MANAGING CONFLICTS ACROSS CULTURES: CHALLENGES TO PRACTITIONERS

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Introduction

Conflict Management covers the various processes required for stopping or preventing overt conflicts, and aiding the parties involved to reach durable peaceful settlement of their differences. Practitioners or intermediaries comprise statesmen, diplomats and a range of specialist negotiators, mediators, facilitators, or advisers, including NGO representatives. Special focus is placed in this paper on ethnic conflicts, whether domestic or international.

Culture, as defined in this paper, may be a significant or insignificant influence in any conflict, being closely associated with the notion of identity. Despite the importance of a person's individual identity, culture is commonly regarded as a group phenomenon. Virtually all serious conflicts since the 1970s, the Cold War being an exception, have been ethnic, originating in many cases in the weaker group resorting to violence as a result of the discriminatory practices of the ruling elite, which belong to the dominant ethnic group.

Culture itself is likely to be an element among others in determining the outcome of the conflict management process, depending on the degree of cultural diversity among the actors involved (parties to the conflict and intermediaries). Third party teams are likely to be strengthened in the long run if composed of members of differing national or ethnic origins who work in an integrated manner, each providing their own talents, qualities and outlook.

This paper discusses certain aspects of cross-culture research of relevance to conflict management and the work of practitioners in this field.

Culture, Identities, Human Needs and Conflict

Each person is partly like all others, partly like some others, partly like no-one else. Stress is placed in this study on the deeper aspects of culture, values, beliefs, norms, which influence perceptions, assumptions, attitudes, and eventually behavior and traditional practices. Culture is understood for our purposes as the "collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede, 1991:5) or as an expression of all the experiences of a particular people or group over time which help shape their personality and manner of perceiving. People carry several layers of mental programming, Hofstede argues, which correspond to different culture levels, from the individual to the universal. Table 1 presents different cultural levels of analysis, with examples of the most common regional and social contexts.

Table 1
Levels of Analysis — Identity and Culture

Level		Examples
1	Universalism	a) Westernization b) Globalism c) Religious Fundamentalism
2	Bipolar divide	a) East and West b) Universalism - Particularism c) Liberalism - Syncretist Ideologies d) Individualism - Collectivism
3	Civilization or Major Country Clusters	a) Strict doctrines (Islamic Fundamentalism) b) Pan-movements c) Historic groupings — European, Anglo-American, Asian, African, Arab
4	Supranational or Regional	Possible examples in Europe — Celtic, Germanic, Latin and Nordic
5	Multinational States	Most countries
6	Ethnonationalism and Nation-States	Certain developments worldwide
7	Sub-national identities	Catalan, Alsacien, Welsh, Basque, identities of indigenous peoples
8	Community	Town/village
9	Family	Nuclear/extended family; kin groups
10	Personal/Individual	

"Groups" or "peoples" in this definition (levels 2-7 of Table 1) refer first, to sub-national kin-groups, communities or minorities with their own specific identities; second to affiliations (loose or institutionalized) of an ethnic or confessional nature which are not only within, but normally transcend national boundaries, as in the case of the Kurds or Islam fundamentalists; and third, "group" may also refer to the citizens or inhabitants of a state. This latter level is frequently emphasized because of the influence of national socializing processes. Finally, groups may refer to broad clusters of several countries sharing certain core values—possibly the relevant level of analysis in estimating cultural influences on negotiating and handling conflicts.

The concepts of culture, identity and values are closely interrelated and can be studied at different levels of analysis. At the universalistic level everyone shares many common elements as human beings, and some may feel strong attachments to the goals of global unity or world citizenship. Universalism implies support for common evaluative standards domestically, and belief that, internationally, the body of uniform procedures, values, rules and laws governing human conduct and transactions can be maximized rather than minimized in the interests of all. Western practice has made it hard to distinguish between true universalism—rules and practices acceptable and applied everywhere—and certain elements of Western culture or values purported to be valid universally. Groups or movements wishing to propagate world-wide a political ideology or religious faith, often use the language of universalism..

