

Virtual School of “Dialogue, Democracy and Peaceful Conflict Resolution”

INTRODUCTION TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION THEORY – Dr Marwan Darweish Lesson VI



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Senior peace and conflict advisor
Responding to Conflict, Birmingham, UK.

EDUCATION

B.A. Social Work, University of Haifa. 1984 Diploma in Conflict Resolution Techniques. 1988-89 M.A Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, England 1989-94 Ph.D. Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, England.

WORK EXPERIENCE

2001- Senior Peace and conflict Advisor: Responding to Conflict, Birmingham, UK. Responsibilities includes:

- Lecturer at Birmingham University MA International Development Department,
- Lecturer at Lancaster University Conflict Resolution Course for MA students,
- Lead trainer for Strengthening Policy and Practice course for international agencies
- Director of Middle East Programme
- Worked as consultant for aid and development agencies in the field of Peace and conflict.

1996-2001 Director of Peace Education Program: Israel/ Palestine Centre for Research and Information, (PCRI). Curricula development, training and facilitation of workshops in Peace Education. Training of trainers.

1995-99 Director of Israeli Studies Department. Centre for Palestine Research and Studies, Nablus, Palestine. Managed and authored key studies on Israeli socio-economic and political life

1995 Director of EU Research Project, socio-economic conditions in the Gaza Strip.

1993-95 Lecturing at Bradford University Department of Peace Studies on the following courses:

- Middle East politics : highlights the interrelated nature of the sources of conflicts and tensions including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, minority groups and Islamic revivalism.

- Conflict Resolution: focuses on both theoretical and practical skills.

- State and society in the 'South' : examines the relationship between state, development and democracy in the Third World.

- Human Rights: studies the philosophy and practice of human rights around the world.

1988 Documentary Film "Voices from Gaza" : Production manager, head of research team and manager of all the interviews.

1984-88 Group Director in Conflict Resolution Wahat al-Salam\Neve Shalom School for Peace. Organized training courses in conflict resolution techniques and counselling. These courses provided skills in reconciliation, mediation, negotiation and group dynamics. Facilitation in different European ethnic and national groups. Personnel responsibilities including regular staff counselling, management and workshop planning and recruitment.

1983-84 Director of Community Centre.

VOLUNTARY WORK. Selected activities:

1978-83 Member of management committee of Umm el Fahem Community Centre with special responsibility for public relations. 1983-85 Member of executive committee of Umm el Fahem Annual International Voluntary Service Camp. 1989-93 Member of the Palestinian-Jewish Committee for Peace and Justice in the Middle East. A UK based group. 1994-95 Facilitator in joint groups of Palestinians and Israelis (Teachers, political leaders, students, community workers).

PUBLICATIONS: Selected list of publication: -1999: "Education for Peace- Educating the next generation to live in peace while peace is still absent" in *Creating a Culture of Peace*, Ed. Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, pp196-208 -1997: "The Palestinian Declaration of Independence: Social and Political Implication" and "The Palestinians in Israel" in *Civics: Democracy and Human Rights*, Palestine Center for Research and Studies, Nablus. -

1996: "The Impact of the Palestinian National Authority on the Arabs in Israel", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no.28, (Arabic). -1995: "The PLO and the Palestinians in Israel: From exclusion to recognition", *Journal of Palestine Policy*, Vol3, no 9. -1995: *The Palestinians in Israel: Nationalism versus citizenship*, Redwood Press, London. -1995: "Israel's Arabs as Mediators", *Peace News*, January. - 1991: "The Palestinians in Israel: The Impact of the Intifada", in *Living the Intifada* by Rigby, Andrew, Zed Press. -1989: "The Intifada: Social Change", *Race and Class*, Vol. 31, No 2.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

The following some of conferences where I presented papers or participated as a panelist:

- The First International NGOs Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, November 1983.
- Democracy and Security Issues in the Middle East, Torenno, Italy, August 1984.
- A two day Workshop on Conflict Resolution between Arab and Jewish Teachers, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, August 1986.
- Democracy and Development, the linkage between the Palestinian Question and the Gulf war, Leeds, 1990.
- Third Conference on Global and Environmental Issues. Leeds, October 1991.
- The Palestinian Israeli Peace Accord: Manchester, February 1994.
- Apprehensions in Arab-Israeli Society about the Possible Risks of Peacemaking, and the Possible Impact of the Resolution of the Conflict. The Fear of Peace Workshop- Royal Institute for inter-faith Studies, Amman 19-20 February 1997.
- Peace Education. Dream or reality? University of Haifa May 1999.
- Peace Education in the Middle East, Rabat, Morocco, August 2000

Introduction to Conflict Resolution Theory

Theory is a set of assumptions and beliefs that we have about causal relationships between people, things or events. These theories or assumptions shape our interpretation and understanding of ‘what is going on’ and it guide our analysis and our appropriate intervention and responses to the situation.

