Searching for Reconciliation in a Post Complex Political Emergency Scenario

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Resumo

A complexidade dos conflitos nos dias de hoje, e a escala de violência que o mundo testemunhou com grande intensidade na última década, revelam que a reconciliação necessita de ser perspectivada de uma forma multidimensional. O seu objectivo é atingir um entendimento compreensivo do conflito no sentido de resolver as causas dos conflitos nos planos individual, nacional e internacional.

A dimensão psicológica da reconciliação ilustra as lutas da mente humana quando lida com traumas passados. O lado teológico revela as fontes da força interior, o poder do perdão e a capacidade, ou incapacidade, das organizações religiosas contribuírem para os esforços de reconciliação. Seguindo o discurso teológico, a dimensão cultural ilustra as diferentes interpretações do perdão, o respeito pelos direitos humanos e as noções tradicionais de compensação e rituais como procedimentos de cura. Haverá culturas que permitem a reconciliação mais facilmente que outras? A reconciliação considera igualmente se o perdão pode ocorrer ao nível político. Possuem os líderes políticos a capacidade colectiva para perdoar? Concluir-se-á que a reconciliação não é um fim em si mesmo, mas sim um processo multidimensional baseado no reatar das relações humanas e no diálogo genuíno sem códigos de conduta estabelecidos, em altos princípios morais e numa visão partilhada do futuro.

Abstract

The complexity of today's conflicts and the scale of mass violence that the world witnessed with greater intensity in the last decade have revealed that reconciliation needs to embrace a multi dimensional approach. Its aim is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the conflict in order to tackle the root causes of frustration at the individual, national and international levels.

The psychological dimension of reconciliation illustrates the struggles of the human mind when dealing with past traumas. The theological side reveals the sources of inner strength, the power of forgiveness and questions whether or not do religious organisations make a difference to non-faith reconciliation efforts. Following the theological discourse, the cultural dimension illustrates the different interpretations of forgiveness, the respect of human rights and the traditional notions of reparations and rituals as healing procedures. Do some cultures reconcile more easily than others? The political aspect of reconciliation also considers whether forgiveness can occur at political level. Do political leaders possess the collective *ability to forgive?*

It will be concluded that reconciliation is not an end in itself, but rather a multi dimensional process based on the restoration of human relations and genuine dialogue, with no established codes of conduct but rather on high moral principles and a shared vision of the future.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine in detail what the requirements are if there is to be reconciliation after violent political conflict. Throughout this present study, reconciliation will be applied to those situations where societies, individuals or groups, have gone through periods of extreme violence and are now confronting the process of transition. In making this study, for reasons to be outlined in the future, we shall be guided by John Paul Lederach's evocation of *"Truth and Mercy have met together; Peace and Justice have kissed"* as the ground rule and purpose of all reconciliation efforts. From this perspective one aim is to establish that reconciliation is effective, not so much as an instrument, but as a conflict resolution attitude that engages with the essential requirements of promoting peace and justice, such as forgiveness and dialogue.

For this purpose, the paper begins by setting the context in which the reconciliation efforts are embedded. "Complex Political Emergencies" (CPEs) reflect the type of conflicts that erupted with great cruelty at the end of the Cold War and are characterised as being brutal ethnic conflicts, usually within states, that have generated profound cycles of violence at social, psychological and political levels. This section aims to explain the main struggles and dilemmas one faces in the aftermath of complex political emergencies. Therefore, reconciliation efforts, in attempting to break these cycles of violence, are questioned by this dilemma: how can one expect forgiveness or repentance from victims and perpetrators afters periods of such violence?

Moreover, having the CPEs as a background, the second part of this paper will draw an overall picture of what the concept of reconciliation entails. In order to emphasise its broad character, reconciliation will be analysed in four dimensions: the psychological, the theological, the cultural and the political.

It will be concluded that reconciliation efforts in attempting to break the cycles of violence, exemplified by CPEs, are required to engage in an inside-out analysis of the dispute, implying that the psychological, theological, cultural and political dimensions of reconciliation are essential tools and ultimately an attitude of conflict resolution.

1. Complex Political Emergencies

The concept "complex political emergencies" (CPEs) emerged in the late 1980s reflecting a new type of conflicts characterised as being protracted in duration, deep-rooted in

religious, ethnic, political, economic and psychological frustrations, and multi-dimensional in nature. As Oliver Rambsbotham and Tom Woodhouse remarked, the roots lie in the relations between ethnic groups in the struggle for basic human needs such as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation[1]. The concept of CPEs has been grounded on the Azar's notion of Protracted Social Conflicts, which with its more pluralistic explanation of the causes of conflict, has broadened not only our understanding of conflict resolution but also opened new ways to pave reconciliation efforts.

In sharp distinction with the Cold War era we have entered in a period of complex small wars, growing collective violence, genocide and mass killing, where civilians are the primary victims[2]. It is a situation where conflicts occur within and across state boundaries, not only provoking a regional spill over effect, with great flows of refugees and internally displaced, but also calls the immediate attention of the international community. As Ramsbotham remarked "CPEs are a hybrid form of conflict which is are neither purely inter-state conflict nor confined within the normal institutionalised rules and procedures of domestic conflict management"[3].

