Peace and Conflict Studies

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Bereavement, Storytelling, and Reconciliation:
Peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians*

Frida Kerner Furman

Abstract
Despite the ongoing conflict and the general neglect by the media, power brokers, and the public, grassroots organizations in the Middle East persist in their dedication to “people to people” diplomacy between Israelis and Palestinians. The Parents Circle-Families Forum is a bi-national NGO committed to peacebuilding and reconciliation between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Its most distinctive features are its membership, composed of 300 families from each side who have lost a close relative to the conflict, and its use of storytelling to connect the two sides. Bereaved individuals develop the capacity for empathy and moral responsibility beyond their own people by encountering “the other” via personal stories of loss and suffering. In pairs, Palestinian and Israeli members then share these stories with students in each society, modeling compassion and human solidarity, in an effort to bring about social transformation. This paper, based on ethnographic research recently conducted in Israel and the West Bank, considers the moral dynamics of these encounters and presentations, and their potential contribution to reconciliation and conflict transformation.

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Introduction
In the last week of June, 2012, a surprising image graced newspapers throughout the world. The photograph, taken in Belfast, showed a smiling Queen Elizabeth II shaking hands with an equally cheerful Martin McGuinness, once the commander of the Irish Republican Army and currently Northern Ireland’s deputy first minister. This gesture of reconciliation between formerly bitter enemies symbolically put to rest the decades-long bloody conflict between the Protestant Unionists and the Catholic Republicans (Cowell, 2012). Does this image offer hope for the resolution of other seemingly intractable conflicts, such as the one
between Israelis and Palestinians? The situation in the Middle East looks so discouraging at the present time that it is difficult to imagine anyone there feeling hopeful about peace. Yet despite the bleak outlook, there are grassroots organizations that continue to persevere in their commitment to peace.

The Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF) is just such an organization: a bi-national NGO committed to peacebuilding and reconciliation between Israeli Jews and Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Its most distinctive features are its membership, which consists of 300 families from each side who have lost a close relative to the conflict, and its use of storytelling to connect people across the divide.

In recent years, storytelling has received attention as an important method used by adversaries in reconciliation work across the globe, usually in situations following violent conflict. Less is known about groups' use of this approach in the context of ongoing conflict and asymmetrical power dynamics, as is the case in Israel-Palestine (Maoz, 2011); this is precisely the focus of this paper.

An American social ethicist, I recently spent two months in Jerusalem doing qualitative field research with the PCFF. I attended several presentations in English given to visitors from abroad by one Palestinian and one Israeli PCFF member and conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews (typically lasting between one and two hours) with twelve members in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Beit Jala, including the then Israeli and Palestinian co-directors of the organization. Interviewees were selected by the PCFF staff based on members' availability and English competency and were evenly divided between Israelis and Palestinians. Working with a schematic interview protocol and probing for deeper responses, I asked study participants about their views of and involvement with the PCFF: what drew them to the organization; in what ways they felt connected to its mission, values, and methods; their views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of the "other"; the role the organization has had—if any—in effecting a change in their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward the other; their involvement in the organization's activities; and their view on the role that transformation at the personal level, an important goal of the PCFF and of person-to-person diplomacy, can have on the social level. I gleaned further data about the PCFF and its members from the organization's extensive website (Parents Circle Families Forum) and videos it has produced (Parents Circle-Families Forum, It Won't Stop until We Talk).
In this paper, I explore the unique contribution to reconciliation and peacebuilding made by the PCFF built around bonding through storytelling about loss and bereavement. While the PCFF sees itself as an educational organization as opposed to a political one, I argue that its methods are profoundly political, as they challenge and help transform each side’s received cultural knowledge about itself and about the other.

**Encountering the “Other”**

After his brother Yusuf was killed by an Israeli soldier at the entrance to his village in the West Bank, Jewish coworkers called Khaled to offer condolences, and to apologize. But he refused to talk with them. From the start, his anger flared up, feeding his hatred even for those Israelis he had known before, because “everyone on the other side is guilty of what has happened to your brother.” Having lost his direction in life, he stopped working and spent most of his time sitting at home, thinking. This took place in 2000, the year the Second Intifada broke out.

Two years later, Khaled’s little brother Sayed, fourteen years old, was shot dead as well. Sighing wearily, Khaled says to me now, head in his hands, “It’s like that, again and again, the same drama.” This time, members of the Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF), at the time an exclusively Jewish Israeli organization, hoped to meet with Khaled and his family and provide them with some comfort. Once again, his first reaction was refusal, because they were “the enemy, from those who killed my brother.” But “those people are talking about peace,” argued his mother. “Everyone wants peace,” retorted Khaled, skeptical. “All the people are talking about peace. They are lying to us. They are killing our children.” Yet she insisted, arguing that these were bereaved families, “like us.”

Eventually, Khaled relented, largely because he was driven by curiosity: “I had a question, ‘Are [PCFF members] crazy people? Have they lost their minds?’” He could not fathom a rational connection between the reality of losing a loved one and the desire to meet the other. “They killed your brother, and they’re interested in meeting the other side, the perpetrator?” So he opened up his home, and they came and told stories of their own relatives’ deaths. Khaled listened attentively to each story, remaining silent himself, and “in the story of every one of them, I found my story.” He could feel in these speakers the same kind of pain now familiar within himself. And then, not knowing exactly how this happened, he said, “I also have a story like every one of you.” And I started talking about Yusuf and Sayed, for the first time.” And when he finished his story, Khaled announced, “I think I
belong to this group, I want to be in this group. I think we should bring peace, we should have peace here.”

At the time of my interview with Khaled Abu Awwad in 2010, he was the Palestinian co-director of the Parents Circle-Families Forum, whose Palestinian office is located in the town of Beit Jala in the West Bank, some six miles south of Jerusalem. (Actual names are used for PCFF’s staff members, while names given to other study participants are fictitious.) How do we explain Khaled's seemingly sudden determination to engage with members of the PCFF, given his previous resistance to meet with Israeli Jews? What motivates bereaved families to embrace the other and to join together in shared peacebuilding? Why does the work of the PCFF work? And what can the PCFF teach us about storytelling, reconciliation, and peacebuilding efforts in such a fraught environment? These are central questions I address in this paper.

**Peacebuilding and Challenges to Identity**

It is a well-known fact that identity issues are often located at the core of conflicts such as this one (Lederach, 2003; Volkan, 1997). While the PCFF tries to create a safe space for meeting the other, it takes a good deal of courage to enter that space since one's identity is likely to be challenged on a variety of fronts. First, the trauma of the loved one's death engages difficult emotional and psychological responses that may vary from one person to the next, since each has a distinctive way of handling loss. Undoubtedly, all come to the table with a major sense of vulnerability about revealing their personal pain, as mourning in general, but especially given traumatic circumstances, can be a lonely, private, and isolating process. Several study participants told me how painful telling the story of their loss was for them, particularly at the beginning of their PCFF involvement. For Tzvi, for example, “It was very, very difficult ... to speak about my father, to call myself a bereaved son.... The Parents Circle gave me the ability to personally deal better with what happened in my family.” This is in no way surprising, for, as anthropologist Michael Jackson (2002) argues, “Every place of violence and social suffering becomes, for a time, a place of silence.... At such times, traumatic experiences tend to be salted away in subjectivity, too painful and personal to be told” (p. 132). Some experience the telling of their stories of bereavement as leading to profound healing from a seeming abyss, as a bereaved Israeli father in a PCFF produced video poignantly puts it: “Meeting bereaved parents gave my life meaning. Meeting with them gives me a reason to get up in the morning” (Parents Circle-Families Forum, *It Won't Stop Until We Talk*). Yet others say it took them years before they were
willing or able to join and to engage in this kind of deeply painful revelation. These individuals may have been wisely self-protective, for in telling traumatic stories, there is always the risk of becoming traumatized once again (Bar-On, 2006, p. 41).

Existential concerns also accompany traumatic events such as the death of loved ones in the context of violent conflict. After all, to use the language of religious studies, death is a fundamental limit situation, one that challenges our sense of self, questions the predictability of our world, and brings home the reality of our own mortality. In addition, in the context of the Middle East conflict, ongoing fear acts as a profound threat to self, family, and nation in the experience of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Finally, social identity is dramatically challenged when adversaries choose to meet the purported enemy with peace and reconciliation as central goals. Group-based identities tend to be essentialized, built on the constructed binary of “us/good” versus “them/bad” (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008, p. 127); these constructions populate collective narratives, markedly so in contexts characterized by long-term conflict. Therefore, to enter a space where PCFF members encounter the other side involves a challenge to that secure national narrative that informs personal identity and aligns it with that of one's fellow countrymen. Openness to the other's suffering becomes a subversive activity of sorts: the assumptions of the witness to such suffering—or to the storytelling about it—are thereby challenged when encountering what some scholars call “dangerous memories” (Metz, 1972; Ostovich, 2002; Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008). The term, originally coined by Walter Benjamin, may be used to interpret the PCFF’s work of exposing members and other audiences to the experiences and suffering of the other, which are mostly kept hidden from the populace by master narratives, that is, those internalized dominant cultural storylines that form the blueprint of national consciousness (Andrews, 2004, p. 1) and shape social identity.

Khaled recalls a situation that, in addition to his own experience, represents an illustration of dangerous memories and their impact. When the PCFF first became binational, it organized a meeting in the village of Deir al-Hatab, near Nablus, to invite bereaved Palestinian families to join the organization. A couple of Israeli parents talked about the loss of their sons, after which one of the Palestinian men said in response,

You know, before we met you, we were very happy whenever we heard that an Israeli soldier had been killed; but now, after meeting with you—the parents—it will be harder for us to have this kind of happiness when we hear something like this, because we know that they are your sons, just like we
have sons. We know now that you are suffering, and that the pain that you
have is the reason for your loss of soul. It will not be easy any more for us to
hear, or to be happy with, such news.

Khaled offers me the following commentary on that father's declaration: “For me, I
think this is the point of our work. And this is what we try to bring to the people.” This
perspective goes hand in hand with the characterization of PCFF members as “messengers of
reconciliation” offered by Nir Oren, the then Israeli co-director of the PCFF, whom I met in
the Israeli office of the PCFF, located in a suburb of Tel Aviv. In effect, the Palestinian
father's realization that Israeli parents suffer when their soldier children are killed provides an
example of an exposure to a dangerous—or disruptive—memory; in this case, the Israelis'
telling of their painful losses intrudes into the Palestinian's worldview. Such exposure to
dangerous memories leads to the recognition of the existence and legitimacy of alternative
narratives and has an important influence in reshaping one's view of the other, especially in
contexts where strategies that elicit empathy are put in play.

Not surprisingly, participants in PCFF dialogues run the risk of social marginalization
from their own communities through accusations of being “traitors” in the case of Israelis, or
possible collaborators engaged in “normalization” in the case of Palestinians, that is,
participating in activities with Israelis despite the continuing occupation; after all, these are
perceived as culturally and politically dangerous activities. While this possibility does not
materialize across the board—most participants in fact told me they receive support from
their families for their PCFF work—everyone is aware of such risks.

Not all participants are initially sure that the non-violent commitment of the PCFF is
congruent with their views, as some, at any rate, experienced impulses toward revenge soon
after the death of a relative. Others are not certain when they first attend a meeting that it is
peace they are fundamentally after, or that it is possible to make peace with the other side.
For example, Robi Damelin, an Israeli bereaved mother and long time PCFF staff member, is
featured in a PCFF video approaching a Palestinian woman who attends her first PCFF
gathering (Parents Circle-Families Forum, It Won't Stop Until We Talk). The woman looks
anxious and suspicious and soon expresses anger about the Israeli policies that cause her
people suffering. Robi looks into her eyes and gently tells her, “I see your pain. I know what
it is.” The camera cuts to another scene as the women embrace. Robi’s recognition and
acknowledgement of the woman's suffering allows the latter, at least temporarily, to suspend
her political stance, set her anger aside, and accept the empathy extended to her.
Empathy and Moral Inclusion

Palestinians have ample cause to hate Israeli soldiers, given the latter’s role and actions as safe-keepers of the Israeli occupation, akin to Israelis’ hatred for suicide bombers and for those Gazan organizations that regularly send rockets into the Israeli city of Sderot, targeting civilians. Yet in the course of an hour or two, we have seen what might be called “conversion” experiences taking place on the part of bereaved Palestinians. What do we learn from such poignant responses to the suffering of the enemy communicated through storytelling? Empathy is clearly at work here, insofar as seeing the suffering of the other opens up the possibility of identification with and compassion toward the other’s pain, a dynamic that has received a great deal of scholarly attention in what some call, referring to the present time, the “age of empathy” (de Wall, 2009; Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). This dynamic seems to be operative in this context in rather extraordinary circumstances in at least three ways. First, empathy is extended across enemy lines in the course of continuing conflict, in contrast to the more common post-conflict efforts at reconciliation following ethnic or nationalist discord. Second, empathy develops across a highly asymmetrical political reality, given the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Territories and its consequences for the Palestinian population. And third, empathy emerges between parties who have been traumatized through the loss of their children, parents, or siblings, suffering not due to illness, old age, or natural disaster, but perceived by each side to be the result of morally indefensible acts of violence.

Empathy is thus a critical emotional response operative in PDFF dialogue encounters, encouraging bonding across the divides. We may view the content of the exchanges—the sharing of dangerous memories—that take place within the auspices of the PCFF as the raw material for empathy to do its work, with empathy as the internal affective change allowing for a significant shift in perspective about the other, including elements of personal experience and collective realities.

Participants’ courage and willingness to engage in dialogue set the stage for the possibility of personal and social change. Finding commonality in suffering becomes a transformative moment in these encounters. As Pam Kleinot (2011) suggests, each side is able to withdraw its hatred by witnessing each other’s suffering, which mirrors one’s own (p. 106); she adds that “[a]cknowledging each other’s pain replaces blame” (p. 108). Perhaps this is the beginning, as well, of a shift away from righteous victimhood, a theme we will return to. When the Palestinian father asserts that he will no longer rejoice when an Israeli
soldier is killed, he is in fact engaged in a form of moral conversion of the sort Kleinot addresses. In addition, through shared storytelling about their experiences of loss and pain, he has found commonality and bonded with members of the other side, and in so doing he has expanded his circle of moral responsibility from a position of exclusion of Israelis to one of inclusion, initially of those of his acquaintance. Randa also reveals a commitment to greater moral inclusivity when she tells me that through her participation in the PCFF she feels strongly that “I can’t let one of my people hurt one of them,” referring to the Israeli friends and colleagues she has made through the PCFF: “They are now part of my reality.” A new kind of “we” (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008, p. 148) has emerged for Randa and for other members as their taken-for-granted assumptions have been contested via their exposure to their former enemies.

The broadening of moral responsibility we see here may well have a necessary antecedent, as Michalinos Zembylas (2006) suggests: “Witnessing is above all a practice of reconceiving the Other as a subject” (p. 316). For as is well known antagonism and conflict are triggered and sustained through the stereotyping and vilification of the perceived enemy. Before attitudes can change, the other must be perceived as a human being “just like us,” that is, with a distinct personality, a history, and a life. Face to face encounters that reveal the suffering of the parties involved decidedly facilitate this kind of recognition. Witnessing of this sort involves more than being a spectator to the other's experience; it involves learning to “see differently when one confronts others’ suffering,” resulting in the widening of one's memory “to include the Other's memory” (Zembylas & Bekerman 2008, p. 145). Such process has the capacity to develop trust in and solidarity with the other.

This shift in moral attitude takes place among Israelis as well as Palestinians, as demonstrated by Nir when, some years ago, he attended a parents’ meeting following his son’s participation in the PCFF’s summer camp for bereaved families, which served as Nir’s introduction to the organization. Largely unacquainted with Palestinians at the time—not unusual for many Israelis—Nir, a social worker by training, felt ashamed when he met bereaved Palestinian parents who were his professional counterparts—doctors, government officials, corporate managers—realizing they did not fit his image of the Palestinian peasant working on his field. Hence began his openness to meeting the other and expanding the range of his moral imagination; soon thereafter he attended a PCFF weekend retreat, which he found to be a “euphoric” experience, as he was able to tell of his mother’s death several
years earlier during a suicide bombing with the feeling that the other side was “containing my story,” that is, listening attentively, without judgment or angry retort.

**Empathic Listening**

Nir raises here the important role that listening must play if storytelling is to be a productive tool of reconciliation. This approach only works when the storyteller can count on an audience that listens with respect and an absence of contestation, at least in the short term. Empathic listening is taught to PCFF members so they can hear the other’s narrative, even if they disagree with the perspective of the speaker, a difficult but essential exercise if trust is to be developed. (See Furman, 2009-2010, for an analysis of compassionate listening in the service of reconciliation.) Yehudit, an Israeli bereaved mother, tells me of the time when a mixed group of PCFF members went to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum located in Jerusalem. Seeing photos of Nazis with dogs in one of the exhibits, a Palestinian bereaved mother declared, “This is exactly like Israeli soldiers with dogs in Nablus.” This association was difficult for Yehudit to hear, since for her the Israeli army uses dogs to find explosives and is, therefore, not comparable to the Nazis’ genocidal motivations. “But that’s the way she sees it; that was her impression.” So provisionally Yehudit let the woman’s interpretation stand as an expression of her experience. “It is important to listen to it from their point of view, and then it brings empathy.” For the sake of the other, Yehudit did not argue, as “one has to be open to recognizing the other’s right to have a different narrative.” This view is consistent with the practice of compassionate listening (Furman, 2009-2010). In the long run, Yehudit and others believe that “If you are part of the Forum, you have to be encouraged enough to tell yourself to say the way you see things, and to listen to the way they see things. I think otherwise you cannot be together.”

Unlike some groups committed to coexistence whose work focuses exclusively on finding commonality across the board (Maoz, 2011), the PCFF does not shy away from addressing disagreement, both at the leadership and membership levels. The organization is said to have become binational, in part, because the Palestinians “gave the Israelis an ultimatum in 2003, noting that either the organization became a joint organization and they started to share the work more evenhandedly or they would leave the organization” (Gawerc, 2012, p. 207). Since that time, the PCFF has had to address challenging issues calling for greater symmetry and equality within the organization, including the equitable distribution of staff, salaries, and authority for the Palestinian and Israeli administrators and their respective offices. In addition, there is a recognition that each side is fundamentally concerned about
different things—Palestinians with seeking justice and freedom from the occupation, Israelis with pursuing security—with the PCFF representing a sort of microcosm of the conflict as a whole (Gawerc, 2012). But, as Michelle Gawerc (2012) argues in regards to the PCFF and other Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding organizations, “These groups may have been reflections of the macrocosm, but unlike the macrocosm, they were still talking when others were not, trying to build trust, and trying to deal constructively with the discord” (p. 152). As a result, according to both Khaled and Nir, trust has been largely achieved within their organization.

At their organization-wide meetings, members characterize their exchanges in images suggesting lively and emotional debate. “Very clashing,” Nava tells me. Full of “loud arguments,” recounts Marwaan. More expansively, Lev says, “We see things from different angles…. We don’t agree immediately on things, and sometimes the shouting goes up, right up to the ceiling.” Yet he concludes by saying that “after a very heated discussion … we come out even more convinced that we need to work together to put an end to the bloodshed.” Nir informs me that in a large member seminar in 2006, members of both sides were told to “ask the difficult questions” of one another. Some people became alarmed, afraid that this approach would “ruin us.” But questions, sometimes provocative ones, were asked, such as, “How come you don’t reject the suicide bombers?” “How come you send your son to the army?” Early in the seminar, an argument arose as to whether or not “to continue in this vein or continue [exclusively] trying to find mutuality.” Members concluded that “the Parents Circle was strong enough to start fighting…. We believe we don’t just want to have hummus and hibukim [hugs],” shorthand for superficially good relations that avoid deeper disagreements. What this account suggests is that while the PCFF begins with the painful task of bonding individuals through their stories of personal and familial suffering, the method does not stop there. As Maoz (2011) opines, the story-telling model “combines interpersonal interaction with interaction through group identities, subsequently combining the formation of personal ties with discussion of the conflict and of power relations” (p. 120). There is a move that takes place, therefore, from exposure to the other to the challenging engagement with political realities affecting—typically differentially—those on each side of the divide.

Recognition

Much has been made in the scholarly literature of recent years of the significance of recognition as a moral value. Beyond the more generalized philosophical and existential
meanings that recognition may embed, there are important local meanings that deserve attention in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both populations, as is the case in other ethnic or nationalist conflicts, suffer from dehumanizing, denigrating characterizations by the other side. Palestinians feel that the condemnation leveled at suicide bombers is unjustly extended to them as a matter of course by the Israeli populace in general, shaped by the mainstream Israeli media and, especially in recent times, by right wing government officials. As a result, there is a palpable and urgent desire among the Palestinians I interviewed for the recognition of their humanity. Randa, a mother of five whose two brothers were killed by the Israeli Army, reveals this sentiment whenever she tells her story. Constructing an imaginary message to the soldier who killed her favorite brother, she says:

If I face you, I will never cut you to pieces, I will never be a monster like you. I will invite you to live with my family for two days, where you will find that we are human, that we deserve to live exactly as you do.... If you give me a chance to show you that I’m here, that I’m not an animal, that I’m not with horns, then I think I will succeed [in showing you my humanity.]

The Israelis that I talk with have been deeply informed by egalitarian commitments, even before joining the PCFF, but their sensitivity to Palestinian suffering has been significantly expanded through their joint dialogues and activities. Israelis, in my view, seek a parallel kind of recognition from their Palestinian counterparts in the PCFF. They wish to be reinstated as moral human beings, to be rehabilitated, if you will, from the Palestinian characterization of all Israelis modeled after soldiers assigned to the West Bank, whose actions are perceived as vicious and humiliating toward Palestinians. They too want to be seen as individuals worthy of respect, as those who disagree with the occupation and who affirm respect for human life and dignity, Israeli and Palestinian alike. So the dialogue functions as a context for the mutual recognition of both suffering and moral character for both sides of the divide, facilitating the understanding of one another as embodied persons, not simply as the grand abstraction that the other typically connotes (O’Connor, 1998, p. 211).

Equivalence of Suffering?

Openness to the other at PCFF gatherings is shaped for many members by perceptions of equivalence when it comes to their losses, despite the asymmetry of political locations between Israelis and Palestinians. A central shared value seems to be the sacredness of human life, which likely derives from humanistic, liberal values, but also from each of the
three Abrahamic religions represented in the conflict. Yehudit, an Israeli woman who lost her son in 1997, for example, explains the bonding among PCFF members as “being part of the same sorrow and the same grief and the same feeling.” Jamal, a Palestinian who lost his son to the conflict, argues, in turn, for the moral leveling of suffering when he tells his West Bank village that bereaved Israelis “are suffering, not from the checkpoints and not from the occupation; but they suffer from the terrorists, whose acts don’t differentiate between whites or blacks, Arabic or Jewish, American or Swedish.”

Not all study participants express this attitude, however. For example, Layla, a Palestinian woman whose brother died while in an Israeli prison, recalls a time when she addressed Israeli members of a PCFF’s women’s group, who of course are also bereaved:

“I admit that you are hurt. I admit that you are in pain. But your pain is not equal. It can never be equal to my pain. I want you to imagine that you are sleeping in my house [in a West Bank refugee camp], and to see how the [Israeli] army used to break our doors and come into our houses and take us all. Or to be at the checkpoints and to see what they do to us—the way they humiliate us, the way they call us names.”

Similarly, Hadassah, an Israeli Jew who lost her son while he served in the army, expresses great frustration about the “conventionality” of some Israeli PCFF members. Reporting on a joint meeting of the organization, she remembers how a Palestinian woman had told what happened when her son was killed, and about all the terrible things she had endured. “And one of the Israeli girls says, ‘I tried to understand you, but you are not trying to understand us,’ and I almost died when she said that.” Pointedly addressing the asymmetry of the conflict, reflected as well in the PCFF membership, Hadassah asks rhetorically, “What do they have to understand, with all the luxury, with all the democracy [available in Israel]? When your son dies here, you are recognized for your whole life as a bereaved family and financially supported.”

