# Peace Work by Civil Actors

# in Post-Communist Societies

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Since the momentous events of 1989/90, the pattern of conflict in Europe has changed for good. Inevitably, the forms, institutions, and mechanisms for dealing with conflicts have also changed, although constructive intervention is still far outpaced by the dynamics of conflict. The concepts of peace policy and peace work have had new life breathed into them. One feature that has assumed especial importance is the debate about the *actors* involved in these domains: How can the role of multilateral actors in preventive diplomacy, in intervention in acute conflicts, and in the consolidation of peace be strengthened? Does the ethnopolitical character of the conflicts between majorities and minorities in the crisis regions of Europe not necessitate the creation of a new type of multi-ethnic state — one that radically calls into question the nation-state concept that has prevailed up to now? Should not actors at the social level be involved in putting peace policy into practice, as well as those at the state governmental level? In what capacities can internal and external actors aid the process of constructive conflict management? How important are human-rights groups, 'fact-finding' and crisis-intervention missions, humanitarian organizations, non-violent campaigns, and intervenors from outside?

The following paper addresses the whole gamut of peace tasks and roles confronting civil actors in the post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We work on the assumption that the current ethnopolitical movements and conflicts are an expression of a massive change in the pace of development and of a drastic redistribution of opportunities and

chances to participate. For this process of 'civilization' to take place, many different actors and forces—political and social, party and non-party, domestic and external — must be involved. Given the meagre resources usually available, 'the more the better' is not good counsel here. A preferable course is to identify *strategic priorities and alliances* for peace work in societies undergoing transformation.

The *civil* actors highlighted here are all those persons and groups of persons working from outside the governmental sphere for the nonviolent conduct and resolution of ethnopolitical conflicts. In contrast to what is implied in the usual distinction between *state* and *societal* areas of operation, the *civil* area in this sense can also include the staff of state or semi-state institutions — for example, members of parliament or those working in research and educational establishments, in state enterprises, and in regional and local authorities. Because of the political wrangling over privatization and the market economy, the continuing influence of the nomenclatura networks, and the infiltration of a number of administrative spheres and economic sectors by mafia-like groups, the distinction between state and societal structures will continue to be a blurred one for a long time to come in many post-communist societies. Precisely because of this, those individuals working for democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and non-military conflict resolution from within state structures merit special attention.

In 1996, in the light of experience with the implementation of the Dayton Accord in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the significance of civil actors began to be discussed more widely. The attempt by governments and multilateral institutions to impose the precarious combination of a Serb-Croat-Muslim condominium with mono- and bi-ethnic governmental structures can only succeed if civil groups lend it legitimacy. But what about the relationship between those who, because of the violence and injustice they have suffered, see the best solution as lying in autonomy, self-determination, and separation, and those who back the idea of reconciliation and the creation of multi-ethnic policies? Often it is precisely these two camps that are ranged in sceptical, if not hostile, opposition to one another.

Peace work is often automatically equated with the bridging of differences, with *rapprochement* and mutual understanding. In the context of ethnopolitical crises, the notion is also widespread that the prime concern of civil actors should be impartiality, in order to prevent such conflicts from escalating. But are there not,

precisely in these kinds of disputes, situations in which what is required is support for the weaker side — if ist cause seems just, in other words: partiality? The tension between 'associative' and dissociative' peace-strategies which was described by Johan Galtung as far back as the 1970s has up to now been interpreted primarily as something relating only to state-based peace-policy. But it is also relevant to civil actors. The theoretical observations and practical examples that follow here are based on reports from training-sessions and workshops conducted with actors from post-communist countries, notably within the framework of a 'support project' for indigenous peace-workers financed in 1995/6 as part of the European Union's 'PHARE/TACIS Democracy Programme'.[1]

# 1    Democratization as a Transformation of Conflict Culture[2]

The democratic upheaval in the eastern part of Europe has radically altered the peace agenda. The introduction of pluralist political systems and the ousting of at least some sections of the old élites by new ascendant groups has meant that the repressive-cum-bureaucratic approach to resolving conflict has been superceded by a 'transitional conflict-culture'. This is characterized, on the one hand, by a strong continuing trend to authoritarian patterns of conflict resolution, particularly on the part of government bodies; on the other hand, by the new institutions embodying parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, and economic/political competition which are increasingly necessitating the creation of other mechanisms for balancing interests.

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[1] This project is being conducted jointly by the Berghof Center of Constructive Conflict Management (Berlin), the Institute  of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moskow), and International Alert (London).

[2] By this term mean social norms, patterns and attitudes in relation to conflict.