As the term suggests CPEs are essentially political. It is a conflict situation where the competition for scarce resources and political power are ultimate. As Mark Duffield defined CPEs "are protracted political crisis resulting from sectarian or predatory indigenous response to socio-economic stress or marginalisation … (they) have a singular ability to erode or destroy the cultural, civil, political or economic integrity of a established society"[4].

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1 Jonathan Goodhand, & David Hulme – *Understanding Conflict and Peace-Building in the New World Disorder*, in Third World Quarterly, Special Issue: Complex Political Emergencies, Carfax, Vol. 20, Nº 1, 1999, p. 17; Azar considers that there is also a "process dynamics" that determine the outbreak of protracted social conflicts, such as *communal actions and strategies; state actions and strategies; build in mechanisms of conflict*, in Hugh Miall, et al – Contemporary Conflict Resolution, 1999, Polity Press, pp. 74-77.

2 Edward Azar and Herbert Kelman consider these conflicts as being rooted in deep frustrations at the level of basic human needs, on actual or imagined differences towards "the other" and in the formation of mirror images. It seems pertinent to include Galtung's *Triangle of Violence* in order to explain that violence tri-dimensional: *direct violence* (seen as an event); *structural violence* (seen as a process); *cultural violence* (seen as permanent).

3 Jonathan Goodhand, & David Hulme – *Understanding Conflict and Peace-Building in the New World Disorder*, in Third World Quarterly, Special Issue: Complex Political Emergencies, Carfax, Vol. 20, Nº 1, 1999, p. 16; Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse also provide us with concept of International-Social Conflict – "conflicts that are neither pure international (interstate) conflicts, nor pure social (domestic) conflicts, but sprawl somewhere between the two" – which also helps us to draw an analytical framework to understand CPEs. In Hugh Miall et al – Op. cit., p. 77.

4 Paul Harvey – *"Rehabilitation in Complex Political Emergencies: Is Rebuilding Civil Society the Answer?"* IDS Working Paper 60 in http://www.ids.ac.uk/bookshop/wp/Wp60.pdf.

Therefore, it is within this context that CPEs reach a stage of an emergency: it is often the case that the state has collapsed or failed, or even been heavily contested; the political process has reached a deadlock and high tensions leaves little space for any sort of reconciliation efforts; civil society institutions have disintegrated or reached the stage of critical demoralisation[5]. Furthermore, this sense of emergency at a political level has been fuelled by vested interests in the continuation of the conflict. As Lautze remarked, "there is a deliberate creation of crisis... warring parties target vulnerable groups and social systems as part of their military strategy"[6]. Furthermore, Keen also argued that this state of emergency and the prolongation of the conflict may even generate "real benefits to powerful groups"[7].

It seems important to consider Dame Margaret Anstee *solution* that "the overriding goal in a CPE has to become political – the prevention or resolution of conflict or the avoidance of a relapse into war once a peace agreement is in force; all other activities undertaken by outside actors – humanitarian relief, reconstruction or development – must be subject to and lead towards that goal if sustainable peace is to be achieved"[8]. However, as far as reconciliation efforts are concerned, what can be done on the ground level towards the population who have witnessed the collapse of the country by their leaders, in order to regain confidence and trust in the political institutions?[9]

Moreover, the disintegration of governmental institutions, the breakdown of authority, law and order, has serious consequences at civil society level. Azarya and Chazan argue that such vacuum may compel civil society institutions to either *integrate* into the

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5 The concept of failed state has been defined by Steven Ratner and Gerald Helman as "a country that is unable to maintain itself within the international community". Its governmental institutions are incapable of dealing with existing tensions within their borders, at political, social and economic level. Consequently, it gives rise to a widening gap between the state and the society, as the former fails to provide basic social needs, such as security, economic well-being, education and political participation. The causes for state failure are multiple and will not be fully discussed in this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is important to note that while most of the causes are multi-dimensional and internal, ie, ruthless military leaderships, economic and political deprivation or even natural disasters, Jenny Pearce also draws the attention for the international causes and responsibility of that failure, reflected on poor Structural Adjustment Programs or even superficial international interventions.

6 Paul Harvey – *"Rehabilitation in Complex Political Emergencies: Is Rebuilding Civil Society the Answer?"* IDS Working Paper 60 in http://www.ids.ac.uk/bookshop/wp/Wp60.pdf.

7 Op. cit.

8 Paul Harvey – *"Rehabilitation in Complex Political Emergencies: Is Rebuilding Civil Society the Answer?"* IDS Working Paper 60 in http://www.ids.ac.uk/bookshop/wp/Wp60.pdf.

9 One must not forget that conflict affects all levels of society, as Jean Paul Lederach has stressed in his Piramid Paradigm.

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government's policies or *disintegrate*, retreating into a parallel economy or into traditional and local authorities' communal life, far from the capital's interference. Nevertheless, this process of disengagement and resilience is not free of dangers: it is often the case that predatory militias manipulate through violence long established ethnic ties to gain control of local resources and support of the community.

