CIVILIZATIONS IN CRISIS: FROM ADVERSARIAL TO PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESSES

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Introduction

Cilizations in Crisis: poverty and starvation amongst plenty within and between nations, uncontrollable violence at all social levels, ethnic conflict and cleansing, drugs, crime and corruption, personal insecurity--and avoidable environmental pollution and depletion. All increasing at exponential rates.

Systems failure has been a feature of human history. Revolutions have led to alternatives which have in time run into their own problems. And now, with continuing failures to deal with societies' problems, there is, even in advanced "democracies", a growing reaction against the Westminster adversarial party political system and its no less adversarial American version.

This is the political system that has been the world model. It is equated with "democracy". It is the political system which most enables the essence of private enterprise, which itself is the financial model. It is the political-economic system that has produced the relatively free and prosperous societies within the world society. But it is now being seen to fail and is under fire.

There are understandable reasons why, in changed global conditions, this is so. The party political system is historically adversarial. It evolved out of past feudal landlord and commoner confrontations. It became even more politically divisive with industrialisation. It retained consensus support and remained viable as long as its authorities were in effective control. Poverty and poverty-based crime could be contained by exporting convicts and building more gaols. But with communications that help to establish a separate culture for the under-privileged, and with the availability of weapons, effective control of the alienated in no longer possible. Personal security has become a major concern even in the most economically advanced countries. One of the most expanding industries is private security services. But more and more security precautions provide only a limited protecti

With economic growth in democracies there has evolved a dominant middle class. Its members have no desire to be caught in the cross-fire of any historical we-they confrontation. The press, radio and television have brought to its attention the absurdities of party political debate as a decision-making process. Furthermore, the members of the dominant "capital" and "labour" parties are now seen to be in conflict largely for personal career reasons, not because of policy differences. There is a growing consensus that the problems civilization face must be tackled by less adversarial processes in which analysis and reason prevail.

But the jump from adversarial systems to collaborative, analytical problem-solving ones implies a major paradigm shift. New institutions would have to be introduced, implying change

on a major scale. Such change would threaten the interests of those who presently influence the party political process, and also this anxious middle class. No consensus options exist even conceptually.

The probability is that civilizations can avoid crises, not by any new system, but by all societies, whatever their nature, pursuing a continuing process of reassessment of their social norms and institutions, and by appropriate changes in them. But what would be the basis of reassessment? In what direction is change to be, what are to be the goals? By what processes could interest groups be won over and decisions be taken in arriving at change?

The emerging study, Conflict Analysis and Resolution, deals specifically with problem solving by non-adversarial and collaborative processes. Parties in conflict or with opposing policies make a facilitated and informed costing of the consequences of the present, leading to a searching discussion of possible options. Altered perceptions and getting down to shared fundamentals, such as personal security and quality of life, take attention away from material concerns and point to previously unconsidered possibilities.

But in so far as Conflict Resolution deals only with specific cases of conflict, which is largely the present position, it can make little contribution to the universal problems of violence which civilizations face. To make a serious contribution it must get to institutional and social sources and thus help to avoid conflicts occurring, not just treat a selected few after they have emerged. Similarly, in so far as the older Peace Studies deals only with specific issues, such as arms control, it fails to deal with system origins of problems.

Even the recent development of teaching conflict avoidance and resolution in schools, while probably reducing violence there, does not deal with the sources of violence. Children adopt violence because they are brought up in an environment of violence: family experience, games they play, radio and television entertainments, and reports of daily happenings in society.

In this article I explore the question whether Conflict Analysis and Resolution theory offers a political philosophy and a policy approach that would help in the collaborative reassessment of existing institutions and policies, define common goals and point to collaborative decision-making processes that could evolve as an alternative to contemporary adversarial procedures.

In the first part I try to define the source of contemporary social problems, focussing on the nature of systems as they have evolved, and their prevailing adversarial strategic, political and legal institutions. In a second part I trace out the history of thinking towards a political philosophy that could be an alternative to the traditional adversarial one. (This is a most personal and introspective account. I hope that by going back in time in this way I may be able to convey some of the problems of shifts in thinking that we all experienced in the early stages of Conflict Resolution. I hope others will do the same and in this way there will emerge a history of thought in this area). In a third part I outline some first steps that seem practical.

The Problem Area

In defining the source of contemporary problems there is a basic issue to be determined. Are they the inherent behavioural consequences of survival-of-the-fittest struggles, and just have to be lived with. Or are they due to conditions that reasonably would seem to be well within human capacities to alter.

When societies were small extended family or tribal units there was a large degree of social concern, collaboration within them, and frequently between them. With population increases and the end of face-to-face relationships, competitive territorial and property acquisition and conflicts of interest inevitably conditioned social relationships. In the systems that have evolved over the last few thousand years, the struggle to survive and achieve has been very much a personal or class one, not a community one. These evolving competitive systems led to slavery, feudalism and forms of colonialism, and to present day adversarial industrial and political relations. Personal and group conflicts of interests have thus been built into societies. As social and environmental conditions deteriorate further with population doubling every thirty five to forty years (see Weeks, 1981), individuals and conglomerates will, in present conditions, act increasingly in their own interests. This will be at the expense of others in each society and also in other societies, but ultimately, of course, at their own expense also. Societies, especially modern industrial ones, have demonstrated little capability to cost the personal or social consequence of behaviours and to react accordingly. Competitive short term gains have continued to determine institutions and policies.

It has been widely assumed that such interest-based systems have evolved because by nature "man is aggressive", to use the Lorenz-type phrase of the power politics theorist, Hans Morgenthau (1948). This is an assumption that fits well into the acceptance of inevitable survival-of-the-fittest system causes of violence. Behaviours are not the consequence of the way societies are organized. On the contrary, the assertion is that systems as they have evolved are the direct result of inherent human aggressiveness. Societies just have to live with this. Limited police and defensive measures are the only possible policy response.

