

# Consilience of Knowledge for Sustained Positive Peace

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## A response to the Articles by Cordula Reimann and Hugh Miall

[Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation](http://www.berghof-handbook.net)  
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The articles by Hugh Miall and Cordula Reimann in **Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation** (2001)<sup>[i]</sup> attempt to map out a distinct theory of conflict transformation, but in the process they present the field of conflict resolution as a problem-solving theory (herein after, referred individually as 'Article 1' and 'Article 2', and collectively as 'the Articles'). Conflict resolution is represented in the Articles by singularity of strategy, target group and as envisaging an end point to conflicts, when parties arrive at a 'positive sum outcome' (Miall, 2001:3; Reimann, 2001:13). This leads to a claim that conflict resolution is a relatively simplistic approach to contemporary conflicts (Miall, 2001:1), hence the Articles consider and develop conflict transformation as a more realistic approach to protracted violent conflict situations.

This paper has two main aims; one, to provide an evaluation of the Articles and two, to raise the possibility of *consilience* at the level of knowledge, as the mainspring of ideas for *concerted* efforts to the problem of how *sustained positive peace* may be achieved in cases of protracted violent conflicts? "*Consilience*," a term coined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, refers to the uniting or integration of knowledge.<sup>[ii]</sup> At the outset, this paper evaluates the assessment of conflict settlement in Article 2, to highlight the contrast between the mainstream view and Article 2. Following this, the definition of conflict resolution proposed in Article 2 is appraised— to demonstrate dimensions and aims of conflict resolution which are reflected in the definition, yet not in the Articles.

This paper then inquires into the original intentions of the architects of the problem-solving approach, the philosophy and background to their research agenda. In essence, their approach was very much a response to "power politics"— the dominant paradigm at that time (in the 60s). More importantly, the originators of the problem-solving approach do not claim their approach and its techniques as defining the field of conflict resolution.

There is no singular comprehensive theory in conflict resolution. As Galtung explains, within conflict resolution the multiplicity of approaches are only 'more or less radical' (1976, Vol. II: 291), meaning how fundamental the envisaged changes to the actors and conflict system(s) in the resolution process is really dependant on the researcher/theorist. But the Articles neglect to point out the diversity of approaches to conflict resolution instead conflict resolution is discussed primarily as a problem-solving theory.

Following an analysis of the different approaches to conflict resolution, this paper argues that the distinctions made in the Articles between conflict resolution and conflict transformation are untenable, leading us to inquire into the real distinction between both concepts.

The concluding section of this paper is based on the observation that more and more peace research work is enlightened, as the nature of the problem posed is *how to achieve a state of sustained positive-peace?* But, though we acknowledge the *complementarity* of the conflict settlement, conflict resolution and conflict transformation approaches, conditioned thinking continues to manifest in our holding on to mutual *exclusivity* of the efforts under the aforementioned approaches in dealing with the problem of protracted and violent conflicts.

*Consilience* of knowledge in the field is proposed. Knowledge transcends rigid forms and structures and at this level the paper considers the possibility of consilience of the approaches to protracted violent conflicts. Consilience seems the natural way forward if a majority of researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies consider the problem as how a sustained positive peace is possible? In this regard, I echo the call by Galtung that we 'should not be steered by traditional borderlines....often randomly drawn and as dysfunctional as the borderlines drawn by the colonial powers on the map of Africa, impeding rather than facilitating insights (1976, p 246).

### **The assessment of conflict settlement**

Article 2 states conflict settlement as referring to 'all outcome-oriented strategies for achieving *sustainable win-win* solutions and/or putting as end to 'direct violence', without necessarily addressing the underlying conflict causes (my emphasis. 2001:10). Mainstream approach to conflict settlement however presents a different view—a sustainable win-win outcome is not a consideration in the efforts underlying a conflict settlement approach.

