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Christopher Mitchell

Beyond Resolution:

What Does Conflict Transformation Actually Transform?

Luc Reyhler

Peace Architecture

Abdul Aziz Said and Nathan C. Funk

The Role of Faith in Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution

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A Journey into the Future: Imagining a Nonviolent World

Books Received

A Journal of
The Network of Peace and Conflict Studies

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Information about the Authors

Abdul Aziz Said is Mohammed Said Farsi Professor of Islamic Peace and Director of the Center for Global Peace. Dr. Said was a member of the White House Commission on the Islamic World during the Carter Administration, has served as a consultant to the U.S. Information Agency and Department of State, and has played an active role in Arab-Israeli dialogues. His publications in the field of international relations have covered a wide range of topics, including human rights, ethnicity, multi-national corporations, American foreign policy, peace and conflict resolution, and Islamic-Western relations. His work, *Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective*, is now in its fourth edition.

Elise Boulding is Professor Emerita of Sociology, Dartmouth College, and former Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association. A scholar-activist, she has undertaken numerous transnational and comparative cross-national studies on conflict and peace, development, family life, women in society as well as writing on the future. Her books include: *The Underside of History: A View of Women through Time* (1992); *Building a Global Civic Culture*, (1990); *One Small Plot of Heaven: Reflections of a Quaker Sociologist on Family Life*, (1989); *The Future Images and Processes* with Kenneth Boulding (1995); and *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History*, (2000).

Nathan C. Funk is an assistant professor of International Relations at the American University School of International Service. His areas of specialization include peace and conflict resolution, Islam and Middle Eastern politics and culture. He has authored or co-authored writings on conflict resolution, dialogue, the contemporary Middle East, Islam and United States foreign policy.

Christopher Mitchell holds the Drucie French Cumbie Chair of Conflict Resolution and International Relations at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Virginia. He is the author of *The Structure of International Conflict* (1981), *Peacemaking and the Consultant's Role* (1981), *A Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (with Michael Banks, 1996) and most recently *Gestures of Conciliation* (2000). He was one of the original members of John Burton's Centre for the Analysis of Conflict at University College, London.

Luc Reyhler is Professor of International Relations and Peace Research at the University of Leuven, Belgium. He is also Convener of International Peace Research Association's Commission on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building. Dr. Reyhler has published many journal articles on field diplomacy, conflict prevention as well as a book entitled *Peace Building: A Field Guide* (2001).

BEYOND RESOLUTION: WHAT DOES CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION ACTUALLY TRANSFORM?

Christopher Mitchell

Abstract

The paper considers the concept of 'conflict transformation' in relation to earlier ideas concerning the 'resolution' of conflict and seeks to differentiate between the two approaches. Writers and writings from the conflict transformation 'school' are surveyed and an effort is made to delineate the core characteristics of the approach, viewed either as a process or an end state. Questions are raised about transformation on a personal, group or conflict system level, all of which seem to be encompassed by various adherents of the transformation school, and the unifying concept that emerges is that of the relationship between adversaries being transformed by a variety of techniques. However, it is finally argued that the very idea of 'relationship' is itself ambiguous so that a real intellectual effort needs to be made to clarify its nature and characteristics, and the various ways in which relationships can be changed.

Over the last few years it has become increasingly popular in the field of conflict studies to contrast processes leading to *conflict transformation* and those that are said to result in *conflict resolution*, with the strong implication that there are major differences between both processes and their respective outcomes, and the slightly less strong hint that transformation is a process that will make up for the inadequacies of mere resolution. For example, talking of a 'sea change' in the way conflicts are perceived, Kumar Rupesinghe argues, "...the notion of being able to resolve them once and for all has been superseded by an understanding that such dynamic and deep-rooted processes call for dynamic and sustained responses..." A similar view is expressed by Johan Galtung who states categorically that "...conflicts are generally not solved...What survives after a conflict has disappeared from the agenda is conflict energy reproduced and produced by the conflict. Then energy does not die...it attaches itself to one or more conflicts, possibly also the old one..."(Galtung 1995, p. 53)¹.

Now it may be, as my colleague Ilana Shapiro has pointed out in a personal communication², that employment of this relatively new term of 'transformation' is a reaction to the growing misuse of the term 'resolution' to stand for almost anything short of outright victory, defeat and revenge as an *outcome*, as well as for many *processes* involving overt violence ('bombing for peace') or covert coercion (economic sanctions to obtain parties' acquiescence to a dictated settlement) as 'resolution' methods. In short, the concept of transformation has emerged because of the corruption of the conception of 'resolution' in the sense that the latter is

employed indiscriminately to stand for what previously would have been termed 'managed' outcomes and strategies; and would fall clearly into the category of what David Bloomfield recently characterized as 'settlement' approaches (Bloomfield 1997).

A second explanation for the emergence of the concept of 'transformation', at least in terms of conflicts that involve individuals and small groups as parties, is offered by Bush and Folger (1994). They draw attention to the way in which the field of mediation and dispute settlement has changed over the last twenty years from one which began at grassroots level, with a focus on bringing about major social change, to one which has become a professionalized and organized practice, with a major goal of solving problems for clients. Given the co-option of mediation and resolution by status quo institutions in society, and their current focus on distributive settlements that satisfy needs, Bush and Folger argue that 'conflict resolution' has become a term associated with the manipulative search for an agreement that is satisfactory not merely to the adversaries, but also to the third party and the latent interests they represent. They neatly term this a 'win-win-win solution'. Commitment to social change and reform – mediation as a social movement – has been abandoned in favor of the search for atomized processes seeking agreements that provide superficial solutions to individual problems confronted in isolation. "...At its start in the 1960s, the mediation movement was indeed considered capable of helping to change the conditions that fueled the disorder of that decade...Today, it seems that few think of the mediation movement as even relevant to the problems of disempowerment, division and alienation that lie at the heart of societal tragedies..." (Bush & Folger 1994, p. 51). Hence the need for 'transformation' rather than 'resolution' with the latter's current implications of superficial satisfaction and agreement-itis.

Whatever the reason for its emergence, this dichotomy between 'resolution' and 'transformation' is, in many ways, a pity. Firstly, because the addition of yet another term to those already obfuscating the study and understanding of conflict – conflict formation, conflict management, conflict reduction, conflict containment, conflict mitigation – seems unnecessary. Secondly, because original uses of the term 'conflict resolution' appear more than adequate to cover any additional implications generally involved in the idea of a 'transformative' process or solution. For example, John Burton and Frank Dukes in the early 1990's were writing about conflict resolution processes as being those that seek to examine needs and options, and reach agreements that not only satisfy those needs but which can also bring about changes in existing systems and patterns of relations giving rise to the conflicts in the first place (Burton & Dukes 1990). Even before that, in the early days of conflict resolution practice, there was a clear understanding that many 'resolutions' certainly implied the need to bring about major structural changes in social systems, countries and communities as well as changes in fundamental relationships, if the 'resolutions' were to be genuinely acceptable, self-supporting and durable.

Be that as it may, it is worth considering arguments to the effect that conflict transformation is a different and perhaps more comprehensive process than conflict resolution ever was, and to explore what these differences are. To do so, it is

obviously necessary to have a clear idea of what conflict transformation is, what assumptions underlie the process, what effects it seeks to have on protracted conflicts and how these effects can best be brought about. This is a tall order and the task is made no easier by the fact that those who write about and advocate the use of transformation procedures have themselves a wide variety of views about what 'transformation' involves and how, when and by whom it can be brought about. The one central thing most writers and practitioners agree about is that transformation takes the business of coping with destructive protracted conflicts beyond the cessation of violence, the achievement of a compromise settlement or even the joint creation of an acceptable solution to the issues currently in conflict between the adversaries – in other words, beyond resolution.

Resolution and Re-emergence

Before tackling the major task of delineating the essential nature of conflict transformation, however, I think it is necessary to clear up one misapprehension about what writers from what might now be termed 'the resolution school' mean when they talk about conflicts being finally resolved as opposed to settled. This claim is rather more modest than sometimes appears. It involves a contention that an acceptable and durable solution to the issues in a particular conflict between adversaries has been discovered – or mutually created – by the parties themselves, possibly with outside assistance from other 'third' parties or possibly through their own efforts and sometimes with local assistance from 'insider partials'. It does not mean that exactly the same parties may not come into conflict in the future over other issues, some of which may even arise from the working out of the agreed solution to the original incompatibilities. The final 'resolution' of one particular conflict does not imply a conflict-free future, especially if the parties involved have a long history of enmity, fear or mistrust, although it is to be hoped that the process through which a mutually satisfactory solution was devised might have done something to diminish some of the dislike and mistrust and, at least, serve as a model for what might also be achieved through similar resolution processes in future conflicts between the same parties. This is, of course, a most unlikely outcome if the 'solution' takes the form of a settlement of exhaustion or a temporary compromise, partly coerced from the adversaries by a third party *a la* Dayton.

In somewhat different terms, nobody advocating the utility of conflict resolution is likely to argue that resolving a particular conflict will remove all differences or potential differences between parties³, whether the differences take the form of possessing contrasting goals or aspirations or simply *being* different from one another, perhaps as regards language, appearance, religious beliefs, social organization or culture. Even if, through some miraculously effective processes, the political, social and economic issues currently dividing the Greek Cypriots from the Turkish Cypriots on the island of Cyprus could be 'resolved', there would still be two different (and to a degree socially separate) communities on the island of Cyprus – or perhaps three, given the influx of mainland Turks into the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Undoubtedly new conflicts would arise among them in

future, some of which would likely be conflicts that exist at present but are suppressed by the currently dominant, inter-community conflict.

This argument sometimes appears difficult to support in view of the long drawn out conflicts that involve countries, nations and ethno-linguistic communities, such as the protracted struggle in Ireland and then in Northern Ireland, or the Franco-German rivalry between 1870 and 1945, or the complex system of conflicts in the former-Yugoslavia. Such conflicts, because they involve 'the same' people appear to go far back into history and to die down only to re-emerge at a later date. Analytically, however, many of such apparently protracted 'ethnic' conflicts might well turn out to involve quite different issues, some of which probably lend themselves to resolution no matter how ostensibly intractable they appear. It may be more accurate – and certainly more hopeful – to regard them as series of potentially resolvable, interlinked conflicts involving 'the same' people⁴, rather than as the same phenomenon that has 're-emerged' because it was not – and could not be – resolved during 'its' last cycle.⁵

It is true, of course, that some writers in discussing the need for conflict transformation have argued the impossibility – or, at least, the unlikelihood – of ever being able to resolve certain conflicts, and that all that happens is that they are temporarily suppressed or their pursuit neglected in favor of other activities. Carolyn Nordstrom, quoting Galtung, talks about conflicts being "...momentarily quieted, only to resurface again at a later time and in a different guise..." and criticizes the conception of conflicts having a linear form and a final endpoint as essentially the result of a 'Western' epistemology (Nordstrom 1995, p. 105). Clearly, some conflicts do re-emerge fundamentally unaltered, which would indicate to me, at least, that the previous solution had taken the form of an unsatisfactory, temporary compromise rather than a durable resolution. Such cases thoroughly justify Nordstrom's point that such *mis-titled* 'resolutions' may, paradoxically, be aptly named because, unable to deal with them in any final sense, we are constantly 're-solving them' (Nordstrom 1995, p. 106).

However, other cases may involve the formation of very different conflicts involving very new issues, rather than being the same conflict 'in a different guise', even though they involve the same parties. One needs to ask how 'different' a different guise needs to be before it ceases to be 'the same' conflict that has re-emerged, rather than a new one. Some careful analysis of the nature of the issues involved and the structures underlying their development needs to be undertaken before claims of 're-emergence' are made. It is even possible to make a case, for example, that the issues in the Irish conflict changed radically enough between 1921 and 1966 from issues of establishing an independent, united Irish republic to those of civil rights for the minority in the North – and then by 1970 rapidly back to issues of Irish unity and the partition where the conflict has remained – to be regarded analytically as a different conflict. One also needs to recall, when talking about protracted ethnic conflicts, Rudolph Stavenhagen's point that many so-called 'ethnic' conflicts are, on closer examination, examples of social, political and economic conflicts between groups who identify themselves and their opponents in ethnic terms (Stavenhagen 1991, p. 119). Some apparently intractable ethnic conflicts may be over issues only remotely connected with ethnic identity and its

expression, while others which are more closely related to ethnicity and its manifestations may allow for mutually acceptable solutions once it is recognized that ethnic survival is not actually an issue.

However, it is also true that such analytical distinctions between what is classified as new conflict and what as old, unresolved conflicts newly re-emerged may be practically irrelevant. The distinction may only be important in the sense that in the latter case the temporary settlement might ideally have been treated as a breathing space to enable a durable solution to be sought; and in the former case successful resolution of one set of issues might have led on to the exploration of conflict prevention measures to minimize residual antagonisms that might lead to future conflicts, which will almost inevitably arise and might escalate rapidly into coercion and violence. With this in mind, it seems unarguable that conflict transformation advocates have a point in holding that it is simply not enough to resolve one set of issues between parties who then remain in a mental frame of mutual suspicion and antagonism, in a relationship of unloved interdependence and locked in a system from which major, salient contentions will inevitably arise. Conflict transformation implies that much more than simply finding a solution to one set of conflicting interests and values is required. But what?

Formation, Transformation and ‘Standard’ Conflict Dynamics

Unfortunately, as I have already noted, a variety of somewhat contradictory answers are given to that question, depending partly upon which analysts are writing and the social level of the conflicts that they discuss. One might start by approaching the conundrum linguistically. If the term ‘resolution’ implies the process of finding a solution to some problem, then the term ‘transformation’ surely implies bringing about some major change in some aspect of the conflict or the socio-political system in which it is embedded – or in something else. But at least the conception of profound change is implied.⁶

In addition, using the same distinction as I have used elsewhere when discussing conflict resolution, it is reasonable to conclude that *conflict transformation* can stand both for an end state (or at least a set of identifiable conditions) when the conflict can be viewed as ‘transformed’ and for a set of processes through which the end state is achieved.