This traditional and widespread view, however, contains within it a false assumption. While not clearly stated, the assumption seems to be that "man is aggressive" primarily in the pursuit of material acquisition, especially resources and territories which are in limited supply. But now both experience and theory suggest that material acquisition is rarely if ever the primary source of conflict. There is room for compromise in a conflict over physical acquisition, especially when there are likely to be costs of conflict. For this reason it has been possible to introduce into societies appropriate legal and bargaining institutions and processes.

What has not been realised is that conflicts are defined in these physical terms even though there are non-material human values and needs involved. International conflicts are defined as territorial even when there are clear identity or ethnic issues at stake. Workers strike and demand increased wages even when the problem is one of relationships with management and treatment of the working person. Matrimonial disputes on custody and properties are

described in the same material terms. But in all cases there are non-material needs to be satisfied that provoke such aggressions, needs of recognition and identity in particular.

No bargaining or compromise, such as is possible on material acquisition, is possible in relation to any such deep-rooted human needs. The dole is no compensation for the human costs of unemployment to young people seeking their identity in society, and anti-social behaviours are a consequence. The right of a vote does not offset loss of ethnic identity by a minority within a nation-state. Secession demands persist.

The consequence is that while there are in many societies sophisticated arbitration processes that deal with physical demands and needs, no institutional means have evolved to deal with behavioural needs. Consultants help the individual to adjust to social conditions, but the latter remain unchanged. Indeed, such means, other than voluntary non-governmental activities, would be threatening to the institutions that govern material acquisition. Consideration of the human element, especially values attached to harmonious relationships, have been excluded from adversarial systems as they have evolved. This does not mean that such values do not exist.

It is these hidden sources of conflict that are the main problem area in international relations. Wars are initiated and lost by greater powers just because this human element is ignored. North Korea and Vietnam were initially regarded as minor excursions. Without a full appreciation of the need for independence and a separate identity the costs were misjudged.

So when Morgenthau attributed conflict to aggressiveness in physical acquisition, and deduced that conflicts can be avoided by threat and deterrent strategies, he omitted a human element that defeats his prescription. No threat can deter when there are human behavioural needs at stake. This is as true at the level of youth gangs as it is at the international. Given anthropological studies of tribal face-to-face relationships, and given contemporary knowledge of human needs, (see Burton, 1990a), it is more likely that adversarial systems have evolved despite a strong human preferance for collaborative social connections from which personal security and personal identity are derived.

If there is competitive material acquisition, on the one hand, and an individual desire for collaborative relationships, on the other, the explanation of the preponderance of adversarial behaviours would have to be the conditions imposed by systems as they have evolved, not, as has been assumed, by some inherently aggressive human attributes. If this is the case, civilizations are not doomed necessarily because of human aggressiveness in acquisition of scare supplies. They are now threatened because of past failures to include in decision making a human element and to employ available intellectual resources to resolve problems as they emerge.

There is a second assumption that justifies ignoring the problem. There is a widespread middle-class belief that social problems are due to personal failings: unemployment and poverty are due to lack of intelligence and diligence. A related belief is that social problems stem from a lack of social consciousness, that is, a moral obligation to observe social norms. This is claimed to be related to lack of intelligence. The empirical evidence seems to contradict this. For example, problem children placed in a different environment seem to respond positively (see Prothrow-Stith, 1991). But even if it were so, the fact is that such people exist and will be a source of social problems unless they are given an identity and a role within the social system. So, also, with minorities within nations.

Those who attribute social problems to lack of intelligence or morality tend to support the view that it is far better to deal with system failures by increased controls, by band-aid social measures, by military measures, than by system change. But now costs are becoming greater. Authoritative controls, including military controls, do not provide the answer. Problems have to be treated at source.

Survival-of-the-fittest is a misleading concept unless it includes specifically a human needs dimension in addition to physical goals. It is the struggle to satisfy non-material human needs that is the prime source of conflict. It is only in this sense that it can be said that "man is aggressive".

But unlike material needs, human needs of recognition and identity are in unlimited supply. There are acceptable means of giving a sense of identity to the person at the work place, to young people, to minorities and ethnic groups. There is no reason why human needs should be a source of conflict once their existence is recognized and institutions are adjusted accordingly.

Scholars and thinkers generally have, over the centuries, developed theories and policies within the existing material acquisition frame, avoiding the challenge of including a behavioural element in their analyses.

Economics, for example, has become the instrument of special interest promotion. So-called "economic rationalism" has eliminated any human element or consideration of quality of life and social harmony. It advocates special interest pursuit through an uncontrolled market. In the 1930's this was called Fascism, the desperate Italian response to depression. It was based on the view that resource acquisition and manufacture are the only important goals, that the processes required are outside human comprehension and capabilities and are, therefore, better left to competitive activites in the market place. Any deliberate or planned attempt to promote quality of life or a more equitable distribution of resources is, in this view, destructive of the more important goal of resource acquisition and its manufacture into goods and services which should in due course benefit all. Poverty, unemployment and their social implications are a price that has to be paid by some for this productive economy.

Sociology, no less, has traditionally adopted the feudal view that the ordinary person must accommodate to the prevailing system and its norms, even though it be a material and an elite-driven one. Even psychologists have usually taken the view that lack of adjustment to social norms is a sign of personal maladjustment. To suggest that institutions and social norms should be adjusted to the requirements of the person is outside their scope.

Specialised area studies such as Strategic Studies also have their own assumptions, and artifical human constructs to justify them. Strategic Studies assumes that deterrence deters, which is, of course, basic to theories of power politics and power balances.