Rubin and Rubin point out that conflict settlement is aimed at achieving an 'outcome in which the overt conflict has been ended' (1991:159). In fact, conflict settlement views 'getting Iran and Iraq, Contra and Sandinista, Israeli and Palestinian to lay down their weapons—even temporarily—is a considerable accomplishment, even in the absence of anything more lasting' (Rubin and Rubin, 1991:161). Dixon (1996) confirms this view of conflict settlement by excluding sustainability as criteria for successful conflict management strategies in promoting settlements. He justifies the exclusion by quoting Miall— 'one could never be sure that the most recent settlement was the last' (1996: 657). Indeed in Article 1, Miall points out that conflict settlement approach to conflict management does not place importance in the reaching of win-win agreement but reflects 'the use of power and resources by powerful actors to bring pressure on Parties to settle' (2001:3).

A more controversial approach to conflict settlement advocates the ending of ethnic and inter-communal conflicts be brought about 'by establishing a balance of relative strength that makes it unprofitable for either side to revise the territorial settlement' (Kaufmann, 1996:161). International intervention in the form of economic sanctions, military aid and in extreme cases, direct military intervention is aimed at orchestrating a symmetry in military capabilities or balance of power between the Parties, such that partitions of the state along ethnic lines is made possible (Kaufmann, 1996).

The mainstream approach to conflict settlement, however, is more along the view suggested by Zartman. Settlements are made during the condition of mutually hurting stalemate when the situation necessitates the parties to seek a way out (Zartman, 1993:24). Such settlements, Zartman admits are really in the nature of truces; a trial-and-error affair, parties waiting to see how it works (1993: 29 and 30). He describes the situation as one of where '*the arms of the rebellion are buried, out of reach under the trial regime, but ready to be exhumed when necessary again*' (my emphasis. 1993: 30).

It appears that the assessment of conflict settlement as 'strategies for achieving sustainable win-win outcome' in Article 2 is in contrariety with the established view in the field. Fisher and Ury's (1991) work used in Article 2 to explain the 'case of conflict settlement' is a *step-by-step guide* to using the method of *principled negotiation*. If anything it has greater affinity to the problem-solving method (see their chapter on 'inventing options for mutual gain', especially pages 60-63 and 70).

## Evaluating the definition of Conflict Resolution

Article 2 states conflict resolution as 'all process-orientated activities that aim to address the *underlying causes* of direct, cultural and structural violence' (my emphasis. 2001:12). Several questions arise about the definition. Firstly, what is meant when conflict resolution is said to aim at the underlying causes of direct violence? Does it mean that stopping direct violence *per se* is not within the consideration of conflict resolution? If physical violence is being perpetrated, I would argue that priority under any approach, be it conflict settlement, conflict resolution or conflict transformation would be to stop the violence.

The difference, however, between conflict settlement and an approach which *aims to address the underlying causes of direct violence*, would be in terms of *how* the peacekeeping activities (sometimes termed as 'peace enforcement') are operationalised. Within traditional conflict settlement mentality, the Powerful Intervener imposes rules as seen fit to address the situation. Under the conflict resolution approach, the aim of *addressing underlying causes* as stated in Article 2 implicates the overt operation to consider at the very least how the rules look from the perspective of those experiencing and participating in the conflict; for any effective effort in addressing the *underlying cause* of direct violence involves *acceptability* of the operation by the communities in conflict (obviously the immediate threats to lives must be secured against).

The definition of conflict resolution by Reimann in Article 2 reveals yet another dimension to direct violence. Montville, considers it as part of conflict resolution process to pay attention to the *psychological* impact of direct violence, such as the sense of victimhood felt on both sides at the societal level (Montville, 1993). However, Article 2 limits the approach of conflict resolution as 'non-official and non-coercive strategies such as facilitation/consultation (problem-solving workshops/round tables)' at Track II level of actors (academics and professionals) and posits *trauma work* as part of Track III (grass-root) conflict transformation strategy (Reimann, Box 2, 2001:13). But Montville's writing on conflict resolution reveals that trauma work is not exclusive to conflict transformation.

Addressing the causes of cultural violence denotes changes to the belief/value system that vindicates the direct and structural violence. In that sense, if addressing cultural violence is part of the aim of conflict resolution, as suggested in Article 2, surely this signifies strategies for engaging at the level of the minds of the mass, not just amongst the few attending problem-solving workshops.