Some will argue that there **is no such thing as a value-free theory**. Theories are shaped by the theorist’s values, culture and underlying worldview. Those who write about conflict theories are influenced by their views, values and understanding of the world.

Our practical responses to conflict around us or we read about are generally grounded in a theory that highlights a particular cause of conflict and suggests ways for action. For example if we look at the conflict in Iraq at the moment and ask ourselves what is the root causes? What is the conflict about?

Therefore, we are all conflict theorists, because we all have theories of conflict. These ideas are *implicit* (not directly expressed). However, a ‘theorist’ is someone who tries to make these ideas – and the reasons why they think they are relevant – *explicit* so that everybody can understand it.

Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change. It reflects the different interests, values and beliefs in society, especially in a society in the midst of change.

Conflict can be between symmetric (balanced) or asymmetric (unbalanced) parties. When it is between asymmetric forces one wins and the other loses. To change the asymmetric conflict it is important to think about the aspects:

Response to conflict needs to be at all levels

- Change in the context of conflict often depends on the international and regional situation
- Conflict within a state or over a state, demands a change in structure at state level
- Conflict between parties demands that relationship issues are addressed
- Cultural change is important at all levels

There are different ways to change unbalanced relationships in a conflict. The following are some ways that this is accomplished:

- Gandhi dedicated himself to “speaking truth to the power”.
- Lobbying at the grass roots level, mobilisation and support.
- Raising awareness and education.
- Removing those who support the people in power (e.g. the army, financial corporations and institutions, etc)
- Changing the structure of the relationship – such as targeting the World Trade Centre for attack
- Empowerment to change the existing balance in the relationship

This short paper will highlight two main theories that influenced his thinking and practice in the field of conflict transformation: **Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence and John Burton's basic need theory.**

Galtung represented a European/Scandinavian approach and based his work on Peace Research concepts. Galtung was a founding member of the Journal of Peace Research and peace institutions, which highlighted the debate and discussion about issues of peace and war; conflict and conflict resolution. Peace Research highlighted the values of non-violent action, peace, justice, equality. He argued that in order to understand the root causes of conflict one must understand and expose the structural violence. Galtung made a clear distinction between:

- 1. Direct violence**
- 2. Structural violence**
- 3. Cultural violence**

He made a distinction between positive and negative peace. Negative, cold or shallow peace being the absence of war, or violence with a minimum agenda for distinction peacefulness; while positive peace is a maxim list agenda: proactive approaches to the creation of a peaceful environment.

Direct Violence

Looking at the conflict situations most of what we see is the violence as behaviour; killing, beating, torture and so on are examples of physical violence and there is no shortage of this kind of behaviour in communities, societies and countries all over the world. Look at the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan where wars are the visible and the violence within our community, where much violence behaviour occurs also in the private domain.

Structural violence

The structural or institutional violence is less obvious and visible and much more difficult to name or to point at and therefore to address, however it is very damaging and can sustain inequality and injustice and therefore death. "Violent" structures or institutions are there to maintain control and power over and therefore oppression. Many see some of the trends in international financial systems as violent structures, whereby one group of nations, or institutions imposes deliberate suffering on others. For example, many international institutions encouraged poorer countries to borrow large amount of money. These debts and the conditions for repayment now being imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have forced many poorer countries to restructure their economies in order to pay the debts rather than meet the need of the population. The economy has forced to adjust to meet the demand from the international financial institution that forced community to new economy and abandon their traditional one. The effect of that in terms of death and damaged lives are often serious as the effect of the war. The EU policy of subsidies to European farmer give them great advantage where farmer from the south can't compete and therefore they lose their source of livelihood. Wherever systems discriminate between groups, communities and nations to the point of threatening lives and livelihoods, the result is structural or institutional violence. The Apartheid system and structure in South Africa is a good example which illustrate the three element presented by Galtung. We had a system and structures in the country that came to deny the black majority from their rights for education, healthcare, employment and access to the political life and decision making.

The apartheid were based on values and attitudes that gave the minority a superiority and on the streets and shanty towns of south Africa we witnessed the direct violence against the Black majority.

