

The Conflict Resolution Field: Reflections on Multiple Realities, Challenges, and Geographical Divides

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CR) IS AN INTELLECTUALLY stimulating field of inquiry, not only due to its inherent appeal, but also to the multiplicity and complexity of the challenges that it offers its scholarly community. It encompasses a variety of fascinating topics, ranging from hostage negotiations and divorce mediation to artistic dimensions of peacemaking. Answers to CR research questions must often be sought through the use of multiple techniques as diverse as laboratory simulations and oral history. Moreover, locals in a conflict zone might view practitioners of conflict resolution alternately as agents of change and peace lovers, with whom they sympathize, or as imperialists, whom they detest. Furthermore, there is no agreement within the field as to what the practice of CR actually constitutes. Nevertheless, CR is rapidly growing and increasingly making contributions to knowledge production and to finding non-violent solutions to conflicts.

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This essay aims to offer insight into what comprises CR and to outline some unique challenges confronting the field. The paper argues that the eclectic nature of the field and lack of core competencies are the two factors that accentuate those challenges. Accordingly, the following section presents basic assumptions that make it distinct from other fields.¹ The paper then lists its main characteristics by highlighting the related challenges that CR scholars and practitioners face. The third section discusses the state of research and practice and briefly introduces the most recent debates in the science and art of CR. Finally, this paper addresses issues related to different applications of CR in multiple geographies, mainly by looking at U.S. and European practices, and offers a glimpse of developments in other cultural settings by focusing on the Turkish experience. The institutionalization of CR started in early 2000 in Turkey, mainly in academia. Since then, its development took different forms in multiple venues. The lack of knowledge-based competition and the social and political contexts in which these developments take place are some aspects that are discussed in this section.

THE FIELD OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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As noted by Jakob Bercovitch and others, “Conflict resolution is about ideas, theories, and methods that can improve our understanding of conflict and our collective practice of reduction of violence and enhancement of political processes for harmonizing interest.”² The field of CR is not homogenous in terms of its assumptions, issues, or methodologies.³ That said, some general observations can be made about the basic features of this approach.

First, CR is interested in both structural and perceptual factors affecting conflict systems. One perspective is that parties are bound to their perceptual frameworks when evaluating interactions with opponents. This presumption, distinct from peace studies traditions, naturally embraces behavioral themes, such as the role of trust, perception, attitudes, motivation, and cognitive frameworks. Accordingly, in practice, CR is not only achieved through the improvement of economic, gender, and environmental inequalities, but also through the incorporation of facilitated dialogues and small group interaction approaches into the peacemaking practice.

Second, CR treats social conflicts and conflict resolution techniques as dynamic processes. The assumption here is that parties, issues, and interests change over time. The nature of interactions also varies as conflicts persist. This approach highlights the importance of process as a key variable for the CR

researcher. The two well-established research areas, negotiation and mediation, are heavily nurtured by research projects that investigate process-outcome relationships in the employment of such techniques. Similarly, for the practitioners, the question of which process results in which outcome remains a fundamental one in designing and implementing conflict interventions at all levels of human interaction, including interpersonal, intergroup, and international encounters.

Next, one of the crucial issue areas of CR is the role of third parties. Third parties may help conflicting parties reach mutually satisfactory outcomes in cases where the parties cannot reach an agreement through their own efforts. The interactive conflict resolution workshop approach is a distinct tradition among practitioners in the field.⁴ These meetings, assisted by a third party, take place between the key players and influential actors of the adversarial groups and are mostly conducted in private settings. Third-party practitioners do not take a partisan attitude to conflict situations. Instead of attributing the cause of the conflict to one side's characteristics, they are interested in what parties can specifically do to influence the conflict process. Mediation, facilitation, peace-keeping, and humanitarian interventions are major areas of academic research that come into play.

