the US government also failed to provide law and order; daily crimes increased after the invasion and a general lack of basic needs frustrated the Iraqi population and decreased their trust in the US government (Kimmel & Stout 2006). The situation continues to intensify as the Sunni population increasingly protests against the Maliki government and police violence against protesters has increased (Katzman 2013).

The current conflict with Daesh has intensified the potential for further conflict between Sunnis and Shiites within Iraq. Most Sunnis do not support Daesh, nor played any role in their rise, and their lives have been most negatively impacted by the actions of this group. The conflicts in Iraq have resulted in millions of displaced people, the vast majority of these are Sunnis, as Daesh has predominantly taken over traditionally Sunni areas. Further, while Daesh has been forced out of some of the territory they seized, this territory was historically Sunni but has now been liberated largely by Shiite and Kurds. In places like Salman Beg, Shiite militias have pushed out Daesh, but have also been suspicious of the Sunnis that originally resided there and have even denied them access to their homes. In addition, previous Sunni and Shia tensions have resurfaced in some areas, like the predominantly Sunni province of Diyala. Overall, the situation has become critical, and there is an ever-increasing likelihood of escalated violence and revenge killings between Shia and Sunni groups.

## On-going Responses for Peacebuilding and Development in Iraq

Several international organizations, such as the United Nations, USAID, World Vision, Relief International, the World Food Programme, the International Rescue Committee, and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent have played an important role in peacebuilding in Iraq, but the vast majority of these organizations primarily provide humanitarian aid for displaced people in Iraq (Internally displaced children in Iraq are at high risk of Polio and Measles outbreak 2014; IRC 2014). Some international organizations have worked to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) in Iraq to aid in efforts such as monitoring government transparency and accountability, improving the functioning of government, and improving economic conditions (UNDP 2014;The World Bank 2013). Even

though inclusion of CSOs is critical, these groups still lack any real power over policies. Furthermore, international organizations often select and control the trajectory of development projects and are selective in the CSOs they choose to work with, potentially creating additional bias in the process.

While local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a key role in mediating between the Iraqi government and local people, during negotiation, coordination, and advising, they are often left out either by the government or by the Political Department of the United Nations Assistance Mission of Iraq (UNAMI) (Ali 2014). Moreover, local or international NGOs are not well protected, which has led to increased assassinations of local and international NGO members (Ali 2014). This demonstrates that security is a big issue and violence against these organizations decreases NGO members' ability to serve.

The NGOs, Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East and St. George Church, provide some reconciliation methods for these communities in Iraq. Since 2007, they have organized the High Council for Religious Leaders (HCRLI) in Iraq.  The HCRLI gathers quarterly for a roundtable discussion and meeting. These meetings facilitate cooperation and allow discussion regarding how religious leaders can use their influence to discourage violence and encourage respect for the rule of law and political participation. They also discuss potential spoilers to peace and how to overcome such challenges. Successful meetings lead to an agreement that is signed by the council members outlining strategies for religious reconciliation and an action plan for implementation (FRRME 2012). While these programs have successfully brought religious leaders together to discuss non-violence, they lack broader sectarian integration.

International Relief & Development (IRD) has a program called Cultural Bridges to Reconciliation in Iraq (CBRI) which uses theatre, dance, poetry, and town hall meetings with tribal, civil, and religious leaders to provide opportunities to speak about problems. In addition, people in the audience actively participate, give their opinions and recommendations for the problems. CBRI uses these suggestions and works with the local stakeholders to mitigate conflict.  The first year of the project, over 13,000 people contributed in 60 plays and debates, which had a positive impact in the community and helped local stakeholders to mitigate conflict (IRD 2014). In 2013, Christian Peacemaker teams also conducted 12 non-violent workshops in five high schools in the city of Suleimani in Iraqi Kurdistan. About 184 students, from grades 10th to 12th, participated in the workshops. Additional workshops were held in local cafes within Suleimani and in the village of Daraban, near Ranya and Halabja, where about 81 people participated. All of these workshops aimed to demonstrate and teach non-violent tactics based on the experience of Kurdish activists and other nations. The participants emphasized that they found the non-violent workshops are very useful fighting against violence in their community. While these workshops have been crucial, they have been short-term and limited in geographic scope.

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has been one of the most active actors in building peace in Iraq.  They have coordinated and conducted dozens of various workshops in Iraq, focusing on a variety of actors and issues.  For example, they have conducted training workshops on reconciliation and human rights issues for Iraqi officials, workshops to revise the education system with Iraqi education officials, workshops to educate Iraqi professors how to effectively

teach human rights in their classrooms, and training programs aimed to train participants about conflict mitigation and  reconciliation for the Provincial Councils around Iraq. They have also pursued programs for youth and women.  Some of their most extensive work has been working on interethnic reconciliation - the focus area of our peace workshop recommendation.  For example, in Kirkuk, three workshops were implemented regarding interethnic reconciliation. These workshops aimed to bring together community leaders, major ethnic groups, and professional sectors to work to resolve their problems.