The core of the transformation concept, therefore, involves some kind of major change – a qualitative shift, as opposed to a quantitative alteration in degree, as that involved had medieval alchemists achieved their ambition of changing lead into gold.⁷ The question that follows must be: What gets transformed? Two obvious starting answers are firstly the conflict itself and secondly some aspect of the socio-political system in which that conflict occurs.

Here one immediately runs into the problem that conflicts themselves are inherently dynamic phenomena, even when they are in their early stages when nobody either involved in the conflict or observing it is even contemplating trying to settle, resolve, terminate or transform it. In one – probably misleading – sense, conflicts are transforming all the time, from the moment the incompatible interests emerge into parties’ consciousness, through the mobilization of support for the

achievement of shared goals, the escalation of coercive and eventually violent behavior (and inevitably, of the costs of prosecuting the conflict) to the involvement of third parties as sponsors, allies or intermediaries.

It seems inherently less than useful to confuse the normal and familiar dynamics of conflict with its ‘transformation’, but some writers have used the term in this fashion. Edward Azar, for example, in his interesting discussion of *protracted social conflicts*, argues that a number of factors lead to the emergence of such intractable disputes, and that “...rapid growth orientated economic development strategies [that which is primarily practiced by the global community] in underdeveloped countries result in the deepening of a dual economy in which the modern sector becomes prosperous...while the traditional sector stagnates or even deteriorates as wealth is intentionally transferred to the modern sector...” (Azar 1986). This uneven development, plus the involvement of different ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious communities in the growing or the stagnating sector, leads in Azar’s analysis to the transforming of “...nonconflictual situations into conflictual ones...” a change which seems quite profound enough to be properly regarded as an example of transformation of the conflict (Azar 1990, p. 7). Hence, willy nilly, Azar himself might be taken to be an example of writers who treat the emergence of conflict into an overt stage of antagonistic competition as being a type of transformation, if not necessarily a desirable one.

But most other writers in the field do not appear to regard the emergence of a conflict as a type of transformation. Rupesinghe takes a most logical approach to the question by talking about *conflict formation* which – while warning that conflicts seldom develop in a linear fashion – he likens to birth and infancy of a dispute before it grows and develops to maturity and requires some form of ‘managing’ (Rupesinghe 1995, pp. 77-78). On the other hand, a number of writers do use the conception of transformation to stand for what I would regard as ‘standard’ dynamics of conflict and nothing so out of the ordinary as to require that label, even though, admittedly, some ‘normal’ conflict dynamics – crossing the threshold from coercion to violence, for example – do represent major qualitative changes. For example, Raimo Vayrynen argues that conflict transformation can take place in at least four different ways (1991, pp. 4-7):

[1] *Actor Transformation*, which involves either major internal changes within the original parties to the conflict or the addition [and, presumably, subtraction] of new parties to the conflict.

[2] *Issue Transformation*, which involves an alteration of the political agenda of the conflict through a transformation of what the conflict is “about”.

[3] *Rule Transformation*, which involves a change in the norms involved in the conflict and the limits within which the parties conduct their relations.

[4] *Structural Transformation*, which involves changes in the whole structure of inter-party relations.

The last type of change certainly seems to conform to what many other writers mean by ‘conflict transformation’ and I will return to this conception later in this article. The other three types seem much more akin to what most writers on conflict processes would regard as the normal dynamics of conflict, although there are some who highlight the process of issue change and use the label ‘transformation’ to apply to this kind of alteration.⁸ For example, in their interesting paper on how conflicting parties can attempt to shape and define a conflict by ‘re-phrasing’ what the conflict is about, Lynn Mather and Barbara Yngvesson argue that this type of ‘transformation’ occurs at all stages of conflicts, starting as soon as one party “perceives a grievance against another” (Mather & Yngvesson 1981, p. 777). Further, they argue that while efforts to define what the conflict is about – and to have a major influence on how it will be handled and settled – may be part of the adversaries’ tactics in prosecuting the conflict, it is also a process employed by third parties who redefine the issues in the conflict (what Mather and Yngvesson refer to as ‘the content’) in order to make it amenable to particular modes of settlement. This is most clearly seen in the process by which disputes and the range of issues involved are shaped in a particular way so that they become amenable to legal settlement, but there is, the authors argue, a similar ‘transformative’ process involved in the use of intermediaries, part of whose function is to present “...a formulation which disputants and others might accept and at the same time satisfies the interests of a third party...” (Mather & Yngvesson 1981, p. 778). In many ways, this last argument echoes that of Dale and Bill Spencer regarding the manner in which issues can be altered to facilitate attaining a solution to a conflict so that, in their view, conflict transformation “...can be thought of as a redefinition of the dispute situation by the actors themselves, one that may lead to opening a space for cooperation and peace...” (Spencer & Spencer 1995, p. 162).

While there might be an argument for using the term ‘transformation’ to indicate a change in the conflict itself that involves a re-definition of what the main issues in contention are, there seems to be a clear consensus that the term does not apply to other familiar changes that occur during protracted conflicts. For example, while Vayrynen might be right in arguing that a conflict will be significantly changed by the direct involvement of a patron or by the defection of an ally, such a change does not seem to be what most writers mean when they use the term ‘transformation’. It might, therefore, be more appropriate to use the more limited term of conflict ‘enlargement’. Other labels, such as ‘escalation’ or ‘polarization’ seem more useful for describing the numerous changes that almost inevitably seem to accompany the involvement of adversaries in protracted conflicts, such as heightened ethnocentrism, alienation, scapegoating, dehumanization, stereotyping, tendencies to create enemy images and what Leo Kuper describes as a general ‘decline in moderation’ (Kuper 1977). At a socio-political level, common changes include a tendency of parties to over-commit and entrap themselves in increasingly costly and failing courses of action; in many cases an increase in physical separation and a more rigorous enforcement of both social and territorial boundaries; and what Pruitt and Rubin refer to as ‘residues’, one of which involves increased national or group cohesion and the emergence of militant leadership (Pruitt and Rubin 1986, p. 92).

No one would deny that these changes are important, nor that many of them involve important thresholds which, once crossed, make stopping and reversing the dynamic increasingly difficult. But they hardly seem to be the kind of changes, however major, that the 'conflict transformation' school refers to when it uses that term. Nor does it seem to be the case that the changes that accompany both the emergence and the escalation of conflicts in a related socio-political system offer more than a clue to what is the essential nature of this broader conception of 'conflict transformation'. Anyone who has been in a country that has become involved in a war, or in a nation or community in which protracted and violent conflict has broken out, will be under no illusions about the profound changes brought about as a result. Anatol Rapoport (1986) refers to changes involving the establishment of a 'self-perpetuating war machine' and many others have talked about the inevitable 'militarization' of society. Protracted conflicts, both internal and external, result in major changes in government powers (a national emergency or a 'state of siege' is declared); in economic organization and activity (mobilization of resources for defense or 'increased security'); and in all social and cultural life, including major population disruptions (evacuations, flight, so-called 'ethnic cleansing').

Faced with the kind of major changes that characterize conflict emergence and escalation, (what Rupesinghe calls 'formation', 'escalation' and 'endurance') it is difficult to argue that these do not 'transform' a society or a region in which the conflict takes place. However, given that most writers on the subject see the term 'transformation' as applied to changes in the opposite direction, then one way of dealing with questions about the basic nature of transformation would be to assume that it refers to *the reversal* of the *all* negative forms of change that occur *within* the conflict system itself and *to* the social system in which the conflict is embedded. Thus, transformation involves, for example, changes such as an increase in empathy on the part of adversaries, with stereotyping, dehumanization and demonization of the other side becoming less common; a decrease in the levels of social and geographical separation of the parties; and major changes in the nature and homogeneity of communications aimed at the others.

But do major changes in the conflict and the surrounding socio-political system in the direction of the status quo ante really represent an accepted and acceptable meaning of 'conflict transformation'? Clearly there is more to the conception than this, for many writers insist that a mere return to the situation before the emergence of overt conflict is simply to go back to the very conditions that gave rise to the original aspirations for change and goal incompatibilities in the first place. How can this be termed 'transformation', rather than being simply an unsatisfactory process of 'restoration'? Although there are different emphases in the writing on transformation, one of the factors that arises clearly in most is that, while transformation implies 'positive' change in many aspects of the conflict, the parties and the participants, it also implies the need for major changes in the socio-political and economic systems from which the conflict originated. This is put most clearly by Juha Auvinen and Timo Kivimäki when they argue that "...The philosophy of the conflict transformation approach is that in conflicts there are causes or reasons more fundamental than are expressed on the level of disputes. Often conflicts are

structurally caused by economic, political, identitive, discursive and other structures which then give rise to concrete disputes...” (1996, p. 3). The clear implication of this approach is that transformation involves at least the principle that some of the things that have to be changed radically are the structures giving rise to conflict in the first place. In turn, this suggests that Vayryenen’s fourth category of *structural transformation* might well be the dimension of his framework linking it to the core ideas of other writers on transformation processes.

Certainly this focus arises from a philosophy of handling protracted conflicts which is more far reaching than one which aims at finding an acceptable resolution to one current conflict and much further reaching than one which simply attempts to alter the behavior of adversaries and to patch together some compromise based upon division or compensation.

Core Factors to Be Transformed

Delineating clearly what is involved in conflict transformation – in the sense of the nature, direction and range of changes involved – remains difficult, however. This is not always because writers on transformation tend inadvertently to conflate the process aspect of the phenomenon with the outcome elements. Partly it is because, for some members of the ‘transformation school’, establishing a particular process is an end in itself – a desired outcome. Partly it is because others argue that conflict transformation is a continuing process in itself, so there *can* be no end state in which a conflict – or something else – is said to be ‘transformed’. Galtung, for example, views conflicts as “...phenomena that have no clear beginning or end... they wax, wane and transform themselves through patterns of dependent co-arising...” (1995, p. 52). This view finds echoes in many writings about transformation and it is interesting to note the number of occasions on which those discussing the phenomenon use the present participle to describe what it involves – ‘restructuring’, ‘building’, ‘validating’, ‘empowering’, ‘understanding’, ‘training’, ‘promoting’, ‘participating’, ‘reconciling’ and so on.⁹

The Transformation Process

This close intertwining of ideas about conflict transformation as process and as outcome necessitates some arbitrariness in trying to answer questions about what is changed through that process, and at least a brief description of what normally seems to be involved in a conflict transformation process. Again, different writers stress different aspects, but most seem to agree that a conflict transformation process, in order to be effective, must involve:

[1] Multi-level participation, involving elements from all social levels of all the involved parties, from top decision makers through middle range opinion leaders to grass roots constituents, including those who would normally be excluded from the process and whose interests would not be represented in ‘normal’ negotiations.

- [2] Efforts to empower the ‘underdogs’ in the struggle so that solutions and changes can be sought between parties that are more equal than they would otherwise be.
- [3] Efforts to ensure that those directly involved in the conflict can control the transformation processes to their own satisfaction and thus make sure that any outcomes have the approval and support of those affected.
- [4] A focus not merely on immediate issues but also on long standing traumas and hurts, and on any deep-rooted sense of past injustices.
- [5] Brokerage by appropriate intermediaries who understand the culture and social structures in which the adversaries are embedded.
- [6] Co-creation of a new understanding of the conflict, how it arose and what needs to be changed in order both to resolve it and to ensure that other, similar disputes do not arise in future.
- [7] An ability to create and put in place procedures that will maintain and continue the changes found necessary to resolve the current conflict and prevent others arising in future, or – when they arise – taking on a protracted and destructive form.
- [8] The mutual, inter-active education of adversaries about the nature of the socio-political and economic systems from which the conflict arose and of the dynamics of that conflict; and their training in skills that will enable them to deal with that conflict and others that may arise in future.

This is a rather general list which undoubtedly omits a number of key aspects of the transformation *process* in the eyes of some writers, but I would argue that it does contain most of the features generally accepted by ‘transformation school’ analysts and practitioners. It is, moreover, a list which does begin to offer some clues to the continuing question about what transformation transforms, and it emphasizes that it is possible to sort out the wide variety of answers to that question into three broad categories; those dealing with *personal* changes, those dealing with *structural* changes; and those dealing with *relationship* changes.

Transforming Persons

There will clearly be major differences in what gets transformed depending upon the social level at which the conflict takes place and the sociopolitical and economic environments for the conflict and those involved. At the interpersonal level, transforming persons by definition also involves changing ‘the parties’, and hence having a major effect on the conflict. Even with conflicts at the inter-group, inter-community and international level, however, conflict transformation is held to involve a variety of major changes in the individuals involved, both at the level of leaders and of followers, a point that has led some critics to argue that the aspirations of conflict transformation for affecting protracted *social* conflicts are wildly optimistic.

It is probably the case that, at least at the interpersonal level, Baruch Bush and Jay Folger have argued most strongly that in properly conducted initiatives it is the parties themselves who become transformed, so that the major change occurs in the individuals directly involved in the conflict as adversaries. Bush and Folger are quite specific about the form such personal transformation takes. Identifiable transformational effects are brought about by a process which "...can strengthen peoples' capacity to analyze situations and make effective decisions for themselves and...to see and consider the perspectives of others..." (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 264). In short, transformation involves a marked increase in the parties' sense of *empowerment* or self-determination, and in their capacities for *recognition* or responsiveness to others – and this is the objective of a transformative approach to a conflict, rather than either simply reaching an agreement about the issues that appear to divide the parties or – even less desirably – having intermediaries construct a settlement to which the parties are then expected to adhere. In slightly different terms, a transformational mediation process:

...contains within it a unique potential for transforming people – engendering moral growth – by helping them wrestle with difficult circumstances and bridge human differences in the very midst of conflict. The transformative potential stems from mediation's capacity to generate two important effects, empowerment and recognition. In simplest terms, *empowerment* means the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems. *Recognition* means the evocation in individuals of acknowledgement and empathy for the situation and problems of others... (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 2).

...can allow parties to define problems and goals in their own terms, thus validating the importance of these goals and problems in the parties' lives. Further, mediation can support the parties' exercise in self-determination in deciding how, or even whether, to settle a dispute and it can help the parties mobilize their own resources to address problems and achieve their own goals...Parties in mediation have gained a greater sense of self-respect, self reliance and self confidence... (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 20).