In practice, three basic paradigms of conflict culture are observable, and the relative weightings between them provide an indication of the degree of success of the reform process. The first is, in some sense, an extension of the practice of communist party leaderships, whereby differences of interest between various groups exercising influence were kept within manageable bounds through barter, compromise, and the redefinition and accentuation of shared overall interests. Typical this took the form of, on the one hand admitting the differences, but holding the negotiations behind closed doors, or, on the other hand, the practice of coming to secret accommodations whilst averring unanimity of interests to the outside world. This was the approach used by President Yeltsin in 1995/6, as part of his dual strategy of containing strategic élites within the internal power-apparatus whilst externally projecting the impression of a populist levelling of differences of interests.

The second paradigm consists of open competition and co-operative solutions between various interest-groups, whether in the form of elections or of institutionalized negotiating-processes, including procedures based on the rule of law. The differences are brought into the open and acknowledged as legitimate. The aim is either unequivocal majority-decision or overt agreement as to how the interests of divergent groups are to be reconciled. In many post-communist societies, however, the preconditions for this kind of democratic liberal conflict-culture — namely, a stable economic base, established procedures and forums for resolving differences, an acceptance of heterogeneity, plurality, and, above all, the 'rules of the game' — are only at a very rudimentary stage of development. Their further evolution is also rendered more difficult by the sharp polarization between — to put it in simplified terms — the winners and losers of modernization, as emerged, for example, in the Russian presidential elections of 1996 between Yeltsin and Zyuganov.

Apart from the ethnopolitical tensions, it is this opposition between the winners and losers of modernization which represents the greatest challenge to internal peace in the societies undergoing transformation. And yet the civil actors involved in this area — from the trade unions, at their various stages of development, to the newly created commercial and professional associations — are seldom viewed from a peace-work perspective. Neglect of their peacemaking

function and potential is possibly one of the reasons why ethnic loyalties and affinities have instead assumed exaggerated importance.

It is in this area — that of ethnopolitical tensions — that the third paradigm of transitional conflict-culture is mostly to be found. Here, differences are often fought out in an especially ruthless and uncompromising way. They point to a long prior history, which not infrequently involves deep historic wounds and claims on both sides. Such differences are at great risk of being resolved by violent means. Why the post-communist world in particular should suffer from this type of conflict is a question that has been subjected to repeated analysis since the changes.[3] Key factors that might be cited here are: the way in which the civil rights movement in many countries outside Russia was linked to the struggle for liberation from Soviet domination; the particular type of "ethnic engineering" within the Soviet Union; the tendency, in times of transition and crisis, to turn to supposedly primeval loyalties and affinities; the calculations of political leaders, who use ethnic membership as a tool in the struggle for power and in economic competition; and of course, last but not least, genuine injustices/the safeguarding of privileges, and the failure to work through the conflict when it ocurred before.

Less attention has been devoted to the question of how far the post-communist legacy also offers a basis for a constructive conflict-culture in the democratic liberal sense previously mentioned. And yet there are a fair number of examples of ethnopolitical tensions having been successfully resolved — as in the peaceful partition of Czechoslovakia in 1993, or the bilateral treaties concluded in 1994/5 between the Russian federal government and a number of republics within the Russian Federation. As far as mobilizing civil actors is concerned, the legacy is ambivalent: on the one hand, the high levels of education and training in all the communist countries resulted in the build-up of a large pool of people who are, in principle, qualified for this task; on the other hand, enforced membership of various 'mass organizations' has not exactly increased the motivation to involve oneself voluntarily in efforts to achieve particular political/social ends. The chances of seeing civil-society structures develop are clearly at their best in those places where a broadly based civil rights movement existed before the changes — for example, in

Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, three countries in which, incidentally, the revolutionary potential of 'civil society' was recognized at an early stage by dissidents.

Civil society movements, albeit often comprising no more than small, poorly resourced non-governmental organizations (NGOs), now exist in all the post-communist countries. Their development has been fostered to an important extent by support programmes organized by American foundations or the European Union, and also through co-operative projects conducted with Western and international NGOs. An important role is played here by training and advisory projects aimed at fostering the development of political/social organizations, and by training sessions in which potential multipliers are introduced to the styles of communication and interaction current in humanistic psychology, and in which the methods and skills of participative group-leadership and constructive conflict regulation are passed on.

In this way, there has emerged, within a relatively short period of time, a transnational 'NGO market' — albeit of modest proportions — which has also opened up career opportunities for civil actors in the new democracies. An example of this kind of development is the activity engaged in by the US-initiated NGO network 'Partners for Democratic Change' (San Francisco) under the programmatic rubric 'Building a Culture of Conflict Resolution in Emerging Democracies'. On the basis of experiences in multi-ethnic community-work and mediation in California, seven national centres have now been established as part of this network in Central and Eastern Europe, with the aim of disseminating various forms of co-operative conflict regulation and its attendant skills. The training sessions in communication, negotiation, and problem-solving organized by the centres have been attended by thousands of future multipliers. What is more, with the help of the centres, 'ethnic conciliation commissions' have been successfully set up and trained.