Iraq has a long history of communal conflict therefore USIP's work has been crucial. For example, in 2014, Daesh was responsible for a massacre at the Camp Speicher military base, close to Tikrit. This event could have increased tension and revenge killings, but USIP worked with the Network of Iraqi Facilitators to create dialogue between Sunni and Shia, which prevented further violence. In addition, USIP's workshop with the Sunni and Shia tribal leaders in the city of Mahmoudiya, called the "Triangle of Death," helped the community restore peace, security, and rule of law. Moreover, USIP workshops have helped to build the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities, which has led Iraqi people to advocate for the rights of Christians, Yazidies and other minorities. Their work also led the Iraqi Education Ministry to acknowledge minorities in school textbooks. The Alliance of Iraqi Minorities helped United Nations workers protect minorities during Daesh's invasion of Mosul in 2014. The alliance also helped the Kurdish parliament in the north draft a constitution that recognized minority rights. USIP's work has persuaded community leaders and security services in Baghdad, Basra, Karbala, and Kirkuk to create dialogue, overcome fear and misunderstandings, and establish  a community that works to help each other and solve issues. Overall, USIP's work has helped Iraqis to overcome security issues and increase dialogue between community leaders and people.

USIP's workshops and trainings have addressed some of the shortcomings of others, which often included only certain groups of people in Iraq, like religious leaders. However, while the USIP has conducted many workshops and trainings in Iraq and has had great success, their workshops are often half-day or single day events.  Further, while some workshops may take place over multiple days, they have few, if any, workshops that attempt to bring together the same people repeatedly in an effort to build trust through repeated interactions. In addition, while USIP has worked throughout many areas in Iraq, the do not always offer each of their workshops in a wide variety of locations - particularly in places where both Sunni and Shia live or places with larger Sunni populations.

Our workshop proposal has three key elements that are missing from previous attempts at peace workshops.  First, we promote longer workshops that allow participants more time to interact with one another and build relationships.  Second, we suggest having workshop attendees regroup for additional meetings and workshops following the initial workshop.  Third, we propose have workshops across the country in a variety of communities and areas, some of which might often be overlooked, to increase the reach of the peace workshop effort.  Overall, our proposal and activities aim for grassroots level communication that would identify the needs and concerns of both Sunni and Shia communities while increasing dialogue and empathy and helping to improve perceptions and collaboration and provide avenues for conflict management.

## Peace Workshops for Iraqi Communities

A variety of methods have been recommended to address the conflicts and disputes between the two parties, including diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, and workshops (Malhotra & Liyanage 2005). In order to increase communication and dialogue, some scholars and non-governmental organizations have turned to 'peace workshops' or 'peace camps' (Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005). Such workshops use controlled communication, as discussed by John Burton, which is a social-psychological tool for changing the thoughts and views of individuals while reducing hostility and tension between the two representative parties. There were a number of peace workshops in Sri Lanka and Cyprus to increase understanding within these divided communities. These workshops demonstrated that the people who chose to attend the workshops tended to have a more positive view and were more empathetic, which are crucial attributes during negotiation (Fisher, 1994; Malhotra & Liyanage 2005). In addition, such workshops have been shown to be effective in preventing the reoccurrence of conflict in places like Liberia (Blair, Blattman, & Hartman 2011).

We find the success of these previous workshops promising and believe that such workshops would be particularly useful in the Iraqi context, where there is a strong need to improve the relationship and establish peace between Sunni and Shia communities.

## Goals for Peacebuilding Workshops

We utilize an integrated framework, created by Lederach, Neufeldt, & Culbertson (2007), to create our peacebuilding workshop recommendations.  Based on this framework, our overall goals for these proposed Iraqi peacebuilding workshops are increased dialogue, trust, and capacity to prevent violence between Shias and Sunnis. Our peace workshops will achieve these goals in several ways. First of all, peace workshops can help these groups confront their problems through direct interaction.  Second, if both communities develop better relationships and communication, there will be a lower likelihood that these individuals will join or support insurgent activities.  Third, these increased interactions, communication, and cooperation will create avenues for earlier responses to potential violence, thus increasing violence prevention. And finally, these connections can help create mediation groups and more broadly help in mediating the conflict and lowering violence.

The outcomes of these peacebuilding workshops will ideally be focused in four key areas: personal, relational, structural, and cultural (Lederach et al. 2007).  Intergroup dialogue has been shown to have a variety of positive effects, including understanding group inequalities, discrimination, prejudice, and the causes of conflict (Schoem & Hurtado 2001; Walter Stephan & Cookie Stephan 1996). In addition, dialogue helps participants to decrease concerns and anxiety regarding intergroup contact, to increase communication, to learn to how respond to and collaborate against violence and conflict, and to play the role of facilitator and become involved in activities to decrease violence and bring social justice.

## Workshop Locations

Due to security issues, it would be difficult to facilitate workshops in areas that are currently

under the threat of Daesh. As such, we suggest conducting peace workshops in every city and town that the Iraqi government has full control over, with additional cities to be added once security is less of a concern. Thus, the location of these workshops would be such to avoid overt interaction with Daesh.  Specifically, we suggest beginning these workshops in the Diyala region, which contains Sunni and Shia and has seen increased tensions between these groups in recent years.  In particular, major cities like Baqubah and Miqdadiyah would be useful places to begin, as workshops in these cities would reach many individuals.  However, workshops should not be limited to large cities, and ideally, should be conducted in as many different cities and towns as feasible.