These two quotations indicate clearly that, for Bush and Folger, transformation processes and outcomes have a central *moral* dimension, one which is aimed chiefly at the people involved in the conflict as parties. *The* goal of transformation, they argue, "...embodies the premise that it is not only being better off that matters but being better", at least in the sense of having increased capacity to understand and decide and to empathize with others. Hence, "...the goal of transformation is unique because it involves a supreme value that the other goals do not encompass..." (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 30). Conflicts and disputes can be viewed "...not as *problems* at all, but as opportunities for moral growth and transformation..." (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 81).

Leaving aside for the moment the issue of whether no other approach to coping with conflicts involves goals of changing participants or parties for the better – whoever is to decide what ‘better’ means – it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Bush and Folger also view transformation as having social as well as personal impacts, so that their view of transformation goes somewhat beyond that of changing individuals. The unique promise of mediation, they note, “...lies in its capacity to transform the character of both individual disputants and society as a whole...” (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 20). However, it is clear that the transformation of society is an indirect result of individual transformations, rather than through any direct agreements that are devised as solutions requiring social reform or change. For these writers, “...transformation does not mean institutional restructuring, but rather a change or refinement in the *consciousness and character of individual human beings...*” and they acknowledge that the effects of individual change in bringing about social change are likely to be a long time coming – perhaps most especially in societies prone to violent and intractable conflicts like Cyprus, Sri Lanka or the former Yugoslavia (Bush & Folger 1996, p. 24). They are also rather vague about the precise mechanisms for converting personal into social or structural transformation, and about whose and how many individual transformations will eventually add up to a sufficiently large change to enable anyone to talk convincingly about a social transformation.

While Bush and Folger concentrate on individual changes in empowerment and responsiveness, they are hardly alone in arguing for the need to change individuals in some fashion if conflicts are to be changed into something else. Many others have argued that the aims of conflict transformation processes should include the *general* promotion of mutual empathy and understanding between parties among leaders, opinion makers and grass roots individuals, as well as a sense of shared responsibility for the origins and dynamics of the conflict in the first place. Similarly, transformation processes should aim at removing the sense of helplessness about the conflict among participants, particularly those at the local and grass roots levels of the parties and at increasing the sense of empowerment, at least in terms of their being able to affect the conduct of the conflict, its resolution and the structures that originally gave rise to it. At this individual level, transformation is usually said to be characterized by major and widespread changes in peoples’:

- [1] Framing and understanding of the issues in conflict.
- [2] Acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the other party, its claims, concerns and hopes.
- [3] Sense of responsibility for the origins of the conflict and the interactive manner in which it has inevitably been prosecuted.
- [4] Consciousness of the other party’s perspectives and objectives, and reasons for their being held.
- [5] Recognition of the need for short-term mutual re-assurance and the building up of longer-term trust between the parties.

[6] Sense of competence and capability in confronting the search for solutions to the conflict and undertaking actions to prevent repetition.

[7] Willingness to include the interests of those not normally represented in the search for solutions, including future generations.

[8] Acknowledgement of the existence of past grievances, injuries and traumas plus a willingness to examine these thoroughly and to search for means of healing the damage caused through a variety of means, including reconciliation and a mutually acceptable process of restorative and – if necessary – redistributive justice.

[9] Acceptance of the need for a durable, inclusive and acceptable solution to a mutual problem, which may involve major structural change.

Many writers have also suggested that one essential element in a conflict transformation process is that those involved should recognize that the activity also concerns a search for social justice and that part of this, in itself, involves them in a mutual effort to define the nature of this elusive idea and what, exactly, a just solution to their conflict would look like. In this sense, then, individuals will need to become willing to change their usually monocular view of 'justice' and 'a just solution' to one which admits the possibility of more than one conception of what might be seen as 'just', together with a concomitant need to engage in some form of wide ranging discussion about what criteria of justice or 'fairness' should be applied to some range of possible outcomes. In this way, it is argued, a peaceful solution to a conflict has a greater chance of also being a just one, and thus being durable.

Transforming Structures

If there is one area in which some conflict transformationists argue that transformation differs from resolution, it is in the former's explicit commitment to bringing about major 'structural' change, and the need for this if a conflict is to be permanently transformed into something else. In opposition to this view, it could justifiably be argued that both theorists and practitioners of conflict resolution are tolerably familiar with situations in which it becomes clear at some stage in the process of resolution that a durable and mutually acceptable solution is only possible with some level of structural change, either political or socio-economic. Often this is clearly revealed by the resolution process itself, together with the likely long- and short-term costs of *not* changing.

For example, the protracted and very violent internal war in Liberia during the early to mid-1990s was, to a large degree, over who and which faction would control a highly centralized presidential political system, together with the power and access to wealth that accompanied that outcome. In the initial stages of a process hopefully intended to be resolutionary, it became increasingly obvious that such a structure could only result in the conflicting parties achieving a win-lose outcome, so that the Liberian political system, at least, had to undergo a major structural change – decentralization, local autonomy, shared local/central control of

national wealth – if a durable solution was to be achieved. In the event, a compromise settlement involving a cease fire and supervised elections within the existing political system was achieved. The winning faction took power and now tries to maintain its position by persecuting any serious opposition while awaiting the next, probably violent attempt to transfer centralized power to another faction.

This is a not too untypical example of a process of conflict resolution at least identifying the parameters of a solution clearly involving structural change, but failing then to influence official processes that resulted eventually in a temporary, win-lose settlement. It certainly illustrates Rupesinghe's critique of one aspect of the 'resolutionary' approach, especially its reliance on small group, problem solving workshops from which "...successes are unlikely to be transferred in any meaningful way to the conflict ..." (Rupesinghe 1995, pp. 75-6).

While conflict resolution approaches clearly allow for necessary structural change, it is certainly the case that there is, at least, a difference in emphasis between approaching a conflict with this possibility in mind and the transformationist approach that assumes that only through such change might the conflict, the people involved and the future be altered permanently so that this conflict is wholly changed and other conflicts do not recur.¹⁰ This may seem to be an over-generalization about conflict transformation, and to be clearly connected with the kinds of protracted and intractable conflicts on which transformational writings concentrate, but it is the case that the need for *structural* change forms a major theme in much of this analysis.

For example, in Rupesinghe's survey of the transformational literature there appear two clear strands in thinking about structural reform. The first involves the need for "...sustainable structural and attitudinal changes...within society and new institutions...to address outstanding issues..." The second advocates "... the building and/or revival of indigenous political, social and economic mechanisms and attitudes which militate against the use of violence to resolve conflicts..." (Rupesinghe 1995, pp. 76-7). These themes of the need for long term structural change and the need to revive neglected traditional means for dealing with conflicts are echoed by many other writers.

Transforming Relationships

The third major theme in writings on conflict transformation involves the need for changes in the 'relationship' between the adversaries, and that a lasting transformation of the conflict must involve such a restructuring if it is to be successful. Some advocates do talk about the need to create or restore a relationship but this expression seems to me to miss the point that adversaries are already involved in a relationship, however unsatisfactory as this might be, so that the *adversary* relationship has to be fundamentally changed before one can speak of the conflict being transformed.

This point is echoed in some of the earlier work of Adam Curle, one of the scholar-practitioners most influential in incorporating this idea of the necessity for relational change into the conflict transformation approach (Curle 1971). One of Curle's central themes is the need for parties to move from 'unpeaceful' to

'peaceful' relationships, defining the former as those which impede all round human development and which are characterized by unbalanced power relationships and inequality in the level of awareness about the actual degree of incompatibility in their interests and objectives. Peaceful relationships on the other hand are those which involve "...active association, planned cooperation and intelligent efforts to forestall or resolve potential conflicts..." and in these relationships "...there is neither domination nor imposition. Instead, there is mutual assistance, mutual understanding, mutual concern and collaboration founded on this mutuality..." (Curle 1971, pp. 15-16). Thus, for Curle, the defining characteristics of peaceful relationships are *equality* or balance of capability, *mutuality* and the sense of an equal degree of concern between people, and *reciprocity* in the sense of a balanced exchange of material and non-material goods. A similar view of the kind of relationships that need to be achieved for conflict transformation to occur can be found in the work of Hiskias Assefa, who argues that a necessary process involved in such a change moves a society or community from a social order based upon hierarchy and coercion to one based upon equality, respect, participation, voluntarism and mutual enrichment (Assefa 1993, pp. 5-7).

The precise transformation process employed to reach such an outcome depends to a large degree on the type of conflict existing in the society or community to be transformed, according to Curle. In cases where the adversaries are equally aware of the existence and nature of the goal incompatibility, and are roughly equal in their capacity to harm each other in pursuit of their interests, negotiation, mediation or conciliation could well be relevant processes for achieving a new and stable relationship. In circumstances where the adversaries are aware of their conflict but capability is one sided, then processes aimed at equalization are appropriate. In a third situation, where capability is imbalanced, awareness low – at least on one side – and the conflict latent rather than overt, Curle advocates processes aimed at increasing awareness to the point of confrontation over newly recognized key issues. All these are strategies which provide clear guidelines for transformational activities in a variety of structural situations, and at least provide some answers to an issue on which conflict resolution literature tends to be silent – the role of resolution processes in conflicts which are highly unbalanced and especially in those which are so unbalanced that no overt signs of conflict even exist to signal a need for resolutionary efforts.

Both Curle's and Assefa's work provide some clues as to what kinds of relationships need to be transformed through a transformation process, and what they need to be transformed into, and this line of thought has also been enriched by some of the writings of Harold Saunders, who argues strongly that changing relationships between adversaries is the core to long term success in bringing peace in even the most intractable conflicts. Saunders make the important preliminary point that relationships between parties have to be considered in their totality, and that they both have multiple qualities and are dynamic, two points to which I will return below (Saunders 1993, p. 8).

Further ideas can be sought in the work of John Paul Lederach, who focuses his own approach to transforming a conflict on processes of reconciliation between adversaries in protracted conflicts and draws upon long experience of efforts to

transform conflicts and relationships among combatants in Nicaragua, Spain and Somalia. Lederach makes the interesting if neglected point that, in many protracted conflicts in the contemporary world, it is simply not possible for the adversaries to disengage and have little or nothing to do with one another once a particular set of contested issues has been ‘solved’. As Lederach puts it, a solution cannot be “...pursued by seeking innovative ways to disengage or minimize the conflicting groups’ affiliations...” because “...*relationship* is both the basis of the conflict and of its long term solution...” (Lederach 1997, p. 26). Willy nilly, the groups or communities or societies in conflict have a relationship now – they are *adversaries* – and they will have one in future, at least as *neighbors*. The question has to be: What sort of neighbors can they be or do they want to be? Lederach reminds adversaries that in all contemporary internal conflicts, “...the futures of those who are fighting are ultimately linked and interdependent. Opportunity must therefore be given for people to look forward and envision their shared future...” (Lederach 1997, p. 26). His recommended approach involves a complex process of reconciliation so that more complex but above all more accurate images of “the enemy” can be developed, preparatory to changing the manner in which those involved inter-act and the basic nature of the relationship that will link them in the future, once the underlying issues currently in contention have been mutually delineated and solutions successfully sought.

Among a number of practical example of relationship building, Lederach gives the example of the Norwegian sponsored talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives near Oslo, and notes how – over a long period of time – those involved began to build new and deeper relationships, no longer viewing one another uni-dimensionally, simply as enemies but more complexly as humans-in-the-round (Lederach 1997, pp. 32-4). Together with capacity building, relationship building forms one of the major parts of Lederach’s transformational approach to conflict and peace building and is, he argues, that aspect of the process that “...responds to the longer term and coordination requirements needed to sustain peacebuilding...” (Lederach 1997, p.109).

Relationships: Types and Characteristics

Unfortunately, amid all the writings of the transformational school on the core role of ‘relationship’ and the essential part played by relationship building in conflict transformation, the central concept itself remains somewhat vague. At one level, it is clearly the case that there are many different relationships possible between any two (or more) individuals, groups or communities. Changing two groups from adversaries to something else would undoubtedly indicate that a situation of conflict has been transformed – also to something else. As the Arab proverb has it: “The best way to destroy your enemy is to make him your friend”.

But what kind of new relationship might replace that of being *adversaries*? Clearly, it might be possible to change erstwhile adversaries into *partners* or *colleagues*. However, if one is interested in analyzing when such a relationship changes – and by implication, conflict transformation – has occurred what might be the most reliable indicators of the new relationship? Behavior towards one another?

Nature, extent and balance of inter-actions between the groups? Views, attitudes, images, beliefs and other psychological states? Degrees of trust? And how widespread do these changes have to be within a society or community before the transformation has occurred, given the fact that, for many people, negative views of a long time adversary are difficult to alter and can be passed on from generation to generation?

A third puzzle is less concerned with the type of new relationship to be built as a replacement for the old one, or with the indicators that the relationships has, indeed, changed, but more with the characteristics of this new relationship. The argument here is that, while it is possible for individuals, groups and communities to be categorized into a variety of relationships and roles – adversaries, colleagues, neighbors, superiors, fathers, communicators – within each of these kinds of relationship it remains possible for those involved – and the relationship itself – to display very different qualities. For example, it is possible to be a *good* or a *bad neighbor* – or a thoughtful or indifferent father. As President Kennedy once indicated, it is even possible to be in an *adversary partnership*. The whole issue of the kind of relationship, or the qualities within that relationship, needs much more careful consideration before it becomes possible to use it as an analytical tool for understanding the nature of conflict transformation.

Sociologists and others who have discussed the nature of inter-personal relationships take as their starting point the idea that relationships involve at least two related dimensions, one behavioral and one cognitive or affective. A generally agreed basis is that a relationship involves sequences of interactions between entities (e.g. individuals that are known to one another) that continue over some substantial period of time. To quote Robert Hinde, “...A relationship implies first some sort of intermittent interaction between two people, involving exchanges over a period of time...” (1979, p. 14). This initial definition echoes that used by Hal Saunders, who describes international relationships as “...a continuous political process of complex interaction among significant parts of whole bodies politic across permeable borders...” (Saunders 1993, p. 6).

