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Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means (the Transcend Method)



*A Manual Prepared by the
Crisis Environments Training Initiative and the
Disaster Management Training Programme of the
United Nations*

Part I: PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL
THE MINI-VERSION

Part II: TRAINER'S MANUAL
THE MINI-VERSION

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THE MINI-VERSION

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Alfaz del Pi, December 1996
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A summary of the approach

This summary follows the logic of the Table of Contents. “The Transcend Method at a Glance” is also a summary, in another form.

Conflict workers

I. Conflict workers (peace workers) apply for membership in the conflict formation as outside parties. Their credentials: as fellow human beings, they bring in general conflict knowledge and skills with compassion and perseverance, but no hidden agendas.

Dialogue

II. Dialogue is the tool used to explore the conflict, with one party at a time, making no effort to “win” or persuade: it is an ongoing brainstorming process in which time, questioning and answering are shared equally, it means being honest, outspoken, tactful, careful and “normal”. Respect for conflict dialogue partners is essential: for them the conflict is deadly serious, they have suffered and are often highly educated, knowledgeable, experienced, but trapped in and by the conflict, seeing no way out. In return, demand respect and equality from them as a condition for constructive work together. For conflict/peace workers to be genuinely new to a conflict, avoid specialization on conflict parties and issues. Aim at quality dialogue and involvement, not just at the “high level” (nos. 3-5 from above may be useful); treat everybody well regardless of level; each single dialogue is “the” dialogue. The setting can be anywhere, even “high level” offices, but open-ended time is best. Avoid recording/notes, unless agreed.

Conflict theory

III. Conflict theory: conflict as both Destroyer and Creator, as potentially dangerous both now and in the future because of the violence, but as a golden opportunity to create something new.

Conflict practice

IV. Conflict practice requires empathy, non-violence, and a creative approach: understanding conflict partners from the inside, feeling their logic, identifying valid goals and non-violent approaches to attain them, eliciting creativity from all parties in order to find ways of transcending incompatibilities.

Violence theory

V. Violence theory: Direct, structural and cultural violence that hurts both directly and indirectly, and the culture that justifies it.

Violence practice

VI. Violence practice: Identify roots of violence in culture, structures, actors and untransformed conflicts; early warnings.

Transformation

VII. Transformation: There is no alternative to transformation: changing violent attitudes/behaviour, applying creativity to contradictions.

Peace dialogues

VIII. Peace dialogues: explore diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy together. Avoid linearity, keep dialogue flowing back and forth. Sequence: past therapy (what went wrong, what could have been done) - prognosis - diagnosis - future therapy. Sow seeds, ideas. Expose old codes of state-system/nation-system; positive images for Conflict the Creator and negative images for Conflict the Destroyer; emphasizing joint roles in developing new codes; preparing parties for meeting each other some day "at the table".

Conflict transformation

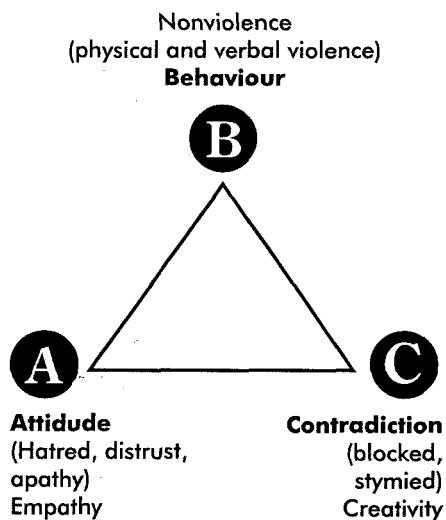
IX. Conflict transformation can then, in principle, happen at all levels of conflict: global, social, inter- and intra-personal.

Peace transformation

X. Peace transformation also presupposes a peaceful context as provided by peace education/journalism, the continuation of the work after violence, and readiness to reopen peace agreements.

Introduction

Conflict theory and practice: a perspective



A conflict has its own life-cycle, almost like something organic. It appears, reaches an emotional, even violent climax, then tapers off, disappears – and often reappears. There is a logic behind this, since individuals and groups (such as nations and states) have goals:

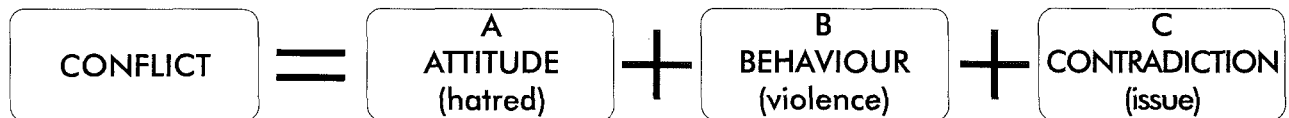
- goals may be incompatible and mutually exclusive, like two states wanting the same land, or two nations wanting the same state;
- when goals are incompatible, a contradiction, an issue, is born;
- the more basic the goal, such as basic needs and interests, the more any actor or party with unrealized goals feels frustrated;
- frustration may lead to aggression, turning inwards as attitudes of hatred, or outwards as behaviour of verbal or physical violence;
- hatred and violence may be directed towards those who hold the goals and stand in the way, but it is not always that “rational”;
- violence is intended to harm and hurt (including oneself) and may breed a spiral of counter-violence in the form of defence and/or revenge;
- this spiral of violence becomes a meta-conflict (like a cancerous metastasis), going beyond the goals of preserving and destroying.

In this way, a conflict may acquire eternal life, waxing and waning, disappearing and reappearing. The original conflict recedes into the background, as when Cold War attention focused mostly on nuclear missiles as a means of destruction.