This line of reasoning leads us to the next point: while CPEs lead to a state of emergency at the political level, they can also be a cause of or set a precedence for collective violence that is not only physical (mass rapes and killings or even genocide) but also psychological and social. Everyone agrees that these issues have a sense of emergency too.

Generally, protracted and collective violence has its roots in deep frustrations at religious, ethnic, social and political levels[10]. Such violence provokes intense human suffering, painful resentments and memories that last for generations, and most dangerously, it can become so entrenched in a group's culture that can be part of its own identity. Moreover, it is not only a question of one ethnic group trying to "eradicate" the "other", as it happened in Rwanda, Hutus versus Tutsis. Ervin Staub also point out what he calls "auto-genocide", groups that can turn into each other for the simple reason of not belonging to a political party or class. He recalls that Cambodia witnessed the killing of large numbers of Khmer who were "regarded as political enemies or incapable of contributing to the ideal of total social equality they envisioned"[11]. Therefore, the consequences at social and psychological level are immense, not only for the victims but also for the perpetrators: a friend today can be the enemy of tomorrow. This sense of human insecurity is felt on both sides, as future perpetrators are motivated not only by ruthless leaders but also repressed memories of past painful experiences. As Staub remarked, "the past victimisation of a group and the unhealed wounds that result are ... conditions to genocide and mass killing. Without healing, members of a victimised group will feel diminished and vulnerable. They will see the world as dangerous. They will respond to instigating conditions, especially to conflict with another group with violence, which they experience as necessary self-defence"[12]. Therefore, Staub argues that reconciliation, healing and forgiveness, are vital approaches for groups that have experienced

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10 Due to the broad character of the subject, the causes of collective violence will mainly be analysed under the psychological and social perspective. This is so because reconciliation efforts (implying forgiveness and repentance) in attempting to deal and overcome profound traumas find great obstacles in those areas.

11 Ervin Staub – *"Genocide and Mass Killing: Origins, Prevention, Healing and Reconciliation"*, in <u>Political Psychology</u>, Vol. 21, Nº 2, 2000, p. 368.

12 Ibid., p. 370.

mutual victimisation and have to live side by side. Nevertheless, Staub recognises that forgiveness is a difficult process to start with, it can even be offensive, especially when gross violations of human rights were committed. Furthermore, the reconciliation dilemma in post-complex political emergencies has also to deal with the healing capacity of forgiving the perpetrators. The same author considers that "it is even difficult for many survivors to consider forgiving those members of the perpetrator group who have not personally participated in the violence, either because they belong to the perpetrator group or because they were passive bystanders"[13]. Moreover, Staub argues that is of vital importance to look at the perpetrators as wounded human beings, who despite having committed un-explicable acts of violence, it is necessary to engage in their own pain and start the healing process, otherwise they will "continue to blame and devalue their former and potential future victims"[14]. The author concludes his argument by saying healing, forgiveness and reconciliation is a mutually interdependent and dynamic process which contribute to the fulfilment of basic human needs: for security, positive identity, positive relations to others and a comprehensive understanding of reality that offers hope and a "future"[15].

Within the context of post-complex political emergencies, let us ponder some questions: between whom shall reconciliation engage its efforts with? Should reconciliation efforts be considered as a "state's internal affairs"? Due to the nature of today's conflicts is reconciliation (implying forgiveness and repentance) possible at collective level? Or is a personal struggle? At a political level, who has an interest to reconcile? Is there such a thing as "the timing" for reconciliation? When is a country ready to reconcile after a period of massive violence? Are the processes of reconciliation at political and population levels a single process or two distinct ones? What reconciliation efforts should aim for when civil society has been severely undermined, contested or when is attempting to emerge? What are the necessities of the people that have gone through great traumas and are badly demoralised?

Therefore, the following section will analyse in greater detail the concept and methods used in the process of reconciliation.

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13 Ervin Staub – Op. cit., p. 377.
14 Ibid., p. 377.
15 Ibid., p. 377.

2. Reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation has always been part of the field of conflict resolution, having common objectives and ideals but, on the other hand, their methodologies diverge. While both essentially aim at resolving the conflict facing the root causes of the dispute, "conventional" conflict resolution is often characterised by employing "rational" methodologies such as mediation and negotiation[16]. From this point of view, conflict resolution is considered to have a clear-cut solution to conflicts that is assisted by a third party intervener aiming at creating a power balance between the parties.

Reconciliation on the other hand, is a process that involves the reconstruction and a restructuring of relationships after a hard period of quarrelsome tensions. Hizkias Assefa and John Paul Lederach argue the need for the restructuring of relationships at the level of not only the population in general but essentially among key political players. The authors sustain that peace settlements and Track I diplomacy efforts are important but do not provide for a sustainable peace. This key idea, explained by Nicole Ball, emphasise that "peace agreements provide a framework for ending hostilities and a guide to the initial stages of post-conflict reform. They do not create conditions under which the deep cleavages that produced the war are automatically surmounted. Successfully ending the divisions that lead to war, healing the social wounds created by war, and creating a society where the differences among social groups are resolved through compromise rather than through violent conflict, requires that conflict resolution and consensus building shape all interactions among citizens and between citizens and the state"[17].

