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Can There be a Just Resolution of Conflict?

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Abstract

Excerpt

I may have first thought about "just resolution of conflict" when I was a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem many years ago. Those days I often heard on the radio--there was no TV in Israel at the time--and read about King Hussein's repeated calls for a "just and lasting Peace" in the Middle East. I have also noticed over the years that the same slogan has been repeated, not only by King Hussein, but also by other prominent and less prominent leaders in regard to other conflicts.[1] The notion of just resolution of conflict has attracted me more and more, especially over the years in regards to my study of Africa.

Keywords: *conflict resolution, ethnic diversity, human needs, just resolution of conflict, motivation*

Author Bio(s)

Dov Ronen taught at the Hebrew University and at the Harvard University Extension and was affiliated for nineteen years with Harvard University's Center for International Affairs, six years as director of its Africa Research Program. He served as chairman of the Ethnicity and Politics Research Committee of the International Political Science Association, as an advisor of UNESCO's Project, Management of Social Transformations (MOST) on multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies, and as Principal Investigator, Institute of Conflict Resolution, Vienna, Austria, on several research projects. As Lecturer on Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, he has conducted a weekly seminar on "Conflict" for the last six years. Among his publications is an article in the Encyclopedia Britannica, and among his five books, The Quest for Self-Determination (1979), Pluralism and Democracy in Africa (editor, 1986), and The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict: Democracy and Self-Determination in Central Europe (1997). Perhaps because he is a survivor of the Holocaust in Hungary, his personal and primary research interests have been the causes and mechanism of conflict, the connection between violent conflict and the state, and the path to a future global order of peaceful relations among human beings.

CAN THERE BE A JUST RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT?

Dov Ronen

I may have first thought about "just resolution of conflict" when I was a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem many years ago. Those days I often heard on the radio--there was no TV in Israel at the time--and read about King Hussein's repeated calls for a "just and lasting Peace" in the Middle East. I have also noticed over the years that the same slogan has been repeated, not only by King Hussein, but also by other prominent and less prominent leaders in regard to other conflicts.[1] The notion of just resolution of conflict has attracted me more and more, especially over the years in regards to my study of Africa.

This attraction has resurfaced while doing some research and writing recently on ethnic diversity in Central Europe, including the recent conflict in former Yugoslavia (Ronen, 1997). Indeed, it was my recent work in Central Europe that prompted me to take the slogan "just and lasting peace" seriously, try to clarify the phrase "just solution," or "just resolution" in the context of conflict, and speculate on its possible application in practice.[2]

In spite of my inclination to get on with the research, I still hesitated to go public with an approach that had "just" in its title and rendering justice as its explicit purpose. One of the reasons for this reluctance was my awareness that probably all those concerned with the resolution of conflict have always been aiming at a just resolution of conflict.[3] Thus, I had no doubt that references in existing scholarly approaches to "fairness" and "acceptability to the parties concerned" implied, if not explicitly stated, "justice."[4] A "just resolution" may have also been intended in perhaps all formal negotiations and in government policies aimed at preventing conflict, even by the United States government in Bosnia Herzegovina.[5] I have also been persuaded that one of the scholars' and practitioners' reasons for shying away from the words "just" and "justice" may have been the often stated dictum that "what is just for one may not be just for the other," which is difficult to refute. Another very likely reason for refraining from the explicit use of "just" for an approach may have been, that the phrase "just resolution of conflict" sounds utopian, naive, and unrealistic which, I think, is also unrefutable.[6]

All these reasons seemed to be fairly good excuses, perhaps good reasons as well, to put aside my inquiry into the just resolution approach. In any case, I hesitated to publicly propose such a notion.

Then, a few months ago I attended a presentation given by Larry Susskind of MIT at a seminar of the Program for International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs. Susskind prefaced his own thesis with the expression: "What if..." That expression, "what if," seemed to me to project a degree of

hesitation, and appeared to contain an appeal for deliberation and experimentation which, I realized then, is what I also wanted to imply in my proposed approach.

Feeling encouraged by this newly found way of conveying reservations, I discussed with a few friends my "just solution approach."[7] After hearing reactions which I rightly or wrongly considered quite encouraging, I have decided to dare to suggest: WHAT IF we were to set out to discuss and try to experiment with an approach to resolution of conflict with the word "just" in its title and in which the rendering of "justice" is its stated aim?[8]

Before I turn to discuss my specific propositions, I should specify at the outset what I think the just resolution approach might accomplish.[9] I have come up with five points:

First, the use of the phrase "just resolution of conflict" would make explicit a notion which has been implicit anyhow in at least some conflict resolution approaches and perhaps in many practical attempts as well. More precisely, the use of the term "just" would place a morally accepted notion in the forefront.

Second, the use of the phrase "just resolution of conflict" would juxtapose an unquestionably high moral policy objective with what I consider to be important but morally inferior objectives, such as the serving of various interests and foreign policy considerations.[10] The important but morally inferior objectives would not necessarily be discarded--they could hardly be in the "real world"--but they could fall under greater scrutiny in light of the moral notion of justice.

Third, the mere use of the morally acceptable phrase itself, "just resolution of conflict" in the approach, might affect, effect, enhance, and produce morally acceptable outcomes.

