

# DENNIS SANDOLE

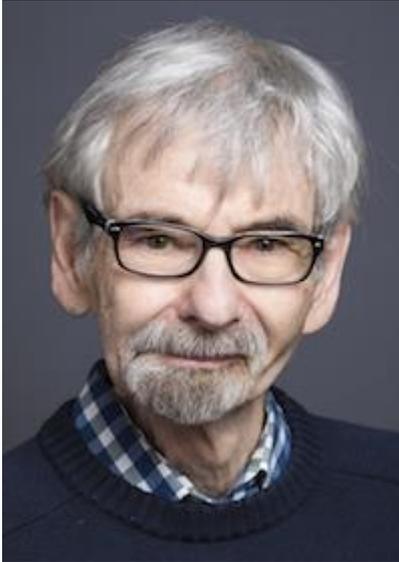
## PROFESSOR OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

I met Dennis Sandole when I first joined the Conflict Research Society in the 1980s and it was a great pleasure to renew our friendship and to meet Ingrid when, in recent years, Dennis came to the CRS conferences. Dennis kindly contributed a number of writings to my monthly Commentaries, some of which appeared in the *Values, Society and Modelling Yearbooks*, 2014 and 2015. The 2014 Yearbook also contained a chapter by Dennis's colleague, Kevin Avruch, about Dennis's work with John Burton. The 2015 Yearbook contained a chapter by Kevin Clements which discussed the work of John Burton, including papers by John and Dennis.

### Contents

In memoriam: Dennis Sandole	2
Dennis Sandole - Parent of the Field	3
Peace Studies and Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) Programs. An American Example Against a Global Backdrop. Dennis J.D. Sandole. <a href="https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&amp;pid=sites&amp;srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2MDUzZjczYWO2ZWl1M2E3">https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&amp;pid=sites&amp;srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2MDUzZjczYWO2ZWl1M2E3</a>	5
Bringing Russia and China in from the Cold Sandole, Dennis. [Yearbook 2014]	6
“Insights Obama can now use to undermine Putin’s narrative.” <i>Financial Times</i> , April 18, 2015: 6. Sandole, Dennis. [Yearbook 2015]	13
“Bringing Russia out of the cold and into the fold.” <i>Financial Times</i> , July 1, 2015: 10. Sandole, Dennis. [Yearbook 2015]	14
Context and pretext in conflict resolution, CRS Book of the Year, 2014 Kevin Avruch (joint winner) [Yearbook 2014, Chapter 2]	15
Transcending adversarialism: the John Burton Memorial Lecture, 2015 Kevin Clements. [Yearbook 2015, Chapter 2]	28

## In memoriam: Dennis Sandole



It is with deep sadness that we share with you that our friend and colleague, Professor Dennis Sandole, has died after a long battle with cancer. Dennis was hired in 1981 as the first dedicated faculty member of S-CAR when it was the Center for Conflict Resolution. He will be dearly missed.

A memorial will be held on Friday, May 11, at [Fairfax Memorial Funeral Home](#), located at 9902 Braddock Road, Fairfax, Virginia 22032. Visitation will be from noon to 1 p.m.; the service will begin at 2 p.m.

We invite you to share your memories of Dennis in this [online guestbook](#). Gifts in Dennis's memory can be made to the George Mason University Foundation, Inc. and designated to the S-CAR Dean's Fund at 3351 North Fairfax Drive, MS 4D3, Arlington, VA 22201. Contributions can also be made online at [give.gmu.edu](http://give.gmu.edu).

- S-CAR Dean Kevin Avruch

## **Dennis Sandole - Parent of the Field**

Video: <https://activity.scar.gmu.edu/parents-of-field/dennis-sandole>

Having spent four of his early adult years in the Marines, Dennis Sandole opted for an alternative career trajectory and in 1968 joined the Ph.D. program at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, where he remained as first a master's and then a Ph.D. student until gaining his doctorate in 1979. At the time, the program was run by the charismatic Richard Rose, who was one of the few politics and government scholars of that era to believe in a social scientific approach to studying politics, peace, and security, so his Department was unusually accommodating to the new ideas of modeling, measurement, and the statistical testing of ideas. Dennis Sandole's initial interest in simulation and gaming fitted well into the Department, but it was also almost inevitable that he should have been affected by the ambience at Strathclyde and become eventually one of the more numerate and rigorous of the conflict research fraternity.

While completing his doctorate in Scotland, Sandole's own teaching career took off in many directions. He took up the position of Lecturer in International Relations (IR) down at University College London, becoming a member of John Burton's Centre for the Analysis of Conflict there, teaching courses in research methods, international theory and foreign policy analysis to master's and undergraduate students. In the same period, he spent much of the 1970s teaching on the two European based master's programs in IR run for the US military by the University of Southern California. This necessitated regular travel from London to Germany and weekly journeys to many of the US air bases scattered round East Anglia.

In the summer of 1981, Dennis Sandole returned to the USA to join Director Bryant Wedge and Assistant Director Henry Barringer as the first formal teaching appointments to the brand new Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) at the new and expanding George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. At the time, this was a joint appointment with the Department of Politics and International Relations, but much of the central teaching role for the first M.S. program rested with Sandole. The three founders were responsible for the survival and the growth of what became the Institute and then the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

Eventually Sandole's appointment was transferred completely over to CCR, and amid his teaching he was also able to begin the first of the stream of distinguished publications that continue until this day. These started with the collection of papers derived from many of the courses then taught at CCR, for example, Conflict Management and Problem Solving: Interpersonal to International Applications. The subtitle of the work gives the clue to Sandole's wide ranging interests in the field, which have ranged from neurological sources of human behavior, through foreign policy decision making and arms control arrangements to generic theories of international conflict, practical methods of conflict control, and the dynamics of international cooperation. His many projects while at George Mason attest to Dennis Sandole's eclecticism and to his impact on many parts of the field of conflict analysis and resolution and on the search for peace and stability, regionally and globally.

Dear Gordon,

Attached is a copy of "Peace Studies and Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) Programs: An American Example Against a Global Backdrop," which appears in *Konflikte Vermitteln? Lehren und Lernen in der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* ["Conflict Transformed? Teachings and Insights from Peace and Conflict Research"], co-edited by our German colleagues Mathias Bös, Lars Schmitt, and Kerstin Zimmer (Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS, 2015).

One of only two chapters in English, my paper looks at the origins and status of S-CAR against the background of peace and conflict studies programs in the U.S. and globally.

Please feel free to use as you see fit!

Cheers,  
Dennis

The first page is reproduced on the following page. The whole chapter is available at:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxnb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2MDUzZjczYWQ2ZWl1M2E3>

## **Peace Studies and Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) Programs An American Example Against a Global Backdrop<sup>1</sup>**

Dennis J.D. Sandole

### 1 Introduction

A perception has been developing for more than a decade, reinforced by the publication of Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (2011),<sup>2</sup> that both the frequency and intensity of violent conflict worldwide have been on the decline. More specifically, according to *The Human Security Report* (2005):

By 2003, there were 40 percent fewer conflicts than in 1992. The deadliest conflicts – those with 1,000 or more battle-deaths – fell by some 80 percent. The number of genocides and other mass slaughters of civilians also dropped by 80 percent, while core human rights abuses have declined in five out of six regions of the developing world since the mid-1990s. International terrorism is the only type of political violence that has increased. Although the death toll has jumped sharply over the past three years, terrorists kill only a fraction of the number who die in wars.

The global decline in armed conflict has been attributed “to the ascendance of democratic regimes and the rising success of international efforts at containing and negotiating settlements to many serious armed conflicts, most of them civil wars” (Hewitt et al., 2010, p. 1). However, by 2008, “both the subsidence of armed conflict and the surge in democracy had stalled and begun to reverse” (ibid.). The reversal was due, in many cases, to conflict recurrence: In 2010, “of the 39 different conflicts that became active in the last 10 years, 31 were conflict recurrences – instances of ...

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxb3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXneDo2MDUzZjczYWQ2ZWl1M2E3>

<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges with gratitude comments made on this paper by Dr. Ingrid Sandole-Staroste and Dr. Mathias Bös and other members of his editorial team. <sup>2</sup> Also see Joshua Goldstein's *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (2011) and Ian Morris's *War! What Is It Good For? Conflict and the Progress of Civilization from Primates to Robots* (2014).

11

M. Bös et al. (Hrsg.), *Konflikte vermitteln?, Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-658-07798-3\_10, © Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden 2015

## **Bringing Russia and China in from the Cold**

We now reflect on the current state of relations between Russia and China and the West. In June 2014 The Times noted how EU deals with former Soviet republics were “stoking Russian fears about its shrinking regional influence”.

“Ukraine tied its future to the West yesterday when its new president signed a trade and political deal with the EU, seven months after his predecessor’s failure to do so plunged the country towards civil war and conflict with Russia ... [the deal] ends President Putin’s dreams of establishing a Eurasian Union, a free trade association widely seen as a first step by Moscow towards a 21<sup>st</sup>-century version of the Soviet Union reuniting Russia with Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan ... President Poroshenko agreed to extend by three days, until Monday, a ceasefire in the fighting with pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country ... Two other former Soviet republics, Georgia and Moldova, also signed similar free trade deals [with the EU], stoking Russian fears about its shrinking regional influence and that markets for its exports could be hit by cheap EU imports.”<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to the Financial Times, Dennis Sandole expresses concern about “the progressive exclusion of Russia from post-cold war European security architecture” and suggests that “Nato should negotiate a security structure that includes Russia”:

“Sir, As Russia continues to escalate the crisis over Ukraine and its economy deteriorates further, some observers wonder if – through accident, miscalculation or overreaction – Nato policymakers will feel compelled to invoke their Article 5, “all-for-one-and-one-for-all” defence commitment, resulting in an east-west war. This may not be a far-fetched scenario: the centennial of world war one reminds us that the policymakers of great powers can blunder into wars they do not want. Not surprisingly, two former UK ambassadors to Russia, Sir Tony Brenton (November 25) and Rodric Braithwaite (November 26) have joined the FT’s John Thornhill (November 24) in declaring that “a settlement with Russia is the only option”. What would such a settlement look like?

Since the end of the cold war, Nato has expanded up to Russia’s borders, absorbing non-Soviet Warsaw Pact states and threatening to embrace Soviet successor states Georgia and Ukraine as well. In the

---

<sup>1</sup> Holdsworth, Nick. “Ukraine’s EU deal provokes warning from Moscow.” *The Times*, June 28, 2014: 38.

process, Russia has been pushed further to the periphery. The progressive exclusion of Russia from post-cold war European security architecture converges with conflict resolution theory: a major driver of violent conflict is exclusion from structures that privilege others at one's expense.

A potential solution to the Ukraine crisis, therefore, is that Nato members should negotiate with Vladimir Putin a Euro-Atlantic security structure that includes Russia. This too is not far-fetched: in December 1991, the then Russian president Boris Yeltsin said that Russia's membership in Nato was "a long-term political aim", which was very compatible with US President George H W Bush's vision of a new world order with "Europe whole and free". Later, even Mr Putin saw no reason why Russia should not be in Nato. The implication is, if Russia were inside the house, it would have a stake in preserving it, and not what it is doing at present: destabilising it.<sup>2</sup>

[The rest of this section is also by Dennis Sandole. It first appeared in a newsletter article, 'Bringing Russia and China in from the Cold: Lessons from the Great War', for George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.<sup>3</sup>]

It is ironic that, during the centenary of the First World War and a period of declining violence worldwide, as documented comprehensively by Harvard's Steven Pinker<sup>4</sup> and others<sup>5</sup>, the possibility of war between major powers is once again rearing its head and in two volatile regions: The dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea and the near-war standoff between Russia and the West over Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

Early last year, Britain's Financial Times commented that, "While there is no reason to fear that the world in 2014 is on the edge of such an epochal disaster, there are some disquieting similarities between then

---

<sup>2</sup> Sandole, Dennis J D. "Nato should negotiate a security structure that includes Russia." *The Financial Times*, December 3, 2014: 10.

<sup>3</sup> Sandole, Dennis J D. "Bringing Russia and China in from the Cold: Lessons from the Great War." *S-CAR News*, 9, 1, February 2015. Accessed September 1, 2015. <http://scar.gmu.edu/newsletter-article/bringing-russia-and-china-cold-lessons-great-war>. Note: The author gratefully acknowledges Dr. Ingrid Sandole-Staroste who read and commented on an earlier version of this article.

<sup>4</sup> Pinker, Steven. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Viking [Penguin Group USA], 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Goldstein, Joshua S. *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide*. New York: Dutton [Penguin Group USA], 2011.

Morris, Ian. *War! What Is It Good For? Conflict and the Progress of Civilization from Primates to Robots*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.