   The workshops need to be widespread and have strong attendance to have greater effects on attitudes and policy.  It is important, particularly in larger cities, that multiple workshops be held in different areas of the city and in places that are seen as fairly neutral by all parties involved.  This, of course, might pose a challenge in cities where populations are geographically divided.  Some potential locations for these workshops include town centers, government office buildings, or schools.  Leaders from the various communities within each city should be brought together to discuss and negotiate potential locations for these workshops.

## Workshop Attendees

   We propose workshops that would take place at a community level.  Everyone in the community should be invited to these workshops, as individuals from different backgrounds and groups have different perspectives that need to be addressed and bring different strengths to the table. It is very important that religious leaders and tribal leaders attend these meetings, as they have influence in their communities and can use this influence toward effecting changes in attitudes. It is also essential to include youth, who are an at-risk population, but also have a great potential to contribute to peacebuilding efforts (Hubner, Morgan, & Apia 2016; Schwartz 2010).

   Further, it is important that both men and women are included in these peacebuilding workshops. Recent works have highlighted the importance of women in peacebuilding efforts (see, for example, Flaherty, Byrne, Tuso, and Matyók 2015; Schnabel and Tabyshalieva 2012). For example, Liberian women used nonviolent and conflict resolution strategies to recruit people and mobilize grassroots organizations, relying on their identity as women to build bridges between religious and ethnic communities (Snyder & Stobbe 2011). Because men and women often experience the effects of conflict in different ways, it is essential that the experiences of both of these groups are fully incorporated into the discussion.

   It is ideal to encourage the same participants to attend more than one workshop, which aids in measuring the growth in relationships and learning among the same group. In order to increase the number of attendees, it is imperative that workshops are heavily advertised by community leaders, religious leaders, and local and international NGOs. In addition, transportation should be arranged and made available for people in need of these services.  While funding is always an issue with any peacebuilding effort, if larger funds are not available for the project, it may be possible to arrange transportation on a grassroots level.  Any incentives, such as providing food during the meetings and perhaps a small stipend for participation, would greatly improve participation.  Major agencies with experience in Iraq, such as USAID and USIP may be willing

to provide modest grants to help offset costs for transportation and food and help provide some of the logistical support for these workshops.

## Workshop Organizers and Leaders

These peace workshops should be organized and facilitated by a neutral third party, but one that is seen as legitimate at the community level.  Given that perceived legitimate parties might vary from community to community, it is imperative that many actors join together at a larger level to help facilitate these workshops broadly, while individual actors and NGOs may be responsible for the implementation of these workshops on a community level.  While the national government's involvement may provide some legitimacy for these workshops, and may be necessary to a certain extent, we would caution against over-involvement by the central government.  Since non-profit grassroots organizations may be less bias and partial, it would be ideal to work with these types of local organizations. As scholars have noted, sub-state groups and local movements often have greater legitimacy and are more viable than governments, which may be seen as corrupt and part of the problem (Reno, 2008).

As such, we suggest the best actors to institute these workshops would be local governments, local NGOs, and other local leaders or groups that may be seen as most legitimate in their communities.  However, to ensure that there is some continuity in these workshops, we would also suggest that there be some collaboration and networking between these localized entities. We would not expect all workshops to be mirror images of one another, but discussion between communities is very important, and will help facilitate the continuation of these workshops.

We would also suggest that these local communities and NGOs reach out to scholars and practitioners in international conflict management and consider including additional third-party facilitators from these communities in their workshops. While there could be some resistance from local populations to bringing in 'outsiders,' there are likely to be scholars and practitioners that many within a community can agree upon to be impartial. Adding these professionals can help provide an outside perspective that may be useful for identifying problems and concerns but can also add expertise and experience in facilitating these workshops, which will contribute to their ultimate success. Furthermore, many agencies, like USAID and USIP are currently working in Iraq and could be approached for help in coordinating these events and for potential funding opportunities.  These groups are also likely to have many connections among the leaders in various areas of Iraq and can help facilitate the bargaining process between traditional and local authorities.

## Format and Style of Workshops

For these workshops to have a lasting effect, we suggest holding at least three peace workshops (one about every 4 months) over a one-year period, creating more frequent interaction and, hopefully, a more positive long-term outcome. Each workshop should be at least three to four days long, if possible, so that there is time for attendees to reflect at the end of the day on what was discussed during the workshop before meeting again the following day. Such time for reflection will help facilitate more meaningful discussions on subsequent days.  Further, longer

workshops provide time for a variety of collaborative activities among the attendees.

Several studies have demonstrated the usefulness of lecture-discussion sessions for intergroup dialogue (Nagda & Derr 2004; Schoem & Hurtado 2001; Stephan & Stephan 1996; Zúñiga 2003). We recommend peace workshops should include a series of roundtable discussions, which provide a more formal dialogue style designed to establish effective communication between opposing groups over specific topics relevant to the conflict in Iraq. Roundtable discussions would cover the specific topics that are of particular importance to the community, but we would recommend the following topics be considered for inclusion: peace and nonviolence; peace and social justice; peace and reconciliation; peace and political justice; the role of religion and Islam in peace; peace and crime prevention tactics. These discussion activities will help the attendees and facilitators identify problems and solutions and will guide and inform the Sunni and Shia communities about peace and violence prevention. One challenge is attempting to balance the imbalance of power between groups. We recommend having a moderator for each group who will be able to manage these power imbalances during the workshops.