Transcending Victimization

Intractable ethnic and nationalist conflicts typically lead to feelings of victimization on both sides, sometimes manifested in competitive ways, as in claiming that “We are more victimized than you are.” In fact, Vamik Volkan (1985) uses the term “egoism of victimization” to characterize situations in which “there is no real empathy for suffering experienced by a group’s traditional enemies, although it may be as severe as that of the group itself—or even worse” (p. 222). In this particular Middle Eastern locale, both the
Holocaust and the Nakba (the “catastrophe” of 1948 for Palestinians) act as the historical antecedents for more recent losses, thereby justifying for each side claims of greater victim status, typically based on ignorance about the adversaries' pain. In the absence of communication across the divide, people often remain immobilized by their grief, by their anger, and by this self-definition as victims.

According to both Palestinian and Israeli members, encountering the other results in a shift of self-perception and relief from the experience of being victims. For example, during a public lecture, Saleh declares assertively, “I cannot live in the [refugee] camp and be a victim all the time,” hence rejecting that label. Nir captures this sentiment as well, and expands on it, when he tells me that during his first three-day seminar with the PCFF, “I could hear their [Palestinian] story without fighting about who is the greater victim.” He came to realize that “I don’t want to be a victim anymore. Although I am a ‘registered victim,’ I don’t want to act upon it as if I am a victim. I can define what I’m doing, not according to the situation, but according to what I want to achieve.” In short, participation in the PCFF moves members like Nir and Saleh from the experience of victimhood to one of empowerment and agency as they commit to a mutual cause, namely, working for peace.

Seeking Reconciliation: Turning Personal Pain into Social Ends

The Parents Circle-Families Forum believes that a process of reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis needs to be developed if peace is to be realized between the two peoples. This position is shared by other grassroots organizations whose approach fits under the category of “people to people” diplomacy; their view is that peace agreements are only pieces of paper unless supported by an infrastructure of trust by people on both sides of a conflict. Therefore, a key to the PCFF’s mission, according to the organization's website, is to “influence the public and the political decision makers to choose dialogue and the path of peace over violence and war in order to achieve a just settlement based on empathy and understanding” (Parents Circle-Families Forum, Our Mission Statement). Furthermore, members believe that if people who have lost so much can talk to the other side, so can everyone else. It is not surprising, therefore, that a favorite PCFF slogan is “We won't stop until we talk.”

Over the years since its original founding in Israel in 1995, the PCFF has engaged in a variety of activities designed to achieve this goal. Its chief public activity has consisted of presentations given by members in various venues, including schools, community groups,
and visiting foreign delegations. This section of the paper will be dedicated principally to a discussion of this activity, particularly as it is carried out in Israel.

Early on, the PCFF began conducting “lectures” in Israeli high school classes, with the permission of the schools’ principals. These are storytelling presentations of loss and bereavement collaboratively conducted by a Palestinian paired with an Israeli member: “Our most important ongoing work on the ground is conducting dialogue meetings in schools. They allow us to reach more than 25,000 students every year. We speak to 16- and 17-year-old Palestinians and Israeli students who, for the most part, have not met anyone from ‘the other side.’ Coming into a classroom of Jewish-Israeli students with a Palestinian partner who tells his or her personal story and journey to reconciliation opens their eyes to the humanity and narrative of the other side” (Damelin, 2011).

Fundamentally, the PCFF sees itself as educational in nature and the lectures, by extension, as having an educational purpose. As Tzvi puts it, it is critical “to convince Israelis of the basics that Palestinians and Israelis are not monsters.” So the method used in dialogues between Israeli and Palestinian PCFF members is extended to the classroom, where storytelling exposes the suffering of the bereaved individual and becomes a tool of humanization. For this process to be effective, it is critical, at least initially, to see the individual qua individual, that is, beyond usual stereotypes and perceptions defined strictly via national categories. As Nir puts it, the goal is to see the person as both an individual and a member of a group:

When I see this Palestinian in front of me and I talk with him, he is a Palestinian, but he is also a person.... Now you are standing in front of an individual, and now he is human. You find humanity.

Considering that each side has been socialized to perceive the other in a negative light, this strategy of humanization, if successful, is no small feat.

Reconciliation as a Moral Imperative

All PCFF members that I met identify reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians as the main goal for their involvement in the schools project, thereby taking a teleological moral position. For example, Jamal offers a beautiful set of metaphors to communicate the PCFF's work in the schools, which for him is key to changing deeply entrenched antagonism between the two peoples:

Our purpose is to open the minds of young people of the next generation. We build the columns, we prepare the lands for them, we plant small trees for
them. We start all of this from our tears after losing our relatives.... If we continue in this way, they will benefit from the food, and they will taste it.

I also noticed some Israeli members' unmistakable use of deontological, or duty-based, language to characterize their ongoing commitments, language that reveals their moral sensitivity to the injustice of the occupation and to the power differentials between the two sides. For example, as an Israeli, Gad feels responsible for the unjust actions of the Israeli government in the Occupied Territories. “I prefer being responsible than ashamed. I feel obligated” to do something, he claims, even if it does not change the situation. In addition, through the lectures in the schools, Gad believes he is setting right what his deceased father did wrong: As an architect working for the government, he designed settlements in the West Bank at a time when neither he nor the society as a whole thought about their long-term implications. Lev's involvement devolves from his desire to represent his dead son who at a young age “felt obligated, committed, responsible.” Several Israelis are impelled by their perceptions that the Israeli government's actions toward the Palestinians are “anti-Jewish.” In regards to the “siege” of Gaza, for example, Yoni says, “It is not human; it is not Jewish. We have an obligation as Jews” to be just. For Nava, the settlements are the central ethical issue in the conflict. “Jewish ethics,” she declares, teach us to “be good to others as you are to yourself. But the current government does not do it; they do the opposite, and that kills me.” Finally, Lev quotes the prophet Amos in his lectures when his Jewish “consciousness” is questioned by some Israeli students: “‘Let justice roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.’ That is my outlook. That is Judaism.’” Then, quoting Hillel’s famous dictum, he adds, “‘This is the Torah: What is hateful to you, don't do unto others. All the rest is commentary.’”

The ultimate goal for all of these PCFF members is to reach a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict so that others will be spared the grief they have known through the untimely death of their children, parents, and siblings. Individuals from both sides also tell me in anxious tones how important it is for them to protect their own children and grandchildren from future harm. By sharing the stories of their losses, they hope to use their pain for the sake of social transformation.

**Awakening the Public**

PCFF members are of course aware of the general ignorance and distrust that characterizes Israelis’ and Palestinians’ attitudes toward one another. Hadassah believes that “the Israeli public is completely numb . . . living with a closed mind.” The PCFF's job,
therefore, is to “awaken the public” to the Palestinians’ experience under the occupation. Khaled finds it most rewarding to see the impact of the lectures at Israeli schools, as “they give students a new picture of the Palestinian people.” Following these lectures, “we see students coming to us and hugging us and telling us that we’ve opened their minds, that we’ve opened their eyes, that we are bringing them hope. This is not the Palestinians that they know.” Nava’s view is that before the lectures, “Israeli students think that Palestinians have horns and tails, and I don’t know what else. From my point of view, it is very important that they see that the Palestinian speaker is a real man, not a terrorist, and that he wants peace, like me.” Students’ exposure to flesh and blood Palestinians and their suffering removes social blinders and expands their moral imagination, as Lev reports about some student responses: “They will say after a lecture, ‘We’ve never heard it put that way. We never thought that Palestinian families also weep for their children.’” So it is precisely the storytelling nature of these events—as opposed to presentations of facts and statistics—that enhances the possibility of transformation, for “it is in narrative description that we gain a sense of the moral impact” that the conflict has had on people, argues social ethicist June O’Connor (1998): “It is in the detail that our moral imaginations are stretched and our constructive moral thinking challenged” (p. 212). In other words, because the communication transmitted during these lectures involves principally emotional experience as opposed to didactic or intellectual information and interpretation, audiences are more likely to open up to the other. As anthropologist Marc Howard Ross (2007) suggests, “Reconciliation ... is about changing the relationship between parties in conflict both instrumentally and emotionally in a more positive direction so that each can more easily envision a joint future” (p. 84). Not infrequently, in response to the lectures, I am told, some students will write, “What can I do to help? I think that I have to become active.”

In presenting the central purpose of the PCFF’s work, Lev quotes the writer Amos Oz’s recommendation, “Try to take out stones from the wall of hatred between the two peoples,” and concludes, “and that’s what we are trying to do.” The paired nature of the school presentations undoubtedly functions to model for students empathy and the possibility of reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. Gad is well aware that most bereaved Israeli families are not part of the PCFF; instead, they tend to be nationalistic and right wing. Through lectures, he says, “I have to show another possibility ... an alternative reaction to the loss.” Presenters make no secret of their trust in and fondness for one another. When paired with Yoni, for example, Khaled tells classes that he has lost two brothers to the conflict, but
that in Yoni, “I have gained a brother” (Parents Circle-Families Forum, *It Won’t Stop Until We Talk*). Noor says that she often hosts visitors from abroad, but that she is not able to have Lev, who is her “neighbor,” visit her at home—given travel restrictions across the border—and that this pains her. Speaking in a lecture context, she says that it was only through PCFF dialogues that she came to understand that:

> There is a human side to Israelis, because what I knew about them before was through the soldiers only.... I didn't know that there is a very big human heart in those people. Now I have a lot of Israeli friends. I'm not talking because I want to make it like a movie. No. I'm talking from my heart. Really, I love them; they are my friends.

**Conquering Fear, Modeling Agency**

Not surprisingly, students’ fears regarding the “situation” surfaces during these events. Randa believes that understanding the other “conquers fear,” hence the urgent need for the PCFF’s reconciliation work:

> Fear is the true enemy. I will bring peace if I believe that my enemy is not a soldier, but that my enemy is his fear. How can I make an agreement with someone who feels afraid of me, or I feel afraid of him? Before anything, we should destroy this monster between us. [My enemy] should understand me, should know me, so that knowledge and understanding lead us to make this big difference.

Lev reports that Jewish students often express profound fear, challenging him in this way:

> “How can you contemplate sitting down with those people who send their kids to blow themselves up in shopping malls and bus stations? How can you think of sitting down with them? We’ve had our Holocaust. And we’re entitled to do everything not to repeat that experience. We are afraid. And we have to look after ourselves.”

A Holocaust survivor himself, Lev responds, “‘You are afraid? Not more than me—not so much for myself, but for my family and for my grandchildren. You speak of the Holocaust, but where will fear lead us? What will we do?’” Palestinian students also respond by listing their fears and grievances about the way they have to live under Israeli occupation, and Lev counsels them thusly:

> “Look, I know what it is to feel without being able to control your future. I’ve been a little refugee boy without the ability to know what to do, how to get on.”
I know what it is to feel like that. But I ask you, will another bomb or another stone bring you your homeland—your suffering homeland—any nearer? That’s not the way. We have to dry up that spot of despair, and think of another way.” And then they say, “OK, tell us. What’s the other way?” So I say, “I just want you to know that the way of thinking involves the idea of compromise.”

Both sets of students express a sense of powerlessness about what they can possibly do to change the situation. They ask Lev, “‘So what do you want from us?’ ‘We are youngsters. Even our parents have no real say in these things. These things are decided way up – presidents, prime ministers. There’s nothing we can really do.’” Lev responds to them by saying,

“No, no. Important things require a two-way movement. Obviously, there has to be movement from above, but there has to be movement from the grassroots. That’s how it was in South Africa, that’s how it was when the United States was involved in Vietnam. There has to be a grassroots movement.”

“And I tell them, ‘I believe that you have sense to know, to choose an aim, a worthy aim like peace, and you have the power to work for it, to get it. And you have to be active.’” He adds, “In a few years you’ll be starting your own families. So will you be prepared to lean back and wait for somebody to bring peace down for you? You have to be active. Talk to your friends, your family, your parents, your neighbors. You have to go out and be active.”

It is clear that in this account of a classroom encounter, Lev uses the pain of his own experience—as a bereaved father, as a Holocaust survivor—to empathize with the students’ fears, grievances, and sense of powerlessness. But he does not stop there. He also models for students a way to work for peace in the midst of the conflict by providing them with a kind of embodied way to make a difference—talking to people, addressing the conflict head on, being active in the pursuit of peace.

Like every other PCFF member I encounter, Lev rejects revenge as an appropriate course of action, as “revenge leads to revenge, a vicious cycle of blood that goes on and on. There must be something else.” Some members concede that they felt driven to revenge when their loved one was first killed but rejected this option on rational grounds, much as Lev does. Others may well have chosen to strive for reconciliation, instead, via a
“substitution of values,” to use Michael Jackson's term (2002, pp. 165-166), by giving up vengeance in exchange for the support, recognition of their suffering, empathy, and healing they have received as PCFF participants. Yet others were never inclined toward revenge. For example, Nava says that she and her husband joined the PCFF after their son's death precisely to stop the ongoing conflict, which is often fueled by acts of revenge and retribution. These attitudes against revenge are shared with student audiences on a routine basis.

**Storytelling and the Truth of Lived Experience**

Since the PCFF relies on storytelling as a major method of reconciliation, there are two questions that require some attention at this point. The first pertains to how the story is delivered so as to avoid communicating the moral superiority each group typically assumes about itself. A major strength of the PCFF's approach is its engagement in personal storytelling regarding each speaker's family experience rather than locating the experience of loss within a specific ideological interpretation. Suggesting that not all stories will do, Bar-On (2006) argued for the importance of the “good enough” story, which may well be “a story that members from both sides [can] emotionally identify with” (p. 138). It needs to be presented “in a way that both groups [can] contain, emotionally and cognitively, despite the continuing struggle between them” (p. 202).

The second question pertains to factual accuracy in storytelling. Are bereaved individuals' accounts of the loss of loved ones empirically accurate? Is their storytelling credible? It is generally known that memoir and other autobiographical expressions interpret historical events through specific and selective lenses, since memory is not reliable when it comes to the recollection of facts. Perhaps if one focuses on the question of the truth of lived experience as such, this question ceases to play a central role (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003, pp. 86-87). In listening to a PCFF member speak, what becomes evident to an audience is the authenticity of bereaved people's loss and grief. As an example: I talk to a Palestinian woman I call Fahima. She tells me that her son was shot by an Israeli soldier six years earlier while serving as a pallbearer at a funeral for a friend killed by the army. She immediately turns to her large purse, prodding and pushing its contents around, until she finally retrieves her iPhone and proceeds to look at the screen with great concentration. She passes the iPhone to me, pointing to a video image of a funeral procession, of a group of men carrying a coffin through a crowded street. The scene soon becomes turbulent; I first see some jostling, then, very quickly, jostling turning to chaos. The factual details of this event are hardly clear.
But the next scene reveals a young man on a hospital gurney, naked from the waist up, diaphragm moving rapidly up and down. That was her son as he lay dying, Fahima informs me. And that observation seems credible to me, especially given the continuing grief evident in her face, in her voice, in the way she labors to swallow at times, in the clenching of teeth, in the occasional avoidance of eye contact as her gaze moves to some indeterminate point on the horizon. Fahima is attesting to her son's death, and we, the listeners, become witnesses to her truth, which we experience emotionally, in our hearts, so to speak. And what she is sharing, of course—as so many PCFF's stories do—are dangerous memories, capable of communicating to an Israeli audience aspects of their army's behavior typically unavailable for public viewing.

When students or others witness Fahima’s and other PCFF members’ stories, the palpable, authentic suffering communicated by these storytellers may well evince empathy, encourage in listeners an openness to multiple narratives and moral inclusion, and create “new solidarities without forgetting past traumas” (Zembylas & Bekerman 2008, p. 128). Hence, for Jewish students, the collective trauma of the Holocaust is not erased by witnessing a Palestinian's pain; neither does the Nakba or the occupation disappear for the Palestinian audience of a Jewish bereaved storyteller. So it is not that “the unjust past and the suffering . . . are being forgotten” in this scenario. Rather, “it is the anger and the hatred that are being forgotten, so as to enable space for reconciliation” (p. 139). In some cases, “memory interrupts fixed historical narratives by acknowledging the powerfulness of human suffering. All human beings as subjects are located in suffering; thus, through the memories of suffering—that is, dangerous memories—the taken-for-granted narratives are interrupted” (p. 130). These interruptions may lead us to “remember events in the past [in ways that] question our consciences and assumed horizons” (p. 131). In drawing her listeners into her experience of loss and suffering, Fahima’s story intrudes into—interrupts—the way Israelis might usually interpret their identity and social location. Thus memories like hers propel “individual consciousness into a new process of narrativization. Re-claiming forgotten connections with others involves acts of compassion, self-criticality and resistance to the status quo” (p. 131).

Perhaps, then, the PCFF's program in the schools may be understood in part as a “pedagogy of dangerous memories” or of counter-narratives that function precisely to question the received historical narratives of each people, challenging listeners to deconstruct received assumptions and reconstruct more complex, multiple, and inclusive narratives. Such
pedagogy was also at work when a large group of PCFF families—70 from each side—participated in a visit to Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948 where some members were raised as children. Yehudit recounts how moving it was “to see them coming to the place, touching the ground, taking the soil and touching it,” her voice fading as she concludes, “And they could describe every place: here was the mosque, here was that....” Seeing the Palestinians’ emotional response, Yehudit felt she could hear and validate their story. For Lev this visit pressed him and his fellow Jews to “try and see and feel what our friends went through.” The experience was similar in important ways for Palestinians who accompanied Jewish members to Yad Vashem.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the PCFF’s reputation and credibility (the organization is the recipient of numerous international peace awards) among its various audiences is the cultural capital garnered by its members because they have suffered disproportionally for the sake of their respective peoples. Ironically, for individuals who now reject war and exclusivist nationalist strivings because they have lost so much and wish to spare others their unspeakable pain, they are honored by their countrymen because of the perceived sacrifice their dead relatives have made to each side’s cause. Hence, because bereaved families are beyond suspicion, PCFF members are situated in a particularly good location to influence public opinion, one lecture at a time.

Educational vs. Political Goals?

As mentioned earlier, the PCFF sees itself as an educational institution, and therefore as non-political in orientation. The non-political characterization may well be strategically based, grounded on a rather narrow definition of the meaning of politics. (See Furman, 2011, for a discussion of the strategic use of “non-political” by another Israeli peacebuilding organization.) I believe that the “educational” designation is seen as a more acceptable, less controversial term, and hence likely to draw more members, especially on the Israeli side. Also, the educational label allows access into Israeli high schools, now with the blessings of the Ministry of Education. When members tell me that the PCFF is non-political, they mean that it does not take public positions regarding the way in which the conflict should be resolved, nor are members involved as members in what is more typically considered political work, that is, publicly advocating a particular party or policy, or demonstrating for a particular cause. While the PCFF’s website supports this perspective, it also concedes that some political values are shared by its members:
Although the PCFF has no stated position on the political solution of the conflict, most of its members agree that the solution must be based on free negotiations between the leadership of both sides to ensure basic human rights, the establishment of two states for two peoples, and the signing of a peace treaty. (Parents Circle-Families Forum, Introduction)

My definition of political action is broader, as it includes any challenges to reigning power dynamics, which of course involve cultural as well as social and more traditional “political” relationships. From this point of view, as I have argued, a good deal of the PCFF’s work is decidedly political, as members are willing to expose themselves to “dangerous memories” in their dialogue with those from “the other side” and to engage in a pedagogy of dangerous memories with students and others in their presentations. In keeping with Zembylas and Bekerman’s (2008) argument, such exposure interrogates accepted master narratives, expands the boundaries of received identities, and leads to solidarity with the other.

In contrast to Israelis, Palestinian members engage in traditional political discourse as a matter of course when addressing Palestinian audiences in the West Bank. As Khaled explains to me, the approach is different from the one used in Israel, given the different situations involved, alluding to the power differential involved in the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Territories. As in Israel, lectures are given to young people, but in universities and youth clubs, not in high schools. Depending on the zone, security issues, and the general climate, sometimes Israeli members are able to join their Palestinians counterparts. Instead of telling stories of suffering and loss, as is typical in Israeli lectures, in the West Bank Palestinians must project a strong persona “in order to make the people trust you and be ready to listen to you.” Essentially that means providing bona fides regarding the speaker’s standing as a Palestinian:

I am only Khaled the Palestinian. I am Khaled who lost two brothers. I am Khaled who spent one and a half years in jail. I am Khaled whose son has been injured by the Israelis. I am Khaled whose son is in an Israeli prison until now. I am Khaled whose brother was shot down by a soldier. I am Khaled whose brother spent seven years in an Israeli prison, and his other brother also seven years, and his mother six and a half years.

These realities situate Khaled squarely in the Palestinian narrative as a point of departure and furnish him with the legitimacy needed to “open doors,” to convince his audience that the
PCFF is a trustworthy organization. Judging by the success of Palestinian families' joining the PCFF—300 to date—this strategy has worked.

A number of Israeli members would like to see the organization engage in more conventional political work, such as public action and resistance, including demonstrations, joining with other organizations in protecting Palestinian land from Israeli expansionism, shielding Palestinians from settler violence, and assisting Palestinian farmers harvest their olive trees. The differing social locations of Israelis and Palestinians give rise, at times, to tensions about how to proceed in light of the PCFF's non-political self-definition. A case in point is the time of the Gaza War of winter, 2008-2009, when Palestinians members’ impulse was to withdraw from the organization as a way of registering their response to the power asymmetry between the two sides, manifested particularly by the massive use of force used by the Israeli army in Gaza, sometimes against civilian targets. It was hard for people to meet during that time, both because of different views on the war and because it was difficult to find a location where Palestinians and Israelis could safely gather; they finally settled on a gasoline station where both sides could get to, on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, near the Dead Sea.

During that war, some Israeli members participated in a protest watch in Be'er Sheva against the war on behalf of the children of both sides. More recently, another gesture of public solidarity with Palestinians and resistance to Israeli government actions was made by the PCFF by honoring a member who took part with Israelis and Palestinians in boarding a boat headed for Gaza in opposition to the Israeli blockade. A couple of Israeli interview participants take exception to the political nature of such actions in the name of the PCFF, arguing that this kind of activity violates the agreed upon non-political status of the organization. These members, unsurprisingly, also feel that the PCFF sometimes bends over backwards to address Palestinians’ identity needs, while neglecting the Israelis’. One of these members believes, for example, that “at the Forum, there seems to be a general black and white perspective, where the Israelis are ‘black’ and the Palestinians are ‘white.’” As a facilitator in a women's group following the Gaza War, she made sure to give the Israeli women the opportunity “to express what they feel, so the Palestinians would see also the other side. It is much more obvious for the Israelis to see the other side than the other way around.” Another member tells me that were the PCFF to become more politically active, she would participate less but still remain a member. These views suggest that the PCFF
enjoys a strong commitment from its members, even when they have substantial disagreements with the organization.

Reconciliation, Not Forgiveness

On one thing there seems to be widespread agreement, however, and that is the role of forgiveness in the reconciliation process between Palestinians and Israelis. No doubt because of the powerfully influential model offered by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), reconciliation and forgiveness are often joined at the hip in conflict resolution discourses. As is well known, the TRC was headed by Desmond Tutu, the charismatic Anglican archbishop whose vision of reconciliation was, naturally enough, deeply shaped by his Christian understanding of forgiveness as a major key in the healing of conflict. Any number of PCFF members told me that forgiveness is not necessary for reconciliation, that they are not willing to forgive, or that they had no right to forgive, as they themselves had not been the direct targets of violent action, a position consistent, certainly, with a Jewish perspective on forgiveness, though this view was not limited to the Jews I interviewed.

An interesting dynamic arose following a PCFF presentation to a visiting group of American Evangelical Lutherans that illustrates this point of view. The visitors’ leader self-assuredly declared that people of faith take forgiveness very seriously, at which point Yoni, the Israeli speaker, interjected that the PCFF is not a religious organization, and that it is not interested in questions of forgiveness. “One cannot forgive the killing of innocent people,” Yoni asserted, “but one can try to understand what happened: the origin of the violence.” Saleh, the Palestinian presenter, agreed with Yoni, saying, “I don't have the right to forgive the killing of my father.” He concluded by extending to the group a request frequently heard from PCFF members: “Don't be pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian. Try to bring rights, justice, and peace to us all.” Likewise, Nir supports that point of view when he declares that the PCFF’s approach is to be “pro-dialogue, pro-reconciliation, pro-solution,” so he routinely asks his Jewish audiences, “Please don’t be pro-Israeli.” To me, all of this points to the importance of understanding the local context and its concomitant meanings and assumptions when interpreting approaches to reconciliation and peacebuilding, a view widely supported by scholars of conflict transformation (Lederach, 1999).