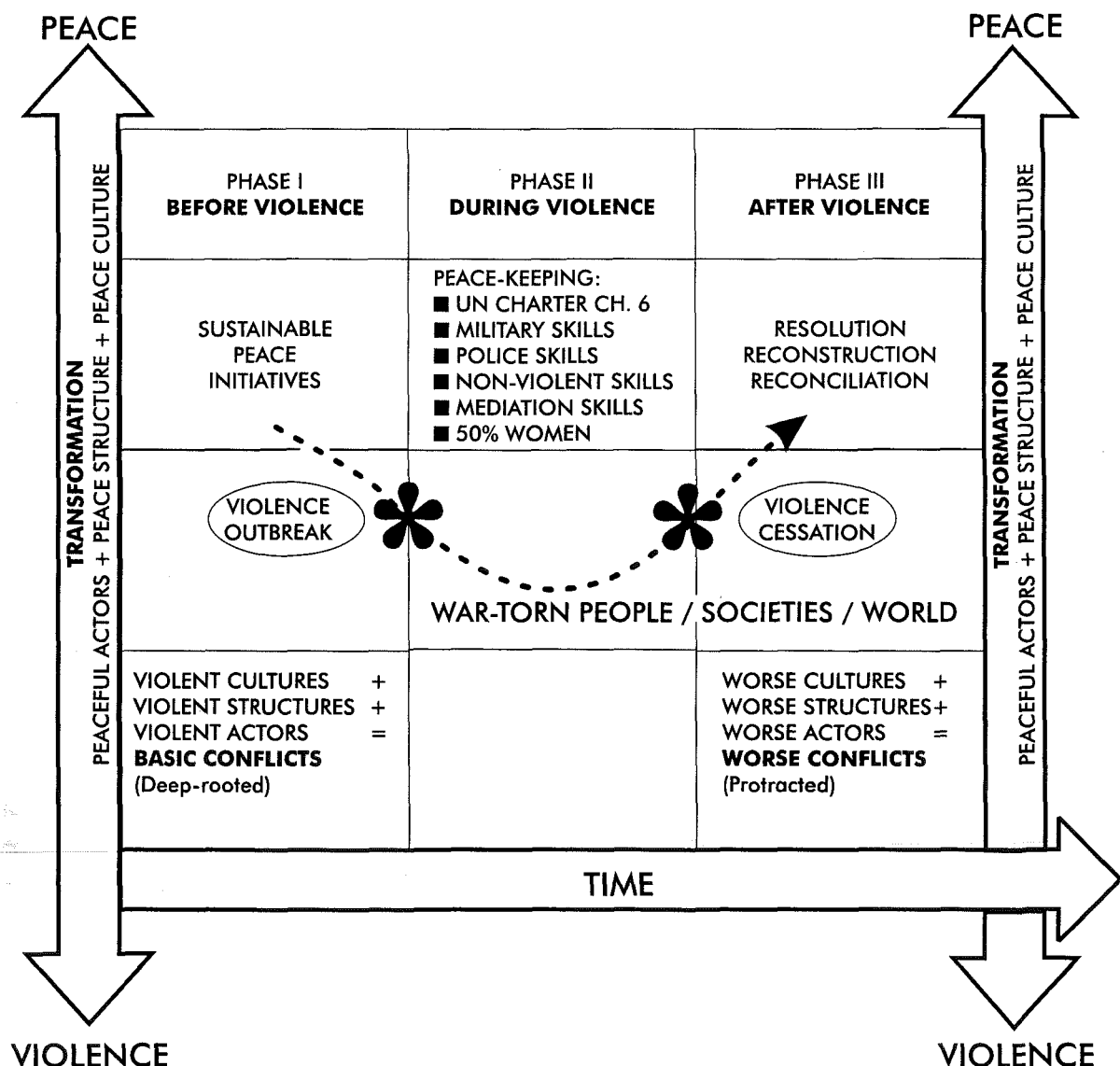
Conflicts may combine, in series or parallel, into complex conflict formations with many parties and many goals, because the same parties and/or the same goals are involved. The elementary conflict formation with **two** parties pursuing **one** goal is rare, except for pedagogical purposes or as the polarized product of hatred and violence leading to simplified conflict formations. The normal conflict has many actors, many goals, and many issues, is complex, is not easily mapped, yet that mapping is essential.

Life-cycle of a conflict

A conflict may be divided into three successive phases: before violence, during violence and after violence, separated by outbreak of violence and cease-fire. This does not imply that violence is unavoidable, or that conflict = violence/destruction.



All three (A, B and C) have to be considered in all phases:



The diagram may look formidable, but it is actually quite simple. On the horizontal axis is time, in the Greek sense of *khronos*, time that flows, physical time. But then there are two *kairos* points, time that stops, time that punctuates the flow of time: the outbreak of violence and then the cessation of violence, the cease-fire. No doubt these are important events.

But there was also conflict before the violence broke out. Four foci for conflict work have been indicated: violent cultures that legitimize violence, like machismo; violent structures that exploit, repress and alienate people; violent actors, bullies with no concern for the hurt and harm they cause; and, lastly, how they combine to form basic conflicts that are left unattended.

The Table then indicates what to do in the three phases. This manual focuses on Phase I, with some remarks on Phases II and III.

I. Before violence

It is cynical to describe this as the “prevention” phase in which to avoid violence. A basic conflict is enough reason in itself for serious attention. People are already suffering. Moreover, a conflict is also an invitation for the parties involved, the society, and the whole world to move ahead, directly taking up the challenge presented by the issues, with an attitude of empathy (with all parties), non-violence (also with a view to preventing the meta-conflicts from developing) and creativity (to find ways out).

The task is to transform the conflict upwards, positively, finding positive goals for all parties, imaginative ways of combining them without any recourse to violence. It is the failure to transform conflicts that leads to violence. Each act of violence can be seen as a monument to that human failure.

The diagram suggests four foci for conflict work in this phase. Violence may be rooted in violent cultures that justify violence; in violent structures (of repression, exploitation and alienation, of keeping apart people who want to be together or too close for comfort those who want to be apart); and in violent actors attracted by violence (to show prowess, to gain power) and by hatred (to build their own identity against other groups). As hatred and dispositions to violence increase, empathy, non-violent approaches and creativity become even more indispensable. But in a deeply polarized conflict formation – precisely when they are most needed – such talents are given less chance to emerge, grow, and blossom.

However, never forget the conflict, the goals that stand in each other's way. Those conflicts bring together the violent cultures, violent structures and violent actors; any inattention carries increased harm and hurt in its wake.

A concrete example: Turkish "foreign workers" (who are often German citizens) in Germany. A minimum four-foci program:

**A focus on
the cultures.**

We are generally speaking of cultures of hard nationalism, demanding "Germany for Germans, Turkey for Turks"; and cultures of violence: conflicts are not to be solved in a way satisfactory to all parties, they are there to be won. To challenge such cultures is necessary, but will take a long time. Missing peace cultures have to be substituted.

**A focus on
the structures.**

There is usually a combination of exploitation and excessive closeness. Missing peace structures, like a Council for Intergroup Relations where nations can meet and solve issues will have to be introduced before they become even more intractable because of spiralling violence.

**A focus on
the actors.**

Sometimes they can be identified because they themselves announce their readiness to use violence. Take them seriously, engage them in dialogues about all aspects of the situation. Neglecting them will make them more intractable. If violence occurs then a judicial process of keeping them in prisons is insufficient. The dialogue has to continue, if not with victims or their families, then with others of the same nation.

**A focus on
the conflicts.**

Issues may include scarcity of schooling, housing and jobs, and threats to identity. Obviously, any country's capacity to receive foreigners has an upper limit. A ceiling is not necessarily a concession to hard nationalism, nor is increasing a country's capacity a concession to pressure from the outside. An identity based on hard nationalism is more problematic. In our shrinking world there is only room for soft nationalisms, filled with curiosity about the Other, and with the capacity to enter into a dialogue.

The general task is clear: to bend the conflict process upward, into the "peace region", by making cultures, structures and actors more peaceful so that conflicts can be handled without violence. The whole conflict syndrome is transformed and embedded in the upper half of the Table, which is where it should be.

Concretely, focus on peaceful cultures may bring in the human rights tradition, and focus on peace structures calls upon the democratic tradition. Both are useful examples of broader approaches. But they are not unproblematic as, for example, in the case of cultural differences. They fit better into Western “I”-cultures with high emphasis on individualism, individual rights and individual minds, voting in elections and then being counted. They fit less into “we”-cultures with great emphasis on groups (clans, tribes, nations), collective rights and dialogues to consensus.

