

GST 222

PEACE STUDIES & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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PHASES IN CONFLICT

A beginner in the field of peace studies and conflict resolution usually perceives or sees conflict as something negative that should be avoided like the plague. Although, due to individual differences, conflict is an inevitable and recurrent fact of life, we should therefore develop our understanding of conflict and its positive management.

The Chinese do not see conflict as negative in their language; rather, they see conflict as "an opportunity or chance for change as well as risk or danger." Therefore, conflict is neither positive nor negative; however, how it turns out to be is determined by our response, which is a function of our perception, attitude, background and the environments. Knowing the root causes of conflicts does not automatically proffer solution or clue on how to prevent or resolve them, as the inherent dynamic of conflicts tend to give them a Life of their own. Conflict tends to emerge/evolve in a cyclical pattern, often with several vicious cycles that are closely entwined. Even a removal of the original problems may not guarantee an end to a conflict, as additional conflict is being generated by the conflict itself.

However, having a positive approach to conflict help one to manage it in a constructive manner with positive results while people with negative connotation of conflict tend to handle conflicts in a destructive way with negative effects. Each conflict situation contains certain predictable elements and dynamics that are amendable to regulation and change.

There are two key propelling variables in conflict (escalation) cycle: opportunity and willingness.

Opportunity

This has to do with the available resources at the disposal of a person, group or a country such as money, people, arms, land, minerals, good organisation, external support and so on.

Willingness

This is desire or need to act. This is a situation whereby a group of people are determined and convinced to embark on an action aimed at changing their situation irrespective of the likely consequences.

Both the opportunity and willingness are complimentary in nature in the sense that one may have the means to act but may not be willing to do so or the willingness to act may be there but the means is lacking. In the light of the above, for conflict to move from one stage to the other, both must be present because they are dependent on each other.

Conflict Cycle and Stages of Conflict

Conflict tend to progress from one place to another when the stakeholders (the oppressed and the oppressor) become more aware of a conflict of interest,

means to act and then mobilise to alter the prevailing situation to each group advantage. In the course of altering the situation or addressing the injustice being faced by the oppressed, a sporadic violence can erupt if either parties should fail to adopt positive approach of conflict management.

Stages of Conflict

The following are the various stages of conflicts emerging in different parts of the world:

A. The Formation Stage

This is the first stage of conflict whereby a problem emerges and acts or things, or situations that were previously ignored or taken for granted now turn to serious issues. The obvious antagonistic shifts in attitude and behaviour patterns is a clear indication of the early warning signs of conflict formation, which need to be addressed if further escalation is to be avoided.

B. The Escalation Stage

This stage is characterised by the formation of enemy images. People begin to take sides, positions harden, communication stops, perception becomes distorted and parties begin to commit resources to defend their position, leaders begin to make inflammatory public statements regarding their positions and street demonstrations intensity.

C. The Crisis Stage

At this stage, parties in conflict now begin to use physical barricades to demarcate their territories. Attempts to defend or expand territories or interests lead to direct confrontation and eruption of violence. Stockpiled weapons or arms are now freely used in an attempt to dominate or have upper hand leading to breakdown of law and order and essential services are virtually disrupted and people begin to experience discomfort due to lack of water, food, electricity and other essential goods and services.

D. De-escalation Stage

This is the stage in which parties in conflict begin to experience gradual cessation of hostility arising from conflict weariness, hunger, sanctions or external intervention.

E. Improvement Stage

At this stage, stakeholders begin to have a rethink, shift ground and needs for dialogue are recognised and efforts are made towards attaining relative peace.

F. Transformation Stage

All causes of conflicts have been removed at this stage and reconciliation has occurred. This stage is the most difficult stage to attain in any conflict situation, though desirable, attainable and accomplishable.

Conflict Cycle

It is now generally believed that conflict most times evolve in a cyclical pattern that are closely related.

i. Latent Phase

This is the first phase of the conflict cycle where a conflict is dormant and barely expressed by the conflicting sides that may not even be conscious of their conflicting interests or values. At this phase, a conflict can easily be “nipped in the bud” through a preventive action on the basis of early warning in principle. Although, latent conflicts are difficult to detect with any degree of certainty – and their presence and absence may be hard to verify. Despite that, we can still identify various indicators of impending conflicts, such as inequality, growing poverty, frustrated expectation, unemployment, pollution and a growing tendency to view problems in “us versus them – terms.”

