
Creating Culture of Peace: Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

The history of mankind has been marked by the use of force, which has led many thinkers to seek answers to questions: what are conflict and violence, what is their nature, are they generated externally, by what forces, or are they a product of human aspirations to selfishly satisfy their needs. The answer to these questions is only the beginning of the search because it opens new, undoubtedly equally important questions – whether conflict and violence can be positive values and, in particular, whether conflicts can be resolved or transformed before they generate violence, and if so, what are the processes, mechanisms and strategies. Seeking answers to all these questions requires complex multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and integrating and harmonising their results into a coherent whole. Having this in mind as a limiting, but at the same time motivating research factor, the authors of this paper aim to determine with sequential analysis the way of resolving the conflict by non-violent means through the stages of its development.

Keywords: social conflicts, phases of conflicts, latent conflict, post-conflict peacebuilding, violence, causes of conflicts

Creating Culture of Peace: Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

In many contemporary considerations, there are common claims that more attention was paid to the theoretical pondering of conflicts only after the Second World War. Nominally, they are not incorrect, which is proven by the simple fact that with the increase in population and faster scientific and technological development, the number of a highly educated population and, with them, the number of scientific researchers is growing. The development of information technologies has eased access to sources relevant to specific research, which has also influenced the increase in the number of scientific papers on various research problems. Among the consequences of scientific development is also the creation, or separation, of new scientific disciplines, especially in the field of social sciences and humanities. Traces of psychology, as a science that studies the human mind, behaviour and thoughts, can be found even in the philosophical writings of ancient civilizations, confirming the view that people have always needed to study and interpret their behaviour and experiences, as well as to study other people's actions and their interpretation of them. Interest outside scientific circles has been growing steadily in recent decades thanks to the development of psychological concepts and theories of human health and behaviour, which are referred to as popular psychology. In the conditions of increasingly complex interpersonal relations, the study of interpersonal conflicts and, especially, ways to overcome them, have been the focus of interest of both the scientific and lay public.

On the other hand, scientific interest in social conflicts, which are always at the level of collectivity (social, cultural, political, economic, ethnic, religious, etc.) was also present in the early periods of scientific thought, primarily through the fields of philosophy, history and politics. The use of force in the interrelations of collectivity throughout human history has inspired many thinkers to seek answers to the question of what is at the root of conflict and violence, whether they are generated externally, by what forces, or if they are a product of selfish human pursuits, which in suitable ways they present as joint, i.e., collective. The horrors of the two

world wars and the Cold War threats of a third, potentially fatal, world war have heightened scientific interest in seeking answers to the questions of whether conflict and violence can be positive values and, in particular, whether conflicts can be resolved or transformed before they generate violence, and if yes, what are the processes, mechanisms and strategies. Such scientific interests have been articulated mostly through various forms of studying war and peace, expressed in a very diverse terminology – conflictology, paxology, polemology, irinology, but also through broader concepts such as: "philosophy of peace, peace policy, peace pedagogy, psychology of peace, theology of peace..., etc." (Sakan, 2010, p. 29).

In this paper, we aim to determine with sequential analysis the way of resolving the conflict by non-violent means through the stages of its development. By the set goal, the first part of the paper points out the importance of understanding the nature and causes of social conflicts, and the second part presents possible solutions to conflicts non-violently through the phases of their development.

Understanding the Nature and Causes of Conflict at the Collectivity Level

Having in mind the number and diversity of definitions, social conflict is one of those concepts that can have a universal lay form close to the simplest scientific terminological framework. A lay definition that would meet the requirements of universality could read – conflict is a relationship of initially opposing positions. Indeed, this definition is close to different concepts of defining, according to the scientific disciplines they belong to. However, the diversity of approaches to understanding conflicts is necessary, at least for the most transparent display of the complexity of their analysis and understanding. This was especially characteristic of scientific research from the middle of the 20th century when the interest of the scientific community in studying this social phenomenon increased sharply. Psychology adhered to the theory of decision-making and cognition, sociology started from the group and organizational structure, political science from the role and influence of power, and the science of international relations built its approach based on the concept of the state (Gutierrez, 2015, p. 1). Regardless of the starting point, there is

always a situation in which at least two parties are in opposite positions in terms of tendencies, where each of the conflicting parties sees the other side as a threat or obstacle to achieving its goal. Therefore, mutual communication and behaviour of conflict actors grow into strategies, intending to fight to impose their views as correct, through a kind of competition, negotiations or ultimatums, with a tendency to escalate to where at least one side will suffer damage (Table 1).