Some of the most important conceptual and practical contributions of CR are integrative bargaining, problem-solving workshops, conflict assessment frameworks, stages and dynamics of conflict, third-party intervention, and contingency approaches.⁵ Contemporary CR goes beyond these contributions and includes such aspects and practices as “building the condition for peace, including post-violence reconciliation, enhancing justice, establishing conflict management systems, and many other issues.”⁶ As this essay will elaborate on in the next section, CR is an interdisciplinary field. That said, with the aforementioned assumptions, related concepts, and approaches, the sum of CR is larger than its individual disciplinary contributions. In other words, in addition to direct intellectual contributions of the traditional disciplines—such as political science, international relations, economics, biology, sociology, social psychology, etc.—the CR field comprises an independent stream of study that is heavily based on the assumptions stated above, together with those hybrid studies and practices that stand in between.

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CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION FIELD

CR is an interdisciplinary field. Its genesis can be traced back to an independent line of research that began in the 1920s with psychologists such as Kurt Lewin

and his students.⁷ In the mid-1940s, this effort was complemented by the contributions of economists, led by the work of von Neumann and Morgenstern that was further developed by Nash and Schelling.

The tradition of game theory introduced crucial concepts such as Pareto optimality, zero-sum games, and non-zero-sum games. Social psychologists later borrowed these terms and further elaborated upon them within the context of labor disputes. Organizational development and management sciences joined the bandwagon in the mid-1960s. Additionally, the study of negotiation and third-party intervention—including mediation research—has been explored by political scientists, sociologists, social psychologists, scholars in the management sciences, and international relations scholars. Other disciplines contributing to CR include anthropology, environmental sciences, applied game theory, decision sciences, communication, and more recently, both fine arts and performing arts. This collage of studies from different disciplines poses challenges to CR scholars and practitioners. It is in this context that Carrie Menkel-Meadow questioned whether “theory and practice [could be] scaled-up from dyadic negotiation or triadic mediation to whole politics and complex decision making in deliberative democracies.”⁸ This is an important inquiry that addresses challenges in theory building as well as in application-related complexities of the field.

10 One particular challenge to conducting analysis in the field of CR is the lack of uniform terminologies, which therefore also poses a challenge to the systematic accumulation of knowledge. The depth and scope of some core concepts vary across different levels of analysis and disciplinary boundaries. For example, empowerment is a key concept in CR that has been generated in the context of divorce, labor mediations, and community mediation practices in the

United States. Empowerment activities by mediators include power-balancing tactics, such as controlling the process via ground rules and neutrality. In general, these activities allow the parties to deal with

each other more effectively. Sometimes, however, they require the mediator to directly help the weaker party by transferring skills and resources in order to balance power asymmetries across the table.⁹ Though the term is part of the generic CR literature, its meaning and application become controversial in an international context. In international relations, empowering the weaker party is often perceived by disputants and policy analysts as taking sides with one of the

parties. This means that the original constructive content of the term translates into something counterproductive, as it transcends disciplinary boundaries. Intervention, bias, and impartiality in mediation and mediation strategies are other concepts whose meaning and practice vary from one discipline to another. Such confusion is not limited to the practice of CR; the same feature renders a messy conceptual toolbox to CR scholars. Menkel-Meadow refers to the issue of transdisciplinary concepts in the context of contingency problems related to the locus of theory and practice of CR.¹⁰ She emphasizes different disciplinary and social contexts in which those concepts are generated and questions the “integrity, clarity and legitimacy” of the transdisciplinary terms in explaining the world to a general audience in the academic community.

The prestige of the CR field in disciplinary hierarchy is another challenge. In academia, this aspect is generally reflected in the way administrations allocate resources among different programs, and more concretely, in academic recruitments. Other things being equal, a classical international relations or psychology degree with an emphasis on conflict studies generally trumps an interdisciplinary degree in CR. Babbitt and Hampson suggest that, because CR theory and research are drawn from multiple disciplines, as opposed to international relations theories, it is “chaotic—hardly elegant or parsimonious.” They claim that “this translates unfairly to CR studies being seen as ‘soft’ theoretically, focusing more on praxis rather than contributing to innovation and advancement of our general understanding of conflict processes.”¹¹ In international relations, the impact of the behavioral approaches is not as predominant as it is in CR, except in the political psychology subfield of international relations and perhaps in decision sciences. Similarly, the practice of international relations—diplomacy—is mostly confined to institutional analysis. CR theory, however, heavily relies on knowledge and methodologies generated in the behavioral realm. CR practices are also nurtured by micro approaches, such as communication studies and small group dynamics literature in social psychology. Furthermore, the social and political contexts in which international relations studies have flourished (e.g., World War I, World War II, and the Cold War) have generated a considerable demand from the policy and defense world for systematic study of international interactions. This demand has resulted in considerable resources to be spent for the development of the international relations field. The CR field has not yet benefited from such an outpouring of resources.