ii. Manifest Phase

At this phase, conflicting parties express their demands and grievances openly, but only by legal means. It is easier to identify both problems and stakeholders, at this stage while preventive action can still be taken to prevent conflict escalation or degeneration into violent confrontation. Despite limited time available, exhibit conflict behaviour and regroup themselves in opposing camps. Mediation efforts geared towards compromise solutions still stand a reasonable chance of success provided violence has not occurred.

iii. Violent Phase

This phase is characterised by direct physical attacks and confrontations leading to spilling of blood and loss of life of both conflicting parties and innocent people and thereby produce additional motives for struggle elongation, if only to “get even” or escape retribution for atrocities committed. Moreover, people having their various private agendas and that are personally benefiting or profiting from the continuing crisis often usurped the initial/existing leadership structure in order to have influence and control over their groups.

iv. Escalation Phase

Under this phase, violence breeds further violence, producing an escalatory momentum. Moreover, the longer the struggle has lasted, and the more destructive it has been, the more do the warring parties (and especially their leaders) have to lose by laying down their arms. Only victory can justify the preceding bloodshed; hence, the proclivity to struggle on as long as there is even a slight hope of prevailing, thereby attaining the power to set the terms. Neither the violence nor the escalation phases therefore leave much scope for peaceful intervention, mediation or negotiations. On the other, embarking on military intervention at this stage could be regarded as a risky enterprise despite the fact that it might make a difference.

v. Contained Phase

Escalation comes to a halt in this stage. This could be because the conflicting parties have temporarily exhausted their supply of weaponry, leading to lower

intensity. At this stage, there appears hope for negotiations and mediation efforts by the intervention of a third party aiming towards a truce. Most times, peacekeeping forces can be introduced to protect each side against the possible breaches of the truce by either of the conflicting parties. The truce agreed upon allows for the provision of humanitarian aid to the civilian victims without supporting either of the warring sides.

vi. Mitigated Phase

Mitigated stage of any conflict is the period during which the basic causes of conflict remain in place, but the conflict behaviour and attitude has been significantly changed with reduced or less violence and more political mobilisation and negotiation. At this stage, the ray of post- conflict recovery can easily be read and felt in the minds of political leaders on opposing sides, while external factors are at the advantage of gaining new leverage, that is, serving as potential (but not unconditional) provider of aid.

vii. The Resolution Phase

This phase is the most perceived critical stage of all the phases, as success or failure of post-conflict peace-building will determine whether the conflict will flare up again. For a tangible and enduring or sustainable success to be accomplished, both the underlying causes of the conflict and its immediate consequences must be addressed. This include reordering of power relationships, bringing some of those responsible for the preceding blood shed to trial and facilitating reconciliation between the opposing sides as a precondition of future coexistence. At this stage, the importance of external actors is very crucial in the following areas such as provision of various forms of assistance and support to the emerging civil society after the resolution of the conflict, and to support programmes for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, including child soldiers.

Conflict Handling Styles

These are various forms or ways by which individual, groups, societies or nations perceive and respond to conflicts arising from diverse/conflicting views, opinion, ideas, values and belief. The behaviours and attitudes of the parties concerned usually determined the success and failure of any conflict which can be described along these two basic dimensions namely:

a. Assertiveness

This describes the extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy his needs and concern.

b. Cooperativeness

This explains the extent to which a person attempts to satisfy his needs and concerns as well as the other person's needs. These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be applied to define or explain the following five conflict handling styles: dominating/competing; accommodating; avoiding; collaborating and compromising.

i. Dominating/Competing

This takes place when an individual is very assertive and not cooperative. Such a person pursues his own concerns at another person's expense. It is a power-oriented mode. It is a position that states: "I have to win." It can also mean: "I have to stand up for myself, for my rights." It entails defending a position by argument, by rank, or by economic advantage. This position connotes "you win, the other loses."

ii. Accommodating

You are unassertive and cooperative. It is the opposite of competing. When accommodating, you neglect your own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this handling style. It can be selfless, generous; it can be yielding because of weakness or low self-esteem.

iii. Avoiding

You are unassertive and uncooperative. You do not (immediately) pursue your own concerns or those of other person. You do not address the conflict. It can be a diplomatic way of handling conflict, postponing for a better time. It can also be a withdrawal, that could lead to worsening of a relationship.

iv. Collaborating

Under this dimension, you are both assertive and cooperative. It is the opposite of avoiding. You are working with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both parties. It means dialogue, it means good listening, it means understanding your and the other person's needs and concerns and creating solutions to meet those concerns. In this case, both sides win. A win-win situation for all.

v. Compromising

You are partially assertive and partially cooperative. When you compromise you attempt to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. When you compromise, you split the difference, you make concessions, you give up something to gain something in return, you seek a middle ground position, you win a little, and you lose a little.