Fourth, the use of the phrase "just resolution of conflict" could legitimate the use of such means as international sanctions, threat of force, arm-twisting, and payoffs to political leaders, for the enforcement of compliance with a just resolution.

Fifth, the use of the phrase "just resolution of conflict" could more easily lead to what Herbert Kelman calls "cooperative functional arrangements," and more clearly imply an intention to find a long lasting resolution of conflict (Kelman, 1996: 504). This proposition is based on my belief that a just resolution of a conflict could enhance cooperation, and be a long lasting resolution; other attempts could merely set the stage for conflict management.

I might add here the hope, as a sixth point, that possible future deliberations and experimentation with the "just resolution of conflict" approach would be looked at quite favorably by foundations and the "international community" as a serious research undertaking of a purportedly new approach to the important task of conflict resolution and conflict prevention around the world.

I shall now turn to the approach itself, which has two main components. One component of the approach is a largely technical one. It concerns suggested formalities and content of the discussions between two parties to a conflict and of the role of third party observers in them.[11] I shall discuss this component very briefly in the first part of my paper. The other component of the approach, the second and longer part of my paper, is the theoretical one. In the third part of

my paper I shall make a connection between the technical format and theory.[(12)] I should also state at the outset that there is no attempt here to review the literature. The intent of this paper is to outline a purportedly innovative approach and provoke reactions to it.

Formalities and Content

Perhaps the only a priori requirement I would stress in regard to the formalities is that the participants from both sides to a conflict be specifically invited to discuss a possible just resolution of the conflict. The discussions would be attended by third party observers. It might also be useful to highlight in the invitations the two parties evident, and perhaps frequently stated, desire to reach a just and lasting peace between them.[(13)]

The discussions would be divided into two distinct segments, each with a different purpose. The invited parties to the conflict would be challenged to address two different issues, in two separate, sequential steps. First, they would be invited to state, or summarize, WHAT their party to the conflict might consider to be a just resolution of that specific conflict (or perhaps of any conflict). Second, they would be invited to explain to each other--and to the third party observers--WHY they consider their proposed resolution, or perhaps any resolution, just.[(14)]

It seems to me very likely that during the first challenging step, during the presentations of WHAT might be a just resolution, the content of the discussion would not be different from the content of any other type of discussions, at least in their initial stages, in that (a) the parties might do no more than reiterate their respective interests, positions and demands; (b) the parties might come up with extreme and mutually exclusive views. It is in the second step, during the discussions of WHY the resolution they proposed should be seen as just, that I assume the content of the discussion, and the role of the third party observers, would be to a considerable degree different from the content of discussions in other approaches.

The reason for the considerable difference is that in the second step the parties are not challenged and expected to better understand each other, or to gain each others' confidence, or to come up with a mutually satisfactory solution to the conflict. They are challenged to point to and elaborate on the principle of justice as they see it.[(15)] Even if the content of the second step is expected to be different from the content of discussions in other approaches, it is not expected to be less confrontational. It is quite likely that both parties would offer not normative but historical justifications, relate past behavior of the other side, plead for retribution for grievances, and the like.

The third party observers have basically four tasks to perform. Their task during the first step would be to list the just resolutions proposed by the two sides. Their second task would be to record the respective explanations of the list of just resolutions. Their third task would be to assess the gap and the possible overlap between the explained just resolutions on the one hand, and the just resolution concept conveyed in the theoretical model elaborated further below, on the other hand. The observers' fourth task, and the most important one, is to try to guide the two parties toward the propositions outlined in the theoretical model, i.e., toward their realization that a just resolution of their conflict should reflect the requirements outlined in the model.

That much about the formalities and content for the moment and that too is only tentative. Although I shall say a bit more on procedural matters further, all its aspects, including the scheduled duration of each segment, should be assessed in light of past experience with other approaches, several in-house discussions and experimentation with the proposed one.

The Theoretical Component of a Just Resolution of Conflict

My intention in this section is to present a summary of my thesis as succinctly as possible and expose it to constructive criticism and suggestions for revisions.[16] Methodologically, there will be only scant references to the literature. I shall merely follow a line of thought that leads from a brief exploration of the cause of conflict to a statement about its just resolution.

Focusing on the cause(s) of conflict will be the first step, for it is my belief that any theory or proposition regarding the resolution of conflict must be based on a theory, or proposition, on the cause(s) of conflict. A theory offered in regard to the resolution of conflict without reliance on a theory regarding its cause(s) is analogous to a medication given to the poorly understood cause of the common cold. The inverse is also true: the poorly understood cause of the common cold, or of conflict, can only produce unreliable medication to either or both. Accordingly, I shall start with a statement on the relationship between a poorly conceived cause and effect relation, first with a reference to a widely held belief, then with an example from recent history.

What are not the Causes of Conflict?

A widely held popular belief about the origins of conflict, which influences the thinking of scholars and practitioners, is that mere differences among human beings, or groups, are the cause of conflict. There is no evidence to substantiate the belief that differences cause conflict.[17]

On the other hand, the evidence that differences in themselves do not cause conflict is plentiful. Human beings of various ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic and other backgrounds (and civilizations!) have lived alongside each other in various parts of the world. So did Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims in South-Eastern Europe, Hutus and Tutsis in Africa, Tamils and Sinhalese in South-East Asia, Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East, Irish Protestants and Catholics in Western Europe, and French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians in North America. The ethnic, religious and various other types of differences do polarize groups in already erupted conflict, but the cause of conflict must be sought elsewhere.