Addressing structural violence as an aim of conflict resolution means breaking down the structures of exploitation, marginalisation and fragmentation of people in society. It is impossible to do away with structural violence as an over-night operation at the level of the leaders of the demand-groups. It is unlikely to happen with mere changes to institutions and/or change of mind of a few top or mid-range leaders— addressing structural violence requires *conscientisation* and empowerment of the masses, on both sides of the conflict.

Article 2 places conflict resolution approach singularly within Burton's work, claiming that it is illustrative of the field of conflict resolution (Reimann, 2001:12). In this regard, I admit that a disproportionate attention has been focused on Burton's approach of problem-solving facilitative type of intervention by third-parties; in fact some books do give an impression of the problem-solving approach being the entire field of conflict resolution. But, just by a prima facie examination of the definition of conflict resolution, as stated in Article 2, reveals richer dimensions to the field of conflict resolution, far more than attributed in the Articles.

Next, we shall consider the intentions of the designers of the problem-solving approach.

### **The problem-solving approach to conflict resolution**

The problem-solving approach was proposed by Burton as an alternative political tool to 'coercion or authoritative approach' (1990:4). His is a response to traditional methods of conflict management—the use of coercion, which in his view was failing in society and leading to further escalation of conflicts and violence. Let us examine his research purpose. He says 'this study seeks to examine...whether there is an alternative or a supplement to, the prevailing power consensus in the study of conflict, its resolution and prevention' (1990:6).

Burton reflects on different models of decision-making (noted by Reimann, 2001: 12) and by this, he argues that the 'power-oriented processes' of decision-making has failed to assist society in addressing its problems and conflicts (1990:48). It is evident that Burton situates the problem-solving approach within a decision-making context and as such cannot be considered as illustrative of the field of conflict resolution. His design is of a method which in his words would allow 'decision making processes that do not prejudice or limit outcomes in advance of deep exploration...including the

human dimension [needs],...instead of a unilateral reactive power model of decision-making (1990:181-182).

To summarise the basic point about the problem-solving approach, I refer to a renowned thinker in the field, Herbert Kelman:

'problem-solving workshop and similar approaches, from the researcher's side provides for analysis at the micro-level on how to break-through mirror images and self-fulfilling prophecies and resistance to positive information of the Other, as well as discover how interpenetration of perspectives, mutual assurances and joint initiatives at generating ideas for addressing the conflict may be achieved. *All this with the agenda that the micro-level analysis would allow some lever for understanding and predicting how and when change at the macro-level is likely to occur and what kind of change it is likely to be and for creating conditions that promotes change in the direction of conflict resolution.*' (my emphasis. 1997:232-233)

The Articles seem to consider the problem-solving approach as the paradigm of conflict resolution, but those working in that area seek to differ. Kelman places a caveat to his discussion of the approach—in his view it is not 'a comprehensive alternative theory' but rather to complement *other approaches to conflict resolution* (my emphasis. 1997:192; see also Azar, 1990:26).

Reimann in Article 2, states the minimum requirement of success under conflict resolution approach to conflict management would be an outcome that satisfies the needs of both parties (2001:13). The author, in this way posits conflict resolution as addressing needs *first and then* starting to address structural and cultural violence (Box 2, 2001:13). But Azar points out that the deprivation of needs is often intertwined with structural violence, be it of the state and/or international structures (1990: 9-12). It is not possible as suggested in Article 2 to separately address the structures that marginalise and exploit and the needs of the people; genuine satisfaction of needs requires *concomitant* addressing of structural and cultural violence(s).

The Articles present the reaching of *mutual agreement* on needs as conclusion of the conflict resolution process. Do conflict resolution theorists consider it possible to arrive at a single agreement that resolves all the differences of needs between the demand-groups? Conflict resolution theorists

are not naive as to dissent that a single agreement is capable of dealing with violent and protracted conflicts or to assert that the reaching of an agreement is the end of the conflict resolution process.