Similarly, the exclusion of a human dimension distorts concepts and language. The widely held concept of democracy is defined as government by the people through their elected representatives. It assumes many unstated conditions that have far-reaching behavioural implications, for example, relative ethnic homogeneity, classlessness and equality. Democracy of this order is a system that could possibly be achieved in a small unified society. It has no prospect of achievement in a society that contains major income differences, and in which

minorities are unrepresented but must observe the norms of a majority. The implications are extensive in the modern world in which there have been migrations and in which state boundaries, drawn as the result of colonial aggressions, cut across ethnic and tribal territories.

This traditional concept of democracy leads to another assumption, that minorities should be prepared, not only to conform with the discriminatory norms of the majority, but that individuals have the inherent capability of such conformity. Secession movements are sometimes sought as an alternative to conformity. They are usually opposed by the majority on the grounds that they are disruptive of the nation-state. They are, nevertheless, pursued even at great cost by a human need for identity. For these reasons democracy has built into it the seeds of conflict. We are led, therefore, to question yet another assumption, that the nation-state is any longer the appropriate unit within the world society.

The core problem would seem to be the evolutionary trend towards a centralised state that brings together a diversity of peoples and interests. There being a decreasing interest in or awareness of the needs and aspirations of those whom it governs, the focus has been the preservation of its power and its institutions. Communism was to be government for and by the people, but emerged as a centralised party dictatorial system. Capitalism similarly remains an elite-oriented system. Both promote the belief that the first priority is to preserve the centralised nation-state.

Accordingly, international organizations comprising nation-states support state authorities when they are faced with challenges by ethnic minorities or by tribal factions whose members have been cut off from their traditional relationships by inappropriate colonial boundaries. Secession has become such a widespread problem that each fears that change in any one sovereign state will invite changes in its own. In these circumstances human rights and political legitimization are sacrificed in the maintenance of a sovereign state system that includes the results of colonial aggressions.

In this context the United Nations now poses a serious problem. It is an organization of sovereign states, all expecting mutual support from the organization in maintaining their jurisdictions.

Questioning assumptions in this manner is often frowned upon and even held to be subversive, especially when alternative systems might be implied. But it is continuing questioning of such assumptions at all social levels that could lead to continuing adjustments in thinking and in practice, avoiding system failures and social crises. Far from being subversive, such questioning is fundamental to social loyalties.

Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy

Conflict Analysis and Resolution thinking evolved out of case studies. It avoids the problem of specialisation and its artifical human constructs, for it is necessary to take a holistic approach when helping parties to a conflict to make an in-depth analysis of their relationships.

It is helped also by its reliance on Needs Theory (see Burton, 1990a), which directs attention to the otherwise hidden behavioural sources of conflict.

To those not familiar with the concept, (and this as yet comprises the vast majority of people), it must seem strange to refer to conflict resolution as a recent development. To the strategist, the power politician, citizens of powerful nations, police and authoritarian heads of households, conflict resolution means the use of adequate force to bring about some desired result. The concept of problem-solving was until a few decades ago largely a mathematical concept. Similarly, conflict prevention has meant the use of adequate threat. Even today no distinction is made in ordinary speech between "settlement", implying coercion, and "resolution", implying problem solving. No distinction is made between "disputes" that may in practice be settled quite acceptably by authoritative or legal processes, and "conflicts" that involve non-negotiable issues such as individual human needs of identity and recognition and which can be resolved only when all parties are satisfied. In the new discipline of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, conflict resolution means getting to the roots of problems and resolving them in ways that further the longer-term goals of all concerned. Prevention does not imply threat, but policies that anticipate responses and thereby avoid conflict.

One might well say, no wonder the term conflict resolution is not understood: it sounds so idealistic as not to be entertained seriously. Experience in the late 20th Century, however, is demonstrating that the old power methods of dealing with conflicts are not merely costly in lives and resources, but dysfunctional, leading most usually to the outcomes that were to be prevented, such as Japanese and German victory in peace after defeat in war, or increased social maladjustments of people punished for anti-social behaviours.

Indeed, it was an appreciation of the unrealistic nature of what was described as the political realities of power politics that led to a search for an alternative after World War II, first at the international level, and then at the national. What seemed to be idealistic turns out to be the real political reality. Conflict Resolution is in this sense an emerging new political reality, despite thousands of years of consensus support for power politics and its institutions.

Can the still emerging a-disciplinary study of Conflict Analysis and Resolution offer a means of analysing and dealing with the pressing problems of conflict and violence within and between societies? Or is the study and its applied processes just another palliative to help lessen to some very limited degree the personal and community hurts that are being inflicted by particular conflicts? Problem-solving or analytical conflict resolution, as distinct from negotiation, arbitration and mediation, came mainly out of the study of International Relations and, to a limited extent, out of Management Studies in the early 1960's. This was a stage of thought when that which was perceived as international was regarded as different in a behavioural sense from other levels of social relationships. The unit of analysis was the institution of the nation-state. An assumption was that the centralized authority of the nation state was the ideal. There was little recognition of spill-over from domestic problems to the international as, for example, when a domestic policy might adversely affect the economies of other nations. It was considered reasonable to separate International Relations as a study removed from the more general study of Politics.

Furthermore, there were few behavioural components, except those that, like "economic man", were invented to fit existing theories. The hypothetical "enemy" was assumed to be of a different culture, possibly capable of all manner of threats and atrocities, leading to clear concepts of right and wrong and to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. The underlying assumption that conflict is always the fault of the other party was rarely challenged. This abstraction was shared by popular opinion and by scholars.

At the international level, questions of peace and security were dealt with as part of strategic studies, the basic assumption being that of human aggressiveness, or at least the potential human aggressiveness of others. Defense strategies and power balances amongst the "great powers" were regarded as the appropriate means of promoting peaceful relations. Power balances were, of course, a theoretical fiction, for the struggle was always to have a favourable balance of power.