Unfortunately, in my judgement, many scholars have found that "elsewhere" in the recent events of the end of the Cold War. As ethnic conflicts have proliferated since the end of the Cold War, so have the number of scholars and practitioners theorizing about them. Many among these scholars and practitioners have drawn a seemingly logical cause and effect relationship between, on the one hand, each of the three unexpected events which have been tightly connected to the end of the Cold War and, on the other hand, the subsequent eruption of ethnic conflicts.

1. The ending of a specific form of political repression due to the collapse of communist regimes (producing a host of "weak states"), has been seen by many as causing a release of previously repressed ancient, pre-modern, ethnic hatred.

2. The end of the ideological and military confrontation during the Cold War has been at least implicitly assigned as a cause for the eruption, the beginning, of new types of confrontations, including ethnic conflict.

3. The unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, in turn, is seen to be an obvious cause for the resurgence of ethnic and national aspirations.[18]

The three types of phenomena that have occurred in the aftermath of the Cold War--the end of the bi-polar Cold War confrontation, the curtailment of communist repression, and the collapse of these two entities are historical facts. The relationship between these three events connected to the end of the Cold War, including the subsequent process of democratization, on the one hand, and the eruption of conflict, on the other hand, is obviously sequential, but not necessarily causal. In any case, whatever degree of causal relationship may exist between any of the Cold War related events and the eruption of specific conflicts, there is no good reason to deduce from those relationships a general theory on the cause of conflict, ethnic or otherwise.

Nor is there a good reason to deduce a general theory on the cause of conflict, ethnic or otherwise, from conflicts waged in recent years in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Canada, Rwanda and elsewhere. Each of these conflicts, as well as conflicts waged prior to and after World War I in Europe, and in Africa and elsewhere in previous centuries and in the present one, occurred in specific historical circumstances which may only provide clues as to the specific factors that contributed to their eruption.

A general theory of conflict cannot be drawn from history. The number of cases we could draw from would necessarily be limited and their interpretations skewed. Conflict between and among human beings, alone or in groups, is an universal phenomenon that transcends time and space. So the cause of conflict is likely to be universal as well.[19] My hypothesis about the cause of conflict purports to be universally applicable, for it is extrapolated from studies of human psychology, nature and needs.
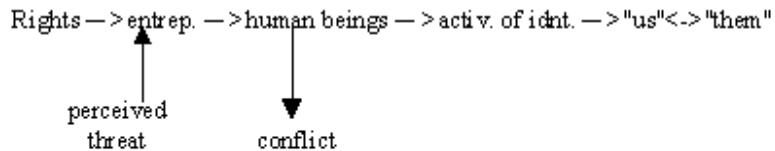
The Probable Causes of Conflict

A central component of conflict, I propose, one of its core causes, is the perception of threat, danger, or fear.[20] Another, separate, central component of conflict may be the desire to remove the threat which is commonly vested in an "other," be it an individual, a group, or a government. In case of ethnic conflict, or any other group conflict, there may be still a third central component: the political entrepreneur or leader, who engages in mobilization of human beings against the "other," the perceived source of the threat. Thus, I propose, conflict is the by-product of an effort, "my" or "our" effort, to reduce or eliminate a perceived threat by somehow neutralizing, overcoming, or even eliminating "them," the ones responsible for the threat. To put this into a single complex sentence in regard to group conflict:

Any type of group conflict erupts if and when a number of human beings are successfully mobilized by political entrepreneur(s) against an "other," for the purpose of removing a perceived threat to "us."

Several other components may also be identified in addition to the three listed above. They would include (a) the activation of a shared identity by members of a mobilized group, (b) polarization of characteristics and past deeds between "us" and "them," (c) the indispensable awareness of one's (human) right to be free from the "content" of the threat, and (d) the very notion of "perception," which may or may not reflect reality. Including these and additional elements as well, here is the thesis in one long and complex sentence:

Group conflict occurs if and when human beings are successfully mobilized by political entrepreneur(s), ("leaders") who, conveying to them their (human) rights and a presence of a threat to them, are also successful in bringing them to activate a shared identity in a polarized opposition to the identity of those responsible for the threat--may be a government, another group of human beings in a state, or in another state--in order to remove the perceived threat.

To illustrate the dynamic interaction:

Three comments should be added. First, all the components of the causes of conflict are proposed to be the same in all group conflicts, be they ethnic, religious, national, social class, economic class, gender, generational, interstate, or any other. (In inter-personal conflict only the activation of a shared identity is presumed to be absent.) Second, although neither ancient hatreds, centuries old hostilities, nor ethnic, religious, gender, cultural and any other differences cause conflict, any of the above can accentuate polarization between two entities and render the conflict between them (more) violent. Third, and perhaps most importantly, human beings, not groups, perceive, activate, are mobilized, and so on. The human being is the participant in conflict and all components of the cause of conflict pertain to him/her. To the discussion of this issue we now turn.

The Human Being as a Unit of Analysis

Herbert Kelman has noted that ". . . although war and peace, and international relations as a whole, are societal and intersocietal processes, which cannot be reduced to the level of individual behavior, there are many aspects of international conflict and conflict resolution for which the individual represents the most appropriate unit of analysis." (Kelman, 1996: 503). From my perspective, the human being represents the most appropriate unit of analysis, with all reservations removed. In other words, the individual human being represents not only "the appropriate unit of analysis" but the exclusive unit of analysis.