Conclusion

I was first introduced to the Parents Circle-Families Forum through the film Encounter Point (Avni, Bacha, Rous, & Rukab, 2006). I was immensely impressed by the
courageous and generous work of this organization, for it demands that its members deploy their most personal, wounded experience of loss and grief in the interest of peace and reconciliation. This kind of work remains largely hidden from public view because the contemporary media across the globe typically choose to focus on stories of conflict and destruction, of hatred and vindictiveness, and not on accounts that provide us with models of the best that human beings are capable of. Exposure to members of the PCFF is thus an ennobling and inspiring experience. I am most grateful to have had the opportunity to speak face to face with its members and co-directors, to have been gifted with their time and personal stories of suffering and hope.

In this paper, we have seen that the PCFF is invested in the development of trust, empathy, and bonding between Palestinians and Israelis, even in the midst of the continuing conflict, lest more people on each side continue to suffer the immeasurable loss of loved ones, as they have. While I have focused here principally on PCFF’s peacebuilding work in the schools, it is important to note that in more recent times the organization has also designed successful projects intended to connect Israelis and Palestinians in a variety of ways in order to facilitate their contact, communication, and mutual understanding. For example, “A Crack in the Wall” is a virtual project using social media whose goal is to break the wall separating the two peoples, encourage sharing and understanding across the divide, and contest the status quo. In “History through the Human Eye,” the PCFF has brought together hundreds of people to share personal and national narratives of Israeli and Palestinian university students, young political leaders, grandmothers, and other groups. Perhaps some of these initiatives will address a continuing challenge for the PCFF, namely, how to grow the organization by appealing to a broader swath of the bereaved population on both sides. The most ambitious project to date consists in the recent development of a reconciliation center, which now includes the above mentioned narrative project, a resource center, and activities intended to engage politicians in processes of reconciliation leading to peace (Parents Circle-Families Forum, Reconciliation Center).

The last initiative is a recognition that the PCFF’s efforts—and those of other grassroots organizations in the region—on behalf of reconciliation and peacebuilding, as successful as they are, are not sufficient to end the conflict, as a major partner is missing, namely, each side’s policy makers; these, after all, are the social agents with the power to put in place major structural processes aimed at conflict transformation (Lederach, 2003). The late Israeli psychologist and peace educator, Dan Bar-On (2006), argued that it is very
difficult for a society to adopt psychosocial perspectives—such as those that PCFF members
develop through their dialogues and lectures—in the absence of “parallel, top-down political
change into which [their] activities and understanding can fit.... An important component of
a successful peace process,” he believed, “is positive mutual acknowledgement and
synchronization of top-down agreements and bottom-up peace-building activities” (pp. 206,
219).

What is needed now is political will on both sides, so that one day newspapers
throughout the world will surprise their morning readers with photos of Israeli and
Palestinian leaders smiling broadly as they shake hands, marking, finally, the beginnings of
sustainable peace and reconciliation between their two peoples.

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A Sequence Analysis of International Peace Operations: Japan’s Contributions to Human Security of East Timor
Daisuke Akimoto

Abstract
Japan’s commitments to the UN-authorized peace operations in East Timor were the largest contribution the country has made in the history of its international peace operations. Notably, Japan’s participation in the peacebuilding operations in East Timor was based on “human security” as one of the pillars of its diplomatic policy. Moreover, Japan’s participation in the peace operations in East Timor was a touchstone issue for its human security policy. Yet, one simple but important question arises. How consistent were Japan’s commitments to the peace operations? In an attempt to answer to this question, this paper systematically examines Japan’s contributions to the international peace operations for East Timor. In order to investigate long-term and complicated activities in the peace operations, this paper employs timeline “sequence analysis” as a research method which combines and simplifies analytical models suggested in earlier scholarship. Through the application of sequence analysis, this paper investigates four stages of Japan’s contributions to the peace operations in East Timor: 1) preventive deployment (UNAMET), 2) peace-enforcement (INTERFET), 3) peacekeeping (UNTAET), and 4) peacebuilding (e.g. UNMISET). The findings of this research reveal to what extent Japan’s commitments to the peace operations were consistent and for human security of East Timor.

Introduction
During the Cold War period, Japan was unable to participate in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) because of its post-war anti-militarist pacifism, based on its Peace Constitution. However, the Japanese government enacted the International Peace Cooperation Law (PKO Law) in order to dispatch the Self Defense Forces (SDF) to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992. Japan’s participation in UNTAC was a turning-point for Japan’s peacekeeping operations (PKO) policy. In order to participate in UNPKOs, Japan’s pacifism shifted from one-nation pacifism constrained by Article 9 of its Constitution to international pacifism based on the Preamble of the Constitution (Akimoto, 2012; Ishizuka, 2005). During the 1990s, Japanese peacekeepers were dispatched to the following UN peacekeeping operations and other humanitarian operations:

In this context, the Japanese government attempted to make a greater contribution to UN-authorized peace operations in East Timor based on the concept of “human security” as one of the pillars of its foreign policy (Nasukawa, 2010), which “emerged as a tool for coordinating various activities of international aid and peace operations” (Shinoda, 2004, p. 1). Notably, as Gen Kikkawa (2007, p. 248) observed, Japan’s participation in the peace operations in East Timor was “the first test case of Japan’s human security policy”.

Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that military and constitutional limitations of Japan’s peace operations are obvious because “Japan avoids genuine risks for peace by not dispatching adequate manpower” (Lam, 2012, p. 193). Here, one simple but significant research question immediately arises. To what extent were Japan’s peace operations in East Timor consistent despite its military and constitutional constraints?

The purpose of this paper is to answer to this research question by systematically examining Japan’s contributions to the international peace operations in East Timor. To this end, this study employs timeline “sequence analysis” as a research method, which combines and simplifies analytical models suggested in earlier scholarship. Through the application of sequence analysis, this paper investigates four stages of Japan’s commitments to the peace operations in East Timor: 1) preventive deployment (UNAMET), 2) peace-enforcement (INTERFET), 3) peacekeeping (UNTAET), and 4) peacebuilding (e.g. UNMISET). Finally, examined research data will be provided after the analysis of the four periods in order to visualise and evaluate the sequence of Japan’s peace operations for human security of East Timor.

Methodology

UN-authorized peace operations in East Timor were comprehensive, and can be divided into four major stages, as observed by Juichi Inada (2004, p. 229). This research utilizes this classification to conduct “sequence analysis” of the four periods. First, the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), led by Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Ian Martin, was established on 11 June 1999 in order to observe the national referendum. Second, the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), under the command of Major General Peter Cosgrove, was initiated on 15 September 1999 as a peace-enforcement operation authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Third, as a peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East
Timor (UNTAET) led by SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello was set up on 25 October 1999. Fourth, as a post-independence peacebuilding operation, the United Nations Mission of Support to East Timor (UNMISET), under the leadership of Japanese SRSG Sukehiko Hasegawa, was organized on 20 May 2002.

Simply put, the peace operations in East Timor consists of four phases as follows: 1) preventive diplomacy (UNAMET as a preventive deployment), 2) peacemaking (INTERFET as peace-enforcement), 3) peacekeeping (UNTAET), and 4) post-conflict peacebuilding (UNMISET), as advocated by former United Nations Secretary General Boutros B. Ghali (1992) in his essay, *An Agenda For Peace*.

Strictly speaking, however, Ghali (1992) proposed “preventive diplomacy” as a peaceful action before conflict arises. Still, UNAMET can be categorized as preventive diplomacy in that it was a “preventive deployment”, aiming to prevent conflict from spreading during the ballot. INTERFET was not a UN force or UN-led peace enforcement unit, but rather a multinational force authorized by a UN resolution. Nonetheless, it can be categorized as UN-authorized “peace-enforcement” part of the “peacemaking” process. UNTAET was established based on Chapter 7 of the Charter of the United Nations, but in reality, this peace operation was a UNTAC-type “peacekeeping” operation. UNMISET and the peace operations which followed can be categorized as post-conflict “peacebuilding”.

During the four periods, Japan made substantial contributions to the peace operations in East Timor by dispatching civilian police to UNAMET in 1999, donating US$100 million to INTERFET, sending civilian electoral monitors to UNTAET in 2001, and deploying peacekeepers to UNTAET and UNMISET in 2002 (Cabinet Office Japan 2002-2004).

Needless to say, previous research has developed and employed sophisticated timeline conflict analysis methods, such as “conflict escalation and de-escalation” to clarify nine stages of conflict (Glasl, 1982), “progression of conflict” (Lederach, 1995), “conflict life-cycles” to analyse the birth/genesis, maturation/dynamics, death/solution of conflict (Galtung, 1996), the “life history of conflict” illustrated as a bell shaped curve (Lund, 1996), and the “hourglass model” to investigate conflict containment, conflict settlement, and conflict transformation (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2005). In the examination of international peace operations, some researchers have focused on peacekeeping operations and other analysts have emphasized the significance of peacebuilding activities (Paris & Sisk, 2009; Francis, 2010). The earlier works provided applicable conflict analysis models and in-depth investigations, but they are methodologically different from analyst to analyst.
In contrast, this study integrates the analytical frameworks employed by the earlier studies and simplifies them as a “sequence analysis method”. Normally, the term “sequence analysis” is employed in the field of natural science, especially in genetics for the analysis of a DNA sequence (Margulies & Birney, 2008). However, a timeline-based sequence analysis can be applicable to political science (Fenno, 1986; Pierson, 2004), social science (Abbott, 1995), economics (Kanai, 2002), conflict analysis (Gottman, Markman, & Notarius, 1977), and peacekeeping operations (Akimoto, 2012). The previous works in various academic fields employed the sequential analysis in different ways, but they indicate that it is possible to introduce the sequence analysis method into the field of peace and conflict studies. The sequence analysis method in this paper examines the “four stages” of peace operations (1. preventive deployment, 2. peace-enforcement, 3. peacekeeping, and 4. peacebuilding), followed by analysed and visualised research data. The simple sequence of peace operations in East Timor can be shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sequence of Four Stages of Peace Operations in East Timor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Stage of Peace Operations</th>
<th>Name of Peace Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>1. Preventive diplomacy</td>
<td>UNAMET set up (preventive deployment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>1. Preventive diplomacy</td>
<td>Ballot conducted (cause of violent conflict)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>2. Peacemaking</td>
<td>INTERFET operated (peace-enforcement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>3. Peacekeeping</td>
<td>UNTAET established (pre-independence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>4. Peacebuilding</td>
<td>UNMISET, etc. (post-independence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For a detailed sequence analysis of the peace operations, see Table 2.

In order to apply the sequence analysis method, this paper investigates the data from the Cabinet Office Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), and the United Nations as primary sources. The in-depth sequence analysis of the primary sources will assist in filling a gap in the earlier research regarding Japan’s contributions to international peace missions in East Timor (e.g. Gorjao, 2002; Inada, Yoshida, & Isezaki, 2003; Inada, 2004; Walton, 2004; Kikkawa, 2007; Llewelyn, Walton, & Kikkawa, 2009; Lam, 2012) and answering to the core research question: to what extent Japan’s peace operations were consistent and comprehensive for human security of East Timor.

Findings

Stage 1: Preventive Deployment: Japan’s Contribution to UNAMET

As an analysis of the first stage of the peace operations, Japan’s contribution to “preventive diplomacy” for East Timor, will be overviewed in this section. From the
perspective of a sequence analysis of international peace operations, UNAMET can be
categorized as a “preventive deployment” for independence. Normally, preventive diplomacy
is considered the prevention of conflict, and conflict already existed between East Timor and
Indonesia. Still, UNAMET was a UN peace operation to prevent violence during the
referendum period. In spite of the operation’s peaceful nature, Japan did not dispatch the SDF
and reluctantly sent three civilian police officers. On 5 May 1999, Indonesia and Portugal
signed an agreement to resolve conflict over East Timor. An agreement was also reached on a
“direct, secret, and universal ballot” to determine the future of East Timor and to set up an
appropriate United Nations mission to oversee the process. On 11 June 1999, the UNSC
adopted Resolution 1246 to establish UNAMET (United Nations, 2001a).

In response to requests from the United Nations, the Japanese government decided to
dispatch a political affairs officer and three civilian police officers from July 1999. In
addition, Japan contributed US$10.11 million to the UN Trust Fund, and provided 2,000
radios (MOFA, 1999a). As for the significance of Japan’s material contribution to UNAMET,
Ian Martin noted that “Asia’s economic collapse was UNAMET’s good fortune: stocks of
vehicles were available to be flown to East Timor from Tokyo” (Martin, 2001, p. 39). Due to
the death of police officer Haruyuki Takada during the UNTAC operation in Cambodia, a
cautious debate took place in Tokyo when three civilian police officers were dispatched to
East Timor (National Diet Library, 1999). In spite of the small number of participants, Japan
was recognized as a “major contributor to the voluntary funding of UNAMET” (Martin &

Ironically, the ballot in East Timor turned out to be a cause of conflict despite the
peace operation as a preventive measure. According to UNAMET, as many as 446,666 East
Timorese people registered for the ballot. The direct ballot in East Timor was carried out on
30 August 1999 and 98.6% of registered voters participated in the process. The result of the
vote was that 78.5% of voters rejected the proposed plan for special autonomy and 21.5%
voted in favour of being governed by the special authority of the Indonesian government
(United Nations, 2001b, 2001c; Martin, 2001, pp. 60, 90, 94). Immediately after the result of
the ballot was announced, however, anti-independence (pro-integration) groups burned down
houses and killed people. UNAMET spokesman David Wimhurst pointed out that UNAMET
was “defenceless” because “UNAMET had always been an unarmed mission and that
security had always been the province of the Indonesian authorities” (United Nations, 1999b).
By 5 September, as many as 150,000 people, one-quarter of the entire population, had become refugees due to the violence and destruction. At this stage, 1,200 members of the Australian Defense Forces began implementing military drills near Darwin in anticipation of the UNSC adopting a resolution to authorize the armed intervention of multinational forces (Ishizuka, 2008, pp. 121-122). Gross human rights violations, including the indiscriminate killing of women and children, were conducted across East Timor in September. In addition, as many as 70% of the buildings (90% in Dili) were destroyed and approximately 270,000 people, one-third of the entire population, became refugees (Takahashi, Masuoka, & Monju, 2000, pp. 7-10, 13-20). UNAMET was able to hold the ballot but it could not prevent “crimes against humanity”, and major cities in East Timor became “killing fields” (Dunn, 2001).

These mass killings and “human insecurity” (Umegaki, Thiesmeyer, & Watanbe, 2009) in East Timor were beyond the mandate of UNAMET and necessitated military intervention by INTERFET.

Stage 2: Peace-enforcement: Japan’s Financial Contribution to INTERFET

In the second stage of the peace operation (peacemaking/peace-enforcement), it is clarified that Japan made a financial contribution to INTERFET as a peace-enforcement operation in East Timor. On 15 September, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1264, recognising the security situation in East Timor as a threat to peace and security. The resolution authorized the establishment of a multinational force (United Nations, 1999a). INTERFET was established to “restore peace and security in East Timor, protect and support UNAMET in carrying out its task (and within force capabilities) and to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations” (Cobb, 1999). It is noteworthy that Resolution 1264 legitimatized the use of force, stipulating “all necessary measures to fulfil [its] mandate” (Ibid).

The approximate number of the “coalitions of the willing” soldiers was 13,000, comprising troops from Brazil, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, the United States, and Australia (Dee, 2001, p. 1). The mission of INTERFET troops was to crack down on and disarm the East Timorese militia, which had been created by the Indonesian army (Isezaki, 2004, pp. 64-65). In this sense, the INTERFET mission was more difficult to carry out than other UN peace operations.

Predictably, Sadaaki Numata, the MOFA Press Secretary, was vague on the issue of dispatching the SDF to INTERFET, stating that “I think it is a bit premature for me to go further into the details of what sort of possible participation there might be in the United
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Nations Peacekeeping Forces” (MOFA, 1999b). It is plausible that Numata avoided mentioning a SDF dispatch to INTERFET because of Japan’s constitutional restraints. The dispatch of the SDF to multinational military operations was technically impossible, and therefore, the Japanese government decided to support the launch of INTERFET by financially providing a fund of US$100 million. Notably, the entire contribution to the INTERFET Trust Fund was US$107 million (Dee, 2001, p. 10; McDermott, 1999).

In response to the worsening security situation in East Timor, the Japanese government decided to contribute an additional US$2 million as an emergency assistance fund. One million dollars was donated to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and another million was contributed to the World Food Programme (WFP) (MOFA, 1999c). This immediate response from Japan indicates that the Japanese government believed that it was constitutionally impossible to dispatch the SDF to join a multinational force. At a press conference, the MOFA Press Secretary rejected the possibility of a dispatch of the SDF to INTERFET on the grounds of a lack of legal framework (MOFA, 1999d).

To make contributions to UN peace operations in East Timor, the Japanese government started to reconsider its conventional PKO policy. These decisions by the Japanese government regarding a non-military contribution to the security crisis of post-ballot East Timor were made based on the PKO Law. While making decisions on humanitarian aid, the Japanese government attempted to lift the freeze on peacekeeping forces (PKF) operations. In this context, the LDP, the Liberal Party, and Komeito signed the “Three-Party Accord” on 4 October 1999 (Shoji, 2005). On 14 October, the Japanese government announced plans to dispatch a field study mission, made up of officials from the Secretariat of the International Peace Cooperation Headquarters, the Prime Minister’s Office, MOFA, and the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) to East Timor. The Japanese government hoped to contribute towards the transportation of UNHCR goods by plane through 150 staff of the Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) (MOFA, 1999e). Based on the PKO Law, the government contributed assistance goods, such as 500 tents, 9,000 blankets, 11,140 sleeping mats, 20,000 water containers, and 5,120 plastic sheets for the displaced East Timorese (MOFA, 1999f). In response to a request from UNHCR, the Japanese government also decided to dispatch four aircraft (C-130H) as transport planes for the ASDF and a multipurpose assistance plane (U-4) with six liaison officers between Surabaya (Java Island) and Kupang (West Timor) (MOFA, 1999g). In addition to the material assistance, the Japanese
government contributed US$100 million to the UN Trust Fund, and the government, moreover, explored options to dispatch the SDF to East Timor in post-INTERFET operations.

**Stage 3: Peacekeeping: Japan’s Incremental Contribution to UNTAET**

In the third stage of the peace operation (peacekeeping), Japan’s contribution became gradually active, and finally, Japanese peacekeepers were dispatched to UNTAET. The mandate of the UNTAET operation was based on Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which includes “peace-enforcement”. Yet, the UNTAET operation can be categorized as an UNTAC-type peacekeeping operation. Although the nature of UNTAET was peacekeeping rather than coercive action, Japan could not at first deploy the SDF to UNTAET due to constitutional constraints. Instead, Japan dispatched the SDF to Indonesia and West Timor to support UNHCR for the relief of East Timorese IDP during this period. On 20 October 1999, the Indonesian government decided to withdraw from East Timor and the UNSC set up UNTAET based on Resolution 1272, which was adopted on 25 October 1999 (United Nations, 1999c, 2001d).

The word “Timorization” became a slogan to empower East Timor and the nation-building process, and was also part of a process of “democratization” (Isezaki, 2004, p. 46). UNTAET was composed of three pillars: the military, Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Rehabilitation (HAER), and Governance and Public Administration. HAER was conducted under the leadership of Akira Takahashi, who later became Special Adviser on Development and Humanitarian Affairs to the SRSG. HAER was “instrumental in coordinating a range of relief and humanitarian organizations and working with the East Timorese to determine relief assistance priorities” (Smith & Dee, 2003, pp. 62-63). Unlike PKF activities, humanitarian assistance is an area to which Japanese peacekeepers could make a substantial contribution. Takahashi’s leadership in HAER assisted Japan’s contribution in the field of humanitarian aid.

On 26 October 1999, MOFA Press Secretary Numata announced that Japan was willing to make a contribution to UNTAET in response to the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1272, although he did not mention the possibility of the dispatch of the SDF to UNTAET (MOFA, 1999h). Akira Takahashi, Special Advisor to the President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), was appointed by the UN Secretary General as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Rehabilitation of UNTAET (MOFA, 1999i). Takeshi Kamiyama, a MOFA official, was appointed as a senior civil affairs officer to take charge of the Environmental Protection Unit.
of the Governance and Public Administration Component of UNTAET (MOFA, 2000). These appointments of Japanese officials to pivotal positions in UNTAET reflected MOFA’s diplomatic efforts to make a contribution to peace operations in East Timor.

On 19 November 1999, in response to a request from UNHCR, the Japanese government decided to dispatch 113 ASDF members to Indonesia and West Timor (Kupang) to transport aid materials. The ASDF left from the Komaki base and transported 400 tons of material, and UNHCR appreciated Japan’s participation, which made it possible to provide aid for 120,000 East Timorese refugees (JDA, 2000, pp. 175-176). Yoshio Mochizuki, a Parliamentary Secretary for MOFA, visited East Timor on 11 April 2001 to meet the leaders of East Timor, including President Xanana Gusmao and Vice-President Jose Ramos-Horta. In these meetings, Mochizuki emphasized Japan’s contribution in the three fields of agriculture, human resources development, and infrastructure (MOFA, 2001a). The dispatch of ASDF personnel to Indonesia and West Timor and Mochizuki’s visit to East Timor show the non-military and indirect nature of Japan’s contribution to the UNTAET operation.

In response to a request from the United Nations, the Japanese government dispatched 19 civilian election observers to the Constituent Assembly of East Timor based on the PKO Law (MOFA, 2001b). With regard to the election, the Japanese government decided to make an extra emergency contribution of US$1,191,000 through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (MOFA, 2001c). On 30 August 2001, Constituent Assembly Elections were held with a voter turnout rate of 91.3%. 88 Assembly members were elected as part of a peaceful democratic process (MOFA, 2001d).

Significantly, the Koizumi government revised the 1992 PKO Law on 14 December 2001 to make SDF’s participation in PKF possible (Cabinet Office Japan, 2001). In February 2002, in response to strong requests and expectations from the United Nations and the leaders of East Timor, the Japanese government decided to dispatch 680 Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF) personnel in engineer units and 10 PKF headquarters personnel to peace operations conducted by UNTAET (MOFA, 2001e, 2002a; Cabinet Office Japan, 2002-2004). In response to a further request from the United Nations, the Japanese government decided to dispatch eight electoral observers to the Presidential Election to be held on 14 April 2002 in East Timor (MOFA, 2002b). In the same month (29 April), Prime Minister Jun’ichirō Koizumi visited East Timor to inspect an SDF engineer unit serving in UNTAET (MOFA, 2002c). For Japan, participation in UNTAET, the Constituent Assembly Elections, and the Presidential Election without casualties was a symbol of success. If SDF personnel had been
killed, the Japanese government would have had to consider the withdrawal of the SDF. Moreover, the UNTAET operation itself was generally successful (Ishizuka, 2008, pp. 132-133).

**Stage 4: Peacebuilding: Japan’s Contribution to Post-independence Operations**

In the fourth stage of the peace operation (peacebuilding), Japan, on the basis of its “human security” policy, maximized its contribution to the peace operation in East Timor. UNMISET, under the leadership of SRSG Sukehiko Hasegawa from Japan, can be categorized as a post-conflict peacebuilding operation. Based on new diplomatic concepts such as “human security” and the “consolidation of peace”, the Japanese government dispatched a total of 2,300 SDF personnel to East Timor. In addition to UNMISET, Japan made a contribution to the subsequent UN peacebuilding operations in East Timor. East Timor gained independence from Indonesia on 20 May 2002 and UNTAET was replaced by UNMISET based on UNSC Resolution 1410 (United Nations, 2005a). The deployment of up to 5,000 military personnel, including 120 military observers, and 1,250 civilian police officers, was authorized based on the UNSC resolution (United Nations, 2005b).

The independence of East Timor allowed Japanese peacekeepers to play a greater role. The Koizumi government decided at a Cabinet meeting to reassign a Japan GSDF Engineer Unit of 680 members (including seven female personnel) and PKF headquarters personnel, all of whom had been dispatched to UNTAET, for the post-independence nation-building operations of UNMISET (MOFA, 2002d). The JDA organised 295 vehicles for the GSDF, two fleets for transportation and escort for the Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF), and seven C-130H transportation aircrafts and a U-4 multifunctional support aircraft for the ASDF. The SDF was stationed in main cities, such as Dili, Maliana, Suai, and Oecusse (Pante Macassar), to construct roads and bridges and to offer support with water and food supplies in collaboration with the Korean forces (JDA, 2002, pp. 214-218; JDA, 2003a, p. 215; JDA, 2003b, p.12).