Systems theorists have emphasized that inter-personal and social exchanges can involve three types of flows – material, energy or information – but Hinde makes the important point that relationships not only involve *content* (i.e. what is being exchanged or what behaviors are taking place) but also *qualities*, the latter providing a context within which the nature of an interaction can be categorized and distinctions made. For example, the physical action of a blow on another’s back may be an assault or a boisterous greeting or a warning of approaching peril. Quoting Saunders, there are “...relationships of different levels, kinds and qualities...” (Saunders 1993, p. 8).

Clearly, the nature of particular relationships is determined to some degree by content, by what is exchanged, and how it is exchanged. Equally clearly, their nature or quality is affected by the cognitive/affective dimension – that is, by what those involved in the exchange think of the interaction and of each other’s role in it. Relationships are not simply patterns of interaction but also involve memories, expectations and evaluations on the part of those who are part of the exchange – what Hinde describes as “...the social meaning to the actor...” (Hinde 1979, p. 22).

These factors help to explain both why relationships can persist overtime in the absence of any interaction at all (as good friends or as historical rivals) and why they can change radically, even without change in their basic content.

This discussion does begin to offer some clues as to how one might begin to analyze the nature of, and – eventually – the reasons for the changes in relationships held to be the essential feature of conflict transformation. If relationships consist of some continuous patterns of exchange plus the evaluations of those involved in the patterns, both of which enable inferences about the nature or quality of the relationship to be made, then any efforts to change the relationship as a part of transforming a conflict can involve altering the content of the exchange, parties' evaluation of the exchange – and thus of the relationship – or both. In one case, this process can involve altering the exchange from one imposing costs through coercion or violence to one conferring benefits (or at least doing no harm). In another it can involve a complete change in the content of an exchange – from tribute to trade – and in the evaluation of that exchange – from resentment to approval.

Even such a preliminary discussion of relationship change as the one above reveals the complexity of the process if an adversarial relationship in a conflict [whether manifest or latent] is to be 'transformed'. As I noted earlier, Adam Curle makes the change from 'unpeaceful' to 'peaceful' relationships the central pillar of his approach to the task of transforming conflicts into non-conflicts, but what precise changes in the nature of that being exchanged and in parties' evaluations of the relationship are needed to bring about such an alteration? The difficulty is that there are many possible evaluations of a pattern of exchange and thus many possible qualities of a relationship that could be altered in any process of relationship 'transformation'. At one level, transformation could involve a change in parties' evaluation of the relationship so that it moves from fearful to confident, hostile to friendly, concealing to open or mistrustful to trusting. At another, the relationship could move from being central to being peripheral. It could become static as opposed to dynamic, or stable as opposed to unstable or responsive as opposed to indifferent.

It seems that there is a major need to those advocating major changes in relationships as a means of transforming conflicts to specify which qualities of existing, *adversarial* relationships need to be changed for a genuine 'transformation' to occur, and how such changes might be indicated. As a tentative starting point, I would suggest that four key qualities, dimensions or aspects of existing relationships that might well be changed – somehow – to form the basis of a transformative change are:

[1] From *imbalanced* to *balanced* exchanges, at least to the point where all parties are more or less disposed to agree that they get roughly the same value from the exchange as the others.

[2] From *dependent* to *interdependent* exchanges, so all parties' fortunes and futures are more or less equivalently tied to the continuation of the exchange.

[3] From *dissonant* to *consonant* evaluations of the exchange, in that all the parties share similar views about its utility and each others' acceptance of the exchange. (No more 'happy slave' misperceptions on the part of masters.)

[4] From *non-legitimized* to *legitimized* evaluations of the exchange, so that all parties more or less accept its essential 'rightness' – and even 'justice' – and are content with its continuation in, roughly, its present form.

Conclusion

I started this article with a query regarding the differences between the ideas of *conflict resolution* and *conflict transformation* and – to be honest – some skepticism about the existence of any major differences, given the original meaning of the first idea and its acceptance of the possible need for major changes if some conflicts were ever to be fully resolved. I am now less sure that the two are simply different words for basically the same phenomena. Clearly the two approaches are closely related and have many things in common which, in turn set them aside from the 'management' approaches currently being mislabeled as conflict 'resolution'. As processes both resolution and transformation tend to avoid or minimize the use of 'leverage' in attempting both to get adversaries (or their representatives) into face-to-face interaction or to get them to accept agreements or arrangements about which they have serious doubts.¹¹ Both emphasize the importance of participants being in control of meetings, as well as the parties being in control of the overall process, at least in the sense that they can withdraw at any time without loss. Both acknowledge the importance of intangible issues in the causation and the resolution of conflict. Both are viewed by their practitioners as adjuncts – if important adjuncts – to formal, official efforts to bring protracted conflicts to some kind of satisfactory conclusion.

On the other hand, there are differences, if only in approach and emphasis. Resolution has tended to deal with conflicts by operating close to official efforts and to deal with decision making elites or, at least, with opinion makers and influentials. Transformation both advocates and practices the conception that processes have to take place at all levels, including the very grass roots. Resolution has a tendency to concentrate upon the immediate and the shorter term, its advocates arguing that dealing with the issues and the deeper interests producing a current situation of intractable conflict is enough of a problem in itself. Transformation has deliberately included 'the aftermath' in its focus, purposefully building in approaches and processes that deal with conflict 'residues' – traumas, fears, hurts and hatreds – which, even if one major conflict has been resolved, will remain to poison futures and ensure that later conflicts will be prosecuted in a spirit of intransigence, if not revenge.

If there is one significant difference, which is not merely one of emphasis, it seems to me that it reveals itself in the attitude of the two approaches to the matter of structural and relational change and their role in coping with protracted conflicts. As I remarked earlier, the possibility – even the likelihood – of the need for

structural change is fully accepted within the conflict resolution approach and it is acknowledged that in many cases, resolution without major change is simply not possible. The process of conflict resolution is partly aimed at getting parties to understand the likely long-term costs of not changing, and of finding alternative ways of changing that avoid both the costs of continuing 'defensive' coercion and of apparent surrender. However, within a conflict resolution framework, it is also quite conceivable for a resolution to be achieved without necessarily involving major structural changes. Furthermore, changes in relationship are not afforded a central place in resolutionary approaches; it being usually assumed that these will 'naturally' follow once the conflict at issue has been successfully resolved. The lack of attention to this relational aftermath aspect of resolution almost seems to become a philosophy of: No conflict = new relationship!

In contrast to these two elements in the overall resolutionary approach, conflict transformation clearly assumes that major structural changes will always and inevitably be necessary conditions for any successful effort to deal with the conflict, and that only by seeking such structural change will future conflicts not arise from similar sources. For transformationists, the central objective of the process is structural change, for all else flows from that. Moreover, new – and improved – relationships between erstwhile adversaries do not simply and 'naturally' arise from the fact that they are no longer in contention over a limited number of – admittedly – salient issues. Relationships have to be replaced and rebuilt through deliberate and directed efforts, and reconciliation can only take place as a result of these efforts. Without this aspect of change, even major structural alterations may prove fruitless in heading off future disputes, clashes, crises and conflicts. Hence, while structural change is axiomatic, relational change is also a fundamental part of transformation.

This being so, there may be something to be learned from my colleague Ilana Shapiro's argument that, if one is comparing conflict transformation with more traditional management or settlement approaches, the basic philosophical differences revolve around a conservation/change axis. The settlement approach – mediation, conciliation, negotiation – starts from an acceptance of a given political and socio-economic status quo, which may need some adjustment but is fundamentally sound and within which solutions to conflicts could and should be found. Fair elections will be the solution to the conflict in Liberia over which faction controls the political system and the economy. Eritrea is an integral part of an existing, recognized state, so solutions will have to be sought within that framework. Solutions to protracted conflicts in Central American countries must be sought without major land redistribution or undermining the concept of private property.

The transformational approach, however, begins by assuming that there is nothing sacred about the status quo – indeed, it is probably the source of the conflict – so that the process starts with an analysis and critique of the existing system and an assumption that it will be necessary to create new systems, structures and relationships. It then proceeds with the objective of helping to bring about such change, on the argument that only this type of alteration will deal with the conflict long term. The contemporary structure and number of 'independent, sovereign states' in international society not being sacred, there may be a case for some kind

of independence for Eritrea. Land reform may be necessary for stability and peace in Central America. The political system in Liberia may need to be wholly reformed rather than relying upon monitored elections, however 'fair', conducted within the present system.

This is an interesting line of thought to be pursued, but my final question is where this distinction between settlement and transformation leaves conflict resolution. I would hope that it would occupy its old position on the side of major political and socio-economic changes when these are clearly necessary, but it may be that it is or has become an inherently conservative activity. I intend to explore this possibility in a future article.

Endnotes

1. Leaving aside what is meant by conflicts disappearing from an agenda, there seems to be no inherent reason why conflict-generated 'energy' cannot be redirected into other channels different from seeking further conflicts. On the other hand, if 'energy' is interpreted as organizational capacity for violence, together with a conflict ready mind set and no immediately available alternatives, so that there exists a 'conflict habituated' system in Louise Diamond's words, Galtung undoubtedly has a point as the survival of NATO and the US search for new enemies and new wars indicates. However, these are 'new' conflicts, not old ones.

2. This idea was initially mentioned in an unpublished paper by Ilana Shapiro, for which I am much indebted to her.

3. Except in the relatively rare cases in which the conflict is the sole *raison d'être* for the existence of the parties involved in the dispute, or for one of them.

4. Louis Kriesberg, in his excellent text book on social conflict, makes the point that certain entities are potentially ready to be parties on conflicts through their existence and their ability to take up issues in conflict – states, ethnic communities, religious organizations, etc.

5. Strictly speaking, many protracted conflicts that take place episodically, may involve the same 'nations' or 'communities' but they can hardly involve the same people. Unless the Irish add incredible longevity to their other qualities, the Irish nationalists who rose against the British in 1916 were a different generation from the civil rights protesters of the late 1960s, and they in turn, a different generation from the current members of the IRA, Sinn Fein and the INLA.

6. Some who write about conflict transformation and who wish not to be identified with 'linear, western' thinking, imply that transformation has to be regarded as an on-going, continual process, with no final end state. However, such a view seems to imply that transformation is simply synonymous with 'change' but even in this argument use of the term seems to involve major as opposed to minor change in certain things, so that as different degrees of change are involved it would seem

possible – and useful – to be able to indicate when the major changes have been completed.

7. Conflict transformers may, indeed, turn out to be the social alchemists of the early 21st century.

8. As I emphasize in a previous working paper (Mitchell 1999a) changing the agreed definition of ‘what the conflict is about’ and uncovering the nature of underlying issues in the conflict lie at the heart of conflict resolution processes, so this feature is clearly one shared by both approaches.

9. In line with this trend is the title of John Paul Lederach’s latest book, *Building Peace*.

10. In line with this argument, Frank Dukes remains convinced that, at least at the level of ‘public policy’ disputes involving conflicts between local communities and government and other agencies, conflict resolution approaches should be a “...vehicle for changing governing practices and institutional culture of agencies, public officials, citizenry and communities...” and that conflict resolution remains “...a vehicle for social justice and transformation...” (1993, p. 47, 46).

11. While certainly avoiding ‘mediation with muscle’ it is really impossible for conflict resolvers or transformers to have no influence at all on the course or outcome of discussions – unless they remain totally silent, which is unlikely.

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PEACE BUILDING ARCHITECTURE

Luc Reyhler

Peace Re-Search

In the sixties the green and the peace movements alerted the international community of the deterioration of the environment and of the danger of nuclear conflicts. Since then, the green movement has been transformed into political parties, departments, jobs, environmental impact assessments and several international regimes. The first publication of the Club of Rome in 1972, *Limits of Growth*, had a catalyzing effect for raising life and death questions that confront mankind and claiming that planetary planning was the most important business on earth (Meadows 1972). The peace movement, on the other hand, evolved differently. There were some peak moments such as the peace marches in the eighties, but the impacts were weaker and less decisive. One explanation is that the peace movement had to cope with the strong bureaucracies of foreign offices and of defense departments that claimed the expertise. Another explanation is that a great deal of the peace movement does not define peace as a collective good. Being removed from the embedded conflict gives a false sense of apartness making some conflicts seem irrelevant to societies at peace. The possibility of cruise missiles hitting peaceful countries caused huge peace marches; the snipers in Sarajevo did not. A third reason is that costs of violence continue to be underestimated because of inadequate estimates of the price of failed conflict prevention (Reyhler 1999a).

The last explanation concerns the state of peace research. Despite a great deal of progress and creativity, the field remains hampered by three weaknesses (Reyhler 1992, pp. 89-96). First, there is a lack of field experience or close cooperation between professionals in the field and peace researchers. A synergy between the *speculari* and *operari* ('thinkers' and 'doers') would enhance the peace building business considerably. Second, there is a one-dimensional quality of peace building; the negative side effects of many well-intentioned projects have been documented.¹ Finally, there is a 'toolbox approach' to peace building. The result is that too many conflicted countries end up with piles of peace building stones, and no sustainable peace building.

Despite all this, peace research is quickly reducing the gap with the green movement. The prevention of violent conflicts has become a major point on the agendas of foreign offices not only in the U.S. and in Europe, but also of major international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).² The driving forces were not of moral or legal nature, but cost-benefit considerations. Once a conflict crosses the threshold of violence it becomes much more difficult and costly to manage it. Political, social, cultural, ecological,

psychological and spiritual costs join the already considerable costs of humanitarian suffering or economic destruction (Reychler 1999b). The human costs of failed conflict prevention or transitional aid are very high. The process of transition in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, for example, had huge development costs, many of which are still unabated (UNDP 1999). Human costs refer to the loss of lives, the high levels of disease, poverty, socio-economic disparity, rising gender inequality, educational decline, unemployment and many less tangible costs. It has become clear that proactive conflict prevention (that is, efforts made before a conflict has escalated) is more cost effective than reactive conflict prevention (that is, efforts made after a conflict has become violent to contain and reduce the intensity, duration and the possibility of geographic spill over) (Brown and Rosecrance 1999). There is a growing perception that there are limits to the level of violence the world can permit. It has become clear that sustainable development is impossible without sustainable peace building. This paper tackles one of the challenges of the international community in this decade; namely, making the world safe from conflicts or creating a more effective system to prevent violence.