A third challenge involves communication difficulties across disciplinary boundaries. Due to the multiplicity of contributors, scientists with traditional disciplinary backgrounds often have a tendency to rely on knowledge gener-

ated in the same tradition, even when their research areas are extensively cross-disciplinary. This is especially the case for relatively well-rooted epistemic communities such as the peace science community of the IR field, which particularly encourages quantitative research on peace and conflict management as well as social psychology traditions. A quick literature review of bias in mediation, for example, shows that studies conducted in the peace science tradition rarely include work from the behavioral sciences. In very few studies can references be found to publications in the behavioral tradition, interdisciplinary outlets, or the case study tradition. Similarly, review articles by behavioral scientists rarely include works published in journals of peace science. In the absence of communication across disciplines, the accumulation of knowledge in the field is often unsystematic and sporadic.

CR is also characterized by a multiplicity of ways in which systematic knowledge is generated. Different disciplines approach the same phenomenon through their own traditional lenses. A CR scholar, therefore, has to be knowledgeable in multiple methodologies but at the same time remain ontologically neutral in order to keep an equal distance from all research techniques that produce systematic knowledge.¹² This aspect could offer the scientist additional freedom in formulating research questions and enable him or her to communicate with other peoples' research, generated in the neighboring field, without disciplinary biases. This challenge is one that other social science scholars rarely face, unless they purposefully aim to expand their investigative toolbox. Epistemologically, CR is dominated by both the positivist and constructivist approaches. Similarly, laboratory experimentation, large-N analysis, formal model, meta-analysis, content analysis, focused comparison, case studies, field research, evaluation research, action research, oral history, narrative analysis, policy studies, and contemporary issues are among the research techniques that the field embraces.

The aforementioned features are also reflected in the various aspects of institutionalization of the field, especially in the way they shaped those venues where academic knowledge is shared and disseminated. Most of the academic conferences on conflict are designed to attract a particular epistemic community. There are few academic platforms that bring a variety of people together. The International Studies Association's peace studies section generally attracts international relations scholars and political scientists working on peace and conflict studies. The American Political Science Association's "Conflict Processes" section creates a setting for a similar audience. The International Association for Conflict Management, which originally was mostly dominated by social

psychologists, has recently extended its scope in an attempt to be more inclusive. The International Society of Political Psychology also constitutes an exception.

The lack of core competencies in the curricula is an additional challenge to institutionalization of CR. While a variety of academic programs exist in the CR field, a common core curriculum among these programs—such as the kind that exists in the mainstream disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology—is unfortunately absent. CR programs are often hosted by different departments or centers, including law, education, public policy, arts, social sciences, and management

sciences, among others.¹³

Curricula of these programs are generally comprised of courses that are designed according to the backgrounds of the

available faculty, instead of a course list that reflects essential core competencies for a CR degree.¹⁴ In practice, especially in the peripheral geographies, this corresponds to a multiplicity of du jour CR programs, allowing an institution to start a glitzy new program in its efforts to attract students and to compete through product differentiation in the market. There have been efforts by the scholarly community and field experts to discuss this issue on different intellectual platforms. The 2013 International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) symposium, named Graduate Education in Peace and CR: Accomplishments and Challenges, is a recent attempt in this direction. In general, these debates mainly focus on a common curriculum of knowledge competencies as well as methodological, skill, and specialist competencies.¹⁵