During the workshop, it would be useful to have Sunni and Shia religious leaders in attendance to highlight the role of religion in peace and to have a session where Shia and Sunni attendees are assigned into groups together to discuss the political, social, and structural problems they face, as well as ideas for change that may produce sustainable justice and peace.

When culturally appropriate, men and women can participate in these workshops together; if preferred, communities may want to have separate groups for women and men. Separating men and women has both strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, it is essential that all members of the community participate in these efforts together, and it is important that men recognize the issues facing women in their communities. On the other hand, it may be possible to have more honest discussions when men and women are able to talk only amongst themselves. As such, we would suggest that the ideal workshops would include space for both of these formats: they would allow separated discussions (with moderators) where women speak only with other women and men with only men, but then would also include larger group discussions where the needs of each of these communities are communicated more broadly (with the help of moderators if necessary).

The roundtable and dialogue portion of these peace workshops is likely to be emotionally intense. As such, it is important that peace workshops also include collaborative activities that provide the opportunity for Sunni and Shia attendees to work together in ways that are more creative or fun. For example, organizers could have Sunni and Shia children or adults work as a team to create an art exhibition; invite Sunni and Shia children or adults to play soccer with teams organized as co-religious; design joint peace prayers; or have Sunni and Shia women do a skills presentation. The specific types of activities would be flexible and would allow each community to exert their own creative influences; but the idea behind these activities is that they would provide an outlet for cooperation and communication on a more interpersonal level and help the Sunni and Shia communities to work together. As such, we would expect each group to gain an increased understanding and empathy for one another.

**Security**

Issues of security are obviously a major concern in Iraq, and this could impact the success of peace workshops. Avoiding areas currently controlled by Daesh is clearly an important part of maintaining security. However, in many other areas there are militias and armed groups present, many supported by the Iraqi government. In areas such as Salman Beg, a historically Sunni area, Shiite militias have taken the territory back from Daesh, but have continued to deny Sunnis access to their property. Situations like these create problematic scenarios, particularly since these types of cities would likely benefit greatly from the types of workshops we propose. However, we would recommend that in these areas, where Sunni attendees may not have free movement and/or would be under more severe threat, workshops be postponed until the situations is more stable.

In other areas, such as the Diyala region, where there is some tension between groups, increased security for peace workshops may be necessary. However, this is a quite delicate situation. Any security forces need to be seen as neutral, which can be problematic when some attendees may feel police forces are not neutral bodies. First of all, both sides should be consulted about what type of security (if any) they feel is necessary. Grassroots organizers from each side are likely to have the best understanding of the security situation in their area and how that impacts their side. They may choose to have no additional security, as they may see this as a deterrent to participation. Or, they may feel increased security is necessary to ensure people feel safe to participate. One potential solution is to have joint security details created with members that are chosen from each side. These members could, themselves, attend a miniature peace workshop to obtain important training and socialization prior to assuming their duties. Whatever the solution, it is essential that the issue of security be addressed in each area individually with the specific context of the area and the attendees in mind.

## Evaluating and Monitoring the Success of the Peace Workshops

It is ideal to encourage the same participants to attend more than one workshop, which will help in measuring the growth in relationships and learning. We would suggest that key actors, and particularly neutral third parties, begin collecting results after the first peace workshop. Since at least some of the goals for these workshops deal with changing attitudes toward each other, we recommend that workshop organizers conduct a survey of the participants' attitudes prior to the beginning of the first workshop and then again following the completion of this workshop. These 'pre' and 'post' attitudinal surveys will allow the workshop organizers to evaluate the impact that the workshop is having in changing these attitudes. The 'post' surveys should also include questions assessing the skills gained through the workshop, highlighting the key problems and issues that arose, and the attendee's overall optimism about the future of continued cooperation. Based on the findings from these initial reports, it will likely be necessary to make some changes to the activities before the second peace workshop. Following the second workshop, a similar evaluative process should be conducted prior to the third workshop. Community leaders should be part of this evaluation process and should be encouraged to consider the results and attempt to address problems and concerns at the local level. The final results, along with recommendations based on issues and problems raised by attendees during the

workshops, should be shared with state officials and policy makers, who can then work at a national level to also address the problems and concerns.

There are some clear measures that the workshops are successfully achieving their goals. Following the first peace workshop, we may expect to see return attendees and an increase in the number of attendees from each group in subsequent workshops; greater agreement on the agenda for these workshops; increased socializing during breaks and meetings; more active participation during workshops; greater willingness to express opinions and concerns; participant provided action plans; and greater attendance in community projects. The first two workshops aim to increase sectarian tolerance and awareness. The final indicators after the third peace workshop (after a full year of workshops) are: children from different groups increasingly playing together after the workshops are over; men and women meeting and socializing outside of the workshops; attending and celebrating each other's religious rituals, holidays, events together; sectarian marriages increasingly considered acceptable; community members reporting if there is any feeling of religious tolerance; and a decrease in sectarian violence. This third round of workshops aims to improve dialogue and relationships between Sunni and Shia community and, ideally, bring social change for the Iraqi society. From a larger national perspective, after the final workshop we would hope to see a variety of national-level changes, including, for example, more equal representation for Sunni and Shias in government; religious leaders continuing to engage in dialogue at the national level; the adoption anti-discrimination laws and the promotion of official holidays for Shia and Sunni population; the adoption of a national program for religious tolerance in schools; and support for TV programs that encourage peace and harmony.