Peace Architecture

A major part of this challenge is the development of better peace architecture through more cost effective ways to create sustainable peace building processes. Strategists, designers and planners are also concerned with combining means and time efficiently. I found, for example, nearly one hundred peace plans drafted before the Second World War. There is a great deal of flexibility and overlapping in the meaning of the terms *strategy*, *design*, *planning* and *architecture*. The term *strategy* continues to be strongly associated with states or their alliances which are designed to focus on security, enemies and threats through the use of military force and command. The term *peace plan* is also quite restrictive. Most peace plans are legal blueprints for the creation of world peace or are too abstract in context. The term *design* has more appeal, but it is associated with the construction of conflict management systems or with business (for example, practice oriented towards the development of products, tools, components and processes) (Magolin and Buchanan, 1998).³

I prefer to use the metaphor 'peace architecture' because (a) it draws attention to the architectural principles/considerations that have to be addressed in sustainable peace building processes; (b) it emphasizes the need to identify the necessary pre-conditions or building blocks for different types of conflicts; (c) it could shorten the learning curve by providing a methodology for comparative analysis and evaluation of conflict transformation; and (d) it could contribute to greater attention paid to the vital role of peace architects.

Architectural Considerations and Principles

The image of peace architecture suggests that peace building is not only a science but also an art, where imagination and creativity are an essential part of the

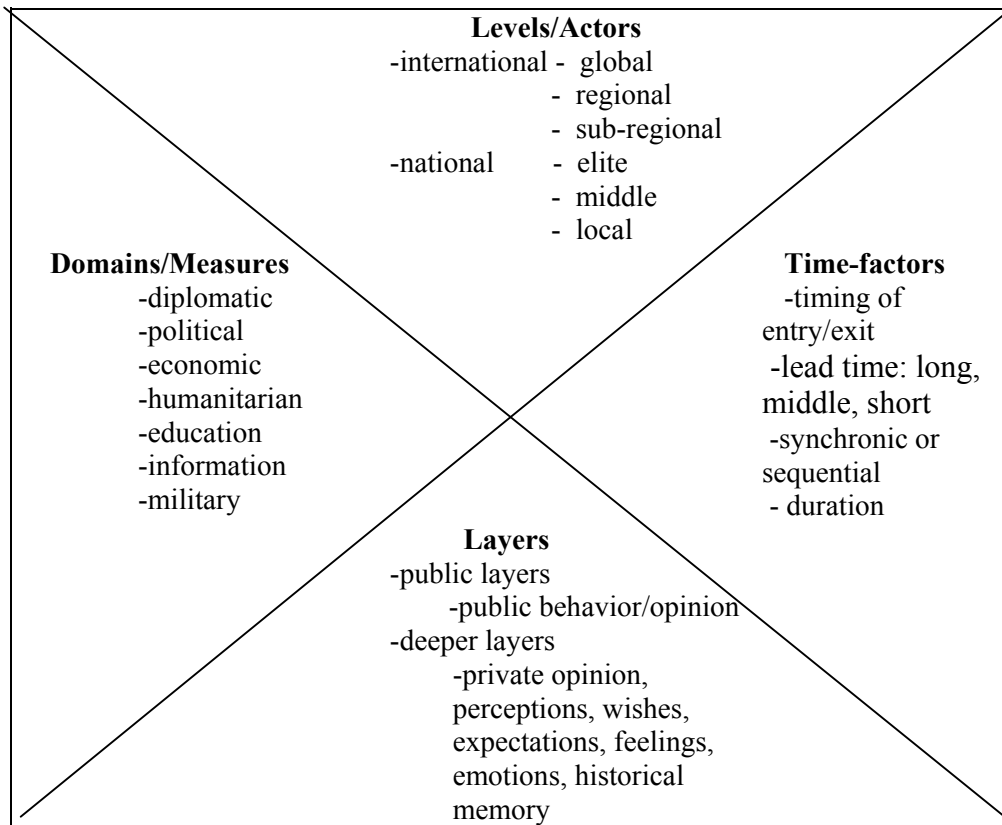
building process. This conveys the need for professional peace architects and architectural teams, and it draws attention to the key principles of the architecture process. Following are six principles that should guide the design of peace building processes.

1. A clear and compelling definition of the peace to be built. This requires a reconciling of the competing needs of the owners and the concerns of the stakeholders who will have to share the same fate; imaging a more attractive future; and an estimation of the costs.

2. A contextual and comprehensive assessment of the available peace building capacity with appreciative inquiry and of what still needs to be done to build a sustainable peace building process.

3. The development of a coherent peace plan. Coherence refers to the achievement of good time management and of a synergy between peace building efforts in diverse domains, at different system-levels and layers of the conflict.

Table 1: Coherence between Domains, Levels, Time-factors and Layers of a Conflict



4. An effective implementation of the peace plan. This involves not only the commitment of sufficient time and means to build the sustainable peace process, but also coordination and effective leadership.

5. The involvement/inclusion of the people who commissioned the peace building (the owners) and the stakeholders in the whole process.

6. An identification and dismantling of the 'senti-mental walls'⁴ that inhibit the peace building process.

Building Blocks of Violence and Peace

Another challenge of architectural analysis is the classification of different types of violence, peace and the identification of their causal antecedents or necessary preconditions. From a comparative study of the architecture of the genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda and Burundi, seven building blocks of genocide were distilled (Reychler 2000):

Table 2. Building Blocks of Genocide

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A country in transition with high levels of political, economic and cultural insecurity and frustration. • An authoritarian government that attributes the responsibility of the problems to a particular group. • A small group of fanatical leaders and a pliable majority. • A systematic dehumanization of the victimized group(s). • A plan for ethnic cleansing. • A relatively powerless victimized group. • An international community that disapproves morally of the genocidal behavior, but does not take effective measures to prevent or stop the massacres. |
|---|

Table 3: Building Blocks of Sustainable Peace Building

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective system of communication, consultation and negotiation at different levels. • Political and economic peace enhancing structures (consolidated democracy and social free market system). • An objective and subjective security system. • An integrative moral political climate, characterized by the expectation of an attractive future resulting from cooperation, a replacement of exclusive nationalism with multiple loyalties, reconciliation and dismantlement of senti-mental walls. • Political, economic and security cooperation at a multilateral level. • A critical mass of internal and external peace building leadership. |
|--|

Comparative Analysis and Evaluation of Peace Architectures

Another challenge of architectural research is the development of ways and means to improve sustainable peace building processes. A comparative analysis and evaluation of successful and less successful peace building efforts could shorten the learning curve significantly. In such a comparative study, three phases could be distinguished. In the first phase an analysis and evaluation is made of the conflict to be transformed. This gives an indication of the problems to be solved and the degree of difficulty to be expected. The second phase involves an assessment of the results or the output of the peace building efforts, while the third phase focuses on the process.

Phase 1: Analysis and Evaluation of the Conflict to Be Transformed

In this part a diagnosis would be made of the actors, the issues, the opportunity structure, the strategic approaches of the parties involved and of the conflict dynamics. This gives us an idea of the type of conflict one is confronted with, and also allows us to estimate the costs and difficulty of the conflict transformation efforts. The latter implies additional data gathering and analysis of the peace building efforts, such as: the actors included or excluded in the peace process (levels/internal-external); the prescriptive or indicative nature of the process; the operational definition of peace; the issues addressed; the tools selected; the levels on which the peace efforts were focused; the layers of the conflict addressed; the time management; the commitment of time and means and the coordination of efforts.

Phase 2: Evaluation of the Outcomes/Results of the Peace Building Efforts

Here we focus on two criteria of effectiveness: the nature of the outcome and the durability. The nature of the outcome is assessed by checking how and to what extent the above-mentioned criteria of sustainable peace are satisfied. The durability is assessed by studying the installation and consolidation of the necessary preconditions of sustainable peace.

Phase 3: Evaluation of the Peace Building Process

This is the most difficult part of the comparative study because it requires a thorough understanding of what is needed to build an effective, efficient and satisfactory peace building process. In the second phase, the effectiveness was assessed by looking at the nature of the outcome and the durability. To assess the efficiency one uses direct and indirect sets of measures. The first set of direct measures assesses the tangible and intangible costs of the transition such as the human, economic, social, psychological, cultural, ecological, political and spiritual costs; the amount of time wasted and missed opportunities and the impact of the transition on the nature of the relations between the conflicting parties.

Table 4. Evaluation of Peace Building Architecture

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
Effectiveness	Nature of outcome: characteristics sustainable peace Durability: installation and consolidation of building blocks
Efficiency	Direct measures: costs/time/relations Indirect measures of factors that are assumed to enhance efficiency, such as inclusiveness of the process, early warning of threats and opportunities, effective negotiation and mediation efforts, etc.
Satisfaction	With the process With the relationship With the outcome

The second set of indirect measures studies the series of factors that tend to enhance or inhibit transition processes. The efficiency of the peace building process influences several variables below.

The involvement of the people who view themselves as deeply affected by the peace building process. The inclusion or exclusion of the owners and stakeholders makes the difference between failure and success. The people who see their interest as deeply affected should be at the heart of the decision making process. Others who should be included, consulted or informed are: those who could hinder the successful implementation; those whose advise or assistance is needed; and those whose approval will be required to enable the project to proceed (Kraybill, 1995).

Effective communication, consultation, negotiation and mediation process. This implies an evocative rather than a prescriptive approach and an acquaintance with effective negotiation and mediation methods that tend to enhance win-win agreements with low transaction costs, good relations and durable outcomes.

*A contextual and comprehensive analysis of the problems which are responsible for the conflict.*⁵ Special attention should be directed to the components of sustainable peace that need to be absent, installed or consolidated.

An appreciative inquiry of the strengths and the peace potential in the conflict ridden zone. In contrast to the problem-oriented approach — which focuses on the past, the problems, and the weaknesses — an appreciative inquiry turns the attention to the future and the strengths on which peace could be built.

A clear and compelling definition of peace. The conflict behavior of the parties is strongly influenced by their respective expectations about the future. Therefore, the projection of a clear and attractive future could catalyze the conflict transition process significantly. Peace architects such as Jean Monnet, succeeded in convincing the Europeans that cooperation would bring them not only security, but also freedom and affluence. In other cases, the parties will have to negotiate a better future by reconciling competing values.

The battery of tools used in the conflict transformation process. (For example, European Community). These tools should be related to the specific peace building needs in the conflict zone.

The coherence of the peace building plan. Here we look at the synergy or the interaction of actions such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects. Attention is paid to the cross impact of the efforts in different *domains* (political, diplomatic, military, humanitarian, economic, etc.); at different *levels* (internal and external – elite/middle/local); on different *layers* (public behavior, opinions, perceptions, feelings) and time-factors. The purpose is to enhance the positive and synergetic impact of the peace building efforts and prevent and/or reduce the negative effects (Reychler 1999c, 144-162). The installation of an effective conflict impact assessment system (CIAS) would help considerably (Davis 1996; Gardner 1993).

The use of time. Time is one of the vital and nonrenewable resources that continue to be wasted. Time is money, but it also makes the difference between life and death. Many violent conflicts are examples of missed opportunities. More research should be undertaken about the role of time and timing in conflict transformation. On the agenda are issues such as: attitudes towards time (proactive versus reactive); the relative importance paid to the past, present and future in the design of a reconciliation process, (for example; the lead-time of projects); the preference of short-, middle- and long-term programs; the duration of the intervention; when to enter and exit; how to schedule the interventions (consequentially or simultaneously).

Other questions should be considered, including: Can elections be organized when there is no agreement about power-sharing? Is there something like an economic threshold below which efforts for democratization are a waste of time? How should political democratization and economic privatization be linked?

Intelligent early warning. An intelligent early warning system tries not only to anticipate threats and the risk of violent escalation, but also pays attention to the opportunities to intervene proactively; to the costs of different conflict transformation policies and the impact of planned policies, and programs or projects about the dynamics of the conflict. The development and installation of an effective conflict impact assessment system would increase the chances of a conflict prevention system considerably.

Effective implementation of a peace building plan. This implies not only the commitment of sufficient time and means but also leadership and a good coordination of the peace building activities of the parties involved.

Unlearning and dismantling of 'senti-mental walls'. Peace building is not only about construction, but also about deconstruction. To analyze and transform conflicts, more attention needs to be paid to political-psychological variables. In particular, efforts should be made to identify and dismantle 'senti-mental walls'. This term refers to concepts, theories, dogmas, attitudes, habits, emotions and inclinations that inhibit democratic transition and constructive transformation of conflicts. The existence of senti-mental walls increases the chances of misperceiving the situation and of misevaluating the interests at stake; they lower the motivation to act on an opportunity and hinder the development of the necessary

skills and know-how to overcome conflicts. The hyphenation of sentiment and mental to 'senti-mental' is done to make people aware of the emotional roots. In a comparative study of genocide, it became clear that the behavior of all actors was distorted: the victims by despair, pluralistic ignorance and political inefficacy; the offenders by historical falsification, stereotyping, dehumanization, distrust and indifference; the third parties by neutralism/passivity/non-intervention, cultural arrogance, moral-legal approach and the preference to wait until the conflict is 'ripe'; the analysts by one-dimensional analysis, the use of invalid theories, pseudo-scientific doctrines/myths/taboo, elitist analysis, wrong assessment of future developments, etc.

A critical mass of peace building leadership. Without a critical mass of external and internal leadership, who motivates, guides and commits people to the peace building process, the chances of successful peace building are very low. Could a leader make a difference in bringing people together? Do unfortunate countries lack leadership or is the level of conflict sometimes too powerful for any leader to overcome (Lederach 1997)? The premise is that an essential ingredient of sustainable peace building is a critical mass of leadership that can raise hope, generate ways and means to reach the goals, and commit people to the peace building process. The critical mass of leadership needed depends on the specific conflict context. It could include internal and external leadership; some conflicts can be transformed successfully with internal leadership, others necessitate external leadership to support the process.