The way of interpreting and conceptualizing conflict can influence the political and other decisions of relevant social subjects, especially the actors themselves, thus leading to "effective repressive, pseudo-regulatory or regulatory actions" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 1). The existence of a large number of different concepts, with the inevitable coinciding of many aspects, hides the danger that the objective and subjective conditions that cause conflict could be identified as the conflict itself or, worse, conflict could be perceived as a reason for attitudes and behaviours instead of being considered as a result of differences among them.

On the one hand, subjective causes of conflicts are the attitudes and behaviours of decision-makers, while on the other are those represented by them and/or those who oppose them. Those who make demands are on one side, and the other are those who are expected to meet those demands and who are presumed to be responsible for the problems. Conflicts that tend to escalate into violence are characterized by extreme polarization of attitudes and the ultimate imposition of solutions, i.e. expressing feelings of hostility and aggression, while maximizing one's interests and diminishing opposing ones. At the same time, memories and the attitudes and behaviours derived from them can be a product of the manipulative behaviour of the other party. Therefore, they cannot be analysed without ignoring objective circumstances because practically "beneath deep hostilities and antagonism lie power imbalances and economic disparities that generate grievances" [Jeong, 2008, p. 43].

The objective causes of conflict are all those circumstances that exist independently of the current will of the actors themselves, which does not mean that their previous behaviour did not affect the emergence of such

circumstances. The prehistory of the conflict itself, that is, the historical facts that have a cause-and-effect relationship with it, is the objective cause of the widest scope. Competition and antagonistic interests with consequent rivalries and tensions are the focus of that range. They develop from social divisions, which always have two poles – social power on one side, and the status of dependence and subordination on the other. The forces of attraction of the pole of social power are stronger, so its conquest opens the way to achieve the desired goals. Therefore, in the motivational background of social conflicts, the primary goal is practically always the acquisition or exercise of power over the opponent, i.e. the establishment or conquest of central power (eGyanKosh, 2017b, p. 36).

The nature of social conflicts is determined by the context in which it arises, so it is a type of manifestation of its essential causes. Today, the most common causes of social conflicts of large collectives are recognized as political, religious-ideological, geostrategic, territorial-border, and conflicts for energy and ore exploitation (Jeftić et al., 2018, p. 24). Having in mind the complexity of social relations in modern conditions, different classifications are possible, by the very wide range of possible sources of conflict. Rivers of different aspects flow from each of these sources, resulting in different types of conflict, which Lyamouri-Bajja et al. (2012, p. 57) present in a very picturesque graphic representation (Figure 1).

Due to the complexity and number of factors influencing the emergence of social conflicts, to understand and find an effective solution to overcome them, it is necessary to have an accurate insight into the arguments of all conflicting parties, taking into account their positions in social relations. On that occasion, it is important to distinguish causes from triggers, because triggers can obscure the nature of a conflict situation and the real goals of conflicting parties. Triggers are additional factors in the occurrence of consequences, quick events that manifest themselves as immediate incentives for deciding on entering into an open confrontation. Citing triggers as reasons for escalating confrontation aims to divert attention from the real causes. The party responsible for escalating the conflict wants to build an alibi for its actions and shift responsibility to the other side. Other parties in

the conflict make this substitution of theses mostly due to specific political goals. An event that is taken as a classic example of distinguishing causes from triggers is the beginning of World War I. Although the immediate start of the war was preceded by a sharp block division and conflict between the colonial interests of the Central Powers and the Entente (Blakemore, 2019). Austria-Hungary, which started World War I with aggression against Serbia, justified it by invoking the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip on June 28, 1914, in Sarajevo. Austria-Hungary blamed the Serbian government for this assassination, although the Prime Minister of Serbia, Nikola Pašić, had previously warned Austria-Hungary that it had information about a possible assassination attempt. Almost a month later, Austria-Hungary gave Serbia an ultimatum consisting of 10 points, with a short deadline for response – 48 hours. Serbia responded positively to 9 points, but the Austro-Hungarian request for their investigation team to come to Belgrade was met with Serbia responding that that cannot be accepted since it would be in contradiction with its constitution and criminal procedure. Serbia did, however, state that in some cases results of the investigation could be communicated to the Austro-Hungarian officials. Austria-Hungary considered this answer as a rejection of the ultimatum, so on July 28, 1914, it declared war on Serbia. Although Great Britain was an opponent of Austria-Hungary in World War I and an ally of Serbia, today this country presents the trigger for the beginning of World War I (Sarajevo assassination) as the cause, while the real cause was the desire of the Central Powers for a “fairer” colonial division. (Royde-Smith, 2022).