Agreement at the leadership level is indispensable, but a single agreement (even using the problem-solving method) will not be able to address the range and diversity of needs of the groups in the conflict, nor is it likely to have any significant effect on structural violence. Agreement(s) may act as catalyst to bring about changes in terms of cessation of physical violence (assuming the leadership is effective, i.e. having sufficient influence of the demand-group's behaviour), and changes in institutional structures. However, the mere fact that old structures are dismantled does not mean that structural violence ceases. Even if new institutions are formed, attitudes and beliefs take longer to change and catch-up. This implies that the process of conflict resolution continues on all levels of actors of both demand-groups even after agreements and the formation of new structures/institutions (refer to later discussion on 'associative conflict resolution;' see also, Van der Merwe's example of the South African local government and housing problem, 1993).

### **Muddling through conflict resolution**

Sometimes confusion reigns in the usage of the term 'conflict resolution.' As an example I refer to Vayrynen's article entitled *To Settle or to Transform? Perspective on the Resolution of National and International Conflicts*— which seems to suggest that there are two approaches to the resolution of conflicts— one, a settlement approach and the other, a transformation approach. He starts by stating 'the resolution of violent conflicts is usually considered a politically desirable objective. It saves lives, prevents the internal disorganization...*Conflict resolution is a path to peace, at least to negative peace*...In this approach, conflict resolution becomes an antinomy of political violence' (my emphasis. 1991:1). Is Vayrynen considering 'conflict resolution' or is he musing on 'conflict settlement'?

Then Vayrynen proceeds to the '*notion of conflict resolution as a problem solving theory*' which 'encourages the development of techniques by which the problems can be *abolished*' (my emphasis. 1991:1). It has been considered above, that those working in the field of problem-solving do not claim it to be a comprehensive theory of conflict resolution to *abolish* problems. Vayrynen continues to state that the problem-solving approach 'often considers the prevailing power relations and institutions given, thus shunning the alteration of their basic nature. In that sense it is nonstructural and a historical' (1991:2). This view is opposed to the description of the problem-solving approach by

Montville (1993); he notes 'the first substantive stage of the workshop is taking a history of the conflict...The purpose of the walk through history is to elicit specific grievances and wounds of the groups or nations in the conflict' (1993:115). Furthermore, the aim of conflict resolution is not the preservation of status quo as suggested by Vayrynen but includes addressing structural violence.

### **Conflict resolution and conflict transformation – two sides of the same coin?**

Is conflict resolution a problem-solving theory? Azar points out that the problem-solving approach is not the 'panacea in the resolution of conflicts' but merely a tool/method in dealing with the incompatibilities of needs that have become manifest through the process of conscientization in the conflict (1990:26). The problem-solving approach is concerned with the needs dimension in a conflict; but there are other approaches to conflict resolution with *heterogeneity of envisioned future states*—as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, some are "more radical than others". As an example, let us consider Galtung's twelve (12) approaches to conflict resolution <sup>[iii]</sup> (1996:116. Also refer to Galtung, 1976, Vol 2:292)

Firstly, according to Galtung 'it is possible to resolve an incompatibility without really touching the actors or their relations, even without really touching the conflict formation.' This approach according to Galtung is similar 'to a new formula for dividing the existing cake' (Galtung, 1996:114). The second approach of conflict resolution is *compromise*; the third is *withdrawal*. The next approach is by *deepening* the scope of interaction between the parties— by increasing the number of conflicts, and in this way Galtung submits the 'trading of one conflict for another' as a means of resolution. In all the aforementioned approaches, the actor-system remains preserved (1976, Vol 2: 291). But conflict may also be resolved by changes to the actor-system, by *multilateralisation*— more actors 'establishing cycles of conflicts that can be cancelled off against each other' (Galtung, 1976, Vol 2:292; 1996:114). Conflicts may be resolved also by *integration* of actors and harmonization of goals (interest and values), or obversely, by disintegration or *decoupling* of the competing Parties in the conflict.

What is the meaning of conflict resolution in these approaches? It would seem that in the above approaches, conflict resolution has a limited meaning, namely resolving the 'incompatibility of goals'



(Galtung, 1996:116). Galtung then brings in Gandhi, the 'leading theoretician and practitioner of nonviolence' into his discourse and considers what would be Gandhi's choice of approach to conflict resolution (1996:115). His view is— Gandhi would reject withdrawal as this 'runs counter to his[Gandhi's] injunction'—it is escaping from the conflict (115). Galtung also believes that Gandhi would reject the deepening or multilateralisation approach to conflict resolution, as 'such approaches only establish market for trading incompatibilities' and does not address structural violence (1996:115).