A focus on peaceful actors may bring in more women, and more actors in the religious/intellectual or commercial traditions, less in the aristocratic/warrior tradition. This may serve to mobilize sufficient empathy, non-violence and creativity to transform the conflict; whether this comes about through dialogues with all parties separately, or through direct dialogues, “at the table”.

Structural violence may be as bad as, or worse than, direct violence. People die or lead miserable lives because they are politically repressed, or economically exploited, or deprived of the freedom to be close to those with whom they identify or forced to be close to those they do not like. To refer to this as “early warning” of direct violence to come is, as mentioned, cynical and disrespectful of the suffering already there. Direct violence should be seen as a warning, that comes too late, of unbearable structural and cultural conditions, exploited by cynical actors.

And that gives us another perspective on development. The traditional perspective uses the more developed countries (MDCs) as models for the less developed countries (LDCs), seeing the differences in what they have as deficits in the latter. Deficits are then handled by getting the money, through own earnings (e.g., through export), grants or loans, to import from the MDCs the things deemed necessary for them to be (more) developed.

The MDCs, however, originally developed by producing themselves, to substitute imports. Imports to reduce the deficits become like transplants that do not take hold and are rejected after some time. And any import means more resources for some people and fewer for others. Conflicts are bound to arise because of inattention to culture and structure and the ensuing friction and possible violence may more than cancel any material gains made.

A more basic definition of development may read as follows:
development means building the capacity to transform conflict.

Reduce cultural violence through work in schools, de-glorifying and demystifying violence, adding how to handle conflicts with empathy, non-violence and creativity.

Reduce structural violence through the 1966 Human Rights Convention Against Repression (political and civil rights) and exploitation (economic, social and cultural rights).

This is not a substitute for the economic development mentioned above. But after some cultural and structural reconstruction a society may be ready for more meaningful economic development. Projects that could improve the livelihood of millions could be better rooted. So Phase I should include the 3 R's: Resolution, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation; not waiting for violence to strike or for violence to end!

II. During violence

During violence, the primary task is of course to stop the violence, because it is bad in itself and because it makes the original conflict more untractable. But first, some reflections may be useful on why human beings make the transition from Phase I to Phase II.

The first answer comes out of the original, root conflict: violence is used to incapacitate the other party or parties in order to impose the first party's own goals. This is sometimes called a "military solution", an oxymoron if the word "solution" means "acceptable".

The second answer also comes out of the original conflict but is less rational: aggression because of frustration, of being blocked by somebody; violence out of hatred.

The third answer comes out of meta-conflict logic: conflict as an opportunity to gain honour and glory by winning; and to show courage and gain honour and dignity even when not winning.

The fourth answer also comes out of the meta-conflict: violence as revenge for violence suffered, now or in the past.

These are four important reasons to be taken very seriously. At no point, however, is there any assumption to the effect that violence is intrinsic in human nature, like the drives for food and sex. The latter are found wherever there are humans, in space and time. The drives may be suppressed, but that only

proves the point about their universality. Violence is there all the time as a potential, but that potential is only activated when:

- a basic conflict is left unattended (a negative cause!), without empathy, non-violence and/or creativity to impose an outcome, or out of frustration; or
- the culture justifies the transition from conflict to meta-conflict as an opportunity win, to gain honour through violence, or it justifies violence as compensation for violence.

The conclusion is clear: basic conflicts, like basic wounds, should not be left unattended, nor should violence be justified.

However, violence does not last and spread forever; if it did there would be no humans around. Violence abates, for instance because belligerents run out of:

- means of destruction (hardware/weapons, software/people);
- targets to destroy (material, people);
- willingness to destroy (less “fighting spirit”, more disgust);
- the hope of winning; the parties predict the same outcome.

This gives us four ways of terminating violence: through embargoes on weapons and mercenaries; evacuating people and removing targets (scorched-earth tactics); demoralizing soldiers by clarifying the visible and invisible consequences of violence so as to induce conscientious objection; pointing out that in the long run all parties will lose because of the spiralling violence.

But there is also the fifth possibility of intercession between the parties. If the concern is with peace by peaceful means, this paves the way for operations under Chapter 6, but not for Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. What is suggested in the Table is that peacekeeping operations could be improved by calling on expertise not only in military reasoning and the means of violence, but also in police skills, non-violence skills and mediation capabilities.

Since women would tend to relate more to people than to hardware they could perhaps constitute 50% of the units. Moreover, numbers should be vastly increased. In short, a blue carpet of peace-keepers, not only blue helmets, so dense that there is little space left for fighting. And peacekeeping would then also include the 3 R's: Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Resolution; not waiting till the violence is “over”.

III. After violence

After violence, the relief that violence is over may make people blind to the invisible, long-lasting consequences of violence (such as traumas and the desire for more glory and revenge) and blind to how cultures, structures and actors may have become even more violent. The task is more difficult and more complex than before the violence. The mere task of reconstruction after the violence, rehabilitating the wounded and rebuilding after material damage, may be so difficult that reconciliation to solve the meta-conflict and resolution to solve the original, underlying conflicts are forgotten or postponed, possibly forever.

The tasks to be engaged in are formidable:

Reconstruction After Violence: An Overview

- Rehabilitation: the trauma and collective-sorrow approach
- Rebuilding: the development approach
- Restructuring: the peace-structure approach
- Reculturing: the peace-culture approach

Reconciliation After Violence: An Overview

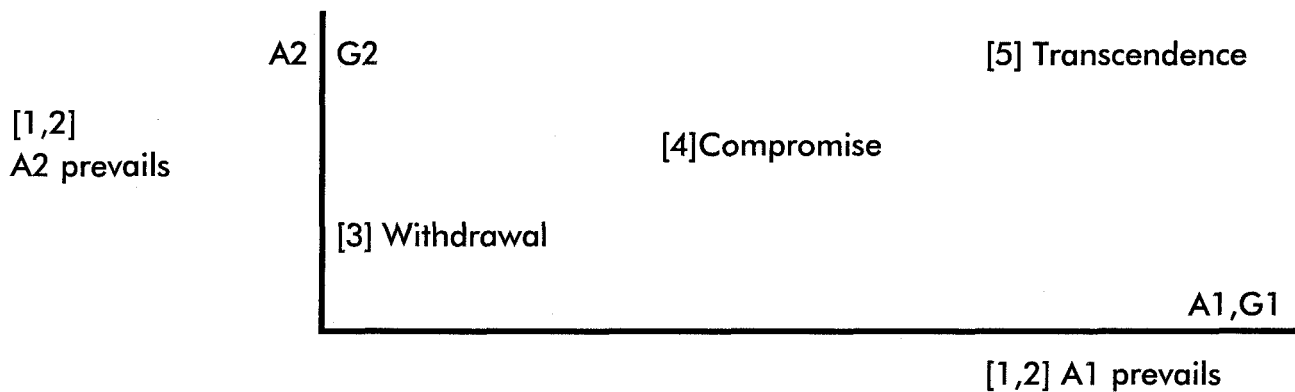
- The reparation/restitution approach
- The apology/forgiveness approach
- The theological/penitence approach
- The juridical/punishment approach
- The codependent origination/**karma** approach
- The historical/truth commission approach
- The theatrical/reliving approach
- The joint sorrow/healing approach
- The joint reconstruction approach
- The joint conflict-resolution approach

The world is ill-equipped for most of these tasks. There is an “Executive Outcomes” for violence, but not for undoing violence. And there is a simple reason why this is so important. The expression “after violence” is too optimistic. Do nothing about the roots of a basic conflict, do not transform conflict, and the violence will be reproduced when the horrors of the last violence are no longer in conscious memory, but “only” in the subconscious. And “after violence” easily becomes “before violence”.