Understanding the real reasons is achieved by analytically observing all circumstances preceding the confrontation, without restrictions in terms of the retrospective of the past. Unlike personal conflicts, which can suddenly arise and immediately escalate into the most difficult form of manifestation, social conflicts, and especially their escalation into violence, always have prehistory. Therefore, every collective conflict, like most interpersonal ones, can be broken down into phases.

The way to non-violent conflict resolution

The very word conflict is coloured with a negative meaning, but in practice, the existence of conflict does not always mean a negative sequence of events and consequences. The existence of different attitudes, even seemingly irreconcilable ones, can be a driving force for quality change (Marković, 2021, p. 3). Everyday life is filled with potential for conflict because different values, needs and interests are developing among people, especially at the level of wider social communities. According to whether these differences between people are at rest or move with a tendency to grow into turbulences, we can conditionally break down each social conflict into stages, so as to better understand the circumstances that contribute to the conflict, but also potential non-violent measures and activities that can be taken in a timely manner and thus avoid resolving violence through violence. Observing the time scale of the conflict, we notice three main stages (pre-conflict, conflicting stage and post-conflict stage), which take place in chronological order in several phases.

In the pre-conflict stage, two phases stand out: Latent Conflict and Conflict Emergence. Latent conflict or the so-called phase of “unstable peace” is always present, because although serious differences between people and human communities exist, they are at rest during that period. When individual interests are not diametrically opposed, chances are great that peaceful solutions will be found for their harmonization. The development of common ideas leads to the non-violent overcoming of differences of opinion and, in the worst-case scenario, the long-term status quo is maintained. When tensions grow due to discordance of values, needs and interests, we speak of the phase of Conflict Emergence because the circumstances indicate the insufficient readiness of the opposing parties to find compromise solutions with mutual goodwill and joint efforts. In such circumstances, the need for mediation to find nonviolent solutions to the looming conflict becomes apparent. The mediating party is expected to know in detail the situation from the Latent Conflict phase to understand the motives and arguments of all opposing parties. Only with such an understanding and impartial approach to disputable differences, the mediator can propose objectively

acceptable solutions for all actors. This, of course, does not guarantee that all actors will agree to the proposed compromise, which is why, especially in international relations, it is important to find someone who has the authority of legal force for the role of a mediator. This presumed force must be lawful and not imposed during mediation so it could have a non-violent character. If all efforts are exhausted, i.e. if the conditions for the outbreak of the conflict exceed the possibilities of peace efforts, in the pre-conflict phase it is still possible to seek compromising solutions that will stop the process of developing the conflict in the direction of violence. The very fact that conflict is in a phase characterized by milder forms of manifestation leaves room for “a cooperative conflict resolution process consisting of four general phases: (1) diagnosing the conflict, (2) identifying alternative solutions, (3) evaluating and choosing a mutually acceptable solution, and (4) committing to the decision and implementing it” (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2014, p. 268). Implementing the process of diagnosing problems and finding solutions is necessary for all other stages of the conflict if they occur, but the conditions for its implementation then become more difficult, not only because of objective circumstances that are extremely changing but also because of the aggravation of attitudes.

The conflicting stage has four phases: Conflict Escalation, (Hurting) Stalemate, De-escalation/Negotiation, and Dispute Settlement. In each of these phases, a non-violent approach to conflict resolution is possible. However, in that case, we can no longer talk about pure non-violent conflict resolution, but we can certainly talk about building a culture of peace through non-violent measures and activities. The Conflict Escalation represents an intense aggravation of the irreconcilability of attitudes and interests of the opposing parties. Entering this initial phase of the conflicting stage speaks of the absence or failure of attempts to resolve disagreements by non-violent means during the pre-conflict stage, especially its first phase, the Latent Conflict. This may be due to the untimely identification of the problem, misdiagnosis and identification of the conflict at its early stage, but also the refusal of the opposing parties to make compromises to avoid escalation of the conflict. During the escalation, there is often a stalemate, because neither side in the conflict wants to give in