## Conclusion

The exclusion of the Sunni population from society and the government following the 2003 US invasion of Iraq has resulted in violence and insurgent activities throughout the country. Peace and peacebuilding between communities is hard to achieve, but the peace workshops we propose attempt to identify the root causes of conflict and increase the understanding and dialogue between Sunni and Shia populations. These peace workshops can serve as a tool to demonstrate to the reluctant Shia population that policy change is necessary and to convince the Sunni population to support peacebuilding and development projects. In addition, these workshops can help to inform and increase awareness about Sunni needs and grievances resulting from their weakened positions in the post-war power structure of Iraq. Our recommended peace workshops can help to achieve peaceful resolution and create harmony between Shia and Sunni population in Iraq and would, ideally, help prevent the reoccurrence of conflict in the future. Peace workshops in Sri Lanka, Greece, Liberia and other conflicted countries have led to positive political and social changes; therefore, we are hopeful that similar endeavors in Iraq could also lead to increased peace and positive national policy changes.

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# DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY CASE STUDY

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## Abstract

This paper is a case study on the Department of Energy's (DOE) types of conflict and how they are most frequently addressed. The study looked at their best practices and how the DOE could improve. A content analysis of information available regarding conflict for the Federal Government revealed that environmental conflicts were the most frequent and costly. This has led the Federal Government to issue policy regarding Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) and reporting requirements. Annual reports and trend analysis on a number of ECCR cases from 2007 to 2017 were utilized to assess practices for the DOE and their associated entity, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

## Introduction

The United States Department of Energy (DOE) has been known to have conflict in various areas, from conflict caused with the public by policy written and administered to internal conflict within the organization. The DOE responsibility for cleanup of nuclear sites, and the sprawling nature and infrastructure intensive nature of energy production and delivery systems often cause environmental conflict with property owners and environmentalists who do not want the process or distribution in their surroundings, sometimes referred to as "Not In My Back Yard, or NIMBY" (MacLachlan, 2002).

The DOE is a cabinet level department, serving as an advisory body to the President of the United States. The department was formed on 04 August 1977 and is responsible for policy regarding energy and nuclear safety. It consists of three primary offices, and a host of 30 program and staff offices (*DOE-ORG-CHART-December-2017-revised.pdf*, n.d.). The three primary offices are the Office of the Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and National Nuclear Security Administration, the Office of the Under Secretary for Science, and the Office of the Under Secretary of Energy. It is the later office that contains a policy office that is most responsible for much of the policy regulating energy. The office has a budget of $30.6B and employs 14,000 employees and 95,000 contractors (*Fy-2017-doe-annual-performance-report-fy-2019-annual-performance-plan.pdf*, n.d.) (*Energy Department FY 2019 Budget Fact Sheet.pdf*, n.d.).

The DOE is currently responsible for the nuclear cleanup of 16 sites comprising of two million acres across 11 states, making it the largest and most diverse area of program management within the DOE ("Project Management," n.d.). These projects account for $60B in cleanup efforts. In addition, the Federal Regulatory Commission (FERC) has responsibilities to

"Promote Safe, Reliable, Secure, & Efficient Infrastructure" (*AFR-2017.pdf*, n.d.), resulting in policy affecting significant infrastructure projects that also have environmental impacts and cause conflict with landowners and environmental groups.  Although the DOE is currently utilizing Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR), the number of growing cases could be an indicator that they need to reassess their policy on addressing these issues, and focus more on preventative conflict management measures such as ombudsry, interest-based negotiation and conflict coaching (Brubaker, Noble, Fincher, Park, & Press, 2014a)

## Research Question

The DOE utilizes ECCR to manage and resolve environmental conflict, in alignment with policy established by the Office of Management and Budget and Council on Environmental Quality.  This policy calls for Federal agencies to "foster collaboration to build relationships, enhance public engagement, minimize or prevent conflicts, and manage and resolve conflicts when they arise" (*OMB_CEQ_Env_Collab_Conflict_Resolution_20120907_2.pdf*, n.d., p. 2).  This paper will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. *What are the most common types of conflict in the Department of Energy, and how are they most frequently addressed?*
2. *What are the best practices for conflict management in the Department of Energy or similar government agencies, and how can the Department of Energy improve?*

## Literature Review
### Policy

   The DOE has a long track record of support of conflict management, adopting the principles outlined in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Joint Memorandum on Environmental Conflict Resolution signed 28 November 2005.  This memorandum directed agencies to "increase the effective use of environmental conflict resolution and build institutional capacity for collaborative problem solving" (*OMB CEQ Joint Statement_1.pdf*, n.d., p. 1).  The joint memo recognized the challenges of balancing public interests and various agencies objectives, and sought a methodology to reduce the costly litigation, lengthy processes, costly delays, wasted investments, and hostility between stakeholders.
   The DOE built on the 2005 memorandum, adopting the 07 September 2012 Joint Memorandum on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (*OMB_CEQ_Env_Collab_Conflict_Resolution_20120907_2.pdf*, n.d.), increasing the use of third-party assisted environmental collaboration and environmental conflict resolution.  The memorandum specifically built on the 2005 memorandum, calling for more upfront environmental collaboration, stressing the "value of collaboration in policy making, conflict prevention and management, and conflict resolution" (p. 2).
   Referring to the review of the DOE website above, ECCR is shortened to Environmental Conflict Resolution (ECR) and is described as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process that utilizes a neutral third party in the prevention or resolution of conflict.  The site then identifies that ECR can also include collaborative processes that prevent or resolve environmental issues.  Although a subtlety, the shortening of ECCR to ECR and comparison to

ADR insinuates that the focus may be more on the resolution of the dispute once it occurs, instead of focusing on conflict management strategies to actually prevent conflict from occurring.