[1914] and now."<sup>6</sup> Alliance commitments (The U.S. security treaty with Japan; NATO's Article 5, "all for one and one for all" collective defense guarantee); a nearly deterministic action-reaction escalatory dynamic that renders rational human agency all but inoperable, and the impact of threat-based stress on the complex relationship between the limbic (emotional) and neocortical (thinking) parts of the human brain that, at some critical tipping point, allows the emotional to trump the rational. The insidious result is a self-stimulating, self-perpetuating violent conflict system where it no longer matters who threw the first punch because "conflict-as-process" will have overwhelmed and overtaken "conflict-as-startup condition" as the main driver.<sup>7</sup>

These conflict dynamics converge with the results of the classic work conducted on the arms race that preceded the outbreak of WWI by British physicist and peace studies pioneer, Lewis Fry Richardson<sup>8</sup>. Beyond some critical point of "no return" in the escalation of a dynamic conflict system, a stable equilibrium in the form of a balance of power can shift to an unstable equilibrium which tips over to either -- through positive feedback -- a runaway arms race and the outbreak of war or -- through negative feedback -- a condition of total disarmament, which Richardson likened to "falling in love".

In addition, crisis decision-making research tells us that highly stressed participants in a rapidly escalating crisis tend to over-perceive threat and, worse, to overreact to it<sup>9</sup>. This dynamic appears to have overwhelmed Kaiser Wilhelm when, following Russia's mobilization during the summer of 1914, he panicked over the realization that Germany would likely be forced to fight a two-front war. By contrast, thanks to John F. Kennedy's

---

<sup>6</sup> Editorial. "Reflections on the Great War." *Financial Times*, January 2, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Sandole, Dennis J.D. *Capturing the Complexity of Conflict: Dealing with Violent Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Cold War Era*. London and New York: Pinter/Cassell [Routledge/Taylor & Francis], 1999. See Chapter 6.

<sup>8</sup> Richardson, Lewis F. (1939). "Generalized Foreign Politics: A Study in Group Psychology." *British Journal of Psychology, Monograph Supplements*, 23, 7, (1939): 1-91.

Richardson, Lewis F. *Arms and Insecurity*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960.

<sup>9</sup> Holsti, Ole R., Robert C. North, and Richard A. Brody. "Perception and Action in the 1914 Crisis." In *Quantitative International Politics: Insights and Evidence*, J. David Singer (ed.). NY: The Free Press, and London Collier-Macmillan, 1968.

Zinnes, Dina A. "The Expression and Perception of Hostility in Prewar Crisis: 1914." In *Quantitative International Politics: Insights and Evidence*, J. David Singer (ed.). NY: The Free Press, and London Collier-Macmillan, 1968.

reading of Barbara Tuchman's (1962) classic, *The Guns of August*<sup>10</sup>, the president was able, in 1962, to deal deftly with his crisis team and Soviet Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and, as a consequence, prevent the Cuban Missile Crisis from spinning out of control into World War III.

To effectively manage these and other factors as the world gets further into the centenary of WW1, Gideon Rachman<sup>11</sup>, the *Financial Times*' chief foreign affairs commentator, argued that national policymakers should avoid being impacted by the "Munich mindset" which, in summer 1914, resulted in the macho, nationalistic posturing that helped precipitate the catastrophic war. Rachman's continuing challenge is that, in some cases, the dominant approach to international affairs is still governed by the "Munich" instead of the "Sarajevo mindset;" for example, the provocative saber-rattling between China and Japan over the disputed islands -- a crisis compounded by the US treaty-based obligation to defend Japan should any of its territory, including the disputed islands, come under attack. Given China's declaration of an "air defense identification zone" over the islands, which clashes with Japan's long-standing similar declaration, plus the potentially disastrous "near miss" in December 2013 between Chinese and US naval vessels in the South China Sea, the possibility of an accidental collision or miscalculation in the East China Sea between Chinese, American, Japanese, and/or South Korean naval ships or aircraft, leading to runaway escalation, still cannot be ruled out.

Mr. Rachman lamented that the Munich mindset remains so entrenched that a real intellectual shift would be required to change it. Indeed, as Russia continues to escalate the crisis over Ukraine and its economy deteriorates further, some observers wonder if, through accident, miscalculation or overreaction, NATO policymakers will feel compelled to invoke their Article 5, "all-for-one-and-one-for-all" defense commitment, resulting in an East-West war. Two former UK ambassadors to Russia, Sir Tony Brenton<sup>12</sup> and Rodric Braithwaite<sup>13</sup>, expressed their

---

<sup>10</sup> Tuchman, Barbara W. *The Guns of August*. NY: Ballantine Books [Random House], 1962

<sup>11</sup> Rachman, Gideon. "Time to Think More About Sarajevo, Less About Munich", Comment, *Financial Times*, January 7, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Brenton, Sir Tony. "Sanctions Are No Better than a Failed Drone Strike." Letter to the Editor, *Financial Times*, November 25, 2014: 8.

<sup>13</sup> Braithwaite, Rodric. "A Negotiated Settlement with Russia is the Only Option." Letter to the Editor, *Financial Times*, November 26, 2014: 8.

concerns in the editorial pages of the FT by joining with John Thornhill<sup>14</sup> in declaring that "A settlement with Russia is the only option."

What would a settlement with Russia look like? Here, we must consider that since the end of the Cold War, NATO has expanded right up to Russia's borders, absorbing non-Soviet Warsaw Pact states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovak Republic), threatening to embrace Soviet successor states Georgia and Ukraine as well. In the process, Russia has been pushed further to the periphery. The progressive exclusion of Russia from post-Cold War European security architecture converges with developments in conflict resolution theory informed by research in neuroscience; i.e., a major driver of violent conflict is exclusion from structures that privilege others at ones expense<sup>15</sup>.

A potential solution to the Ukraine crisis, therefore, is that NATO members should negotiate with Mr. Putin a Euro-Atlantic security structure that includes Russia. This is not far-fetched: In December 1991, then Russian President Boris Yeltsin said that Russia's membership in NATO was "a long-term political aim", which was very compatible with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's<sup>16</sup> (1987) concept of a "Common European Home" and U.S. President George H. W. Bush's vision of a new world order with "Europe whole and free." Later, even Russian President Vladimir Putin saw no reason why Russia should not be in NATO. The implication is, if Russia were inside the house – even as framed nearly twenty-five years ago by Richard Ullman<sup>17</sup> as the new European Security Organization -- Russia would have a stake in preserving it, and not what it is doing at present: destabilizing it.

---

<sup>14</sup> Thornhill, John. "It is Time for the West and Ukraine to Offer Putin a Deal." Comment, *Financial Times*, November 24, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Taffel, David. *Neuroscience and Social Conflict: Identifying New Approaches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Saxelab and The Project on Justice in Times of Transition, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge (MA), February, 2012.

Fitzduff, Mari. "An Introduction to Neuroscience for the Peacebuilder." 2014. Accessed September 1, 2015.

[http://api.ning.com/files/fl5zqutucodyBO1fI9ne44mB8-ACXeu-eKN-BkAQu0dYseACEohwBHnL5p5VxTfgIXWcWGfGCKRk4Puvz96A1wmab\\*xZot/sr/AnIntroductiontoNeuroscienceforthePeacebuilderPCDN.pdf](http://api.ning.com/files/fl5zqutucodyBO1fI9ne44mB8-ACXeu-eKN-BkAQu0dYseACEohwBHnL5p5VxTfgIXWcWGfGCKRk4Puvz96A1wmab*xZot/sr/AnIntroductiontoNeuroscienceforthePeacebuilderPCDN.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Gorbachev, Mikhail. *New Thinking for Our Country and the World*. New York and London: Harper & Row, 1987.

<sup>17</sup> Ullman, Richard H. *Securing Europe*. [A Twentieth Century Fund Book.] Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. See Chapter 4.

In addition, building upon recommendations I outlined at the outset of Barack Obama's first year in office<sup>18</sup>, the president could embark on a strategic course of action by convening, within the context of the G20, a series of meetings to start the process of establishing more effective global governance. A global problem-solving regime whose objective would be to tackle the interconnected, intractable elements of the "Global Problematique"<sup>19</sup> -- prevent or manage crises and address conflicts that, if left unaddressed or dealt with simplistically, could escalate into global catastrophes. Such a regime would comprise the "best and the brightest" from around the world, including Russia and China: Social and natural scientists, humanities scholars, policy experts, retired military officers and diplomats, former officials, and others would publicize widely and share with political leaders their evidence-based research findings on the etiology and optimal handling of select complex conflicts and other global challenges that no one state or international actor can address adequately on its own (e.g., climate change, environmental degradation, pollution, Ebola, poverty, state failure), but only by "communicating, cooperating, coordinating, and collaborating" among themselves.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, we have nothing of the kind. We have only traditional, one-dimensional politics and policies, all stuck in Thucydides<sup>21</sup> box which continues to reflect the cross-cultural, cross-temporal, near dominance of the core "take-away" from the Melian Debate of 416 BC: "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must!" But surely, we now know that that simple but compelling Realpolitik logic has been serially upended by the attacks perpetrated by marginalized and alienated young men and women on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, Bali, Madrid, London, Boston, Montreal, Ottawa, New York, Sydney, and Paris! One hundred years after the outbreak of the Great War, and more than fifty years into the development of the European Union – despite its manifold challenges, the closest thing on the planet to Immanuel Kant's "perpetual

---

<sup>18</sup> Sandole, Dennis J.D. *Peacebuilding: Preventing Violent Conflict in a Complex World*. Cambridge (England) and Malden (Massachusetts): Polity Press, 2010. See Chapter 5.

<sup>19</sup> Sandole, 2010, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Nan, Susan Allen. "Intervention Coordination." The Beyond Intractability Project, The Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, September, 2003. Accessed September 1, 2015.

<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/intervention-coordination>.

<sup>21</sup> Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. NY: Modern Library, 1951.

peace<sup>22</sup> – we can surely do better than "sleepwalk" into a replay of the 1914 catastrophic exercise in global carnage and assault to the commons<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>22</sup> Kant Immanuel. "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," Ch. 6 in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (Ted Humphrey, trans.). Indianapolis (IN): Hackett, 1983. (First published in 1795.)

<sup>23</sup> Clark, Christopher. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. New York and London: HarperCollins, 2012.

## **Insights Obama can now use to undermine Putin's narrative**

*"We'd be wrong to snub Putin's parade. Refusing to travel to Moscow to honour the many million Soviet war dead is not the right way to conduct such a dialogue. There has to be a public British recognition of the victimhood of Russia during the war, their central contribution to the defeat of Hitler."*<sup>24</sup>

However, as noted above, Roger Boyes has argued against this Western decision – thus echoing some of the arguments made by Dennis Sandole in the following letters to *The Financial Times*.<sup>25</sup> (This in turn had been prompted by an earlier article by Kathrin Hille on 'what Russians really think'.<sup>26</sup>)

"Sir, Thanks to Kathrin Hille's report "What the Russians really think" (Life & Arts, April 11), we now have a clear idea about why Vladimir Putin continues to enjoy approval ratings of up to 85 per cent. In his particular framing of Russia's actions in Ukraine and tensions with the west, President Putin has created a master narrative that taps into an indelible part of Russian identity embedded in Russia's "chosen glory" in defeating Nazi Germany.

Barack Obama can leverage this insight by building on the momentum generated by recent breakthroughs in US relations with Cuba and Iran by responding affirmatively to Mr Putin's invitation to commemorate Victory Day in Moscow on May 9 — the day in 1945 that Germany surrendered to the Soviet Union. By demonstrating respect for the Russians and their sacrifices in the Great Patriotic War, Mr Obama can undermine Mr Putin's narrative, plus provide an opportunity for the US president to have a one-on-one chat with his Russian counterpart that just might succeed.

Russia is too important to global governance and problem-solving — terrorism, climate change, North Korea, Iran, Syria — to be allowed by Mr Putin's Machiavellian machinations to slip into the abyss. Since threats of

---

<sup>24</sup> Boyes, Roger. "We'd be wrong to snub Putin's parade." *The Times*, May 6, 2015: 32.

Bellamy, Chris. *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War*. London, Macmillan: 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Sandole, Dennis. "Insights Obama can now use to undermine Putin's narrative." *Financial Times*, April 18, 2015: 6.

<sup>26</sup> Hille, Kathrin. "What Russians really think." *The Financial Times*, April 1, 2015. Accessed September 1, 2016.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/505bfd22-de2e-11e4-8d14-00144feab7de.html#slide0>.

further western sanctions and of lethal military aid to Kiev have not been successful, the time is ripe for acting outside the box.”

