

Roles and Functions of

Third Parties in

the Constructive Management of

Ethnopolitical Conflicts.

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Introduction

At the close of the twentieth century, the main challenge faced by peace policy is that of ethno-political conflict. Contrary to the optimistic expectations of many theoreticians of modernization, ethnicity has lost none of its importance as a defining characteristic of what Germans call *Schicksalsgemeinschaften* — collectivities forged by some common destiny. Indeed, in the crises of transformation that have occurred since the dissipation of the East-West conflict, parties amongst whom violent disputes are taking place, or threaten to take place, are making increased use of the argument about ethnic membership to mobilize their adherents. Some of these disputes have long histories, in the course of which the relations between the parties have become charged with a host of conflictual factors — from clashes of interest and disputes over resources, through one-sided or multi-sided experiences of domination and violence, up to an including ideological differences and dissension over values and beliefs. Typical examples are the protracted conflicts in Northern Ireland and Cyprus, or between the Israelis and Palestinians.¹

The opposition between the ethnically defined parties frequently appears so all-embracing and thoroughgoing that it seems impossible for the conflict to be de-escalated without the participation of actors not involved in it. These latter have come to be known by the term *third parties*. Third parties can be either governmental/non-governmental institutions or single individuals/groups of individuals who are not involved, at least directly, in the conflict.² Where agreement

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1. On the whole topic of ethno-political conflict (with details of further literature), see Christian P. Scherrer: *Ethno-Nationalismus im Weltsystem: Prävention, Konfliktbearbeitung und die Rolle der internationalen Gemeinschaft* (Münster, 1996).
 2. On the terminology, see Jeffrey Z. Rubin, Dean G. Pruitt, and Sang Hee Kim: *Social Conflict, Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*, 2nd ed. (New York et al., 1994), 196–223.

is lacking, however, is in regard to the precise roles and functions these third parties should assume in order to have a truly peace-making effect.

This question will be examined more closely in what follows here. I shall start by clarifying the key concepts and classifying the various kinds of third-party intervention. Two ideal-typical forms of intervention will then be contrasted: primarily content-oriented *mediation procedures*, and primarily relational *consultation procedures*. Both procedures seek to influence an acute conflict over the short or medium term. What chance there is of transforming the particular conflict in a long-term way, of establishing lasting peace, is a question which can, in contrast, only be clarified by also looking at the framework conditions and macro-structure of the conflict. Taking these factors into account leads to a substantially broader understanding of constructive roles and functions in the context of ethnopolitical conflicts than would emerge from too simplistic a view of ›the third party‹.

Ethnopolitical is here taken to refer to those conflicts in which involvement as a party to the conflict results, for the actors from one side at least, from ethnic (or linguistic or religious) differences. This description does not imply that it is ethnicity as such which constitutes the conflict; ethnicity merely constitutes one special, albeit highly influential, form of socialization. Only when ethnic membership is mobilized for political purposes, particularly in times of social unrest, where a (re)distribution of existential options is at stake, does it become a key feature of the disputants' self-image.

Alongside the traditional concept of overall *conflict resolution*, an increasingly prominent role has been played in recent years by the pragmatic *conflict management* approach, inspired to a great extent by the various US-imported ›human relations‹ movements in organization theory, and by humanistic psychology in psycho-social and educational work. Where recalcitrant ethnopolitical conflicts are involved, the first concept turns out to be too ambitious, the second suitable for use only in acute crises or in relation to concrete individual agreements founded on some kind of basic understanding. The concept of *conflict transformation* highlights the need for a long-term perspective; and the German term *Konfliktbearbeitung* (treatment or processing of a conflict) implies the

involvement of external actors and the expediency of approaches based on a division of labour.

The qualification of conflict management as *constructive* points to two features. First, the crucial feature is the *outcome* of the particular conflictual behaviour or conflict intervention. Have these been successful in preventing or ending violence, or in attaining other goals considered relevant to peace — e.g. social justice or cross-party loyalties and institutions? Whether a piece of behaviour or an intervention has been constructive in this sense can, of course, only ever be established *ex post facto*; and whether it was *this particular* piece of behaviour or *this particular* intervention that was decisive can, in view of the complexity of social processes, only be demonstrated in approximate fashion.