The internal leadership to be involved could be situated at different levels. The top level comprises the key political and military leaders in the conflict (Monnet 1976). These people are the highest representative leaders of the government and opposition movements or present themselves as such. The middle range leadership is not necessarily connected to or controlled by the authority or structures of the formal or major opposition movements. They could be highly respected individuals or persons who occupy formal positions of leadership in sectors such as education, business, religion, agriculture, health or humanitarian organizations. The grassroots leadership includes people who are involved in local communities, members of indigenous non-governmental organizations carrying out relief projects for local populations, health officials and refugee camp leaders.

Process

The overall aim is *to create a win-win situation* or a mutually benefiting sense of interdependence between all the parties involved and *to embed the peace building into institutions* that reinforce and sustain the process. Jean Monnet stressed repeatedly the importance of helping the Europeans to see their common interests (*leur intérêt commun*). He also pleaded for the creation of 'supranational' institutions (such as the European commission), which could facilitate the cooperation process (Kraybill 1995). Sustainable peace is seen (a) as the result of a *reconciliation of competing values, interests and needs*, such as freedom, justice, affluence, security, truth, mercy and dignity, and (b) as flourishing best in a

consolidated democratic environment. A great deal of effort is spent on the development of a good process (Bennis and Nanus 1985, p. 224).

The process is *inclusive*. Monnet insisted on talking to all participants (government, business, unions, etc.) to engage all the stakeholders in the peace building process. The assumption is that parties to a conflict will work more effectively at a resolution if they have personal stakes in the successful outcome of the process (Global Excellence Management 1999).

There is the belief that nothing positive can be expected from a peace plan build on unequal grounds rules. Monnet insisted on negotiating on the basis of *equality* and did not accept the idea of *primus inter pares*.

In order to build confidence, the process is made *transparent*. All plans Monnet proposed were clear and simple. He believed trust could be achieved by presenting unambiguous plans that would substantiate the peace process through mutually beneficial goals. When initially some negotiators were suspicious, little by little, they saw that there was nothing to hide.

The problem solving approach is enriched with an *appreciative inquiry* (Monnet 1976, p. 273). Appreciative inquiry is a far more complex process than the simple positive thinking approach with which it is sometimes confused. It involves challenging the status quo by *envisioning a preferred future* and *identifying the existing peace building potential*. Both the identification of the strengths and the articulation of a realistic and attractive future, a condition that is in some important ways better than what now exist, can accelerate the conflict transformation considerably.

Another characteristic of peace builders is their *proactive mindset*. Monnet was a mover, not a care-taker. He not only envisioned a European Union, but he also tried to assess the impact of policy alternatives proactively.

Characteristic is the *open-minded search for alternative means* to build peace in an efficient way. Peace builders are not orators who instinctively know the solution. Peace builders make a distinction between interests and positions and search actively for formulas that satisfy all conflicting parties. In some cases, this could mean integrative solutions (such as the creation of a European Union, the new South Africa or the unification of East and West Germany) or a disintegrative solution, such as the relatively peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Empire or the smooth divorce of the Slovak and Czech people. A great deal of time is taken out to search for and develop alternative solutions.

Decisions are not made on the basis of pressures or emotions, but on their merit. Essential is the use of *fair and objective standards and procedures* for evaluating alternative policy options. To convey the costs and benefits of alternative futures Monnet made ample use of balance sheets.

It is important to engage and network with the leaders of different domains and at different levels in the process. Monnet did not perform as a *prima donna*, but preferred to give the limelight to the politicians: "Since they take the risks, they should have the laurels" (Europa Notities 1996, p. 400).⁶

Conclusion

To research more systematically the characteristics of peace architects such as Jean Monnet would significantly contribute to more effective peace building. It would not only help to identify and strengthen the peace building potential, but also to track and weaken the spoilers in the peace building process. It could also eliminate some of the stereotypical images of peace builders, such as the image of passive pacifists. They do not only construct, but also need to deconstruct. They cut through dogmas, taboos, doctrines, etiquette, cynicism and others sentimental obstacles on the way to progress. Monnet challenged the ideas of political prestige and economic protectionism; he pleaded for supra-nationalism and questioned the belief in ‘archenemies’ or the existence of a politically independent economic sphere. He was a professional with a cause.

Endnotes

1. Since the publication of Mary Anderson’s, *Do No Harm: Supporting Capacities for Peace through Aid*, many studies have highlighted the negative impact of uni-dimensional well-intentioned efforts (humanitarian and structural aid, peace keeping, democratization, etc) on the peace building process. The work done by Peter Uvin has been remarkable.
2. For the European Union, see for example Conflict Prevention Network (1999).
3. See also K. Slaikeu and R. H. Hasson (1998); C. A. Constantino and C. S. Merchant (1996); and W. L. Ury, J. M. Breet and S. Goldberg (1988).
4. See page 31 for a description of ‘senti-mental walls’.
5. A useful typology of impact can be found in M. A. Max-Neef (1991). He distinguishes destroying – impact, pseudo-impact, inhibiting impact, singular impact, synergic impact and exogenous and endogenous impacts.
6. See also M. Kohnstamm (1981) and Jean Monnet (1976).

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THE ROLE OF FAITH IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Abdul Aziz Said and Nathan C. Funk*

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When we speak of the role of faith in cross-cultural conflict resolution, our challenge is to honor the diversity of the world's humanistic and spiritual traditions while seeking common ground among them. What we aspire towards, in other words, is an agenda for research, dialogue and activism that is global in conception and responsive to common challenges of peacemaking and coexistence within and among the world's many traditions. It is no longer sufficient for transnational peace agendas to be defined primarily by the cultural experiences and perceived security threats of a particular nation or culture. We need new frameworks for organizing knowledge about religion, culture and spirituality – frameworks that recognize the powerful role that faith and belief play in conflict and conflict resolution, and that do not privilege one culture as 'normal' and label another as 'exceptional'.

One of the greatest barriers to open dialogue between major cultural traditions is the assumption that a universally valid (and presumably secular) framework of knowledge for peace and the resolution of conflicts already exists. This notion is untenable for two reasons. First, it breeds complacency, lack of vision and reliance on dominant paradigms which presuppose that peace and human development 'take care of themselves' so long as self-interested actors pursue such mundane, minimalist goals as economic growth and physical security.

Second, it is exclusive, and implies that approaches based on non-Western sources, or even religious precepts, for that matter, are dangerous or somehow invalid (Dallmayr 2000). The rising prominence of protracted ethnic and religious conflicts, however, has convinced many scholars that the cultural and religious aspects of conflict and its resolution must be taken seriously. An emerging literature on religion, conflict resolution and peace has contributed significantly to this development.

One of the most important findings of cross-cultural conflict resolution research is that religion is a perennial and perhaps inevitable factor in both conflict and conflict resolution. Religion, after all, is a powerful constituent of cultural norms and values, and because it addresses the most profound existential issues of human life (e.g., freedom and inevitability, fear and faith, security and insecurity, right and

* Lynn Kunkle, who is a doctoral student at American University, has substantially contributed to research and writing of the article.

wrong, sacred and profane), religion is deeply implicated in individual and social conceptions of peace. To transform the conflicts besetting the world today, we need to uncover the conceptions of peace within our diverse religious and cultural traditions, while seeking the common ground among them.

Defining the Role of Religion in Conflict and Peacemaking

Peace and conflict resolution are both universal and particular; similar as well as divergent approaches derive form and vitality from the cultural resources of a people. When we examine peacemaking and conflict resolution across cultures, we discover both common themes and significant differences, both of which enhance our general theories of conflict resolution and help to create constructive channels for the perennial religious impulse.

Whether or not scholars and practitioners are consciously aware of religious influences in the shaping of their own perceptions, religious belief systems directly impact the development of theories of conflict and conflict resolution. Primarily, this occurs through presuppositions regarding the nature of reality and society, the purpose and ultimate meaning of life, and the means by which to live an 'authentic' ideal life – the life of inner and outer peace. Religious concepts of peace, then, embody and elaborate upon the highest moral and ethical principles of a given society and define the terms and conditions for individual and social harmony.

Religion may be defined as a path of ultimate transformation, comprised of interconnected systems of symbols and guidelines. These shape the individual and group subconscious from which social practices and interactions are all given meaning (Galtung 1997). This common frame of reference underpins the very fabric of group and individual identity, providing the shared normative foundation that makes harmonious social interaction possible as well as meaningful. Social and political norms manifest the virtues, priorities and ideals of their religious culture.

Religion in Conflict Situations

In promulgating the ideals and values held in highest esteem by groups and individuals, religion profoundly influences goal-seeking behavior in conflict situations, by establishing the criteria or frames of reference for determining the rightness and wrongness of events. Viewed from a religious perspective, conflicts are interpreted not only as ruptures in horizontal relationships between human beings, but also as ruptures in one's vertical relationship with the divine.

The 'shared cultural universe' or 'collective cosmology' that religion provides operates at both a conscious and subconscious level, and both levels come into play in the midst of conflict. For disputants, the disruption that accompanies conflict can shake unstated, implicit expectations and reinforce tendencies to frame relationships in terms of religious categories. In this context, religious presuppositions regarding 'self', 'other', 'conflict' and 'peace' emerge, as individuals or groups frame the conflict, give it meaning and fashion responses appropriate to their values and goals for its resolution.

By enjoining a broad repertoire of models or precedents of desirable behavior in conflicted circumstances while specifically admonishing others, religion implicitly influences the desirability and likelihood of certain courses of action over others. When utilized constructively, religion can affect individual and social responses to triggering events through (a) placing the event in a historical, goal-seeking context, (b) providing meaning for events in light of values, goals and religious identity and (c) offering roles for dealing with conflict through appropriate, affirmative responses based on religious precepts and idealized models or precedents. When faced with difficult challenges or uncertainty in conflicts, participants rely on these established codes of conduct to alleviate cognitive dissonance, anxiety and guilt as well as to fashion a path of correctness (based on idealized courses of action) that promises to restore harmony and order.

Religion and Conflict Resolution

It is essential to recognize that the experience of conflict evokes a deep-seated need for affirmation of identity and restoration of meaning. Conflict resolution does more than address material clashes of interest; it speaks to social reintegration, restoration and redemption, existential security, personal transcendence and transformation. These concepts are drawn from the backdrop of the sacred, which may be defined as any process that explicitly connects us to the largest possible context to which we belong (Said, Lerche and Lerche 1995; see also Bateson and Bateson 1987). The affirmation of individual and group identity achieved through redemptive transformation is essential in giving meaning to a conflict and its resolution. Attempts to divorce the spiritual from conflict resolution practices deny an essential component of healing and social restoration that permits conflicts to be *experienced* as resolved.

The religious cosmology of a group, in privileging some values and ideals over others, specifies how restoration, wholeness and healing can be achieved through distinctive paths of resolution adopted by different cultures (Abu-Nimer 1996). Conflict resolution approaches that do not incorporate appropriate and relevant paths of redemptive transformation are less likely to yield more enduring or effective resolution. The ruptures experienced in conflict situations often require symbolic or other social exchange found within collective cosmologies. In this way, conflict resolution strategies manifest distinctive conceptions of peace, which illuminate the terms and conditions necessary for social harmony to be both understood and experienced.

For example, in Christian cosmologies and in some Western approaches to conflict resolution, personal responses such as an aspiration toward transcendence or perceptual transformation are encouraged, emphasizing historical breaks from the past that enable renewal and revisionism. This is in line with Christianity's traditional emphasis on a personal relationship with the divine and the idealized social value attached to the individual pursuit of interests (Tarnas 1991). Significantly, Christianity alone among the monotheist traditions encourages this kind of comprehensive, unilateral conflict resolution approach, whereas in both Islam and Judaism, reciprocal or other social actions signal the achievement of

resolution within a larger, historical context. The role of community and community leaders in achieving historically and communally acceptable solutions is particularly evident in Islamic approaches to conflict resolution.

Islam, Peace and Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution: A Comparative Perspective

Contemporary frictions between Western and Muslim societies underscore the importance of developing cross-cultural frameworks that highlight inter-religious and faith-based dimensions of conflict resolution. Where poorly managed conflict leads to distortion and failure of communication, cooperative inquiry into traditions of peace and peacemaking helps to establish new points of contact and complementarity across cultures.

For far too long, Western media and scholarship have tended to mirror the unfortunate estrangement between Islamic and Western societies and cultures. Popular as well as academic literatures have focused disproportionately on religious radicalism and militancy, effectively viewing Islam through the lenses of terrorism and violence and neglecting its role as a deeply embedded discourse and affirmative value system in the day-to-day lives of Muslims. Meanwhile, early Muslim admiration for the West's achievements has been tempered by a tendency to filter perceptions through the lenses of colonialism, imperialism and contemporary grievances in the Middle East.

To this day, the presumption of incompatibility has provided the dominant motif for storytelling about Islamic and Western cultures. Both Western observers and Muslims paint with broad brushstrokes when they engage in generalization about macro-cultural units of analysis, and fail to account for the diverse strands of cultural legacies. As protagonists of the story of incompatibility, they often resort to a language of exclusivity. This language is preoccupied with defining boundaries, and manifests a retreat from intercultural experiences to psychological and cultural segregation. Implicitly or explicitly, the 'other' is depicted as a threatening monolith.¹ The result is that Muslim and Western analysts have placed such strong emphasis on extremist tendencies among their purported adversaries that a 'clash of symbols' has begun to emerge, in which the most superficial and eye-catching aspects of the 'other' are highlighted at the expense of shared and convergent values.

To transcend the 'clash of symbols', Muslims and Westerners must aspire to know one another within a new context of sustained, dialogical engagement. Dialogue can enable Muslims to respond more substantively to the innovations of the West, while also making it possible for Westerners to appreciate Islamic conceptions of peace and thereby transcend the habit of focusing narrowly on those groups of Muslims that are responsible for destructive acts or confrontational rhetoric.