As an example, many Western governments have actively promoted the virtues of their way of life and values abroad, especially in Latin America and Central-Eastern Europe. In addition they have offered financial aid as inducement to modernism, usually with stringent conditions attached. The assumption is that others want the benefits of Western material-industrial civilization. Modernization theories predict that parochial identities, ethnic and religious attachments succumb to influences such as secularization, urbanization, technology, education and loyalties to larger communities (Gurr, 1994: 347).

The world has in one sense become increasingly integrated in the last fifty years. Certain thinkers have suggested that cultures were converging and becoming more homogeneous. The quickening momentum in this direction has stimulated parallel divergent forces of fragmentation and particularism (Rosenau, 1994: 255-81). Such counter tendencies are partially reflected in the desire of many countries or societies to protect and develop their own indigenous cultures. The end of the bipolar East-West conflict of ideologies may be replaced by a new North-South conflict as economic, immigration and environmental issues coalesce along a broad cultural divide. This separates the Universalists (primarily the West) from the particularists (predominantly the more collectivist non-Western societies).

The non-Wests, Huntington's phrase, "increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways" (Huntington, 1993: 26). Countries with economic, political and strategic power, such as Saudi-Arabia, India and China, can better resist pressures for reform or modernization along Western practices. At the world conference on Human Rights held at Vienna, in July 1993, the West, led by the United States, stressed the "universality of human rights." In contrast the East, led by China, Syria and Iran, insisted that non-western cultures should not be held to Western standards. The UN Charter of Human Rights tends to emphasize Western individual rather than non-Western collective rights. Huntington

questions the relevance of Western ideas to non-Western culture in areas such as individualism, human rights, democracy and free markets (Huntington, 1993: 40-41). Certainly, many non-Western societies wish to retain certain benefits of the West while developing and creating more open societies in ways associated with their own particular cultures and needs, as in the case of Japan. However, other non-Western societies have other objectives. Haas, like Huntington, sees the basic international divide as a non-violent, largely peaceful, conflict between Western liberal rationalizers and the supporters of syncretist ideologies. The latter are mostly attached to religious systems that shape local culture, and largely reject Western values (Haas, 1993: 534-35, 544).

Huntington argues that the bipolar "West against the Rest" is an important area of concern. The significant area of violent conflicts, though, will be along six or seven fault lines separating broad civilizations, differentiated by history, language, traditions and religion—Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin-American and possibly African. Some confirmation of this is found in the 50 current serious ethnopolitical conflicts. Eighteen of these are considered civilizational, overlapping with 15 labeled militant religious nationalism, concentrated particularly in the Middle East or the Indian subcontinent (Gurr, 1994: 350).

Huntington's classification mixes religious, regional-geographic and national categories. Yet individuals are subject to a wide range of values, beliefs and identities involving various aspects of their lives, including social, political and religious. For example, some people's loyalties may extend first to extended families and friends before ties to religious or national groupings. Consequently cultural divisions may not necessarily arise along the divides envisaged by Huntington. No evidence, according to Gurr, indicates that civilizational conflicts will become more significant.

At the level of multinational states, cross-national surveys reveal considerable variation in what people prize most in their own country (one indicator of national values) and the extent to which individuals owe their first duty to the state rather than to personal welfare. Huntington interprets the American identity as one whereby each citizen adheres to the dominant political creed (or Americanism) while being allowed the right to retain personal ethnic culture and traditions (Huntington, 1981: 27), in effect distinguishing between the public culture of a country and a person's private culture.