The Federal Departments and Agencies prepares a report annually pursuant to the 07 September 2012 OMB-CEQ policy memorandum on ECCR. The 2017 reports that the number of ongoing ECCR cases for FERC has gone from 21 cases out of a total of 257 total federal government cases (or 8.17%) in 2006, to 115 cases out of 489 total cases (or 23.52%) in 2017 (*Fy_2017_epa_eccr_annual_report_final.pdf*, n.d.). While one can argue that it is positive that FERC is utilizing the ECCR process, one could also surmise that there needs to be more focus on conflict prevention (Brubaker, Noble, Fincher, Park, & Press, 2014b).

## Environmental Conflicts

Environmental conflicts can occur at the policy level over laws or regulations, or at the instance level, where the issue or project occurs  (Dukes, 2004). The magnitude of the environmental conflicts can be determined by the bargaining power, or extent by which competing interest have the ability to reach a bargain or the ease of pursing other alternatives (MacLachlan, 2002).

## Energy Landscape Conflicts

The notion of NIMBY has continued to expand over the years and has now transitioned to renewable energies. This new area of conflict between land use for renewable energy and NIMBY philosophy has been termed energy-landscape conflicts. These conflicts occur when individuals and social groups place a high value on the unspoiled landscapes (van der Horst & Vermeylen, 2012).

## Infrastructure Projects

Large Construction Projects

DOE efforts often result in significant construction projects for nuclear cleanup, production, or transmission of energy. Two main categories of conflict usually arise as a result of large construction projects, internal, and interface conflicts. Internal conflicts usually occur between the internal groups associated with the project involved with the planning, design, and execution of the project. Interface conflicts exist between the internal groups and the social groups that interact with the project and the internal participants. Interface conflicts on large projects arise primarily due to attitudinal differences between the various groups (Awakul & Ogunlana, 2002). There is a recognition that environmental aspects of projects often delay projects, resulting in significant project cost growth and delay of delivery of critical projects to public benefit. This, coupled with the need to invest in infrastructure to strengthen our economy, improve world trade, create jobs, and reduce the costs of goods and services has prompted Executive Order 13807 targeted at improving the environmental review to improve the execution of infrastructure projects ("Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects," 2017).

Transmission Lines

Energy transmission lines are some of the primary causes of conflict due to the continued demand on energy worldwide.  This often results in an environmental conflict.  Consensus building can be effective if the overall process includes participation by stakeholders, trust building, and focus on the key objectives.  Often times, the focus turns to items like renewable energy or whether there is a true need for the energy, instead of maintaining focus on the design and construction of the transmission line (Keir & Ali, 2014).

Oil & Gas Extraction & Distribution

Oil exploration has resulted in conflict in many areas around the world, Nigeria experiencing significant conflict and violence.  This conflict has been attributed to poor communication efforts.  This communication is required both internally and externally to the organization (Nwagbara & Brown, 2014).

## Environment Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

Environmental conflict is costly and time consuming for the Federal Government, costing millions of dollars and thousands of employee hours annually.  The Federal Government has developed a program called Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) to try and combat the challenges associated with environmental conflict.  The Federal Government has utilized ECCR for more than 3,800 cases since 2006 and currently has over a decade of data on how it has improved outcomes for them (*ECCR_Benefits_Recommendations_Report_ 5-02-018.pdf*, n.d.).  The ECCR has been proven to save time and money, improve relationships between the government and stakeholders, and improve overall outcomes.

In a study of 123 ECCR participants, the ECCR process saved time in 75 percent of the cases, and saved money in 81 percent of the cases.  In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified that their cases took 45 percent less time and had 79 percent fewer attorney hours than litigation (*ECCR_Benefits_Recommendations_Report_ 5-02-018.pdf*, n.d.).

ECCR has been proven to improve the relationships between the government and other stakeholders and improve outcomes.  In a survey of over 700 participants that have utilized the process, 82 percent agree that the process improved relationships and created new ones.  And even when the process did not reach an agreement, 64 percent of the participants still responded that progress was made, and their working relationships improved.   Finally, ECCR improves outcomes with high settlement rates ranging from 63 to 93 percent, as well as creative solutions (*ECCR_Benefits_Recommendations_Report_ 5-02-018.pdf*, n.d.).

## Data Methods

This study was a content analysis on information available about the Department of Energy (DOE).  The data is available from the DOE website.  The data were obtained from annual reports pursuant to the OMB-CEQ policy memorandum on ECCR are produced by Federal Department Agencies, and the data synthesized into a published study (https://www.udall.gov/OurPrograms/Institute/ECRReport.aspx).  These reports have been published

annually since 2006 and provide a basis for trend analysis for how each federal department is utilizing ECCR.