By implication there was another "rational actor" assumption inherent in strategic studies. Man was aggressive, but his aggression could be deterred by the threat of retaliation. Defense strategies and power balances obviously would be of no relevance if this deterrence assumption were not true. From modern history we know it is not necessarily true. Two small countries, North Korea and Vietnam, won their wars against great powers. The reason must be that there are some human values and needs, including values attached to independence and autonomy, that will be defended at all costs.

The international community, nevertheless, has not moved from this position even now. The Conflict Prevention Centre in Europe provides a forum for discussion of military information and of unusual military activities. It can encourage discussion of hazardous incidents of a military nature, prepare seminars on military doctrine, and try to promote other ways in which to reduce military threats. This is hardly conflict resolution: it is the old Peace Studies approach focussed merely on arms control.

Daily events now bring to our attention the reality that domestic levels of violence are outside the control of most authorities, in both developed and underdeveloped societies. But it has taken years to address the question, "why is this so?" Are there some human behaviours, individual, group, national and international, that are not subject to deterrence and control? If so, what are these and how are they to be accommodated? Might it be that military and authoritative controls are ineffective, that only values attached to relationships with others and with institutions can exercise an influence in the control of some human behaviours?

In the late 1960's these questions started a search for an alternative theory of behaviour, an alternative to the Morgenthau thesis, "Man is aggressive, therefore the state is aggressive", from which he deduced the need for authoritative power. It is a search that has advanced academic knowledge, but has not as yet penetrated decision making, least of all amongst those whose professional interest is in control by power and in the maintenance of power as the ultimate sanction.

If there are human needs that have to be accommodated, then conflict control will have to give way to quite different processes which seek to find the human source of conflict and the environmental conditions that promote conflict, leading to institutional change. Conflict will have

to be defined as a problem to be resolved rather than a situation in which behaviours have to be controlled.

Redefining our problems by reference to human components has the consequence of treating conflict as a generic phenomenon common to all societal levels, for example, family, industrial, social and international. This, in turn, becomes a challenge to all separate disciplines, each of which has its own human construct, conveniently invented to fit the various institutionally-based theories of these disciplines.

So there is evolving a new theory of behaviour, a new set of concepts, leading to a new language by which to communicate these alternatives. With such a fundamental paradigm shift over the course of less than half a century, with alternatives being dicovered only in the last few decades, it is little wonder that there remains today a major gap between Conflict Resolution theory and practice, on the one hand, and the power political stances that governments, especially militarily powerful governments, still adopt, on the other. Military defeats internationally and authoritative defeats domestically are still attributed to the employment of insufficient power. It has not as yet been recognized that if a person, an ethnic group or a country is determined to defy more "powerful" authorities, there is likely to be a reason and that this reason has to be discovered and accommodated.

This short historical summary suggests some major shifts in thinking over a peiod of thirty of so years. It may be useful to the present generation to spells these out in a way that points to trends in thinking. I happen to have been educated in a power-political frame, and also to have worked through the formative stages of Conflict Resolution. As indicated earlier, this is an introspective account. One way to trace out the development of Conflict Resolution is to recall personal thoughts and experiences and shifts in thinking.

In the 1930's, a time during which students were fearful of war, the general view was that disarmament was the means to peace. Disarmament was the central theme in some of my early books some years later. In retrospect disarmament is a most simplistic approach to what we now know to be a complex system problem.

In 1938, when war was imminent, my Ph.D. interest was Restrictive and Constructive Intervention. The selection of the topic reflected some diversion from undergraduate days, from peace through disarmament, to an interest in the sources of conflict. How could Fascism be assessed? What should be the role of governments? When was intervention restrictive, that is, hampering transactions, and when constructive in the pursuit of considered longer-term social and economic goals? These were the general questions one pondered as a public servant, which I had been since graduation. Impending war brought them to a sharper focus: what were the war's origins and causes. Importantly for me, what were the policies that had to be avoided after it was all over?

While I saw the dangers of Fascism, I found myself in support of Munich and "appeasement" of Hitler, except that it seemed to me to be too little and too late. World War I and the Peace Treaties had placed Germany in an impossible position. The Great Depression of the 1930's had brought underlying problems to a head.

The position was even clearer in relation to Japan. Britain had been relying greatly on its colonial empire for its raw materials and markets. In the depressed conditions of the 1930's

Britain chose to exclude Japan from its colonial markets rather than take the more challenging step of retraining and transferring its labour from the threatened British textile industries in the North to a growing electrical industry in the South. I was impressed by papers submitted by two Japanese scholars at an International Studies Conference in Bergen, Norway, in 1939 (a conference that had to be abandoned because war with Germany was clearly threatening). They argued that Japan, like Britain, being a small island with a large population, *had to* rely on foreign sources for raw materials and markets for finished products, and *had to* have its "co-prosperity sphere". It seemed to me that, given British policies, a war with Japan was not only inevitable, but would finally be won by Japan regardless of the outcome of fighting: the longer-term realities would finally determine the outcome.

These experiences at the London School of Economics did not take me out of the power political framework that was the unquestioned consensus of the time. There seemed then to be no alternative frame in which to think. When, years later, I did get around to teaching and writing, my early books, especially *International Relations: A General Theory* (Burton, 1965), were placed in the power category by a young scholar, John Vasquez, in an insightful paper, *Color it Morgenthau*.

I went back to the government service, researched in the area of post-war reconstruction, attended the Paris Peace Conference, the Food and Agriculture Conference, International Labor Office conferences, the U.N. Charter Conference, British Commonwealth Conferences and others. In every role the power-political approach was always dominant.

There is no hint of conflict resolution in the United Nations Charter, which at the time we all thought was a wonderful document. The basic idea was to construct an international enforcement agency on the model of the domestic one. We accepted without question the power political theory under which coercion is the means of control. I cannot recall a debate in any committee of the Charter Conference in which alternatives to the power approach were canvassed.