Ethnic group identification possesses both affective and instrumental components. The affective or primordial includes beliefs in common historical experiences, language, religion or ancestral common roots. The instrumental, contextual or political component arises through the crisscrossing, overlapping and multi-levelled nature of cultural and identity attachments in practice. In other words, leaders are able to emphasize those aspects of an identity, or activate that particular ethnic divide, most likely to attract and sustain widespread group mobilization and to achieve desired aims, especially in times of conflict (Carment, 1993: 139; Gurr, 1994: 352). Ethnonationalism marks the efforts of many nationalists worldwide to form nation-states, understood originally as each nation being synonymous with each state. However, the term Nation-State has commonly been applied not only to the few relatively homogeneous states such

as Denmark, but also to heterogeneous State-Nations, where numerous ethnic groups are in various degrees integrated within the mainstream culture.

Culture, as broadly outlined in the next section, assumes that a person's mindset cannot normally change rapidly. Usually individuals require time to unlearn customary habits as to how things are done in one setting, and to make adjustments mentally. For example, national values, beliefs or traits, and cluster groupings originate as a result of a range of factors, including history, geography, religion, language, colonization, immigration patterns and dominant elite groups. Such influences may reach back into the distant past. For example, High Power Distance, a technical term for organizational values centered on hierarchy and dependency, may have originated in certain societies from the centralizing practices of the Roman and Chinese empires (Hofstede, 1991: 43). Smith (1993: 130) stresses the persistence of both ethnic affiliations in the modern world, and of historic identities which are slow to change. Older Western countries evolved round an ethnic core, even if they shifted the emphasis from kinship/ethnic links towards a mass public culture with which minorities could associate.

One popular postmodern view advances an alternative scenario. Weak social bonds offer a choice of lifestyles, and the possibility of developing easily reshapable identities. Concepts such as nationality and identity are social concepts which can be constructed and imagined, and adopted or fashioned according to circumstances. An individual can instrumentally choose an identity "without being fated by history to occupy ordained ethnic slots" (Haas, 1993: 505).

Human needs theory is influenced by the above approach, involving a paradigm shift towards the individual and the identity group and away from authority and institutions (Burton and Sandole, 1986: 340). The implication is that there is free individual choice among various identities rather than predetermination by other forces. Rubenstein suggests that genuine Conflict Resolution takes place when a person freely realizes a number of identities from the individual to *homo sapiens*, and is not locked unwillingly into an intermediate level through group or other social pressures (Rubenstein, 1990: 348-49). Certainly, individuals vary considerably in the extent to which they reflect the mean score of any value said to typify culturally any group. Some effectively interact, especially if linguistically gifted, across a range of national, sub-national and supra-national cultural boundaries.

Theories relating to weak identities, human needs and the empowering of individuals, may reflect the core values of certain Western individualistic countries, while overlooking the significance of power and authority within High Power Distance societies, whether democratic or not. Human needs theory is linked to the school of thought which traces basic causes of social conflicts to frustrated human needs which result from tyrannical or corrupt rule, "the absence of legitimate structures, institutions and policies" (Burton, 1990: XV). Solutions proposed are major internal reforms, and changes in the international system to alleviate inequalities. Culture is not considered a significant variable, and so no distinction is made between ethnic and other conflicts.

Huntington argues that culture will be the main cause of future conflict, and that cultural differences are less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic matters, especially when religion is involved (Huntington, 1993: 22,27). In contrast, Rubenstein and Crocker (1994) evoke Burton's human needs theory in challenging Huntington. They argue that,

unless basic needs are unfulfilled as a result of unjust structures, different cultures have no reason to conflict. While this may be true at the civilization level, their next point, that conflicts based primarily on cultural differences alone are easier to settle than structural conflicts, because the parties involved seek goods such as identity and mutual recognition which are not in short supply, is debatable. In predicting that domestic and ethnic conflicts are becoming the most important threat to international security, Carment (1993: 146), for example, stresses that the economically weak, dependent regions in Africa and the Middle East are particularly affected. Gurr points out that the greater the competition and inequalities between groups in heterogeneous societies, the greater will be both the salience of ethnic identities, and the prospect of overt violence. In other words, cultural distinctions add an extra sharper dimension that increases divisiveness and the intensity of conflict. As an example, all but 5 of the 23 wars in 1994 were based on communal rivalries (Gurr, 1994: 348,350,355). Table 2 illustrates an unevenly upward trend in the number of ethnopolitical conflicts since 1970.