Contrasting Western and Islamic Approaches to Peace

Although Western approaches to peace reflect traditions within Christian religious cosmology, most are underpinned by largely secular intellectual constructs. In the field of international relations, the prevailing Western approach is apparent in an emergent synthesis of neorealist power politics and neoliberal institutionalism. Considered separately from justice, peace is equated with an absence of war; justice, in turn, is understood as an absence of gross violations of human rights. As an absence of war or organized violence, peace is maintained by the threat of coercion and by institutionalized cooperation among great powers. Peace is equated with stability and order guaranteed by hegemonic influence. Where institutionalized order cannot be guaranteed, as in politics among core and peripheral nation-states, preponderance of coercive power is viewed as a necessary, albeit arbitrary, arbiter of intractable disputes.

In its defense of the contemporary world order, the dominant approach to peace in international relations reflects the modern Western tendency to think about peace and conflict resolution in terms of rational order or problem solving predicated upon reason and expediency. Following the example of such Greek thinkers as Plato and Euripides, modern Western thinking regards reason as sacred. Passion has been posited as the opponent of reason (hence the putatively dispassionate quality of serious intellectual inquiry); passion is dangerous and destructive. Emmanuel Kant (1723-1804), for example, understood history as progress toward rationality (Reiss 1991).² While it is true that modern advocates of *realpolitik* have disregarded Kant's optimistic rationalism, they have not rejected the underlying assumption that peace can only reign if reason continues to achieve triumphal victories in an ongoing war against passion – for example, against tribalism, ethnic conflict and ideologically based competition. In the past, Islamic civilization has sometimes been framed as inimical to this Western ethos, and as an 'exception' to natural processes of development and progressive, peaceful change.

Not surprisingly, the conception of peace that is dominant among Western elites differs markedly from Islamic conceptions. Historically, Islamic thinkers benefited from and even extended the thought of the Greeks, but speculative thought never dissociated itself from religious precepts and values. Moreover, most Muslim thinkers were reluctant to imitate the Greek inclination to sanctify reason while denigrating passion. Reason was seldom regarded as sacred in its own right, nor was passion viewed solely as a source of disruption and injustice. The general tendency was to view reason and passion as complementary aspects of the human being that can be integrated through the faith and practice of Islam, active submission to the divine. Such an integration is suggested by the Qur'anic ideal of *nafs al-mutma'inna*, the "soul at peace" (Qur'an, 89:27), in which deeply held values, conscience, and desire are in harmony.³

Like Christians, Jews and followers of other traditions, Muslims share in a common calling to work for peace. This calling is rooted in the *Qur'an*, which enjoins humanity to "strive as in a race in all virtues" (Qur'an, 5:48). Within the Muslim community, or *umma*, this calling has manifested, and will no doubt continue to manifest, in varied ways that reflect continuous efforts to interpret and

apply foundational Islamic values in specific historical, social and cultural situations. Islam, like all religions, is not only a theological affirmation but also a living historical process with multiple syntheses and expressions that must be taken into account. Though in principle we may speak of Islam as an integral tradition, from a practical, realistic standpoint there are many Islams, each of which reflects a different approach to perennial challenges of integrating precept and practice. Through its varied traditions, Islam has much to contribute to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue on the advancement of peace and related humanistic and spiritual values (Said, Funk and Kadayifci 2001).

Practices of Islamic societies, of course, have often reflected those aspects of the prevailing Western approach to peace that call for coercive power, particularly through an emphasis on the role of centralized authority in checking centrifugal forces of rebellion and fragmentation. Nonetheless, Islamic norms have long rendered a minimalist approach to issues of peace and justice questionable in its religious legitimacy. Ever since Muslims first assembled themselves in political community, they have believed that a society guided by inspired laws, wise leadership and extensive consultation is superior to a society governed by the arbitrary whims of a king, dictator or oligarchy. Islam puts little faith in ideas such as the ‘invisible hand’, and enjoins the proactive establishment of peace through a just social order. Peace is understood to imply not only an *absence* of oppression and tumult, but also a *presence* of justice and conditions for human flourishing.

As Muslim jurists developed the *shari’a*, or law of Islam, they responded both to the demands of governing a new empire, and to the abuse of power by caliphal authority. Many *shari’a* provisions, such as the rules of evidence, were understood as a protective code, ensuring that believers would be able to pursue the good life (*hayy tayyiba*) without fear. While Muslim thinkers have given consideration to the same types of dilemmas that have preoccupied Hobbes and Locke, Islamic aspirations have long reflected a broad and holistic conception of peace.⁴ This conception is premised on the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah* (the example of the Prophet).

The keynote of the Qur’anic revelation could be characterized as integration and wholeness through surrender to God. This essential theme is expressed in a universalistic spirit, suggesting a worldview premised on tolerance and inclusiveness (Qur’an, 49:13). Peace in Islam begins with God; God *is* peace, for peace (*al-Salam*) is one of the “most beautiful names” of God (Qur’an, 59:23-24). Peace in the world reflects higher realities. In the *Qur’an*, peace is affirmed as the greeting, language, and condition of Paradise (Qur’an, 10:10, 14:23, 19:61-63, 36:58). God calls believers unto the abode of peace (*dar al-salam*) (Qur’an, 10:25), and the yearning for peace derives from the innermost nature of humankind. Interestingly enough, the word *Islam* derives not from the name of a particular prophet or people, but from the same root as *salam* (*s-l-m*) and suggests a condition of peace, security, wholeness and safety from harm that is attained through surrender (*taslim*) to the Divine.

Peace, then, occupies a central position among Islamic precepts, where it is closely linked to justice and human flourishing. Peace in Islam suggests a condition of principle-based order – a proper equilibrium of parts – from which a pattern of harmony can emerge. This condition is both internal and external; upholding it is

the responsibility of every Muslim. The term *jihad*, often translated superficially as “holy war”, actually means striving, and the “greater jihad” (*al-jihad al-akbar*) in the Islamic tradition has always been the inner struggle to purify the self and behave in a manner which furthers rather than disrupts the divine harmony.

Islam adopts a positive view of human nature, insisting that the original human constitution (*fitrah*) is good and *muslim* in character. There is no conception of original sin, but rather a hopeful conception of human potential that is integrally related to a status of stewardship towards creation. In contrast to the Western idea of free choice and freedom from constraint (‘freedom to do’), Islam accentuates existential freedom (‘freedom to be’). The dignity of the individual is actualized through service, within a broader context of human solidarity.

There is a clearly articulated preference in Islam for nonviolence over violence, and for forgiveness (*‘afu*) over retribution. The *Qur’an* aims to regulate the commonplace, retributive responses of people to conflict and violence. Forgiveness is consistently held out as the preferred option for humanity in matters of requiting clear injustice or crime. “*The recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoever forgives and thereby brings about a reestablishment of harmony, his reward is with God; and God loves not the wrongdoers*” (Qur’an, 42:40). Neither naive pardon nor a mechanical retribution is urged; what is sought is a reformation or moral good accomplished by sincere forgiveness.

Finally, the *Qur’an* frequently cautions people against going to excess when attempting to pursue rights or correct injustice. The *Qur’an* discourages unnecessary conflict, and heaps utter condemnation on those who, by selfishly pursuing their own limited goals, bring destruction, oppression and violence (*fitnah*) down upon the rest of their fellows, “committing excesses on earth” (Qur’an, 5:33).

A Communally Embedded Approach to Conflict Resolution

From an Islamic point of view, the achievements of the dominant Western approach to peace are impressive, but also one-sided. From a Muslim perspective, the Western approach puts too much faith in institutional formulas and the “invisible hand” of competition, and too little emphasis on communal cooperation in the conscious pursuit of values. Where the Western approach celebrates human self-determination, the Islamic perspective underscores divine purpose and human exertion. While the Western approach points to political pluralism, individual rights and consumerism as the substance of peace, the Islamic perspective affirms cultural pluralism, communal solidarity, social justice and faith.

The differences between Western and Islamic approaches to conflict resolution mirror some of the differences between Western and Islamic perspectives on peace. Modern Western traditions view conflict as natural and potentially even creative (in ideas ranging from ‘natural selection’ and ‘creative destruction’ to ‘nonviolent conflict transformation’), despite its potential conduciveness to instability and disorder. While professionals and scholars who *specialize* in conflict resolution abjure attempts to merely suppress conflict and encourage the brokering of durable, mutually beneficial resolutions to problems (Fisher, Ury and Patton 1991), the

prevailing inclination is to permit open confrontation among conflicting interests without necessarily seeking a 'win-win' solution or recourse to religious values.

While conflict resolution specialists have begun to develop newer approaches in order to prioritize human needs and non-adversarial processes (Burton 1990; Laue 1988), Western conflict resolution has traditionally reflected a cultural outlook of pragmatic individualism and a style of instrumental problem-solving (Scimecca 1991). This outlook has been associated with an emphasis on expediency and technique. From an Islamic standpoint, it can be criticized as an engineering approach that neglects relationships while focusing on isolated issues or on variables that can be manipulated mechanistically.

However suitable modern Western techniques may be in their original cultural milieu – especially when harmonized with religious or humanistic values – their applications in more traditional or non-Western contexts are circumscribed. John Paul Lederach (1995), for example, has observed substantial differences between contemporary Western conflict resolution approaches and traditional Latin American approaches that are derived from indigenous culture and embedded in communal realities. On the basis of his work in the region, Lederach (1995) concludes that 'insider partial' mediators – who are by definition well versed in local cultural meanings and expectations, and often have vested interests in conflict outcomes – have better chances of making important contributions than mediators who play the North American role of the disinterested, impartial outsider (see also Wehr and Lederach 1993). Other scholars have also recognized the role that culture plays in conflict and peacemaking, and have affirmed the potential contributions of diverse religious institutions and principles to conflict resolution within divided societies (Augsburger 1992; Avruch 1998).

While the strongest current of the Western approach to conflict resolution prioritizes problems to be abstracted and solved, distinctively Islamic approaches resemble other non-Western approaches insofar as they frame conflicts as matters of communal and not just individual concern, and underscore the importance of repairing and maintaining social relationships. Muslim approaches to conflict resolution draw on religious values, social networks, rituals of reconciliation (Irani and Funk 1998) and historical practices of communal and inter-communal coexistence. Strong emphasis is placed on linkages between personal and group identity, between individual and collective responsibility for wrongdoings, and between attentiveness to 'face'-related issues (public status, shame, reputation for generosity) and the achievement of restorative justice within a context of continuing relationship. Conflict resolution efforts are directed toward the maintenance of communal or intercommunal harmony. They favor recognition of mutual rights and obligations, and uphold shared values by calling for public apology, compensation for losses and forgiveness (Irani and Funk 1998). Conflict resolution mechanisms are legitimized and guaranteed by communal leaders and (traditionally) elders who facilitate a process of reconciliation. History is regarded as a source of stability and guidance that provides lessons for shaping a common future for the society. Efforts aim to protect and empower families and the community as a whole to participate in a resolution process.

Islam and the West: A Search for Common Ground

Discussion of Islamic conceptions of peace and conflict resolution leads quite naturally to the question of Islamic political activism. Contemporary Islamic activism is best understood not as a backward-looking rejection of the modern world, but rather as a deeply felt expression of cultural identity and a critique of domestic as well as international political orders (Falk 1997; Salla 1997).⁵ Islam provides its adherents with a language that addresses all aspects of life, and Islamic activism equips Muslims with a vocabulary through which they may affirm their identity and project themselves politically.

One distinction that many observers of Islam fail to make concerns the difference between revivalism and fundamentalism. *Islamic revivalism* is a broad-based social and political movement directed toward internal renewal. First and foremost, it is a response to a widely felt malaise that has left Muslim societies weak and unable to meet the modern world on their own terms. Although its manifestations are remarkably widespread, Islamic revivalism is not a monolithic movement, nor is it equivalent to the militant *fundamentalism* – a reaction to foreign incursions and perceived threats to identity and security – that captures the attention of the media. Among the world's major historical powers, only the Muslims, as a people, have not reversed the decline in their global status. The Japanese, the Chinese and the Europeans have all regained their world influence. The Islamic revival is a way that Muslims are defining who they are. Under conditions of cultural, economic and political marginalization, large numbers of people are returning to deeply embedded religious discourses as they search for authentic values and alternative means of responding to their problems.

All too often, differences between Islamic and Western concepts and values are either over-represented or under-represented. When they are over-represented, the result is the traditional 'incompatibility' story, in which dialogue between the West and Islam is portrayed as an exercise in futility. In large part to counteract this story, a second story – the story of compatibility – has also been told, identifying genuine similarities but sometimes seeking to subsume Islamic precepts within a Western framework. A third story – a story of intercultural complementarity and reconciliation, we hope – has yet to be written. Nonetheless, we would like to suggest a possible script for this new narrative.

Because Islamic traditions provide a set of powerful political precepts and practices with universal implications, Islam can make important contributions to an integrated world order that affirms the unique value of all cultural traditions. In particular, Islam prescribes a strong sense of community and solidarity of people: it postulates a collaborative concept of freedom; and it demystifies the Western myth of triumphant material progress and development. Moreover, Islamic precepts offer strongly affirmative statements on the subject of cultural pluralism.

In the Western pluralistic tradition, diversity is seen in terms of the coexistence of political systems and ideas but not of cultures. Cultural pluralism has roots in an Islamic tradition of ethnic diversity that historically fostered a tendency toward cultural broadness and flexibility. This heritage has allowed autonomous non-Muslim cultures to flourish within Islam to this day, while the West succumbed

to the destruction of native cultures and to sporadic, but virulent, anti-Semitism (Mazrui 1997). While Muslim practice has often fallen short of Muslim principles and the advent of the nation-state has created new tensions between national and sub-national identities, the religion of Islam is remarkable for its explicit precepts favoring cultural and religious pluralism (Qur'an, 2:256, 5:48, 10:47, 49:13, 109:6).

Today's challenge for the West is to live up to its liberal tradition, which requires continual openness to new revelations of truth. Today's challenge for Muslims is no more than the expansion of the original ideas of Islam. A retreat to a cultural ghetto by any group, be it Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist or Hindu, is not only a denial of the rich diversity of the modern cultural experience, but also a rejection of responsibility for future generations. Retreat is one of two faces of fundamentalism, which we define as a pathology of culture that arises when a group takes a subset of the basic tenets of a tradition and – either under the pressure of insecurity (in the case of today's Muslims) or in the pursuit of hegemony and total security (in the case of the West) – uses them to seal off others or to maintain dominance. Islamic fundamentalism involves a militantly political re-appropriation of religious precepts; Western political fundamentalism is characterized by the canonization and propagation of an exclusive cultural and political narrative.