Despite all the commendable contributions it makes towards civilizing conflict cultures, the spread of this kind of Western-initiated training-infrastructure does, it

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3 Cf. for the former Soviet Union the comprehensive study by Valery Tishkov: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. A Mind Aflame. London et.al. 1997.

must be said, also suffer from a number of weaknesses. These can be summarized under four heads:[4]

- Most of the activities consist of one-off short programmes (lasting one to two weeks), in which mainly Western, English-speaking trainers pass on generalized knowledge, abilities, and skills. It would, however, be better if advanced training were designed to take place over a longer period and conducted in parallel with the work or project concerned; if native experts were involved in the design and implementation of the sessions and local trainers trained for future work; and, last but not least, if the sessions were conducted in the language of the country concerned.

- Developing structures of civil society is a great deal easier in urban, and especially political, centres than on the social periphery. This gap is accentuated by the fact that training events are focused on a circle of individuals with international contacts based in the centres. In choosing the target groups, more account should therefore be taken of geographical range.

- Because of the administrative requirements associated with them, the long period of preparation they require, and the desire to maintain control, support programmes run by Western foundations exercise a *de facto* preference for projects put forward by Western proposers/project leaders, who do not always fit the bill for the particular region. In addition, it is often easier to obtain funds for training than for projects in which the skills acquired can be put to practical use. One example is the disproportion between the funds raised for training prospective members of 'ethnic conciliation committees' and those available to NGOs wishing to run reconciliation projects at a local level. A positive counter-example is the decentralized structure of the Soros Foundation, most of whose staff in Eastern Europe are themselves recruited from the national NGO scene.

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[4] This summary is based on a survey amongst 56 civil actors conducted by Anja Weiss and Aleksej Nazarenko as part of the previously mentioned 'Support Project' in 1995. See Anja Weiss: Insider NGOs as a key to developing peace constituencies in the new Eastern democracies, in: Peace and Security XXIX (March 1997), 37 - 45.

- After the rhetoric of class war, the 'win-win problem-solving' formulas of conflict regulation, as propagated by many trainers, have fallen on extremely fertile ground. What has often been overshadowed in all this is that, in cases where the power relations in a conflict are asymmetrical and conflict forums have not been sufficiently institutionalized, the mere passing-on of these methods cannot of itself guarantee constructive handling of conflict. Civilizing conflict culture is by no means merely a question of individual capacity to deal with conflict.

The first three of these criticisms have now begun to be addressed in several countries, and have led to the development of independent advisory and training structures. The Bulgarian NGO world, for example, managed early on to emancipate itself from some of its American sponsors. The indigenous 'Foundation for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution' in Sofia is now in a position to conduct fairly long-term education projects in the multi-ethnic regions of Bulgaria and to offer training sessions in conflict resolution in neighbouring countries as well. Another trend is that of the gradual emergence of a profit-oriented market for conflict-resolution services, either for private companies or for public administrations. Many NGOs see this as offering them a chance to subsidize their peace-making activities through the provision of commercial services.

## 2    Nurturing and Containing Conflicts

The danger of a domestic conflict escalating to the level of organized violence is particularly great where the distribution of basic opportunities is involved or there is an uneven satisfaction of basic needs. It might be economic advantages and disadvantages or the right to cultural identity or political self- or co-determination that is at issue. Such factors acquire added significance at times of crisis or change, when real or perceived inequalities and injustices are judged to exist between ethnically defined groups. In the eastern part of Europe and in the former Soviet Union, it is usually in majority – minority relationships that this kind of potential for

conflict is expressed. Such relationships are particularly explosive when disadvantaged national minorities form a majority of the population locally or regionally, as is the case, for example, with the Albanians in Kosovo, whose basic rights to cultural identity and participation in political decision-making has been denied them.

In such cases, peace work is on the one hand faced with the task of *containing* intense conflicts in such a way that they can be worked through non-violently; on the other hand, in relationships involving highly asymmetrical and unfair distribution, it may be their job to reinforce or support the weaker side's capacity for conflict. Hence peace work should not be automatically equated with the de-escalation of conflicts. Where there is extreme discrimination and handicap, a settlement can generally be achieved only when the conflict has been brought into the open and the stronger party has been confronted with the concerns of the weaker side. In this sense, all the improvements in the protection of minorities which have occurred since 1990 within the framework of the C/OSCE have been due in no small measure to the improved capacity for conflict of the minorities' representatives and those championing their cause.