Conflict Outcomes and Conflict Processes

Exercise: a table, on the table an orange, two kids seated at the table; what happens? As many ideas as possible, please! And don't be arrogant, most people manage at most 8 of 16:

Figure 1 : Conflict - The five basic outcomes



(A=actor, G=goal)

The diagram presents the five general types of outcomes in a conflict with two parties. Here [1] and [2] are the same, they both mean that one party prevails. In a concrete conflict each general type has several specific interpretations:

[1,2] ONE PARTY PREVAILS

The Rule of Man: Fight it out, might is right (to be avoided)
The Rule of Law: Adjudicate, some principle (like need, cultural preference)
The Rule of Chance: Some random method
Compensation: Broadening (triangle), deepening (double conflict)

[3] WITHDRAWAL

Walk away from the situation
Destroy or give away the orange
Just watch the orange
Put it in the freeze

[4] COMPROMISE

Cut the orange
Squeeze the orange
Peel the orange, divide the slices
Any other division

[5] TRANSCENDENCE

Get one more orange

Get more people to share the orange

Bake an orange cake, have a lottery, divide the proceeds

Sow the seeds, make a plantation, take over the market

Basic Thesis: THE MORE ALTERNATIVES, THE LESS LIKELY THE VIOLENCE

The Transcend method is biased in favor of transcendence, trying to go beyond, “disembedding” the conflict from where it is located, and “embedding” it elsewhere. Go beyond that one orange, get one more (“teacher, you forgot one orange!”). Or focus on the most important part of the orange, the seeds, plant them.

So much for basic conflict outcomes, how about the basic processes or approaches used in conflict? They are related:

Thesis No.1: Violence tends to lead to [1,2], one party prevails;
Violence is used to impose the victor’s goal over the vanquished;
or: to prevail = being on top, violence is a process

Thesis No. 2 Adjudication also tends to lead to [1,2], one party prevails;
Adjudication is used to decide who is right (not guilty, not liable);
or: to prevail = being right, adjudication is a process

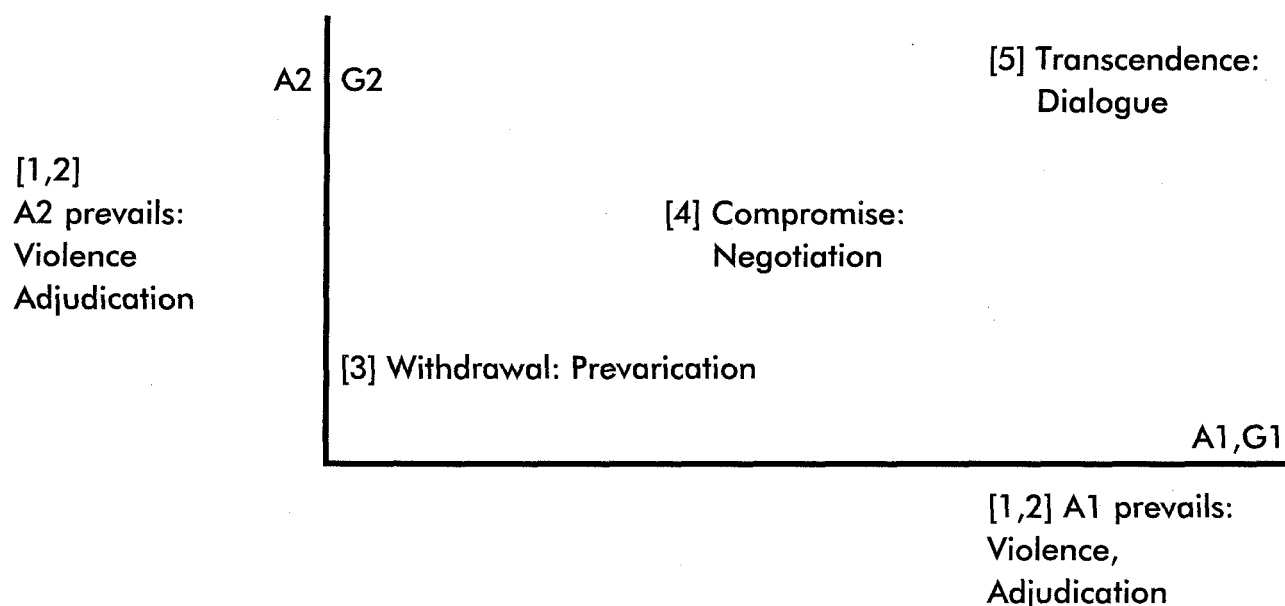
Thesis No. 3: Prevarication tends to lead to [3], withdrawal;
Withdrawal implies the time is not ripe, status quo is preferred;
or: to withdraw, prevarication is a process

Thesis No. 4: Negotiation between parties tends to lead to [4], compromise;
Compromise, assuming one party does not dictate;
or: to obtain compromise, negotiation is a process

Thesis No. 5: Dialogue with the parties tends to lead to [5], transcendence
Transcendence, defining a new situation;
or: to transcend the conflict, dialogue is a process

In other words: the outcome is already hidden in the process, and the process chosen depends on the outcome wanted in a conflict.

Figure 2: Relation between conflict outcome and conflict process



(A=actor, G=goal)

Let us now go back to the distinction between the original, root conflict and the meta-conflict. The root conflict is about finding some outcome, solution, exit, transformation, whatever it is called. The meta-conflict is essentially about one thing: to win. There is only one outcome: one party prevails. The meta-conflict can be fought with physical means, violence, war and usually leads to victory for one and defeat for the other (in rare cases with a draw, e.g., because the war is drawn-out).

Or it can be fought with verbal means, like in a court, which has much of the same structure. Adjudication is a way of deciding who is right and who is not but guilty, or liable; it is not a good process to obtain the other three outcome types. There is usually a very asymmetric decision defining the winner.

The meta-conflict is often used to decide the root conflict. The winner takes all, also what is disputed in the root conflict. This outcome may be acceptable, and it may be sustainable. But it also may not; the meta-conflict may be seen merely as display of physical or legal power. And any decision in favor of only one party already sounds simplistic and divisive, not denying that there also are conflicts where one party simply is right. Nor is there any denial that courts are better than wars.

Withdrawal may work short term, but sooner or later the conflict has to be taken on. The traditional approach is negotiation between the parties; the problem being that the parties may treat the table as a verbal battlefield and at best end up with a flat compromise that satisfies nobody and does not make use of the occasion to move forward. Hence the bias in favor of the fifth outcome: transcendence, going beyond. The best method is dialogue, with each other, but to start with perhaps better with a conflict worker. To which we now turn.