We also discover that the approaches mentioned above develop a different meaning as per the aim or envisioned future-state in the conflict resolution process. For example, de-coupling in the process of conflict resolution might be necessary; this may sound consonant with Kaufmann's suggestion of partitioning in cases of ethnic conflicts, but the different of a Gandhian approach is in the Actor's *perspective and aims* of de-coupling. De-coupling is taken as means of destroying structural violence; the oppressor is no longer able to oppress.

The crucial point in the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution is the perspective that both the oppressed and *the oppressor* are considered as liberated. Further, in true Gandhian approach the process of resolution continues, as Galtung points out 'decoupling is never a lasting solution. Integration, union, fusion is the goal' (1996:117). The Gandhian view of conflict resolution is far more complex, extended in time and the envisioned future state is more enlightened than the limiting discussion of conflict resolution in the Articles as a theory on achieving a 'win-win' outcome by the problem-solving approach.

In the opinion of Galtung all of the approaches to conflict resolution mentioned in his example involve real conflict *transformation!* (1996:115). In fact his discourse on the approaches to conflict resolution is under the sub-titled "*Conflict Theory, Conflict Transformation – and Gandhi*. "What is conflict transformation? In my view, conflict transformation is a *constant*— in the formation(s) of a conflict, from moment-to-moment (or from week-to-week/months/life-times) and it may be unintentional or intentional, for example, the conscientisation and mobilisation of people is a formation in the process of manifestation of a conflict and in the same breath it is a *trans-formation*, from the previous state (formation) to the present state (formation), from a previous moment to the present moment. In the "de-formation" of conflicts, conflict transformation can be a constructive process or a destructive

process— for example even when solutions are imposed or compromises are made, it involves transformation.

Galtung recognises the need to resolve the particular contradictions that have become manifest in a conflict and this may happen through *transcendence* (1996: 95-98). There is an outcome— *sui generis*, which *transcends* the underlying contradictions or the *casus belli*. In the same breath as the conflict is transcended, it involves some *trans-formation* to the conflict-system. But this does not prevent future contradictions from arising in the relationship, and for this reason, the Articles suggest that the weakness of conflict resolution is that it seeks *outcomes*, an end-point to conflicts when it is not possible to remain frozen in a state of ‘transcendence’; society and conflicts are subjected to the *constant* of change (process). There may be those who want to hold on to the “state of transcendence” as long as they can, whilst others want new formations.

Though some conflict resolution theorist discuss conflict resolution as a narrow outcome-oriented concept, there are others, more radical in their thinking. Galtung argues that a more fundamental consideration is how a society approaches or handles changes of *formations*; especially, when the formation change is directed towards “society” itself. Galtung suggests that the goal of conflict resolution should therefore be to establish *infrastructures* for constructive conflict handling (1976, Vol II). This goal of conflict resolution is indistinguishable to the goal of conflict transformation as defined in the Articles (see next section).

Capra in *‘The Turning Point’* discusses ‘a new vision of reality’, that being a *systems* view— where the framework is the *non-linear* interrelatedness and interdependence of all parts of the system, from the individual(s) to families, tribes, societies, nations and the world (1982, Chapter 9). Hauss employs systems theory as underlying his approach to conflict resolution (2001:36). A conflict resolution approach based on systems theory goes beyond horizontal interaction between leaders; it pays attention to vertical and diagonal interactions and pressures between and within groups in conflict, within a global system. In that spirit, Fergal Cochrane and Seamus Dunn’s “People Power” investigates the role/influence of community and voluntary organisations on the peace process in Northern Ireland (2002; see also, Ryan, 1995:256—257; and, Azar on *process-promoting* workshop, where the intention is to empower the base (community) in order that they may exert influence on the leaders, 1990:28).