Model Two

This second model grouped conflict handling styles into three major headings or classifications in as much as approaches to conflict vary from individual to individual. The classifications are thus:

1. Avoidance/Denial

This is a common way of handling or dealing with conflict. We may decide to avoid the other party/person or pretend that the conflict does not exist even though we are hurt or angry. We need to observe that this approach or style of handling conflict often leaves us feeling more hurt, frustrated, and annoyed. It can be likened to a housewife who keeps sweeping dirt under the carpet; the dirt will surely become a heap, which she will not be able to manage one day. This approach creates room for a win/lose option, an option where one person gets what he/she needs and the other person gets nothing. This style does not actually solve the problem but buries it for the time being. However, this style is useful in some

situations, for example, avoidance method can be a stop gap to reflect on what next line of action or step to be taken.

2. Confrontation/Fighting

In this approach, some people, group, nation or state might decide to slog it out with the other party in conflict situation. They threaten, attack, yell, insult and tenaciously hold on to their point of view and disagree with the other party's point of view. This approach often leads to violence and it creates lose/lose option, an option where both parties lose. Neither party gets what he/she needs. In some cases, confrontation might also lead to win/lose where the stronger party with bigger power wins while the weaker party ends up being the loser.

3. Problem Solving

This is an approach whereby the parties in conflict listen with the intent conflict and attack underlying elements in the conflict and attack the issues. The parties adopting this style normally show respect for differences and look for ways to resolve the problem. Furthermore, people using this style or approach are less concerned about who is right or wrong. They view conflict as belonging to both parties which require their mutual collaboration to resolve. This approach creates room for a "win/win solution"- a situation where both parties come out satisfied with the solution. They are both happy and satisfied because their needs and desires have been met and their relationship has been restored.

Based on the above discussion, it is now crystal clear that it is important to know the stages or phases of conflict progression to enable you ascertain the step to be taken in the prevention of conflict escalation and management approaches to be adopted in managing conflicts that are at different stages or phases of conflict cycle.

In this unit, two key propelling variables in conflict escalation are discussed together with the stages of conflict, conflict cycle, and conflict energy while various conflict handling style were extensively discussed.

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SECTION 1 LESSON 4

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

It is a clear known fact that conflict exist at all levels of human interaction either at interpersonal, intra-group, inter group or at communal, national and international levels. Therefore, it has become imperative for a conflict management practitioner, intervener or a peace studies and conflict resolution student to acquire necessary knowledge and skills required to enable such a person gain an insight into the hidden issues in conflict. The issues ranging from the causes of the conflict, stages/phases of conflict, the stakeholders (parties in conflict), and the conflict analytical tools and techniques necessary for proper understanding of conflict analysis in view of proffering sustainable solution to the conflict. Analysis is usually accompanied by “conflict mapping” and “tracking” both of which are very important at giving the conflict management practitioner a clear picture of what is happening, what is at stake and what could be done to manage the “difficult” situation.

Meaning/Definition of Conflict Analysis

Conflict analysis is a critical review, interpretation and explanation of what is observed and recorded about the conflict situation. Alternatively, conflict analysis can be defined as a process by which the root causes, dynamics, issues, and – other – fundamentals of conflict are examined, reviewed and unraveled through the use of various mechanisms for proper and better – understanding of the conflict from several perspectives.

Conflict analysis avails peace experts intervening in a conflict the opportunity of gathering necessary data or information that will facilitate bringing together of parties in dispute and reveal a dependable, reliable and effective direction on the choice of strategies and action to be adopted for a successful intervention and termination of conflict.

Categories of Stakeholders

A stakeholder is defined as those men and women, group or parties who are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict and have a significant stake in the outcome.

a. Primary Stakeholders

They are those whose goals are, or are perceived by them to be incompatible and who interact directly in pursuit of their respective goals. They are the direct investors in the conflict.

b. Secondary Stakeholders

These categories are affected directly by the outcome of the conflict but do not feel to be directly involved. As the conflict progresses, they may become primary and primary may become secondary.

c. Interested Stakeholders

These parties have an interest in the conflict. They stand to benefit from the outcomes whether peaceful or conflictual. The difference between interested and secondary stakeholders is that the interested stakeholders suffer no direct impact of the conflict in the short and medium term.