## **Bringing Russia out of the cold and into the fold**

The 2014 Yearbook gave an extended analysis of the situation in Ukraine and included Dennis Sandole’s call to “bring Russia and China in from the cold”.<sup>27</sup> Tensions continued into 2015 and Dennis Sandole provided the following analysis:

“Sir, The US and its Nato and EU allies can respond to Russia over the Ukraine crisis in at least two diametrically opposed ways: a zero-sum confrontational or a positive-sum collaborative approach. The first option is implicit in your editorial “Nato comes home to its historic base in Europe” (June 24), with its emphasis on the need for Nato “to deter the risk of future Russian aggression in eastern Europe after Moscow’s incursion into Ukraine”. By contrast, the second option inheres in the letter (June 26) from Hugh Wotherspoon, who argues that “the west’s long-term aim is for Russia and its neighbours to join Nato”.

What to do? In his interview with Kathrin Hille (June 22), Sergei Ivanov, chief of staff of Vladimir Putin’s presidential administration, provides a hint about what the Russian president “really wants” by commenting: “. . . if we talk about Europe, let’s talk about a large and common Europe, and not about a Europe with dividing lines.” Clearly, Russia is not a member of Nato, even though, in 1993 and again in 2002, George H W Bush’s former secretary of state, James A Baker III, recommended that Russia be brought in to the Atlantic Alliance. Since *exclusion* from major institutions is a primary driver of violent conflict, isn’t it time that we brought Russia in from the cold, eliminated the dividing lines in Europe and, in the process, nipped in the bud the Ukraine crisis?”<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Burt, 2016, op. cit. Chapter 9, 114-120.

<sup>28</sup> Sandole, Dennis. “Insights Obama can now use to undermine Putin’s narrative.” *Financial Times*, July 1, 2015: 10.

## Context and Pretext in Conflict Resolution (by Kevin Avruch)

*What follows in this section is the talk given by Kevin Avruch on jointly receiving the award of CRS Book of the Year at the CRS Conference, University of Leeds, September 3, 2014.*

Thank you for honoring my book, *Context and Pretext in Conflict Resolution*, with recognition as one of your two 2014 books of the year.

In my remarks today I want to start where I began in the field – arguing for the importance of attention to “context,” and then move on to the altogether thornier matter of “pretext.” The concern with pretext is something I came to later. It was easy for me as a cultural anthropologist -- no great intellectual or conceptual stretch -- to argue for the importance of context, in the guise of “culture.” It took me more time, more understanding of the place of conflict resolution *practice*, to recognize that pretext was equally important and, indeed, was fundamental to how we understood context. And in order for that to happen, I had to appreciate just how the field of CAR grappled with – or failed to grapple with – the obdurate problem of power.

This is all very abstract and gnomic, so let me start at the beginning, with culture and context – and with John Burton.

... In fact, the other reason for my gratitude in getting this recognition from *this* group of colleagues is that it allows me to honor my distal connection to CRS through John Burton, whom I came to know when he came to George Mason in the mid-1980s and brought with him the standing, the energy, the force of character and the never extinguished ambition to create the field of conflict analysis and resolution – both a field of academic theorizing, research and, critically, *practice*. As your own website notes, “The CRS was officially inaugurated in 1963 at University College, London while John Burton was lecturing there. It was the first British academic group to focus on conflict, predating the Bradford School of Peace Studies.” Around him at UCL, Burton gathered a group of young students and researchers some of whom ended up in the States and helped to build our program, and to build the field in general: Chris Mitchell and the young Dennis Sandole, a Strathclyde PhD. Chris, too, has a long standing relationship to CRS; I believe he was the Society’s ‘Organizing Secretary’ at some point in the 1970s.

I want to spend some time talking about Burton not only because of his connection to the origins of CRS, but because it was his theory of conflict,

centered on Basic Human Needs, that seemed to me to be deaf and blind to issues of context and locality, and also appeared inattentive to the potentialities for individual agency in the midst of conflict. It was Burton, that is, that got me started on trying to inject context, difference, and the local, into our field. Nowadays our concern with the local – or the lack of concern -- is usually centered on the notion of peacebuilding, not Basic Human Needs. But the dynamic is the same: the idea that the analyst, or the outsider peacebuilder, knows best, and that he or she will tell the folks on the ground what needs to be done. If nowadays the dismissal of the local has more to do with the hegemony of neoliberal political economy, and less to do with sociobiology, as in Burton’s day, the question of context is still at the forefront. As are – as I will come to in my discussion of the limitations of using the language of “culture” as a metaphor for context – some of the ethical difficulties we encounter. (That’s how we get to “pretext.”)

Burton came to what was then merely the Center for Conflict Resolution at Mason housed in our department of sociology and anthropology. Almost immediately, the notion of “analysis” was added to our name, and CCR became CCAR. As well, Burton insisted that our concern was to be in the area of “deep-rooted” conflicts (what we today mostly call identity conflicts), and not about mere commercial or organizational “disputes.” He came to us after leaving UCL and starting a center at Kent-Canterbury, leaving that for a year’s fellowship in South Carolina and from there a relatively brief but very productive time at the University of Maryland with the one of the under-sung and only lately appreciated heroes of our field, Edward Azar. Burton had already developed the rudiments of what he would call the Analytical Problem Solving Workshop as a form of conflict resolution practice while at UCL in the mid-1960s. (This is a story told variously by David Dunn, Chris Mitchell, and Dennis Sandole in respective publications – Dunn’s [2004]<sup>29</sup> is the most complete.) He arrived at Mason having recently published *Deviance Terrorism and War* (1979)<sup>30</sup>, where he laid out for the first time in some detail his theory of Basic Human Needs and their causal, etiological, relationship to what he called deep-rooted (what others called “intractable”) conflicts.

I had been a part of the faculty group that originated the Center for Conflict Resolution and the MSc degree in 1981, but both as junior faculty and a bit of a skeptic I was by no means a central player. Burton changed

---

<sup>29</sup> Dunn, David J. *From Power Politics to Conflict Resolution: Assessing the Work of John W. Burton*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan (rev. ed.), 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Burton, John W. *Deviance, Terrorism and War*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1979.

this, in the sense that he came bearing a Theory that seemed to me -- and to my anthropological colleague Peter Black – problematic on both theoretical and methodological grounds. There are a number of publications by Peter and me at the time that chronicle that debate, and you can find it described in Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall's *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*.<sup>31</sup> What Black and I responded to was a theory of Basic Human Needs that was rooted in genetics and a rather crude biological determinism. The argument was distilled in an article Burton coauthored with his younger colleague Sandole (Burton and Sandole 1986)<sup>32</sup>, to which we responded (at Burton's invitation, I must add) in the same journal (Avruch and Black 1987)<sup>33</sup>.

The theory of Basic Human Needs, they wrote was not only a “generic theory but also a genetic one” (Burton and Sandole 1986:338). Following his earlier work in *Deviance, Terrorism and War* (1979), Burton had chosen, mainly from the work of Paul Sites (1973)<sup>34</sup> eight basic human needs. Basic human needs are located within individuals “genetically.” They are invariant and universal in their distribution. They cannot be suppressed: individuals will seek their satisfaction at all costs. Suppression by ruling elites or coercive authorities or social orders deploying brute power is the root cause of all deeply rooted, protracted or intractable, social conflicts. Conflict resolution consists of the satisfaction of the needs. Crucially, Burton argued, needs are not scarce resources, and therefore caught up in essentially zero-sum contests. To increase, for example, the security of one is to increase the security of all. In this way Burton reached for the ultimate positive-sum, the idealized Pareto-optimal state, not even imagined by the Harvard integrative bargaining theorists of the Getting to Yes persuasion. In their article Burton and Sandole also claimed that this theory was revolutionary, indeed, a paradigm-bursting in the manner of Thomas Kuhn.

Peter and I critiqued the theory on several grounds, some of them reacting to Burton's extreme positivism: he really wanted to establish a wholly rational science of conflict resolution. On those grounds the theory was conceptually and methodologically suspect: why those 8 (or 9!) needs;

---

<sup>31</sup> Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Burton, John W., and Dennis J.D. Sandole. “Generic Theory: The Basis of Conflict Resolution.” *Negotiation Journal* 2 (1986): 333-344.

<sup>33</sup> Avruch, Kevin, and Peter W. Black. “A Generic Theory of Conflict Resolution: A Critique.” *Negotiation Journal* 3(1) (1987): 87-96, 99-100.

<sup>34</sup> Sites, Paul. *Control: The Basis of Social Order*. New York: Dunellen Publishers, 1973.

how were they derived, and; if one wants to assume the mantle of science, how could they be tested or disconfirmed? But the main critique focused on the fact that as biologically derived these needs functioned like the selfish gene of then-current sociobiology: individual humans had little space for individual agency. Individual persons were in a sense simply carriers of these imperious and universal needs, whose expression was foreordained. Like most simple redactions of biological imperatives, the theory was devoid of notions of difference, of context, of *culture*... at least as cultural anthropologists understood the term.

The usual response to our critique was to argue that the needs (they became “ontological” rather than “genetic” soon after Peter and I published our work: in this way Burton substituted Kant for Galileo) were universal and fundamental, but the satisfiers were “culturally inflected.” We didn’t argue with this, but we had said something else: that rather than ontologically primordial, or functional satisfiers of universal needs, *the needs were themselves “culturally constituted.”* That what was fundamental was context. At the end of the 1987 piece we turned to Wittgenstein (in the guise of A.R. Louch [1966])<sup>35</sup>, and wrote that to speak of Basic Human Needs in the language of science and positivism was to engage in a particular kind of *language game* – and that other language games were possible. This was a line of thinking I took up later – along with a rising generation of even more emphatically post-structural colleagues in the field.

So through Burton I entered the field of CAR in a committed way. Peter and I wrote a series of articles that argued for the centrality to the field of what we called “The Culture Question” (Avruch and Black 1991)<sup>36</sup>. It argued for the importance of difference and of context, of *local knowledge*, as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983)<sup>37</sup> had put it. We edited a volume of case-studies that featured what we called “ethnoconflict theories” and “ethnopraxis” – local, ethnographically situated, ways in which people understood and “theorized” conflict, and locally devised ways to manage or resolve it (Avruch, Black and Scimecca 1991)<sup>38</sup>. At the

---

<sup>35</sup> Louch, Arthur R. *Explanation and Human Action*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

<sup>36</sup> Avruch, Kevin, and Peter W. Black. “The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution.” *Peace and Change* 16(1) (1991): 22-45.

<sup>37</sup> Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

<sup>38</sup> Avruch, Kevin, Peter W. Black, and Joseph A. Scimecca, eds. *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Greenwood/Praeger, 1991/1998.

same time, John Paul Lederach (1995)<sup>39</sup> was developing his distinction, between “prescriptive” and “elicitive” approaches to practice. The latter approach favored elucidating the local or indigenous theories and practices. Subsequently, I went on to engage the question of “culture and conflict resolution” in a book with that title (1998)<sup>40</sup>, which in turn helped to establish the “culture question” – and ultimately the politics of difference – as central ones for the field (Ramsbotham et al., 2011:332)<sup>41</sup>.

But that book, like all books, raises as many questions as it answered, and I have tried to take up some of these in the two decades that followed. Among the loose threads were the following: to better understand some of the reasons why culture was neglected in the first place; to better understand the limitations of using “culture” as my main point of entry; to better understand the place of practice connected to theory: what happened when we as outside parties come to intervene some place. Thinking about about what it meant to practice “peacebuilding,” meant coming to terms with our pretext for action, and with its consequences. It led me to recognize, in a way I hadn’t in earlier work, the dilemma of *power* as fundamental to understanding “the politics of culture—of difference.” And all of these led me back to John Burton, and a new appreciation for what he was claiming and trying to accomplish.

### Why was Culture (Context) Ignored?

Today, many in our field consider the “culture question” to be a central area of concern. But in the 1980s any real consideration of culture – of context – was notable by its absence. There were at least four reasons for this, two stemming from the conceptual biases inherent in the two main academic disciplines that fed the field and two from biases in the world of practice. The field of conflict resolution drew much of its conceptual capital from scholars in the disciplines of international relations (IR) and social psychology. IR had resonance particularly for peace studies: the peace studies perspective was conceived as offering an alternative to IR’s neo-realism. The work of social psychologists was influential in the development of conflict resolution and as an expression of American

---

<sup>39</sup> Lederach, John P. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Avruch, Kevin. *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. Washington DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), 2011.

“pragmatism.” In both cases, the resistance to culture lay in the effacement of *difference*.

Political scientists and IR specialists, even when they argued against the policy implications of neo-realism and *machtspolitik*, typically took power to be the only “variable” that counted; power was conceived simply as the ability to apply force or to coerce (how many submarines? how many warheads?); states were autonomous “actors” who (*sic*) “calculated” their interests and behaved rationally to achieve them. In this constricted sense of power (neither Hans Morgenthau nor Kenneth Waltz could pass muster as Foucauldians), culture all but disappears from view. If culture matters at all, then we understand it in its essentialized and totalized form of “national character.” (Here I speak of “classical” IR in the days of Burton’s fights with it. The field has broadened its purview since then – partly, I would argue, under the broad influence of our work in peace and conflict studies.)