System theory is process oriented and ecological in perspective. In that sense, when applied to conflict resolution, it denotes consideration of future implications for the system as part of the design of present strategy. And in terms of *continuity*, the achieved state(s) of resolution is regarded as evolutionary. In short, there is no singularity of approach to conflict resolution or to conflict transformation as analysed in the Articles; but what we can actually observe is that our approaches to conflict situations are increasingly *enlightened*. Thinkers in the field, whether conflict resolution theorists or advocates of conflict transformation recognise the importance of establishing infrastructures within society for constructive conflict handling, the feature of a progressive society.

### **Distinction between conflict resolution and conflict transformation— what the Articles say**

In this section, I point out how conflict transformation theorists seek to distinguish conflict transformation from conflict resolution. Miall says at the start of Article 1 that conflict transformation is best considered as a re-conceptualisation of the field (2001:1). But what is the need for the re-conceptualisation of conflict transformation as a distinct approach from conflict resolution? In Miall's view, the need is two-fold, (I) the nature of contemporary conflicts, and (II) the simplicity of core theories of conflict resolution (2001:1).

Advocates of conflict transformation argue that conflict resolution is ill-advised to the reality of protracted violent conflicts which 'require more than reframing of positions and identification of win-win outcomes' (Miall, 2001:3). It is better to think in terms of transforming the 'relationships, interests, discourses and if necessary the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflicts' (Miall, 2001:3). The *goal* of conflict transformation is therefore not about resolving any particular conflict but transforming the way people deal with their conflict, i.e. that people may approach conflicts in a positive way (Miall, 2001:3).

There is a danger to the transformative zeal, where resolution is regarded as antithesis and transformation, as the synthesis. A conflict transformation view which considers the reaching of agreement as secondary 'to addressing the overall conflict process' (Rupensinghe, 1995:76) may retard attempts to resolve the political aspirations of the different groups in the conflict. Political agreement in itself may act as a catalyst for crucial changes to occur in other dimensions of the conflict.

With regards to the claim of crucial changes to the nature of contemporary conflict that 'calls for such a re-conceptualisation' (Miall in Article 1, 2001:1), in my opinion, protracted, asymmetrical, violent conflicts with *ex-situ* linkages are not so recent a phenomena. As early as the 1970s' Azar had identified conflicts of such nature, including the regional/international dimension; leading him to advocate for changes in our approach to dealing with such conflicts.

As for the simplicity of conflict resolution, this is due to the narrow representation of the field in the Articles. Admittedly, some conflict resolution writers may speak in terms of "win-win", but there are other conflict resolution theorists who reject such a view. For example, Hauss employs the "win-win outcome" terminology to define an outcome which satisfies all (2001:40); but Galtung considers such jargon as mechanistic. I believe the point is made sufficiently by Galtung: 'The terminology alienates; it does not evoke images of life-and-death concerns, nor of the depth of involvement. Rather, parlor-game cleverness is elevated as metaphor for existential concerns...' (1996: 96).

Article 1 provides an inaccurate verdict on conflict resolution that it is limited to the search of win-win outcomes (Miall, 2001:3). But as Kelman submits: '*There is no presumption, of course, that conflicts can ever be totally or permanently resolved; conflict resolution is a gradual process conducive to structural and attitude change, to reconciliation, to the development of a new relationship mindful of interdependence*' (Kelman, 1996 as quoted in Hauss, 2001:41).

It also appears that the *goal* of conflict transformation as advanced in the Articles— a change to the way conflicts are handled in society, that is from violent to constructive conflict handling and to increase the capacity of the society in handling conflicts in a peaceful manner is *not dissimilar* to the vision of conflict resolution as advanced by Galtung. For Galtung, the problem posed is 'how a self-supporting conflict resolution could be found?' (1976, Vol II: 297).

Galtung points out that even when a set of contradictions may have been resolved, that does not eliminate future contradictions arising in the relationship and for this reason he weighs an *associative approach to conflict resolution*. An associative approach to conflict resolution establishes *infrastructures* for positive conflict handling. The infrastructures are established in the society to act as a 'reservoir for the system to draw upon, just as the healthy body has the ability to generate its own antibodies and does not need ad hoc administration of medicine' (1976, Vol II: 298). Establishing equitable relationship, entropy and symbiosis are some of the infrastructures suggested by Galtung as

negation of antihuman conditions of exploitation, elitism and isolation (299). Also, mechanisms of conflict resolution need to be built into new arrangements/structures and relationships, for example institutionalising problem-solving mode of decision-making (1976, Vol. II:301).