It is not groups that perceive a threat or participate in conflict; human beings do. Ethnic and religious groups, nations, states, minorities, or cultures do not perceive, make decisions, vote, live, declare wars, participate in revolutions, fight and die in wars, sign peace treaties, and enjoy the fruits of peace. Individual human beings do. Marx made a crucial error of judgment in

assuming that workers of the world would become aware of their "true" identity as the proletariat, perceive their acute oppression by the owners of the means of production, and hence would unite and engage in conflict (revolution) against their capitalist exploiters. We should learn from Marx's historic mistake and not replicate it in regard to other presumed groups.

Fear is felt personally and may be expressed and acted upon collectively by those who do fear. War and peace, and all other types of inter-state and intra-state relations, are societal and intersocietal processes, but they are conducted by human beings. However insistently the claim is made by the powers that be, the sense of personal security of the individual human being is not and should not be seen as synonymous with the "national security" of the state in which those individuals live.

That human beings sharing the same ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, national, or any other background, feel and act the same way is perhaps true on a very high level of metaphysical generalization but not in reality. In reality, not all human beings who share the same ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, national or any other background necessarily proclaim the same self-identity[21] in all circumstances, nor perceive a threat, or the same threat; nor necessarily do all of them feel a compulsion to act, or act the same way, against a threat in all circumstances--not all Corsicans, all Tamils, Croats, Palestinians, or Americans.

Nor is there evidence for a unanimous verbal or moral support for "the cause" on any side of an ethnic, religious, class, or international conflict. It has not been so in the conflict among the Serbs and Muslims, among Hutus and Tutsis, Palestinians and Israelis, nor was it so among the peoples of the various states that participated in history's innumerable wars.

As an example from recent history, the notion of the Bosnian-Serb and Bosnian-Muslim conflict encompassing, as it were, two peoples in conflict, is a correct statement in the abstract but not in fact. Many individuals from both groups of people considered themselves Yugoslavs and have not regarded human beings with different ethnic backgrounds in the former Yugoslavia as the "other."

True enough, in case of heightened tension, in the former Yugoslavia and anywhere in the world, such as in the case of ethnic cleansing, terrorist attack or war, there would be a sense of solidarity with "the cause" on either side. But even solidarity gained in such instances might fluctuate with changes in the intensity of the conflict.[22]

Every effort should be made not to lose sight of the fact that the human being is the proper unit of analysis in conflict. This issue leads us to an examination of human needs.

Human Needs

As the human being is the unit of analysis, so human needs refer to personal needs. John Burton has noted: "Problem-solving at the social level . . . is possible only by processes that take the needs of the individual as the basis for analysis and planning." (Burton, 1979: 79). Johan Galtung, in turn, has made the following remark: "Our concern is with human needs, and by that

is meant needs that are located, if not necessarily perceived, in individual human beings. The need-subject is an individual..." (Galtung, 1980: 60).

Each human being possesses his or her needs, as well as his or her own aspirations, wants, and dreams. A specific human being is hungry, or homeless, feels safe, or feels satisfied, or feels free, in every part of the world, including those from non-western cultures. The phrase "individual needs" has nothing to do with western cultural, or perhaps capitalist, individualism. Hunger was individually felt in primitive tribes thousands of years ago, the same as by the homeless on a New York street today. Attributing needs to socially, politically or economically defined groups, such as voters, soldiers, consumers, ethnic groups, or citizens of a state, may be useful for specific purposes--such as in submitting collective demands for a pay-raise, or for providing statistical information in national budgets. But, for understanding the meaning and implications of political and economic behavior of human beings and conflict, we have to focus on personal needs.[23]

What are the Needs of Humans? How Many Needs are There?

In the early 1930s, the Harvard psychiatrist Henry Murray suggested that there are twelve "viscerogenic" and twenty-eight "psychogenic" needs of human beings. In Murray's view the first twelve needs are primary, the latter secondary (Murray, 1938). Abraham Maslow, the late American psychologist, listed a hierarchy of five biologically based needs: (1) Physical needs (water, food, sex, etc.); (2) Safety; (3) Love, affection, belonging; (4) Self-esteem; and (5) Self-actualization. (Maslow, 1943: 370-396). James Davies, a political scientist, after revising Maslow's list by eliminating the second category of safety, asserts that "all these [four] basic needs are organically, genetically programmed predispositions" (Davies, 1977: 161).

The most cogent discussion of human needs and human nature I have found is in The Evolution of Civilizations, by the historian Carroll Quigley. (Quigley, 1979). According to Quigley, needs are the range of dynamic requirements of the human organism to develop potentialities, which are the range of static abilities of the human organism. "Drives," argues Quigley, transform potentialities into needs. In other words, human needs are the dynamic aspect of potentialities. The number of potentialities, or needs, is difficult to establish, writes Quigley, for some potentialities "blur into one another," while some conflict with others, and still others substitute for one another in practice. (Quigley, 1979: 54). In addition, writes Quigley, "needs" in one category at times overlap, or are in some way interconnected with, another need in the other category, such as, for example, physical sex and emotional love. Quigley notes that due to these complications one could divide the range of human potentialities and needs into "forty or into four hundred divisions or levels." Nevertheless, he lists two basic "range[s] of human potentialities or human needs," the one physical, the other psychic, under which all other human needs cluster.

