

Clinical Sociology Review

Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 23

1-1-1993

Timing the De-escalation of International Conflicts

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Recommended Citation

Kaldenberg, Dennis O. (1993) "Timing the De-escalation of International Conflicts," *Clinical Sociology Review*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 23.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr/vol11/iss1/23>

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scope of study, and the inferences that clinical sociologists and sociological practitioners could make about specific religions and behavior, this book is essentially catalogued information. More substantive analysis by the editors (and others) is badly needed, and the introduction and conclusion are too sparse to give readers a firm grasp of issues raised. The appendix—key questions about death and afterlife, with answers from all fifteen religions—moves toward accomplishing the task, but an appendix cannot substitute for direct analysis and discussion.

The quality of specialist contributions is uneven, and their varied formats distract rather than aid the absorption of complex data. Although brevity is necessary and appropriate for analytic purposes, some distinctions must be maintained. For example, the editors note that a Reform perspective is used in the review of Judaism, but this author does not comment about substantive differences among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews, or identify himself with Reform Judaism. In addition, the editors should have assumed responsibility for the consistent use of inclusive language.

How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife provides some valuable information for making connections between beliefs and behavior, and may meet the editors' stated purpose of broadening readers' understanding and empathy by clarifying their own religious views. As religion is a significant clinical variable—at individual, family, community, and social levels—sociological practitioners can benefit from the substance of this book.

Timing the De-escalation of International Conflicts, by Louis Kriesberg and Stuart J. Thorson. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991. 304 pp.
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The ancient aphorism reminds us that “To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Applied to conflict resolution, it would suggest that there is a time to intervene in a conflict and a time to refrain from intervening. “This book offers assessments of when the time is actually right for a de-escalatory effort” (p. 1). The authors use an introduction and eleven major essays to speak to the issue of timing in international conflict de-escalation. The articles in the book were chosen to address three sets of issues in timing de-escalation: 1) the conditions conducive to de-escalation, 2) the effectiveness of various strategies in various conditions, and 3) the consequences of acting or failing to act at either the

appropriate or inappropriate time. Separate sections of the book are organized to address the first two of these issues; the third issue is discussed in readings throughout the book.

Part One of the book includes a collection of essays which address the issue of conditions conducive to de-escalation. The first chapter, by Terrence Hopmann, examines the role of external events in the negotiations to improve relations between countries that are in conflict. His review of empirical studies and cases concludes with specific, practical, policy-oriented suggestions for those doing negotiations within the context of the international environment. Indar Jit Rikhye writes a chapter on the types of conflict conditions that warrant involvement by the United Nations secretary general, and the role that the secretary should play once involved. Richard Haass examines the intrinsic and extrinsic conditions that led to a "ripe time" for cold war de-escalatory efforts. His chapter examines successful INF reduction negotiations between the United States and Soviet Union. Also addressing the issue of conditions, Jo Husband's chapter attempts to classify ways in which domestic factors affected timing and opportunities for efforts to reduce conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Part Two of the book examines the issue of strategies for de-escalation. The first chapter in this part is an attempt to develop a theory of de-escalation which focuses on the way adversaries define their relationship to each other. In it, Roger Hurwitz points to the importance of relationship redefinition in successful de-escalatory efforts. The following chapter by I. William Zartman and Johannes Aurik examines the role that positive and negative power (promises and threats, respectively) play in de-escalation. Juergen Dedring's chapter on superpower strategies in the efforts to terminate the war in Beirut illustrates how de-escalation can be undermined by failing to include all of the primary parties (Israel in this case) in the de-escalation efforts, failing to synchronize timing of the actors who could effect the de-escalation efforts, and failing to match strategy to prevailing conditions. Two-track diplomacy, nongovernmental, informal and unofficial negotiations between parties from different countries is examined in a chapter by John McDonald. Two-track efforts are most likely to be used by parties who feel their interests are not being addressed in formal/official negotiation efforts. Such two-track systems are illustrated by the negotiations between scientists from different countries, or between business representatives and countries' representatives (for example, Armand Hammer and the Soviets) or participation in citizen exchange programs. Such multiple track programs are effective not only because they serve to generate dialogue between groups at conflict, but also because they destroy the

need for an enemy among selected consistent groups from both countries. Ralph Earle discusses the role that private negotiations (those done outside the purview of official government-to-government negotiations) can have in the de-escalation efforts. While such efforts often may help the movement toward de-escalation, they may not be entirely successful at reducing or resolving a conflict. If such efforts are made, they are best limited to minor disputes, undertaken by individuals with the facts necessary to negotiate effectively, and done with the approval and coordination of official parties.

The two chapters of Part Three provide closure on the many topics and perspectives discussed in previous chapters of the book. Jeffrey Z. Rubin emphasizes that the time is ripe to begin a systematic study of the role of timing in conflict resolution which moves beyond abstract, subjective assessments. The final chapter, by James P. Bennett, Goodwin Cooke, and Stuart J. Thorson, points to the importance of integrating theory and practice. One important application of theory to practice is in providing assistance, guidelines, and norms to the people who are doing the negotiations. Although contextual factors make direct applications from the past difficult, there still is something to be learned from the quote by George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The collection of essays in this book provides detailed historical examples combined with scientific generalizations on the issue of conflict resolution between nations at conflict. It illustrates that while conflict de-escalation can benefit from systematic scientific study, it cannot be completely understood without reference to the values of parties involved in the conflict de-escalation effort. This book on the role of timing and its relationship to conditions and strategies in de-escalation is a valuable contribution to theory on conflict resolution. Although aimed specifically at de-escalation of international conflicts, the generalizations about timing and intervention in the conflict process will be valuable to clinical and applied sociologists who deal with efforts to reduce conflict between other parties (individuals, groups, organizations, families).