The 2017 report was the last report available for review, and provided a trend analysis of reporting from 2007 through 2017 (*FY17ECCRSynthesisReport_Final.pdf*, n.d.).  Reports were reviewed for both the DOE and the Federal Electric Regulatory Commission (FERC), as they are an entity associated with the DOE.  The key data reviewed was the number of ECCR cases for each entity in each year from 2007 through 2017.  The reports were reviewed to determine not only numbers, but types and categories of cases, and suggested areas of improvements offered by the agencies.

The latest summary report illustrates 120 cases (25%) were associated with planning, and 137 cases (28%) were associated with siting and construction (*FY17ECCRSynthesisReport_Final.pdf*, n.d.).  The 2017 report from FERC illustrate that 103 of their reported 115 cases  were related to siting and construction, representing 75 percent of the overall siting and construction related cases for all agencies ("Udall Foundation," n.d.).  The summary report also identifies that agencies are still "Building ECCR personnel and staff capacity" (*Fy_2017_epa_eccr_annual_report_final.pdf*, n.d., p. 6), illustrating that some agencies still require additional resources.

## Findings

A review of material available on the DOE and FERC websites indicate that the focus of conflict management has been on environmental conflict.  The information further suggests that focus was placed on Environmental Conflict Resolution at the Federal level beginning in 2005.  This focus promulgated annual reporting to help capture and quantify the use of ECR.  This focus was renewed and expanded in 2012 to include collaboration, resulting in the Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR).  This indicates that the Federal Government realizes the importance of collaboration early in the process as a preventative measure to eliminate, or greatly reduce the number of conflict cases that actually reach a critical point that requires ADR.

Review of the data for the DOE and FERC reveals that the trend for the DOE has reduced significantly since the inception of the program in 2005, starting with 136 reported instances in 2008, peaking at 152 cases in 2009, and dropping to 31 in 2015, spiking to 89 in 2016, and dropping to an all-time low of 20 in 2017.  The FERC, however, appears to be trending upward, starting in 2007 with 21 cases, dropping to an all-time low in 2008 of 16, then climbing to a high of 115 in 2017, with some peaks and valleys in between.  The findings indicate a trend of decrease in ECCR cases for DOE for the decade of data available, and a significant increase in cases for the 11 years reported by FERC.
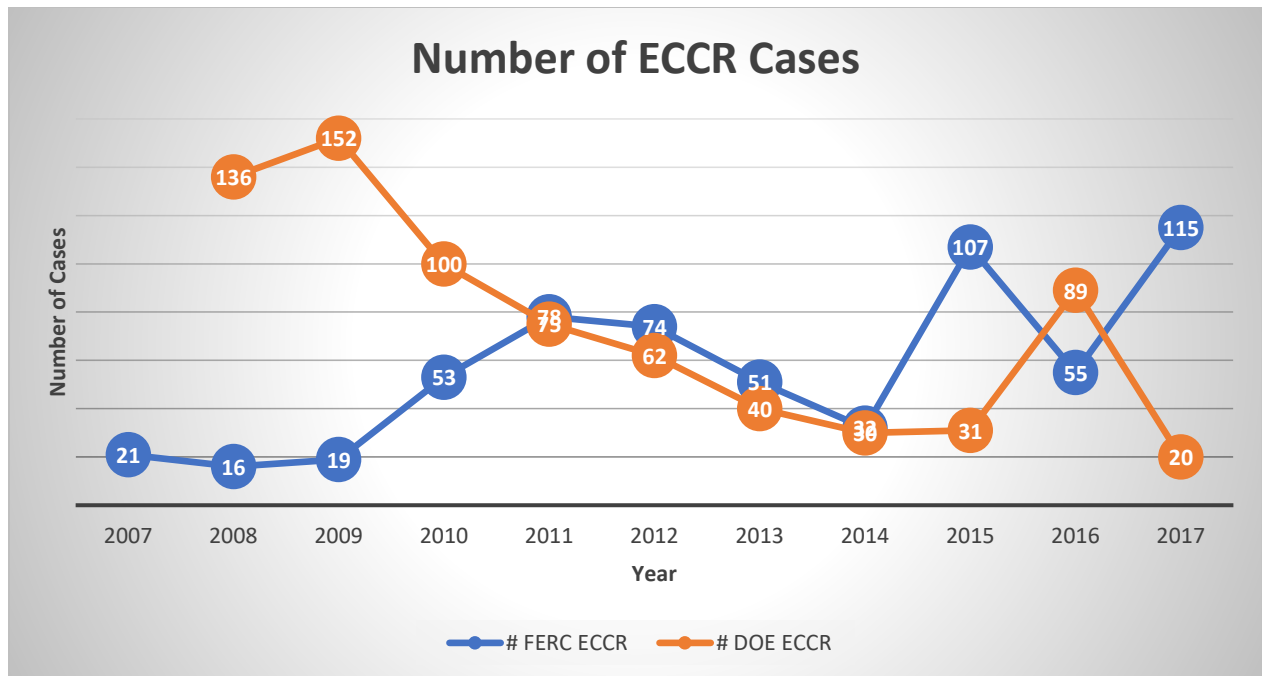
*Figure 1. Number of ECCR cases for the DOE and FERC from 2007 through 2017.*