However, anyone seeking to reinforce the capacity for conflict of oppressed and disadvantaged ethnic groups by means of peace-based argumentation faces two challenges: first, the seemingly inevitable correlation between the escalation of a conflict and the increased tendency to violence; and second, the possibility of the conflict's becoming further ethnicized. Nevertheless, a number of factors militate in favour of engaging with these dangers in a *preventive* way. If one works on the premise that, sooner or later, most unfair distributions will come under great pressure to be politicized, then these effects will, in any case, have to be reckoned with. But identifying them in good time could make it easier to link them with nonviolent forms of struggle.

Peace work should therefore be differentiated according to the particular phase of the conflict that has been reached. Or, to put it another way: constructive transformation of a conflict requires different concepts of peaceful intervention depending on the overall conditions and the forms of conflict involved. Four phases should be distinguished—though these should not be viewed as an unvarying, one-dimensional succession of clearly demarcated stages. The dynamics of a conflict

are determined by a multiplicity of actors at different levels, the individual and not infrequently contradictory developments build up into unforeseen trends. In the case of protracted conflicts there is, in addition, a tendency to interpret reversion to a phase prior to open conflict as success.

## 2.1    Engagement and response in situations of latent and suppressed conflict

In this phase, there is manifest disadvantage to, and discrimination against, a particular group, which my be defined in terms of ethnicity, language or religion. The possibilities which this group has to defend itself against such treatment are minimal, either because of oppression by the majority party or parties, or because of poor internal mobilization. A typical example is the situation of the Roma, who overall, in terms of population, form the largest ethnic minority in Central and Eastern Europe. Although there are now a range of civil actors representing the Roma's interests, they are highly fragmented, rivalry far outweighs any efforts at coalition-building, and their impact within the Roma population remains slight.

Peace work amongst such disadvantaged groups means first and foremost education and training — "conscientization" in Paolo Freire`s sense — and helping them to improve their socio-economic conditions. Only in combination with these things can an increased capacity for organization and solidarity be achieved. Externally, there has to be a parallel process of public-awareness work, human-rights monitoring, crisis intervention in favour of the minority, and ideally also action to highlight the majority group's own long-term interest in advancing the cause of the minority.

An example of this kind of work is the activity of the Bucharest—based NGO 'Rromani CRISS: The Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies'. This body is geared mainly to developing and supporting social-work projects designed both to bring about some concrete improvement in the situation of the Roma community in Romania and at the same time to enhance their self-awareness/self-confidence, their awareness of their rights, and their sense of collective responsibility. It also documents the situation of the Romanian Roma and works to ensure that they are presented in a non-discriminatory way in the media, to prevent and investigate local

pogroms against them, and to secure the introduction of measures that will stabilize multi-ethnic communities.

## 2.2 Engagement and response in situations of "no violence"/"minimal violence"

In this phase, the weaker parties are in a position to articulate their interests and views; there is a political agenda — e.g. in the form of claims to individual and collective minority-rights, to autonomy, or to a fair share in the exploitation of the country's resources; actors with conflict strategies of a more or less radical kind emerge. Mobilization also occurs on the side of the majority party/parties. Quite often, these parties are part of the driving force, because they are seeking to safeguard privileges or to exploit the conflict for other purposes. The use or threat of violence does in certain circumstances play a role in the parties' calculations, or may do so in situations of acute confrontation, but it does not at this stage constitute a systematically planned component of the conflict.

In this situation, peace work comprises a kind of dual strategy of simultaneously bolstering the weaker side and fostering shared structures and loyalties. The former component includes: monitoring human-rights deficiencies; campaigning for the extension of minority rights; and reinforcing minority representation. The latter includes: dismantling barriers to communication and reflecting on mutual stereotypes, such as enemy images; fostering day-to-day multi-ethnic links; and supporting direct conflict resolution.

The Helsinki groups, which mostly emerged at the time of the old civil-rights movements, have made a crucial contribution to the development of an active lobby-scene working for the protection of minorities. In many countries, they managed — as did the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland — to go beyond monitoring and early warning and actually influence governmental initiatives in this area. An example of work towards the establishment of a multi-ethnic polity is provided by the efforts of the Center for Minority Rights in Vojvodina (Serbia). At the time that the conflict with Croatia was escalating, and later also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, its representatives worked to maintain peaceful co-existence

between the various ethnic groups in its region, through public-awareness work, round tables, seminars, and mutual support amongst those who had undertaken to work in this field.

## 2.3 Engagement and response in situations of "violence"

In terms of consequences produced, the most crucial juncture in the escalation of a conflict is undoubtedly the transition to organized violence. At a stroke, there are scores of additional grounds for the conflict; the whole spectrum of people who up to then have tried to counter the friend/foe configurations are now forced into polarized positions; those in possession of military power acquire increasing control over the dynamics of the conflict, and the civil forces withdraw into the background.