Points for the trainer

The trainer/resource person and the participant may of course be the same person, engaging in self-training.

1

A suitable point of departure may be the Flow Chart that gives structure to the Table of Contents. Use both as transparencies, asking the participants to trace arrows on the Table of Contents. The basic point is the distinction between the bottom track, “the problem” – conflict and violence – and the upper track, “what to do about it” – dialogue, dialogue for peace, transformation – ending with conflict and peace transformation. A Summary of the Approach could then be added to this as a transition to:

2

The one-page version, The Transcend Method at a Glance, with real life examples. One example of the exercises that were used when this manual was tested in 1997 is included: The Lima Hostage Crisis. It all ended after 126 days with the attack on April 22, 1997, in which all but one of the hostages were liberated and all the Tupac Amaru were killed, with the loss of two commandos. The point about the exercise is to have an alternative vision of what might have happened, given that few seem to have been really happy about the outcome. The example serves to illustrate the distance between some current practices and more desirable processes and outcomes. To what extent that process/outcome would also have been feasible could be a good topic for discussion. The trainer might like to add or substitute another example to get a good discussion going.

3

“Conflict Theory and Practice: A Perspective” is the basic introductory document. Use transparencies for the Phase I-III Diagram often, with reference to the tasks in each phase.

4

“Creativity, Transcendence and Conflict Transformation” can be discussed anywhere during training, but particularly in connection with Units 19, 20, 34 and 45.

5

Most of the Trainer's Manual is taken up with commentary with exercises on most of the Participant's Manual: the 50 Units.

6

A happy message: there is a short version of the manual, only 15 units long,: Units 1, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 22, 38, 46-50.

This introduces conflict workers and dialogues (2 units each), conflict theory (3 units) and conflict practice (1 unit), then violence theory (1 unit), and peace dialogues (1 unit), it ends with peace transformation (all 5 units). You might like to try this first, and then add the other units.

7

Estimates of time needed for the TRANSCEND Method training:

- the long, unabridged, version: two sessions a day for one week; covering one section per session, spreading introductory material.
- the short, abridged, version: four sessions over two days; one for introductory material, then five units for each session.
- the mini-version, two sessions, Introductions to Participant's and Trainer's Manuals (with Conflict Theory, Creativity Theory).
- the micro-version, one session only, "The Transcend Method At A Glance, With An Example; and Contents, With a Flow Chart."

8

Two Tales: About Camels, Numbers and Many Things: Any time!

A Flow Chart

The participant manual consists of 50 units divided into ten sections of five units each; separated in the Table of Contents.

I	CONFLICT WORKERS	5 units	1 - 5
II	DIALOGUE	5 units	6 - 10
III	CONFLICT THEORY	5 units	11 - 15
IV	CONFLICT PRACTICE	5 units	16 - 20
V	VIOLENCE THEORY	5 units	21 - 25
VI	VIOLENCE PRACTICE	5 units	26 - 30
VII	TRANSFORMATION	5 units	31 - 35
VIII	PEACE DIALOGUE	5 units	36 - 40
IX	CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION	5 units	41 - 45
X	PEACE TRANSFORMATION	5 units	46 - 50

I

First, conflict workers are introduced, with personal and social profiles, exploring relations to the conflict parties.

II

Then follows the major tool for the conflict worker: dialogue in the form of conversation and brain-storming; very different from debate.

III

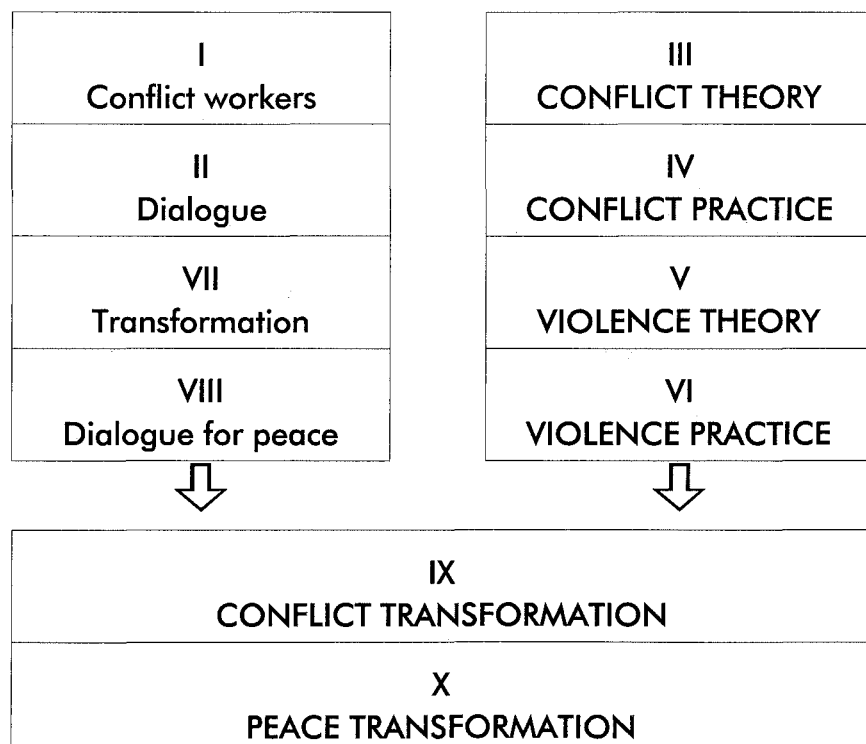
Conflict is introduced by exploring such basic concepts in conflict theory as attitudes, behaviour and contradiction.

IV

This is related to the conflict worker through conflict-practice concepts like empathy, non-violence and creativity.

- V** As violence may enter, basic concepts in violence theory like direct, structural and cultural violence are explored.
- VI** This is related to the conflict worker through violence practice in diagnosis, prognosis and early warning.
- VII** The central thesis is that in order to prevent violence and develop the creative potential of a conflict, there has to be transformation, the meaning of which is then explored.
- VIII** To bring this about, the conflict worker proceeds to a focused peace dialogue; including socio-analysis.
- IX** The goal of the whole exercise, conflict transformation, is explored at global, social, and inter/intra-personal levels.
- X** To achieve peace transformation the conflict context has to be brought in through such measures as education and journalism.

The manual moves on two tracks. One track brings in the conflict worker, the dialogue tool and the transformation task; the other track focuses on conflict and violence, in theory and practice. The two tracks meet in conflict and peace transformation.



The Transcend Method at a glance: a two-page version

Basic Premise I

A Hindu view: Conflict the Destroyer and Conflict the Creator; conflict as a source of violence and conflict as a source of development. The conflict worker has the third role as Preserver, transforming the conflict by avoiding violence, promoting development.

Basic Premise II

A Buddhist view: codependent origination, everything grows together in mutual causation. Conflicts have no beginning and no end, we all share the responsibility; no single actor (e.g. a statesman) bears all the responsibility (monopoly), no single actor all the guilt.

Basic Premise III

A Christian view: the responsibility for conflict transformation ultimately lies with individuals, with their individual decision to take action to promote peace rather than violence.