Scholars from social psychology (many with roots in Kurt Lewin’s interest in social conflict and socially engaged scholarship) were especially influential in the study of negotiation; and negotiation was often conceived as the fundament, the “atom” of conflict resolution. The psychologists assumed that given the biogenetic unity of the human brain we must all think and reason in the same way, and so, say, decision-making (as in negotiation) must look the same everywhere. (“Everyone negotiates the same way; just speak louder and slower”). Once again, culture disappears or — if cross-cultural psychologists are heard from -- is to be understood in such constricted senses as individualist vs. collective cultures; high context vs. low context, and so on. Moreover, behind both international relations theories of states and world politics, and social psychological theories of the individual actor, the authority of rational choice theory, with its restricted conceptions of motivation and intentionality as simply interests and utilities -- and in negotiation research, by the reigning heuristic of the buyer-seller -- effaced all other theories of mind or sociopolitical action, but in particular culturally informed ones. In IR, rationality resided in the state, for the social psychologists in the individual actor. The epitome of this, which brought together scholars (and their assumptions) from psychology, economics and political science, can be seen in the amount of work devoted to game theory in general and the prisoner’s dilemma game in particular, as a way to model conflict and conflict resolution processes in the real world. Work in this vein dominated the influential *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and through that journal set the tone for characteristically “American” approaches to the field throughout the 1960s and beyond.

As for practitioners, the absence of attention to culture had two main sources. First, many practitioners came from such fields as labor-management relations, where whatever cultural differences between the sides (based on class?) that might exist were subsumed by the strong commitment on both sides to negotiate around shared and usually narrow conceptions of interest. Some, on the other hand, came with experience in international diplomacy, where working with elite and cosmopolitan counterparts (and often in English!), masked deeper, and consequential, cultural differences (see Cohen 1997)<sup>42</sup>. Communicational impedances that arise in the negotiation that might be related to cultural difference were likely attributed to individual personalities and dismissed as “atmospherics.” Then, too, the early practitioners themselves were not a culturally diverse group: overwhelmingly male, white, North American.

Finally, the fourth source of practitioner resistance to culture was more complex in being intentional, and involved practitioners who worked in situations different from labor-management, family or other domestic settings. In fact, I came to understand that this was at the root of Burton’s hostility to the notion of culture. For those who worked in deep rooted or intractable conflicts around issues of race, ethnicity, religion, nationalism (the whole range of so-called identity conflicts), conflicts often marked by extreme enmity, violence and suffering, it seemed that anything having to do with “culture” was part of the problem and not the solution, and therefore any attempt to bring attention to culture back to the conflict was both counterproductive of conflict resolution – and probably unethical, as well. In *Context and Pretext* I argue that this stance is mistaken. It reflects a sort of category error, conflating culture as an analytical term and culture as a political term used in identity politics. On the one hand, for practitioners, this mistake can be costly. Keeping culture (in the analytical) sense out means that the practitioner is potentially self-blinded to the sorts of obstacles – say, communicational impedances, misinterpretation of key symbols, a functional deafness to the narratives of hurt and justice denied, put forth by one side or the other -- which may doom a negotiation or an entire peace process. On the other hand (I decided later) failing to recognize the very heavy baggage that the concept – the very term – “culture” brings with it can result in misapplications of third party power and authority that usually tends to hurt the less powerful parties to the conflict.

---

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, Raymond. *Negotiating Across Cultures*. Washington DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press (rev.ed.), 1997.

## The Problem with “Culture” as a Term of Reference

Arguing on behalf of culture was important for our field because it was an argument in favor of context, local understandings and, properly deployed, of individual agency. The problem with the term had to do with the fact that, as Raymond Williams put it, it is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (1983:87)<sup>43</sup>. The “baggage” it carried came with it from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where it was used to underwrite among other things Spencerian social Darwinism and the “rightness” of colonial conquest and possession abroad, as well as divisions of social class at home. Also, “Culture,” once made sufficiently metaphysical with doses of *Volksgeist* and *Volkseele*, underwrote the romantic nationalist, “blood and belonging” reaction to Enlightenment universalist thinking in the rest of Europe. In my earlier *Culture and Conflict Resolution* I recognized the baggage, but argued that one had to be “brave,” and prepared to “partition it out,” and keep to the “technical” virtues and uses of the term. These include: “Culture” as a way of talking about “the local” -- *indigenous* social grammars, cognitive maps, schemata, semiotics and narratologies. My faith in the technical power (and purity!) of the term was some distance from Burton’s genetics and sociobiology, but it was in the same family, that of modernist social science. (To which I continue to plead guilty, incidentally.) How to distinguish between the analyst and the players, both of whom make recourse to the same term was something I knew to be a problem, and in the later work, *Context and Pretext*, I took it up at greater length. In a sense, having abetted the establishment of “culture” as crucial to our field, I now had to examine critically what I and others had helped to bring about.

## Misusing Culture

There are several ways in which the term or idea of culture (as opposed to the more neutral notions of “the local” or “context”) can be misused. First, it can be used interchangeably for ethnicity or nationality, ending up in the social science parody called “national character.” More malignantly, it can stand in as a less politically incorrect cipher for race: this is how it was used in South Africa in the later Apartheid period, or in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s in discussions of the “culture of poverty.” Third, after the demise of the Soviet Union and the alleged “end of history” (the seeming final victory of neoliberal capitalism over its main ideological rival, per

---

<sup>43</sup> Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Fukuyama), it took communism's place in a revised neorealist narrative of the agonistic world, where the old bipolar conflict of East and West becomes the multipolar one called "the clash of civilizations." Religion (one in particular) has come to replace ideological communism and socialism as "the West's" adversary. A strong narrative usually seeks to replace the many ("Civilizations" in the plural) with the two, so that Huntington's thesis self-distills in the end to The West v. The Rest.

Lastly, and for well-meaning liberals the most vexing, culture appears misused when it is taken up by certain indigenous or local actors who play off the sensitivity to "culture" on the part of many in the enlightened West, and who are admonished: "You can't criticize *us* on human rights, or the treatment of women... to do this is to disrespect our traditions, and our Culture." In the book I write about this as a balance act between committing what I call "Type One Errors," underestimating the impact of "genuine" cultural difference and thus appearing to have an insensitive "tin ear," and Type Two Errors, overestimating culture's impact ("hearing voices") or mistaking a discourse that uses culture, for one based rather on gender or power – on, for example patriarchy. But Type II Errors can be costly, and usually for the less powerful parties. Here the question is put starkly: Who gets to claim the legitimizing cloak of "culture" in conflicts over gender, religion, and authority? Those already in power and guardful of it? The male village elders? The despot suppressing dissent with secret police and prisons? With these questions context gets inextricably bound to power and, if outside "intervention" is in the cards, bound to matters of pretext, as well.

Here, for modernist culture theorists like myself, was a circle to be squared. I did it by asserting a difference between culture "in the technical sense of the term," *cultural analysis*, and the political uses of culture by ethnic politicians, entrepreneurs, and simple (but PR-savvy) racists: *culturalism*. This is a distinction that remains key, for me. But it is also a solution post-structural critics are loathe to allow me, since they argue that the technical sense of culture is in the end something imposed by the outsider with his or her objectivist pretensions at "diagnosis" or analysis, and maybe even with claims to "science." In this way it is also therefore an exercise of power "over" the Other. If the analysis and diagnosis by an outside "third party" is in support of a program of conflict resolution, transformation or – most difficult and fraught of all – *peacebuilding*, then it is an attempt on the part of Us at governing the conduct of Them, the epitome of Foucauldian *governmentalite*.

The great virtue of the post-structural critique is that it forces us to look at the pretext for our interventions into other peoples' conflicts -- *why*

*are we there?* -- and the consequences, especially the unintended ones, of being there. We say we are doing “peacebuilding,” but is this really thinly disguised state building? If we engage in something called “nation building,” which among the several “nations” on the ground (oft times at each other’s throats, and occasionally set at it by previous interventions on our part) are we supporting? And what is it we want our “stability-and-reconstruction,” now-unfragile state to do for *us*, anyway? Keep the regional peace? Suppress the Islamists? Make the world safe for foreign direct investment? Here of course is the standard and well-articulated critique of the “liberal peace” that has grown ever since Boutros Ghali introduced the notion to the world of “peacebuilding” as an ambitious task for the UN and the “international community.”

The other virtue of the post-structural critique for our field, with its focus on power and pretext, especially for the practitioners, is that it allows us to privilege what They – the Other – thinks we are doing there, and what it is They want done. (Maybe it’s just: leave us the hell alone.)

Except for one thing: There are never just one or two contexts and pretexts, but many. We are hardly monolithic, neither is The Other. Peacebuilding may come with different agendas, it may be biased in favor of “Western” values and liberal ideals, and decidedly, nowadays, it mostly aims to make unruly regions ordered and the world hospitable to Western FDI. But a serious commitment to context and “the local” means understanding that what is local -- and (as the term now has it), “local-local,” *really* local -- is also diverse in its demography, its hopes and aspirations: that respect for “tradition and culture” is not a way to give “the old men’s” views on honor killings or forced marriages of children taking place in Brixton (and in Lahore?) a free pass. It is to say, however, that in some sense the response to this must also come in part from the local, where opposition to these things already exists (and has for a long time), and it’s neither “Western” nor “non-Western” -- whatever they are. In the chapter where I discuss culture and human rights I have tried to transcend the hoary universalism relativism debate to argue that human rights can be thought of as universalizing (a different thing from “universal”) so long as we recognize that human rights in the end are going to be vernacular and local – which is to say, like just about everything else in the social world, some sort of hybrid.

Let me stop here, for I’m balancing on the edge of a precipice about arguments over the Enlightenment and was it a good thing? Or: Is “cosmopolitanism” the true and hoped for heir to an enlightened Enlightenment? You can push me over later.

## John Burton Redux

What I want to do here at the end is to return to my beginnings, what made me take context in the guise of culture into the field of conflict and peace studies more than thirty years ago. That was arguments I had with John Burton about the seeming context-free universality of Basic Human Needs. In the event, the Avruch-Black critique of BHN was occasioned by several things. The neglect of culture was one of them, and the exaggerated claims to have found a new paradigm based on BHN, what we dismissively called Malinowskian functionalism in reverse, was another. We also reacted to Burton's positivism and claims to science. Yet in some essential way the 1987 critique also reflected our ignorance of the totality of Burton's work (not to say of his remarkable career, rise and fall, in Australian politics in the post-War years), and his place in then contemporary controversies in IR theory. Black and I mentioned, but passed over, his claims about bursting the paradigm of power politics in neorealist IR. In this case the blinders of our own disciplinary socialization picked up "culture" but passed over "power" almost entirely. I wrote earlier that most of my reading of Burton began with and followed *Deviance Terrorism and War* (1979). Not only was there much of Burton to read before that but, more significantly, everything that followed also followed what David Dunn (2004) smartly called Burton's "ontological break." The break was from traditional IR theory and its state-centric basis in power, to a conception of conflict resolution and problem solving based on the significance of the individual and irrepressible BHN. It was (I now understand) in his opposition to the "normal science" of IR theory and realist power politics, that Burton claimed a Kuhnian revolutionary status. And indeed, as I learned later from reading David Dunn but also from Chris Mitchell and Dennis Sandole, who were there at UCL in the early 1960s, in the UK at least, Burton was very much treated by the academic powers that were like a dangerous revolutionary. (Chris talks of the rows with Fred Northedge at the LSE, and of UCL and LSE faculty acting as outside examiners failing each other's postgraduate students.) It took many years of my learning conflict resolution, worrying particularly about the ethics of its practice -- and of writing in ways that seemed to some of my critics the practice of international relations without a license -- before I came to realize what a Jacobin John Burton was, and how important it is for our field still to think critically about power. This is part of Burton's legacy.

There is another part, and it has to do with his focus on the individual as a way of talking about pretext. The radical idea that Burton proposed

was that power resided ultimately in the BHN, not in the cultural-social systems within which individuals were socialized to conform, nor in the polity, the state and institutional structures that sought coercively to compel conformance. After 30 years I still cannot see BHN within the framework of hypothesis-testing positivism or “behavioral science.” I can’t see Galileo, here. But I can easily pick out Kant. I think Burton failed in the end to connect the idea of power and BHN coherently to his hyper-rational conception of facilitated conflict resolution. I think he never resolved the dilemma of “real-world” power asymmetry in practice. But I do see the power of basic human needs all around me. Students respond almost viscerally to the notion. It has tremendous face validity for them, even if it resists operationalization. In 2011 they saw a young Tunisian street merchant endure decades of abuse from authorities and crack after he is publicly slapped by a police officer. Following his dramatic suicide the Arab world explodes. They called (they still call) for dignity and freedom. Are these needs “basic?” They are certainly palpable.