Criteria for Determining Primary Stakeholders

Determining where stakeholders should be put is both political and fluid. The following often determines the decisions of interveners in selecting the stakeholders to engage.

i. Functional

This suggests those who directly wage the conflict. Their legitimacy on the negotiating table is their capacity and ability to perpetuate the conflict. They are the embodiment of the conflict. Observers believe they have the power to end the conflict.

ii. Representativity

This is political aspect of stakeholders' categorisation. Stakeholders are primary because they represent a large number of people who are directly affected by the conflict. These people also have the means to wage conflict or build peace.

iii. Moral Authority

Primary stakeholders can also be determined because their moral authority carries the vision of post-conflict society. These include religious leaders, civil society organisations including women's organisations and traditional leaders among others. Earlier, this category was only confined to the secondary level.

Five Elements Required to Structure Analysis of Stakeholders

- i. **Relationship** -What is the interaction between the stakeholders?
- ii. **Agenda/Power** -What are the agendas of key stakeholders for conflict and for peace?
- iii. **Needs** - What are the needs of the different stakeholders? Which needs are opposing and overlapping?
- iv. **Action** -What actions are the different stakeholders undertaking to promote peace or conflict?
- v. What is the cumulative power of actions for peace or conflict?

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Conflict Transformation

The International Alert (1996:37) conceptualises conflict transformation as a:

..particular approach which aims to recognise the grievances, needs and issues of all the parties. It focuses on the processes by which conflict develops into violence, rather than focusing exclusively on how to bring a violent conflict quickly to a cease fire for settlement. It addresses the *structural reality* of inequality, rights and injustice in the society involved, and offers alternative ways of addressing those matters. This approach aims to transform a conflict from violence and destruction into a constructive force which reduces social change, progressively removing or at least reducing the conditions from which the conflict and violence have arisen. The peace, which develops, can then be well-founded and sustainable.

The fundamental objective of this latest concept is to transform unfair social interactions. Conflict transformation aims to transform a conflict from violent and destructive stage into a constructive force, which will lay the foundation for social change. This can be achieved by systematically and progressively removing and playing down the conditions that gave rise to conflict and violence. The objective is to have a well-founded and sustainable peace. In achieving the foregoing, due attention is paid to the actors, the issues, the rules, and the structures.

In approaching conflict transformation, there are two broad approaches. These are non-violent conflict transformation associated with Gandhi otherwise known as the Gandhi theory. The second though seemingly unscrupulous approach is a combination of approaches that does not pre-suppose resolution of the incompatibilities, but tries to freeze the conflict, negate it, protect it, through all kinds of devices, including structural and direct violence.

The non-violence theory or Gandhi theory is vehemently intolerant of the use of either structural violence or direct violence because it will contradict the spirit and letter of the non-violence theory. In addition, non-violence is an admonition to struggle against both direct and structural violence, and an equally strong admonition not to use them in the struggle. Non-violence or Gandhi theory will also not condone the fair protractive devices earlier mentioned because they are antithetical to the non-violence theory of conflict transformation. For Gandhi; “there is no way to peace; peace is the way; to be taken, now.”

One of the chief proponents of conflict transformation is John Lederach. In his analysis, Lederach distinguishes conflict transformation from conflict management and conflict resolution. Conflict transformation is desirable than the two because it emphasises a broader and deeper understanding of the conflict. “Conflict resolution” suggests that conflict is destructive like fire; therefore, it should be put out quickly. It also implies that conflict is a flash or spark that can be handled once and for all in a decisive manner through mediation or other intervention processes.

“Conflict management” correctly posits that conflicts could be protracted in span, which makes it difficult to be swiftly resolved, but “management” implies that people can be directly or remotely manipulated, as they were physical objects. Furthermore, the notion of management implies that its goal is the mitigation or control of volatility without dealing with the real source of the problem.

Conflict transformation transcends simply eliminating or controlling conflict, but stresses making on the dialectic or dynamic nature of conflicts. In the context of social conflict, Lederach argues that social conflict is ordinarily created by humans who have relationships that suffer immediately there is a conflict. Therefore, cause-and-effect relationship goes both ways from the people and the relationships to the conflict and back to the people and the relationships. Conflict changes relationships in predictable ways often negatively; it changes modes and contexts of communication processes of social organisation, altering images of the self and of the other.