However, a piece of behaviour or an intervention can also be rated as constructive on *process-related grounds*. If one works on the premise that a successful instance of conflict management always also entails learning processes that lead to a broadening of perspectives and to increasing mutual understanding on the part of those involved, then the crucial feature is the presence of indicators of these kinds of constructive learning-processes: agreement on the definition of the conflict, or at least a willingness to ›agree to disagree‹ (which, in the case of ethnopolitical disputes, is one of the very first hurdles); signs that differences in standpoints are acknowledged as legitimate; a willingness to come to a mutual understanding on procedures for dealing with the conflict.³

The concept of conflict management by *third parties* often has associated with it the idea of equidistance to the parties in dispute. In an ideal situation— according to a widespread notion based on the concept of ›mediation‹ (*see below*) — third parties should, if possible, fulfil two criteria: they should, firstly, be *neutral*, i.e. not biased as a result of previous links with any of the parties; and secondly, they should be *impartial*, i.e. not show preference for any one of the positions held by the parties in the particular dispute. But precisely in the context of ethnopolitical conflicts, with their many gradations of partiality and their diverse

3. On this, see the similar distinction in Eva Maringer and Reiner Steinweg: *Konstruktive Haltungen und Verhaltensweisen im Konflikt: Begriffe und Erfahrungen*, (Berghof Report 3, forthcoming).

external actors, each with their own, highly partial interests, one has to ask whether these requirements are realistic in relation to actual persons (groups of persons) and institutions, and whether they are helpful as regards the actual matter in hand. It would seem more sensible to interpret the concept of the third party as an *ideal-typical form* to which real actors attain to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their own particular interests and their position in the nexus of conflictual events. Whatever the case, one precondition is that they should have the intention of playing a de-escalatory, regulatory, and mediating role between the parties to the conflict.⁴

4. Johan Galtung points out that third-party terminology may foster polarization in conflicts, and that it would therefore be better to talk of *N&1 parties* — or, better still, of 'go-betweens' — in order to highlight the aspect of outside influence and the fact that the external actors have their own interests. These suggestions are worth considering, but will probably not have any impact on the now-established third-party terminology. See Johan Galtung: The Role of the third party, in Jörg Calließ and Christine M. Merkel (eds.): *Peaceful Settlement of Conflict — A Task for Civil Society: Third Party Intervention*, (Loccumer Protokolle, 9/94; Rehburg-Loccum, 1995), 368–77.

1 Third Parties between ›Good Offices‹ and ›Power Mediation‹

Depending on the position and function of the third party *vis-à-vis* the disputants, various ideal-typical forms can, in their turn, be identified. One very common type of differentiation is based on the third party's options for intervention. According to this, the following basic forms can be distinguished — beginning with the weakest type of involvement:

Good offices: This essentially involves promoting and supporting the direct treatment of the conflict by the parties in dispute. It includes, at a specific level, the provision of communications facilities, transport, and accommodation, and the creation of opportunities for direct encounter. At the more general level, this category can be regarded as covering all the measures that help the disputants arrive at a constructive resolution of the conflict without the third party's directly assuming a facilitating or negotiating function. This includes, first and foremost, training the negotiators in methods that offer ›win‹ opportunities for both sides; it also includes shuttle diplomacy.

Facilitation and mediation: As soon as the third party assumes a decisive role in directing the conflict-resolution procedure — something that is possible even within shuttle diplomacy — the bounds to negotiation are overstepped. The decisive precondition here is, of course, that the parties in dispute should be prepared, in the first place, to agree to this type of negotiation. A whole range of schools with non-uniform terminology now exist in this area. It would therefore seem to me to be sensible to apply the term ›mediation‹ (in the narrower sense) to all those methods of negotiation in which the third party takes charge of directing *the process of conflict management* but responsibility for *dealing*

with the content of the conflict remains with the parties in dispute. Weaker forms of negotiation, where there is no consistent leadership-role but there is emphasis on the procedural side of the conflict management could be described as ›facilitation‹.

Formal and informal arbitration/Litigation: In these classic rule-of-law methods of dispute settlement, the third party assumes responsibility not only for the procedure, but also for the material settlement of the conflict. It makes its decision on the basis of superordinate legal principles and norms, and it determines winners and losers, or the nature of the compromise reached. The specific differences between the individual procedures lie in whether the third party is also able to enforce its decisions, or whether it is dependent on the assent of the actors involved in the conflict.

Power mediation: Here too, the decision about the outcome of the conflict lies with the third party. But the latter makes its decision not on the basis of legal principles and norms but on the basis of its own interests and on the basis of whether it also has the means to enforce its decision.