Another characteristic of the discipline of CR is the existence of multiple epistemic orientations to its study and practice. According to Marieke Kleiboer, orientations vary along two dimensions: 1) assumptions about the nature of conflict (conflict as a challenge to order versus as an opportunity for social change) and 2) assumptions about the ontological status of conflict and its implications for theorizing about conflict (realist/objectivist versus nominalist/subjectivist epistemologies).¹⁶ Accordingly, the research and practice of CR could be conducted for different motives and purposes. Again using Kleiboer's terms, the practice of CR could serve and be perceived as a tool for political problem solving; reestablishing social relationships; asserting economic, cultural, or military dominance over a population; or power brokering. An example of CR being used for political problem solving could be those political negotiations that aim to

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develop and sustain a productive dialogue and to avoid conflict escalation. More specifically, the recent negotiations that led to an interim agreement between the United States and Iran on the limitation of Iran's nuclear enrichment could be an example of that sort. Furthermore, power brokering aims to reestablish the balance of power and maintain the stability of the international system. The U.S. involvement in the Bosnian conflict, for example, aimed at restoring balance in Europe and the Balkans in the post–Cold War era. John Burton's controlled communication workshops in Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lanka are examples of CR as social relationships, which regards conflict as an opportunity for social change. CR as domination, on the other hand, includes all initiatives that aim to maintain or change the status quo, according to the interests of the dominant powers. Mediating among the warring factions in Syria could be perceived by some analysts as an initiative to enhance the international communities' political and strategic priorities on the Syrian conflict. The question of naming the field is in itself a reflection of differences in understanding its essence and boundaries. Conflict management, dispute settlement, peace studies, CR, conflict transformation, and peace and development studies are all names that the field calls itself.¹⁷

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Such cleavages create multiple identities for the CR researcher. While some scholars consider the field a normative discipline and a venue to contribute to social change and justice, others see it as yet another platform for knowledge production. This leaves CR scholars with different identities—including researcher, advisor, analyst, strategist, and performer—resulting in a unique multiplicity of roles in contrast to the mainstream social or behavioral scientist.¹⁸ For example, the “Whose peace?” approach, which critically analyzes contemporary peace-building practices and advocates for more inclusive strategies, could be evaluated in this context. Scholars who consider liberal peace a hegemonic practice take an activist role by engaging in debate over major intervention strategies in the conduct of contemporary international relations, including responsibility to protect, humanitarian intervention, and the role of regional powers.¹⁹ Similarly, the ethics of intervention is a contested subject not only in the international context but also in family, community, and organizational realms.

The practice of CR can be politically charged. The scope of CR practice is not limited to civic involvement. Rather, it is often executed as part and parcel of states' official diplomacy. Many countries consider CR-related activities part of their foreign policy missions and, therefore, establish related institutions to execute such tasks. In the United States, for example, the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM), the Office of the Coordinator for Recon-

struction and Stabilization (S/CRS), and the Office of Transactions Initiatives (OTI) are departments that operate under the umbrella of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and work on CR issues. Moreover, CR is about forming political alliances within international organizations. Illustrations of this phenomenon include Turkey and Finland's Friends of Mediation initiative at the United Nations in September 2010 and following UN resolutions on mediation, the Spanish-Moroccan Initiative on Mediation in the Mediterranean Region. Outsiders often perceive these efforts as policies intended to enhance the influence of states with similar policy priorities. CR activities of NGOs in conflict zones are often interpreted by local authorities as "foreign intervention" in domestic politics. This is an issue in the current peace negotiations between the Turkish government and the Kurdish representatives in Turkey. The Turkish authorities resist the idea of employing an international third-party observers group into the peace process by claiming that these observers could be potential spoilers along the road. At the time of this writing—that is, on the eve of the general elections—both parties seem to agree on a peace monitoring group composed of Turkish/Kurdish opinion makers. It remains to be seen how this attitude of the government will be reconciled in the future stages of the peace talks.