Lederach also opines that conflict transformation is a prescriptive concept. This implies that on its own, conflict can have destructive consequences. However, the consequences can be regulated or transformed in order to improve self-images, relationships, and social structures depending on the way it is handled. Usually this is done by transforming perceptions of issues, actions, and other people or groups. In as much as conflict destroys relationships by altering perceptions and emphasising on the differences between people and positions, efficacious conflict transformation can work to improve mutual understanding. Even when actors’ interests, values, and needs are contrasting or irreconcilable, a fair understanding of one another though contacts and communication can help. This has potentials or effects on the way conflict is expressed. This can make the expression of conflict aggressively or violently replaced by non-violent advocacy, conciliation or attempted cooperation.

For the success of conflict transformation processes have been evolved. Although different writers emphasise different aspects, nevertheless, most of them seem to agree on the following for conflict transformation to be effective.

- Multi-level participation involving elements from all social levels of the involved parties, from top decision makers through middle range opinion leaders to grass roots constituents, including those who would normally be excluded from the process and whose interests would not be represented in ‘normal’ negotiations.
- Efforts to empower the ‘underdogs’ in the struggle so that between parties that are more equal than they could otherwise be.
- Efforts to ensure that those directly involved in the conflict can control the transformation processes to their own satisfaction and thus make sure that any outcomes have the approval and support of those affected.

- Focus not merely on immediate issues but also on long standing traumas and on any deep-rooted sense of past injustices.
- Brokerage by appropriate intermediaries who understand the culture and social structures in which adversaries are embedded.
- Co-creation of a new understanding of the conflict, how it arose and what it needs to be changed in order both to resolve it and to ensure that other, similar dispute do not arise in future.
- An ability to create and put in place procedures that will maintain and continue the changes found necessary to resolve the current conflict and prevent others arising in future, or-when they arise – taking on a protracted and destructive form.
- The mutual, inter-active education of adversaries about the nature of the socio-political and economic systems from which the conflict arose and of the dynamics of that conflict; and their training in skills that will enable them deal with that conflict and other that may arise in future.

The above according to Mitchell helps to understand the concept of conflict transformation in three main categories. The first category comprises those dealing with personal changes, the second, those dealing with structural changes and the third those dealing with relationship changes.

Conflict transformation is geared towards positive peace and restorative justice. In theory and practice, it transcends conflict management and conflict resolution. It stresses the restoration of relationships to the status-quo-ante of the conflict.

Types of Conflict Transformation

Issue Transformation

In many instances, issues are often shaped by perception and the fear of its effects on parties concerned. These are some of the factors that impinge on conflict transformation. Schmid (2000) defines issue transformation as a change in the political agenda of the conflict, downplaying the importance of original conflict issues and emphasising shared concern for new issues. However, for issue transformation to aid any conflict transformation process the particular types of conflict must be accurately understood and analysed. Therefore, a modification of Schmid definition becomes auspicious because other than political issues or conflicts there are other types of conflicts with vexed and salient issues that must necessarily be transformed. Issues of identity, security, religion, ecology and others also often need to be transformed. The main thrust of issue transformation is to make discordant tunes less salient while making concordant tunes better perceived and appreciated. Issue transformation also entails the dexterous handling or manipulating of issue structure and contents to enhance the possibility of conflict transformation. Issue transformation calls for the expansion of the agenda rather than restricting it to maintain social coalitions and the convergence of disparate interests.

Politically, arrangements supportive of the previous agenda will have to change. Put succinctly, the transformation simultaneously encapsulates several actors and connects issues and actors with each other. In large-scale conflicts, this may entail significant political rearrangement within most of or all the countries involved. This has to be done continuously and mindfully so as not to be seen as prying into the domestic confines or precincts of actors to avert violence and instability.

Surrounding most issues that need transformation are the parties' needs, interests and values, which are not always accurately and explicitly expressed by their positional statements. Interests, needs and values are the concepts that underlie most conflicts, yet one often mixed up. The concept of "interests" usually refers to what people or parties in a conflict want. They may be material things as they often are or not. They are usually negotiable people are willing to trade more or less are interest for more or less of another. For the fact that conflicts are defined based on the incompatibility of interests, it is assumed that for things like (money, land, jobs etc.) the more one person or group possesses the less the other party possesses. Therefore, when conflicts are conceptualised in the context of interest the conflict becomes a fixed-sum conflict or zero-sum game. Needs are also things people wants in a conflict. However, they are often immaterial things such as security, identity and recognition. Needs constitute an integral part of the human being. Needs are different from interests in many significant ways.