Japan’s commitment to peacebuilding operations in East Timor gradually decreased as the UNMISET mission was carried out. The changeover of Japanese peacekeepers was conducted in the presence of Toshio Kojima, Parliamentary Secretary for the JDA, on 13 March 2002. Responding to a request from the United Nations, the SDF Engineer Unit was reduced from 680 personnel to 522 (MOFA, 2003a). On June 14 2002 in New York, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announced the appointment of Sukehiro Hasegawa as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and Deputy Head of Mission (MOFA,
The United Nations decided to extend the mandate of UNMISET in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1480 until 20 May 2004, and the Japanese government also prolonged the term of the GSDF engineer group and headquarters personnel operating in East Timor (MOFA, 2003b). In line with the gradual conclusion of UNMISET, the number of SDF troops was reduced from 522 to 405. Prime Minister Koizumi, in talks with East Timorese President Gusmao in Tokyo on 23 February 2004, promised to make a further contribution of approximately one million US dollars to East Timor (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2004a).

After the mandate of UNMISET expired on 20 May 2004, the Koizumi government decided on the full withdrawal of the fourth SDF personnel. Even so, the mandate of UNMISET was extended from 20 May 2004 for a maximum of one year (MOFA, 2004a). The total number of SDF personnel dispatched to UNMISET amounted to approximately 2,300 SDF troops, including 25 female personnel. The nation-building activities of the SDF consisted of 120 projects that included the maintenance and repair of roads, bridges and infrastructure, levelling land of the fields for elementary schools, and the construction of waste disposal facilities (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet 2004b). Through the Trust Fund for human security, the Japanese government decided to support the “100 Schools Project: Improving the Quality of Primary Education in East Timor” conducted by the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (MOFA, 2004b).

Following the expiration of the mandate of UNMISET on 20 May 2005, the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), a UN special political mission, was established with a one-year mandate. In April 2006, ex-national army troops dropped out of the army as a result of discrimination and the demonstrations. The East Timorese government intervened with the national army, and approximately 100,000 people became IDPs, around 60% of the entire population of Dili. In response, the Japanese government decided to provide emergency contribution of US$5 million for an emergency shelter, water, and health care (MOFA, 2006a, 2006b).

After the UNOTIL operation expired, UNSC Resolution 1704 authorized the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). Responding to a request from the United Nations, two Japanese civilian police officers were dispatched to UNMIT (Cabinet Office Japan, 2007). For presidential and parliamentary elections in East Timor, the Japanese government provided an emergency grant aid of US$723,855 though the UNDP and dispatched 14 electoral observers (MOFA, 2007a, 2007b,
In spite of all these peacebuilding activities, the security situation in East Timor was not stable and Australian Defense Forces remained until the security situation improved (MOFA, 2008). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the UN peace operations failed in East Timor. Japan did not stop its contribution to the peace operations and dispatched two peacekeepers for cease-fire monitoring operations to UNMIT in 2010. In response to the extension of the UNMIT mandate to 31 December 2012, the Japanese government also extended the duration of its commitment until 28 February 2013 so that Japan could make an extra commitment in case of an emergency (MOFA, 2010, 2012; United Nations, 2012).

**Discussion: Examined Data in the Sequence Analysis**

As clarified by the sequence analysis of Japan’s commitments to the peace operations in East Timor, although Japan could not make a direct military commitment to “national security” of East Timor through INTERFET, it donated US$100 million to the INTERFET operation, and continuous and substantial contributions were made by the Japanese government for “human security” of the East Timorese people as shown in Table 2 below (“PKO”, here, means general PKO missions regardless of stages).

**Table 2: Sequence of Japan’s Peace Operations for Human Security of East Timor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start of Operations</th>
<th>Name of Operations and Details</th>
<th>PKO</th>
<th>Humanitarian Relief</th>
<th>Election Observation</th>
<th>Contributions in kind, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1999 (Stage 1)</td>
<td>Contribution in kind to UNAMET (US$10.11 million to the UN Trust Fund) (2,000 radios)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1999 (Stage 1)</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment in East Timor (A political affairs officer and three civilian police officers)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 1999 (Stage 2)</td>
<td>INTERFET (US$100 million) Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for East Timor (US$2 million) (US$1 million to UNHCR and WFP)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1999 (Stage 3)</td>
<td>Contribution in kind to UNHCR for the Relief of East Timorese Displaced Persons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1999 (Stage 3)</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment for East Timorese Displaced Persons (150 ASDF) (500 tents, 9,000 blankets, 11,140</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the data displayed above demonstrate, Japan’s contribution to the peace operations, particularly dispatch of the peacekeepers to East Timor, became active after the Japanese government adopted the human security concept as a pillar of its diplomatic policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2001</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment in East Timor (19 civilian election observers) (US$1,191,000 through UNDP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2002</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment in East Timor (680 GSDF and 10 PKF to UNAMET) (2,300 GSDF in total to UNMISET)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 2002</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment for East Timorese Election Observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May. 2004</td>
<td>100 Schools Project (UNICEF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2006</td>
<td>Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for East Timor (US$2 million)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>Emergency Grant Aid through International Organizations for IDPs from Unrest in Timor-Leste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2007</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment in Timor-Leste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 2007</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment for Timor-Leste Election Observation (14 electoral observers and US$723,855 through UNDP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 2010-</td>
<td>International Peace Cooperation Assignment in Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (2 peacekeepers for cease-fire monitoring to UNMIT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Combined Data from Cabinet Office Japan, JDA, MOFA, and the United Nations)
Simply, the sequence represents that Japan’s peace operations in East Timor were consistent and comprehensive for human security (freedom from fear and want). Moreover, as represented in Table 3, Japan was the third largest donor for peacebuilding in East Timor following Australia and Portugal (2005 and 2006). This fact means that Japan made significant contributions to human security of East Timor especially in terms of “freedom from want”.

Table 3: Percentage of Top 3 Donors for Peacebuilding in East Timor (2005 and 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Country</th>
<th>Number of Donors</th>
<th>Number of Donors over 90% CPA</th>
<th>% of CPA by Top Donor</th>
<th>% of CPA by Top 2 Donors</th>
<th>% of CPA by Top 3 Donors</th>
<th>Total % of CPA by Top 3 Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Timor</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Australia (22%)</td>
<td>Portugal (20%)</td>
<td>Japan (15%)</td>
<td>Total (57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(OECD/DAC, 2008. p. 46)

As well as the financial contribution (freedom from want), Japan made significant contributions to human security of East Timor in terms of maintenance of stability (freedom from fear). Normally, the Japanese government has focused on financial contributions as its human security policy, but the case of East Timor reveals that Japan’s human security policy has become more active and contributory to freedom from fear. Indeed, Japan’s peace operations in East Timor were more comprehensive and large-scale than those in Cambodia (Akimoto, 2012; Walton & Akimoto, 2013). This fact can be visualised by comparing the case of Japan’s peace operations in East Timor with the other peace operations conducted by Japanese peacekeepers as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Percentage of Japan’s Peace Operations for East Timor of Total Operations

(Modified Data from Table 2 and Cabinet Office Japan)
As Figure 1 shows, the percentage of Japan’s commitment to peace operations in East Timor in comparison with the other operations is relatively high (31% in PKO, 50% in humanitarian relief, 33% in election observation, 19% in contributions in kind). Japan dispatched its peacekeepers to peace operations (PKO) in Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, the Golan Heights, Nepal, Sudan, Haiti, and South Sudan, but the peace operations (PKO) in East Timor account for as many as 30% of the total. The figure, especially that of PKO, indicates that Japan’s peace operations in East Timor were more consistent, large-scale and comprehensive than the other peace operations conducted by the Japanese government for human security (particularly “freedom from fear”).

In short, not only did Japan make financial and material contributions to “freedom from want” of the East Timorese, but the Japanese peacekeepers contributed to “freedom from fear” of the people as well. Although Japan could not make a military commitment to national security during the INTERFET operation, its contributions to human security of East Timor were seamless and comprehensive, including peace operations, humanitarian relief, election observation, and contributions in kind. Japan’s military and constitutional limitations could be overcome by cooperating with other countries, which are experienced in peace operations including peace-enforcement. In sum, the analysed data indicate the fact that Japan made holistic and consistent commitments to the peace operations for human security of East Timor.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Japan’s contributions to the four stages of peace operations in East Timor through the application of sequence analysis. By utilising the sequence analysis method, the complexity of the multi-dimensional peace operations and Japan’s contributions in East Timor has been clarified. As demonstrated by the data supplied in Table 2 and 3, as well as Figure 1, Japan has made long-term and large-scale contributions to the peace operations in East Timor.

In the post-Cold War period, Japan explored making contributions to UN-authorized peace operations in East Timor. Japan’s first contribution was made to UNAMET as “preventive deployment”. Japan dispatched a political affairs officer and three civilian police officers and made a substantial material contribution to UNAMET. Nonetheless, as a result of the 1999 ballot, an armed conflict broke out and approximately one-fourth of the East
Timorese population became refugees. This period represents a culmination of “conflict escalation” (Glasl, 1982).

The armed conflict in East Timor necessitated military intervention by INTERFET, as “peace-enforcement” for the sake of “conflict containment” (Ramsbotham, et al., 2005). Australian-led multinational forces contributed to peace-enforcement as part of the peacemaking process. Although the multinational forces were not a formal UN force, their military operations were authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1264. While Japan could not make a direct military contribution to “national security” of East Timor, owing to Article 9 of the Peace Constitution, it did make a financial contribution to INTERFET, UNHCR, and the WFP.

The mandate of UNTAET as a peacekeeping operation included peace-enforcement based on Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Therefore, in 1999 Japan dispatched the SDF not to East Timor but to Indonesia and West Timor in order to support UNHCR. During the UNTAET operation, Japan made humanitarian and legal contributions. Indeed, HAER, one of the three pillars of UNTAET, was carried out under the leadership of Akira Takahashi. In addition, electoral observers were dispatched to the Constituent Assembly Elections in 2001. Finally, in February 2002, 680 Japanese peacekeepers and 10 PKF headquarters personnel were deployed to UNTAET. The Japanese government revised the PKO Law in order to dispatch the SDF to peace operations during the “conflict termination” period (Lund, 1996).

In consequence of UNTAET, the Koizumi government sent more peacekeepers to UNMISET as a peacebuilding operation led by SRSG Sukehiko Hasegawa. On the basis of diplomatic concepts such as “human security” and the “consolidation of peace”, Japan dispatched about a total of 2,300 peacekeepers to UNMISET, which was the largest number in the history of Japan’s PKO policy. Furthermore, Japan has continued supporting post-independence peacebuilding operations, such as UNOTIL and UNMIT. Those UN peace operations literally involved “state-building” as a part of peacebuilding operations (Paris & Sisk, 2009). Thus, although it seems to be relatively simplistic, the sequence analysis method has contributed to clarifying the complicated Japan’s peace missions. In conclusion, the findings discovered by sequence analysis substantiate that Japan’s contributions to peace operations in East Timor were incremental, seamless, and comprehensive despite the technical limitations.
References


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Achieving Democracy: Implementing the 1992 Salvadoran Peace Accords
Raymond W. Cox III and Hugo Renderos

Abstract
The literature on negotiations and bargaining has been dominated by academics in business and public administration. Given the interests and orientation of the academic disciplines, it is not surprising that the academic studies predominantly have examined the processes and dynamics at the level of collective bargaining and to a lesser extent organization leadership and management. Dispute resolution has a distinctly intra-organizational character. In 1991 the warring factions in El Salvador came together to negotiate both an end to the fighting, but also to create a framework for the introduction of a democratic government for the country. Over a period of several months the two sides shaped an agreement. Finally in late December of 1991 with a flurry of decisions an agreement was drafted and signed. Twenty years later the country continues to implement the peace accord, but there is no consensus that the task is complete.

Introduction
The basic premise of alternative dispute resolution is that the parties to a disagreement can be brought together to resolve that disagreement (Fisher & Ury, 1981). These processes are ubiquitous at every level of government and are central to much of international relations. From the relatively mundane — an employee grievance — to the momentous — ending wars—dispute resolution processes are used to end disagreements and presumably, once an agreement has been reached, to set the parties on a new path.

The literature on negotiations and bargaining has been dominated by academics in business and public administration (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Lebow, 1996). Given the interests and orientation of the academic disciplines, it is not surprising that the academic studies predominantly have examined the processes and dynamics at the level of collective bargaining and to a lesser extent organization leadership and management. Dispute resolution has a distinctly intra-organizational character.

The focus on intra-organizational and policy disputes has created a rich literature about the negotiations process leading to an agreement (i.e. the grievance is settled; the contract is signed). Similarly, there is a large body of literature on the consequences for future negotiations based upon the way the prior negotiations unfold (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2009; Shell, 2006. Less well developed is the literature on the aftermath of those
decisions. This gap in the literature is particularly critical when one examines negotiations that are essentially a one-off event, such as negotiating a peace treaty, or most international agreements, where there is a presumption that there will be no follow-on negotiations by the parties. We know that the choices made during negotiations create future problems, but those problems are examined through the lens of future negotiations. The dispute and problem-solving mechanisms are built into the negotiations (Lewicki et al., 2009). This is a somewhat self-referential process in which the parties return to clarify what was meant. Importantly, those mechanisms assume that the process will be much like the original negotiation and may even involve the same actors. In some instances, both sides to the dispute are eager to engage in dispute resolution because that ambiguity is a detriment to current practices and future negotiations. International and national disputes do not have recourse to such problem solving mechanisms. Perceptions of success or failure in such negotiations are judgments about the implementation of the agreement, not the process of reaching an agreement. The failure of a treaty does not produce a renewed discussion about the treaty per se, but rather returns the negotiations to a pre-negotiation stage (Lewicki et al., 2009; Shell, 2006). All bets are off and everyone is back to square one, but potentially under more trying circumstances.

Thus, we posit that the consequences of failed implementation under such circumstances are far more critical and dangerous than under traditional (i.e. labor) negotiations. Traditional dispute resolution follows the same rules as the original negotiations. The process has structured rules, and those rules are understood by the parties to the dispute. Original negotiations under such arrangements are aided by the safety net of the dispute resolution mechanisms. International negotiations rarely have such a safety net (as will be noted later, even the introduction of third parties during or after negotiations may be viewed as a threat). Implementation of such agreements is more complicated and more perilous.

We understand that the negotiation and bargaining process requires compromise and even a certain level of ambiguity (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Shell, 2006). These ambiguities are treated as necessary components of reaching an agreement, yet the consequences of those compromises, and especially the ambiguous language, for implementation are not explored. The problems in implementation are subordinate to the primary goal of an agreement.

This examination of the Peace Accords implemented in El Salvador since 1992 reflect the perilous nature of negotiations without the safety net of structured dispute resolution.
There are many historic accounts of the move from war to peace negotiations and then the long-standing efforts to achieve democratic governance in El Salvador (e.g. Stanley, 1996; Wood, 2001; Wood, 2002). To a large extent the Peace Accords are treated as little more than the transition from war to peace. The war is analyzed and then the efforts to transform the government since are closely examined. The Peace Accords are the starting point for those efforts toward democracy. The analysis starts with the words in the document. Much less is known about the process of negotiations as it unfolded. As a result the potential influences of the negotiations process on implementation of the Accords are ignored.

The incomplete implementation of the Peace Accords is a product of the negotiation process itself—especially in December 1991 when the imperative of reaching an agreement outweighed the ambiguities in the wording of the Accord. Much was left for future elected officials to work out but with little more than an acknowledgement that the details had not been worked out as guidance. Not only were future elected officials left to create a new democracy, they were left to address unresolved problems left over from the negotiations. At a certain level it is a testament to the commitment of all Salvadorans to the ideal of democracy that they continue to work at completing the work of the Peace Accords.

How did this intentionally and unintentionally ambiguous wording in the Peace Accords affect implementation of this momentous document? To answer this question it is necessary to first examine the negotiations process through the template of academic negotiations and bargaining. Fisher and Ury’s (1981) classic text on negotiations and bargaining offers that template. Based upon interviews with participants in the Peace Accord negotiations, a sense of how the negotiations unfolded and in particular the tensions and concerns of the two sides will be explored. With this information as background, a critique of the bargaining process can occur, highlighting the areas of ambiguity and compromise. The critique is not to look for fault but to understand the logical consequences of the decisions made (and not made) to reach an agreement. The intent here is to understand why this process, implementing the Peace Accords, after twenty years is still incomplete. That is the task of this study.

**Negotiation and Bargaining Fundamentals**

Negotiations are a basic means of getting what one party wants from another. It is a two way method of communication designed to reach an agreement when two parties share interests while opposing others (Fisher & Ury, 1981). There are five key elements of negotiations that are pertinent in our study:
1. This is a bi-lateral process
2. The desire to reach an agreement
3. Styles and types of negotiations and how those styles intersect
4. A means to break an impasse during negotiations
5. A potential end-date for negotiations

Bi-lateral Negotiations

Because the point of reference for most of the academic literature on negotiations is contract negotiations in the private sector, these negotiations are general treated as simply two-way processes. As public policy studies related to legislative behavior and environmental policy noted as early as the 1980s (Anderson, 2010), public policy negotiations generally involve three or more interested parties. This more complex arrangement does not change the dynamics discussed below, but it does greatly increase the precarious nature of the negotiations. As the number of active stakeholders increases the likelihood that at least one party does not wish to resolve the problem increases (the current stalemate in the United States Congress in which both political parties are themselves divided is certainly one example).

A Shared Definition of the Goal in Negotiations

Critically, the negotiations process cannot begin until both sides agree to the simple premise that the outcome of the negotiations is a resolution of the questions in dispute. While it may seem obvious that a positive outcome is a necessary starting point for negotiations, particularly in international relations the seemingly simple question of what outcome is sought, may be in dispute (Vietnam, Korea). Unless the outcome envisioned by both sides is a mutually agreed upon vision, very little may get done. In the case of El Salvador “meetings” over the years never evolved into formal “negotiations” because of the lack of agreement on the fundamental question— ending the civil war. Until both sides came to the negotiations table with the intent of reaching agreement, the process of negotiations could not begin. As will be noted in the discussion below, several attempts to negotiate occurred. Meetings were held, but follow-up was lacking. There was for a long time little reason to negotiate. It took longer to start negotiations (five years) than to conduct negotiations (eighteen months).

Negotiation Approaches

Fisher and Ury (1981) designed three approaches to negotiations. There is the soft, hard, and the principled methods for negotiating. During any negotiation, all three
negotiating methods come into play (Fisher and Ury). These methods are often seen as methods for “getting your way.” While there is that element to these methods, as presented by Fisher and Ury they are methods for moving the negotiations along. The art in negotiation is in using these methods and knowing the right time to apply a method to facilitate negotiations.

**Soft negotiations.** Soft approach negotiators try to avoid conflict in order to retain an amicable relationship. They also avoid personal confrontations by readily conceding to reach an agreement. The soft approach is more likely to occur at the beginning and ending stages of a negotiation. At the beginning phase negotiators share the sense of the desire to reach a common outcome, promoting a soft or benign approach (Fisher & Ury, 1981). At the end of negotiations, all parties involved have deadlines and timelines to meet. In order to meet these deadlines and timelines, they are impelled to seek agreements with rapid acceptance of language that would otherwise have been debated.

**Hard negotiations.** An important starting point in negotiations is for the separate parties define for themselves their “bottom line”—the outcomes that must be achieved (or exceeded for an agreement to be accepted). The negotiations “game” requires that initial public proposals be far removed from the bottom line to mask the real goal/outcome. Thus occurs the common phenomenon in which all parties stubbornly cling to extreme positions and adamantly deny the possibility of budging. This approach will recur as negotiations reach the still unacknowledged bottom line (Cox, 1987). Hard negotiations are necessary, but also dangerous. Fisher and Ury (1981) suggest that hard negotiations run the risk of alienating the opposition and thus ending the negotiations before an agreement is reached.

**Principled negotiations.** The principled stance of a negotiator focuses on basic interests, fair standards culminating in an agreement whereby all parties involved feel the process and results of the negotiations are satisfying to all (Fisher & Ury, 1981). This method consists of four basic principles:

1. Separate the people from the problem: The ability to see each other’s issue from the point of view of the opposing party in a negotiation assists in appreciating the issue more realistically and allows all parties involved to focus on the issue not the parties (Fisher & Ury, 1981);

2. Focus on interests, not the on the positions: Each party’s interests are the prime motivators that force all involved to decide upon an agreement (Fisher & Ury, 1981);
3. Invent options for mutual gain: In complex and difficult situations, it is important and necessary to be creative when inventing options for mutual gain (Fisher & Ury, 1981). By inventing different options for a mutually agreed solution to a negotiation, all interested parties uncover solutions in common. Deciding on a mutually agreed accord becomes easy when shared interests dovetail (Raiffa, 1982); and

4. Use objective criteria when arriving at an agreement: In contrast to using positional bargaining, negotiators accept proposals based upon the use of criteria independent of the preconceived or ideologically-driven views of either side (Fisher & Ury, 1981, p. 11).

Impasse Procedures

Negotiations rarely run smoothly or at a consistent pace. The negotiations may come to a halt because an agreement on an issue may seem impossible. Finding a way out of such impasses is the key to coming to a final agreement. The models for addressing such impasses come from collective bargaining where both mediation and arbitration are recommended as paths to settle disagreements during negotiation (Cox, 1987; Dresang, 2009). Mediation is the process by which a third party enters the negotiations to help the two parties reach an agreement on items at impasse. In contrast, arbitration is a more extreme measure whereby the third party imposes a solution. In the first instance the two “sides” in the negotiation remain in control of the outcome. In the later instance much of the control over the outcome shifts to the third party (Cox, 1987).

Even though it brings the parties closer to a final agreement, the introduction of an arbitrator is rarely viewed by the parties as positive. While the language of international relations implies that outside parties (the United Nations, for example) is a mediator, it is not unusual for the parties to the negotiations to see the entrance of a third party into the discussion as a loss of control—in other words, the third party is perceived as an arbitrator. While in collective bargaining the introduction of a mediator is generally seen as a neutral or positive occurrence, arbitration is not. In international settings the introduction of a third party is inevitably viewed as a negative. The mere threat of the introduction of a third party is often sufficient to restart movement toward a final agreement (Dresang, 2009; Lewicki et al., 2009; Shelo06C, 2006).

Timing

There is an internal rhythm to negotiations (Cox, 1987; Fisher & Ury, 1981). The pace of negotiations quickens near the end. In some settings the “end” represents a defined
date known by all at the start of the negotiations (the expiration of a contract for example). In contrast most international negotiations have no future limit. It is more like writing legislation or a constitution. The future is limitless. The sense that the “end” is approaching and, therefore, negotiations need to speed up, is not something that can be identified until it is happening. This sense that a conclusion is imminent may be the product of conflicting views. The first is a sense that the “tough” issues have been addressed. The second is the sense that unless the parties start settling the matter an (unwelcome) third party may intervene.

The Chronology of the Salvadoran Negotiations

Serious peace negotiations among the parties—the government and the FLMN [Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front]—started in April 1990 (though that first meeting at which “progress” was made was preceded by a critical meeting in September 1989, lasting until its consummation in January 16, 1992. There were brief meetings prior to serious negotiating in 1984, 1986, and 1987 (El Salvador Chronology). The negotiating parties could not establish a framework from which to proceed. The parties could not yet agree on an agenda, timeline, or issues to discuss at the negotiations table. They were not ready to agree.

The first meeting at which both parties were seriously engaged was in September 1989. What had changed between 1984 and 1989? International events were pushing both sides to the conflict toward serious negotiations. Changes both symbolic—the tearing down of the Berlin Wall—and practical—the disintegration the USSR halting military support for the FLMN—would influence the prospects for success of the FLMN. Similarly, US Congressional pressure on President Reagan to abolish military aid to the government, led the government to question its future prospects. Both parties foresaw a military stalemate (El Salvador Chronology).

