

INTRODUCTION

Peace Building in Fractionated Societies: Conceptual Approaches and Cultural Specificities

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The papers brought together here represent the work of the IPRA Commission on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building that met during the 1994 Conference of the International Peace Research Association at Malta to address the issues of peace building in crisis areas. The papers focus particularly on the role of ethnicity and culture in intractable conflicts, but also on how these same factors can contribute to the structures and processes of peace. Those of us who have been in the peace research field since the 1930s and 1940s are aware of how much more complicated peace processes are than we thought in those early days. Yes, we understood the dangers of nationalism, but ethnicity was not yet on our mental horizon. Now we know that one of the major tasks that confronts us as we near the twenty-first century is an adequate conceptualization of integrative processes in a world that is becoming more, not less, diverse. The papers that follow deal with that diversity both at the theoretical level and in concrete situations in Latvia and Estonia, France, South Africa and the Middle East.

The opening paper by Pamir unpacks the paradoxes of the conflicting forces at work in nationalism by distinguishing between ethno-nationalism, state nationalism and protest nationalism (right wing and fundamentalist), clarifying how nationalism can spawn or stifle democracy depending on economic and political conditions in critical transition periods. Birckenbach offers a thought-provoking analysis of two countries in such a critical transition period—Estonia and Latvia—where one-third or more of the residents are of Russian nationality and are excluded from citizenship. Birckenbach's conclusion in the face of persisting intergroup hostility and the failure of twenty international, intergovernmental and nongovernmental fact-finding commissions to agree on the extent of human rights violations, is that the problem of different perceptions by different sectors of the populations involved have not been addressed, and that open dialogue between nationality groups is essential.

South Africa is another example of a country in a critical transition period. Van der Merwe and Johnsen focus here on the problem of reconciling goals of peace and justice, of the good of society as a whole and the rights of individuals and minority groups, and of facing the injustices of the past. The government-appointed Commission of Truth and Reconciliation is described as reconciling retribution and forgiveness in a comprehensive and balanced process of restitution. In a unique breakthrough, the new government acknowledged the rights of minority groups, including ethnic identities, and achieved successful negotiations and constitutional

arrangements that may serve as a model, at least in terms of process, for other countries with serious ethnic conflict problems.

If the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is far behind the South African process, Ragionieri's paper indicates why. He offers a rich summary of the diversity of players and interests found in the now unipolar international system itself as well as among the bitterly opposed factions within Palestine, within Israel, and within Jerusalem — let alone between these entities. This overview is buttressed by a sympathetic presentation of the powerful historical mission felt by each contending group. Ragionieri notes the growing strength of civil society in both Israel and Palestine, and suggests that important conflict resolution potentials lie in the very diversity of each civil society, as well as in the continued efforts at dialogue between peace-oriented Israelis and peace-oriented Palestinians.

Cultural conflicts have increased in recent decades with the general increase in South-North migrations. Seijuq documents how an earlier romanticized relationship between France and the Maghreb has turned hostile in the face of growing immigrant Maghreb community in France. High unemployment of this population since the end of the Cold War has led to serious negative stereotyping of Muslim culture. Seijuq points out the urgent need for strategies on both sides to develop reality-based perceptions and more mutual respect between populations, each with their own claims to French citizenship (some, of course, considerably more recent than others). Given the ubiquity of this type of problem in Europe and increasingly in North America, this paper offers much food for thought.

In the closing paper of this collection (by Leeds), we move from specific conflict situations with strong ethnic components to broader issues of the cultural patterning of conflict management in different civilizational traditions and at different levels, from the global to the personal. Leeds draws on a variety of theoretical and empirical research perspectives, providing a useful overview of a complex field. Of particular importance is the emphasis on serious cultural differences between the West and the Non-west, and between collectivist and individualistic traditions. He highlights the problems that stem from western assumptions of universal values that are not accepted as universal by nonwestern societies and cultures. Leeds offers the possibility of a creative synthesis of individualistic and collectivist approaches to conflict management by encouraging the adoption of flexibility and pragmatism on the part of practitioners in the international arena. In fact, the need for flexibility and pragmatism can serve as a common underlying theme for all the papers brought together in this issue of the *International Journal of Peace Studies*.