First, they are often non-negotiable. Parties in conflict rarely want to trade away their identity, security or recognition. Identity especially ethnic and religious is so fundamental to human satisfaction, that people will go to any length to protect and preserve them. This may include the violation of fundamental norms, or reduce their ability to obtain their interests, in a bid to fulfil or protect their fundamental needs.

A second fundamental difference is that needs are often inextricably linked together. While interests may be arranged or shared in such a way that only one side gets its objective, needs based issues cannot be so shared because of their intangible nature. Insecurity or denigration of one party's ethnic identity or the desecration of one party's religious symbols would likely trigger violence or aggression. It is, however, theorised that, if one's identity or security is secured, than the likelihood of threatening that of others is greatly reduced.

Values are also crucial to the social well-being of man. Values are fundamental beliefs that are non-negotiable. Values are the ideas, habits, customs and beliefs that are characteristic of particular social communities (Burton, 1990). Values determine how we understand the world and how we respond to it. Similar to needs, if one's values are questioned or threatened, one gets compelled to strongly defend one's values.

Since values and needs are non-negotiable, any attempt at issue transformation as part of conflict transformation process must pay due attention to the two. In order to transform issues values and needs must be extensively and dexterously handled.

This is more expedient because of the increasing occurrences of intra-state conflicts especially in many African countries mostly based on ideological conflicts, which are inextricably linked to issues of needs and values.

Rule Transformation

As the popular saying goes, "rules are made for human being and not vice versa." Among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, it is also opined that there can be no violation of rules or norms where none hitherto existed. Rule transformation as part of conflict transformation processes usually occur during intense conflict or after. Vanynen (1991) describes rule transformation as one of the measures to restructure a conflict. Rule transformation tries to redefine the norms which actors in a conflict are expected to follow in their mutual interactions. According to the structuralist approach, the rules of behaviour have been presumed to be dependent on the position of an actor in the structure and in that way on its relative power and interests. This implies that rules would only alter the behaviour of an actor in a conflict based on the interests of the actors and the relative power it possesses to achieve the interests. In recent times, scholars such as Vaymen, 1991 argue that rules can have independent impact on inter-actor relations. This is why it is opined that a significant transformation of rules can be expected to alter actor behaviour and hence create a new basis for managing the conflict. At this juncture, it becomes apposite to explain further that rule transformation also aims to change rules operation in a conflict setting or surrounding the issues in a conflict in a way that will at least meet the needs of the parties in conflict in order to reduce violent or destructive confrontation.

Structural Transformation

A major distinguishing feature of conflict transformation is the transformation of necessary structures. This is one of the fundamentals of conflict transformation that makes it different from conflict resolution and conflict management. The explicit commitment to effecting structural transformation goes a long way in transforming any conflict. This is even one area where consensus exists between conflict resolution theorists and practitioners on one hand and proponents of conflict transformation. This is because a durable peace can only be achieved with some level of structural change either political or socio-economic. This is often reinforced when the implication of not effecting the structural transformation becomes imminent. It will not be incorrect to state that one of the causes of many violent conflicts is structural imbalance, especially in plural societies. This structural imbalance could be in terms of representation in places like the army, civil service and other national or juicy (plump institutions) (Galtung, 1996). For example, the protracted and violent intra-state conflict in places like Liberia and Sierra Leone were not unconnected to structural imbalance in terms of who gets what in the highly centralised and seemingly unitary presidential systems of those countries.

Structural transformation also entails the influencing of structures officially to prevent any win – lose outcome or feeling in the post – conflict phase. The common concerns of the transformation school includes can be categorised into two. These

are the need for sustainable structural and attitudinal change within society and institutions in order to address outstanding issues connected to the conflict. The second concern is an advocacy for the erecting or revival of indigenous and locale-compliant political, social and economic mechanisms and attitudes that discourage the use of violence in resolving or handling conflicts.