Another crucial in Reimann's distinction between conflict transformation and conflict resolution is the claim that Burton in his mind was concerned primarily with *horizontal* relationships i.e. between parties of equal status (2001:13). The author claims that 'the conflict resolution approach, however, missed opportunity to further develop and build vertical relationships. Relationships which develop and build dialogue between actors of unequal states...This opportunity is taken up by the conflict transformation approach' (2001:13-14).The aforesaid view is however contrary to a creative application of Burton's problem-solving method.

In Burton's view 'the traditional decision-making process, being power-oriented, was commands coming down from the apex of the decision making pyramid that comprises a small elite to the mass of those who have the obligation to obey' (1990:178).Burton's problem-solving approach on the other hand was designed to remove the 'abuse of power' in vertical interaction between leaders and grass-root or when parties involved in the conflict are of asymmetrical power. Furthermore a systems approach to conflict resolution is based on non-linear, multi-levelled, interdependent relationships.

Miall, lays out five types of "*transformers*" of conflicts— context, structure, actor, issue and personal/elite (Article 1, 2001: 12). An example of a *contextual transformer* given by the aforementioned is the changes to the rules of diamond trade which may have an impact on conflicts in Sierra Leone and Angola.As a *structural transformation*, he point to the Black Consciousness Movement in the conscientisation of people in township areas in South Africa during the Apartheid regime.In terms of *Actor transformation* he notes the decision of leaders to initiate a peace process (2001:11-14). Conflict transformation is envisaged as an 'open-ended' process (Reimann, 2001:17, Rupensinghe, 1995:76).

The examples of "transformers" given by Miall in Article 1 beg the questions of what was the purpose of those "transformers"? The Black Consciousness Movement mobilisation of people envisioned an end to the repressive Apartheid Regime and a future state of democratic rule; the World Diamond Council's prohibition on the trade in conflict diamonds was aimed at removing the resource that helped perpetuated the armed conflicts of Angola and Sierra Leone such that these types of conflict may be

resolved. The point is, the “transformers” in a conflict as identified by Miall are undertaken so far as Actors see the primary purpose of their Actions as contributing to the *ending* of particular sufferings—direct, cultural and structural violence(s), not as Actions in an “open-ended transformation process”. For Actors in their various capacities in a conflict situation *need and do* create envisioned future states as formations to be actualised. It is the envisioned future state, as Viktor Frankl says, supplies the “*why*” that can bear any “*how*” (1976:99 and 106).

### **Consilience of Knowledge for *Sustained Positive Peace***

The Articles keep in line with existing thinking— in terms of mutual exclusivity of third-party strategies, though *complementarity* and *multi-track* is recognised. Article 2 draws distinction between Track I as conflict settlement strategies such as “power mediation,” Track II as all “non-official and non-coercive strategies” such as facilitation or consultation and Track III strategies as “trauma work, capacity building and humanitarian help” (see Box 2, 2001). It is pointed out in Article 2 that Track I activities can be supported by Track II, in some cases taking the lead in unlocking Track I deadlock (the example given is the Norwegian back-channel leading to the Oslo accord between PLO and the Israeli government, Reimann, 2001:5).

Is it not possible to transcend this exclusivity, the rigid pigeonholing of strategies as *either* track I, II or III? Though facilitation and power mediation are employed in certain *forms*, crucially, they are based on more fundamental *knowledge*, beyond form and structure. Knowledge is formless and can be united— consilience occurs at this level. I must admit that the *rediscovery* of thinking in terms of consilience requires further consideration and *de-conditioning*. But to suggest this possibility, is one purpose of this paper.

I have attempted to provide a possible example. At the level of the leadership, it is possible to induce compliance using power mediation. But, the Actor is able to justify the action to external forces and therefore unlikely to cognitively assimilate the action to the Self. If we are faced with a situation where, by her/him Self the leader is unlikely to undertake conciliatory de-escalation, then external pressure becomes necessary. In the traditional ways of thinking, there will be those who would favour the use of rewards or threats, and there will be those opposed, with their suggestion of facilitation, through ‘powerless’ third-party. The powerless third party may fail, leading to the use of force to secure compliance.