Table 2
Number of Ethnic (Ethnopolitical) Groups Involved in Serious Conflict since 1970

	Europe	Middle East	Asia	Africa	Latin America	TOTAL
1970-1979	1	16	18	19	1	55
1980-1989	7	13	20	17	5	62
1993-1994	10	6	28	3	70	

source: adapted from Gurr (1994: 350)

Culture, Cognitions and Negotiation

Cultural elements underlying conflicts are an important consideration mediators need to bear in mind, adding an extra edge and degree of sensitivity to the difficult tasks of mediating and peace-building. This section will explore these elements, and two pairs or paradigms that contrast, respectively, (a) pluralistic atomism and integrated wholism and (b) "hard" mechanistic impersonalism and "soft" flexible personalism. These two pairs reveal insights into the relationship between culture, mentalities or mindsets, and effective communication in negotiating, mediating and handling conflicts. Hall (1976: 64) contrasts the deductive holistic thinking cultures of the indigenous peoples of North America, such as the Navajo, with the more fragmented inductive thinking of Euro-Americans who focus on parts or "bits." In general he also explores basic differences between high context (usually polychronic, collectivist societies) and low context (usually monochronic, individualist societies). His findings resemble existing research results regarding right and left hemispheres of the brain (Ornstein, 1972). One popular view formerly associated Western societies with left brain scientific, analytical and rational thinking processes, and the non-western world with right brain, synthetic, emotional and intuitive thinking processes (Mintzberg, 1989: 55). Individualists stress attributes such as being logical and balanced, whereas other cultures, for example, the African, value qualities such as a person's spontaneity, unpredictability, unique movements and uninhibited self-expression (Triandis, 1989: 82). Later researchers have argued that both hemispheres of the brain are capable of undertaking functions formerly attributed exclusively to the other. This fact has not prevented continued speculation on how certain clusters of qualities associated with the brain relate to various cultures.

Lessem and Neubauer have developed a typology of response clusters which they apply to Western Europe, North America and Japan. *Pragmatism* describes the Anglo-Saxons (including the United States and Canada), seen as primarily sense-based, supported by thinking. *Rationalism* characterizes the Franco-Nordic group (thinking supported by intuition) and *wholism* the Germanic/Nippon cluster (largely intuition and feeling). *Humanism* is applied to the Italian/Latin group (feeling supported by intuition) (Lessem and Neubauer, 1994: 20-24).

In much of the non-Western world and Mediterranean Europe the building of relationships forms a crucial part of any transaction, whether political, economic or social. The showing of emotion, affectivity or natural human feelings publicly is acceptable to a degree. In certain societies such as the Japanese, people may be emotional, sensitive, even if, like Asians and Africans, they tend, in public, to hide their emotions. Cohen (1987) contrasts Impersonalism (Americans) and Personalism (Egyptians) as one of a series of contrasting attitudes which has caused problems in diplomatic negotiations between these countries.

Various researchers have identified distinct approaches to negotiating and handling disputes in international conferences. For example, Walker (1990) identified three different kinds of discourse during the Third United Nations Law of the Sea Conference, (Caracas, Venezuela, 1974, and subsequent negotiations). The First World tended to focus on procedure, concrete details, factual statements, and statistical information. Representatives adopted a pragmatic, legalistic approach, preferring to discuss clearly defined issues before considering general

principles, an inductive manner of reasoning. When Walker refers to a Western or First World negotiating style, this, in effect, reflects the Anglo-Saxon style. The Second World, namely the former Communist block except China, adopted a deductive rational approach, arguing from abstract and general principles, prior to entering into specific details. The Third World's argument orientation tended to be characterized by emotion, exaggeration, imagery, ambiguity and reference to history. They stressed the need for compensation justice, arguing from general principles, often considered to be universal (Walker, 1990: 106-7).