A third major feature of the field is that CR is an applied field. Many regional organizations see CR as part of their mandates. For instance, there are multiple peace and CR NGOs working in the field. Semigovernmental entities such as the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and, recently, the European Institute of Peace both work for similar causes. A number of academic institutions offer a variety of CR workshops as part of the field's practicum tradition. The interaction between theory, research, and practice is notably vibrant. Pressing needs in the policy world often pose new research questions in academia, demanding further sophistication in the knowledge production domain. Issues that emerge in the field—such as participation in peace processes, evaluation of peace interventions, the role of women in peace processes, and post-conflict issues—in turn shape the research agenda in academia. CR scholars frequently contribute to the practice of CR by offering their services in conflict mapping, systems analysis, process tracing, intervention design, evaluation, facilitation, and mediation. These efforts qualify as expert interventions—also known as applied theory—and their design and implementation require professional and academic preparation, in some instances not less than the effort invested to conduct traditional academic research. The field comprises a rather small scholar-practitioner community that delivers such services. Lawrence Susskind,

for example, a professor of urban and environmental planning at MIT, is involved in dispute resolution processes in the context of public disputes, land use conflict, and water conflicts. Similarly, Benjamin Broome, professor of communication at Arizona State University, has conducted several applied projects on bicom-munal communication in Cyprus and has produced academic publications, as well as policy papers on the dynamics of intercultural communication. John Burton, Christopher Mitchell, Ronald Fisher, Dennis Sandole, Edward Azar, and Herbert Kelman are other known CR scholars who employed interactive problem solving approaches in various ethnic conflicts. There are at least three issues related to CR being an applied field.

First, the scholar-practitioner identity in the field is not acknowledged in career advancement in traditional academic institutions, which often causes issues in tenure and promotion considerations. Similarly, such practices add new time constraints to the scholars' demanding schedules. Very often, scholars have to engage in CR praxis as a side job to their traditional research and teaching duties.²⁰ This, in turn, places limits on the enhancement of knowledge-based CR practices and inhibits the enrichment of CR theory through field experiences.

Second, one must consider how best to translate the research findings to the policy world. Again, there are no natural venues to which such knowledge can be transferred. These exchanges require boutique initiatives mostly taken by those groups who are most in need of such exchanges. Action research, which also includes the aforementioned workshop tradition, is a special research technique that directly allows the transfer of knowledge from practice to theory and vice versa. Aside from this technique, however, there is a need for special efforts to build such interfaces. The academic council of the UN Academic Advisory Council on Mediation, for example, was established with this understanding in mind in November 2012. Its aim is to promote more systematic exchanges between academics and institutions working on conflict prevention and mediation in different regions, and also in the United Nations Department of Political Affairs. There is still plenty of space for similar institutions to bridge IOs, NGOs, CR professionals, and academia.

Third, peacemaking is a complex activity that entails the collaboration of multiple actors in order to achieve a variety of goals in different phases of the endeavor. Coordination between the players remains one of the key issues in its practice. Actors, NGOs, government agencies, and donors aim to avoid duplicating an engagement that already exists in the field. In addition, they want to be sure that the nature of the engagement is the correct one, given the stage of the conflict and history of other involvements. All these considerations are also

related to the maximization of limited funding and services. Susan Allen Nan, in discussing the challenges in CR coordination, offers examples of good practices from the field. She highlights the coordination efforts in the form of analysis sharing between the two NGOs, the Conflict Management Group (CMG) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), when they worked together on the Georgian-Ossetian Dialogue Project. In this case the NRC provided CMG with information on local developments from the conflict zone and collaborated with CMG staff, which was based in Cambridge, MA, in analyzing the conflict situation.²¹ Coordination between official peace efforts (Track I) and civic engagement (Track II) is another facet of the same issue. In this context, Nan highlights an incidence of collaboration between Track I actors (official mediators such as OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine) and Track Two interveners (Moldovan Initiative Committee on Management) in the Moldovan-Transdnestrian conflict in 1999, when actors in both tracks jointly organized a study visit to Northern Ireland with the expert groups from both sides of the conflict and the mediators.²²