Then came Korea. Australia was a member of the U.N. observation team at the North-South boundary. The information I had was that there had been persistent provocations from the South in an attempt to justify a war of integration. I.F. Stone's *The Hidden History of Korea*, published soon after the war, was clearly made possible by some official leak. Despite this, a changed Australia government declared war. I felt I had no option but to protest by resigning as the official in charge of the foreign affairs department.

So here I was breaking away from a power political approach, but without any reasoning that could be conveyed at the time. There were no diplomatic processes by which the situation could be assessed in any analytical way. The U.S. sought a unified Korea, and free from communism. What were the options in the contemporary power political frame? The subsequent U.S. threat to attack China with "overwhelming force at a time and place of our own choosing", which was a response largely to the growth of independence movements in Asia, provoked me to write *The Alternative: A Dynamic Approach to Relations with Asia*. In this book I suggested that we had to expect former colonies in Asia to seek independence, by force if necessary, and that this had little if anything to do with any communist threat. But if their independence were opposed then support would be sought by these emerging nations from Communist China or

elsewhere, transforming Asian post-war independence movements into a possible communist threat.

Publication of *The Alternative* provoked an invitation to be a Fellow at the Australian National University and led to an academic career which I had never contemplated. There I wrote *Peace Theory: Preconditions of Disarmament*. It was at least a step away from disarmament as a remedy towards analysis of the reasons for arms.

In 1963 at University College London my first lecture notes became *International Relations - A General Theory*. It was very much in the power political frame. There were many references to deterrence. I argued that the power politics frame, especially in the nuclear age, was one in which deterrence strategies would be effective and permanent for all countries. Peace was assured because of the obvious consequences of nuclear war!

In this same year my attention was drawn by Michael Banks (editor of *Conflict in World Society*) to *Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control* by Karl W. Deutsch. This was for me a most significant book. He adopted a cybernetic or feed-back approach to decision making, still within the power framework. It was modeled on the electronic devices invented during the war that enabled pilots to see storm formations ahead and divert around them. This was a means of saving power, not an alternative to its use. I attached significance to this because it seemed to me that it could be the beginning of a break-away from power theories. If decision makers were to see ahead or anticipate the consequences of their decisions, and alter their decisions accordingly so as to avoid the need to employ more power where there was likely to be resistance, then this implied the need for an understanding of those who would be affected and would be responding. But we did not have a basis for this understanding.

University College London was a part of the University of London, of which the London School of Economics was another part. The latter also taught International Relations and we were required to examine together. It was not long before there were sharp disagreements in grading: we tended to fail their students and they ours! Whereas the L.S.E tended to teach from an historical and empirical perspective, we had been moving toward an explanatory perspective. We were interested in perceptions and relationships generally rather than just power relationships.

The disagreements on approach spread through the wider International Relations teaching community. There was a biennial meeting of teachers of International Relations throughout Britain at which there were general discussions and observations about teaching. Our dispute became a central feature of these meetings.

At one particularly tense meeting we were challenged to take a case and show that we could interpret it better within our frame. It was suggested that we take the case of Cuba. My response was that we would not take a case in which the documentation was already recorded within a power frame. We would want to take one that had not been already interpreted. We would wish to take an on-going situation and examine it in detail ourselves, not relying on the media or the interpretations of scholars who would be using, of course, the power politics frame.

This challenge was in 1965. To meet the challenge we decided to make a study of a current situation, a serious conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia, including Singapore. There was, among other issues, a territorial claim made by Indonesia to a part of Borneo, then under

Malaysian jurisdiction. The British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, had unsuccessfully tried to bring the parties together. The situation was increasing in intensity and violence.

I wrote to Wilson asking if he had any objections to our approaching the heads of government concerned to seek some kind of conference. He quickly replied that he had no objections. He asked a back-bench member of the House of Commons to keep in touch with us. We sent letters to the three governments asking them to nominate two or three persons who could help us understand the situation. It was clearly an academic exercise. Apparently it was easy to accept such an informal invitation to an off-the-record academic discussion, even though it had been impossible to accept an invitation to meet formally to negotiate.

Nominees arrived within a week or so. We invited Roger Fisher of Harvard to participate with us. (He was the only person we knew of who was making a study of conflicts and their treatment). While he would have preferred to draft an agreement as the basis for negotiation, we wished to pursue a more analytical role until the parties were in direct dialogue and had identified the sources of their problem.

Let it be clear that we were responding to an academic challenge. We were not in the game of conflict resolution, though clearly we were moving in that direction and for this reason had singled out Roger Fisher to help. We were interested in International Relations theory and in trying to find out whether we were on the right track in our teaching. But it became clear that the participants regarded the experience as a means of resolving their problems. The more we probed to find out about international relations, the more they became involved in discussing their relationships. At the end of the week they were communicating in a most analytical way, discovering a lot about each other. Finally one of them said, "Let's face it, we all have the same problem, we all have a minority problem from which we are trying to divert attention. We can agree on a common approach". They went home. A week later in answer to a message asking if there was anything further we could do, replies came back in similar terms indicating that they were now in normal diplomatic relations. The situation vanished from the media

We had received a shock. We were still in the traditional power frame which treated international relations as separate from domestic politics. This Asian conflict jolted us because it turned out to have its source, not in aggression for its own sake, but in a domestic problem faced by the governments concerned. It was a shock also in that we unwittingly had started a conflict resolution process. We saw that it was a facilitated analysis of a situation, but we did not fully understand why it had helped to resolve the conflict. What made it different from formal processes, such as Prime Minister Wilson had tried, was that it was an off-the-record exploratory academic exercise in which there would be no bargaining or negotiation, just analysis and exploration.