Individualism-collectivism is often regarded as the most important dimension underlying cultural differences. Many misunderstandings between Western and non-Western societies are attributed to this dimension (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991: 276; Triandis, 1989: 48-49). One approach explains the individualism-collectivism distinction basically as the actor having a choice between prioritizing either private and personal interests or collective goals (Kluckholm and Strodtbeck, 1961: 18). Another stresses the relative strength of ties and bonds. In individualist societies, identity is based on the individual, ties are loose and individuals are expected to look after themselves and immediate family. In collective societies identity is based more on the social network to which one belongs, people being integrated from birth in strong groups which provide protection in return for loyalty.

Hofstede places both Universalism and Particularism and Hall's low and high context as sub-categories, respectively, of individualism and collectivism. Collectivist societies make important particularistic "our group-other group" distinctions, treating friends better than others being considered ethical and natural (Hofstede, 1991: 66). Empirical evidence suggests that morality in collectivist societies is viewed differently than in individualistic cultures, and is related more to a particular context and the actor's position socially (Triandis, 1989: 83). The idea of dependency or subordination appears in numerous studies as a significant feature of many areas of non-Western societies. A person's identity and existence is partially or wholly bound up with commitments to one or more of the following: family and kin, ethnic ties, clientelist associations, or a religion.

The various findings of Walker, Hofstede, Triandis and others, correlate to an extent with the findings of Huntington, Haas and Gurr concerning the risks of major conflicts involving religious, ideological or cultural issues. A straightforward West/non-West dichotomy appears to be one frequent interpretation. All Western countries are democracies, while stable established democracies elsewhere are few, of which Japan and Costa Rica are examples.

The West versus the non-West scenario can be moderated by certain findings, indicating that Southern Europeans share to an extent many traits associated with non-Western societies. The key psychological traits—sensation, thinking, intuition and feeling—associated with parts of Western Europe, are said to be universals, capable of being all incorporated by individuals and societies as they develop and interact. Europe's cultural diversity implies that it represents a miniature variant of the world in terms of variety in mental programming (Hofstede, 1993:10).

Culture, Negotiating and Mediating

The many skills of the mediator naturally include negotiating and handling conflict. Negotiating internationally used to be largely, and still is to an extent, seen as based on universally-accepted principles and practices. In the last decade the idea that culture can be an important influence, depending on the circumstances, has received greater recognition (Black and Avruch, 1993: 382-85; Elgstrom, 1994: 294-99). Negotiating literature tends to emphasize a three-style formula---competing, compromising and cooperating. The competitive strategy (dominating) is usually recommended initially (Sergeev, 1991: 59) with compromise often viewed as the best solution between tough competent opposing parties (Kremenyuk, 1991: 30; Persson, 1994: 220). However, the cooperative or problem-solving style as the ideal overall strategy (Fisher and Ury, 1983) has been receiving broader acceptance.

The assumption that international diplomatic and business negotiations should normally open with a tough adversarial phase (especially with new opposing negotiators) is less obvious to many non-Western societies. Asian and many other cultures value harmony, consensus and indirectness in communication. Countries such as Japan and France might employ avoiding as a delaying strategy. The Japanese prefer to use the formal session to announce agreement reached through bargaining at the informal level (Thayer and Weiss, 1987: 54-55). In many parts of the Middle East, Asia, Mexico, France, Russia and elsewhere compromise has a negative connotation, often associated with a second-best solution, with surrendering principles and losing face. Western cultures tend to underemphasize the importance of "face" considerations in negotiations, mediation and conflict management (Harrison, 1987: 81; Fisher and Ury, 1981:34). A more detailed discussion of this area is covered particularly in the research of Stella Ting-Toomey et al. (1991).

An approach to interpersonal conflict, quite popular within the literature on handling organizational and industrial problems, involves five main options (Rahim and Blum, 1994: 5-6).