Thirty years ago perhaps no one (save the visionary John Burton, himself) would have foreseen the idea of “human security” arise and gain wide acceptance as an imperative, at times competing in a political-moral discourse with the old imperative of “national security.” One sees it underlying Amartya Sen’s linkage of development and freedom. And one sees it, of course (here adverting to Kant) in the entire globalizing discourse of human rights wherein it is argued that these are the rights “one has simply because one is a human being” (Donnelly 2003:1)<sup>44</sup>. Burton would no doubt have interesting things to say about the relationship between Needs and Rights. Likely he would have argued that the latter are satisfiers of the former.

Basic human needs are not inducible, deducible, or (Burton was enamored of C.S. Peirce) abducible. They are however the central element, the motivating thematic, of very important narratives we tell ourselves and others tell us, about how to understand serious or deadly social conflict in this century (Avruch and Mitchell 2013)<sup>45</sup>.

Burton’s claim as a radical thinker comes through most clearly in essays and books where he imagines his vision of “conflict resolution” as something more than problem-solving technique, rather as an entire “political philosophy” (what he neologized as *provention*) that comes to undergird an entirely reconceived “political system.” In that essay he

---

<sup>44</sup> Donnelly, Jack. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Avruch, Kevin, and Chris R. Mitchell, eds. *Conflict Resolution and Human Needs: Linking Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2013.

announces the failure of capitalism and communism both as philosophies and as systems able to provide for the full development of human individuals. If one thinks at all about the contours of a society or the institutions of a political system that might in fact satisfy (or not suppress) Burton's eight Basic Human Needs, one gets a sense of just what a radical thinker he was. He was a revolutionary and Utopian at the same time, though he always claimed (particularly to his pragmatic American audiences) to represent the true and the "real" *realist* position.

Burton brought me into the field as a critic who argued with him against an imperious universalism and in favor of context, and as those of us who work at peacebuilding know all too well, the struggle for attention to and respect for the local and to difference and to context is in no way over. But more personally, I also look to Burton now as the one who began my education on the calculus of power, and through this, the ethical imperative of attending to what we think we are doing when we go out into the world. That's the "pretext" part of the book I wrote, and that you have so generously honored today.

## CHAPTER TWO, YEARBOOK 2015

### TRANSCENDING ADVERSARIALISM: THE JOHN BURTON MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2015

BY KEVIN CLEMENTS

The highlight of the Conflict Research Society conference in 2015 was *The John Burton Memorial Lecture*, given by Kevin Clements, Director of The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, at the University of Otago in New Zealand. Kevin Clements has kindly allowed me to reproduce the lecture he gave in the present chapter.

Overview. “Transcending adversarialism to satisfy Basic Human Needs: John Burton’s relevance for 21<sup>st</sup> century conflict transformation?” John Burton was a very complex diplomat, scholar and practitioner. In the first role he made many important contributions to the formation of an independent foreign policy for Australia and in the second he was one of the founding fathers of peace and conflict studies. This chapter aims at evaluating his theoretical and practice contributions to conflict resolution and peace studies.

Burton’s experience as a key player in Australian government gave him a deep awareness of power and decision-making in complex situations – and a deep scepticism. As an academic he challenged the dominance of the state-based power politics paradigm and argued for attention to Basic Human Needs and world society. As a scholar-practitioner, Burton’s Problem Solving Workshops aimed to create an environment where individuals changed their perception of others, recognised the presence of frustrated human needs, thought about positive relationships and generated options for transforming relationships. Before and since, there have been many other individuals and organisations engaged in somewhat similar processes. Kelman’s work is of particular interest. How useful are these approaches? The workshops are important at the micro level but the re-entry problem and the transfer problem remain important challenges.

Turning to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is noted that there were over 100,000 battle-related deaths last year (2014), just a tip of the vast

iceberg of human misery with 60 million people being displaced. While the Basic Human Needs of these millions are not being met, it is hard to see how problem-solving workshops and other well-intentioned interventions can make much of a dent in these figures. We need to rediscover our common humanity; provide immediate assistance; raise consciousness about responsibility; accept responsibility; and together devise global solutions. Even though non-adversarial politics are a stretch from interactive problem solving, there is no doubt that this was Burton's final vision and moving in this direction would ensure that the Burtonian legacy continues as we devise practical processes for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

### **Transcending adversarialism to satisfy Basic Human Needs: John Burton's relevance for 21<sup>st</sup> century conflict transformation?**

John Burton's life began and ended in war. He was born on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1915 in Melbourne, Australia, and died in 2010 in Canberra. 1915 is a memorable year for Australians and New Zealanders because, on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, that year, many Australian, New Zealand and other Imperial troops were slaughtered at the battle of Gallipoli in Turkey. Ormond Burton, (a New Zealand historian but no relation) stated that "New Zealand's national identity was formed somewhere between the battle of Gallipoli and the Battle of the Somme"<sup>46</sup>. This sentiment was also echoed in Australia where Burton grew up.

Nations are rarely formed out of military battles and defeats but this is the myth and this is what Australians and New Zealanders commemorate on ANZAC day every year. Burton, however, was a cosmopolitan internationalist who grew up in a country that was insular, parochial and dependent on the United Kingdom for its trade, identity and foreign policy. This was the national backdrop against which Burton developed his understanding of identity and conflict. These two issues were to shape most of Burton's academic career.

Burton was the son of a Methodist Minister. This undoubtedly shaped many of his fundamental values. He grew up during the great depression, which fuelled his desire for equality and socialism. And his political inclinations remained on the left all his life even if he often found himself in deep conflict with the Australian Labour Party at different stages of his

---

<sup>46</sup> Burton, Ormond E. *The Silent Division. New Zealanders at the Front: 1914-1919, etc.* Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935.

career. After his Ph.D., he was employed by the Australian Federal Government and experienced rapid promotion. In 1941, for example, he became the Private Secretary to the Australian Foreign Minister “Doc” Evatt. This meant that he worked at the heart of most Australian responses to the Second World War and was on the Australian delegation to the Charter meeting of the United Nations. This experience taught him how to talk about war and violence from an official insider’s elite perspective.

As Evatt’s Private Secretary he, along with others, in the new Department of External Affairs had to articulate where Australian and British interests converged and diverged during the Second World War. This gave Burton a profound appreciation of the differences between interests and values and a deep ambivalence towards hegemonic power. He was a radical from the beginning and his ideas were often at odds with the Departments of External Affairs and Defence as he pushed for greater independence from Britain in combination with more engagement with Asia.

He had numerous stories of how he and Evatt challenged the British High Command about the best strategy for the defence of Australia against Japanese and German threats. In one instance Burton, in the absence of Evatt, personally ordered a convoy of Australian troops to drop anchor and turn back half way across the Indian Ocean because he and Evatt disagreed with British requests to send Australian troops to North Africa instead of defending Australia against the much more pressing threat from Japan. He was in his late twenties when he gave this order which demonstrates his precocity and willingness to resist orthodox positions. This wartime experience and his meteoric promotion to Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (at the age of 32) in 1947 gave Burton a deep appreciation of power and decision-making and an awareness of the complex relationships between executive and administrative wings of government. When Labor lost power, his position within the bureaucracy was somewhat precarious since the government of John Menzies wanted to restore direct close relations with the United Kingdom and were not that interested in forging new relationships with the new governments in China and elsewhere. Out of the bureaucracy he stood unsuccessfully for parliament in 1954. His defeat was probably a good thing for himself, Parliament and peace research. It is interesting though that the man who later was so uncomfortable with power politics was deeply imbedded in and profoundly tempted by them at the beginning of his career.

By the late 1950s and after some bruising personal political experiences,<sup>47</sup> Burton developed a deep scepticism about government, governance processes and the negative consequences of much national statecraft.

Having been in San Francisco for the Charter conference of the United Nations and impressed by the post war idealism expressed there, Burton was appalled at the way in which its idealistic aspirations fell victim to the Cold War. He also found himself embroiled in the challenges posed by the Chinese Revolution, the Korean War and all the regional and global independence struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. It was in response to these new post-war dynamics that Burton really started wondering about the emotional as well as rational motivators of political behaviour and why decision makers lapsed so quickly into military responses to political challenge.

In particular Burton wanted to understand the complex relationships between personality, behaviour, domestic national dynamics and international conflict. He was particularly interested in how and why elite decision makers were trapped by top-down desire to control and coerce citizens and how they utilised external threats to promote internal integration. He felt that dominant political science power frames ignored the significance of emotions, human needs and the multiple domestic processes that drove government decision makers in both rational and irrational directions. Burton understood the limitations of elite decision making in terms of understanding and representing the interests of multiple individuals and groups. In addition to understanding the ways in which diverse voices were marginalised in most political decision-making, he grew progressively disenchanted at the inability of modern state systems (founded as they were on a monopoly of force) to engage the sources of domestic and global violence creatively and non-violently. He saw no future or utility in perpetuating violent and vicious cycles in response to violence so when he was freed of official constraints he developed both a radical critique of realism and embarked on a lifelong quest to understand the deeper sociobiological and social psychological sources of violence and how to respond to these effectively and non-violently.

Burton's public peaceful and collaborative aspirations were always somewhat problematic at the personal level. He was a very strong, opinionated and conflict-creating personality. The field of conflict

---

<sup>47</sup> He was charged by a Royal Commission, for example, with being the Australian Labour Party's "Pink Eminence" in relation to the 1954 Petrov spy affair.

resolution seems to attract its share of conflict creators and Burton never hesitated creating conflict to advance his own views or to surface incompatibilities. He was married three times and was often in conflict with people who should have been his natural allies. In any event, from the 1960s onwards his life was directed towards exploring and identifying the origins of individual and collective violence and how best to respond to them.

## Theoretical Contributions

No matter what we think of Burton as a person there was no doubt that he was one of the first significant critics of International Relations theory and a major contributor to the fledgling field of peace and conflict research. He had the public intellectual's skill of bringing insights, and theory from one discourse and applying it somewhere else. Burton was multidisciplinary in his background and orientation. He was not a political scientist or an International Relations specialist but a social psychologist. A lot of his critical insight flowed, therefore, from transferring the wisdom and knowledge of psychology or sociology into politics and International Relations.

When International Relations was bound tightly to the nation state as the major unit of analysis, for example, Burton argued convincingly that we needed to think in terms of a world society<sup>48</sup>. This was very prescient for 1972<sup>49</sup>. Today's world is a vindication of this orientation. We do indeed live in a multi-layered, networked and interlinked world society. Space has been annihilated through time via the Internet and there are many non-state actors that are as important if not more important than most of the world's state actors. Burton's arguments on world society, therefore, prefigured and shaped a lot of later work on the role of civil society and transnational economic actors at the national and global levels. Thinking in terms of world society rather than anarchic nation states focused scholastic attention on all the diverse exchanges and relationships

---

<sup>48</sup> Burton, John W. *World Society*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

<sup>49</sup> Although he was one of the co-founders of the International Peace Research Association he had an argument with me in the 1990s about changing its name so that International did not appear. This was because he took great issue with Hedley Bull's anarchical view of global politics and wanted everyone to think in terms of a World Society. He thought it oxymoronic that International and Peace should be combined because he saw nation states – everywhere - as a if not the major source of contemporary violence. It was a bit of a handful though to think in terms of a World Society Peace Research Association.

that bind us together as opposed to those that tear us apart. Reframing nation state discourse in terms of trans-national relationships and transactions, certainly helped shape a more positive and pro-active view of the role of civil society in relation to the promotion of sustainable peace. Burton was one of the first conflict researchers to focus on ways in which individuals, groups and organisations contribute to norm and institution building at national, regional and global levels. Elise Boulding's work on *Building a Global Civic Culture*<sup>50</sup> and Mary Kaldor's work on *Global Civil Society: an answer to War*<sup>51</sup> certainly built on Burton's World Society perspective.

In addition to seeking alternatives to a state centric view of the world, Burton also sought to understand the deeper drivers of social and political behaviour. Because of his psychological training, Burton understood that men and women were not just motivated by power or wealth. He knew that there were some deeper values, emotions and physiological drivers that were equally important. Here again his focus on these individual motivators have been vindicated by a lot of recent work in neuroscience which has established very clearly that we are not hard wired for competitive individualism but for social bonding. This new work demonstrates that one of the most crucial elements in the determination of a peaceful person is not fear but close maternal attachment in the first 5 years of life<sup>52</sup>. Burton did not have these recent discoveries to guide him but he was very taken by Paul Sites' book on *Control: The Basis of Social Order*<sup>53</sup>. It was after reading Sites that Burton 'discovered' Basic Human Needs and saw their frustration as the primary explanation for political anger, aggression and conflict. This gave rise to his book *Deviance, Terrorism and War: The process of Solving Unsolved, Social and Political Problems*<sup>54</sup>. In this book, Burton focused on the origins of conflict, problem solving solutions to such conflict and the articulation of a paradigm shift that would shake the foundations of realist International Relations theory. With typical Burtonian zeal, Basic Human Needs were

---

<sup>50</sup> Boulding, Elise. *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World*. (Syracuse University Press ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Kaldor, Mary. *Global Civil Society: an Answer to War*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> McGilchrist, Iain. *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Sites, Paul. *Control: the Basis of Social Order*. [S.l.]: Dunellen, 1973.