Should we not now pick a conflict and deliberately plan to help resolve it?

The United Nations was at this time concerned with the Cyprus situation. Ralph Bunch was the person in the U.N. Secretariat taking responsibility. He had not been able to bring the Greek and Turkish Cypriots together. He did have them in different rooms allowing him to act as a mediator. I flew to New York and asked the U.N. whether there was any objection to us trying to bring the parties together. The response was no, but a "no" which signified that they knew it was impossible. They said, furthermore, that Turkey--the only means of contact they had

with Turkish Cypriots--would not deliver a letter to the Turkish Vice-President of Cyprus. From New York I wrote to the President and the Turkish Vice-President and asked to see them. I posted the letters in the ordinary New York mail and shortly afterwards, flew from New York to Egypt and then to Cyprus.

I walked across the no-man's-land to the Vice-President's Office. He was away, but my letter was on the desk of his assistant and an immediate reply was given. They would send appropriate people. Then to the Greek Cypriot President, who assured me that the Turks would not agree, but he thought it was a good idea. I was able to tell him the Turks had agreed.

The meeting took place in London within two weeks. We invited from the US those whom we thought would be interested, Herb Kelman now at Harvard, Chad Alger now at Ohio and Bob North of Stanford. Intensive discussions continued for a week.

The parties sought another meeting, but we could not follow up as we were back in term. Now I would consider this unethical, but we were not prepared at that early stage of facilitation for such developments. However, the two parties had discovered that neither side wanted what each side feared, that was union with Greece or Turkey. That was an important and major discovery. They could live their own separate lives in peace. They "solved" their problem, but did not "resolve" it. The required next step was to work out functional relationships of two separate autonomies, including compensations for those who had lost property, etc.

This did not happen, and would not have happened had they met again because the UN would not have adjusted. The UN is an organization of sovereign states. There is resistance to secession movements almost everywhere, with great power backing. The UN has had "peace-keeping" forces in Cyprus for thirty or so years, in my view totally unnecessarily, and indeed, with dysfunctional consequences. The two leaders, who were close friends in earlier days, are quite capable of working together, given the opportunities. This secession question is the most important in world affairs these days. It raises questions about the nature of democracy: can there be majority government democracy that excludes ethnic minorities? Is the sovereign state any longer a viable unit in the post-colonial world? What are the options? Who decides and how? Clearly, it is only a facilitated interaction that can reach conclusions.

There were obvious lessons to be learned from this exercise. An approach must be at a high level if the exercise is not to be just a simulation. The initial approach and the discussions must be wholly off the record as no party can afford politically to be seen to be talking to "the enemy". It should be understood that there will be no publicity in the future unless the parties seek it. It was because of the official and public approach of the UN and its publicity that it failed. These considerations rule out most political initiatives, as experience shows. Some academics also like publicity for career reasons, but it is very counter-productive.

Another major lesson relates to the nature of facilitation. Knowledge of process, that is the "rules", is important in conflict resolution. It can be acquired in a few days. But facilitation requires much more. It is the knowledge of the facilitator, abilities to ask the searching questions, to cast doubt on prevailing assumptions that makes the difference between well-meaning but ineffective interventions and problem solving. For these reasons a facilitator usually should be a team. Many students are attracted by process, and enjoy being involved in it. Many, also, discover that conflict resolution is far more than process and discover theory as

effective practice. Process without adequate theory and abilities to question and discover tends to be little more than mediation, and that is rarely sufficient in a deep-rooted conflict.

I think it was this experience that changed my approach from a power negotiation to an analytical problem-solving one. We discovered many misperceptions, as for example, the mutual misperceptions about Greek Cypriots wanting Enosis (union of Greek Cypriots with Greece) and Turkish Cypriots seeking Double-Enosis (union of Turkish Cypriots with Turkey). We discovered what it was to have deep-rooted feelings that could not be compromised, such as the identity and security need for ethnic autonomy. We discovered that separation that led to functional co-operation might be in such cases the positive outcome, despite the current conventional wisdom that gave integration a high value.

After the Cyprus experience and discoveries that were to us then quite dramatic, I felt we should not get involved in any more situations until we had thought far more about behavioural relationships. We had been learning from direct experience, but as yet had no theory of behaviour that would guide us in process. I became involved in a London school situation where students were throwing teachers down the stairs. For a time I became a consultant to a firm of 20 or so industrial consultants who could never agree amongst themselves. At that time, also, the social workers of Britian were holding conferences to discuss their role. Were they there to uphold the system by giving support when necessary to those in trouble, or was their role also to draw attention to the circumstances that caused trouble for individuals in society? It was an old debate which still persists, but it was being actively engaged at this time and I gave several papers at their annual meetings. These were chance happenings, but important in that they pulled me out of the separate societal levels approach which was then current and which we in International Relations had adopted. We were now accepting that conflict was a generic condition with sources common to all societal levels, and that there were probably common processes of resolution.

This withdrawal period was my most productive. There was a lot going on in the academic world. There was the same world society having its impact on all of us. We were all responding in our own way. Kenneth Boulding had written an important article in the first issue of *General Systems* back in 1956 which he called *General Systems Theory: The Skeleton of Science*. It seemed to offer a non-power frame in which total systems could be analysed. The current literature and these applied experiences led me to an altered theoretical track. In the next few years I pulled together my thoughts at the time and wrote *Systems, States, Diplomacy and Rules* followed by *Conflict and Communication.*

It was clear, however, that these two books still lacked an appropriate frame. Systems are comprised of institutions and people, but the focus of General Systems Theory was very much on institutions. There was still no behavioural theory by which to anticipate responses. In *Systems, States Diplomacy and Rules* I was still very much within the Deutsch frame, but using the more comprehensive systems theory into which Deutsch's cybernetic model could have fitted. Indeed, there is a chapter in *Systems* that discusses the value of accurate prediction--as a means of conserving resources in arms planning! I do not recall that I was uncomfortable about this at the time. I was apparently still too well-entrenched in power theories to be disturbed by this narrow arms interest.