RECENT ADVANCES IN THE FIELD OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION²³

As with other fields of inquiry, the agenda of CR research responds to contemporary developments in the world. A quick analysis of influential academic journals in the field reveals that the nationalism and ethnic conflict studies of the 2000s have been partially replaced by studies on identity dynamics, the role of cultural traits, and cultural ties to conflict. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the recent rise of the ISIL, and the Charlie Hebdo incident in France, researchers have been focusing on CR with respect to terrorism and interfaith dialogue. The U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan gave rise to research on peace building, post-conflict mediation and CR, women's participation in peace processes, and the role of private military companies. Scholars who study Africa have raised other questions, mostly on the role of natural resources in conflict, climate change and conflict, and refugees. Similarly, globalization has fostered research on multilateral negotiations. In an age of innovations, the use of technology, CR, and conflict in cyberspace are trending subjects. Internally displaced persons (IDPs), human security, transitional justice, mass atrocities and trauma healing, and responsibility to protect are other subjects the field is currently studying. Task conflict—that is, conflict over work issues, such as goal clarification—and process conflicts over logistical issues, distributive injustice and conflict, and the role of emotional intelligence are only a few of the topics one could mention in an organizational context. What is missing in

this overall picture is a substantial crossbreeding between political science and CR. Deliberative democracy approach, which addresses democratic processes that result in a binding decision, could be an exception to this observation. One reason for the overall lack of hybrid studies could be the fact that the CR approach takes social processes as a unit of analysis and therefore has potential to treat all forms of political interactions as a type of negotiation and/or third-party intervention. Political

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science, however, traditionally, emphasizes other factors such as structures, institutions, incentives, and strategic interactions in explaining

causes and dynamics of political action. All public policy issues—including environmental policies, health care, urban planning, education, and bioethics—are issue areas that the theory and practice of CR have plenty to offer.²⁴ Similarly, CR offers valuable lenses through which scholars can conduct policy analysis and examine policy change. Another intellectual intersection awaiting further exploration is that of development studies and CR. Technology, innovation, and peacemaking, as well as the role of fine arts and performing arts in CR, are also promising areas for future studies. As for the practice of CR, hybrid systems of conflict management such as forms of participation in peace processes; gender-responsive evaluations; mediation and negotiation aspects of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); and the strategic aspect of peace building are some of the topics reflecting recent trends.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIVIDES AND THE TURKISH EXPERIENCE

CR is a globally growing discipline. It could be argued that in Europe, CR is heavily influenced by the peace studies tradition that has roots in the theory of the 1960s. Having experienced two devastating wars, Europe is home to a tradition of peace studies that looks into the structural causes of conflict and searches for remedies through the alteration of those factors. The original themes of European conflict research involved the causes of war, violence, and enablers of security. Today, peace and culture, democracy and human rights, civil society, media, conflict transformation, transitional justice, and human security are additional areas of inquiry. In contrast to European structuralism and its critical stand, the U.S. tradition takes a more pragmatic approach that focuses on the process of resolving conflict itself and is generally perceived as being mostly

preoccupied with empirical hypothesis testing.²⁵ Nevertheless, there are hybrid efforts in both locations.

In the policy world, for example, the mandates of the recently launched European Institute of Peace are especially similar to those of the U.S. Institute of Peace. Activities of European-based NGOs do not differ greatly from those conducted by their U.S. counterparts. In academia, especially in the management sciences, this division becomes even more synthetic. The content of the International Biennial of Negotiation (previously *Negocia*) in Paris comprises CR-related themes that are common to the global business community. The Department of Peace and Conflict Research of Uppsala University is an established institution known for its contributions to dataset generation and quantitative research. The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Austria has supported the Process of International Negotiation Program for years. In other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, middle-power mediation, community mediation, alternative dispute resolution, and resolution of indigenous conflicts are themes that have been emphasized. Similarly, in Canada, middle-power peacemaking and peacekeeping have been traditional areas of research. Moreover, academia in Israel has a rich tradition in fields related to CR. CR centers in Africa, among others, study topics related to peace and governance.