<sup>54</sup> Burton, John W. *Deviance, Terrorism & War: the Process of Solving Unsolved Social and Political Problems*. Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979.

identified as the best framework for challenging the dominant realist assumptions of the time. Because these needs rarely figured in International Relations discourse, Burton believed that their application would generate a paradigm shift that would re-orientate both the academic field of International Relations and the “realist” world of global diplomacy.

In retrospect this needs-based focus doesn't seem that innovative. Needs have been written about in Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology for many years and have always featured in the counselling and therapy literature. Burton's unique contribution, however, was to apply the concepts to the field of politics and International Relations where they were considered unusual and inappropriate. In applying them to politics Burton was very concerned to develop a new understanding of power, which did not depend on dominance but capacitation. Other peace researchers were also trying to problematize power. In the 1980s, Kenneth Boulding<sup>55</sup>, for example, asserted that social and political order owed more to integrative power than threat based or exchange power although he also acknowledged the significance of the latter for economic wellbeing and order more narrowly conceived.

Few International Relations specialists in the 1970s and 1980s, however, thought that identity, recognition, participation and security, for example, were all that important to global peace and stability. Nor could they see how to operationalize these concepts for either analytical or political purposes. This was before all the “new” identity based conflicts, and civil wars of the 1990s<sup>56</sup>. Burton, however, had an uncanny ability to anticipate what would be important, and he directed his academic life to articulating the ways in which individuals, groups and nations were consciously or unconsciously motivated by the satisfaction of these fundamental drivers of human behaviour.

Basic Human Needs, in one form or other, while not prominent in 20<sup>th</sup> century mainstream International Relations Theory, certainly did shape the field of peace research and the emergent field of conflict resolution/transformation and it remains one of Burton's enduring legacies to the field.

It gave rise to many robust debates in the 1990s and beyond<sup>57</sup> about how to conceptualise and satisfy needs without generating additional

---

<sup>55</sup> Boulding, Kenneth. E. *Three Faces of Power*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1989.

<sup>56</sup> Kaldor, Mary. *New & Old Wars*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Avruch, Kevin. "Basic Human Needs and the Dilemma of Power in Conflict Resolution." In Avruch, Kevin and Christopher Mitchell (Eds.), *Conflict*

conflicts and whether they are indeed universal or not but there is no doubt that this perspective has persisted in different ways to inform much theory and practice within the field of peace and conflict studies<sup>58</sup>. Johan Galtung's extension and typology of basic human needs, as security, welfare, freedom and identity, for example, shaped a lot of later peace research thinking about needs and satisfiers and how both contribute to peace or violence<sup>59</sup>.

While the Basic Human Needs framework has been critiqued as culturally blind, methodologically individualistic and unable to bridge the gap between micro and macro<sup>60</sup> some variant of Basic Human Needs continues to shape most of the ways we think about the root causes of violence and the social, economic and political conditions necessary to guarantee their satisfaction. Certainly most conflict transformation practitioners utilise some variant of Basic Human Needs in their conflict diagnoses and prescriptions.

The final theoretical contribution that is distinctively Burtonian is that of "Provention"<sup>61</sup>. This was a clumsy word, which has never really caught on in the literature or in the real world, but it was Burton's attempt to describe pro-active as opposed to re-active intervention in violence. It was also his attempt to grapple with some of the root causes of violence like poverty, inequality, ethno-nationalism, overpopulation, institutional domination and militarism. Burton developed "Provention" to link social psychology to wider concepts of peaceful social and economic change.

---

*Resolution and Human Needs: Linking Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2013: 40-58.

<sup>58</sup> Sandole, Dennis J. D. "Extending the Reach of Basic Human Needs: A Comprehensive Theory for the Twenty-first Century." In Avruch, Kevin and Christopher Mitchell. (Eds.), *Conflict Resolution and Human Needs: Linking Theory and Practice*, 21-39. London: Routledge Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Galtung, Johan. "International Development in Human Perspective." Chapter 15, 301-336. In Burton, John W. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (Vol. 2). New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990a.

<sup>60</sup> See the famous debate between Burton and Sandole /Avruch and Black. Burton, John W. and J. Dennis Sandole. "Generic Theory: The Basis of Conflict Resolution." *Negotiation Journal*, 2(4), 1986: 333-344.

Avruch, Kevin, and Peter W. Black. "A Generic Theory of Conflict Resolution: A Critique." *Negotiation Journal*, 3(1), 1987: 87-96.

<sup>61</sup> Burton, John W. (1990b). *Conflict: Resolution and Provention*. (Vol. 1.). Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990b.

Like Maslow<sup>62</sup>, Burton understood well that individuals could not develop or realise their full potential if their basic survival needs were not met. So he developed a link between the individual motivators of peaceful and unpeaceful behaviour and wider development policies aimed at feeding, housing, clothing and educating populations.

This basic idea (largely unacknowledged to Burton) was elaborated in the work done in the 1990s and 2000s on “conflict sensitive development strategies”. For Burton, however, the idea of “Provention” was his way of scaling micro concerns up to general social systems thinking and in the last few years of his life, it became his rationale for developing a whole new political philosophy. This new political philosophy was not based on the pursuit of power but on a quest for human fulfilment and the creation of institutional arrangements that were neither domineering nor adversarial.<sup>63</sup> In the 1990s I had many discussions with Burton about what non-adversarial educational, judicial and political systems would look like. While many of these ideas were utopian they were important alternatives to a more peaceful, less competitive and less dog eat dog world. Although he didn't frame these arguments in terms of a rejection of the “classic” Weberian state the logic certainly moved in this direction.

There is more to say about all of these conceptual and theoretical contributions but this is not where Burton made his most useful contribution. On the contrary, despite his prolific written output it was as a scholar practitioner that he made his most significant impact on the field.

## **The Scholar-Practitioner and Conflict Transformation Practice**

Academics don't normally like to venture too far from the ivory tower. Burton came to the academy, however, from a career as a bureaucratic decision maker and he never lost his desire to make a practical political difference wherever he found himself. He wanted his theories to challenge both academic and political establishments. This is what gave his work its radical edge and resulted in him being labelled an academic stirrer and troublemaker. From his time in the Australian public service, however, he understood the strengths and weaknesses of operating as a state

---

<sup>62</sup> Maslow, Abraham H. *Motivation and personality* ([1st ed.]). New York: Harper, 1954.

<sup>63</sup> If I were being a little psychoanalytic here I would argue that Burton's concern to move beyond power and adversarial processes sometimes reflected his own personal struggle with these temptations.

representative and the ethical challenges of representing national interests. When Burton moved back into the academy, however, he realised that the University was viewed as a legitimate (moderately neutral) space for the free flow of ideas and behaviour. Academics were not required to present or represent national interests they could focus on human interests.<sup>64</sup> Burton decided to take advantage of this neutrality to develop academically based ‘political’ processes that would enable participants to discuss a wide range of issues in an academic environment. These small group processes were important in their own right but also an interesting example of non-conventional Burtonian “anti-politics”. He developed these social-psychological problem solving processes at University College London and then at the University of Kent. Burton did not develop new group processes rather he applied existing ones to new sets of problems. He started off by discussing a wide range of political problems using what he called ‘controlled communication’ techniques. These gradually morphed into what we now call ‘problem solving workshops’ aimed at addressing a range of violent conflicts.

In the beginning, he utilised his old diplomatic connections to bring together an expert group to discuss solutions to the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation of the early 1960s. This was followed by interventions on Cyprus, working with Trade Unions and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland and in the late 1980s, with Edward Azar and Chris Mitchell, he focused on civil wars in Lebanon finishing with workshops on Sri Lanka and the Falklands/Malvinas to name a few.<sup>65</sup>

The controlled communication workshop was a technique used initially in social work and was aimed at bringing parties in conflict together, under the care of a neutral third party panel. The aim of this process was to clarify misperceptions, share goals, agree on the nature of the problems dividing them and generate options for addressing them.<sup>66</sup> Burton brought his old diplomatic convening roles to this process as well as acute listening skills. He was an excellent listener when not involved in his own conflicts.

---

<sup>64</sup> For an elaboration of these ideas see Johansen, Robert C. *The National Interest and the Human Interest: an Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980.

<sup>65</sup> Chris Mitchell knows of no comprehensive database of Problem Solving Workshops that Burton and others initiated. It would be a good Masters or even Ph.D. thesis for someone to try and reconstruct the rationales for, membership of and outcomes of these diverse workshops. (Interview with Chris Mitchell July 15 2015).

<sup>66</sup> Burton, John W. *Conflict & Communication*. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

In terms of evaluating the impact of these workshops, they were innovative in their application rather than in their design.

It was assumed by International Relations specialists, for example, that decision makers and influentials knew how to handle themselves in negotiations. Burton knew (from personal experience), however, how misplaced this assumption was. Controlled communication processes, therefore, were his attempt to get participants to acknowledge the deeper drivers of their behaviour; to communicate in ways which did justice to their own values and those of the opposition and to think in terms of superordinate goals. Most of these early initiatives were dyadic conflicts with relatively few major issues. The relative simplicity of these conflicts meant that perceptions in these workshops changed in a positive direction as participants started seeing the “negative other,” “the enemy” as human beings with the same needs, fears and anxieties as themselves. This is an interesting contrast with the conflicts that we are confronting in the twenty-first century which tend to be multi-party and complex.

Burton’s integration of Basic Human Needs in controlled communication processes to diagnose and respond to violent conflict was developed in collaboration with people like Chris Mitchell, Tony De Reuck and others as ‘analytical problem solving facilitated conflict resolution’.<sup>67</sup> These workshops are now thought of simply as “Problem Solving Workshops” or to use Herbert Kelman’s formulation, “Interactive Problem Solving workshops.” They were and are important new contributions to conflict resolution and transformation, because they focused on process as much as content and on the utility of third party facilitators for balancing unequal power dynamics, clarifying perceptions and grappling with divisive issues. The main point of the workshops was to get parties in conflict to talk about the ways in which their needs for identity, recognition, security, welfare and participation were or were not being met and how and why these frustrated needs were generating the divisions at the heart of different types of violence. The driving idea was to get participants to acknowledge their needs and fears and then to direct their attention to common satisfiers rather than self interest.<sup>68</sup> It was assumed that if conflicting parties could acknowledge each other’s needs then they could discuss mutually agreed satisfiers that would enable non-zero-sum collaborative solutions to their problems.

To do this effectively, Burton argued, required a paradigm shift from coercive power politics with zero-sum outcomes to collaborative and

---

<sup>67</sup> Burton, John W. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

<sup>68</sup> Burton, John W. 1990a, op. cit.

negotiated anti-politics with non-zero-sum solutions. Burton argued that the only way that this would happen was under the watchful eye of a panel of skilled facilitators who would help participants see negative stereotypes, identify prejudiced behaviour and, negative misperceptions of the other and get them all to focus on their shared and irreducible “sociobiological” needs.<sup>69</sup> The important point about Problem Solving Workshops, however, was that they provided ways in which academics could bring parties in violent conflict together for what we now think of as ‘Transformative Conversations.’”

When I was Secretary General of International Alert (IA) I asked my Great Lakes Programme Manager, Bill Yates, what theory he employed in his work in Burundi and Rwanda. He said that he didn’t have any guiding theory. His role was to bring awkward and difficult people from awkward and challenging places to relatively safe spaces, where he and colleagues could catalyse awkward and difficult conversations, which might result in warring parties figuring out how to stop fighting and build or rebuild sustainable peaceful relationships.

To some extent this is exactly what collaborative problem solving is all about, namely bringing people out of violent conflict environments to safe places for facilitated conversations about how each one can help the other to meet and satisfy their basic human needs. Identifying the right people to convene, however, is a critical part of this workshop and healing process.

Burton would probably not be happy with my characterisation of Problem Solving Workshops. On the contrary, as with most things, he felt impelled to write an entire book mapping out 56 process rules to guide the facilitation panels.<sup>70</sup> The major point of these facilitation techniques, was to create an environment within which individuals could (i) change their perceptions of those they were in conflict with; (ii) recognise the centrality of frustrated human needs in the conflict; (iii) start thinking about positive relationships and (iv) begin the challenging process of option generation to enable the actors to transform their relationships in a more peaceable

---

<sup>69</sup> See his three-volume series aimed at embellishing and expanding all of these concepts.