and make a compromise that would lead to ending the conflict, and the side that imposes itself as a force does not have the capacity to win and then impose its interests by force. Under such circumstances, it is possible to intensify attempts to resolve the conflict by stopping the violence and starting negotiations, for which it is previously necessary to physically separate the conflicting parties. The success of such attempts leads to de-escalation and negotiations, which can significantly contribute to calming tensions and strengthening the will to move from a state of conflict to a phase of restoring peace. The final phase of the conflicting stage, the Dispute Settlement, is in fact the initial phase of restoring peace and turning the actors of the conflict toward non-violent solutions. However, their positions are no longer the same, because, during the escalation of the conflict, there are changes that put some actors in a more favourable negotiating position. In this way, non-violent conflict resolution, which inevitably comes into play at this stage of the conflict, is a kind of absurdity, because it develops on the basis built by violence. In this phase of the conflict, any non-violent solution is better than a violent one, especially bearing in mind that from that phase emerges the last stage of the conflict – post-conflict peacebuilding (PCPB). Non-violent conflict resolution at this stage is more difficult than in the previous ones, because the actors got a different identity during the conflicting stage (Bjalski, 2017, p. 63), and the very onset of the post-conflict stage can be marked by the dissatisfaction of some conflict actors due to a defeating outcome. The more the conflict escalated into violence, the more severe are the consequences, so the chances for all parties' cooperation in building peace are lower. As long as there is dissatisfaction and resistance to reconciliation, we can talk about partial post-conflict. Complete post-conflict is achieved either by subduing one side or by signing a peace agreement. This should be distinguished from the syntagma complete peace with the meaning of complete harmony of relationships, without the slightest conflict (Bjelajac, 2021, p. 14). Complete peace can be achieved if the peacebuilding strategy is adapted to the specific needs of the conflict actors. The first steps of post-conflict peacebuilding can be crucial because immediately after the end of the conflicting stage, positive expectations of the conflict actors and their readiness for change are usually

at a high level. If the benefits of peace were not fully felt in the early stages of the post-conflict stage of the conflict, people could return to the conflict due to disappointment. However, where the conflict has lasted longer, with more severe forms of force and, consequently, more severe consequences, post-conflict peacebuilding is a long-term process. The experience of the United Nations shows that the first two years after stopping a conflict are crucial, but that peacebuilding cannot be limited to that early period, because it "involves a great number and variety of stakeholders" and "it is neither a purely political, security nor developmental process, but one that must bring together security, political, economic, social and human rights elements in a coherent and integrated way" (United Nations, 2010, p. 1).

Conclusion

Given that the nature of most social situations is such that there are different interests of its actors, it is clear how pervasive conflicts are. On the other hand, experience tells us that social conflicts do not always produce harmful consequences per se. They can indicate weaknesses in the functioning of a social community or a social process, and in such cases, they must be understood as opportunities to understand different realities and solve complex problems. The existence of different attitudes, even seemingly irreconcilable ones, can be a driving force for quality change. The basic precondition for such an outcome of the conflict is unity, or at the very least harmonization of the interests of the opposing parties.

In theory, there are different approaches to breaking down conflict into stages, but practically each of them starts from the pre-conflict stage in which opposition to a certain state or potential incompatibility is developed. On the time scale of conflict, it is the period in which conditions with the potential for conflict outbreak appear. The existence of such conditions does not necessarily imply an outbreak of a conflict, but the existence of at least one of them is necessary for a conflict to actually occur. That is why this stage is ideal for developing a culture of peace, so as to prevent conflicts of interest. This requires a thorough analysis of the overall environment to be able to identify differences in interests and positions, communication disorders, as

well as unfounded fears from which resistance to change is born. Such an analysis will enable accurate diagnosis and identification of the problem, and thus facilitate the choice of the right strategy for conflict prevention in its latent phase, i.e., for non-violent conflict resolution after it escalates. In practice, it often happens that the initial disagreement develops into an open conflict and escalates into the use of force, significantly reducing the chances of non-violent conflict resolution. Therefore, the focus of the implementation of non-violent solutions is the pre-conflict and post-conflict stages. The first, with the aim of prevention, as well as precluding escalation of conflict into violent forms, and the second with the task of preventing recurrence of conflict.