Basic Premise IV

A Daoist view: everything is yin and yang, good and bad, there is a strong likelihood that the action chosen also has negative consequences and that action not chosen may have positive consequences; hence the need for reversibility, only doing what can be undone.

Basic Premise V

An Islamic view: strength is derived from submitting together to a common goal, including concrete responsibility for the well-being of all.

Basic Premise VI

A Judaic view: truth lies not in a verbal formula but in the dialogue required to reach the formula: this dialogue has no beginning and no end.

Basic Premise VII

Following all of these, but particularly the ahimsa of Buddhism and Hinduism, the sacredness of life.

These views from world religions have given the following inspiration:

- 1 Map the conflict formation: all parties, all goals, all issues.
- 2 Bring in forgotten parties with important stakes in the conflict.
- 3 Have highly empathetic, individual dialogues with all parties.
- 4 Each conflict worker may specialize on one conflict party.
- 5 In these dialogues, identify goals acceptable to all parties.
- 6 Bring in forgotten goals that may open new perspectives.
- 7 Arrive at overarching goals acceptable to all parties.
- 8 Arrive at a short, evocative, goal-formulation.
- 9 Help define tasks for all parties with this goal in mind: disembedding the conflict from where it was; embedding it elsewhere; bringing in forgotten parties and goals.
- 10 Verify how realizing this goal would realize parties' goals.
- 11 Help parties meet “at the table” for self-sustaining process.
- 12 Withdraw from the conflict, go on to the next, stay on call.

The Transcend Method at a glance: an example

The Lima Hostage Crisis: A Possible Conflict Transformation

The take-over of the Japanese Embassy in Lima, Peru, took place on 17 December 1996. The six main parties to the conflict and their principal goals appeared to be as follows:

1

Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, MRTA
(14 guerrillas),

- release of up to 450 MRTA prisoners (ultimately reduced to 30)
- to continue the armed struggle “from the jungle”

2

The remaining 72 captives (the others were released),

- to be released, unharmed.

3

The Peruvian Government (President Fujimori),

- not to yield to terrorism by releasing prisoners,
- release of the captives, unharmed.

4

The MRTA prisoners,

- to be released,
- to continue the struggle.

5

The US government,

- neither the Peruvian government nor anybody else should yield to terrorism,
- release of the captives, unharmed.

6

The Japanese government,

- release of the captives, unharmed,
- respect for Japanese extra-territorial rights, no violence.

Then there is “Peruvian society” in search of ways to abolish misery, and “world public opinion” in favour of all the above.

The overarching goal could be reducing/abolishing misery, and if all parties yield a little they could all find their place:

- 1** Tupac Amaru MRTA disarms, joins the political process in a democratic society, with access to media and elections.
- 2** The captives are released and find ways to help abolish misery.
- 3** The Peruvian government improves prison conditions and shortens sentences, giving training in village/social work, accepts MRTA as a non-violent movement, and steps up effort to abolish misery.
- 4** The MRTA prisoners accept training in the prisons as village workers/social workers, and pledge to disarm.
- 5** The US government makes funding/expertise available for projects for the abolition of misery
- 6** The Japanese government makes funding/expertise available for projects for the abolition of misery, and holds future Emperor's Birthday receptions at multi-exit hotels.

To achieve this, four bilateral talks would also be useful:

- A** Direct negotiations between MRTA and Peruvian government.
- B** Direct negotiations between Prisoners and the Government.
- C** Captives and Prisoners meet and form a joint pressure group.
- D** MRTA and Captives conduct dialogues on Peruvian society.

And mediators trusted by the parties (Fidel Castro, the Pope).

Comments on “conflict theory and practice: a perspective”

The Chart, or Table, with the three phases (see page 7) is, of course, fundamental to the whole exercise. But it has to be emphasized that:

- the root of the whole problem is always a basic conflict, with violent cultures, structures and actors somehow coming together, being left unattended and festering;
- using violence as a signal to start acting is a bad mistake, because violence hurts and harms, and violence has its own logic distinct from the logic of the original conflict; even worse is to let violence run its course till parties are “ripe” for deals;
- what has to be done in the three phases of a conflict is not that different; it is not like one team leaving the stage and another taking over.

The 3 R's, Resolution, Reconstruction and Reconciliation are always needed one way or another:

- Resolution, to solve the original, root conflict,
- Reconstruction, to repair damage done, and
- Reconciliation, to solve the meta-conflict, also from the past.

Exercise

Look at the ten possibilities for reconciliation in Phase III. Brainstorm on similar lists for Phases I and II, given that the 3 R's should be present, one way or the other, in all three phases. Design a concrete program of action.

The same applies to peace-keeping: good soldiering should arrive before the outbreak of violence and not be withdrawn right after the cease-fire – like good policing that prevents both violence and its resumption. This is even more important after the violence, because the situation has usually become worse:

- violence produces more dreams of glory and revenge, hence worse cultures;
- violence produces more repression and exploitation to sustain the war effort, and more polarization, hence worse structures;
- violence lowers the threshold against violence and makes otherwise peaceful actors violent, hence worse actors.

The orange example can be used as an exercise to open a training session, meaning that the Participant's Manual should be handed out afterwards, not before (since the answers are there). One way of doing this was tried out in England at a national conference on bullying in schools, with children, parents and teachers as participants. Twenty participants volunteered, they were seated opposite each other, in pairs, at a long table, with the smallest children at one end and the older parents and teachers at the other, discussing in pairs.

"One orange, two persons; what will you do", avoiding the word conflict since it is not obvious that there is any, they may refuse to take it on (one child said: "we'll just walk away and leave the orange"). Giving the youngest children the first chance, working up the table, proved less necessary; the children had as much or more orange imagination than adults.

When somebody suggested "fight it out" they had to sit in the corner and in the end received an orange "to think more creative, less destructive thoughts". The other oranges were used as prizes for imaginative proposals. In the end the chart with 16 outcomes was shown and compared with what had come up, training them in types of outcomes. The focus was on conflict - imagination: the more outcomes imagined beyond "fight it out", the less likely the violence. Violence is then seen as having a negative cause: conflict illiteracy, lack of creativity. Hence the basic focus of the whole approach is to develop creativity. And the orange example also brings out another point: it is limited what one single person can come up with, several persons will come up with more, and if they really start dialoguing, brainstorming about it then they will come up with much more.

The diagram with the four or five types of outcomes ([1] and [2] are only different when it matters to us who prevails) is basic in the sense that it can be used in all conflicts to identify types of outcomes. But it has to be used with care: as the diagram is two-dimensional it accommodates only conflicts between two parties (A1 and A2, with incompatible goals G1 and G2). Real life conflicts are more complex, but "prevail", "withdrawal", "compromise", and "transcendence" are nevertheless always meaningful. In the orange example the task is to find what these words mean in practice: one kid ends up with the orange, they walk away, they split it, they sow the seeds.

The next diagram is based on the same four of five outcomes, but now related to process, not to outcome. Note the word “tends to”: there is a relation, but it is not an iron law.