I tried to pull thoughts together for teaching purposes and in 1972 published *World Society* as a first year teaching text. How different it was from the lectures I gave those poor students back in 1963! It broke away from the billiard ball model of power politics in which relationships were at the boundaries of nations, toward a cobweb model of interactions, thus justifying the title. This was the influence of systems thinking. But as for a theory of behaviour, it got no further than to stress human problems of perceptions. It included all kinds of diagrams to show how much we misperceive. The conclusion was that interactions and better understanding between peoples were all that was required to resolve problems!

This was a long way from observing that perhaps institutions and structures were imposing on persons conditions to which there could not be adjustment. In *World Society* I had a chapter on conflict resolution: the first time I tackled the subject. I still thought that sufficient contact and understanding could bring peace.

I became involved at about this time in the Northern Ireland situation as a result of an invitation to visit there by the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission. It led to many discussions with both sides, to secret meetings between leaders of the opposing factions, to a meeting in Holland of the Protestant paramilitaries designed to give me a document to take to the other side, to contacts with the Officer in Command of the British Army in Northern Ireland and the head of the Northern Ireland Office and, finally, to a threat from him if I were to return there. During this time the Community Relations Commission was abolished. One of my most telling memories is driving back to my farm at Kent after one of the last visits and this threat from the Northern Ireland Office. I drove through red lights. After hearing the many toots I asked myself why I had run the lights. I had been thinking over many months' experiences in which I had acted on the assumption that the British Army and Government would like to be able to resolve this problem. I had to put in context conversations about the valuable experience the army was getting, the absence of any suitable camp in England, the low costs of the enterprise, the abolition of the Community Relations Commission, the murder in a secure Protestant area of the head of the Holland team on the evening of his return and many such considerations. It had suddenly occurred to me that I should reverse my assumption and act instead on the assumption that the Government at Westminster had, for political reasons, no intention of seeking a solution and would, on the contrary, discourage anyone seeking one. Everything was reversed and red meant green and green red. I went through the lights!

When one thinks about it, this should not be an infrequent experience. We work on a set of given assumptions, some are falsified and we rationalize in order to preserve our position. Then, finally, the evidence is such that we have no option but to recognize a major error, leading to a paradigm shift. If there is a major investment in a previous thought system, this takes some doing.

I moved to Kent where I discovered Steven Box, *Deviance, Reality and Society*. He happened to be teaching there. I happened on Paul Sites, *Control, the Basis of Social Order* and at the same time works on C.S. Peirce. These all made important shifts in my thinking. There were stimulating Ph.D. seminars where my former London colleague, John Groom, and I could continue to interact.

It was at Kent that I wrote *Deviance, Terrorism and War: The Process of Solving Unsolved Social and Political Problems*. My original title became the sub-title, because the publishers felt they had to make up a more attractive title. It never occurred to me that I was writing about deviance, terrorism and war. I was writing about problem-solving, conflict resolution and human needs.

It was in writing this book that I seem to have broken away finally from power as an explanatory frame, even from misperceptions as an adequate explanation of conflict. In 1983 I accepted an International Studies Association Fellowship at their headquarters, which was then the University of South Carolina. There I wrote *Global Conflict: the Domestic Sources of International Conflict*. Clearly I was still struggling to tackle conflict as a generic phenomenon, cutting through all societal levels. This has not been easy for anyone, for we have all come from our own societal-level disciplines. Those who come from International Relations have a special problem because this has been treated as quite separate from all other relationships. In the earlier days we went along with the separation as a means of contending with the Morgenthau claim that "man was aggressive, therefore the state was aggressive". Our defense was to argue that human behaviour and state behaviour were different. We should, of course, have argued that man in not aggressive; but at that stage this Morgenthau assertion was so widely accepted that either we agreed with it or were not prepared to go public and challenge it. In any event we did not have an alternative behavioural theory.

After South Carolina I joined Azar's Center at Maryland. There was plenty of time for research, theory and applied. We had three facilitation sessions with the parties to the Falklands/Malvinas dispute in 1983, 1984 and 1985. We also held two meetings with the nominees of eight leaders in Lebanon. These resulted in two books, *Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Azar and Burton, 1986) and a second one on procedures. During facilitated discussions there were many instances in which colleagues acting on the third party panel made what seemed at the time to be unhelpful comments. Frequently they were not conflict resolution scholars, but colleagues from other faculties pulled in to help form a facilitating panel. In 1987 I published *Resolving Deep-Rooted Conflict: A Handbook*. This set out the "rules" to be followed in a facilitating process, relating them to the theoretical background of the process.

In 1985 I moved to George Mason University. I still had a feeling that something was wrong. Not only were we not communicating very widely in the academic and official worlds, which is a sign that there is some unreality, but we were without any compelling theoretical frame that could be seen to be taking the place of power theories. Yes, deterrence might not deter, but why and in what circumstances?

In 1980 a book was published called *Human Needs*, edited by Katrin Lederer. It was the outcome of a conference held in Berlin amongst a small international group of scholars who were interested in human development. They felt traditional thinking in Sociology and related disciplines was inadequate. This struck a chord with me when I came across the book a few years later. Human needs, needs such as person and group recognition and identity, had proved to be stronger in many recent circumstances than military power. It reflected insights gained at facilitated conflict resolution meetings. Did we have here an explanation of why deterrence does not always deter?