The key question for resolving conflict in a non-violent way is: do all opposing parties sincerely seek a peaceful solution? When there is goodwill and no hidden interests and intentions, the opposing actors will reach a compromise and thus avoid conflict. For a non-violent solution to the conflict to have a chance of success, a relationship based on equality must be established between all actors in the conflict, and in such a relationship the basic causes that led to the conflict must be resolved. Using dialogue, these causes must be viewed through the prism of existing circumstances so a solution for their modification with the consent of all actors could be found. The dialogue must first take place on the inner plan, re-examining one's own values, attitudes and justifications for imposing one's interests, and then externally, by communicating and understanding the other side. However, in real life, in a world of very complicated relationships and increasing tendencies for domination, things are not so simple, and there should be a third party (one or more subjects) with strong arguments for the peaceful overcoming of mutual differences. The role of third parties, the so-called mediators, is either the removal of conditions that may favour the emergence of conflict or raising awareness of the parties to the conflict and leading to compromise. It is quite clear that engaging a mediator cannot yield positive results if the mediator does not have stronger authority than the parties on the edge of conflict. Chances for a long-term solution to a conflict are higher if the mediation is based on trust because that way there is no room for doubt of any opposing party that a peaceful solution is imposed and harmful. Building trust in the good

intentions of the mediating party and a sincere commitment of the other party to making a compromise is not possible if the mediating party shows signs of bias or misunderstanding of the positions and arguments of all parties to a conflict. For a non-violent resolution of conflict through mediators to be long-lasting, the role of the mediator must not go beyond the scenario in which they help the conflicting parties to objectively see the causes and consequences of the conflict, they help them formulate an agreement but do not participate in the decision-making.

Finally, non-violent conflict resolution has its full effect not only by simply ending a conflict but by reconciling the conflicting parties, because only reconciliation can provide at least minimal guarantees for further non-conflicting coexistence. This is all the more reason why the greatest importance should be given to creating a culture of peace in the Latent Conflict phase, as a continuous and ongoing process of developing a policy of rapprochement and reconciliation with the aim of building trust and avoiding escalation of conflict. Reintegration and rebuilding trust to prevent new escalations of conflict is a far more difficult and time-consuming process.

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Table 1

Definitions of Conflict – Different Concepts in the 20th Century Second Half

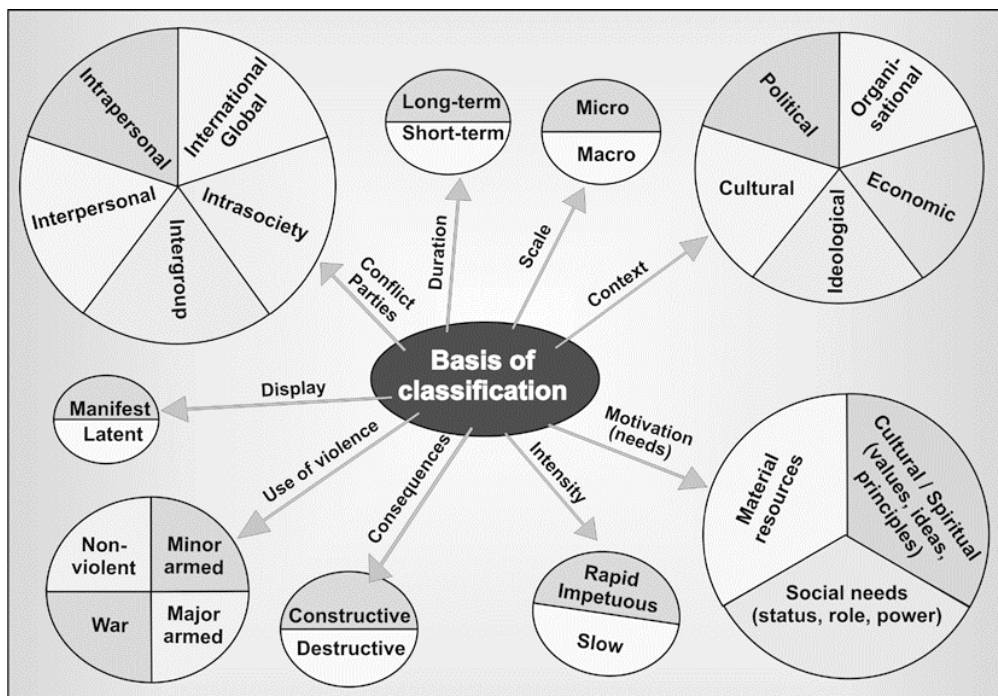
Definition	Key Terms	Author(s)
Conflict(s)...		
"... is a struggle between opponents over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources."	struggle opposition scarcity	Coser (1956)
"... are bargaining situations in which the ability of one participant to achieve his ends is dependent on the choices or decisions that the other participant makes."	strategy bargaining dependance	Schelling (1960)
"... is a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes and behaviours are constantly changing and influencing one another."	structure attitueds behaviours	Galtung (1969)
"... takes place whenever incompatible activities occur. One party is interfering, disrupting, obstructing, or in some other way making another party's actions less effective."	incompatibility interference effectiveness	Deutsch (1973)
"... is a process in which two or more parties attempt to frustrate the attainment of the other's goals. The factors underlying conflict are threefold: interdependence, differences in goals, and differences in perceptions."	goals interdependence perceptions	Wall (1985)
"... is a perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously."	interests aspirations beliefs	Pruitt & Rubin (1986)
"... are communicative interactions amongst people who are interdependent and who perceive that their interests are incompatible, inconsistent or in tension."	communication interdependence tension	Conrad (1991)
"... – understood as incompatible activities – occurs within co-operative as well as competitive contexts. Conflict parties can hold cooperative or competitive goals."	incompatibility co-operation competition	Tjosvold & Van de Vliert (1994)
"... is the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals."	interaction interdependence incompatibility	Folger, Poole, & Stutman (1993)