In overall conditions such as these, peace work is aimed chiefly at bringing the violence to an end, either by exerting direct influence on the warring parties, by engaging in public-awareness work and organizing protest meetings, and occasionally also by mounting spectacular non-violent actions in the crisis-areas. In practice, however, it is humanitarian help for the victims of the war that occupies centre-stage, together with attempts to contain the violence at local level or to maintain contact across front lines. Direct work on the underlying conflict, meanwhile, diminishes in importance—even though it can, in the form of shuttle diplomacy, pre-negotiations, and workshops with third parties, undoubtedly play a major role in fostering *rapprochement* at the leadership level.

The involvement of civil actors in this phase is illustrated by various Russian, Serbian, and Croatian NGOs. Thus, since 1994, following the outbreak of war in Chechnia, the Moscow groups 'Nonviolence International—Newly Independent States' and 'OMEGA — Organization of Missions for Ethnic Harmonization' have been organizing fact-finding missions, with a view to putting pressure on the Russian government via public opinion, and have helped organize aid for the affected population. Because of poorly defined leadership-structures and goals in the Russian armed forces, they were also able to negotiate provisional local ceasefires, to facilitate the withdrawal of civilians, and to encourage the exchange of prisoners. The Russian human-rights and welfare organization 'Order of Charity and

Protection' combined support for children affected by the 1992 outbreak of violence between Ossetians and Ingushetians in the North Caucasus with initiatives aimed at mobilizing local women's organizations and indigenous leaders against the expulsions and ethnic attacks.

## 2.4 Engagement and response in "post-violence" situations

The experiences in former Yugoslavia following the signing of the Dayton Accord at the end of 1995 have shown that political solutions — particularly when they have come about chiefly as a result of pressure from external powers — are not in themselves sufficient to set a lasting peace-making process in motion. Even if the political framework proves durable, it still depends on civil actors to breathe life into it. And what is involved here is not just the huge task of rebuilding the country materially and of making the shift to a peace-time economy, but also the extremely difficult issues of the (re)integration of refugees, war victims, and military personnel, as well as the whole complex of problems associated with achieving reconciliation between the parties to the war. Two crucial challenges are, first, finding a balance between dissociative and associative principles in (re)constructing communities and political entities, and, second, ensuring that the violent past is worked through both individually and collectively.

For a long time, this last aspect was not given either the practical or theoretical attention it deserved. And yet there are many indications that the repression and denial of the memory of violent experiences on the part both of victims and of perpetrators can act as the germ for new conflicts. Of course, in working through the violent past, the principles of truth, justice, and responsibility — both collective *and* individual — must be balanced against those of the maintenance of peace, and of forgiveness and reconciliation. This cannot only be a matter of individual criminal justice at the international level, as, for example, in the war-crimes tribunal relating to the former Yugoslavia in The Hague — however important this is as a step in transnational civilization. It must also embrace the social successor-organizations of those groups that have used or suffered violence.

Clinical experience in general psycho-social work with victims of violence (dealing with 'post-traumatic stress syndrome' — PTSD) is now being reflected in peace work in post-war societies—e.g. in the care of refugees, former interns, victims of torture, and women who have suffered rape. The Georgian refugee-organization 'Association of Displaced Women from Abkhazia' concentrated on the care of children who had suffered direct violence either personally or within their family. Building on these experiences, a similar, multilateral project was set up,

under the direction of a Bulgarian NGO, and as part of this, children from both sides of the Georgian – Abkhazian conflict were invited to a summer camp in Bulgaria in 1996.

An indirect approach to social rehabilitation is being pursued by a group of psychologists and educationists from Serbia who have come together to form the 'Group MOST for Cooperation and Mediation of Conflicts', a member-organization of the Belgrade-based 'Center for Anti-war Action'. They have developed school materials and study-programmes encouraging a reflective approach to nationalist tendencies in Serbia's political system and a constructive approach to ethnic differences. Their 'Good Will Classroom' programme, which contains some elements of training in non-violent conflict resolution for schoolchildren, aspires to be applied within the official school-system and therefore lays greater stress on social than on intercultural learning since this is a more acceptable formulation for the state authorities.

# 3    Internal and External Conflicts

The previously hotly debated question of whether peace policy and peace work should be aimed primarily at influencing political leaderships or at increasing awareness among the population has now given way to an understanding that both are needed. Typical of the present debate about peaceful intervention in internal, ethnopolitical disputes is a paradigm developed by the American conflict-researcher John Paul Lederach.[5] Lederach distinguishes three hierarchical levels and regards specific kinds of intervention-strategy as being required at each level. The three levels are: the top level leadership, leaders at the middle level, and leaders at the grassroots level.

