

## Resolving Partisan Conflict: A Dialectical Approach

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**Abstract :** Western democratic traditions are being strained. Western nations are losing the common agonistic ground needed to engage in traditional forms of democracy - adversarial debate, voting, and the peaceful transfer of power. Political polarization among party elites has become commonplace. Because it seeks to resolve conflict through the integration of opposites, a dialectical approach to resolving partisan conflict offers the promise of helping political partisans bridge ideological divides. This paper contains an analysis of dialectical engagement as a collaborative alternative to adversarial politics. Dialectical engagement involves two broad phases: collaborative political problem-solving and dialectical problem-solving. The paper contains a description of an 18-month longitudinal study assessing the effectiveness of dialectical engagement as a method for bridging divides on contentious socio-political issues. The study shows how dialectical engagement produced dramatic consensus among a small group of individuals from different political orientations as they worked together to resolve the issue of capital punishment.

**Keywords :** collaborative democracy, dialectical thinking, capital punishment, partisan conflict

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