This trend in data, coupled with the review of the specific example cases and methodologies provided in the individual annual report indicates a potential structural issue in how FERC is addressing preventive conflict management across the organization.  Increased number of cases that are likely ADR versus proactive engagement efforts indicate that FERC may not have the processes and resources required within the organization to execute the proactive practices of conflict management.  This would not be surprising, as the initial focus in 2005 was on ECR, not stressing the importance of the collaboration aspects of the ECCR process. The Federal Government re-issued new policy in 2012 amplifying the original call for ECR, and adding collaboration to the efforts and renaming it ECCR (*FY17ECCRSynthesisReport_Final.pdf*, n.d.). Due to the initial lack of focus on the preventative approach to conflict management, there is a likelihood that FERC, as well as other government agencies, have not structured and resourced their organizations to facilitate the required early engagement efforts to reduce or eliminate environmental disputes early in the process.

Upon review of the individual, detailed reports for the DOE and FERC, they describe multiple examples of implementation of ECCR efforts.  However, the approaches taken seem to be inconsistent across both organizations.  There may not be a consistent organizational structure to ensure focus on prevention.  Review and modification of the organizational structure, and implementation of standardized processes and procedures could improve preventative measures for conflict management, potentially reducing the number of ECCR efforts focused on ADR.

## Implications

The material reviewed indicates that the majority of external conflict issues for the Federal Government is related to environmental conflict.  As such, the Department of Energy and related Federal Energy Regulatory Commission are significant players in this area due to their cleanup efforts and infrastructure projects related to the delivery of reliable energy.  This has prompted

the Federal Government to issue policy to reduce the amount of environmental conflict by utilizing the ECR and now ECCR process (*OMB CEQ Joint Statement_1.pdf*, n.d.) (*OMB_CEQ_Env_Collab_Conflict_Resolution_20120907_2.pdf*, n.d.).  This answers the question of *What are the most common types of conflict in the Department of Energy, and how are they most frequently addressed?*  These environmental conflicts are addressed through the ECCR process.  The data reviewed from the annual ECCR cases reported, indicate a downward trend for the DOE and an upward trend for FERC (*Fy_2017_epa_eccr_annual_report_final.pdf*, n.d.).  This upward trend for FERC, coupled with their inconsistent approach to proactive conflict management indicates that their organization is not yet organized and resourced to meet the 2012 requirements for a collaborative approach to conflict management to reduce number of cases.  This indicates that the DOE has a healthy program to ensure a proactive conflict management approach, while FERC may need to assess why their trend is increasing.  This answers the second question of *What are the best practices for conflict management in the Department of Energy or similar government agencies, and how can the Department of Energy improve?* The best practices are a collaborative and proactive approach to conflict management.  The DOE appears to have a healthy program that is effectively utilizing this approach, while FERC may need to modify their organization and resourcing to improve performance.

## Conclusion

The Federal Government recognized the importance of conflict resolution as it pertained to environmental issues over a decade ago and issued policy for Federal agencies to implement Environmental Conflict Resolution processes and programs in their agencies(*OMB CEQ Joint Statement_1.pdf*, n.d.).  Seven years later, the Federal Government realized the importance of proactive conflict management that was facilitated via collaboration, and added that to the policy to result in Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) (*OMB_CEQ_Env_Collab_Conflict_Resolution_20120907_2.pdf*, n.d.).  Based on data and specific cases reviewed, organizations may still be lagging on establishing the organizational structure and resourcing required to perform the preventative conflict management efforts.  While the Department of Energy appears to be meeting the intent of the policy and managing their ECCR cases effectively, the FERC appears to be trending in a direction that indicates that they need to assess their ECCR program, specifically on preventative measures.  Measures could be incorporated into a conflict management tool that would improve the overall preventative management of conflict (Young et al., 2016).

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# About This Issue's Authors

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**Shalom Charles Malka**, PhD, is a professor of management at Sullivan University's College of Business and Technology, in Louisville, KY. Malka is a former president of numerous franchises in several states, and an acknowledged entrepreneur with extensive work experience in both business and academia for more than three decades. He taught at Haifa University and Ottawa University prior to joining Sullivan University. He earned a B.S.W from the University of Haifa, an M.A from the University of Tel-Aviv, an MBA from Ottawa University, and a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh.

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**Travis Summers** Travis Summers is the Infrastructure Lead for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research Development Test and Engineering (DASN (RDT&E)), responsible for

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His academic background includes a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Purdue University (1996), a Master of Public Affairs from Indiana University (2008), and he is currently working on his doctorate in Strategic Management at Sullivan University. Travis is a Certified Energy Manager as well as a Professional Engineer and Registered Land Surveyor in the State of Indiana. He serves or has served on three utility boards and an economic development board over the past 15 years. In his leisure time, he enjoys running, exercising, reading, and golfing. Travis and his wife Leslie reside in Loogootee, Indiana with their daughter Brooklyn. In addition to being a long-term infrastructure manager, Travis owns and operates a consulting company focused primarily on engineering and land surveying.

# Information for Authors

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*Example Title Page:*

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