Events that led up to the September meeting and then afterward, the UN expressed an interest in getting the negotiating parties to agree on an accord. Therefore, a second important meeting took place in Geneva in April 1990; it was at this meeting that timelines and deadlines were discussed. The UN pressed for a role as mediator. The meetings began to gain momentum and were occurring at greater frequency as both parties sought to develop an internal solution without the UN. In May 1990 a meeting took place in Caracas, Venezuela. During this meeting, the agenda and timeline were more clearly defined. A July 1990 meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica allowed the parties to negotiate on human rights issues. While it would be ten months before the parties would again meet to negotiate issues such as
transitional provisions, a truth commission, and political agreements elaborating on constitutional reforms, progress was being made. The San Jose meeting confirmed for the parties that they could negotiate with each other without a mediator. The parties met in New York in December 1991 to refine what had already been negotiated and to produce the document that would be the peace accords. This series of meetings culminated in both parties signing the Peace Accords in Mexico City, Mexico on January 16, 1992 (El Salvador Chronology).

In part because of the scattered timing of the negotiations and in part because topics varied, the composition of the negotiators present at any location varied. When the negotiating parties met in Geneva, each party consisted of four representatives: four members representing the government; three ambassadors; and one former Minister of Finance. On the FMLN side, all four members were former rebel commanders (United States Institute of Peace, 1990). The second time the negotiating parties met government representatives were six in number. This group comprised academicians, armed forces personnel, and high ranking government diplomats. Representatives for the FMLN were again military commanders, but now there were seven present (United States Institute of Peace). When the parties met in San Jose, Costa Rica in July 1990, the same persons who had been in Caracas represented both the government and the FLMN (United States Institute of Peace). The government representatives at the negotiations in San Jose would serve at both Mexico City and New York the following year. In Mexico City only four members represented the FMLN, but a fifth joined the party in New York (United States Institute of Peace). Importantly there was a core of negotiators from both sides that attended virtually all meetings beginning in 1989.

**Data Collection**

The central question is how the 20+ year effort to create democracy in El Salvador was affected by the processes and practices of the actual negotiations. Explanations of and critiques of the implementation of the peace accords suffer from a lack of information about how and why the accords came to be worded in the way they are. The only way to examine the dynamics of the negotiations that led to the Peace Accords is to get information from the source—persons from the two “sides” to the negotiations. Critically, some of those involved are no longer available. Also, the number of persons, who were participants throughout the process, was never large. Fewer than fifteen persons met these criteria. Two persons, one from each side of the negotiations who were long term participants, were identified and
agreed to be interviewed about the negotiations dynamics. Open-ended interviews of more than an hour each were conducted (in Spanish).

The central purpose of these personal interviews was to provide insight into whether or not the negotiations that produced the Peace Accords unfolded in the way that the literature would suggest. In answering that broad question we gain insight on the following questions:

1. What made conditions in 1989 different than in prior years when negotiations did not continue?
2. How did the choice of who would negotiate shape the outcome of the accords?
3. To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, create a “soft negotiations” environment in which horse-trading of previous positions occurred?
4. To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, lead to the choice to “not decide,” leaving the implementation to the political process after the negotiations were finished?
5. To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, lead to implementation decisions to which neither side was comfortable?
6. To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, result in intentionally ambiguously worded language in the Accords?
7. To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, create a circumstance under which implementation was slowed, or even impossible?

Critique of the Accords

Applying the Fisher and Ury (1981) framework for negotiation to the actual events as described by participants affirms that the negotiations did play out much as would be expected. The cycle of hard and soft, then principled and finally soft negotiations did to a large extent occur. Also the commitment of both parties to continue to negotiate to a conclusion (especially in 1991) should be acknowledged. Also, as anticipated by the Fisher and Ury framework, both intentionally and unintentionally ambiguous language appears in the accords. Such language served to facilitate decisions. In this case things went a step further; there are issues intentionally left out. Both of the interviewees stated that some
themes were not negotiated. The socio-economic issues that had been the core of political unrest since at least the 1930s were left unmentioned because there was no consensus between the negotiating parties on how to address them. Getting an agreement and moving toward democracy was more important than the details of the economic character of that future government. Yet, the issue was important enough in the public mind that it could not be ignored completely. Ambiguous language that acknowledged the mandate to address socio-economic concerns without offering any hint of the direction or scope of such solutions found its way into the accords. The following English language translation captures the convoluted passage on economic issues as a way to acknowledge the issue, but clearly shifts the entire burden of offering concrete solutions onto future governments:

a sustained effort and shall be conducted in phases, bearing in mind that the aim is to reach some agreements that are to be implemented immediately to achieve stabilization, others that are designed to tackle the economic and social problems that will ensue from the end of the conflict and still others that are geared specifically to reconstruction. (United States Institute of Peace).

Interestingly, there is some suggestion from the interviews that this ambiguous language was acceptable to both sides, though for quite different reasons. On the one hand the FLMN saw socio-economic reform as a central tenant of their fight, but that did not require those reforms to be in the accords. They were content to leave those decisions to future governments. The government accepted the language because they did not see the wording as a specific mandate to act. They anticipated social and economic issues would not be negotiated, discussed, or considered because these were issues that the government controlled.

Summary of Findings

A summary of the responses by the interviewees to the questions asked above is presented as follows:

1. What made conditions in 1989 different than in prior years when negotiations did not continue? The international situation was changing rapidly. Both sides felt the pressure. The demise of the USSR would mean that military support for the FLMN would inevitably end. The US Congress was pressuring President Reagan to abolish military aid to the government. Most critically, both parties foresaw a military stalemate.
2. *How did the choice of who would negotiate shape the outcome of the accords?* The peace accord was negotiated by several groups of representatives from each party. During the two plus years of negotiating, both parties had different representatives sitting at the negotiating table whenever they met. No one on either side was present at all negotiations, though a few were there for most of the talks. Furthermore, neither side was fully united on every issue. Participants on the same “side” held conflicting views. As a consequence, those negotiators signing the final peace accord shaped the accord’s outcome. As noted earlier this is a critical issue that is examined in more detail in another manuscript.

3. *To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, create a “soft negotiations” environment in which horse-trading of previous positions occurred?* The imperative of impending UN intervention created an atmosphere in which both sides traded off positions. Government representatives agreed to recognize and legitimize the legal existence of the opposition as a political party eligible to participate in popular elections. FMLN representatives withdrew its demand for the demilitarization of the armed forces (effectively making it a nation police force).

4. *To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations lead in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, to the choice to "not decide," leaving the implementation to the political process after the negotiations were finished.* Many of the contentious socio-economic issues that had roots going back to the 1930s were not addressed and, according to both interviewees, remain incomplete tasks to this day.

5. *To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, lead to implementation decisions to which neither side was comfortable.* According to both interviewees, both negotiating parties decided to finish the negotiations even though they had not agreed to specific time frames such as phases and time periods of disarmament, reducing the numbers (soldiers) of military power, and whether both parties would execute their part of the agreement as negotiated.

6. *To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, result in intentionally ambiguously worded language in the Accords.* Chapters one (Armed Forces) and five (Socio-Economic) of the peace
accords were purposely drafted in order to obscure the goals and hinder implementation.

7. To what extent did the mutual goal of finishing negotiations in December 1991, before threatened UN intervention, create a circumstance under which implementation was slowed or even impossible. The events occurring prior, during, and after writing the peace accords, as detailed in the aforementioned six questions above, demonstrate how each negotiating party was intentionally agreeing to opaquely and ambiguously written peace accord provisions in order to later meet again to further negotiate other terms and conditions. Both parties were consciously finishing the negotiations with an eye toward future deliberations and negotiations without regard for the political capacity to implement them.

Discussion

Implications for Implementation

Agreeing on peace accords to reform an entire political system and drafting a political framework designed to change a country’s entire political history is a difficult (possibly impossible) task. When two or more parties consist of more than one individual on each negotiating side, the stakes are high and agreeing on terms as a group becomes challenging for the entire entity. Issues such as intra-group disagreements, conflicts, and divisions come into play. Sometimes group divisions are so pronounced that it causes an entirely new entity, e.g., a new political party, movement, or group, to emerge out of negotiations, or during the implementation phase.

When parties of peace agreements come together, it is inevitable for them to experience delays and misinterpretations. Yet, ambiguity is necessary in order for the negotiating parties involved to settle on a final agreement. The ambiguous wording found in the peace accords is based upon trust and mutual understanding, but also strategic assumptions about who would control implementation. When both negotiating parties agree to an ambiguous wording, they are implicitly accepting that they will meet again and in good faith sign the peace accords. Agreeing to and signing an ambiguous peace accord provides both negotiating parties a belief that, even after signing it, they can come back to it at a later time and work out whatever is left. But both parties act on a second set of presumptions whereby each side believes (hopes? expects?) those future decisions will be based upon different political and socio-economic bases than those that existed in 1991.
Lessons

There are two different versions of whether the Salvadoran peace accords have been fully implemented. One of the parties to the negotiations states that the peace accords have been fully implemented. The other party sees the accords as unfulfilled as long as issues are not addressed. There is ample justification on both sides in the wording of the accords to affirm these conflicting assertions. However, both sides assert that advances in the peace accords implementation have been made. This analysis suggests that advances in the negotiations were made during the negotiating phase of the process, but as with all negotiations, the task of implementation is critical to a summative evaluation of the success of the negotiations. In this there is much left to dispute; the political landscape is quite different today than 20, 50 or 90 years ago. The aspirations of democratic reformers that for so long were denied are tangible today. Nevertheless, the implementation of the accords remains a work in progress. The mandates of the accords still drive political decision-making. The expectations created by that document remain the touchstone for judging progress toward democracy.

Yet another lesson learned from this study is the fact that language ambiguity can work to the advantage of those that seek peace. The advantage it has is that it allows the negotiating parties to move forward while coming back to these ambiguous terms. For example, when the negotiating parties could not reach an agreement, they decided to move on to another theme and come back to this theme later. When the negotiators were able to get back to the topics, sometimes the negotiating parties may have had time to think of ways to word the themes at hand and manipulate them to fit their interests. In some cases the negotiators never got back to the issue, leaving it to the political process.

Next Steps

There is a second element to the negotiations dynamic—the intra-group conflicts that Graham Allison analysed in his examination of the Cuban Missile Crisis (Allison, 1971; Allison & Zelikow, 1999). As suggested above, there were never merely two “sides” to the negotiations. The participants in the peace accords represented organizations that were fairly diverse ideologically and in their expectations of the outcome of the negotiations themselves. A more complete appreciation of the negotiations process and its resulting influence on the implementation requires a separate analysis. That is the next step.
Conclusion

Reforming a political system via peace accords is a difficult task. By every measure the peace accords accomplished its central goals; an end to civil conflict and a shift toward a democratic foundation for politics. The accords are a success. In choosing to ignore certain issues, the political process, not the negotiators inherited the task of policy making and policy resolution. The future is one of democratically addressing political issues. That is as it should be and may well be all that can be expected of the accords. The “incompleteness” of the implementation is now a matter of political decision-making and not one of the accords.

References


Counteracting Dynamics of Violent Communication in Bullying
Jacques L. Koko

Abstract
This study examines fourteen conversations from observations conducted on bullying among 8th graders in 2002, in a Middle School in Virginia in the United States of America to: (1) identify power disparity in verbal bullying between bullies and targets, (2) examine how power disparity in verbal bullying empowers the perpetrator against silent targets, (3) explain how targets’ verbal responses neutralize bullies or stop bullying, and (4) design an approach to counteracting verbal bullying—the “agere contra” approach to bullying, which demonstrates how words could also be used, not only to counteract bullying, but also to heal both the perpetrator and the target of bullying with the intervention of third parties. It was hypothesized that targets’ response (silence or verbal reaction) to verbal bullying affects bullies’ attitudes or decision to perpetuate or stop bullying cycle. The study used a mixed-method approach to perform conversation analysis, and semiotic analysis on the data collected. The results show support for the hypothesis. In light of the results, the study advocates for counteracting bullying by using the “agere contra” approach, which translates into a combination of the target’s verbal response and the intervention of third parties, open anti-bullying teams guided by a school conflict resolution specialist.

Introduction
Nowadays, the observer just needs to watch and read the news to admit that bullying is widespread in elementary, middle, and high schools in the United States. Media sources report abundant news on school bullying as recent and current events. Bullying represents an aggressive behavior pattern where a student (or a group of students in some cases) utilizes his/her physical, verbal, or material power to assault physically, verbally, or by gesture a weaker, smaller, or poorer student through the means of destructive enactments such intimidations, provocations, beating, undesirable touching or solicitations, insults, mocking, name-calling, or other behaviors of that kind (Olweus, 1993; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009; Winslade & Williams, 2012). As per this working definition, bullying can occur in the forms of physical or verbal violence. This article focuses mainly on verbal bullying because our observations show that it happens more frequently in our schools.
What are some indicators of violent communication in verbal bullying, and how do they create power disparity between bullies and targets? To what extent should targets respond, and how should bullying be addressed constructively and systemically? The present article answers those questions and suggests ways to counteract effectively and constructively the social problem bullying represents. The analyst could hypothesize that verbal response could contribute to ending the circle of verbal bullying. However, what if a verbal response does not work? What should be done to stop bullying? The article uses conversation analysis, and semiotic analysis to examine fourteen observations on bullying conducted in 2002 in a middle school in Virginia, and demonstrate how the combination of target’s verbal response and third-party intervention is required to counteract verbal bullying successfully.

**School Bullying as a Social Problem**

Studies by education services and scholars such as the Norwegian psychologist, Dan Olweus, have found that schools are plagued by the problem of bullying. Left unchecked, bullies are more likely than non-bullies to become offenders in the criminal justice system when they get older. Their victims are likely to suffer from severe problems of self-esteem and depression, impairing their ability to perform well in school and social life settings (Olweus, 1993; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009; Winslade & Williams, 2012). At the extreme, victims may commit suicide or develop violent strategies to rid themselves of those who bully them and to express their anger at those who ignored the bullying, as it apparently occurred with the young shooters of Columbine High School in 1999.

Across the United States of America, bullying in schools remains a major issue of concern due to the danger it represents for individual safety and public health. Statistics reveal that 15 to 25% of U.S. students are frequently bullied. Fifteen to twenty percent of students confess they often bully their peers (Nansel et al., 2001). “The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (2007) found a higher figure among students in the 12 to 18 age group: 32% were victims of bullying in previous school year” (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 122). Studies find that bullying negatively affects both the perpetrator and the victim with emotional issues or behavioral deficiency. Findings suggest that perpetrators of bullying are inclined to poor academic performance or drop-out of school, and are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors, including carrying weapons to school (Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, & Schiedt, 2003; Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004; Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, & Piha, 2000). Moreover, scholars indicate that victims of bullying have an inclination to issues of self-esteem, anxiety,
and depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts, in addition to poor school performance (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Ruin, & Patton, 2001; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003; Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Klomeck, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Nansel et al., 2004; Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, & Piha, 2000; Winslade & Williams, 2012). Such emotional and behavioral dysfunctions in perpetrators and victims of bullying may ultimately result in long-term destructive and criminal behaviors in their adulthood (Nansel et al., 2001; Gladstone et al., 2006; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Olweus, 1993).

A number of scholars and practitioners have specifically associated bullying with suicidal thoughts or risks (for example, Kim, Koh, & Leventhal, 2005; Klomek et al., 2007; Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010; Klomek et al., 2011). In a cross-sectional study of 1718 seventh and eighth-grade students in two middle schools, Kim, Koh, and Leventhal (2005) compared students involved in bullying with those who were not involved in it, and found that victim-perpetrators reported more suicidal behaviors. As a result, they concluded that students who experienced school bullying, particularly victim-perpetrators, had significantly higher risks for suicidal thoughts and behaviors when compared with students who did not experience bullying (Kim et al., 2005). Klomek et al. (2007; 2010; 2011) reviewed a series of studies on bullying to examine the association between suicide and bullying in children and adolescents. They found that bullying and peer victimization foster suicidal thoughts with some variations by gender. Their conclusion enhanced a correlation between bullying and suicidality (Klomek et al., 2007). Such results echo what observers witness in the news. According to CBS News’s Steve Hartman, “bullying that ends in suicide has become an all-too-familiar theme on the news” (Hartman, 2011). Cases of teenage students who committed suicide over the past ten years due to school bullying include 13-year-old Ryan Halligan of Vermont in 2003, 14-year-old Megan Meier of Missouri in 2006, 15-year-old Phoebe Nora Mary Prince of Massachusetts in 2010, 18-year-old Tyler Clementi of New Jersey in 2010, 14-year-old Jamey Rodemeyer of New York in 2011, 13-year-old Rachel Ehmke of Minnesota in 2012, and 17-year-old Jay Corey Jones of Minnesota in 2012, to mention a few names.

Even though the literature seems to emphasize the impact of bullying mainly on perpetrators and victims, evidence suggests that bullying also affects the third party that witnesses its occurrence. Bystanders often feel disturbed and even guilty for not helping the victim by confronting the perpetrator of bullying (O’Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999).
Because bullying affects not only the target, but also the bully, and their community, this article examines how the bystander’s involvement in the form of a third-party intervention can be significant for power balance, and contribute to counteracting bullying effectively for the benefit of the school community.

The analyst would observe that research on bullying drastically increased since the 1990s, following Olweus’s (1993) groundbreaking work on bullying. Much of the literature defines bullying as repeated physical or verbal aggressions perpetrated by one or more actors on a subject whom they perceive to be weaker than them (Olweus, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Nansel et al., 2004; Winslade & Williams, 2012). Olweus’s definition of bullying excludes situations involving actors of similar physical and psychological strength (Olweus, 1993; 1994), which implies that he observes some power imbalance in what he understands as bullying. Following Olweus’ work, researchers have more assertively examined power disparities between bullies and their victims (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003; Winslade & Williams, 2012).

However, despite the surge in the literature on bullying, and the increase in scholars’ interest in studying power difference in bullying, the focus has not been so much on power imbalance of communication in bullying, though researchers seem to agree that bullying involves not only physical attacks, but also verbal ones. Some scholars even find that the occurrence of verbal aggression is higher among girls than with boys (for example, Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Bosworth et al., 1999; Nansel et al., 2001; Rivers & Smith, 1994). Observations of bullying experiences in our school systems allow the analyst to scrutinize bullying more carefully through the lenses of power imbalance in violent communication, and beyond the gender spectrum. This article sets that as a goal, which frames its relevance. Indeed, violent communication in bullying often takes the forms of verbal attacks such as insults or curses, name-calling, and mockeries (any words or phrases with some potential of destruction or destructive impact on the victim) recorded in a face-to-face communication, or in a phone conversation. Violent communication in bullying can also be virtual (cyber-bullying), which occurs online through emails, text messages, on Facebook, using twitter, or other new technologies of communication. For its purposes, this study defines bullying as a violent conflict where a party A utilizes his or her physical, verbal, intellectual, or any other natural or personal power to oppress another party B perceived as weaker or disable. This definition of bullying falls in the perspective of conflict analysis and resolution, which
defines conflict as a manifestation of antagonism or contradiction between two parties (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001; Koko, 2008) or as an incompatibility of parties’ aspirations (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). Once bullying is defined as a conflict, it appears that violent communication represents a harmful weapon that bullies use to hurt their targets.

Traditional approaches to addressing bullying include targets neglecting, minimizing, or ignoring the problem, targets fighting the bully back, or school officials taking punitive actions against the perpetrator of bullying, to mention a few approaches (Swearer et al., 2009; Winslade & Williams, 2012). In the perspective of conflict transformation, all such approaches present limitations which could be detrimental to the target, the bully, and their community. Winslade and Williams (2012) coherently highlight some of those limitations. It does not necessarily help when a target ignores bullying. “Perpetrators of bullying can easily see that their efforts are striking home, even on the person who tries to ignore it, and they are encouraged to keep on doing it” (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 126). A target that opts to fight back is either running the risk of embracing the logic of a bully, or increasing the chance of violence escalation (Winslade & Williams, 2012). Finally, punishment may not eventually address the roots of the problem; punishment falls in the win-lose logic of a power-based approach just like bullying, and fails to empower the victim and the bully for collaborative conflict transformation.

Going beyond such approaches, Olweus’ groundbreaking work suggested that bullying should be handled more systemically through the means of class sessions and lessons, teacher awareness campaigns, playground supervision, and other school-wide programs to prevent, reduce or stop bullying (Olweus, 1993; 1994; Winslade & Williams, 2012). However, due to their official nature, some of these programs can still be trapped in the win-lose logic of power-based approach to problem solving, which takes the authority for resolving issues out of students’ hands, and gives it to school officials. Winslade and Williams (2012) clearly understood this when they advocate for setting up undercover anti-bullying teams to integrate and empower students by making them responsible for addressing bullying. To some extent, this article builds on their approach by suggesting that overt anti-bullying teams capitalize on the target’s verbal response to bullying.

By reading the observation sheets of field observations conducted on bullying in 2002 in a middle school in Virginia, the author hypothesizes that targets’ response (silence or verbal reaction) to verbal bullying affects bullies’ attitudes or decision to perpetuate or stop the bullying cycle. The objective of this article is fourfold: (1) identify power disparity in
verbal bullying between bullies and targets in terms of the gap between the words used by the bullies, and the targets’ silent attitudes, (2) examine how power disparity in verbal bullying empowers the perpetrator against silent targets, by highlighting the hurtful power of words used in bullying, (3) explain how targets’ verbal responses neutralize bullies or stop the bullying cycle, and (4) design an approach to counteracting verbal bullying—the “agere contra” approach to bullying to demonstrate how words could also be used, not only to counteract bullying, but also to heal both the perpetrator and the target of bullying with the intervention of third parties, fellow students, parents, school officials, or conflict resolution specialists. The overall goal is to counteract bullying in schools adequately.

**Methodology**

This study mainly uses qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, building on data the author collected in 2002 with a colleague, Bonnie Lofton. Data collection procedures included participant observations. For data analysis this paper relies on techniques of conversation analysis, and semiotic analysis. The population targeted was the oldest children in a mid-sized middle school with a population of 750 students. The site was located in a small city of Virginia with a population of 23,000 people. Using purposeful sampling, and to keep the study manageable, the focus was limited to the top grade level (255 students in grade 8) of the three grades in the middle school. The school was the only public middle school in the city; therefore it embraces all the social-economic groups, races, and nationalities of the city. There were private schools available in the area, but they were smaller, drawing away only about one percent of the middle school population. Gaining entry to the school was relatively easy because my co-researcher, Bonnie Lofton, had contacts and vested interest in the quality of school environment, as a result of (1) having children in the school system, (2) being a substitute teacher in the school system, and (3) caring about the children in the community in which she lives. Lofton was known to school officials and trusted by them, making it possible to do research in the system with relative ease.

The cooperation of school authorities was required to conduct this research. Parents and students received permission slips through the students’ home-base teachers. Informed consent forms were given out to 8th graders in the Middle School, to teachers at the school, and to parents of 8th graders. Finally, the school needed to make physical arrangements for this study, providing permission for the researchers to ride school buses, and to participate in students’ activities in the classrooms, in the library, and in the cafeteria (during lunch).
Participant observations were conducted for two days in different school settings, including on the school bus, in the classroom, in the library, in the hallways, and in the cafeteria.

The observations took place on Thursday, February 28th, 2002, and on Friday, March 1st, 2002. Such observations were guided by the following research questions: How do students get picked on? How do they communicate with one another? What are students’ conversations like, in general? How do students handle bullying? Is it common that certain students hang together? If so, could these groups be described with names? How do members of the groups relate to one another? For example, how do the athletes get along with the artsy students? Do some students get picked on more often than others? Why is it important to reduce bullying here? What are things that teachers or other adults do that make students’ relationships better or worse?