In Turkey, on the other hand, the CR field is a mixed bag. When it comes to institutionalizing CR as an academic discipline, universities, research institutes, and the government have pursued several initiatives. Sabanci University, a private university in Istanbul, started the first CR master's program in Turkey in 2000. This program initially adopted a version of the curriculum of George Mason University's CR program (then ICAR), comprising both behavioral and structural approaches with a practice leg. Later, the curriculum had to be significantly changed according to available academic resources and the background of the existing faculty. On the other hand, Koç University's Center for Conflict studies was established by international relations scholars within the peace science tradition. Bilkent University in Ankara has a center on Foreign Policy and Peace Research, which is part of the Ihsan Dogramaci Peace Foundation. The CR program in Izmir 9 Eylul University, which emphasizes peer mediation and interpersonal conflict, was founded by an education specialist. The Peace and Conflict Studies program at Hacettepe University, on the other hand, is a relatively recent establishment that heavily relies on the support of the visiting international faculty.

Despite this initially lively picture, there are fundamental issues concerning the institutionalization of the academic CR studies in Turkey. In the absence

of specialized human capacity, these initiatives often result in the institution depending on outside support for survival. More often, a practical option for these institutions is to conduct traditional security or policy studies under the label of CR. In the absence of core competencies, these programs, their performances, and their contributions are hard to evaluate or measure. As for the implementation of CR, another alternative for these institutions is to become a geographical hub for international CR actors who need regional partners. This generally results in functional collaboration rather than substantial teamwork. With the Turkish government's interest in the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative—a project launched in 2005 by Turkey and Spain to encourage dialogue and cooperation between different communities, cultures, and civilizations—and its recent commitment to the Kurdish peace process, the introduction of peace and CR-related centers at different universities has been encouraged. Along this line, in March 2015, Bilgi University launched the Peace Academy in Istanbul, with a stated goal of including civil society in the Kurdish peace process. Similarly, a CR center has been initiated at Mardin Artuklu University in southeast Turkey.

As for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) practices, in 2012 the Turkish Parliament passed a court-annexed mediation law that allows only lawyers to become mediators. This law poses a limitation to bottom-up civic capacity building and professionalization of the field. The local NGOs active in the conflict zones are generally religious organizations known to be close to the government or other religious communities. In sum, the situation in Turkey, with a few exceptions, is not far from what is described by Crocker, who claims that “in the absence of any recognized gatekeepers and with dramatically lowered barriers to entry, the conflict management space has become undisciplined and something of a free-for all.”²⁶ Therefore, a lack of human resources and of knowledge-based competition seems to be a major constraint in the Turkish context.

CONCLUSION

The paper provides an analytical overview of a rapidly developing and vibrant discipline. The CR field has a growing number of journals, professional associations, academic programs, think tanks, NGOs, and professionally managed webpages. The aforementioned characteristics and challenges are the indicators of the intellectual depth, breadth, and scope of the issues with which CR researchers and practitioners are involved. It would not be wrong to predict that the CR field will mature parallel to the developments in the social and international realms. The world ahead will contain multiple unforeseeable

and novel security fragilities, new ideas about the distribution of wealth and justice, and—with further technological innovations—constantly reframed conceptions of time, space, and relations. With this picture in mind, one can foresee that the discipline will grow globally and assume diverse tasks. The above-mentioned challenges deserve the attention of the CR community so that the new players can benchmark these efforts and offer their contributions to a structured dialogue. A decision on core competencies in academia is a crucial step toward this end. This does not necessarily mean that one should impose an intellectual straightjacket on such an energetic and stimulating field, but rather that it would be productive to create a reference point—an anchor for communicating across disciplines that will ensure systematic knowledge production, enable ethical and efficient practice, and permit the field to adopt further pedagogical responsibilities. 

NOTES

1. This essay is a brief *tour d'horizon* of a complex academic discipline. This version is mostly based on the debates in the behavioral and social traditions; therefore, it might be missing many other valuable contributions made in other venues.

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