Burton, John W. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Burton, John W. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (Vol. 2). New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990a.

Burton, John W. *Conflict: Resolution and Provention*. (Vol. 1.). Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990b.

<sup>70</sup> Burton, John W. *Resolving Deep-Rooted Conflicts: A Handbook*. Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 1987.

direction. These workshops were very deliberately not negotiations but elicitive processes aimed at getting shared agreements about the nature of the problems each was dealing with and some sense of how to resolve them.

An important part of Problem Solving processes was getting parties to cost the consequences of their actions. Burton felt that if you could get participants to cost honestly, the emotional, material, and personal consequences of the conflict, the search for solutions would become an imperative. After costing the conflict, or in Zartman's terms after reaching some 'mutually hurting stalemate'<sup>71</sup>, conflicting parties would then be prepared to look at their frustrated identity needs and work out how they could treat each other with dignity and respect. Only by doing this would they begin to recognize their collaborative power and capacity and their joint ability to do something about their incompatibilities. These two elements of the Problem Solving Workshop model (costing the conflict and satisfying identity needs) remain important practice tools for any third party intervener and still guide much of our practice in relation to conflict transformation.

The challenge facing practitioners working in this field today is whether or not Burton's overarching concern with satisfying basic human needs at the interpersonal, intergroup and national levels are all that helpful in relationship to current challenges to peacefulness?

Since the 1960s, when Burton began his work, there are now many individuals and organisations engaged in the non-violent transformation of violent relationships, peacebuilding and non-violent social change.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, even before Burton, there were many other individuals and organisations engaged in somewhat similar processes. The Quakers, for example, were convening conferences for diplomats across the Cold War divide and also engaging in quietly facilitated discussions with warring parties in Geneva, New York and London as well as in conflict zones such as Biafra, India-Pakistan, and the Middle East<sup>73</sup>.

---

<sup>71</sup> Zartman, I. William. "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond." In Daniel Druckman & Paul C. Stern (Eds.), *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*, 225-250. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000.

<sup>72</sup> Herbert Kelman, for example, told me in personal correspondence, "Over the years my colleagues and I have organised over 80 workshops and related events mostly with Israeli and Palestinian participants. This estimate includes only workshops in which I was personally involved not ones organised by my students and associates without my participation."

<sup>73</sup> Yarrow, C. H. Mike. *Quaker Experiences in International Conciliation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, there has been a rapid expansion of individuals and groups committed to the non-violent resolution of conflict who are engaged in somewhat similar processes to those that Burton devised in the 1960s. In addition to the Quakers, there are organisations like Conciliation Resources, International Alert, Search for Common Ground, Mercy Corps and the Mennonite Central Committee to name a few who have committed themselves to working with small groups of actors in conflict zones in order to promote non-violent solutions to violent problems.

If Burton were here now he would probably acknowledge some of these initiatives and dismiss the rest because of straying from his own techniques. He was at heart a “purist” about his own processes, but there are many practitioners who still use some variant of the Problem Solving Workshop<sup>74</sup> to bring warring parties together for collaborative problem solving. It is fashionable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to frame this work as conflict transformation rather than interactive problem solving. There is enough commonality between what Burton did from the 1960s to 1980s, however, and what many of us continue to do today for there to be intellectual and practical links back to Burton and those who developed his ideas like Chris Mitchell, Tony De Reuck, Herbert Kelman, Nadim Rouhana, and Eileen Babbitt to name a few. Others like Adam Curle, John Paul Lederach, Paula Green, Paula Gutlove, and Lisa Schirch et al. take what they will from Burton while developing their own distinctive conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes.<sup>75</sup>

Curle, Adam. *Making Peace*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1971.

Curle, Adam. *In the Middle: Non-Official Mediation in Violent Situations*. Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986.

<sup>74</sup> I formed a PSW team two years ago to bring influentials from Korea, China and Japan together to discuss stresses and strains in the diplomatic relationships.

<sup>75</sup> See Lederach, John P. “Conflict transformation: A working definition.” *Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual: Foundations and Skills for Constructive Conflict Transformation*, 2000: 52.

Lederach, John P. *The Moral Imagination the Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Galtung, Johan and IPRI. *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: Sage Publications, 1996.

Kelman, Herbert C., & Stephen P. Cohen. The Problem-Solving Workshop: A Social-Psychological Contribution to the Resolution of International Conflicts. *Journal of Peace Research*, 13(2), 1976: 79-90. doi:10.1177/002234337601300201.

Mitchell, Christopher and Michael Banks. *Handbook of Conflict Resolution: The Analytical Problem-Solving Approach*. London: Pinter, 1999.

The challenge facing the field is to determine the positive impacts of these problem solving workshops and all the other efforts to bring small groups together to deal with both the presenting problems and underlying sources of direct and indirect violence. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives and how do they help us deal creatively and nonviolently with the very particular challenges of the twenty-first century?

These questions will be answered in relation to some past problem solving workshops and a variety of other peace initiatives, which are arguably in a Burtonian tradition even though they have no direct lineage to Burton himself. Burton felt that all of these processes would at some stage have to be complemented with a completely new political philosophy and orientation to power, since he was already attuned (in the 1990s) to growing levels of political dissatisfaction with established political processes in different parts of the world.<sup>76</sup>

One person who stands very directly in the lineage of Burtonian problem solvers is Herbert Kelman. Unlike Burton, Kelman has tried to quantify and evaluate whether or not these workshops do or do not make a difference.

In a recent article in *Political Psychology*, Kelman acknowledges the Damascene experience he had observing Burton's facilitation of a Cyprus workshop in 1966.<sup>77</sup> It was exactly what he was looking for in relation to his work on the Arab-Israeli conflict. He absorbed the process and went back to Harvard to adapt, modify and initiate his own interactive problem solving initiatives. After facilitating 80 such workshops, Kelman now thinks of himself as a 'multipartial' facilitator, which is quite different from Burton's Olympian assumption of strictly neutral facilitators.<sup>78</sup> Kelman has, over the years, also acquired formidable knowledge about the Middle East in terms of context, issues and parties. This deep contextual

Curle, Adam. 1986. Op. cit.

Curle, Adam. *To Tame the Hydra: Undermining the Culture of Violence*. Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 1999.

<sup>76</sup> The Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sander's phenomena in the UK and the US are good examples of this dissatisfaction with establishment politicians, political spin and a lack of basic honesty in political discourse.

<sup>77</sup> Kelman, Herbert C. "The Development of Interactive Problem Solving: In John Burton's Footsteps." *Political Psychology*, 36(2), 2015: 243-262.

<sup>78</sup> I think that Kelman's idea of multipartiality is a good one, however, as it signals clearly to all participants that problem solving facilitators share an equal commitment to all sides of the conflict and are interested in everyone being able to forge peaceful and harmonious relationships even if they have been appalling and dominatory oppressors.

knowledge is a departure from Burton's model. He thought that regional expertise was unnecessary to run a successful workshop and used to argue that if the process was right the facilitator simply had to hold it and the local context and expertise would be introduced and expressed by the participants themselves. Both Kelman and Burton, however, were and are committed to direct communication between adversaries, the centrality of the Human Needs framework and the scholar practitioner model.

Both of them see Problem Solving Workshops as academically based unofficial, third party approaches to conflict resolution (neither would use the term transformation although I think that this is a more accurate description of what each does in a Problem Solving Workshop). They are both concerned to utilize these processes to promote changes in individuals as well as the larger conflict system.<sup>79</sup> This is what most of us who think of ourselves as scholar practitioners want to do. The question is how and what successes can we point to. One attempt to answer this question was Mary Anderson's *Reflecting on Peace Practice Project* which generated some important learnings for all conflict resolvers working in this field. In this project she identified a central challenge for all micro level processes, namely, how to ensure that what happens at an interpersonal level gets translated into what is now thought of as 'peace writ large.' This is the biggest challenge for anyone trying to do good

---

<sup>79</sup> There are some ground rules for problem solving workshops which both Burton and Kelman have tried to adhere to over time. I will outline them here so that those who are unfamiliar with the process know what goes into them. See Kelman, Herbert C. "Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem Solving to the Resolution of Ethnonational Conflicts." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 14(1), 2008: 29-60. doi:10.1080/10781910701839767; 33-36. The first ground rule is the principle of privacy and confidentiality which is very crucial if you are working with adversaries locked in violent conflict. Second, the process is not political it is analytical and problem solving. Third there is no expectation that parties will reach an agreement but there is interest in reaching common ground. Fourth there is equality of the two parties within the workshop setting. This has raised all sorts of comments and criticisms about whether facilitators can really generate this kind of equality even in a workshop setting but it is a guiding aspiration and in my experience this normally happens. Parties who are asymmetrical in the conflict find themselves on an even playing field within the workshop. Finally the facilitation team does not take part in the substantive discussion it simply creates the conditions for the parties themselves to seek common ground. The agenda's normally follow a common format. (a) An exchange of information between the parties about the situation under discussion (b) a needs analysis –concerns and existential fears- and (c) working towards some common solutions.

where they can, with whoever will join them and with limited timeframes.<sup>80</sup>

One way facilitators try and ensure ‘peace writ large’ is by ensuring that participants in the workshops are ‘influentials,’ that is people close to power or able to influence those who are. The second way is by trying to create learning experiences within the workshops, which can be transferred back to the contexts from which participants come.<sup>81</sup> The third way is by ensuring that the micro processes are at the right ‘entry point’ for different phases of official negotiation processes (pre-negotiation, para-negotiations, breakdown of negotiations or post negotiations).<sup>82</sup> Or alternatively by making sure that the central topics of the workshop are addressing fundamental existential dilemmas being faced by individuals under economic, political, or military duress.

In my experience, most of these workshops are never that closely connected to official negotiating processes, they either run in parallel or in sequential phase. They thus often appear to be related but are often disconnected from more official processes.

Recently I have been facilitating a series of problem solving workshops in Northeast Asia. These emerged in response to the inability of the Japanese government to initiate summit meetings or even high level officials meetings with Korea and China because of Prime Minister Abe’s right-wing revisionist position on war history and the Senkaku /Dokdo island disputes with both Korea and China.

There were, therefore, no ongoing negotiations, just a concern to work out how to create a political environment that was conducive to convening high-level summit meetings. I think that my experience is fairly common for many other such initiatives. Third parties are asked to convene meetings to deal with very specific crises or dilemmas in order to prevent violence or develop paths back from violence. They are normally requested by moderates seeking alternatives to violence and by people

---

<sup>80</sup> There have been numerous efforts to assess the positive and negative impacts of this kind of work. I was involved in one such initiative, namely the *Reflecting on Peace Practice Project* of Mary Anderson:

Anderson, Mary B., Diana Chigas, Lara Olson and Peter Woodrow. *Reflecting on Peace Practice Handbook*. Cambridge, MA: Collaboration for Development Action, Inc., 2004.

The issues that are raised at end of the RPP study are pretty much the same as the ones that I will raise from an analysis of university based initiatives.

<sup>81</sup> Kelman, Herbert C., 2008, op. cit., 33.

<sup>82</sup> Kelman, Herbert C., 2015, op. cit., 249.

who are shocked at the ways in which simple differences have become sources of deep division and polarization.

While they might not pull countries or warring parties back from the brink the workshops do, however, play an important role in identifying the problems, combatting stereotypes, developing de-escalatory language, building relational empathy and a shared hopeful vision for the future but the meso and macro effects are often quite elusive even if participants have identified specific conciliatory gestures that can be made on the way.<sup>83</sup>

Kelman has always been much more explicit than Burton about the two goals of interactive problem solving workshops. As Nadim Rouhana eloquently argued in his critique of such workshops<sup>84</sup>, clarity about goals is critical to workshop success. The operational goals for Kelman's workshops have been first 'producing change in the particular individuals participating in a workshop' and second 'transferring these changes to the policy process'<sup>85</sup>. The challenge with these goals is that the requirements for maximizing individual change might contradict the requirements for maximizing transfer, which is what Kelman refers to as the 'dialectics of problem solving workshops'.

This dilemma and dialectic, however, is at the heart of what track-two civil society actors do in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. All individuals and organisations working in the field need to ask what sorts of changes they are trying to induce in the participants and what sorts of policy changes they would like them to propose. The big challenge is how to do this in a non-directive, non-didactic fashion. How can conflict resolvers, create a space for agonistic discussion, for example, which doesn't result in them imposing their own values, aspirations and norms on the participants? How do they do this in a way that embraces the complexities of the situation while avoiding simplistic dualisms? How do they live with all the questions and ambiguities that conflicting parties bring to the table? And how do they avoid rushing to premature integration or unity when it is clear that the conflicting parties remain stuck in victim-

---

<sup>83</sup> On the question of what will generate conditions conducive to successful negotiations, see Chris Mitchell's excellent book on this subject. Mitchell, Christopher R. "A Willingness to Talk: Conciliatory Gestures and De-Escalation." *Negotiation Journal*, 7(4), 1991, 405-430.