In the reality of ethno-political conflict management, these four basic forms of third party are often combined with one another. A perfect example of this is the peace agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina negotiated in Dayton in December 1995.⁵ A decisive factor in bringing about the agreement was the pressure of the US and the readiness of the third parties essentially to accept the outcome of the war — namely, the *de facto* division of the country. However, there were also elements of the use of legal principles and norms (e.g. in the declared resolve to punish war criminals and establish an internationally supervised human-rights regime) and of good offices (e.g. in the clarification of various contentious issues between Croatia and the (rump) Yugoslavian federation).

Empirical research into the role of third parties has sought, amongst other things, to determine which of these forms of intervention may be regarded as

5. U.S. Dept. of State: The Dayton Peace Agreement: Official Texts, (Washington DC, 1995).

particularly successful and promising.⁶ The form that came out best was power mediation, particularly where the third parties had sufficient resources, adequate legitimacy, and marked interests of their own in settling the conflict. Other factors identified as favourable to the course of the conflict were: that the disputants and the third party should belong to the same cultural system or be involved in a common web of relations; that there should be internal homogeneity amongst the actors; that the power relations should be symmetrical; that the conflict should not have gone on for too long; and that the issues of ›national security‹ and ›sovereignty‹ should have as low a profile as possible.

The indicators of success in these comparative studies cannot be equated with lasting peace-making, but no one would probably dispute the fact that in the conflicts that were investigated — most of which were highly escalated and violent in nature — the crucial factors in securing de-escalation were: mobilization of resources, the application of pressure, and the involvement of the responsible actors in binding negotiations. Of course, these findings are not automatically applicable to preventive peace-work. Moreover, the factors identified by empirical analysis as conducive to the management of a conflict are precisely those which are missing in recalcitrant ethnopolitical conflicts. Most of these conflicts are characterized by an asymmetrical distribution of power, cultural differences, internal heterogeneity, and deep social divisions. And last but not least, issues of national security and sovereignty are key factors in such conflicts. It is therefore advisable, when seeking to improve ethnopolitical conflict management, to keep the whole range of third-party interventions in view.

6. See the summary in Jacob Bercovitch: *Mediation in der Staatenwelt: Bedingungen für Erfolg oder Scheitern internationaler Vermittlungsbemühungen*, in Norbert Ropers and Tobias Debiel (eds.): *Friedliche Konfliktbearbeitung in der Staaten- und Gesellschaftswelt* (Bonn, 1995), 89–111; see also Peter Billig: *Eskalation und Deeskalation internationaler Konflikte: Ein Konfliktmodell auf der Grundlage der Auswertung von 288 internationalen Kriegen seit 1945*, (Bern et al., 1992).

2 Ethnopolitical Conflict Management as a Solution to Material Disputes and as a Means of Improving Inter-ethnic Relations

Among the various approaches to negotiation in the narrower sense (mediation and facilitation), two in particular have emerged strongly over the last two decades in relation to ethnopolitical conflicts: mediation procedures geared to the matter at issue, and consultation procedures geared to relations between the parties.⁷ Both approaches are concerned with establishing face-to-face interaction and communication between leading or (potentially) influential representatives of the parties to the conflict. The essential difference between the two procedures lies in the fact that *mediation*, is meant, if possible, to end in a concrete agreement about how to regulate a previously precisely defined contentious issue — e.g. an agreement about erecting dual-language place-name signs in bi-ethnic localities. The aim of *consultation*, on the other hand, is at one and the same time more modest and more ambitious: namely, to improve relations between the representatives of different ethnic groups. In the example with the place-name signs, the goal might be to increase both sides' understanding of *why* the other side is making/rejecting this demand.

The need, in ethnopolitical conflicts, to work not only on the contentious material issues but also on relations between the parties results from the fact that disputes — or lengthy ones, at least — typically operate at two levels: the more or less openly negotiated level of political demands and interests, and the deeper level of collective experiences, stances, and attitudes integral to the formation of

7. For a more detailed treatment of these approaches, see Norbert Ropers: *Peaceful Intervention: Structures, Processes, and Strategies for the Constructive Regulation of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, (Berghof Report 1; Berlin, 1995).

identity. An important role in constituting and shaping these two levels is played by events in which large numbers of the members of a group have been the victims of despotic rule, expulsion, military conquest, or some other form of violence. A whole series of these kinds of collective violations are frequently present in the consciousness of ethnic *Schicksalsgemeinschaften*, and are handed down, or deliberately kept alive, from generation to generation.