Before an effective process of conflict transformation can be implemented; there must be lucid understanding of structural conflicts. As put forward by Galtung (1996), *structure conflicts* can be well understood when compared with actor conflict. According to Galtung (1996) an *actor conflict* involves an actor who is also the subject, conscious of what he wants, why he wants it, and how he feels about what is and what ought to be. Galtung (1996) argues that structural conflict is rarely recognised or articulated by individuals. This implies that for people identity and against a structural conflict, there must be a mobiliser or instigator examples of these include; Saro-Wiwa, and Martin Luther King.

Furthermore, Galtung posits that a situation of structural conflict implies structural violence, characterised by a vertical structure. This features the repression of freedom, particularly political freedom, and economic exploitation. A structural conflict is sustained through some ways. First, the prevention of consciousness formation and conscientisation. This is done by using agenda setting as a tool or manipulation of information from above. Second, by preventing mobilisation and organisation of those in the lower stratum of the society. Conscientisation and mobilisation are often repressed by the entrepreneurs or lords of structural conflict and violence because they are the processes needed for people to identify and articulate their interests in the community. This is why structural conflicts are not easily articulated because identifying or understanding them is often made difficult or impossible by the conflict entrepreneurs, sometimes the state.

Therefore, it can be deduced that a social structure or system that allows formation of consciousness, conscientisation, mobilisation and mass organisation of people from below cannot be described as fundamentally structurally violent. In order to deal with structural conflict, Galtung offers four approaches based on the non-violence school of thought. These are *confrontation*, *struggle*, *de-coupling* and *re-coupling*.

Confrontation implies selecting and addressing an issue that is central and reflective of the conflict. This approach based on Gandhi's famous Salt March (to Dandi in Gujarat, 5 April 1930) entails starting the issue clearly and expressing the desired outcome.

Struggle for overcoming repression and/or exploitation is concerned about how the struggle is prosecuted or implemented. In the Gandhi line of non-violence this must be by the non-violence methodology, that is "peace by peaceful means." The non-violence approach posits that a violent struggle against structural violence will lead to more violence especially against a violent state that uses the carrot and stick or hard-power in handling conflict. The assertion in this context is for the peace

researcher to emphasise that conflict can only be solved if all parties are convinced that they cannot force the other(s) to submit.

Decoupling empirically means getting the exploited or repressed empowered to depend less on the structure that is exploitative. The purpose is to build autonomy and the ability for self-reliance in the masses. This implies looking elsewhere for services hitherto provided by the state.

The purpose of recoupling is to reintegrate those who were hitherto alienated from the structure or restoring people's or citizens' confidence in the state. This is usually through having an horizontal structure based on human rights rather than repression, equity instead of exploitation, autonomy instead of penetration, integration instead of segmentation, solidarity instead of fragmentation and participation instead of marginalisation. While decoupling aims to erect positive structures from below, recoupling strives to build new ones that are more inclusive and less violent from the top.

Therefore, structural transformation implies profound changes in the entire structure of inter-actor relations in a conflict setting or formation. Structural transformation is very central to conflict and its transformation especially social conflicts. The profound transformation of the structure that induced the conflict ensures the durability of the peace achieved in such circumstances.

Actor Transformation

Central to conflicts either at the inter-personal or community level is human being. The way human beings view and handles any conflict determines whether it will be destructive or constructive conflicts. Based on the assertion of Galtung (1995:53) that:

“... conflicts are generally not solved... what survives after a conflict has disappeared from the agenda is conflict energy reproduced and produced by the conflict. Then energy does not die... it attaches itself to one or more conflicts, possibly also the old one”.

Therefore, the need for man, the chief agent in conflict to be empowered to transcend the conflict has informed the concept of actor transformation in conflict transformation.

One of the main factors to be transformed in any conflict is man or the actors. Either at the inter-personal or inter-group levels there are actors involved. Particularly, conflicts at the inter-group, inter-community and inter-national levels have the common features of leaders and followers or primary and shadow parties.

At the inter-personal level, a transformation of the actors or parties has direct and positive effects on the conflict. This can be achieved by strengthening actors' capacity to analyse situations and make effective decisions for themselves and to appreciate the views of others. It focuses on improving the actor's sense of

empowerment or self-determination, and their abilities for recognition or responsiveness to others. This embodies the goal of the transformative approach to a conflict, beyond just reaching an agreement about the issues that appear to divide the parties or even less desirably – having intermediaries construct a settlement to which the parties are then expected to stick to.