From Quigley's thesis I have extrapolated that each human being has two types, or two sets, of needs as I call them: a set of psychological (or psychic, or emotional) needs and a set of physical (or material, or economic) needs. Each set of needs includes a long list of specific needs of the human organism. The set of physical needs includes the needs for the physical survival and well-being of the human being, such as food, water, shelter, touch, medical care and the need to be

free from the opposites of all the above, such as death and bodily injury, hunger, homelessness and illness. The set of psychological needs includes the needs for the psychological survival, and well-being, of the human being, such as a sense of belonging, love, respect, appreciation, friendship, and the need to be free from the opposites of all the above, such as hatred, disrespect, and alienation.[24]

Although all human beings have the same two sets of needs, the quality and quantity of each specific need of each human being varies from person to person. Also, the specific ways the various needs may be satisfied and the specific resources that may satisfy various needs may vary from person to person and from one cultural setting to another. Above all, and most importantly, both sets of needs are requirements of the human organism for survival and, beyond survival, "well-being." My needs for food, water, as well as some form of social interaction, love, freedom from repression, are not merely my desires and aspirations; my body (and my psyche, if your wish) needs them in order to survive and function as a fully-human being. One might put the same in various and perhaps more accurate ways. The noted philosophers Mortimer Adler and Johan Galtung, for example, make a clear distinction between "needs" and "wants," the former being natural desires, the latter acquired ones.[25]

Maslow and Davies are among the scholars who assume that there is a hierarchy of needs. I do not concur. There may be personal prioritizing in different circumstances and contexts. At times food from one set of needs may be deemed by some to be first in importance to freedom from the other set of needs, or vice versa. Similarly, there may emerge a personally preferred hierarchy within each set, such as food preceding shelter in one set; love may precede self-esteem, in the other. I am siding with Galtung, who writes:

In most literature about needs there is an explicit or implicit assumption of a general hierarchy of needs... Any such thesis is dangerous because it limits the range of possibilities that should be opened by any good theory of needs . . .Thus, the idea that nonmaterial needs are 'higher' than material needs can be seen as a way of legitimizing the position given to intellectuals in many societies...[26]

And further:

... the argument is not against having priorities in concrete situations--all of us have--but against any theory of needs that tries to universalize the priorities, freezing them into a general law, thereby decreasing the diversity (Galtung, 1980: 70).

A Just Resolution of Internal Conflict

Here then is my proposition, which is extrapolated from my interpretation of the cause of conflict: The resolution of group conflict is only possible through the elimination of the perceived/actual threat. This may be achieved by addressing either of two components of the causes of conflict: either preventing/outlawing the rise of political entrepreneurs, or the banning opportunities for mobilization. (Without them, groups could not be formed and identities could not be activated.) Although the elimination of either is possible in the abstract, in a modern world guided by democratic principles both are practically unacceptable. More specifically, the rise of

political entrepreneurs and possibilities of mobilization may be eliminated in authoritarian regimes including colonial rule, but not if democratic rule prevails. A third possible way to eliminate a perceived or actual threat in the modern world under democratic rule is through negotiated compromise, concession and the like which, basically, recasts, reformulates, and/or reschedules the satisfaction of needs.[27] Ultimately, the use of this method may produce an end to violence, and might lead to management of a conflict, but not likely to produce its resolution, let alone its end.[28]

A just resolution of conflict, prevention of conflict, and perhaps the attainment of lasting peace as well, requires the elimination of the perceived or actual threat to the satisfaction of the relevant items in either or both sets of needs of human beings in the respective populations involved in conflict. In other words: satisfaction of the needs of human beings is the just resolution of conflict, the only morally acceptable one, and the only one that may also last. To illustrate:

A Just Resolution of Conflict

Rights —>leader —>human beings —>no activ. of idnt. —> no obst.

both sets of needs
are perceived satisfied;
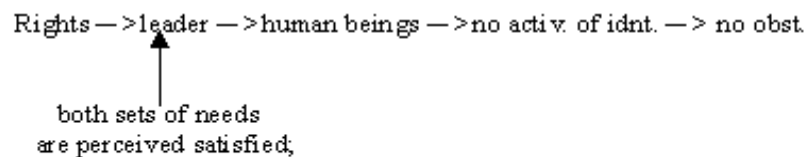
The practical measures required to satisfy needs of human beings may differ according to the type of group membership.

My hypothesis is that the needs of human beings in such groups as gangs, and various other relatively small groups in conflict--such as the once based on activated political, economic interest, religious, racial, and gender identities--may be satisfied through the prompt and effective implementation of economic and social policies that produce need-satisfying political and economic conditions for the members of such groups within the state. ("Policies" refers to laws and regulations concerning the allocation of material resources, and/or implementation of human or civil rights, etc.) If that practical measure is used, perception of the threat will likely to disappear, activation of a shared identity will cease or diminish (perhaps replaced by new ones), and the conflict will be reduced, resolved, or ended.