Some participants may be surprised that adjudication, “rule of law” is in the same category as “rule of man”, violence. But the logic is similar: the idea of winner/loser, or more basic: of “being right”. “Right” becomes almost something material, like “having right”, and may stand in the way of finding more productive outcomes, for instance in a marital conflict.

The approach of this manual aims at transcendence, and the use of dialogue for that purpose. But that does not imply a total rejection of other outcomes and other approaches, including, in extreme cases, minimum use of violence after other methods have been tried, and the situation is truly intolerable.

Transcendence means redefining the situation so that what looked incompatible and blocked, opens up into a new landscape (see the camel tale at the end). Creativity is the key to that lock, block. The conflict has been transformed. To this we now turn.

Creativity, transcendence and conflict transformation

1.

Is there a formula for creativity?

Maybe not. But there may be a heuristic, the formula of a formula so to speak, that could nonetheless be useful in getting a handle on that precious phenomenon. But let us first take note of some comments often heard in the context of creativity:

“It is so simple! Why didn't we think of that before!”

“It makes what we used to say and do so small, as though we couldn't raise our eyes off the ground and see reality”.

“It is like a new reality opening up before our eyes!”

“In the light of this new thinking/idea, what used to be, and what we used to do, is only a special case in the corner, so to speak, of a vast space opening up”.

“God said, Let Newton be, and all was Light” (Pope).

“It is so threatening. Are we ready for that much novelty?”

It looks as though the old and conventional must still be there as an identifiable, special case (“this is where we used to be”) but now seen in a new light that shines on new vistas. Otherwise it is “crazy”, not “creative”. When Columbus balanced an egg on its end by cracking it, the unbalance-able egg was still there. To the remark that “anybody could have done it if it is that simple”, his much quoted answer was “But I did it”.

In this story the old is hidden in the new. Cracks at the end of the egg could be made smaller and smaller, yet the egg would balance till some limit is reached. At that point it becomes clear that the old could not accommodate the problem, as little as Euclidean geometry could accommodate Einstein's problems. He had to explore four-dimensional Riemannian and Lobachevskian geometries (with Euclid as a special case). Some continuity between old and new thoughts and acts is useful.

And so on, and so forth. Let us jump to the conclusion and offer a “creativity formula”, suggested as a hypothesis:

Creativity, in thought, speech and action, is based on:

A

Identifying a phenomenon as blocked, closed.

B

Identifying, in the context of that phenomenon:

- A parameter that is constant, hence unthought of;
- Changing that parameter, as a mental experiment;
- Hypothesis: that will unblock, open, the phenomenon.

C

Testing this hypothesis in the real world.

In other words, creativity is linked to the scientific process. Hardly surprising, since the scientific process has to do with creativity, and creativity has to do with change of paradigms, something easily accommodated within the formula just given. Work within a given paradigm is also identified with science, but more as a puzzle (Kuhn), not as a “break-through”. That term is also used for negotiations; reflecting the sense of relief of a rat struggling through a maze to find an way out and then suddenly finding an exit (the small solution), or jumping out, discovering that the maze has no ceiling (the big solution).

The experience resembles what a social scientist encounters when introducing a “third” variable in multivariate analysis. What looks like no relation at all between X and Y becomes different when Z is introduced: when Z is low, X and Y are related positively, and when Z is high, negatively. The zero relation is still there, hidden in a more complex reality as some kind of average. The creative act consists in identifying the third (fourth, fifth) variable that had not been introduced into the picture before, like cracking before balancing. The rewards in insight are tremendous. Boring data start singing to new music.

Two very different examples come from Japan, and they both relate to music. The first case is “*kara-oke*” (empty orchestra). There is a stage and a hall with people, the audience, the “listeners”. There is microphone and amplifier on the stage. Conventional spatial arrangement of people would put the singer on the stage and the audience in the hall. Karaoke rotates people between hall and stage, making (potentially) all of them singers and all of them listeners. Like professional singers, the amateurs choose a program they want to sing; unlike them they

cannot be assumed to know the texts by heart so that is provided by a prompter, moving with great precision, with the music. The spatial arrangement has not been reversed, the singers are in the hall and the listeners on the stage. But they are no longer stationary – they rotate between hall and stage.

In another, more recent example, dancers are equipped with sensors on various parts of the body, particularly legs and arms. As they move, music is produced with its tones and rhythms. As they dance in special ways the music becomes more attractive, rather like special music can bring about attractive dancing. With quick movements and adequate arm and leg work, with some wiggling of feet and hands and some belly work, complex music can be produced. The possibilities are legion. The time order between music and dance has been reversed; rather than music directing the dancing and the dancer following, the dance is now directing the music, with music following. Movement translates into music – which is nothing new – but this time movement of the total body, not just fingers and lungs/lips/tongue. Advanced electronics was probably a necessary if not a sufficient condition for this particular act of creativity.

Sticking to Japan, the reaction of a Swiss watch maker when told that the Japanese now combined time pieces and computers in a “watch” (watch in the sense of something to watch) was: “Eine Uhr ist eine Uhr und ein Rechenwerk ist ein Rechenwerk” (“a clock is a clock and a computer a computer”, the idea being that “never the twain shall meet”.) This physical separation of two different functions was exactly what the Japanese manufacturers challenged, and with great success.

Thus, the creative act may not introduce any new element at all, only put them together, in space and time, in a new way. Spatial arrangements and time orders that have been taken for granted are challenged. For that reason it is particularly easy to be creative in cultures with very definite views on correct spatial orders; there is so much to challenge. A culture firmly dividing the world in centre and periphery, assuming causality to flow from centre to periphery rather than vice versa (from stage to hall, for instance), and conceiving of time as linear with clear views on what comes before and what after (like music and body movement, for instance) invites creativity. But if such unilinear ideas are firmly entrenched, as they are in Western culture, we would also expect considerable resistance.

Thus, if cause = centre = God, and effect = periphery = Nature + Man, the latter created in His image, then such ideas as democracy, secularism and evolution stand out as revolutionary. The first of these vested power with the people/periphery, like a country without a capital. The second made God a periphery, suggesting that He was created by Man in Man's image. And the third was that Man was an emanation from Nature by competition, like Adam Smith arguing that out of this process came the best of all worlds.

2.

From creativity to transcendence

By “transcendence” we mean creating a new type of reality, something that potentially was always there is becoming an empirical reality. An example from the theory and practice of conflict might be the idea of a condominium, of two or more countries together owning a territory, whether disputed or not. The old formula for Andorra comes to mind, so does the Antarctic, certain aspects of Spitsbergen and Aland, the old arrangement for the New Hebrides, the Cameroons, etc. The conflict between two countries over a disputed territory may end by one winning in a military or court battle, by a compromise dividing the territory, by both of them withdrawing their claims, leaving the territory to somebody else (such as the inhabitants!), or by the two owning the territory together. Clearly only the last outcome transcends empirical reality; the others conform to the formula that each square kilometre is owned by one state alone.