For the purposes of this article, data collected through participant observations were chunked and coded with numbers and themes. In the context of this study, fourteen bullying situations were observed in the school over two days, on February 28, 2002, on and March 1, 2002. From the observations, there were eleven bullies (coded as Bully 1, Bully 2, Bully 3, Bully 4, Bully 5, Bully 6, Bully 7, Bully 8, Bully 9, Bully 10, Bully 11), and fourteen targets (coded as Target 1, Target 2, Target 3, Target 4, Target 5, Target 6, Target 7, Target 8, Target 9, Target 10, Target 11, Target 12, Target 13, and Target 14), with three targets (Target 1, Target 2, and Target 3) for Bully 1, and two targets (Target 5, and Target 6) for Bully 3. The study utilized techniques of conversation analysis, and semiotic analysis for data analysis, and the results were interpreted accordingly. Conversation analysis stands for “a meticulous analysis of the details of conversation, based on a complete transcript” (Babbie, 2004, p. 375). Semiotic analysis looks for “meanings intentionally or unintentionally attached to signs” (Babbie, 2004, p. 373). The unit of analysis in the study was conversation. All fourteen conversations observed were between students at the middle school. Every conversation observed among the student population on the school bus, in the school cafeteria, hallways, and library, was recorded in the form of written notes as presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Eight out the fourteen bullying scenarios observed were verbal aggressions (they encompass the cases of Bully 1, Bully 2, Bully 3, Bully 6, Bully 7, and Bully 8), five were physical aggressions (which include Bully 3, Bully 4, Bully 5, Bully 9, and Bully 11), and only one was an imitation gesture for mocking a disable student (Bully 10). Though it takes into account the physical aggression scenarios observed, the conversation analysis here focuses specifically on verbal bullying, and the target’s verbal response. In other words, the analysis
capitalizes on the interactions between Bully 1 and Target 1, Bully 1 and Target 2, Bully 1 and Target 3, Bully 2 and Target 4, Bully 3 and Target 6, Bully 6 and Target 9, Bully 7 and Target 10, and Bully 8 and Target 11. The study coded the manifest content (or concrete terms) of such conversations by identifying specific words that serve as indicators of violent communication on the part of the perpetrator (or bully in the context of this study) to determine how violent they are. Responses from the targets were organized into categories of counteractions (verbal or physical) and silence (absence of counteraction). Counteractions will be interpreted as filling the gap of power disparity by creating some power balance in conversations between bullies and targets (with positive incidence on discouraging bullying), whereas absence of counteractions will potentially equate with widening the gap of power imbalance with incidence on encouraging bullying, and with damaging implications in student conversations.
Table 1: Observing Bullying (Day 1 Observation Sheet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Researcher's Comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school bus, the school library and hallways, as well as the dining hall unfortunately become settings for bullying. Some students (apparently more powerful) use destructive words to offend others (less powerful). The bullies continue as long as they do not encounter resistance. Once there is verbal resistance they stop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Observing Bullying (Day 1 Observation Sheet)**

**On the school bus:**

‘Your name is moron’, says a tall boy (Bully 1) shouting at his short neighbor (Target 1) on the opposite seat. The victim looks at the perpetrator, then bends his head and remains silent; the bully goes on.

‘You are stupid’, shouts the same schoolboy (Bully 1) at another student some minutes later. The victim (Target 2) remains silent, and the offender goes on.

The same perpetrator (Bully 1) asks another student (Target 3): *why is your head so big, big head guy?* The target responds: *my Dad says it is because I am smart.* The harasser immediately refrains, opens his book, and starts reading quietly.

Soon after, ‘what are you writing?’, a boy (Bully 2) asks a girl (Target 4). *‘I am writing my nickname’*, she responds. – ‘What is it?’ he continued. ‘Rubber’, she says. ‘That is a good nickname’, he adds. Then the girl starts beating him. ‘That is not abuse’, he reacts.

‘That is abuse’, the girl replies. Then, the boy apologizes.

**In the school library:** A boy (Bully 3) keeps touching a girl’s hair (Target 5). She reacts by beating him; he then stops. Later on, ‘get your bottom off my face’, says the same boy (Bully 3) to another girl (Target 6). The latter looks at him up and down, and hardly moves. The boy then moves away from the girl quickly.

**In the hallways:** A tall guy (Bully 4) keeps beating his small neighbor (Target 7). The latter asks him sadly ‘why are you beating me?’ The persecutor responds, ‘because I can’. At this point, two other students notice the interaction, and ask the bully to stop, which he did and apologized to the target.

Another boy (Bully 5) attempts to hug a girl (Target 8) from the back. She strictly resists by saying ‘no’. The boy suddenly backs up from his attempt, and run away.

**In the dining hall:** A student (Bully 6) calls his neighbor (Target 9), *‘smoker’*. ‘Don’t laugh at me, I don’t tolerate that’, the victim responds. ‘I am teasing you, sorry’ the perpetrator says.
### Table 2. Observing Bullying (Day 2 Observation Sheet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>On the school bus:</strong></th>
<th><strong>FIELD RESEARCHER’S COMMENTS:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A girl (Target 10) is talking and laughing. Suddenly, a guy (Bully 7) behind her interrupts ‘shut up’. She reacts ‘I don’t shut up! That is one thing you have to learn from me’. The boy looks down and moves away. Afterward, another girl (Bully 8) calls her neighbor (Target 11), ‘little man’. ‘You call me little!’ he exclaims, shaking his head in disagreement. As a result, another student witnessing the conversation tells the girl, “you should apologize”. She then apologizes.</td>
<td>The dining hall unfortunately becomes a place of group distinction and exclusion! The hallways sadly become a setting for mocking a disable student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the hallways:</strong> A boy (Bully 9) holds his neighbor’s hair (Target 12). ‘I don’t like that’, she declares. ‘I am just kidding’, he said. ‘You have to stop because I take it personal’, she reacts. The boy stops. Another boy (Bully 10) starts limping in imitation of a handicap student (Target 13) walking ahead of him. The victim notices it, and turns around. The boy laughs and stops for a while. As the victim silently continues his way forward, the bully keeps limping after him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the dining hall:</strong> A group of students are sitting around a table. A boy (Bully 11) comes and starts pushing one (Target 14) of them. The victim asks ‘why are you pushing me?’ The bully responds ‘you need to be where you are now; are you worthy to be where I am?’ Then he laughs, clapping his hands. Other students witnessing the scene ask the victim to go complain. Then, the bully immediately starts walking away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Some Indicators of Violent Communication

The observation sheets from the fourteen bullying scenarios show how bullies communicate to their targets in aggressive manners, often using offensive expressions or words that connote or denote violence. In the context of this study, such expressions include “your name is moron”, “you are stupid”, “Rubber . . . that a good nickname”, “get your bottom off my face”, “shut up”, “little man”, “why is your head so big, big head guy?” “Are you worthy to be where I am?” To some degree, these expressions are meant to insult, to intimidate, to mock, or to exclude their targets in a communication process. Indeed, the word “moron” literally indicates a mentally retarded individual, or a foolish person. The adjective “stupid” also has the same meaning. The bully uses them in an attempt to insult or denigrate his victims. In general, the word “rubber” is not commonly used as a name for individuals. Here, the bully intends to mock or laugh at the victim by implying that rubber is a good nickname. Such expressions as “get your bottom off my face” and “shut up” respectively
imply disdain and intimidation. The use of the expression “little man” reflects mockery or derision, which is also Bully 1’s intention when he asks Target 3 this question: “why is your head so big, big head guy?” A certain propensity to exclusion or discrimination is probably what triggers Bully 11 to challenge Target 14 with the following question: “are you worthy to be where I am?” Due to their violent connotations such expressions all bear the potential of having negative or destructive impacts on their targets.

In every communication process, the words we use are powerful, and they affect both our internal and external environment significantly: they certainly affect the receiver of the message more so than the sender (Benveniste, 1973). Positive words or comments translating into messages of lauds or praises tend to affect their receivers positively by stimulating sentiments of satisfaction or happiness. However, negative words or comments echoed in insults, mockeries, intimidations, and discriminations tend to hurt or harm, or even kill their receivers by generating feelings of dissatisfaction and issues of self-esteem, depression, and possibly suicidal thoughts. Words not only stimulate positive or negative feelings, but they also enact or enable constructive or destructive behaviors or actions. Obviously, behaviors usually follow suit sentiments in any organic process of human interactions. In a process of verbal bullying, words can hurt or kill a target. Therefore, we ought to find systemic ways of counteracting bullying by unveiling how words can also heal. Words can certainly hurt and kill, but they can also heal and redeem human subjects.

Categories of Targets’ Responses: Counteraction or Silence and Implications

The observations conducted in the school reveal two categories of targets’ responses. Some targets actively respond to bullies by countering bullying verbally or physically. Other targets are passive and choose to oppose silence to the abuse. Out of the fourteen bullying situations observed over two days, eleven of the targets successfully counteracted bullying either verbally or physically, or both verbally and physically: eight targets confronted their bullies verbally (including Target 3 versus Bully 1, Target 7 versus Bully 4, Target 8 versus Bully 5, Target 9 versus Bully 6, Target 10 versus Bully 7, Target 11 versus Bully 8, Target 12 versus Bully 9, and Target 14 versus Bully 11), one target defeated the bully both verbally and physically (Target 4 versus Bully 2), one target challenged the bully physically by beating him (Target 5 versus Bully 3), and one target stopped the bullying by using body language through disdainful eye contacts (Target 6 versus Bully 3). The other three targets remained silent in the face of attacks (Target 1 versus Bully 1, Target 2 versus Bully 1, and Target 13 versus Bully 10).
On one hand, all the targets who actively responded to their bullies ended up discouraging or stopping the bullying cycle, according to the observations sheets. Out of the eleven targets that confronted their bullies, seven (including Target 4, Target 5, Target 6, Target 8, Target 9, Target 10, and Target 12) were able to successfully discourage or stop the bullying ipso facto, without the assistance of a third-party intervention, and four (Target 3, Target 7, Target 11, and Target 14) succeeded in ending the aggression with some sort of assistance from a third-party. In an attempt to respond to Bully 1’s inquiry about why his head was so big, Target 3 replied: my Dad says it is because I am smart. This reaction implies that having a big head is nothing to be embarrassed about or ashamed of; instead it is an indication of being intelligent or bright. In other words, what the bully thought was a weakness for the target was turned into a powerful asset by the target’s response. Such a response empowered the target and disarmed the bully; it counteracted the perpetrator’s inclination to bullying with a sudden change in his attitude and behavior: he immediately refrained, opened his book, and started reading quietly. When Bully 3 summoned Target 6: ‘get your bottom off my face’, Target 6 responded with an aggressive look at him up and down, and barely moved. As a result, Bully 3 quietly moved away from her. When Bully 6 called Target 9, ‘smoker’, the latter reacted: ‘don’t laugh at me, I don’t tolerate that’, which triggered the aggressor to say: ‘sorry’. Moreover, as Bully 7 shouted at Target 10 to shut her up, the latter replied: ‘I don’t shut up! That is one thing you have to learn from me’. To such a response the attacker looked down and moved away. Finally, when Bully 8 referred to Target 11 as a ‘little man’, the latter responded in disagreement, which made him get an apology from the perpetrator.

On the other hand, with silent targets the bullies either renewed attacks on the same subjects, or made other victims according to participant observations at the middle school. Opposing silence to bullying seems to be interpreted by the tormentor either as an indicator of acceptance on the part of the target of the attacks, or as a sign of weakness on the part of the target, which gives the former a sense of having some superior power over the latter. Either way, the results show that the target’s silence to aggressions seems to encourage the aggressor to perpetrate further attacks. For instance, when Bully 1 called him ‘moron’, Target 1 remained silent, which enabled the bullying cycle to continue, with Bully 1 treating Target 2 as stupid. As Target 2 also remained silent to the insult, the oppressor perpetuated the bullying cycle to hit Target 3 with this mocking question: why is your head so big, big head guy? To which Target 3 stepped up to respond: My Dad says it is because I am smart.
3’s verbal reaction stopped the bullying cycle as Bull 1 immediately refrained from further bullying, opened up his book, and started reading silently. Additionally, Target 13’s silence in the face of Bull 10’s attack empowered the latter to keep the bullying cycle unfolding according the observations.

**Roles of Third-Party Bystanders**

Our observations confirmed that third-party interventions can play important roles in ending a bullying cycle. According to the observation sheets, third-party interventions contributed to stopping the bullying cycle in four cases out of the eight scenarios where targets confronted the bullying verbally. The four cases include Target 3 versus Bull 1, Target 7 versus Bull 4, Target 11 versus Bull 8, and Target 14 versus Bull 11. In the case of Target 3 versus Bull 1, Target 3’s father stepped in as a third-party whose intervention came in the form of an advice that ultimately empowered Target 3: your head is big because you are smart. Regarding the situation of Target 7 versus Bull 4, the third-party intervention was done by two bystanders who noticed the interaction after Target 7’s reaction, and asked the oppressor to stop, which he did and apologized to the target. As far as the scenario of Target 11 versus Bull 8 is concerned, the third-party intervention was that of another bystander who requested that Bull 8 should apologize to Target 11, which he did. Finally, in the case of Target 14 versus Bull 11, the third-party intervention occurred when a group of students witnessing the scene advised Target 14 to go complain to the school officials about the mistreatment.

It is important to notice that in all four cases here, the third-party interventions follow the targets’ verbal reactions to bullying. In other words, the analyst could say that by verbally engaging their bullies, targets catch outsiders’ attention to witness what is happening in their immediate social environment, and to intervene as a result.

**Interpretation of Results**

The results of our analysis confirm the hypothesis that targets’ response (silence or verbal reaction) to verbal bullying affects bullies’ attitudes or decision to perpetuate or stop bullying cycle. Targets’ verbal response to attacks contributes to ending bullying cycle to some extent. According to our observations in this middle school, all eight targets that verbally counteracted their bullies were able to stop the bullying cycle either with or without a third-party assistance: four targets (including Target 8 versus Bull 5, Target 9 versus Bull 6, Target 10 versus Bull 7, and Target 12 versus Bull 9) ended the bullying without the intervention of a third party, and four targets got some form of third-party assistance.
(including Target 3 versus Bully 1, Target 7 versus Bully 4, Target 11 versus Bully 8, and Target 14 versus Bully 11). Such results call for some discussions.

Some hermeneutics of the case of Target 3 versus Bully 1 would reveal that Target 3 reported to his father how his schoolmates were mocking the size of his head, and how the father advised him to respond by constructively transforming his perception of the size of his head, and by ultimately empowering him over his bullies. As Target 3 followed his father’s advice, Bully 1 stopped calling him name, and he certainly felt empowered as a result. It is as if his father’s words exerted some healing power on Target 3. Words can certainly hurt when they are destructive as bullies’ words do, but they can also heal when they become constructive as they did in Target 3’s case. The lesson we learn from this scenario triggers a recommendation to parents and school officials to dedicate more time to listening to their children and students, and to find creative ways of preemptively or proactively empowering them against bullies. Based upon their responses, the analyst can conclude that such targets with a strong character from the participant observations include Target 9 and Target 10: remember that when Bully 6 called Target 9, ‘smoker’, the latter reacted sharply: ‘don’t laugh at me, I don’t tolerate that’, which triggered the aggressor to say: ‘sorry’. Likewise, as Bully 7 shouted at Target 10 to shut her up, she replied: ‘I don’t shut up! That is one thing you have to learn from me’. Not everybody has such a strong personality; yet, what if it could be acquired through training or socialization processes in a society where bullying has unfortunately become a virus?

It is of paramount importance that parents or educators assist in strengthening their students’ character or personality positively. Parents or educators can do so by providing students with empowering or positive auto-suggestions or advice that help them believe in their capacities and transform what could be seen as their weakness into their strength as in the case of Target 3. Suicide and the worst case scenario could be avoided if parents and educators assist students in taking serious actions against bullying. Fortunately, the media presented some success stories in that regard. On Tuesday, February 7th, 2011, CBS news reported a very moving case of a male victim of bullying at the American Heritage Academy outside Atlanta. The 11-year-old boy who suffered from juvenile arthritis was taunted by his classmates over medical ailment; they mocked his limp and called him “chicken legs and other funny names” because of the way he walked (Hartman, 2011). He was excluded and rejected by the popular kids in the school. He was inflicted much physical and emotional pain, and considered killing himself. After they became aware of the problem, his parents,
teachers, and a classmate took action to help the young boy redeem his image, which prevented him from committing suicide: they took time to listen to him share his nightmare of experience; they moved on to seeking counseling for him; they worked to integrate him in a youth group at church; they made sure he became the manager of the school cross country team with the help of a classmate. Such strategic decisions and actions contributed to helping the teenage student survive bullying, and he was excited to share his story with CBS news at the age of 13 (Hartman, 2011). Achieving success in that process requires a climate of trust where students can open up to their parents and school officials, and the latter devote enough time to listen to their students’ concerns, or seek to inquire about their adventures at school.

The results of our analysis show that in some cases targets’ verbal response alone is not sufficient to discourage the bully or end the bullying cycle. Some targets need the assistance of a third-party intervention to overcome the bully as in the cases of Target 3 versus Bully 1, Target 7 versus Bully 4, Target 11 versus Bully 8, and Target 14 versus Bully 11. Nonetheless, the reader ought to notice that such targets still took the initiative to attract the third-party’s attention to their situation by responding to the bully verbally or by exposing their situation to an outsider. This means that where the target’s words are still weak or ignored by the bully, the former should resort to the assistance of a third-party. Indeed, some bullies will reject or counteract their targets’ response to further victimize them; there should not be any doubt about that. Some victims’ “response to bullying can become the target of more teasing” (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 124). When such scenarios occur, the target ought to seek help from bystanders or an outside third party that could be a fellow student, a teacher, a school official, or a parent.

**Implications and Final Recommendations: The Agere Contra Approach to Bullying**

In its literal meaning, “agere contra” is the Latin expression for ‘act against’. This approach is inspired by the Jesuit Spirituality where the principle of agerecontra requires that the subject finds creative ways to counteract or reject bad thoughts, or bad behaviors. The Jesuit principle of “agere contra” entails that “a soul that wishes to make progress in the spiritual life must always act in a manner contrary to that of the enemy” (Loyola, 2000, p. 124). Such a principle is operationalized in two basic rules for the discernment of spirits according to St. Ignatius of Loyola (2000), rules 325.12 and 326.13. Rule 325.12 states that:

**The enemy becomes weak, loses courage, and turns to flight... as soon as one leading a spiritual life faces his temptations boldly, and does exactly the opposite of what he suggests. However, if one begins to be afraid and to lose courage in**
Article 326.13 stipulates:

When the enemy of our human nature tempts a just soul with his wiles . . . he earnestly desires that they be received secretly and kept secret. But if one manifests them to a confessor, or to some other spiritual person who understand his deceits and malicious designs, the evil one is very much vexed. For he knows that he cannot succeed in his evil undertaking, once his evident deceits have been revealed. (p. 118)

These two rules present ways in which human nature ought to take actions to counter the evil spirit’s attacks in a spiritual process. Rule 325.12 suggests that the target of attacks fearlessly and harshly faces such attacks by opposing the enemy’s inclinations or traps. Doing so weakens and discourages the enemy, and ultimately causes him/her to flee. If the target fails to do so due to a lack of courage or due to fears of the enemy, the latter becomes more stubborn and more powerful in renewing his/her attacks. Apparently, this rule implies that the target takes action personally, without the intervention of a third party. However, rule 326.13 requires that the target seeks the assistance of a third party by unveiling the attacks to a spiritual director. As a result, the two rules are complementary: if a target is not able to implement rule 325.12 (or if s/he fails to succeed in its implementation) for whatever reasons, s/he should resort to rule 326.13. The two rules are not mutually exclusive; a target can use them either alternatively or simultaneously. In other words, the target can select to take action personally and still unveil the situation to the attention of a third party for help.

The present study uses such rules by analogy in an attempt to design a model for counteracting verbal bullying. Bullying is here compared to what St. Ignatius of Loyola (2000) called the “enemy”. Bullying—and not the bully—is the enemy because the bully is also a victim of the evil spirit that bullying reflects. It is essential to differentiate between bullying and the bully. Bullying is bad; it is the problem and not the bully (Winslade & Williams, 2012). Actually, Winslade and Williams (2012) further explain what we mean here:

Every person involved in the bullying relationship is also capable of other styles of relationship. No one is a bully or a victim by nature. The bully, the victim, and the bystander are names, not so much of persons as of positions in a narrative. People enter these positions and perform their narrative function, but they can also set the
story aside, given an effective invitation to do so. The challenge is to create an opportunity for each of them to step out of the story of bullying and into another storyline that is incompatible with ongoing bullying. (p. 128)

As a human being, the bully is a person who has the potential of transformation for good behaviors. To some degree, bullies’ bad behaviors could be attributed to bad upbringing or social exposures, negative peer pressures, or related issues of unsafe environments they have experienced. This perspective on bullying reflects the view of the French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, (1964) on society when he suggests that human beings are good by nature; it is society that corrupts them. Thus, a good socialization or education process could help bullies overcome bullying behaviors. In other words, the bullies also need help to learn good behaviors, such as loving and respecting those who are different from them. The fact that the observation sheets show some bullies apologizing to their targets enhances the importance of distinguishing the bullying behavior from the person of the bully. Indeed, over the fourteen bullying cases covered in this study, four bullies ended up apologizing to their targets: these include Bully 2 to Target 4, Bully 4 to Target 7, Bully 6 to Target 9, and Bully 8 to Target 11. If they are able to apologize, it means they recognize their wrongdoing somehow, and they just need help to anticipate and avoid bullying and learn good behaviors. Ultimately, if it is a fact that bullies use their physical, verbal, intellectual, material, or psychological power to hurt those who are weaker or smaller than them, it is certainly possible to teach them to use such powers to serve, help, and love their social environment. Parents and educators should spend more time teaching students to show respect to one another, and to be acceptant of their differences.

The agere contra approach to bullying encourages the target to first respond verbally to bullying, and then bring the issue to the attention of a third party for assistance (see Table 3). The first response is likely to empower the target mentally, as s/he bravely confronts the attacks with the power of words or phrases such as “don’t laugh at me, I don’t tolerate that”, “I don’t shut up! That is one thing you have to learn from me”, all phrases used by Target 9 and Target 10 as observed in this middle school. The list of catchwords for verbally countering bullying could include other catchphrases such as ‘I demand that you stop’, ‘I do not like it’, ‘you can behave better than that’, or any creative verbal motto such as the one by Target 3 in response to Bully 1’s injunction: “my Dad says it is because I am smart”. The target’s verbal response and subsequent empowerment may contribute to discouraging, disarming, slowing, or stopping the bullying cycle as in the case of Target 9 versus Bully 6,
and Target 10 versus Bully 7. However, regardless of the outcome of the target’s verbal response, the *agere contra* approach would require that the target takes one additional step by bringing the situation to the attention of a third party that is able to assist in addressing the issue more broadly and effectively. Because of the danger bullying presents to individual and public health, it is therapeutic and safe for both the target and the bully, as well as for their school community that a third party comes in to address the bullying situation thoroughly in a bigger picture. A third-party intervention would certainly assist in transforming their relationship constructively and help the subjects grow. This second action is in reference to the rule 326.13 (Loyola, 2000) mentioned previously, which requires the target to unveil the attacks to a spiritual director that should be a conflict resolution specialist.

Table 3. *Agere Contra* Approach to Bullying

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Bullying Attacks</th>
<th>Target’s Response: <em>Agere Contra</em> Approach to Bullying</th>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Attacks</td>
<td>(1) Verbal Reaction [followed by (2)]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Bring Issue to Attention of Third-Party</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(a conflict resolution specialist intervenes</td>
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<td>with open anti-bullying teams made up of</td>
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<td>students)</td>
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Specifics of a third-party intervention in school bullying presuppose the services of a conflict resolution specialist working for or within the school. It is critical to emphasize here the importance for each school to have a conflict resolution specialist because their education and training in conflict resolution predispose them to efficiently assist students in handling bullying which is here perceived a destructive conflict pattern within the school system. Their skills in intervention allow them to isolate the issues from the persons in order to tackle the destructive issues and help the persons constructively. As a result, they will be able to help targets, bullies, and their communities by tackling bullying accordingly. If each school can afford a school nurse or counselor, they should also bring on board a conflict resolution specialist in order to successful address the virus of bullying within school communities. Considering the negative impacts of bullying on our school communities, having a conflict resolution specialist working in the school compound is now as vital as having a school nurse.