However, if ethnic or national identities are activated by large and territorial groups, the formulation and prompt and effective implementation of such policies might not suffice. In many if not all such cases the satisfaction of psychological needs (for a sense of belonging, freedom from perceived repression, first class citizenship, and the like) may require structural change. In other words, in such cases there might arise the demand for, and the necessity to implement, some form of autonomy, or federal/con-federal arrangement--or secession. Here lies a serious dilemma for a theory of conflict resolution.

The Option of Secession

Secession, the separation of a piece of territory and population from an existing state, is one possible way of ending conflict, or a way to prevent it. So it was in the case of the secession of Bangla Desh, the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and in the former Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, secession is not commonly considered as an option in resolution and prevention of conflict by scholars, at least not too openly, and ignored by governments. It is a largely untouchable issue in conflict resolution both in theory and in practice.[29]

Some of the possible reasons for this situation are the widely shared belief that secession "opens Pandora's box," that secession in one case may have a "domino effect," and that loss of population, resources, and so on, would negatively effect the original social or political entity. None of those have apparently occurred in any of the cases where secession occurred, especially not in the recent secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Ethiopia lost territory and population, but negative effects of the secession are not apparent. Perhaps the opposite.

There may be a far more significant reason than the ones cited, perhaps a more accurate explanation for the reluctance to consider secession as a legitimate option. The reluctance may be due to a moral commitment of students of conflict not only to resolution of conflict, but also to restoring, or maintaining a social order which, ipso facto, implies the safeguarding of the (territorial) integrity of the social or political unit threatened by conflict. To put it differently, conflict prevention is conceived by scholars and practitioners alike to perform the supposed "morally correct" task of sustaining an assumed "need" for social harmony within the already existing social or political unit, more specifically, within the sovereign state; the resolution of an already erupted conflict, in turn, is conceived to perform the supposed morally correct task of restoring social harmony in the sovereign state.[30]

This simultaneous, perhaps equally strong moral commitment to both prevention and resolution of conflict and to the "survival" of a given social or political entity puts an undue restraint on the process of conflict resolution. More accurately, the moral commitment to the preservation of the existing social or political entity puts undue restraint. In any case, there cannot be a strong moral commitment to the satisfaction of human needs, alongside an equally strong moral commitment to the "survival" of a given social or political entity. It seems evident to me that a prior moral commitment is necessary for the just resolution or prevention of conflict, through the satisfaction of personal human needs--and to the formulation of policies that promptly and effectively produce such a result. A moral commitment to the "survival" of a political entity without assuring the satisfaction of both sets of relevant human needs does not lead to a just resolution of conflict but, perhaps, to a temporary suspension of conflict and to management of conflict.

A moral commitment to a just resolution of conflict requires a recognition that secession may resolve a particular conflict. It requires a recognition that creation of a new social or political entity through secession in search for the satisfaction of both sets of human needs is the moral and functional equivalent of appropriate policy formulation and implementation.[31] Satisfaction of personal needs does not require the "survival" of an existing social or political entity; it requires the survival of human beings. It requires conditions in which both sets of human needs may be satisfied.

It may be useful to consider that secessionists aspire for a new independent and sovereign state for it being a means of escaping of being, perhaps, unjustly ruled by "them" in the existing state. If that is so, taking secession into account for a just resolution of conflict should not be excluded. This is not a recommendation for secession for the resolution of conflict; it is a recommendation to formulate and implement measures that satisfy human needs.

Connecting Between Formalities and Theory

In discussing the formalities and content I proposed that the official or unofficial representatives of parties to a conflict be challenged to do two things, in two distinct steps. First, be challenged to state, or summarize, WHAT their party to the conflict might consider to be a just solution of that specific conflict, or any conflict. Then, as the second step, both parties are asked to explain to each other--and to the third party observers--WHY they consider their solution just.

The tasks of the third party observers were described as follows: (a) to list and identify the various just resolutions proposed by the two sides, (b) take account of the respective explanations of the list of just resolutions, (c) assess the gap and possible overlap among the explained just resolutions outlined by each side. I also noted that the task of the third party observers would also be (d) to assess the gap and possible overlap between the just resolutions outlined by each side and the theoretical model, i,.e, to detect references to personal human needs.

The critical questions are: how could third party observers identify references to human needs in the participants' discussions of interests, demands, claims and complaints? how could third party observers sort out references to the specific human needs that are perceived threatened by human beings in their respective populations?

I suggest considering the option of, first, setting up a four-partite classification. The first two items in the classification pertaining to needs; the second two items pertaining to the policy, or structural changes required to satisfy needs. Second, I suggest to try to classify the long list of terms mentioned by the participants into each of the four considerably distinct categories. Here is the four-partite classification:

1. psychological/psychic needs;

2. physical/economic needs;

3. policy/structural changes that may be required to satisfy psychological/psychic needs, and;

4. policy/structural changes that may be required to satisfy physical/economic needs.

As to the classification of the long list of terms mentioned by the participants, among the terms that might be used by discussants that belong to the list of psychological needs (and also to the unlisted category of political conditions) are: democracy, repression, discrimination, political

stability, freedom, identity, consensus, sense of personal security, flag, reconciliation, citizenship, sovereignty, and self-determination.

Among the terms that might be used by discussants that belong to the list of possible policy or structural changes (3), for satisfying primarily psychological needs are the measures pertaining to items listed above, as well as independence, autonomy, secession, cantonization.