If we consider the problem at the realm of knowledge, we know (I) the actor is unwilling to de-escalate, (II) that a reward may induce compliance (knowledge from the approach of power mediation), but (III) that pressure may cause the negation of volition and reduce the chances of internalisation of the behavioural compliance (knowledge from the approach of facilitation). The consideration of the problem is made outside of rigid forms (formless), producing ideas, which could then result in new strategies (form) that go beyond the exclusivity of conflict settlement, resolution and transformation pigeonholes. Pressure, is not rejected but may be availed innovatively to cause the Actor to initiate de-escalatory action, but not sufficient enough for the negation of responsibility for the Action.

However, the example given is far from perfect, but at the very least I hope it would initiate a consideration of consilience at the level of knowledge in the field. The application and theorising of different strategies to date have produced knowledge— which need not continue to be applied in exclusive manner. We could start to consider how these knowledge may be fused to sufficiently produce new strategies to help us in dealing with conflicts in society.

As a step in the direction of consilience, let us consider if there is an unbridgeable difference between conflict resolution and conflict transformation? In my opinion, if there is a difference, it lies only in our *perspective*. Kelman views 'conflict resolution efforts must be geared towards discovering the possibilities for *change*, identifying the conditions for *change*, and overcoming the resistance to *change*' (my emphasis. 1997:233). Miall uses the same language—the language of 'change' to describe "transformers" of conflict i.e. changes of goals, changes of heart, change in power structure and change in the international environment (2001:12). These changes in conflict are, however, largely the result of human effort with a specific meaning to their effort— that being the redressal of *sufferings*.

Groups-in-conflict need and create meaning for their actions, which is provided by seeking an envisioned future state beyond that of the existing conflict formation. Some may think that the formation is 'permanent' whereas a more enlightened way would consider all formations as a temporary place of rest/equilibrium; though the span of 'temporariness' could be lifetimes. Consider Lao Tzu reflections:

## **All Things Pass**

*All things pass*

*A sunrise does not last all morning*

*A cloudburst does not last all day*

*Nor a sunset all night*

*All things pass*

*What always changed?*

*Earth...sky...thunder*

*Mountain...water*

*Wind...fire...lake*

*These change*

*And if these do not last*

*Do man's visions last?*

*Do man's illusions?*

(Lao Tzu, 6 B.C.)

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## **Notes**

<sup>[i]</sup> Miall, H. (2001), Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimension Task; Reimann, C. (2001), Towards Conflict Transformation: Assessing the State-of-the-Art in Conflict Management— Reflections from a Theoretical Perspective in **Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation** at <http://www.berghof-center.org/handbook/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Whewell, W. coined the term *consilience*, see— Walls, L.D., *Seeing New Worlds*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

<sup>i [ii]</sup> The reader is referred to Galtung's conflict triangle. One point to note about the conflict triangle is its simplification of conflict formation. However Galtung develops his arguments further from this simplified diagram; for example, he considers how *accumulated negative experiences* increases the hostility of emotions and cognition towards the Other side, thereby feeding the intractability of the conflict (1996:72). Miall's inclusion of 'memories' on the attitude side of the conflict triangle in Article 1 is comparable to Galtung's 'accumulated negative experiences' (Miall, 2001:11).

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### **About the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management**

*The Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management initiates, supports and monitors projects and institutions which aim to transform ethno-political conflicts. Explicit stress is laid on the constructive aspect in order to highlight the fact that conflicts are an important and necessary element of social change, and that the challenge therefore lies not simply in containing them but in working through them constructively. The processes of change must therefore be guided by the principles of reducing violence and promoting social justice. The Berghof Center aims, firstly, to explore constructive procedures and models for dealing with these conflicts, and, secondly, to support these processes in practice. Its work thus focusses on practically oriented social research and on supporting local peace initiatives. At the core of the Center's work lie the contributions made by civil society, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, peace work, and human rights activities, but the Center also studies the approaches adopted by semi-governmental agencies and national/international organisations in order to identify ways of linking in with their work as well.*

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