In 1988 we invited this Berlin group to meet with us to examine the nature and sources of conflict in this theoretic frame and to get more clarity on the nature of human needs. It was an unusually interesting discussion. Everyone presented prepared papers. So many insights were obtained that everyone had to rewrite their papers. These were published in 1990 as one of the four volumes in the *Conflict Series* by St. Martin's. This was what we had been looking for for more than two decades. So concerned were we with power theories, with international institutions, with criticisms of strategic theories, that we had failed to ask questions about human behaviours. We had been as narrow as economists and professionals in other disciplines with their invented persons. In retrospect it was all so obvious. The experience provided the foundations of a theory of conflict and practical leads into policies of prevention. It obviously could be extended to throw light on family conflict, street gangs and a host of similar behaviours that were compensation for a denial of recognition and identity. After thirty years with a focus on processes by which a particular conflict might be resolved, now there was a step in the direction of conflict avoidance. It gave rise to the notion of conflict resolution as, not just a resolution process, but a political philosophy. There was, it seemed to me, an explanation why separate disciplines had not contributed to resolving social problems. We now had an alternative to power politics.

This insight was the foundation for my writing the conflict series of four books while a Fellow at the USA Government Institute of Peace in 1988-89 (St. Martins and Macmillan, 1990). The first of the series was *Conflict: Resolution and Provention* (Burton, 1990b).

Practical Steps

I remained very much aware that there was still something missing in my thinking about Conflict Analysis. There was a theory on which avoidance policies could be based. We could move away from particular conflict resolution processes, which were very limited in the sense that for every conflict resolved there are likely to be hundreds more surfacing. But within the exisiting political frame, could such a theory and philosophy make an impact?

It had taken thirty years for Conflict Analysis and Resolution to develop a theoretical frame. There was plenty of evidence of its influence in major situations. But it was still not widely accepted at any political level. Experience suggested that civilizations are likely to experience crises without doing anything about them until it is too late. Decision-making institutions just do not cope. Had conflict theory and analysis anything to contribute?

The core problem seems to be a lack of re-examination of that which does exist. We do not challenge our assumptions and explore. We are not taught to do this at schools or universities. On the contrary, we are trained to respect conventional wisdom and existing institutions. The adversarial legal and political institutions are valued because they are centuries old, which, of course, should be sufficient to condemn them.

What is required are processes of reassessment that are built into all institutions. Such processes would need to be facilitated by persons appropriately trained who can direct attention

to relevant issues. Good test-cases would be such an examination of the role of leaderships, the party political system, the adversarial legal system and the industrial relations system.

Reassessment could be introduced into all institutions, political and industrial, merely by providing relevant training. To a limited degree it is already happening. There are now Conflict Resolution students who have senior executive positions in government and in industry. But the focus on courses needs to be more deliberately on this core problem.

Given the problems now being faced in law enforcement and the handling of conflicts within a legal frame, conflict analysis has much to offer to lawyers. It can offer non-adversarial problem-solving approaches that are much better suited to the majority of conflicts within societies. These are not right-wrong in character, but are the result of structural and institutional constraints preventing the full development and recognition of the individual citizen. So also with other disciplines and professions. Conflict analysis, a break-away from traditional disciplines, should now anticipate its own demise by being incorporated within all social sciences, including economics and law, thus altering their frames and the policy implications of their theories.

There are other practical steps to be taken by Conflict Resolution Centres and Institutes. An urgent one is the establishment of a Non-Governmental Organization to deal with conflicts quietly and at the request of parties to conflicts. UN mediators cannot perform this role because secession problems cannot be dealt with within a nation-state frame. It is up to the academic community in this field to take the initiative.

To establish an NGO it would only take existing Conflict Centres and Institutes around the world to come together, using modern communications, and to make available relevant persons in response to requests. A small secretariat at an agreed centre would be all that was required in extra organization.

Another practical step is to examine how more bottom-up decision making can be woven into existing political systems. Within the emerging competitive global system state authorities have limited abilities to deal with social problems by the usual means available to governments, such as increased social services, and educational and employment opportunities. The problems societies face, be they crime or ethnic violence, are problems that emerge at the ground level. Even a system problem like unemployment must be dealt with finally at a personal level. A return to more face-to-face decision making is required. If teaching institutes were to move into this area, making contact with schools and families in particular, some interesting dicoveries would be made as to the sources of social problems and means of dealing with them.

At a political level it should be possible to encourage political parties to go to the electorate with less policy promises. Electorates are no longer attracted by competitive party promises. They would like the opportunity to vote for representatives who gave more attention to collaborative processes by which policies would be decided.

At a research level a Conflict Resolution approach directs attention to some obvious projects that seem not to be pursued within a more traditional law and order frame. For example, there are hundreds of prisoners held in most countries for murders and other crimes. We know very little about the patterns of crime. When are the reasons psychological, and when due to specific social conditions? We know little about war-lords, about ethnic violence, about alternatives to secession and to central authorities. A considered listing of research topics deduced

from conflict theory would contribute to thinking in the area and would also be useful to students.

These are all urgent tasks. As academics we are in a relatively secure world. But there is another world out there which is becoming threatening even to relatively secure and prosperous societies. Pick up any Amnesty International report and find that the majority of peoples are subject to war-lord and military tyranny, physical cruelties if there is any dissent, starvation deliberately inflicted and all manner of atrocities. It is now a global society. These are common interests.

The turn around required is a fundamental one, yet still within intellectual capabilities. Strong leaderships, so admired in the US and generally, have to give place to skilled facilitators, party politics to consensus approaches, debates to analysis, suppression to problem solving. Finally the issue is one of education, of intellectual leadership, of media responsibility. It is the small elite of privileged that have most to lose if failure continues and, therefore, most to gain from positive initiatives. A first step is to define the problem, to outline problem solving processes through which it can be tackled.

Will others write their introspective account?

What are reader responses?

And, what about a special IPRA (International Peace Research Association) conference to discuss these matters with a view to arriving at some specific proposals?

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