Therefore, reconciliation goes beyond resolution to the extent that it moves towards a closer examination of the psychological dimensions of human relationships, ie the parties' perceptions and attitudes towards the "other", the reasons for hostilities and hate. Accordingly, Whitaker remarked that reconciliation "goes beyond resolution … not only to the political arrangements to solve differences and hostile action but to the psychological processes whereby understanding and tolerance lead to readiness to live together in a new framework of peace and well-being"[18].

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16 Arie Nadler – *"From Tel Aviv to Ulcinj: Can we learn from each other about reconciliation and peace-building?"* In http://www.eurozine.com/online/articles/20010611-es-nadler.html.

17 Nicole Ball – *"The Challenge of Building War-Torn Societies"*, in Crocker, Chester A. et al eds – Managing global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict, 1996, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, p. 619.

18 David J. Whittaker – Conflict and Reconciliation in the Contemporary World, 1999, The Making of the Contemporary World, Routledge, London, p. 1.

Epistemologically speaking, Hizkias Assefa considers that reconciliation implies a willingness to forgive and forget, to accept compromise not through weakness but because doing so is considered worthy. Moreover, reconciliation implies that one does not necessarily expect the quid pro quo expected in hard bargaining, it is essentially a voluntary process where the intended transformation should be internal and personal. Furthermore, it is a process that relies in the honest dialogue between the parties that can occur at the three levels of diplomacy[19]. Moreover, reconciliation implies a liberating sense of healing which, according to Joseph Montville must go through a process of contrition and forgiveness between the perpetrators and the victims in order to establish a new relationship based on respect and reasonable trust. Therefore, and teleologically speaking, reconciliation aims at a profound rebuilding of human relationships, grounded on the power of healing and forgiveness.

Following this line of reasoning, John Paul Lederach considers that reconciliation demands an innovative and creative way of dealing with conflict. Therefore, Lederach proposes a conceptual framework based on three assumptions[20]. Firstly, due to the fact that relationships are at the core of the conflict, they must represent the solution for a durable reconciliation. The author illustrates such importance by using a metaphor "you do not start a bridge starting in the middle. You start with a strong foundation on each shore and build toward the middle. When solid, others can walk across". Secondly, reconciliation symbolises an encounter, a "place, the point of encounter where concerns about the past and the future can be met"[21]. Such process involves a sense of humility, reflecting understanding and acceptance of one's place and one's humanity in an atmosphere of

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19 Since the 1960s one has been witnessing the developing of the so-called "Problem Solving Workshops" initiated by John W. Burton and Herbert Kelman. These non-official and neutral workshops were composed by a small number of participants aiming at the discussion of "their" conflict at its roots, expanding the parties point of view and then moving to a process of "self-disclosure" – a mutual revelation of the motives of the conflict, such as the parties' fears, anxieties and hopes. Kenneth Gergen and McNamee also developed the notion of "Transformative Dialogue" – a process through which each side deals with the conflict between themselves, through expressing emotions the image of the "other", aiming therefore, at reducing the rooted prejudices. Joseph V. Montville introduced the term "Citizen Diplomacy", an initiative of private citizens that while feeling unhappy with Track I Diplomacy, began to open lines of communication to broaden greater understanding and trust between the parties.

20 John Paul Lederach – Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies, 1997, United States Institute of Peace, USIP Press, Washington DC, pp. 26-27.

21 Ibid. p. 27. The author also points out the importance of acknowledgement as "through the hearing of one another's stories, validates the experience and feelings, and represents the first step towards the restoration of personal relationships".

truth. Thirdly, reconciliation should not be modelled by the traditional Track I Diplomacy and, alternatives, such as the "Oslo Channel", should be encouraged.

Lederach's model is fully embodied in the Psalm 85 "Truth and Mercy have met; Justice and Peace have kissed"[22]. The author explains that seeking the truth, within a post conflict context, is about how do we shall remember the past and how can one best deal with it. On the other hand, justice is what can be done in the present to re-establish and rebalance the broken relationships. Mercy and peace are the ultimate goals to reach in the future. However, dialectic process is full of paradoxes, explains the author[23]. Firstly, while reconciliation focuses on the re-establishment of future relations, past hurts are haunting shadows. Secondly, while reconciliation symbolises the encounter between mercy and truth, there is a latent tension between exposing what has happened and the sense of compassion for the sake of a future relation. Thirdly, reconciliation as justice, addressing past wrongs, may undermine peace in the short term.

In order to look at these difficult steps to achieve true reconciliation between the parties, let us look at the different dimensions that such process entail.

2.1. *Psychological Dimension*

Within the psychological dimension, the concept of reconciliation can be defined as a process that attempts to realign one's cognitive and emotional worlds[24]. It is a process that seeks the transformation of human relationships that utterly relies on dialogue[25]. Therefore, it deals essentially with two aspects: the deconstruction of the image of the "enemy", often covered with deep rooted prejudices and stereotypes, and with the painful process of dealing with past traumas in an interpersonal reconciliation encounter. As Kraybill

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22 According to the author, **Truth** embraces: Acknowledgment, Transparency; Revelation, Clarity. **Mercy** embraces: Acceptance, Forgiveness, Support, Compassion, Healing. **Justice** embraces: Equality, Right Relationships, Making things right, Restitution. **Peace** embraces: Harmony, Unity, Well-Being, Security, Respect. In John Paul Lederach – <u>Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies</u>, 1997, United States Institute of Peace, USIP Press, Washington DC, p. 30.