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[5] John Paul Lederach: Building Peace. Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Tokyo: UN University 1994.

**TYPES OF ACTORS**

Level 1: Top Leadership

- Military / political leaders
  with high visibility

**Level 2: Middle Range Leaders**

- Leaders respectet in sectors
- Ethnic /religious leaders
- Academics/ intellectuals
- Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Level 3: Grassroots Leaders

- Local leaders
- Leaders of indigenous NGOs
- Community developers
- Local health officials
- Refugee camp leaders
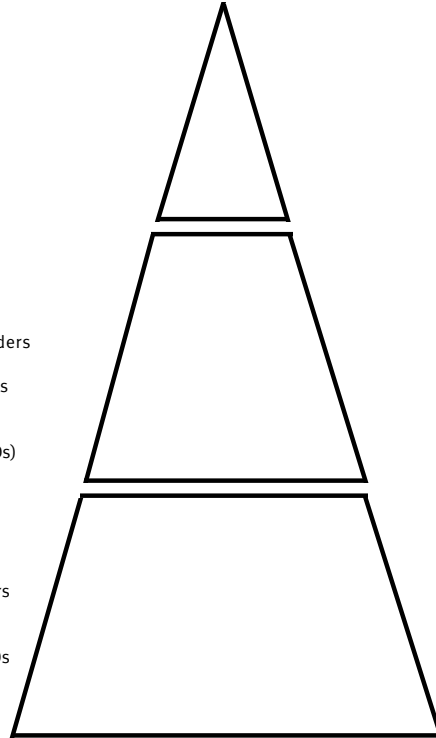
**APPROACHES TO BUILDING PEACE**

- Focus on high-level
  negotiations
- Emphasis on ceasefire
- Led by highly visible
  single personality

- Problem-solving
  workshops
- Training in conflict
  resolution
- Peace commissions
- Insider-partial teams

- Local peace commissions
- Grassroots training
- Prejudice reduction
- Psychosocial work
  in post-war trauma

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*Figure 1: Actors and Peacebuilding Foci Across the Affected Population*

Source: John Paul Lederach: Building Peace. Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.
         Tokyo: UN University 1994, p. 16.

This — undoubtedly important — emphasis on the vertical dimension means that horizontal differentiation fades somewhat from view. This can lead to the impression that the parties to the conflict constitute homogeneous social entities, and that peace work consists mainly in directing the escalation of the conflict into civil channels as it proceeds — depending on your point of view — from the top downwards or from the bottom upwards (or from Lederach´s point of view from the middle up and down). The fact that there are a multiplicity of different actors within the conflict-spectrum, each with their own positions, interests, and preferences in terms of coalitions, fades into the background (Fig. 1). This is most obvious where there is great dissension within one camp about the way in which a conflict is to be resolved with the other side — as is the case, for example, in Israel, since the Rabin and Perez governments have been backing the idea of an understanding with the PLO. In conditions such as these, the thesis that there will not be a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians until both the Israeli and Palestinian sides are reconciled amongst themselves appears a well-founded one.

The notion — widespread in the classical literature on conflict — that escalation will result in greater unity and centralization within each of the affected groups, needs to be modified in view of the complex situation in which societies undergoing transformation find themselves. Although extremist parties and leaderships seek to exploit the polarisation effect, there are a number of countervailing forces. These include, to mention but a few: the different orientations and interests within an ethnic group, which may also polarise increasingly as violence increases; the inter-ethnic enmeshment of economic interests and bureaucratic structures; internal regional competition which, because of the mixed nature of settlement-areas, cannot be reduced to simple ethnic terms; large numbers of people with bi-ethnic or multi-ethnic loyalties, resulting either from origin, mobility, or family ties; and, last but not least, the dynamics of modernization, which generally produces winners and losers in all ethnic groups and secondary parties to the conflict.

The reality of ethnopolitical conflicts therefore involves not only two parties with opposing stances or interests, but also a spectrum of political-cum-social movements lying between the two. A good illustration of this spectrum is provided by the majority–minority conflict between Romanians and Hungarians in Romania.

For simplicity's sake, only three levels are considered here: the partisan, the semi-partisan, and the non-partisan. Peace work in this case is a task that presents itself on all three levels — and is by no means the responsibility of non-partisan forces alone.