To counteract verbal bullying, using the *agere contra* approach, the school conflict resolution specialist ought to reflectively and respectively listen to bullying targets, and
subsequently set-up peer anti-bullying teams to carefully and methodically counteract bullying within the school community. To some extent, this perspective relies on the “undercover anti-bullying teams” approach suggested by Winslade and Williams (2012, p. 127). According to Winslade and Williams:

Establishing undercover anti-bullying teams is an example of a practice that breaks new ground for counselors and employs their professional skills in a way that addresses behavior problems and transforms relationships, without resorting to an authoritarian approach. It can reduce bullying in a school to the benefit of students’ learning, teachers’ classroom management, and administrators’ workloads. (pp. 127-128)

Unlike scholars that advocate for undercover anti-bullying teams (Winslade & Williams, 2012), the present study suggests that such anti-bullying teams should not be undercover, but open. Indeed, open anti-bullying teams within schools are more likely to exert a positive peer pressure that generates a more systemic movement for counteracting bullying on a larger scope than the environment of a single school. Open anti-bullying teams could follow the pattern or trend of a regular student association or movement that publicly and instrumentally stands against bullying. Such teams should be exclusively made up of students to emphasize their orientation to peer-intervention, and to avoid the punitive message that the presence of a school authority might insinuate. Inspired by Winslade and Williams’s (2012) perspective on undercover anti-bullying teams, the open anti-bullying teams should also include a couple of students who perpetrate bullying; however such students should be outnumbered by students who do not bully. By integrating students who do bullying in the anti-bullying teams, the *agere contra* approach intends to embrace a transformative approach to bullying, which distinguishes the problem from the person creating the problem, herein, the bullying from the person committing bullying. Their integration into the teams also grants the bullies an opportunity to be exposed to, and learn good behaviors from their other teammates, by understanding bullying as a bad behavior, and ultimately fight against it. To be more specific, an open anti-bullying team should be made of eight members, including four females and four males for a gender balance. The eight members will include six students who are good role-models, and two students who do bullying. The set-up of the peer anti-bullying team should be designed by the school conflict resolution specialist in collaboration with the bullying target in order to allow the target to take responsibility for resolution and experience empowerment and healing. The conflict
resolution specialist does not act as an authority that decides what to do on behalf of the teams, but he or she plays the facilitative role of a transformative mediator who empowers the parties to recognize one another and to dynamically take control of the process and outcome of problem-solving.

The open anti-bullying team will take on the mission to monitor bullying activities around the identified target in the school environment, and to decisively stand to protect, defend, and empower the target verbally and morally in every situation where verbal bullying occurs. In addition, the anti-bullying team members should be trained to intervene as peer mediators between the bully and the target. Peer mediation is a process of mediation in which students serve as mediators to help their fellows in conflict solve their problem collaboratively by exploring issues systematically (Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Schrumpf, Crawford, & Bodine, 1997). Peer mediation sessions will be used for the parties to experience the healing power of words. In such sessions, the victim should be allowed to express their frustrations to the perpetrator of bullying. The latter should be given the opportunity to listen to the victim, to express remorse, and apologize to the victim with healing phrases such as “I am sorry”, “I regret I did this to you”, I feel bad I hurt you”. Peer mediation can ultimately help empower the victim and inject a culture of healing in the school environment. Furthermore, the anti-bullying team should organize weekly anti-bullying events or forums that are open to the entire school community. Such events will serve as the venue to send clear messages against bullying through the means of student presentations, flyers, or posters. They will also be the place to recognize the anti-bullying team members by presenting them with incentives and rewards for hardworking. Such activities should creatively aim at providing bullies, victims, and their communities with an opportunity for change, growth, and healing. Success will be measured by the target’s report on the reduction or end of bullying assaults s/he experiences, along with his/her expression of satisfaction with the involvement of his/her anti-bullying team. This implies that the conflict resolution specialist consults daily or weekly (depending on the criticality of the case and on the workload) with the team and the target on their achievements and progress. Such moments of consultations could serve as a forum for providing advice and guidance for success. In other words, the consultative forum in the process provides an opportunity for a formative evaluation.

Upon the target’s request, and following his/her expression of satisfaction with the anti-bullying team’s performance, there will be a summative evaluation of the team’s
involvement in relation to the target’s satisfaction. The summative evaluation will ask the target a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions such as the following: Did you like the process? What did you like most in the team’s involvement? How do you feel now? Do you feel better? Do you think the team has helped stop the bullying circle? Do you like the team’s involvement? What would you recommend for improvement in how the team operates? Would you recommend the team to any other target? Members of the team will also be asked more or less similar questions such as: What do you think of the team’s performance? Were you happy to be a part of the team? Do you like working with the team? Do you want to continue being part of this team? How do you see the team’s involvement? What would recommend for improvement?

Conclusion

This study examined fourteen conversations from observations conducted on bullying in 2002, in a Middle School in Virginia to: (1) identify power disparity in verbal bullying between bullies and targets in terms of the gap between the words used by bullies and the targets’ silent attitudes, (2) examine how power disparity in verbal bullying empowers the perpetrator against silent targets, by highlighting the hurtful power of words in bullying, (3) explain how targets’ verbal responses neutralize bullies or stop bullying, and (4) design the “agere contra” approach to counteracting bullying, which demonstrates how words could also be used to heal both the perpetrator and the target of bullying with the intervention of third parties.

Conversation analysis and semiotic analysis of the data translated into results that show that the target’s verbal response as well as a third-party intervention is required to counteract verbal bullying successfully. The study designs and highly recommends the use of the agere contra approach to bullying, which integrates both target’s response and third-party intervention to counteract verbal bullying. The agere contra approach will recommend every school to have a conflict resolution specialist whose role will be to (1) coach or teach victims of bullying to find creative ways to respond verbally to the perpetrators, and (2) create open peer anti-bullying teams made of bullies and non-bullies for intervening against bullying, and performing peer mediation activities. The notion of peer anti-bullying teams is inspired by Winslade and Williams’s (2012) practice of undercover anti-bullying teams. However, this study recommends that such teams are not undercover because they may have a greater impact if they are overt.
The implication of this study for policymaking is straightforward. Policymakers and school officials could find useful tools in the open anti-bullying teams to successfully counteract bullying on a large scale in their school environment. The study also has interesting implications for research in the way it uses conversation analysis, and semiotic analysis to examine a phenomenon such as school bullying. More research ought to be done on bullying by using methods that analyze what is said and done by individual bullies.

This study presents some limitations. Its first limitation emerges from the fact that all fourteen observations were limited to the environment of only one school. Spreading observations on a larger scope, beyond the perimeter of a single school, to encompass many more schools would provide more meaningful results for policymaking. Implicit to this limitation is the small number of observations conducted in this study: analysts could reasonably argue that fourteen observations are not sufficient to make a strong case against bullying. The second limitation of this study is in the time period of the observations which covered only two days, with cross-sectional data collection. The dynamic of data collection and analysis would be different with more reliable results if data collection was longitudinal over a longer time-period. The third limitation is reflected by the single method used for data collection: using additional techniques such as open-ended interviews and surveys would have contributed to enrich the data, and ultimately increased the quality of the results. Another limitation comes from the possibility that the target’s verbal response would even further the bullying cycle as some bullies may challenge the target’s response with increased or additional attacks, and escalation of violence. Finally, the use of more rigorous methods that go beyond conversation analysis and semiotic analysis would foster broader results that can be used for policymaking on a wider scale.

References


Symbolic and Concrete Demands in Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Rotem Nagar and Jacob Shamir

Abstract
Researchers have recently leveled criticism at the realist approach to conflict resolution by pointing out the importance of symbolic aspects of this issue. Few studies, however, have hitherto focused on symbolic demands in conflicts. The present study examines the role of symbolic as well as concrete demands in conflict resolution, and is therefore innovative in this regard. A demand is categorized as “concrete” if it is based on an interest that is viable and applicable, in that it involves tangible resources that may change hands or be divided. A “symbolic” demand, on the other hand, pivots on either refraining from or taking action rather than on a tangible result. With reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this research suggests that the relationship between symbolic and concrete demands can serve as a tool for achieving conflict resolution – not only by compensating for symbolic demands with concrete demands and vice versa but also by balancing between the symbolic and the concrete aspects within the same demand. These findings may have valuable implications for the use of symbolic discourse as an instrument to transform conflicts.

Introduction
According to the classical realist approach to conflict resolution, the parties’ actions are motivated by the desire to advance their interests and maximize their gains, and therefore symbolic aspects of the issue are deemed irrelevant. During the last two decades, however, realist researchers have conceded that, within the boundaries of the realist research of negotiations, symbolic aspects should not be dismissed altogether – albeit recognizing them only as part of a game whose object is to maximize gains (Zartman, 1983). This approach has, in turn, incurred criticism, on the grounds that conflicts can be better understood through the prism of symbolism rather than realism (Faure, 1999; Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002). Thus, in investigations of conflict resolution, the importance of symbolic issues in conflicts has recently come to the forefront.

To the extent that symbols are at the heart of conflicts, matters of honor and guilt may be more important than even the central resource of the village life – the land (Nader & Todd, 1978). Issues that accumulate throughout a conflict have symbolic value that may "defy simple, rational understanding" (Faure, 1999, p. 20) and pertain to human suffering and honor, rather than to land and houses that have been lost forever (Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002).
Conflicts are based on key rights and/or demands that arise from basic identity metaphors and narratives (Zartman, 1983; Ross, 2001). Accordingly, human rights have become an integral part of conflict resolution (Gaer, 1997; Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002). Conflicts have also come to involve sacred values (such as justice), which are perceived as absolute and uncompromisable (Atran et al., 2007; Atran & Axelrod, 2008; Wade-Benzi et al., 2002). It is not surprising, therefore, that barriers in fundamental political conflicts often include differences in the sacred values and narratives of the sides (Susskind et al., 2005; Bazerman et al., 2008). Conversely, a symbolic gesture recognizing the values of the “other” may facilitate the negotiation and even resolution of a charged conflict. Moreover, symbolic meanings may have a powerful effect on the actions of the negotiating parties (Faure, 1999). Indeed, in international politics, nations’ behavior is not based solely on considerations of power and sheer interests, but often involves aspirations for justice as well (Welch, 1993).

In conflicts accompanied by turbulent emotions and disagreements over prestige, the solution to the crisis may lie in a symbolic remedy (Cohen, 1997). However, to secure just and legitimate peace, the symbolic sacrifice may not be enough: more matters must be settled, including recognition of the “other” as an entity with an identity, history and culture (the so-called “thin recognition”) and understanding the basic characteristics of the “other” (“wide recognition”) (Allan & Keller, 2006). Recognizing the rights of the “other,” even on the declarative level, may provide the basis for a constructive negotiation and demonstrate a symbolic willingness to settle the conflict (Kaufman & Bisharat, 2002). Yet, in spite of the findings that point to the importance of symbolic aspects in conflict resolution, few researchers have examined the effect of symbolic demands on international political processes. The present study seeks to fill this void by developing an approach in conflict research that acknowledges the limitations of the realist models and examines the role of symbolic demands, as well as their relation to concrete demands, in conflict resolution processes. In addition to offering a new theoretical perspective on this issue, we focus on the practical implications of the analysis of conflict resolution processes, and especially the use of symbolic discourse as an instrument to transform conflicts.

Concrete and Symbolic Demands

The concepts of concrete and symbolic demands are based on Fraser’s (1995) theoretical work. Fraser described a conceptual continuum between two types of demands for social justice: recognition and redistribution. Demands for distributive justice stem from socio-economic injustice linked to the economic structure. Demands for identity recognition
arise out of cultural injustice rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication. Unlike the paradigm of redistribution, cultural injustice aligns better with Webber’s status groups than with Marx’s classes. While, according to the redistribution paradigm, the solution is a new economic structure, the remedy suggested by the recognition paradigm is a symbolic change (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Fraser’s model has sparked disagreement among scholars. Young (1997) contends that it represents a false dichotomy, and that redistribution and recognition are not mutually exclusive, but rather both stem from a demand for justice. Honneth (2001) censures Fraser’s work, imputing to it Marxist economic reductionism, and arguing that redistribution is essential for justice but should be subsumed under the category of recognition. Economic injustice, on Honneth’s view, is experienced as injustice stemming from disrespect, for example the violation of a complex order of recognition in society.

While conceding that recognition and redistribution are not “clear-cut” categories, we will argue – contrary to Honneth’s (2001) approach – that the distinction between them is meaningful, and that therefore this dualism deserves a place in the study of political demands in negotiation. In line with Fraser (1995, 1998), we will attempt to demonstrate that an analytic distinction can be drawn between demands that are primarily symbolic, such as recognition, justice and apology, on the one hand, and demands that are inherently concrete, such as distribution of territory, water etc., on the other. Our working hypothesis to this effect is that demands set forth in negotiations can be located on a bi-polar continuum ranging from “symbolic” to “concrete.” The mapping of the various demands, and the analysis of the relations between them, should be performed bearing in mind the uncertainties involved in delimiting the two categories and the possibility that any specific demand may be linked to both ends of the spectrum.

We categorize a demand as concrete if it is based on an interest that is viable and applicable, in that it includes tangible resources that may change hands or be divided. For a demand to be symbolic, its meaning must lie in the action of making it and not in a tangible result. While any specific demand might carry both a symbolic and a concrete connotation, we classify it as either symbolic or concrete depending on the phrasing. Thus “water” is arguably an emotionally charged term, but at the same time it is an important physical resource. Consequently, a specific suggestion regarding the use of water is considered a concrete demand. Similarly, while recognition is usually perceived as a purely symbolic act, a demand to accept the end of demands is, in itself, a legal political demand which has the
concrete significance of assuring the other side that no additional demands, concrete or symbolic, can be made. In this case, even though no material property has changed hands, the right to make demands has been forfeited, and this has strong concrete implications.

**Methodology**

In this study, the role of symbolic and concrete demands in conflict resolution is examined in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The situation investigated is rife with political symbolism due to the sides’ strong emotional attitudes regarding questions of land, nation, security and survival. It has been argued that the failure of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to reach a solution is attributable to symbolic factors (Hermann & Newman, 2000).

Negotiations to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict epitomize a contrast between symbolic discourse regarding recognition and justice, on the one hand, and concrete discourse regarding resources in a framework of costs and benefits, on the other. Most researchers concur that the Palestinian side tends to perceive the conflict in terms of rights and frame its demands in terms of justice, focusing on key values (Albin, 2001; Allan & Keller, 2006; Peled & Rouhana, 2007). By contrast, the Israeli side purportedly frames the negotiation in terms of rational cost-benefit analysis centered on considerations of security and territory (Albin, 2001; Shamir & Shikaki, 2010; Sabet, 1998). It goes without saying that this difference in perception is reflected in the public and the political arenas; it determines the framing of the conflict management in public discourse and influences the assessment of possibilities for various solutions.

In this study, the symbolic and concrete aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were examined using two methodological tools: (1) interviews with politicians and experts on both sides who had been involved in the peace process over the years, and (2) surveys to gauge the Israeli and Palestinian public opinion.

**Politicians and Experts Involved In the Peace Process**

Our choice of the sample was motivated by two considerations. First, the politicians and public figures we interviewed were familiar with the entire negotiation process and with the demands set forth by both parties over the years. Moreover, these were the key figures in the peace process: the ones who had led the negotiations and suggested wordings to resolve the disputed issues.

The respondents’ preferences for concrete versus symbolic demands were assessed based on semi-structured in-depth interviews. The attitudes of the Israeli and the Palestinian
experts were examined with regard to each of the demands that had been subject to negotiation over the years: the right of return; recognizing the pain and suffering of the refugees; recognizing Israel's part in creating the refugee problem; water rights; territory; security; end of the conflict; end of demands; mutual recognition of Palestine and Israel as the national homes of their respective peoples; recognition of the State of Israel as a state of the Jewish people. For each demand, we determine whether the interviewers treated it as symbolic or concrete, according to the analytic distinction elaborated above.

The interviews with the Israeli experts were conducted in Hebrew and took place in Israel. The Palestinian experts were interviewed in Arabic, mostly in the West Bank, by a Palestinian Israeli and the interviews were subsequently translated into Hebrew.

All in all, eleven interviews were conducted with Israeli Jewish experts and politicians. All Israeli interviewees studied in depth the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and had participated in formal and informal negotiations, as negotiators or as political consulates, among them the Oslo negotiations, the Taba Summit and the Camp David summit in 2000 and so on. Moreover, three of the Israeli interviewees participated in drafting the Geneva Accord, the only final status peace accord drafted jointly by Israelis and Palestinians.

Five interviews were conducted with Palestinian experts and politicians. All Palestinian interviewees are senior public leaders, most of them in senior positions in the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) and/or the Palestinian National Authority. Most of the Palestinian interviewees had participated in formal and informal negotiations, among them the Oslo negotiations, the Wye River discussions, the Taba Summit and the Camp David summit in 2000. Some of them participated in drafting the Geneva Accord. All interviewees were assured that they will not be quoted directly, and to protect their identities, throughout the paper they will be referred to by random letters of the alphabet.

Public Opinion among Israelis and Palestinians

As stated before, in addition to the interviews, we conducted opinion polls among the Palestinian and Israeli publics. The decision to study public opinion was prompted by the important role it plays in the two-level negotiation game (Putnam, 1988; Shamir & Shikaki, 2010) and in foreign policy decisions (Holsti, 1992). Indeed, it is public opinion that underlies collective wisdom and lends legitimacy to leaders and policies alike (Shamir & Shamir, 2000). Moreover, given the reciprocal relation between state leadership and public opinion (Shamir, 2005), an analysis of each cannot be complete without the understanding of the other. Public opinion is known to be sensitive to symbolic gestures and lend support to a
negotiator who comes up with an appropriate wording to frame a demand – this may be especially the case in conflicts over symbolic values (Shamir & Shikaki, 2010). It is therefore necessary to examine the views of both publics investigated, on both symbolic and material issues, particularly in light of their sensitivity to the symbolic aspects of this specific debate.

The data are based on the Joint Israeli-Palestinian Poll (JIPP), which has simultaneously tracked Israeli and Palestinian public opinion since 2000. The polls were planned and supervised by Prof. Yaacov Shamir, of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University, and Prof. Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR). In addition to using data from the polls conducted since the year of 2000, we developed several questions regarding demands related to redistribution and recognition and included them in the December 2008 and March 2010 polls (Israeli poll: N=600; Palestinian poll: N=1270). In all the surveys the Palestinian data are based on face-to-face interviews conducted among representative samples in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Israeli data comprise of interviews with representative samples of adult Israelis conducted over the phone in Hebrew, Arabic or Russian. The Israeli sample is weighted based on the proportion of Arab and Jewish citizens in the general population, as well as on the results of the general elections preceding the poll.

Respondents were presented with pairs of issues, one symbolic and the other concrete, and asked which among the two they deemed the more important. In all the pairs, symbolic gains were centered around recognition, due to the importance of this issue in the day-to-day political discourse, while concrete issues focused on territorial compromises. Israeli respondents were asked to choose between Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people versus sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. In addition, they were asked to choose between Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state versus sovereignty over settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria. Palestinian respondents were asked to choose between Israeli recognition of the right of return, accompanied by the return of refugees to Palestine (but not to Israel), versus a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders. In addition, they were asked to choose between Israeli recognition of the right of return, accompanied by the return of refugees to Palestine (but not to Israel) versus Palestinian sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem.
In addition, each participant was asked to rank two symbolic and two concrete demands in terms of their importance. The demands that were presented to the Israeli sample and those that were presented to the Palestinian sample had nearly identical social and cultural significance for the sides. The following demands were presented randomly to the Israeli sample: Creating early warning facilities within the Palestinian state to prevent a surprise attack; Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people; securing Israel’s water rights; Palestinian recognition of Israeli pain and suffering throughout the conflict (2008), or alternatively, Palestinian declaration of the “end of the conflict” (2010). The demands that were randomly presented to the Palestinian sample were as follows: safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza; Israeli recognition of Palestine as the home of the Palestinian people; securing Palestinian water rights in any future agreement; Israeli recognition of the pain and suffering caused to the Palestinians throughout the conflict. In order to compare the issues in terms of their importance to the respondents, each of the issues presented to both the Israeli and the Palestinian participants was assigned an index of importance based on the following formula:

\[
\text{Index of Importance (only for the questions that involved ranking in terms of importance):} \\
(1) \\
(Frequency as first priority) \times 4 + (frequency of as second priority) \times 3 + (frequency as third priority) \times 2 + (frequency as last priority) \times 1.
\]

**Findings: Examining the Symbolic-Concrete Continuum for Each Side**

**Experts’ Assessment of Each Negotiated Demand as Symbolic and/or Concrete**

**The right of return**

Most Israeli interviewees distinguished between a declarative symbolic recognition of the right of return and its concrete implementation. The prevailing feeling among the Israeli participants was that, throughout peace negotiations, Palestinians have emphasized the symbolic demand in this regard but have been willing to compromise on its concrete implementation. Israeli interviewee A, for example, stated that “the declaration is more important to them... than the actual implementation. It is important to their leadership... [it is] important to their people, it’s important to the refugees.” The interviewees based their opinions on both formal and informal negotiations. Thus, Israeli interviewee E mentioned the Geneva Accord, in which, as he put it, the Palestinians “gave up the right of return in exchange for a symbolic right of return.” Israeli interviewee F brought up the negotiations...
with Yasser Arafat, contending that Arafat's historic “trade-off,” as he called it, “was to exchange Palestinian sovereignty over Temple Mount for the right to return,” a concession that is both material and symbolic. In the same light the Israeli interviewees saw the Arab Initiative for Peace. Thus, participant F believed that the Arab League’s March 2009 decision clearly indicates that the Palestinian side is willing to forgo any actual return of refugees.

The Palestinian interviewees emphasized that recognition is essential but not sufficient, and that concrete implementation is needed. They noted, however, that they are well aware that the extent of the right of return must be regulated based on an agreement with Israel, or in other words, that not all refugees would return to the State of Israel. Their responses distinguished between the recognition of each refugee’s right to return and a limited implementation of this right. Palestinian interviewee N asserted that the Palestinians “understand that, at the end of the process [peace negotiations], not all refugees can or would want to return.” He went on to say that, while “for Palestinians, recognition of the right of return is very important... they know that there is a difference between having a right and realizing it.” Palestinian interviewee M stated that “Israel must recognize this right in principle... We need to… separate between… the issue of recognizing the right and the responsibility for the great crime... and the issue of implementation.”

Recognizing the pain and suffering of the refugees and recognizing Israel’s part in creating the refugee problem.

Most Israeli interviewees saw recognition of the pain and suffering of the Palestinian refugees as an important part of the negotiation, which may serve as a compensation for more concrete concessions. However, no consensus emerged regarding Israel’s obligation to accept responsibility for creating the refugee problem. Indeed, some of the respondents expressed the belief that the pain and suffering of the Palestinian people ought to be recognized, albeit without taking blame for it. Israeli interviewee I felt that hundreds of Palestinians “want the feeling that Israel says that it admits… responsibility for what happened with the refugees.” However, in the Geneva Accord “we did go that far recognizing the suffering caused to the Palestinian people [without taking responsibility].” In his opinion, recognition of the Palestinian suffering is important, and if the Palestinian representatives in the Geneva negotiation had been satisfied in this regard, this would have had “a good effect on the Palestinian public opinion.” Israeli interviewee J, who suggested that Israel should recognize the pain and suffering, saw the Palestinian demand that recognition of pain and suffering should be combined with acceptance of responsibility as
“an impossible combination” – and as he put it, “a zero-sum game.” On the other hand, Israeli interviewee C believed that accepting responsibility is important for the negotiation. He stated that the third and fourth generations of refugees:

“…want two things... one is related to the concrete dimension and the other to the symbolic dimension. Regarding the concrete dimension, they want a solution... in terms of compensation and rehabilitation in exchange for their terrible loss... Regarding the symbolic dimension... it’s [for Israel] to stand up and apologize.”

The Palestinian side also attached great importance to recognizing the pain and suffering of refugees, but pointed out that Israel must accept responsibility for the emergence of the refugee problem. Moreover, they emphasized that this recognition must be accompanied by concrete actions. Palestinian interviewee M stated that the solution to the refugee problem requires “first and foremost” Israeli recognition of the Nakba and of Israel’s responsibility for it, and underscored the practical implications of such responsibility: “I don’t care about the apology if it is not accompanied by a practical procedure...” Palestinian interviewee A held a similar position, stating: “Recognizing the pain and suffering is important but it's not everything. To achieve peace, we want to see... things happening in the Palestinian people's reality.”