23 Ibid. p. 31.

24 Ronald Fisher – "*Social Psychological Processes in Interactive Conflict Analysis and Reconciliation*", in Ho-Wo Jeong eds – <u>Conflict Resolution: Dynamics, Process and Structure</u>, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, 1999, George Mason University, USA, Ashgate Publishing, p. 94.

25 The author of this article believes that it is vital to import Fisher's definition of 'dialogue' into this context as "norms of open and genuine expression, attentive and respectful interaction and willingness to look for commonalities as well as differences … encourages to speak from personal experiences rather than to make rhetoric or abstract statements". In Ronald Fisher – Op. cit., p. 88.

described "true healing involves the unity of head and heart. The head sets the goal and keeps things "on track". The heart provides the content of the emotions. Given a chance, the two will converge in common purpose. What makes a difference is a process which values and gives space for both"[26].

In order to overcome the psychological barrier at the level of dealing with the past, Montville proposes a joint "walk through history" as an essential attitude to break historical grievances. The Interactive Conflict Resolution Workshops may be viewed as a channel, the necessary space, where victims can be relieved from their grief through a face-to-face dialogue. This process establishes the link between the oppressor's acknowledgement of wrongdoing and forgiveness and the victim's courage and ability to accept it. At cognitive level, it is a process of discovery of the other, the dismantlement of stereotypes and a long process of building trust, hoping to reconstruct a relationship based in a new equilibrium and on mutual respect in the future. Reconciliation at this level is also "self-disclosure", where participants are encouraged to expand their feelings, anxieties, revealing their true identity, creating an atmosphere of true honesty.

However, this reconciliation process at the psychological level is not free of challenges. The sense of victim hood is not only a deep emotional feeling but it is in most cases part of the individual's identity. Therefore, it is very difficult for the victim of gross brutalities to receive information from the oppressor that is often dissonant to their own understandings and to accept the "enemy's" humility for the sake of a new relationship; a relationship that they were never acquainted with. Such process poses a challenge to the extent that although sincerity is expressed by the perpetrator it does not mean immediate forgiveness, that is, the victims need time to review and rebuild its identity: this new reality and the future must be accepted emotionally.

On a more positive note, all these psychological sequences, by allowing an "enemy" to have a human face it may not only change to way victims see themselves but also it can be the case that the perpetrator may also be a victim of a structural conjuncture.

However, is there any source of inner strength that enables the victims to overcome these psychological barriers? What compels victims to forgive and the perpetrators to pursues acts of humility?

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26 Kraybill quoted by Ronald Fisher in *"Social Psychological Processes in Interactive Conflict Analysis and Reconciliation"*, in Ho-Wo Jeong eds – Conflict Resolution: Dynamics, Process and Structure, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, 1999, George Mason University, USA, Ashgate Publishing, p. 93.

2.2. *Theological Dimension*

The theological dimension of reconciliation is commonly associated with the terms forgiveness, repentance, mercy, humility and grace.

To forgive is to recognise that repentance is sincere and a new relationship can be built in the future. In the Christian tradition, however, repentance is not a precondition for forgiveness and it is not even a desired consequence, it is rather the correcting and clarifying process by which forgiveness occurs[27]. Such position gives priority to the victim and not to the wrongdoers. In the New Testament forgiveness is related with an act of grace and liberation, where the primordial goal is to regain and seek the restoration of the community relations. In Mathew 18:15 it is shown that forgiveness is not a unilateral act but a transaction powered by love, whose goal is to discover the other, building trust in a new relationship[28]. When Saint Paul told us that "forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you", means that forgiveness is not a vertical (God's unilateral intervention) or horizontal (with no divine presence) model of reconciliation, but rather a circular process of forgiving and being forgiven. Augsburger explains that such process is circular precisely because "it is in the circle of the cross – the symbol of a forgiving God incarnate in human pain and suffering – that we give and receive forgiveness"[29]. Furthermore, he claims that one must not be tempted to think about reconciliation as vertical and horizontal processes of forgiveness. He continues arguing that "vertical relationships of God with humanity come to us through the horizontal structures of life, and the horizontal structures become healing, acceptant, forgiving and transforming by virtue of God's presence"[30]. The mystery of the cross is, therefore, the evidence of the vertical and horizontal poles that were united in a re-born humanity. Forgiveness is not a compulsory or demanding attitude required from the victims: it is ultimately their ability, powered by the love of God, mercy and compassion, to see the world differently.