Definition	Key Terms	Author(s)
Conflict(s)...		
"... is an interaction between actors (individuals, groups, organisations, etc.) where at least one actor senses incompatibilities between their thinking, imagination, perception, and/or feeling, and those of the others."	interaction incompatibility impairment	Glasl (1994)

Note. Lyamouri-Bajja et al. (2012, p. 55).

Figure 1

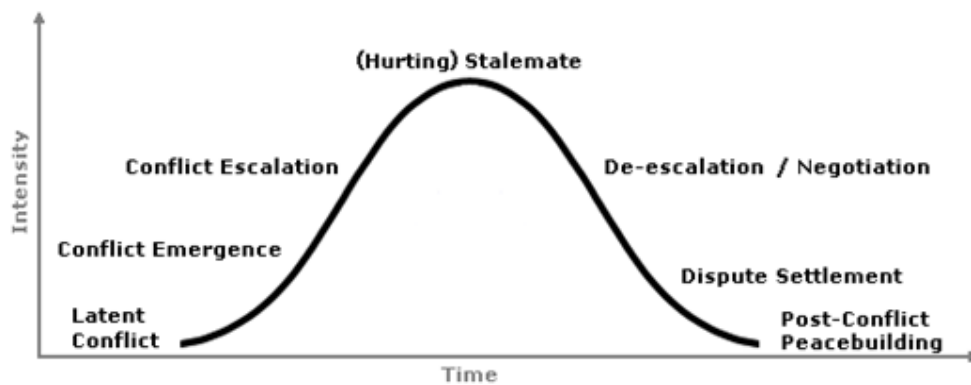
Types of Conflicts



Note. Lyamouri-Bajja et al. (2012, p. 57).

Figure 2

Phases of a Conflict



Note. By Brahm (2003).

Kreiranje kulture mira: Nenasilno rešavanje konflikata

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Sažetak

Istorija čovečanstva je obeležena upotrebom sile, što je nagnalo mnoge mislioce da tragaju za odgovorom na pitanja: šta su sukob i nasilje, kakva je njihova priroda, da li su generisani spolja, kojim silama, ili su proizvod ljudskih težnji za sebičnim zadovoljenjem sopstvenih potreba. Odgovor na ova pitanja je samo početak traganja, jer otvara nova, nesumnjivo podjednako važna pitanja – da li sukob i nasilje mogu predstavljati pozitivne vrednosti i, posebno, da li se sukobi mogu otkloniti ili transformisati pre nego što generišu nasilje, a ako mogu koji su to procesi, mehanizmi i strategije. Traženje odgovora na sva ova pitanja zahteva kompleksna multidisciplinarna i interdisciplinarna istraživanja, te integraciju i harmonizaciju njihovih rezultata u koherentnu celinu. Imajući to u vidu kao ograničavajući, ali i u isto vreme motivišući istraživački faktor, naš cilj u ovom radu je bio da putem sekvencijalnih analiza utvrdimo put rešavanja konflikata nenasilnim putem kroz etape njegovog odvijanja.

Ključne reči: društveni sukobi, faze sukoba, latentni konflikt, postkonfliktna izgradnja mira, nasilje, uzroci sukoba