The most important 'partisan' actors in the conflict are, on the one side, the government, with, behind it, the ex-nomenclatura party-grouping around President Iliescu, plus various other parties whose programmes have a strongly nationalist accent; on the other side is the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians (DAHR). At bottom, the conflict is about two differing conceptions of the state: on the one hand, that of a unified nation-state in which only the Romanian nation/nationality is acknowledged as having a constituent character, whilst the Hungarian minority represents a 'cohabitee' population; on the other, a multi-ethnic polity in which national minorities are also acknowledged as constituent communities and are accorded the right to personal and regional autonomy.

These conflicting conceptions of the state will not be resolved in the near future. What is more, given the crisis precipitated by transformation, drumming up support by means of nationalist propaganda will continue to be a politically 'worthwhile' activity within the Romanian party-spectrum. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, these actors are confronted with an immediate peace-related task, albeit one that is unevenly distributed between the majority and minority — the task, namely, of *acknowledging* the legitimate concerns of the other side. Such an acknowledgement is the very first prerequisite if there is to be any chance at all of entering into a constructive dialogue. It requires much more than a tactically motivated, externally demonstrative readiness to talk. It is unlikely to be achieved without a fairly long communication process and a quite deep understanding of the anxieties and fears of the other side. Hence, party representatives who take on this task — and there are now a number of them doing so in Romania — are making a crucial contribution to civilizing the conflict culture.

The middle category of 'semi-partisan actors' is, by its very nature, not a clearly definable group of political parties or social movements. The term implies all those actors who, although classified as belonging more to this or that side by virtue of various ethnic criteria, themselves see ethnopolitical issues as playing only a subordinate role. They include a number of smaller parties joined in a 'Democratic

Convention' in opposition to the government, as well as various business and professional organizations pressing for an immediate reform of the country. Mention should also be made here of the groups representing other ethnic minorities — though their numerical strength (except in the case of the Roma) is minimal. The initial function of these actors in peace terms is to create institutional links and channels of communication across the ethnic boundaries ('bridge-building'). In addition, they are helping in a crucial way to transform the conflict, by working for Romania's political system to be modernized, thus relativizing the issue of ethnicity. The proposed models for the decentralization of public administration that have emerged from this spectrum, and which could make the concept of regional autonomy resp. self-government more generally acceptable, are an example of this process.

Internal 'non-partisan' actors are rare within an area of ethnopolitical tension, if ethnic membership itself is viewed as de facto partisanship. In situations of an acute conflict, it is therefore a great deal easier for external actors to be accepted as mediators or as impartial monitors in regard to adherence to international standards for the protection of minorities. In Romania, this is true both for multilateral institutions such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe and for NGOs such as the American 'Project on Ethnic Relations' (PER), which deals, amongst other things, with mediation between Romanian and Hungarian middle range leaders. In some cases, indigenous NGOs have sought to attain impartiality by systematically including representatives of both sides in the make-up of their memberships and leaderships. However, initiatives such as this, which run counter to the spirit of the times, find themselves on shaky ground and outside support can be decisive for their success.

# 4    Peace Alliances and their Civil Agents

Peace work aims to transform the conflict itself, and the manner in which it is conducted, in such a way that the danger of (renewed) violence is minimized and, at the same time, solutions are found to the vital concerns of all those involved. In

Figure 2, the contributions of civil actors to the accomplishment of this task are set out according to the phase of the conflict concerned and the degree of partiality of the actors. In order not to overload the diagram, we have highlighted only those roles and tasks in which partisan, semi-partisan, and non-partisan actors display distinct comparative advantages.

*Figure 2: Roles and Tasks of Peace Work in Situations of Conflict*

| Features of Conflict | Partisan actors | Semi-partisan actors | Non-partisan actors |
|---|---|---|---|
| Latent / suppressed conflict | • Creation of political awareness and growing capacity for conflict of disadvanted groups<br>• Acknowledgement by dominant group | • Development policy aimed at reducing ethnic stratification<br>• Promotion of multi-ethnic political structures<br>• Bridge-building | • Monitoring of human richts and the protection of minorities<br>• Encouraging creation of political awareness, capacity for conflict engagement and handling<br>• Acknowledgement of underprivileged parties |
| No violence / Minimal violence | • Mutual acknowledgement of legitimate concerns<br>• Direct negotiations | • Bridge-building<br>• Promotion of multi-ethnic structures and loyalities | • Monitoring<br>• Promotion of constructive conflict resolution via round tables, pre-negotiations, seminars, mediation<br>• Establishment of institutions involving all parties |
| Wide scale violence | • Working for non-violent strategies<br>• Seeking direct negotiations | • Bridge-building<br>• Refusal to join in the violence<br>• Lobbying for non-violent strategies<br>• Humanitarian work | • Monitoring<br>• Shuttle diplomacy and bridge-building<br>• Pre-negotiations, seminar, mediation |
| Post-violence | • Acknowledgement of responsibility; reparation<br>• Participation in reconciliation process | • Bridge-building<br>• Facilitation of reconciliation process<br>• Social rehabilitation and re-construction<br>• Promotion of a "post-war peace-culture" | • Monitoring<br>• Facilitation of reconciliation process<br>• Support in working through the traumas of the violence |