Popular slogans to the contrary, Islam and the West are not inherently incompatible. The first story – the 'incompatibility' story of many political and strategic analyses – informs us of tensions that do in fact exist, but it neglects the deep resonances between Islamic and Western civilizations that are cited by the reformers and specialists who narrate the second story. The third story exists only in the form of a working outline; we have attempted here to suggest the contents of future narratives that draw lessons from ongoing dialogue.

The third story points to the prospect of a cooperative, nonadversarial relationship between Islamic and Western civilizations. Such a relationship would be premised not on ideas of cultural triumphalism, but on mutual respect and openness to cultural eclecticism. Muslims and Westerners can learn from each other and cooperate in the pursuit of humane values. Seeming contradictions will have to be dealt with on a higher plane. If Western individualism is to bring lasting happiness to the individual, new models of 'free community' will have to be explored; if Muslim ideals of community are to reach their fulfillment, it will be necessary to revisit traditions that underscore the dignity of the individual. Muslims can benefit from the Western experience with political pluralism, and Westerners can benefit from the spirit of Islamic cultural pluralism.

All who identify with Islam and with the West can become co-authors of a new story. We need a new story to tell, and the story we begin to tell today has a bearing on the story we will tell tomorrow. We are all heirs of the story of conflict. If we leave aside tired generalizations and seek to know one another, we can become the architects of a truly new order of cooperation.

Conclusion: The Changing Context of Human Spirituality

We stand at the conjunction of two perspectives. One is the emotional perspective felt by many Westerners – the view that, if not for the revival and

increasing political activism of non-Western cultural traditions such as Islam, all would have been well. This perspective points to the calamitous events of September 11, 2001 and states that its peace has been shattered. The other perspective – a perspective of hopelessness that is common among Muslims as well as members of many other non-Western cultural traditions – is born of experiences of exclusion, suffering and resentment that have accumulated over a considerable period of time. From their perspective, peace and justice have long been absent from the world. A precarious and even humiliating state of existence has been the norm, not peace.

Where do we go from here? What contribution can faith make to this state of affairs? We need to experience ourselves in relationship, not out of relationship. In a world of collapsing boundaries, cultures need to experience their commonality. This is necessary if the suffering that Americans and Westerners are undergoing in the face of scourges like terrorism is to find its counterpoint in the suffering of those who turn to militant belief systems or who are unable to prevent their companions from doing so.

In other words, divergent worlds of perception – Islam and the West, the South and the North – must move from isolation toward unity. To do so, we need to stimulate reflection, find meaning in mutual tragedies and share our most sacred values, including our conceptions of peace. Such activities permit a search for meaning and commonality. The discovery of commonality, in turn, makes reconciliation possible, through the re-identification and reaffirmation of the core spiritual precepts upon which our religious narratives, images and values have been built. In the process, we may also derive common responses to shared human suffering.

While we in no way wish to denigrate traditional religious commitments, we believe that, at the present juncture of human development, it is useful to make a distinction between spirituality and religion, even though the terms are often used interchangeably because both refer to matters of faith. The term *religion* refers to an institutional framework within which a specific theology is pursued, usually among a community of like-minded believers. *Spirituality*, on the other hand, transcends the boundaries of religion, suggesting broader human involvement that comes from the inner essence of a person. At the level of the individual, it refers to action borne of a deep commitment that is not necessarily derived from allegiance to a particular religion.

In conclusion, we affirm that achieving a unifying global consensus as the basis for a humane, ecologically viable, new global system is possible. The essence of such a vision must be felt as well as rationally argued, because it involves both the head and the heart. From this perspective, a new global system requires new political and social arrangements, a new (or renewed) vision of humankind's existential reality and purpose, and an unrelenting effort to make the former truly reflect the latter. This is an agenda for conflict resolution that is worthy of the best in human nature and experience.

Endnotes

1. When we speak of Islam and the West, we need to raise the following questions: Which Islam and which West are we discussing? How are we representing the West (geographically as well as culturally and intellectually)? Who represents the “West”? Is the development of the West a finished product, or is the West still developing? Furthermore, what are we representing as Islam? Who represents “Islam”? Is Islam a static set of authoritative cultural norms, or is Islam a dynamic, spiritual response to life based on essential precepts?
2. Hegel also saw history as a grand unfolding of reason.
3. In the words of Mona Abul-Fadl (1987), “it is *wajh Allah*, the Countenance of Allah, which [the sincere Muslim] seeks.... The serene and contented self, *al Nafs al Radiya al Mardiya*, and the self which has found its innermost sense of peace, *al Nafs al Mutma'inna*, are anchored in that infinite and unassailable source from which they draw” (p. 25).
4. From the beginning, Islamic rule was expected to have a *contractual* basis. The sovereign was to exercise power representing both the will of the community and the traditions of the Prophet. After experiences with political turmoil, *de facto* monarchy, and invasion, some Muslim thinkers began to preoccupy themselves with duties of obedience to a sovereign who fulfilled certain basic minimum requirements with respect to the *Shari'a*.
5. Falk unequivocally defends the right of Muslims to equitable participation *as Muslims* in the contemporary world order, and suggests that contemporary Islamic movements manifest resistance to cultural as well as political marginalization. Michael Salla has advanced a similar argument. Salla suggests that there is a need to move beyond both stereotypical ‘essentializations’ and fragmentary models based on historical contingency, toward representations of Islam as a discourse that critiques the dominant liberal democratic paradigm in a manner similar to many other religious discourses.

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A JOURNEY INTO THE FUTURE: IMAGINING A NONVIOLENT WORLD¹

Elise Boulding

The inspiration for this essay came to me after a daylong workshop on Imagining a Nonviolent World which I offered for prisoners at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk on a wintry Saturday morning. This type of imaging workshop first evolved in the late 1970s, as I began to realize that we peace activists, working to bring about a nonviolent world without war, really had no idea how a world in which armies had disappeared would function. How could we work to bring about something we could not even see in our imaginations? Stepping back into the 1950s in my own mind, I remembered translating Fred Polak's *Image of the Future* from the Dutch original, a macrohistorical analysis that showed a war-paralyzed and depressed Europe how past societies in bad situations but with positive images of the future had been empowered by their own imaginations to work to bring the imaged future about. Here was a possible answer!

I worked with Warren Ziegler and other colleagues to develop a workshop format that took people 30 years into the future – to a world at peace. The format allowed time for imaginative exploration of 'how things worked' in that future, followed by a remembering, looking back from this future to the present to imagine how all this peaceableness had come about. The workshops always closed with time for personal commitments to action in the present to help bring about the future participants had pictured. We found that this type of workshop actually empowered people in their peace activism.

But these workshops had involved participants free to be change agents in their world. How could prisoners imagine a more caring world, let alone see themselves as agents to bring those changes about? To make the leap into the future less daunting, I chose ten rather than 30 years as the time span. How would they deal with 2010 in their imaginations? Well, I found out. After explaining about the failed hopes from peace and justice efforts in the past and the new hopes for peace and justice action as we stood on the threshold of the twenty-first century, I asked them what they might hope to find in 2010. Through individual reflection and small group discussion, they constructed a list of hopes. The first major theme in their hopes was:

To be at peace with ourselves and one another and the world in which we live. To recognize, understand, communicate what is going on.

Further themes followed:

There should be a peaceful environment for all mankind: no wars, hunger, homelessness, disease, violence, racism, no TV commercials and no pollution.

People listen to and respect one another. There is equality, just laws and freedom from fear.

Life is local; families are peaceful. There is strong community feeling and conflict resolution. People help each other and have fun together.

Those were the hopes expressed for what might be found in the future. The hopes themselves were more well-defined than I had expected. What their imaginations revealed when they mentally traveled into the future and then drew pictures of what they imagined, was deeply moving. Prison walls had melted away and all the beauties of nature and the life of free humans stood revealed: open countryside, trees, bushes, flowers, distant mountains, lakes and rivers, farmlands, with houses dotting the landscape, often a church in sight. A few drawings pictured villages, malls with shops and people walking about in the malls. One of the most striking features of these pictures was the presence of sunlight and other sources of light: lamps, candles, lighthouses and beacon lights.

Everywhere in these pictures were friendly, often smiling people – walking in couples, bicycling, singing, dancing, playing games, working in small groups, fishing by a lake, growing food, offering helping hands to each other, walking to church, seated in meditation and praying. One picture revealed housing being built for the homeless; another, the opening up and transformation of a prison. Two pictured bombs dropping on a city with the caption, “THIS MUST NOT HAPPEN!” The absence of cars in these pictures was notable.

The themes of open green spaces, the beauty of nature, sunlight, friendly sociability and joyful activity had significant similarities to the themes in the pictured futures of workshop participants that I had been collecting for years. Whether the participants were peace and social change activists, members of women’s, youth or church groups, diplomats, soldiers, scholars or teachers, their pictures suggested a bright, clean, green world and conveyed the ‘feel’ of a joyful local community in which people delight in celebrations, in caring for others. Why should I have been surprised that prisoners could imagine that same world? Whatever impacts prison had on their lives, these men who participated in the weekly Meetings for Worship at Norfolk had vibrant social and spiritual imaginations.

After the participants had worked together in groups of four or five to develop more details about the kind of changes in economic, political and social institutions that would keep this peaceful world functioning, each group was asked to present a short pantomime that would convey what it was like to live in that future. Once again, the liveliness of their imaginations showed through. The pantomimes of

facing differences and resolving them peacefully, of cooperation in difficult tasks, of going from loneliness to joyful community, could have been the pantomimes produced in very different workshops settings.

The *Remembering History* exercise was done with the same zest. The future they had delineated was of course one that would have required at least the 30-year time lapse specified in the usual *Imagining a Nonviolent World* workshop, but since the decision had been taken to set the imagined future only ten years away, there was a tacit acceptance of a strategy of speeding up time!

Standing mentally in the peaceful, prison-free 2010, the participants 'remembered' what had happened over the previous decade. In 2009 (just last year) there had been a great celebration of the emergence of a new personal/global consciousness which was making power struggles obsolete; also a more effective successor to the UN was now functioning – a system of local-global governance. The last nuclear weapons were now destroyed and prisons transformed into rehabilitation centers. The year 2003 saw contact with beings in outer space, a surge in community dancing and music-making, the end of substance abuse and the implosion of the Pentagon. The year 2007 saw reparations to African-Americans, replacement of private cars by public transport, decline in materialism, elimination of the U.S. arms budget and its replacement by equivalent funding of peacebuilding activities including the work of the UN successor organization. This year also saw the achievement of zero population growth for the planet. The year 2006 witnessed the return to Native American peoples by the United States government of the lands previously taken from them; the development of a global food distribution system that drastically reduced hunger and human services that drastically reduced homelessness. Also a *real* Middle East peace treaty was signed by all the countries of the world. In 2005 the successor organization to the UN was able to administer effective pollution controls and people now enjoyed clean air. Human needs budgets and health services greatly increased, along with global immunization against AIDS, as did overall life chances for those who had been poor. In 2004 the process began of dismantling prisons as punitive institutions, and crime rates dropped drastically. The increase in human services, public housing and education began equalizing opportunities for people everywhere. City playgrounds were now safe spaces.

In 2003 the new successor organization to the UN, known as the ESO, or Earth Survival Organization, established an Educational Resources Council to improve learning worldwide and made recycling of all processed goods universally mandatory. Social movements worldwide emphasized the importance of public celebration, dancing and support of all the arts. Hopeful attitudes toward the future began to replace earlier despair, and greed declined. In 2002 the United Nations was officially transformed into the Earth Survival Organization (ESO), accompanied by great celebrations and dancing everywhere. All technological development was now shifted toward saving the planet. A gradual exodus from prisons is under way as new community support systems develop that enable former prisoners to rejoin their families and share their wisdom with their communities.

The year 2001 witnessed a global ban on the production and deployment of nuclear weapons by a changing and evolving UN, and the development of national

gun control programs in every country. The logging industry comes to an end as wood substitutes are developed, and the world's forests are saved. The Internet involves more and more citizens worldwide in communications systems that support cooperation and peace. Power struggles no longer attract adherents. In 2000 the United States elects its first woman president, and moves toward being a softer, gentler nation. The seeds of a new consciousness are being sown. The environmental and peace movements become allies. Are these the kinds of issues and developments prisoners think about during long years behind bars? For the prisoners in this workshop, the answer is yes.

The point of 'remembering history', working back from the future to the present, is to help participants decide what action strategies they personally will commit themselves to in the present, in order to bring the desired future about. What kind of freedom of action do prisoners have? What could they possibly commit to? Each participant contributed his own thoughts on this and six action themes could be identified from their statements. By far the most frequently mentioned action theme was (1) inner peace and personal development. This was expressed in the following phrases: Find inner peace; find out who I am; get more grounded; develop myself physically, spiritually, mentally; continue studies; read sacred literature; become more forgiving, more patient and more nonviolent; stay focused; and deal righteously.

The next two most frequently mentioned themes were, respectively: (2) tell people good things; help others; share with family and friends; network with others, and (3) speak up when necessary; share my truths with the world; write letters; write a book. At least two people proposed the next two themes: (4) work with AVP (Alternatives to Violence Program) and (5) respond directly to bad situations when things go amiss. Lastly, theme (6) was a commitment to more ecological awareness, to consuming less. Challenging commitments, all of them!

That persons with such severe limitations on their daily activities and personal space can not only visualize a positive future for the society which has in so many ways rejected them, but have the inner resources and moral integrity to consider concrete personal actions that could help bring about such a future, suggests how vastly we underestimate the capacities and potentials of our fellow human beings. These human capacities are to be found among the men and women incarcerated in the prisons of our country. Kenneth Boulding always used to say, "what exists, is possible". We have many more potential co-workers in the task of building a more peaceful world than we ever knew.

Endnotes

1. This article is a slightly edited version of the article which originally appeared in the *Friends Journal* in December 1999.

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