1. *Integrating* (win-win)—high concern for self and others;
2. *Dominating* (competitive, win-lose)—high concern for self, low concern for others;
3. *Compromising* (mixed no win/no lose)—intermediate concern for self and others;
4. *Avoiding/withdrawing* (lose-lose)—low concern for self and others;
5. *Obliging/accommodating/smoothing* (losing more than one gains)—low concern for self and high concern for others.

At the interpersonal level, a five-country study demonstrated the utility of the five-style model of negotiating. Americans made most use of the competitive style while the collectivist cultures, Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, utilized more the obliging and avoiding styles. While past American literature interprets the avoiding style negatively, collectivist cultures take a positive view of avoiding as involving "saving the face" of the other party (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991: 289-91; Moran et al., 1994: 46-47). A negotiating style that offers a wide range of options better reflects cultural preferences in international negotiations.

The Conflict Resolution approach, as developed by John Burton and others, is based on the assumption that "universal patterns of behavior exist" (Burton and Sandole, 1987: 97; Burton and Dukes, 1990: 189-209). The Conflict Resolution approach is used both for training third party facilitators, and as the approach a third party invites disputants to adopt. A neutral, skilled, third party of facilitators helps disputants find a mutually agreeable solution. The outsider and impartial stance of the intervening actors protects their legitimacy and authority. This profile type of mediator has been designated the "Outsider-Neutral" (Wehr and Lederach, 1991:86-87).

There can be many variations on the Outsider-Neutral model. The Japanese, for example, apply the avoiding strategy, as a means of not openly admitting conflict. This may involve disputants privately asking a mutual acquaintance to intervene, who takes an active role in the Conflict Resolution process. One study among University students in Hong Kong and the United States found that collectivist cultures appear to take different positions regarding Conflict Resolution, depending on whether they are dealing with ingroups or outgroups. The Chinese subjects were more likely to pursue a conflict if disputes involved outgroup members, and to feel free to use aggressive strategies when negotiating with them. The Americans did not make any ingroup-outgroup distinction (Triandis, 1989: 90).

Both contemporary conflict research theory and the "Outsider-Neutral" global mediator model have been said to reflect largely American and Western practices and traditions (Avruch, 1991: 7). The imagery of the detached rational mediator may be less appropriate for other cultures, such as the Arab, through failure to deal with irrational aspects of human behavior and the role of emotion (Melville and Bretherton, 1994: 16-17). The "Outsider-Neutral" model involving participative egalitarian methods whereby disputants are encouraged to solve their own conflicts, with mediators and "conflict moderators" acting as facilitators, fits the democratic individualist tradition.

The Insider-Partial model appears in a different set of cultural contexts, in collectivist societies. Important features of these societies include preserving hierarchy, harmony and trust, based on personal relations within an ingroup, and dependency—the tendency to refer to others for advice and instruction. Respect for others is based partly on ascriptive status (a person's position in life, and connections). Consequently, a mediator handling disputes in such environments might be involved in a wider role than a facilitator, acting assertively as a mediator-negotiator. This would include the capacity to exert "leverage" or power, possessing resources able to influence disputants and the outcome of negotiations. A high intervening role falls within the range of tasks envisaged for the "Insider-Partial" mediator type. Such a mediator maintains close links with the disputants (internality) and has a personal interest in a successful outcome (partiality). In the Middle East conflicts are often resolved through trusted third parties, as occurred when the Iranian hostage impasse achieved a solution when the Americans enlisted the Moroccans as intermediaries.

The Insider-Partial mode originates from the study of the role Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica, and others played in helping resolve interstate conflict in Central America, and especially Nicaragua, in the late 1980s. Arias worked as a mediator-negotiator (Wehr and Lederach, 1991: 87,98). Both Arabs and Latin Americans appreciate a communicative style involving flair, feeling, rhetoric and emotional commitment whereas a controlled, neutral or

unexpressive style is more acceptable generally within African and Asian milieus. Wehr and Lederach suggest that the Insider-Partial and Outsider-Neutral models complement each other, mediators of both types being able to work together in third party teams as they did in Central America.