Among the terms that might be used by discussants that belong to the list of physical/economic needs (2) (and to the category of economic conditions) are: employment, high standard of living, medical care, food, having a shelter over one's head, physical safety.

Among the terms that might be used by discussants that belong to the list of possible policy or structural changes (4) for satisfying primarily physical/economic needs are the measures pertaining to items listed above, as well as foreign aid, nationalization/privatization.

The same lists may be used for sorting out human needs-related items gathered from opinion polls, referenda, journalists reports and, possibly, intelligence data.

All in all, my assumption is that listing of words in terms of needs might be a useful tool for outlining a proposed resolution of a conflict that is based on the satisfaction of needs of the human beings in the population concerned, hence for a just resolution of that conflict.

Conclusion

Parties to a conflict (especially those from different culture/value traditions) do not likely share, nor could they agree upon, a more or less universal conception of justice. But, WHAT IF--we were to try to construct, and experiment with an approach to resolution of conflict with the word 'just' in its title? WHAT IF--we were to embrace the satisfaction of the two sets of needs of human beings in populations engaged in conflict as the key to a just resolution of conflict? A conception of justice based on the satisfaction of the two sets of needs of human beings in a population may have a chance of being accepted as a feasible way of resolving and preventing conflict.

I fully realize that some will reject the approach itself out of hand. There may also be those who will disagree with some or many of my specific propositions regarding the just resolution of conflict. All those tending to agree that a just resolution approach may have a place among the various approaches are invited to suggest revisions to improve it.

*

As food for further thought on the subject, I would like to conclude with a few pertinent propositions, which we might want to think about:

- Participants in a conflict do not primarily aim at winning; their aim is preventing the "other" from winning. For if the "other" wins, the threat to the satisfaction of needs would continue.
- Human needs are needs of the human organism; they are personal needs. Thus conflict, essentially, is not against "them," it is for "me."
- Neither "we," nor I, consider "them" to be the "enemy" because of what they are, but because of what "we," or I, perceive "them" to do, or threaten to do, to "us," hence to me.
- Long-lasting peace is possible only if the perceived absence of threat to the satisfaction of needs is long-lasting
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Notes

1. The words "just" and "justice" also appear in various declarations, especially regarding human rights, and mentioned by a long line of philosophers, Aristotle, Kant, and Rousseau among them. The two principal recent works on justice I have consulted for this paper are John Rawls (1971), and Morton Deutsch (1985).

2. About the reason for the new attraction to the issue suffice it to say that I have found the Dayton Peace accords on Bosnia-Herzegovina lacks virtually any semblance of a "just solution." For a similar assessment see for example, Miller (1996). For an excellent account of the conflict in former Yugoslavia see Woodward (1995). An interesting discussion in regard to unjust Peace Treaties at the end of World War I may be found in Bailey (1944: 295ff.)

3. For a brief discussion of the various approaches to conflict see Pruitt and Olczak (1995).

4. John Rawls notes the difference between the adjectives "fair," "mutually acceptable," on the one hand, and "just," on the other hand. He writes: " ... 'justice as fairness'... conveys the idea that the principles of justice are agreed to in an initial situation ... is fair. [However, it] does not mean that the concepts of justice and fairness are the same, any more than the phrase 'poetry as metaphor' means that the concepts of poetry and metaphor are the same." Rawls (1971: 12-13).

5. On the other hand, it seems to me that the explicit use of the word "justice" was reserved in the context of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia for the legal persecution of the accused either of crimes against humanity or genocide.

6. It may or may not be appropriate to note here that the word "peace" is widely used. It either does not sound utopian, naive and unrealistic, or the word is used nevertheless, because we have become accustomed not to ask for a precise definition of the word and have wily-nilly accepted it sufficient to mean absence of war? (In any case, if one is ready to strive for a peaceful world why not for a world in which justice prevails?)

7. They included initially Larry Susskind, Kevin Clements, Nadim Rouhana, and Barbara Sullivan, to whom I hereby extend my thanks.

8. The idea first appeared in print under the title "Just Solution Approach to Resolution of Conflict: Dov Ronen's Call for Reactions," (Ronen, 1996: 17).

9. I am referring to both conflict resolution and prevention even when I do not mention prevention specifically. By "prevention" I refer to policies of governments, international organizations and other relevant bodies to prevent conflict.

10. For a comment on foreign intervention in conflict see Burton (1969: 189-196). While Burton refrains from endorsing foreign intervention in a book published in 1969, in the post Cold War era the role of international actors is more readily accepted. See also, Sisk (1996).

11. I shall continue to use the word "discussions," although exchange of views, negotiation, or another word may be deemed more, or also, appropriate. Similarly, I shall usually refer to "observers" for the third party present at the discussion, although other possible titles, such as coordinator, mediator, facilitator, conciliator, may perhaps be substituted. Also, I shall assume that more than one observer would be present.

12. The just resolution approach is intended for both intra-state and inter-state conflict, although some details may be relevant for one type and not for the other. Incidentally, the approach may also be relevant to conflict within the family, neighborhood, corporations, and so on.

13. For further details see Burton (1996: 51 ff.)

14. In practice, the parties must first identify the central issue(s) of the conflict. On the other hand, it is also possible that this two-step approach may prove to be more useful in regard to discussions of specific issues pertaining to the conflict rather than of the conflict as a whole.