Overall, it is clear that the parties to the dispute are the decisive actors in the process of a conflict, and that it is therefore right that peace work should be based primarily on their actions and attitudes. However, it is also true that the way in which the conflict is conducted and the nature of its transformation cannot be understood without taking into consideration the semi-partisan forces and movements. Up to now, their role has not been sufficiently recognized and exploited. Lastly, it should be pointed out that impartiality implies two things: on the one hand, it stands for as objective a reminder/promotion of human rights, democracy, justice, and non-violence as possible; on the other hand, it offers an approach to understanding and mediation that is acceptable to all the parties. Both aspects are necessary, even if they can quite easily be in competition with one another in particular cases.

In the phase where the conflict is latent and suppressed, the task facing external, non-partisan actors is not primarily one of mediation, but one of support for the underprivileged group. In practice, however, these forms of intervention are not so far removed from one another, since the disadvantaged condition of minorities often only becomes manifest within the framework of engagement in or response to the conflict by state bodies or by members of the majority group. Thus, where attacks have been carried out against Roma, attempts are made, under the guidance of respected external figures, publicly to reconstruct the historical background to the events and to consult at the local level about how internal relations within the community can be improved and how external representation of the Roma's interests can be made more effective.

In relation to the aim of preventing violence in the second phase of a conflict — that of the open articulation of opposing positions and interests — the conflict researcher John Paul Lederach and the Secretary-General of International Alert, Kumar Rupesinghe, have coined the term 'peace constituencies'.[6] Behind this lies the idea that, by analogy with 'war constituencies' (in other words embodiments of belligerent socio-economic interests where military conflicts are fought out over a long period of time), peace-building also needs a broad base of social interests. For this task, the semi-partisan actors are of crucial importance — that is, all those

whose well-being in the community, in the economy, in the administration, in education, and at local-authority level is dependent on the conflict's being dealt with by civil means. However, to mobilize these forces in the difficult conditions of a society in process of rapid change, and, if possible, to persuade them to engage in joint initiatives, is no easy task. An attempt of this kind has been made by civil actors from Moldova and separatist Trans Dniester who have come together to form a 'Joint Committee for Conciliation and Democratization'. With the help of a community-work NGO from Northern Ireland, the committee managed to initiate joint local-authority action on transport, the economy, education, and health on either side of the dividing-line.

In situations of violent conflict, semi-partisan as well as partisan actors are in danger of being drawn into the process of escalation and polarization. Under these conditions, external support for civil forces, as provided by the 'Helsinki Citizens Assembly' network, can be supremely important. It should, however, be noted that the good intentions of Western supporters of civil opposition can, none the less, bring indigenous actors into highly dangerous situations within the context of societies at war. Furthermore, the recent discussion about the unintended effects of civil humanitarian intervention in areas of war or crisis shows that there is not one major relief-measure that does not have some effect on the way the conflict is conducted. To what extent the wounds inflicted by war also carry within them the seeds of future violence depends in great measure, for example, on the amount of attention devoted to the psycho-social injuries suffered by victims of violence, refugees, and displaced persons.  Small indigenous aid-organizations such as the Belgrade-based NGO 'Women in Black' have done pioneering work in this regard.

What opportunities for co-operation are offered to civil actors in post-war situations depends to a large extent on how much of a politically durable solution has really been achieved along with the ceasefire. In many cases, war has led to a deep split in society, one that the political peace-arrangement can only cover over very inadequately. To expect civil actors, in this situation, to assume responsibility, particularly for the revitalization of inter-ethnic links, is to demand far too much. In this phase above all, it is important to set realistic goals and gear oneself to a long

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[6]John Paul Lederach: Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework, in: Kumar Rupesinghe (ed.): Conflict Transformation. London et. al. 1995, pp. 201 - 222.

process of transition and healing. An important prerequisite if people in a divided society are to be prepared to work for inter-ethnic understanding is that the capacity for peace in each of the ethnic communities be strengthened. Thus, one decisive indicator of Serbian society's capacity for peace will be how it deals with the integration of Serbian refugees and displaced persons from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Peace work in post-communist societies is inseparable from the creation of a new culture for dealing with political and social conflicts. To achieve this kind of conflict culture, the appropriate democratic and civil-society structures and qualified individuals are required. This should in no way be regarded as a task for marginal idealistic groups. Only when we succeed in making the process of "civilization" a concern both of the parties in dispute and of society as a whole will there be any chance for sustainable peace-building.