This attitude enables the victim not only to feel a sense of relief of God's eternal presence, but also by the example of Jesus forgiving His executioners, for instance, one is believed that forgiving even the most terrible of acts, is possible… because a new life lies

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27 Caritas Internacionalis – <u>Working for Reconciliation: A Caritas Handbook</u>, 1999, Vatican City.
28 David W. Augsburger – <u>Conflict Mediation Across Cultures – Pathways and Patterns</u>, 1992, Westminster//John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky. Another famous passage from the New Testament is the "Prodigal Son" where the father's love is the driving force for the reestablishment of a relationship.
29 Ibid., p. 285.
30 Ibid., p. 285.

ahead[31]. Anther point worth mentioning refers to the Quaker Tradition. This philosophy preaches that God is in every person and this core belief should be basic assumption of peacemaking. As Adam Curle remarked, the peacemaker's awareness of the divinity within each human being will help each to act in accordance to it. Therefore, the acknowledgement of the good in others promotes the expression of that good.

2.3. Cultural Dimension

The importance and the purpose of the cultural dimension in reconciliation efforts is two fold: while "culture" assists us with establishing some basic ground rules and minimising the uncertainty on how we should act, what we could expect, or how we should approach a situation, on the other hand, the study of the cultural dimension enables us to evaluate how each culture has developed their unique patterns of managing their differences and resolving conflicts. Each constructs its repertoire of conflict behaviours, its hierarchy of values and its code of laws. Augsburger argues that out of the same needs (basic human needs) each culture develops ways of dealing with competition, frustration and aggression. The question that follows is that, can we learn from other cultures in terms of reconciliation efforts? Are the notions of forgiveness and repentance culturally relative? And what are the consequences?

Augsburger says that forgiveness has many faces, each culture has its forgiveness understandings that are centred in their traditional values, are embedded in their unique history and driven by their own principles. As the same author argues, forgiveness is "formed by its unique collective ledgers of justice and injustice received and given, harmony and disharmony chosen or imposed, and honour or dignity won or lost"[32]. Forgiveness defined by Augsburger requires an extraordinary self-control of the two most common emotions that arise when dealing with injury: anger and denial. He argues that forgiveness "turns anger towards breaking down walls rather than erecting them and it reverses denial into acceptance of pain and the pursuit of creating change and growth"[33].

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31 A closer reading of the passage Luke 23: 34 reveals that Jesus under the most degrading circumstances, asks God for His forgiveness unveiling God's capacity to rescue Jesus humanity: "Here, the victim Jesus experiences the full dignity of His humanity – the ability to call upon His Father even as His humanity is being demeaned and ripped away ... His calling becomes a paradigm not of instant forgiveness but of maintaining humanity even under the most degrading circumstances". In Caritas Internacionalis Handbook – Op. cit.

32 David W. Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 262.

33 David W. Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 264.

How does each culture/society undergo such painful process? What are their core values? To what extent are they culturally relative?

2.3.1. *The Confucian/Chinese Culture*

The Chinese understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation offers a vision of kindness, generosity and wisdom. It is a culture that has dignity and honour as its maxim, and an insult that challenges one social or moral face becomes deplorable[34]. It is a culture where exists a great sense of community as people think not only of their own face but of the other since "faces are interdependent". As a Chinese theologian clarified " the forgiveness that excuses the other is the acceptance of daily difficulties: it is in most cases, a vertical, nonverbal transaction that leads to reconciliation; it is a reconciliation of mutual care for social face in lesser infractions and of earned and merited justice in larger injustices"[35].

2.3.2. *The Arabian Culture*

The Arab proverb of "a sin covered is half-forgiven" characterises the loyal ties of the Arabic community, closed between their family and close friends. However, the relationships outside this circle are tough and resilient. Although the Qur'an encourages to limit retaliation to fairness or to equal retribution, the latter statement of the passage 5: 48ff implies going beyond retaliation to the point of forgoing it and forgiving to gain a spiritual reward.

2.3.3. *The Hindu Culture*

The Hindu culture is characterised by passive acceptance, compassion and amiability with great faith in their karma. In practice, forgiveness may clash with the notion of truth. According to this tradition, "in certain circumstances one need not always speak the truth: one needs to speak what is beneficial"[36]. The belief in one's karma, that is, you recognise

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34 Traditionally, "social face" represents one's reputation, prestige, success and ostentation. It means maintaining a social status in society and performing expected roles. On the other hand, "moral face" symbolises the confidence of society in the integrity of one's coherent principles and moral character. Ho gives the examples of the professor that if he gives an uninteresting lecture he loses the social face, whether if he is caught plagiarising his moral face is lost. In Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 265.

35 Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 266.

36 Ibid. – Op. cit., p. 268.

that an injury from another was the other's karma to give and yours to receive, put sentiments of anger and revenge into perspective. Therefore, forgiveness is an act of acceptance in which reconciliation is not an integral attitude of the process but rather being patient and tolerant.

2.3.4. *Western Culture*

It is legitimate to draw the Western culture understanding of forgiveness from the Christian tradition[37]. However, strong criticisms have been expressed by today's temptation of adopting the attitude of "forgive and forget"[38]. Augsburger argues that a rather individualistic approach has been growing, which creates defences to avoid true and deep reconciliation.