Another example: European countries were ruled by clergy, aristocrats and burghers; i.e. by word, sword and money. The kings/emperors were aristocrats. They were dethroned, and the succeeding system, democracy, combined word and book-keeping by substituting verbal duels (election campaigns) for the physical duels of the aristocracy, counting the numbers voting in favour of the parties. As time passed, the range of people entitled to vote was considerably expanded. No doubt a potential political reality had become empirical reality and it still is, transcending the old. It was highly creative, at least at its time. But the old was still there. Thus, there were still rulers and ruled. And the sword was still there, in the hands of the military, the police and those challenging them.

3.

From transcendence to transformation

Transcendence introduces a new reality, opening a new landscape. To transform a conflict is to transplant it to that new reality. To transform a conflict would mean transcending the goals of the parties to the conflict, defining some other goal(s), lifting the conflict out of the bed that the parties have prepared for that conflict, including their discourses to ensure that the incompatibility looks insurmountable (the non-transcendable contradiction), embedding it at a more promising place. For this to happen, the conflict also has to be transformed by adding parties and goals that the participants themselves do not always think of. In other words, it would be a major mistake to eliminate some parties (e.g., the “extremists”) for they will certainly make themselves heard and felt (the peace process in Israel/Palestine?). To simplify by eliminating the moderates is also a major mistake (the peace process in Northern Ireland?). The road to fruitful transformation goes through complexification, with the possibility of grouping some of the parties and goals, yet all the time guarding against conflict deformation.

In the case of the Lima hostage crisis, the proposal was to see the conflict less as a problem of (unlawful, violent) invasion of property and hostage taking, and more as a problem of reducing the misery in Peru; switching from meta-conflict to root conflict, transcending the definition of the conflict. To transform the conflict the conflict had to be expanded. Then a solution was proposed for the transformed conflict, distributing tasks to the parties; checking that this also solves the conflict as originally defined. If not, there is deformation, not transformation, and the original conflict will hit back.

If we accept that a conflict may both be a source of destruction and a source of creation, then one approach to transformation of a conflict is to act so that the creative aspects dominate. This is more than steering the conflict away from violence. It adds steering the conflict toward development, both the human development of the individual actors involved, the social development of the collective actors involved and world development. Those who enter conflict should have ambitious meta-goals, like a better Yugoslavia, peace and development in the Middle East, reduction of misery in Peru, etc.

The position taken here is that this is meaningless without deep understanding of the culture and structure within which the

conflict unfolds, of the actors and above all of the conflict itself. Conflict practice has to be rooted in conflict theory; conflict theory has to grow out of conflict practice. Concrete people have to be creative, not only empathic and nonviolent (one of these alone will never do). We suggest calling these people conflict workers. Their major tool is dialogue, with conflicting parties, not only facilitating dialogue among them. To do so the conflict workers need a grounding in general conflict theory and general conflict practice, and more particularly in what difference empathy, nonviolence and creativity can make.

But they also have to know the types of violence, not only the direct violence that shows up in the meta-conflict, but the structural and cultural violence, the bad structures and cultures underlying the conflict, the bad “bet” the conflict has to be lifted out of. The rest is transformation, of the conflict, for peace; by ever deeper dialogues. The result: a transformed conflict that can be handled nonviolently and creatively.

Let us take the Korean peninsula as an example. An enormous conflict energy is put into that conflict and can be released in one more war, in turmoil inside the societies (and not only in the North), with repercussions all over East Asia and beyond. Could that energy be put to more positive tasks?

Here is an example of an approach: to open the rail/road connection between the two Koreas, as suggested (for rail) by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia/Pacific. That border is also the border between the poor (Viet Nam, China, North Korea) and the rich (Taiwan, Japan, South Korea) part of what might one day become the East Asia Common Market/Economic Community/Community/Union, referring to the stages of the EU. Goods would flow in both directions, wealth would be created, the spin-offs for both Koreas would be considerable, and all that is needed is a minimum of cooperation to run the transport.

Analytically, the transformation has several aspects:

- a discourse switch, talking about economic cooperation and common culture, as opposed to military and political structures;
- a new over-arching goal is formulated, involving not only the two Koreas but their four neighbors: East Asian;
- an effort to disembed the conflict from where it was and embed it in the tricky but not lethal problems of economic cooperations;

- no basic change, mutual love or even mutual trust is demanded of the Koreans; only that they pursue the benefit to themselves;
- this is not a meager Pareto optimum with nobody worse off since all six parties would be better off;
- the plan is reversible, but there would be a vested interest in the other parties to provide the incentives to go on;
- within that new setting, in that “bet”, all the other issues may gradually be articulated, or they may even evaporate.

These ideas for a transformation of the conflict evolved out of dialogues with the parties concerned. Worth trying?

Two tales: About camels, numbers and many things

1

Once upon a time a mullah was on his way on camel to Mecca.

Coming to an oasis he saw three men standing there, crying. So he stopped the camel, and asked, 'My children, what is the matter?' And they answered, 'Our father just passed away, and we loved him so much.' 'But,' said the mullah, 'I am sure he loved you too, and no doubt he has left something behind for you?'

The three men answered: 'Yes, he did indeed, he left behind camels. And in his will it is stated $\frac{1}{2}$ to the eldest son, $\frac{1}{3}$ to the second and $\frac{1}{9}$ to the youngest. We love camels and we agree with the parts to each. But there is a problem: he left behind 17 camels and we have been to school, we know that 17 is a prime number. Loving camels, we cannot divide them.'

The mullah thought for a while, and then said, 'I shall give you my camel, then you will have 18'. And they cried, 'No, you cannot do that, you are on your way to something important . . .' The mullah interrupted them, 'My children, take the camel, go ahead.'

So they divided 18 by 2 and the eldest son got 9 camels, 18 by 3 and the second son got 6 camels, 18 by 9 and the youngest son got 2 camels: a total of $9 + 6 + 2 = 17$ camels. One camel was standing there, alone: the mullah's camel. The mullah said: 'Are you happy? Well, then, maybe I can have my camel back?'

And the three men, full of gratitude said, of course, not quite understanding what had happened. The mullah blessed them, mounted his camel, and the last they saw was a tiny cloud of dust, quickly settling in the glowing evening sun.

2

Once upon a time a lawyer was on his way in a fancy car through the desert. Passing an oasis he saw three men standing there, crying. So he stopped the car, and asked, 'What's the matter?' And they answered, 'Our father just passed away, and we loved him so much.' 'But,' said the lawyer, 'I am sure he has made a will. Maybe I can help you, for a fee, of course?'

The three men answered: 'Yes, he did indeed, he left behind camels. And in his will it is stated $\frac{1}{2}$ to the eldest son, $\frac{1}{3}$ to the second and $\frac{1}{6}$ to the youngest. We love camels and we agree with the parts to each. But there is a problem: he left behind 17 camels and we have been to school, we know that 17 is a prime number. Loving camels, we cannot divide them.'

The lawyer thought for a while and then said: 'Very simple. You give me 5 camels, then you have 12. You divide by 2, 3 and 6 and you get 6, 4 and 2 camels respectively.' And so they did. The lawyer tied the five unhappy camels to the car, and the last they saw was a vast cloud of dust, covering the evening sun.

Two ways of handling conflict. The choice is yours.

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