

NATIONS IN CONFLICT: IRE223

Session 5: Conflict De-escalation

This session will introduce students to the topic of conflict de-escalation. Our starting point is a discussion of the question ‘does fighting resolve conflicts?’ after which, a short overview of contemporary conflicts worldwide is offered to illustrate the magnitude of the phenomena and the discrepancy in location, parties, types etc. In this week’s session, we will focus on three types of conflict de-escalation, namely conflict management, conflict transformation and conflict resolution, and discuss related topics (e.g. the prisoner’s dilemma, the orange quarrel, Zartman’s question of ‘ripeness’, Mutually Hurting Stalemate, irresolvable conflicts, etc.). The presentation is concluded with a discussing of conflict prevention, alongside three specific mechanisms to do so.

After reading the assigned literature and going over the presentation, students are asked to assess their newly acquired knowledge by answering the following questions:

1. Why would we want to manage conflicts? What does ‘collective security’ have to do with it?
2. What types of conflict de-escalation were mentioned in the presentation (4)?
3. What is the main difference between conflict management and conflict resolution?
4. What is the message behind the ‘Orange story’? how does it relate to conflict resolution?
5. What is a Mutually Hurting Stalemate? Is it a positive or negative state when conflict de-escalation is concerned?
6. Why are some conflicts irresolvable?
7. What is conflict prevention all about? Name three forms of such prevention and their means.