2.3.5. *Japanese Culture*

The word forgiveness includes the meaning of excuse, to grant indulgence for another's fault. It is a culture that ultimately values the pride and shame of the group and all are responsible to its maintenance. As Takeo Doi remarked "guilt is sharpest when a person is afraid that his or her action may result in betraying the group"[39]. Moreover, when a failure is quietly excused and the group shame contained, the fault can be forgotten. However, when the group is exposed to shame and dishonour, it is necessary to clear its name and regain acceptance, often through some time of exclusion or "village ostracism". On the other hand, within the family circle, the word apology is strongly valued, which brings reconciliation down to a practical level.

2.3.6. *Forgiveness Interpretation in Africa*

Such interpretation is illustrated by Augsburger when he quoted the Zambian first president saying "forgiveness is not of course a substitute for justice... it is a gift, not

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37 See Section 2.2. "Theological Dimension" of reconciliation.

38 Augsburger cites various attitudes such as *denial* "It was nothing, forget it"; *reversal* "I am not angry at him, just concerned"; *superiority* "Nothing that she could say would affect me"; *isolation* "Feelings? What feelings?"; *emotional cut offs* "I forgive him, I just want nothing to do with him again"; Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 271.

39 Ibid., p. 272.

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something we earn, but to know the reality of forgiveness we must be prepared to turn our backs to the things we have done which required us to seek forgiveness in the first place. To claim forgiveness whilst perpetuating injustice is to live a fiction; to fight for justice without also being prepared to offer forgiveness is to render our struggle null and void. Justice is not only about what is due to a human being; it is also establishing right relationships between human beings"[40].

In Africa, forgiveness rituals have a powerful healing effect that marks the beginning of a new relationship. Augsburger pictured these rituals as "mothers exchanged babies with the enemy tribe and suckled the new generation of their foes… prayers were offered the elders and a profound curse pronounced on anyone who would cross the fence to bring harm to either side"[41].

Here lies the difference between the Western and the African cultures: the role and the power that the evil spirits has in the forgiveness process. Among the latter cultures it is believed that the compelling factor why perpetrators committed the wrongdoing was due to the person's possession of the evil spirit in their body. Once rituals of expiation or purification are over, the perpetrator is liberated from his possession and fully integrated and accepted within the local community. Consequently, forgiveness seems to be surprisingly easy in theses communities, whose supreme powers and rituals play a crucial role in the community healing.

In rhetoric, what is the importance of these cultural relative conceptions of forgiveness and reconciliation for our understanding of today's conflicts in their respective zones? Is it fair to say that there are zones of peace and zones of war according to divergent interpretation of these core values? Is it also fair to say that some cultures can better deal with the past or channel their revengeful anguish in more positive ways than others? Or is reconciliation and forgiveness two processes that should be followed by the same rules?

There is no doubt that exploring the field of "culture" within the reconciliation efforts is extremely important as it defines the "traditional" values and interests that are at the core of the conflict. These are values that shape the population's perceptions and define the possible reconciliatory outcomes as positive or negative. Therefore, reconciliation depends on cultural resources to define common ground for clearer communication and more constructive dialogue.

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40 Kenneth Kaunda quoted by Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 277.
41 Augsburger – Op. cit., p. 276.

However, is forgiveness confined to the religious or cultural spheres? Can one spread the value of forgiveness (as different to apology) to the political domain? To what extent are these cultural approaches demonstrated in their leader's capacity to forgive and reconcile? Moreover, does forgiveness needs "power", a political initiative or enforcement measures, to be successful? Can political leaders embody the notion of forgiveness in the name of their nation? Is it legitimate/possible to have such collective understanding or should forgiveness be reserved to the private realm? Are there underlying interests, ie power struggles or institutional bureaucracies that can manipulate reconciliation efforts?

2.4. Political Dimension

It is commonly argued that traditional diplomacy has rarely taken into account the psychological dimension and influence of individuals, groups or nations that have been through traumatic experiences of violence. The conflicts of today have been characterised by gross violations of human rights, mass violence such as genocide and mass killings, painfully leaving psychological marks for generations to come. As Montville rightly put it "time does not heal wounds, only healing heals wounds".

Forgiveness is not only a religious concept; it is very much a real one. How does it become political? Or as Donald Shriver, Jr. asked, is forgiveness and politics a contradiction in terms? The answer to the first question reverts to the field of sociology as Robert Frost answered "to be social is to be forgiving". Therefore, forgiveness in politics has to do with how we manage our mutual relationships with the past, without letting them manage us. The answer to the second question reverts to the possibility of whether healing and forgiveness is only possible at a personal level rather than political. Does a peace agreement or a public act of apology symbolises an act of forgiveness?[42] Or as Michael Ignatieff inquired, does a nation have a collective consciousness?

The dilemma of personal versus political dimensions of forgiveness is a problematic question to the extent that political leaders are responsible not only for their nation, as a collectivity, but to ensure that justice is done. As R. Scott Appleby remarked "Christian

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[42] One should take into account that a peace agreement is often seen as a trade-off of concessions between parties that are motivated by power struggles. On the other hand, as we have seen, forgiveness is a multilateral and voluntary act of acceptance, where the bargain issue is a mutual vision of the future.

advocates of forgiveness and reconciliation as political concepts recognise the tension between the New Testament idea of forgiveness and the notion of retribution"[43].