15. In the approaches that I am familiar with the parties are called to find a common language, such as to gain each others' confidence, or find mutually acceptable solutions. See for example Susskind & Field (1996: 13).

16. Elsewhere I have offered more detailed, albeit somewhat different, explanations. Ronen (1979; 1997).

17. A number of scholars seem to share this view. See for example Lake and Rothchild (1996), and Glickman, (1995).

18. For many among these scholars and practitioners the post Cold War era ethnic conflicts consisted of the virtual totality of cases from which to extrapolate the causes of conflict. Even for scholars and practitioners who have been concerned with conflict since long before the end of the Cold War--including political scientists, to whose ranks I happen to belong, and policy-makers who are called to assess any conflict resolution approach--the post Cold War conflicts have provided convenient reference points in their more recent writings and pronouncements.

19. Not only inter-state and intra-state conflicts. Conflict between spouses, between gangs in neighborhoods and others, which may have the same core causes are surely universal.

20. Most scholars refer to fear which, if it implies a fear from, is essentially the same as threat. See reference to fear by Kelman (1996: 505).

21. In my conceptualization "identity" is far more specific than in the conflict resolution literature. See for example, Burton (1996: 30-31). My notion of "activation of identity" may be found in Ronen (1979: 8-10ff).

22. We often read in newspapers as well as in scholarly works about "responsibility of the Serbs for much of ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia," "the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland," "the Arab-Israeli conflict," and so on. All these are true in a high level of generalization but analytically, for the purpose of the study of conflict especially, they are virtually useless notions.

23. Galtung writes: "The problem is that the term 'need' is also used for nonsubjects; there is talk about 'national needs' (for prestige of a country), 'social needs' (e.g., for a good urban sewage disposal system), and 'group needs' (e.g., for a place to meet, to be together). The argument here would certainly not be that there are no necessary conditions for these social entities or actors to function, but that the term 'need' will only be used with reference to need-subjects -- and the only subjects we know of in human affairs are individual human beings. It is only in them that the 'click of correspondence' between need and satisfier can be experienced. That these individual human beings develop their need consciousness in a social context and that most of them have most of their needs satisfied in a social context does not change the circumstance that groups, cities, and countries do not have minds in which needs can be reflected or even articulated. On the contrary, the usual experience is ... that such 'collective needs' usually express wishes and wants, the desires and demands of the ruling elites in these collectivities, more or less poorly disguised." Galtung (1980: 60).

24. The term "survival" does not only refer to a clinical stage before actual physical and psychic death but also to a low level of human functioning. "Well-being" in turn refers to a higher level of human functioning.

25. The distinguished philosopher, Mortimer J. Adler wrote: "Whatever we need is really good for us. There are no wrong needs." (Adler, 1985: 124). He also added " . . . all real goods are things to which we have a natural right. Our natural needs are the basis of our natural rights -- rights to the things we need in order to discharge our moral obligation to seek everything that is really good for us in order to lead good human lives. If natural needs were not the same for all human beings everywhere, at all times and under all circumstances, we would have no basis for a global doctrine that calls for the protection of human rights by all the nations of the earth." (Adler, 1985: 127).

Johan Galtung noted in the same vein: "A need should be distinguished from a want, a wish, a desire, a demand." Galtung continues: "The latter are subjectively felt and articulated: they may express needs, but they also may not; and there may be needs that are not thus expressed. Thus, there is no assumption that people are conscious of their needs. It makes perfect sense to talk about the need for freedom of a person born into slavery, knowledgeable of nothing else, just as it may make sense to talk about the need for creativity of a person born into the routine jobs of

"modern' society, knowing nothing else . . . Thus, one aspect of 'need' is tied to the concept necessity, which means that we have an image of what is necessary to be human, or at least what it is to be nonhuman. Moreover, we shall claim that there is something universal to this image." (Galtung, 1980: 59).

26. Galtung adds: "if it can be ascertained empirically that people in fact do pursue material needs first and then nonmaterial ones, even under conditions where they cannot be said to be forced to do so, then this is an important consideration." (Galtung, 1980: 67).

27. For example, in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations the psychological need of Palestinians for "freedom" has been recast as "limited autonomy," scheduled to a later date, and so on.

28. Some scholars explicitly aim for a management of conflict and doubt the possibility of its resolution. (Lake and Rothchild, 1996: 42). They also state: "Unlike other, more optimistic observers, we see no permanent resolutions, only temporary 'fixes.'" (Lake and Rothchild, 1996: 56-57). In my view, management of conflict is acceptable only if conflict is restricted to non-violent interactions such as competition, rivalry, verbal disputes and the like. Management of conflict is not an acceptable goal to aim at in cases of violent or potentially violent conflict. In these cases, resolution of the conflict should be the aim.

29. John Burton does list secession in the context of autonomy: "Secession movements are a major symptom of ethnic conflict . . . They could vary from complete independence and new sovereignties, to limited control of education and related cultural elements." (Burton, 1996: 18).

30. The simultaneous commitment to the centrality of human needs and the restoration of stability may also be an explanation for the probably unintentional switch from personal needs to group needs in the literature on conflict, including conflict resolution, be it the need for identity, security, or autonomy.

31. "Just as with individual biological death, social disintegration may not be necessarily bad; it may put an end to something that no longer is viable." (Galtung, 1980: 61).

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