<sup>84</sup> Rouhana, Nadim N. "Interactive Conflict Resolution: Issues in Theory, Methodology, and Evaluation." In Daniel Druckman & Paul C. Stern (Eds.), *International Conflict Resolution*, 294-337. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000.

<sup>85</sup> Kelman, Herbert, C. 2015, op. cit. 244.

perpetrator narratives? How can anyone do this effectively when most western democracies are deliberately and systematically attacking civil society actors and privileging the national security state as the arbiter of what will or will not produce peace and order?

In relation to the three workshops I facilitated between China, Japan and Korea (2013-2014), for example, there was no doubt that the attitudes, perspectives, and relationships changed between all the participants. In evaluations, the participants stated that “the discussions had been useful for giving a deeper appreciation of the other side and for critiquing simplistic stereotypes”.<sup>86</sup> The aims of the workshops had been relatively modest. We wanted to get Japanese participants to understand the diverse ways in which their government’s actions were activating painful traumatic memories in Korea and China and the Korean and Chinese participants to understand Japanese fears and anxieties and why they might be wanting to renegotiate postwar peace agreements, remilitarize and become a ‘normal’ nation again. At the end of the three workshops, there was no doubt that all participants were more convivial towards each other than at the beginning. There was equally no doubt that they had a deeper appreciation of the issues that divided them and the traumatic memories that were impeding peaceful coexistence in Northeast Asia.

As one participant from Korea said:

“Recognition is an extremely important issue in Northeast Asia. Japan wants to be recognized as a ‘normal state’, and this is the reason why it wants to revise its constitution and build up its military. Rising China wants to be recognized as a normal ‘great power’. And South Korea wants to be recognized as a ‘middle power’.”<sup>87</sup>

This was an unprompted comment on Burton’s recognition need. The participants were also able to grasp competitive victimhood dynamics and why different kinds of Japanese apology never seemed to completely satisfy China or Korea. On the more negative side, however, there is very little I can point to in Japan, Korea and China which indicates that the initiative as a whole or the changed attitudes and behavior of the individual participants towards each other has altered the views of the Shinzo Abe, Xi Jinping, or Park Geun-hye governments or even senior

---

<sup>86</sup> Second Report of Toda /Otago University Workshop on “Dealing with Painful History to Build Peace in North East Asia” December 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

officials underneath them.<sup>88</sup>At the level of individual workshop participant, however, even though the transfer effect was not obvious, friendships were formed, stereotypes challenged and some of the conversations reported back to Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. What was noticeable, however, was a major change in the atmospherics of the group. The first workshop started stiffly with participants holding strong national positions and physically locating themselves in three distinct national groups. Over the course of all three workshops, however, this frostiness was replaced by genuine warmth and a new sense of optimism and possibility. This kind of change should not be sneered at. The challenge is to work out what these changed atmospherics mean outside of the group and how they might be reproduced across societies as large and as complex as China, Japan and Korea.

Thus in terms of effectiveness I think we can argue that these meetings are important at the micro level but the re-entry problem and the transfer problem remain important challenges to those of us who believe in the power of small transforming circles to change what happens at the meso and macro levels.

Kelman's workshops have lasted much longer than my small initiatives so he is able to argue that the workshops he organized on the Palestine-Israeli conflict - along with other unofficial efforts:

“... helped to lay the groundwork for the Oslo agreement of September 1993. They contributed by developing cadres prepared to carry out productive negotiations; by creating opportunities to share information and formulate new ideas that provided substantive inputs into the negotiations and by fostering a political atmosphere that made the parties open to a new relationship.”<sup>89</sup>

But even this modest contribution was wiped out with the failure of Camp David and the second ‘Intifada.’ Much to Kelman’s regret, many of the personal relationships that he helped create in his workshops were stressed and strained by these events. Mistrust replaced the trust that had been built up over the years and the whole process had to begin again.

---

<sup>88</sup> I don’t think that Burton or others could claim more for many of the initiatives that they were involved with either. These workshops certainly do generate individual changes and provide opportunities for “intentional” and “experiential” learning from the other side. But what is transferred back to policy makers, however, is often anecdotal and makes a relatively modest contribution to macro policy making.

<sup>89</sup> Kelman, Herbert C., 2008, *op. cit.* 32.

I wonder, how many other scholar practitioners, however, are willing to dedicate 45 years of their careers to creating safe spaces for building and rebuilding stressed, torn and broken relationships across deep boundaries of difference. Certainly Burton did not have this sort of patience. He moved from conflict to conflict without leaving behind alumni of the sort that Kelman can point to.

There have been many analyses of the costs and benefits of problem solving workshops running from how to engage questions of power without being sucked back into a coercive power politics frame<sup>90</sup>, dealing with cultural differences and different understandings of needs and how to satisfy them<sup>91</sup>. There have been explorations, also, into whether women are better participants and facilitators of these workshops than men<sup>92</sup>, and whether any of this work can be done effectively without a clear commitment to non-violent and pacifist solutions to violence<sup>93</sup>. But enough has been said to demonstrate that even though this is not a perfect process it can have transformative consequences for individuals and in favourable circumstances can result in creative non-violent options for elite level decision makers. The major point is that conflict transformation processes of this kind are good examples of cumulative acts of small goodness aimed at building relational empathy and virtuous non-violent dynamics to replace the vicious ones. They also stand in direct continuity with Burton's desire to replace war with third party facilitated conversations and dialogue.

Are these examples of small 'goodnesses' capable of dealing with the challenges we are confronting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In the absence of anything else they clearly have their place and concerned scholars and others have to do what they can where they can to help generate cultures and structures of peace rather than violence. But are they up to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

---

<sup>90</sup> Avruch, Kevin. "Basic Human Needs and the Dilemma of Power in Conflict Resolution." In Avruch, Kevin and Christopher Mitchell (Eds.), *Conflict Resolution and Human Needs: Linking Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2013: 40-58.

<sup>91</sup> Avruch, Kevin, and Peter W. Black. "A Generic Theory of Conflict Resolution: A Critique." *Negotiation Journal*, 3(1), 1987: 87-96.

<sup>92</sup> d'Estrée, Tamra P., & Eileen F. Babbitt. "Women and the Art of Peacemaking: Data from Israeli-Palestinian Interactive Problem-Solving Workshops." *Political Psychology*, 19(1), 1998: 185-209. doi:10.1111/0162-895x.00099

<sup>93</sup> Clements, Kevin P. "Principled Nonviolence: An Imperative not an Optional Extra." *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, Vol. 3(No. 1), (2015): 1-17.

## **Burton's contribution to confronting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

This year [2015] the Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded 40 armed conflicts with a minimum of 25 battle deaths, which is up by six from 2013. This is the highest number of conflicts recorded since 1999 and 11 of these conflicts are recorded as wars, with 1,000 or more battle deaths. Uppsala's best guess for battle related deaths last year was 101,400 most from the Syrian conflict but increasing numbers from the four separate conflicts in the Ukraine<sup>94</sup>.

The direct battle deaths, however, are just the tip of a vast iceberg of human misery. 59.5 million individual human beings have been forcibly displaced by war by the end of 2014. That number has increased in 2015 but we do not have good data on this yet. An estimated 13.9 million people were newly displaced by conflict in 2014, including 2.9 million new refugees. In 2014 the country hosting the largest numbers of refugees was Turkey with 1.59 million refugees. Syria is the world's top source country for refugees, overtaking Afghanistan which had held that title for 3 years. There are 38.2 million people who are internally displaced by war including 7.6 million in Syria alone. 32.3 million of these IDPs are under the protection of UNHCR<sup>95</sup>.

While the Basic Human Needs of these millions are not being met it is hard to think of problem solving workshops, capacity building projects, or even large scale development and peacebuilding projects making much of a dent in these figures. And how useful are the well-intentioned interventions of liberally minded academics in privileged parts of the world in relation to cataclysms of these proportions?

This is particularly problematic when we think of the ways in which the world has been afflicted by 14 years of deliberately manufactured political fear post 9/11. The world's conflicts have become nasty and entrenched because of pathological hegemonic initiative. Instead of an expansion of rational problem solving initiatives we have been exposed to 14 years of wars, military interventions, assassinations, torture, kidnappings and the growth of paranoid national security states everywhere. This has precipitated the emergence of reactive Islamic extremism across the Middle East. States everywhere (which Burton rightly feared), have imposed secrecy on almost everything and there has

---

<sup>94</sup> Petterson, Therese and Peter Wallenstein. "Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014." *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(4), (2015): 536-550.

<sup>95</sup> UNHCR. *Global Facts and Figures*. 2015. Retrieved from Geneva.

been a systematic infantilisation and demobilisation of civil society actors everywhere. So what role is there for the academy and concerned citizens in this dystopian world?

How can we talk while Syria literally burns? But how can we not talk when the only alternatives being mentioned by our leaders in the West are extra judicial executions by drone, renewed bombing raids and more military interventions on top of all the military interventions that have generated these cataclysms in the first place? The other challenge in all of these conflicts is who do we talk to. Most of these conflicts are wars that are networked and deterritorialised; there are multiple parties with multiple issues making them structurally complex and problematic. The time for conflict preventing processes of a small or big kind have passed so we are confronted by some extraordinary ethical, theoretical and practical challenges.

In the first place, how do we in the West begin getting a clear moral compass on the problems that confront us? In particular how might we replace the politics of fear with the politics of compassion? How do we ensure that our security is seen in relational rather than agentic terms? How do we let our political leaders know that we wish to guarantee our security in the company of others rather than in opposition to others? And in relation to the current issue of the day, namely, the pressure of war torn refugees on Europe and any safe haven, how do we practice an ethics of hospitality so that these millions of human beings have a safe space to live and satisfy their other identity and welfare needs? What kinds of tools do we have in our theoretical and practice toolboxes to deal with these cosmic and complex tragedies?

In the first place, human beings have to rediscover some sense of their common humanity. This is no easy task but there is no point in catalysing positive micro processes through Burtonian style workshops, if there is no general disposition to build transnational cosmopolitan community.

Second, everyone has a human obligation to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to all those in need and this is a global responsibility not just the responsibility of Turkey, Lebanon or Western Europe. Burton did not by and large focus much attention on humanitarian need and the challenges this poses to the international community.

Third, there is a need to begin a global process of conscientisation/consciousness raising about which actors and which states are responsible for our current tragedies. It's a bit rich arguing that Europe has diminished responsibility for Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi and Libyan refugees when the West generated the conditions for their displacement in the first place. Burton would have been very positive about initiatives in this direction.

Fourth, how do we persuade these hegemonies and the networked groups of violent actors that they have spawned to assume responsibility for their actions and to figure out diplomatic and other strategies for stopping the violence rather than adding to it? What sorts of conversations with what sorts of people might short, medium and long term strategies for restoring peace and stability to all those places that know nothing but chaos at the moment?

Fifth, and this is the difficult bit, how does the Global North join forces with those in the Global South in recognition of our common humanity to begin devising global solutions to these global problems? In addition to war, violence and forced displacement, we are all confronted with the negative consequences of climate change, accelerating youth populations, and growing global inequality.

Even if we could create thousands of problem solving processes and create small analytical groups on every continent to engage in problem solving it is unlikely that we would have much impact on the tectonic shifts that are occurring at the present moment.

This is, therefore, an opportunity for Burton's second coming. We need a new politics for a post-colonial, post-industrial, and post-violent world. If this does not happen, the future of the planet is in jeopardy. Burton always said that the promise of conflict resolution (or conflict transformation) was to devise a way of being political that did not involve adversarial, hierarchical, hegemonic and dominatory individuals and institutions. It is a politics that is decentralised, networked, global in reach and it is a politics that does not depend on possessing a monopoly of force. It is a politics that depends on human will, hopefulness, and a realisation of collaborative capacity. It is grassroots and top-down politics. It is a politics that is profoundly contextual, aimed at building emancipatory relationships and transforming institutions so that they are relatively equal and participatory. It is a politics in which the arms trade and the global financial sector are brought under effective global control. It is a politics where everyone is valued for who they are not who we would like them to be and it's a politics with the satisfaction of basic human needs at its heart. And, it must be a politics that has conflict transformation at its heart. As John Paul Lederach says,

Conflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures and respond to real life problems in human relationships.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Lederach, John Paul. 2003, op. cit. 14.

Even though non-adversarial politics are a stretch from interactive problem solving, there is no doubt that this was Burton's final vision and moving in this direction would ensure that the Burtonian legacy continues as we devise practical processes for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.