After the Second World War, the reconciliation attempts between France and Germany were marked by Willy Brandt's symbolic diplomatic gestures and signs of apology. After the collapse of Apartheid in South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church apologised for its behaviour during the previous era. In 1998 Tony Blair apologised the Irish people for the Potato Famine in 1800s. However, what is the importance and the symbolism of a political leader in a reconciliation effort? If Franjo Tudjman have apologised for its brutal past during the Second World War, would the Croats and Serbs have gone to war?

The symbolism of a political leader is extremely important and is associated with a nation's traumas in dealing with the past. Montville argued that consciously or unconsciously wounds are part of the historical identity of the loosing side and that can last for generations. The memories of these wounds are a perpetual assault on the sense of self-worth and security especially of the victims. Gregory Rochlin, a Harvard psychiatrist, once remarked that when an individual is victim of physical or psychological attack, the automatic reaction is rage and aggression in the same form. In association, political scientists consider that the same happens with ethnic groups and nations, as they react in the form of extreme nationalism and instigating strong ethnic consciousness.

Montville offered a "solution" based on the so-called "Walk Through History". It is a healing process that begins with a review of historical records. As Elie Wiesel remarked "to forget is a crime against justice and memory. If you forget you become the executioner's accomplice". Another example was attributed to the Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitsky in 1991, apologising the country's crimes during the Holocaust: "Austrian politicians have always put off making this confession. I would like to do this explicitly, also in the name of the Austrian Government, as a measure of the relationship we must have with our history, as a standard for the political culture of our country"[44].

Furthermore, Montville emphasises that for the peacemaker at a political level, it is vital not only to infuse a sense of confidence and trust in a shared future on both perpetrators and victims but also to include the former in the political construction of the country, even if it looks an impossible task from the outset.

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43 R. Scott Appleby – The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation, Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 2000, Rowan & Littlefield – Publishers, Inc., New York, p. 196.

44 Joseph V. Montville – "The healing function in political conflict resolution" – in Sandole, Dennis J. and Hugo van der Merwe eds – Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application, 1999, Manchester University Press, p. 123.

Moreover, the importance of the symbolism of the political leaders in dealing with the past and reconstruction of the future is also not free of challenges. It is often the case that "history" is used for the perpetration and continuation of conflicts. The example of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 is a case to point.

The question now is how and when forgiveness can/or must become political? To answer this question Shriver purposes four steps[45]. Firstly, there should be an intention to work together, behind all political work, such after the Second World War. Secondly, the population should share a common understanding of history and the past wrongdoings in order to build the future without resentments. Thirdly, there should be a common agreed sense of justice for the victims and the willingness not to repeat the errors of the past. Finally, political leaders should be all-inclusive in the construction of the country.

As one commentator remarked "we are like mountain climbers tied with a rope. We climb or fall together"[46].

Conclusion

The reality today has been marked by the unpredictability of eruptive waves of collective violence that have not only undermined the old concept of security but have been characterised by unprecedented levels of political insecurity, state and civil society disintegration, population displacement, poverty and deep psychological traumas at individual and collective level.

"Complex Political Emergencies" is not only a descriptive concept but is essentially a tool of analytical framework, because in order to achieve the ultimate goal of reconciliation one needs to explore the root causes of conflict, its cultural relativity, the underlying basic human needs, and to what extent can these be met in a common post-conflict and future reconstruction. In order to do so, the road to ultimate reconciliation must analyse a) the type of conflict; b) the circumstances for resolving the conflict; c) the goals of reconciliation, *ie* what are its priorities at short and long term.

Considering these aspects of CPEs one needs to ponder in all seriousness the "post" phase of CPEs: what are the immediate goals of reconciliation? Is reconciliation always a

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45 Donald Shriver Jr. – *"Forgiveness in Politics – An Oxymoron?"* – <u>Woodstock Report</u>, March 1996, Nº 45, Woodstock Theological Centre. Available at – <u>http://www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/report/r-fea45.html.</u>

46 Ibid.

good thing? And how is it possible after such violence and hatred? Can one expect immediate forgiveness from the victims or repentance from the perpetrators? Is reconciliation a value neutral concept? And for this reason, is reconciliation a dangerous concept as it may be seen as a normative imposition from the West?

Within the context of a post-complex political emergency reconciliation demonstrated that the healing function of conflict resolution can occur before, during or even after official-level peace negotiations. It does not exclude the need for a peace treaty, the same way Track II Diplomacy does not precludes the need for Track I Diplomacy. On the contrary, the hope is that in promoting reconciliation – the restoration of relationships – the climate will be improved for a negotiated settlement and ultimately for the successful implementation of a peace agreement. In this sense, reconciliation is more a continuum process rather than an end in itself. To conclude, reconciliation affects individuals in their social relationships and psychological and religious well-being; it affects a nation in its struggles and efforts to reconstruct itself after a violent conflict; and affects the international community because for such a process to be successful needs to have a favourable context and support to do so.