**Water rights.**

All but one of the Israeli interviewees expressed a pragmatic view of this issue, seeking alternative technical solutions to dividing the Mountain Aquifer, such as desalination. Palestinian interviewees likewise focused on the concrete aspect of the situation, namely, the need for an equal share of the water. Unlike the Israelis, however, Palestinian interviewees offered fewer specific solutions to the problem. Palestinian Interviewee N stated that, to the best of his knowledge as a member of the committee that negotiated water rights, “there is nothing symbolic, it's a practical thing.” Palestinian Interviewee O was one of two respondents who spoke in terms of justice: “We want a fair and just solution to the division of resources and water.” Palestinian Interviewee M highlighted the Palestinians rights under international law, but also called for an equitable division of the water.

**Territory (including the Jerusalem question).**

It has been widely acknowledged that any debate over territory includes both symbolic and concrete aspects, and this is especially so when the point of contention is Jerusalem and its sacred sites. Nevertheless, both the Israeli and the Palestinian interviewees
revealed for the most part a pragmatic attitude in this matter, and their approach to the issue pivoted on practical solutions for the division of territories. Indeed, most saw Jerusalem as a divisible resource—in fact, in their view, it was already divided, for all intents and purposes.

Israeli interviewees E, C, and J offered solutions involving an exchange of territory. Interviewee J even quantified the problem, asserting that a “serious” disagreement was confined to 5% of the West Bank, while the debate over the rest of the territory had been resolved by prior negotiations. Israeli Interviewee A suggested that a concession in terms of territorial exchange can help achieve compromises on the right of return. Israeli interviewee B supported a pragmatic approach to territorial issues, criticizing the shift in the attitude of the Israeli public from pragmatic to symbolic, expressed in the discourse focusing on “historical rights to the land of Israel.” He rejected the “united Jerusalem” approach, stating that the issue is not pragmatic (“no one looks at the map”) and that “the unity of Jerusalem” has become “a slogan.”

The Palestinian interviewees’ discussion of territory likewise centered on practical solutions. Palestinian interviewees L, N, P and O spoke of recognizing the 1967 borders and allocating land based on territorial exchange. L stated that territory is a pragmatic rather than a symbolic issue: “From a pragmatic perspective, I know that to get Hebron I need to give up Haifa. I can’t get both Haifa and Hebron. I expect the same of the Israeli side.”

**Security.**

As is the case with territory, it has been widely acknowledged that security is an issue that incorporates symbolic as well as concrete aspects. Here, too, the interviews revealed a pragmatic approach on the part of the Israeli respondents, most of whom addressed the issue by offering practical solutions. Israeli interviewee I, for example, explained why any solution in this regard must involve demilitarization in exchange for “strategic depth” (strategic presence of Israeli forces outside of the Green Line). Israeli interviewee H described the security problem as a complex set of “technical issues” that are already being solved on a daily basis. As in the discussions of territory, a number of Israeli interviewees criticized what they saw as symbolic intransigence on security issues among Israeli public. Israeli interviewee G, for example, criticized the insistence of the Israeli side on reserving the right to fly over the West Bank, and contended that it was a symbolic demand with no substance to it: “What's the area of the West Bank for an F15 or F16?... It’s a joke.”

On the Palestinian side, interviewees N, M and L offered specific suggestions in connection with security issues. Thus, interviewee N spoke about an international presence
in the Jordan Rift Valley, and the possibility of using radar and satellite dishes in the West Bank. Similarly, interviewee M suggested that an international force be present, “for the short or long term as determined by both sides.” Interviewee L chose to discuss a security model proposed as part of the Geneva Accord. Palestinian interviewees M and P, on the other hand, saw security as a tool used by Israel to seize land.

**End of the conflict and end of demands.**

“End of the conflict” is a political demand that the accord mark the formal end of the conflict. “End of demands” is a political-legal demand that both parties’ demands be set down in the accord, such that, once the accord has been signed, parties can only claim its implementation.

While some of the Israeli interviewees saw both these demands as concrete and essential, others saw the end of demands as a concrete claim, while the end of the conflict as symbolic. From the responses of Israeli interviewees, it was clear that those who viewed end of the conflict as a concrete demand believed it to be important. Interviewees who saw this demand as symbolic, on the other hand, were divided as to its importance for the peace process. Thus, for Israeli interviewee K, both demands were essential:

If you leave things open, then we haven’t ended the conflict… It’s very important for Israel that the peace agreement should stipulate the end of the conflict… Regarding demands, that’s a legal issue. This means all the demands… have been settled.

In contrast, in the opinion of Israeli interviewee B, the end of demands is a legal contract, while the end of the conflict symbolizes the shift from a pragmatic public discussion to a symbolic public discussion, the latter characteristic of Israeli public opinion in recent years. Similarly, Interviewee C regarded the end of the conflict as “something that we… I don’t want to say we made it up, but maybe we did.” In his view, the end of the conflict demand has no concrete significance; yet, in the Geneva Accord, he had pushed for its inclusion on account of its symbolic value, which – he believed – could serve as “a tool that would help sell the agreement to the Israeli public.”

On the Palestinian side, all the interviewees attached importance to both demands in equal measure. Unlike the Israelis, the Palestinians saw both the end of the conflict and the end of demands claim as endowed with concrete significance. For example, Palestinian interviewee N stated that both demands were important “from the perspective that both sides can be sure that they have solved all the problems.” Similarly, Palestinian interviewee P
believed both these demands to be important and pointed to the section of the Arab Peace Initiative referring to them.

Mutual recognition of Palestine and Israel as the national homes of their respective peoples and recognition of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people.

Mutual recognition of Palestine and Israel as the national homes of their respective peoples and recognition of the state of Israel as the state of the Jewish people are inherently symbolic demands, which according to our definition above are not accompanied by tangible concessions. During the interviews, we examined how important the demands for recognition are to each of the sides.

While some of the Israeli interviewees supported the demand of mutual recognition, all had reservations about demanding recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people. Israeli interviewee C, for example, proposed an alternative wording, namely, that both sides acknowledge the right to mutual self-determination:

The way we did it in the Geneva Accord was much more clever, since in the Geneva Accord, or even in other places... we said that each of the States can determine its own identity, or we said Israel defining itself as the home of the Jewish people, say, signs an agreement with the Palestinian State defining itself as the national home of the Palestinian people. So that way you don’t demand that the other side recognize your self-determination, but you demand that the other side acknowledge that you have the right to self-determination...

Israeli interviewee B believed that it is impossible to reach an agreement without dealing with the issue of mutual recognition, and offered what he described as a “simple solution”: “For example, repeat the wording of the UN Partition Plan... and that’s the end of it... It’s a pragmatic solution to a supposedly symbolic question.” However, he went on to say, this solution “is never going to materialize if Israel insists on the ‘symbolic issue’ of recognizing Israel as the state of the Jewish people, while pragmatically, we don’t need Palestinians to recognize that: we decide what kind of a country it is.” He sees this demand as a part of the above-mentioned process whereby Israeli discourse has shifted from pragmatic to symbolic issues. Israeli interviewees I and E were exceptions, in that they disagreed with the notion of mutual recognition as well as with the demand to recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people. They asserted that there is no need to demand mutual recognition. E, for example, stated that a clause addressing mutual recognition should not be
included in any peace agreement, since such recognition has already been given in the past and, additionally, no such clause appears in any other peace agreement in the Middle East.

In contrast to the Israelis, Palestinian interviewees were not in agreement regarding the significance of mutual recognition of national homes, and some opposed this notion. However, all the Palestinian interviewees concurred with their Israeli counterparts in that each state may define itself however it sees fit, and claimed that political recognition would only complicate the issue. For example, Palestinian interviewee M opposed mutual recognition stating, “because what’s important to the agreement are two things: mutual political recognition of sovereignty of each state, and then ending the conflict, such that there will be no demands in the future...” He stated that Israel can define itself in any way it chooses but the Palestinians should recognize it as it is recognized by international law. On the other hand, Palestinian interviewee L declared mutual recognition to be “definitely” important. As for recognizing Israel as the state of the Jewish people, he leaves it to the State of Israel to decide: “I believe it is up to the Israelis to declare the nature of their state...”

The Importance of Concrete and Symbolic Demands in Public Opinion

Israeli public opinion.

In the opinion of the Israeli public as of December 2008 and March 2010, the most important demand was the recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people – in marked contrast to the Israeli interviewees, who tended to minimize the importance of this demand. In the December 2008 survey, this symbolic demand was ranked first, and two concrete demands – securing water rights and setting up early warning facilities – as second and third. Palestinian recognition of Israeli suffering was ranked as the least important. In March 2010, the demand for the end of the conflict was ranked second, but it was not clear whether it was regarded as concrete or symbolic. The demands ranked third and fourth were securing water rights and setting up early warning facilities, in that order.

In addition to ranking their preferences in the negotiations, the respondents were asked to choose between Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and territorial compromises. The results showed a clear preference for the former over the latter. In December 2008, 50% of respondents preferred Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people to sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem (35%; 6% did not prefer either option, and 10% did not respond or did not know). In the March 2010 poll, 55% preferred Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, while 25% preferred Israeli sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem;
11% did not prefer either option, and 10% did not respond or did not know. Of the respondents who preferred Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people (N=273), 50% said that they find this much more important than securing sovereignty over East Jerusalem; 34% said they find it somewhat more important, and 12% said they find it slightly important (5% did not respond or did not know).

In the December 2008 poll, 46% preferred Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, while 41% preferred sovereignty over settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria; 5% did not prefer either option, and 9% did not respond or did not know. In March 2010, 38% preferred Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, while 31% preferred Israeli sovereignty over settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria; 11% did not prefer either option, and 20% did not respond or did not know. Of the respondents who indicated a preference for Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people (N=273), 50% said that they see this as much more important than Israeli sovereignty over the settlements in Judea and Samaria; 35% said it was somewhat more important, and 12% said it was slightly more important (3% did not respond or did not know).

Thus it appears that, contrary to the belief commonly held among scholars that the Israeli approach is predominantly concrete, the reality is more complex: Israelis tend to uphold concrete as well as symbolic demands.

**Palestinian public opinion.**

Like the Israelis, the Palestinian respondents ranked Israeli recognition of Palestine as the state of the Palestinian people as their first priority. The second preference was the concrete issue of safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, and the third was the symbolic demand for Israeli recognition of the pain and suffering caused to the Palestinians throughout the conflict. Last came securing Palestinian water rights in any future agreement. These findings hold true for both 2008 and 2010.

In a poll conducted in 2003, most Palestinian refugees insisted that any agreement with Israel must ensure their right to return to their homes and property within Israel. The majority of the respondents, however, expressed a wish to live within the Palestinian state (31% in Gaza and the West Bank and 23% in Israeli territories that they envisioned as being made part the Palestinian state) or in a different host country (17%), rather than in Israel (10%). This indicates that, at that time, the right of return was seen primarily as a symbolic right, which most respondents did not intend to realize.
The December 2008 poll indicates that, at that time, 50% of Palestinian respondents preferred a state based on the 1967 borders over Israeli recognition of the right of return accompanied by a return of refugees to Palestine but not to Israel. Only 24% preferred Israeli recognition of the right of return, even at the cost of a smaller state. Nineteen percent did not prefer either option, and 4% did not respond or did not know.

In March 2010, 56% of the Palestinian respondents preferred a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders over Israeli recognition of the right of return. Twenty-five percent preferred Israeli recognition and 18% did not respond or did not know. Of the respondents who preferred a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders (N=716), 52% said that this is much more important to them than Israeli recognition; 39% said it was somewhat more important, and 8% said it was slightly more important (0.7% did not respond or did not know).

We also asked the respondents to choose between Israeli recognition of the right of return, with a limited number of Palestinians returning to greater Jerusalem, versus Palestinian sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. In December 2008, 38% chose Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and 33% chose Israeli recognition; 23% did not prefer either option, and 7% did not respond or did not know. In March 2010, 43% chose Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem and 35% chose Israeli recognition; 22% did not respond or did not know. Of the respondents who preferred Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem (N=543), 50% said that this was much more important to them than Israeli recognition; 34% said that it was somewhat more important; and 11% said that it was slightly more important (1% did not respond or did not know).

The Sides’ Perception of Each Other’s Preferences in Terms of the Symbolic-Concrete Continuum

The Israeli interviewees’ perceptions of Palestinian attitudes diverged: some saw them as primarily pragmatic, while others as symbolic. Israeli interviewee A, for example, described the Palestinians as completely pragmatic:

The Palestinians, I think they care less about dramatic declarations, they want pragmatic results. What they really want is… give me my freedom… give me the territory, I want the symbolism less now… Israel unfortunately sets a great store by such favors and such patronization, like I give you a flag, give you a national anthem, give you a song and screw you over – excuse me – in simple Hebrew, when it comes to territory, refugees, Jerusalem and the like...
Israeli interviewee J felt that, initially, the Palestinians had emphasized more symbolic matters, but this had changed over the years:

When we started the negotiations with the Palestinians, I was there pretty much from the very beginning, honor was the most important component for them and substance was almost meaningless. They also didn’t quite understand, they didn’t prepare enough, they didn’t know the facts well... no one cared about the substance... That’s not [the case] any more. They have really changed, they’re organized, know their facts etc. Actually today the one who cares more about appearances is the Israeli side.

In contrast, Israeli interviewees D, I, B, and H expressed the belief that symbolism is more important to the Palestinians than concrete demands. Interviewee D described Israel’s attitude towards territory, water and refugee rights as a fundamentally technical platform, as opposed to the Palestinians' justice based approach. In his opinion, the conflict between these two attitudes presented an obstacle in previous negotiations, preventing the sides from even beginning to discuss solutions. Interviewee B also believed that the Palestinians’ attitudes are mainly symbolic, but he felt that a change had recently occurred in the Israeli approach: today the Israeli side also concentrates on symbolism, rather than on practicality:

When I started dealing with this issue... 15 years ago... in the beginning, I thought a major part of the issue was the cultural differences between the two sides, mainly that we were the pragmatic ones... while they came with an attitude that cared more about symbols... I’m not so sure this is true [today]. That is, when I look at the importance that is assigned by our side to issues like the unity of Jerusalem... when I know that anyone who knows anything about the subject and has examined it knows that the whole thing is pretty much a bluff.

Israeli interviewees C, E, and G emphasized the importance of an approach that combines the symbolic and the pragmatic, realizing that symbols are of great importance to the Palestinians but also that symbolism cannot stand on its own. Interviewee G actually criticized Israel for being too concrete in its approach, which he dubbed “the thrift-shop mentality.”

While most of Israeli interviewees had formed an opinion regarding the location of Palestinian preferences on the concrete-symbolic continuum, the responses of the Palestinians were much more vague in this respect. For example, Palestinian Interviewee N said that the
Israelis simply “want to get it all.” In the same vein but in less categorical terms, Interviewee L stated:

I can’t tell. What we see now are two issues: the issue of security and the recognition of the state of the Jewish people… The security issue is something we consider as physical. The recognition in the state of the Jewish people… is a bit confusing. It just gets in the way...

The position of Palestinian interviewee M was somewhat more complex: he believed that the Israelis use symbols to justify their political demands.

Discussion

According to a commonly held view, which is also manifested in the academic literature, one of the main obstacles to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stems from a disparity between a concrete Israeli orientation and a symbolic Palestinian approach. The findings here reveal a far more complex reality, with both sides making symbolic and concrete claims simultaneously. It appears, therefore, that the widespread assumption regarding the different nature of the demands made by each of the sides is unfounded. Furthermore, this study shows that this mistaken premise may, in itself, constitute an obstacle to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More generally, in light of the finding obtained in this research, the hypothesis that there is a clear-cut distinction between symbolic and concrete cultures seems untenable. Crucially, this idea is clearly counterproductive, as the data suggest that balancing between symbolic and concrete demands in a negotiation can serve as a tool for achieving conflict resolution.

The Israeli Side

Israeli interviewees were largely in agreement about the degree of importance of mutual recognition of Israel and Palestine as the national homes of their respective peoples, and some also supported the political demand that Palestine recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people. The literature on political recognition deals for the most part with the struggle of different groups within a joint social sphere, rather than with conflicts between states or nations. The interviews conducted for the purpose of this study show that, much as with individuals and groups, recognition is also sought and demanded by states. Thus, our research contributes to the scholarly effort in this regard by extending the academic study of demands for recognition from the national-social to the international context.

On issues of water rights, security and territory, Israeli interviewees appeared to favor the pragmatic approach. Furthermore, the responses show that all the interviewees who saw
the demand for the end of the conflict as concrete believed it to be important, while those who saw it as symbolic were divided as to its importance in the peace process.

In the surveys, Israeli respondents unambiguously placed recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people as their top priority, preferring it over territorial demands. The second and third preferences, however, were concrete.

The Palestinian Side

The interviews demonstrate that, although the Palestinians interviewees assigned great importance to symbolic demands, they did not discount concrete interests either. The recognition of the right of return and of the pain and suffering of refugees was mentioned over and over again, as well as the demand to accept responsibility. The literature is divided on the question of whether or not a political apology must involve accepting responsibility (Auerbach, 2004; Barkan, 2000; Cunningham, 1999; Rotberg, 2006; Rouhana, 2004; Weyeneth, 2001). In our case, the Palestinians focused on the Israelis’ acknowledgment of responsibility as a symbolic gesture, which would necessarily entail an apology.

According to the academic literature, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an example of a case in which the demand for justice has become a key issue. Thus, the goal of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has frequently been defined as achieving a “just and stable peace” (Rouhana, 2004, p. 37), thereby rendering justice as a primary condition to forging peace. The present study has not supported the above theoretical premise. The concepts of rights and justice rarely figured in the Palestinian conceptualizations of demands – in fact, these terms were mentioned only three times, in two interviews. Instead of calling for justice, the Palestinian interviewees tended to frame specific, concrete demands designed to solve the problems of security, water, territory and more – although their solutions were less defined or detailed as compared to those advanced by the Israeli side. And while putting emphasis on Israeli recognition of the right of return and on the refugees’ pain and suffering, as well as on accepting responsibility for the refugee problem, the Palestinian interviewees clearly stipulated that these symbolic gestures must be translated into practical measures. Thus, on the Palestinian side, the discussion of the refugee problem was by no means amorphous or wrapped in vague terminology such as justice or equity, but appeared to be firmly anchored in pragmatism and realism.

As for Palestinian public opinion, the rankings given to symbolic and concrete demands show preference for both. The first priority for most Palestinian respondents was a symbolic demand: Israeli recognition of Palestine. Their next highest preference, however,
was concrete: safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza. Recognition of pain and suffering was clearly more important than water rights, a finding which points to the importance of the former issue for the Palestinian public. The emphasis Palestinian public opinion places on concrete aspects was also evident from their preference for a state based on the 1967 borders or for sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem over recognition of the right of return.

It is noteworthy that, while both sides weighed symbolic and concrete demands as equally important, neither side was aware of that tendency on the part of the other. Israeli interviewees were divided on their perception of the Palestinians' place on the symbolic-concrete continuum, but some of them clearly still saw the Palestinians' attitude as anchored primarily in symbolic values. As mentioned previously, the prevailing assumption among scholars is that differences in symbolic versus concrete preferences serve as an obstacle to conflict resolution. Ironically, the results of this study indicate that it is the assumption itself that might constitute an obstacle in a quest for peace.

From a different perspective, the Israeli interviewees' awareness of the symbolic needs of the Palestinians may be helpful in responding to the Palestinians' demands. The Israeli interviewees acknowledged the importance attached by Palestinians to Israel recognizing the right of return and the pain and suffering of the refugees, as well as to Israel accepting responsibility for the refugee problem. As a result of this awareness, the Israeli interviewees were willing to acquiesce to the former two demands in order to advance the negotiations. The Palestinian interviewees, on the other hand, had no clear perception of the Israelis' place on the symbolic-concrete continuum. In so far as symbolic demands carry great weight in the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, this lack of awareness on the part of the Palestinians may prove an obstacle to constructive negotiation.

As concerns symbolic versus concrete distinction, the present study has shown that the common assumption regarding a gap between the Israeli and the Palestinian preferences is unfounded. On the other hand, a disparity emerged between groups within the Israeli society concerning the value of symbolic aspirations. In the polls, Israeli respondents ranked the demand for Palestinian recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people as their top priority. In contrast, most of the Israeli interviewees believed that this demand for recognition is unnecessary, and may even be perceived by the other side as a provocation. Public opinion is an important player in conflict resolution and, moreover, there is a reciprocal, inter-dependency relationship between public opinion and leaders. Thus, the disparity found
between the opinions of the public and the persons interviewed should not be disregarded, since it constitutes an obstacle that may impede the negotiation and conflict resolution.

Political processes of negotiation, conflict management and conflict resolution require common ground and shared understanding. One of the central challenges in resolving international conflicts is the possible failure of talks or accords due to inter-group differences which hinder communication and prevent sides from agreeing upon shared rules of play (Wittes, 2005). By the same token, the success of any political dialogue depends on understanding the goals and the discourse of the ‘self’ as well as learning about the ‘other’ (Gurevich, 2002; Sagi, 1999). Our research demonstrates that, in a conflict, examining the needs and aspirations of sides through the lens of symbolic and concrete distinction is essential for promoting mutual understanding and toppling stereotypes.

Thus, awareness of the symbolic and the concrete dimensions in one’s own as well as the other side’s aspirations is essential for dealing with conflicts. The Joint Israeli-Palestinian Polls (JIPP) conducted between 2003 and 2006 indicate that an overall package can receive greater support than its component parts. People’s rationale is largely based on trade-offs, so one component may be seen as a compensation for another (Shamir & Shikaki, 2010). This research has shown that the relationship between symbolic and concrete demands can serve as a tool for achieving a compensatory balance. Israeli interviewees proposed varied ideas for symbolic acts as a compensation for concrete concessions. The findings suggest, therefore, that understanding which core issues are seen mostly as concrete (for example land, in our case) and which as symbolic (for example, recognition) improves the chances that the sides will agree upon the overall package in a negotiation. Put differently, in international conflict management and conflict negotiation, it is essential to understand and analyze the sides’ attitudes towards symbolic demands, as this may facilitate conflict resolution as well as reconciliation.

As we maintained earlier, a demand can be seen as both symbolic and concrete. The right of return issue, for example, has two dimensions: a concrete demand for physical return and a symbolic demand for recognition of the right to return. We have found that a trade-off between the two dimensions can be used to achieve conflict resolution. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both sides agree that the right of return cannot possibly be realized by having all refugees return to Israeli territory within the Green Line. This is evident from the results of the December 2011 JIPP poll: 45% among Palestinians support a solution based on permanent residency of the refugees in Palestinian and the Israeli areas transferred to...
Palestinian (residency in host countries, third countries, or Israel would be subject to the decision of these states). While the refugee problem is generally seen as an intractable issue, in our study the interviewees on both sides asserted that recognizing the right of return can be exchanged for Palestinians waiving the actual return and thereby conceding that this right would ultimately remain unrealized. This result suggests that openness to symbolic demands and the trade-off between the symbolic and the concrete dimensions within the same demand may serve as a means to promote conflict resolution. Further studies may examine how this strategy can be applied to other international conflicts, based on an understanding of the importance of symbolic demands for recognition in conflicts.

The above discussion does not imply that symbolic-concrete compensation is possible for all demands in a conflict. The Palestinian interviewees were reluctant to agree to mutual recognition of Israel and Palestine as the national homes of their respective people, despite the importance attached to these demands by the Israeli side. Furthermore, they spoke against recognizing Israel as the state of the Jewish people, in spite of this issue’s importance for the Israeli public opinion. And while the Palestinian side set a great store by the Israeli acceptance of responsibility for the refugee problem, the Israeli interviewees were divided on whether this demand should be met. It seems, therefore, that the study of conflict resolution can benefit from a better understanding of the ways in which recognition can serve as an obstacle to resolving conflicts, on the one hand, and as a tool to aid it, on the other.

An assumption underlying the few studies dealing with the symbolic-concrete distinction regarding conflict resolution is that cultures can be classified into two clear-cut categories: symbolic versus concrete (Abu-Nimar, 1996; Cohen, 1997; Inbar & Yuchtman-Yaar, 1985). Yet, as we have seen in the Israeli case, within the same culture, public opinion and leadership can attach different importance to symbolic demands. Thus, further research on symbolic aspects in conflict resolution would do well to cast such inter-culture assumptions aside. The perception of a culture in academia must take into account its complex nature, and seemingly irrational phenomena should be examined based on the analysis of the symbolic discourse in various public arenas where conflicts are presented and framed.

References