Cultural violence

The source of cultural violence according to Galtung are the attitudes, feeling and values that we hold based on fear, heat and intolerance that we use to justify violence. Another deeper layer to our understanding of violence is that it relates to less visible, mental process; the feeling the attitudes and the values that people hold. It looks at the perception, misperception of each other and of themselves. These can become the source of violence or allow violent behavior and violent structure to operate. Hate, fear and mistrust are feelings which can allow us to classify people as inferior, or superior, in terms of categories such as race, gender, religion, ethnicity, mental ability, physical ability, political ideology or sexual orientation. These felling may cause some groups of people to become intolerant of anyone who is different from themselves in any or all of theses categories. From there with some misinformation it is small step to start seeing people in other groups as less than human and thus to participate in or justify from the sidelines inhuman action.

The most important point about Galtung's model is that conflict is a dynamic phenomenon. He argues that the three components of violence are interlinked and feed and support each other. One might start with feeling of fear and lack of trust towards other group which might lead to legislations or regulations that that discriminate against that particular group and therefore might encourage or legitimise the use of direct violence against.

He addressed structural violence, searching for alternative solutions that were different from the western values, such as values found in Buddhism. He was intrigued by alternative approaches to non-violence and conflict resolution from a non-western perspective. In this approach, Galtung went further to say that "many conflict resolution theories failed to engage critically with issues of social justice, absence of war could cause deep injustice". He looked at the social, political and economic roots of the conflict.

The criticism of Galtung centered on his being too "vague" and that he overlooked the relationships in conflict situation.

Basic human needs:

John Burton is an Australian, a graduate of the London School of Economics (LSE) in the UK. He is the founder of the Centre for Analysis of Conflict in London. Burton represents the development of a multi-disciplinary approach for the study of conflict at an international level. He developed the idea of the problem-solving method or approach.

Conflict resolution comes as a critique of the realism in international relations. In realism states are in conflict over resources and therefore over power in the international arena. According to this approach, conflict is caused by both a scarcity of resources and control over resources. Therefore conflict is an objective caused by measurable, quantitative objects (knowable). Power is the main factor.

There is an assumption that conflict is inevitable. Some conflict resolution scholars believe that there are different causes – not only the inherited causes from the international systems and structures. They argue that conflict has a base in human needs: the denial of human needs will cause conflict. Therefore we must address the needs and not only the interests.

Conflict has objective and subjective aspects. The subjective aspects derive from work in the field of psychology, for example that the perception of the other changes where there is a different stage of escalation or de-escalation of the conflict. This does not mean that there are no objective causes. The complexity of the situation obscures the objective causes such as unfulfilled or unmet human needs. Conflict is a situation in which parties perceive that they have incompatible goals and obscure the reality of the other.

There are two schools of thought with regard to the human needs approach:
Burton identifies the denial of basic human needs as the ultimate source of all conflicts;
Fisher and Keashly – psycho logistic interpretation. They examine subjective social processes that result in conflict and accept that differences in interests can cause conflict.

Interests, needs and position

Position: What publicly we say we want.

Interest: What really we want. Interests are negotiable, divisible and finite.

Needs: What we can't without and must have. Needs are not negotiable, not finite. In needs we talk about survival, security, and identity: basic and genetic needs. According to Burton,

“There are basic and genetic needs that will be pursued, and that the socialisation process, if not compatible with human needs, far from socialising, will lead to frustrations and disturbed and anti social personal and group behaviour.”

Interests are negotiable, divisible and finite. Needs obviously are not: they are not negotiable, not finite. However, it is very important to acknowledge and recognise the other side basic needs, which might enable them to see the needs of others. Burton argues that *“The more security I have the less you have. If more security you have the more security I have.”*

When there is conflict over values, it is more complicated and we must address basic human needs like identity, security and survival.

Reading:

John Burton and Frank Dukes. 1990. *Conflict: Practices in Management, Settlement and Resolution*. New York: St. Martin's Press. → Suggested reading: Introduction pp. 1-13; Problems of Management pp. 17-24; Settlement pp. 83-91.

Berghof Center for Constrictive Conflict Management:
http://www.berghof-center.org/std_page.php?LANG=e&id=11

John Burton. 1990. *Conflict: resolution and prevention*. New York: St. Martin's Press. → Suggested reading: pp. 13-24; 32-35; 36-48.

Johan Galtung, “Violence, peace and peace research” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol 6 no 3: 167-191 1969.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- Think of a conflict that you are familiar with and try and give examples of direct, structural and cultural violence. Do they connect and support each other? How?

- Based on your experience how the human need theory explains conflict? Give examples.

- According to Burton basic human needs theory, which needs that you can't compromise over? Why?

- What are the causes of violence? Is violence a fundamental part of the human condition? Is violence caused by 'evil'? Is it about power?