Concluding Remarks

The Individualism-Collectivism divide tends to associate collectivism notably with strong family/kin ties, and strong ingroup-outgroup distinctions. Collectivist societies have usually had weak to non-existent democratic traditions. Most countries involved in serious ethnic conflicts since 1980 tend to possess the characteristics just described. Part of the transformation of the relationship process on a long-term basis would involve measures for ceasing policies of obligatory assimilation or exclusion based on narrow definitions of a people, nation or state. It would also imply the application of basic human rights to all members of a given population, the end to discriminatory practices, introducing greater democratization and finding ways of developing greater cooperation beyond family, ethnic or religious attachments.

An important feature of societies divided ethnically, is that warring groups occupy the same space. Kelman (1996: 104) finds a correlation between the degree of the intensity of conflict and the degree of interdependence of the parties involved. One solution might be for the intermediaries to encourage the actors, by the input of suggestions, to look for solutions likely to be viable permanently. In all likelihood it would be necessary to construct a new basis for identification, combining exclusivist ethnic forms with greater attachments to civic, public loyalties. People in all countries, societies or cultures display features of individualism and collectivism in different ways and combinations. Countries strong in what Fukuyama (1995: 28-29) calls "familial communitarianism" are weak in "societal communitarianism." Although Fukuyama only cites Southern Europe, China and Taiwan as examples of familial communitarianism, it would seem obvious, based on Hofstede's work, that it is present in a large number of societies. Societal communitarianism implies the capacity of individuals to identify with voluntary associations based on a high degree of trust between members, which form part of an intermediate zone between family and kin groups on the one hand, and the State on the other. Smith (1991: 115) doubts the efficacity of detaching individuals from their ethnic attachments so as to acquire a larger over-arching public loyalty. Instead he suggests that ethnic cleavages could best be lessened by the building up among a people of commitment to a particular spatial location (territorialism) based on the importance of residence and propinquity, as opposed to descent and genealogy.

Conflicts that have dominated the world since the 1990s, such as the conflicts in the former Soviet Union or in Rwanda and Burundi, have demonstrated, according to Kelman (1996: 104), the correlation between the degree of intensity of a conflict and the interdependence of the parties involved. Such protracted conflicts are high in both these respects. Consequently, there is a greater urgency for transforming the relationship between the actors involved. Slim and

Saunders (1996: 43) recommend, for divided societies such as Tajikistan, that intermediaries involved in resolving conflicts can work in conjunction with NGOs to strengthen or establish "boundary-spanning organizations." The latter would bring individuals together from different sections of the population to work on the creation of superordinate transcommunal goals so that everyone can develop greater identification with the whole.

Available evidence of third party intervention in former Yugoslavia since 1991 suggests that a number of mediators lacked experience and knowledge of conditions. The inter-governmental nature of the operation handicapped reconciliatory activities at local level (Wiberg, 1994: 229, 252-53). Lessons learnt from Balkan peacemaking activities include recognition of the value of increased NGO involvement in mediating, and the need for preventive diplomacy before conflicts became manifest or overt. NGOs are now involved in projects to encourage closer cooperation in parts of Eastern Europe between ethnic minority groups, host states and adjacent "kin-states" (homelands of these groups).

In conclusion, it can be argued that model-making and simple constructs, such as discussed in this paper, provide some generalized or idealized, but valid, signposts in an uncertain postmodern world. They represent starting or meeting-points. Peoples or societies invariably combine elements of contrasting values in different combinations. Everyone, for example, has an individual and a group aspect to their nature and behavior.

Out of any polarity, or binary construct, a synthetic third path emerges. In terms of conflict management, negotiating or mediating, this third way depicts the various options an individual or team develops within the space set by the low context–high context and Outsider-Neutral and Insider-Partial confines. Creative ways of handling conflicts often emerge from the adopting of a flexible, pragmatic outlook. Such a contingency model necessitates finding the strategy that appears the most appropriate in a specific situation.

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