In addition, at the inter-personal level, the potentials or advantages of transformational mediation cannot be ignored. Succinctly put, transformational mediation entails helping individuals to wriggle out of difficult circumstances and reducing human differences in the midst of conflict. This stems from the potentials of mediation to produce two useful effects, empowerment and recognition. Simply put, empowerment means the restoration to individuals on consciousness of their own value and strength and their own ability to handle life's problems. Recognition implies the reawakening in individuals of acknowledgement and empathy for the situations, problems and plights of others.

Transformational mediation at the inter-personal level also helps actors to define problems and goals in their own terms, thus validating the importance of these goals and problems in the parties' lives. In addition, transformational mediation can help the actors in being able to personally decide how or even whether, to settle a dispute and it can help the parties marshall their own resources to address problems and achieve their own objectives. In short, the aim of transformational mediation is that it helps parties in conflicts to perceive it as opportunities for growth and transformation, not as problems that is, inherently and pathologically destructive.

The proponents of transformational mediation such as Bush and Folger also argue that transformation of society is an indirect result of individual transformation. Although they accept that this may need a long period of time to take place especially in societies susceptible to violent and intractable conflicts like Cyprus, Sri Lanka or former Yugoslavia. It is nevertheless a desirable and worthwhile venture. This is because of potential to change the society through the individual. Although there is no fixed mode of achieving societal transformation through individual or actor transformation, it must however be based on the peculiarities of each case.

At the broader level, transformation of actors should include the general promotion of natural empathy and understanding between parties particularly among leaders, opinion makers and grassroots individuals, including a sense of shared responsibility for the origins and dynamics of the conflict in the first place. Furthermore, transformation processes should be targeted at erasing completely the sense of helplessness about the conflict among participants, especially those at the local and grassroot levels of the parties and at increasing the sense of empowerment. This should be targeted at achieving some impacts on the way they conduct conflict; its resolution and the structures that hitherto gave rise to it. At this level of actor transformation of conflict, emphasis should be on achieving major and widespread improvement in peoples.

- Framing and understanding of the issues in conflict.
- Acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the other party, its claims, concerns and hopes.
- Sense of responsibility for the origins of the conflict and the interactive manner in which it has inevitably been presented.
- Consciousness of the other party's perspectives and objectives, and reasons for their being held.
- Recognition of the need for short-term mutual re-assurance and building of longer-term trust between the parties.
- Sense of competence and capability in confronting the search for solutions to the conflict and undertaking actions to prevent repetition.
- Willingness to include the interests of those not morally represented in the search for solutions, including future generations.
- Acknowledgement of the existence of past grievances, injuries and traumas plus willingness to examine these thoroughly and to search for means of healing the damage caused through a variety of means, including reconciliation and mutually acceptable process of restoration and if necessary – redistributive justice.
- Acceptance of the need for a durable, inclusive and acceptable solution to a mutual problem, which may involve major structural change.

In another context, actor transformation within the ambit of conflict, transformation can include processes of disarming, demobilising and reintegrating of ex-combatants who usually constitute the primary parties in most violent conflicts. This is very plausible particularly at the phase of reintegration.

Actors are principal factors in conflicts whether at the inter-personal or inter-group level. The attainment and sustainability of peace depends largely on the extent of the transformation that has taken place within and amongst actors in conflict. Therefore transforming actors irrespective of the intensity of the conflict has a strong bearing on the conflict and relationships. The indispensability of actor transformation in conflict transformation has been stressed. The effect on conflict and relationship has also been highlighted coupled with a description of processes involved in conflict transformation. Appleby (2001) based on Lederach's thought on transformation proposes that actor transformation should involve the grass – root and mid – level players. These comprise well – meaning and respected leaders drawn from the community especially in cases of communal conflicts. This must however be done carefully not to inadvertently worsen the conflict situation by bringing people with veiled unscrupulous interest in the conflict or shadow parties.

Personal and Group Transformation

This option considers the prospects that certain positive changes exist in the heart of every person that could be harnessed to positively transform conflicts. Basically, reciprocal respect for one another must be harnessed

to correct misrepresentations, mistrust, extreme dislike, deliberately distorted perceptions etc. It advocates the need for individuals to be willing to reach settlement with others with whom they had conflicts in time past. That is, people should be open minded about the idea of reconciliation rather than being rigid and deliberately prejudiced. Or, to state this principle more clearly, community-wide reconciliation efforts cannot result into any meaningful achievement in situations where individuals are blocking efforts to their personal transformation. It thus emphasises the need for individuals to embrace the idea of forgiveness.

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