If, in such instances, conflict management is confined solely to the negotiating level and to an apparently ›reasonable‹ balance of interests, there will be a danger that the neglected ›deep dimension‹ of collective experiences, traumas, and attitudes will manifest itself as an inexplicable ›irrational‹ derangement. A sign of this is the way in which, in negotiations that are apparently proceeding in a practical and constructive manner, refractoriness and defensive reactions will surface in an abrupt way. Such responses occur particularly in those phases in which a political settlement is beginning to take shape but the social consensus about this settlement is still very fragile — as, for example, in Northern Ireland or in Israel/Palestine in 1995-96.

Typical examples of mediation procedures geared to the matter at issue are official negotiations involving legitimated representatives of the parties in dispute, under the direction of an individual or group of individuals enjoying a particular degree of authority or acceptance on account of their position or mandate. These may include diplomats, elder statespersons, representatives of churches, officials appointed by the UN secretary-general, members of OSCE long-term missions, and so on. Quite often, however, the trilateral talks only take place after the chances of agreement have been sounded out bilaterally, or after a ›pre-mediation‹ session with representatives of the lower echelons of leadership. This process may go on for quite a time — possibly several years — and makes no sense unless one also considers the parallel attempts of the parties to the conflict to achieve their goals with means other than bi- and trilateral talks. A crucial factor in assuring success is that the disputants' definition of their interests should be ›reframed‹ — in other

words that one should ask »Is it possible, in regard to the issues in contention, to move from a ›win–lose‹ to a ›win–win‹ configuration?«⁸ (see Fig. 1)

Fig. 1: Comparison between Two Approaches to Third-Party Intervention in Ethnopolitical Conflicts

Phases and elements	Issue-based mediation	Relation-based consultation
1. Preparation/ establishing contact	Official level, choice by position	Unofficial level, choice by function
2. Type of contact with third party; primary role of third party	Concentration on direction of the <i>procedure</i> , conduct geared to matter at issue and goals	Also direction of the <i>procedure</i> , but could be combined with training sessions, therapy-style activities, encounter sessions, joint projects
3. How conflict is described and diagnosed	Confined as far as possible to a small number of topics	Wide-ranging ›conflict mapping‹ as part of clarification of relations
4. Main emphases in reflection on conflict/reframing	Contextual conditions, clarification of interests: from superficial, short term ›positions‹ to deeper, longer-term ›interests‹	Previous history, acknowledgement of basic needs and fears, sounding out-common ground, predicting the course of the conflict
5. Goal aimed at	Practical agreement on how to resolve conflict, at least ›non-paper‹ agreement on possible methods of resolving conflict	Improvement in relations, increased readiness to take part in bi-/trilateral attempts at mediation
6. Typical applications	›Mediation‹ according to Harvard School rules	Problem-solving workshops

8. This approach became best known in the version presented in the Harvard Law School's 'Program on Negotiation. See Roger Fisher, Elizabeth Kopelman, and Andrea Kupfer-Schneider, *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict*, (Cambridge, Mass. et al., 1994).

By comparison with this, the field of application and target groups of relation-based consultation-procedures are quite a lot broader, because all the individuals affected by the conflict can, in principle, take part in them. Very often, elements of this kind of third-party involvement are combined with other forms of constructive action aimed at influencing the conflict. These include: training sessions in methods of communication, negotiation, and mediation; the organization of programmes of encounter and exchange; the initiation of bi- or multi-ethnic projects designed to improve shared living-conditions, and so on (see Fig. 1). In academic circles working on this approach, it is the ‘problem-solving workshop’ that has become the best-known form, probably because in such workshops, the role of the third party has up to now been assumed primarily by academics. Such workshops involve a group of influential representatives of each party to the conflict being invited to a series of seminars of a half academic/analytical, half sensitivity-based kind.⁹

The consultation approach itself, and its importance in constructively transforming conflicts, are subjects of dispute. As I see it, experience with third-party intervention would seem to indicate that the two approaches should be regarded as complementary.¹⁰ The comparative advantages of the consultation approach are: that it can be set in motion even in phases where negotiations between the official leadership-groups are blocked; that an ever-larger group of open-minded potential negotiators can be mobilized with its help; and that forums can be created in which more deeply seated conflicts can be dealt with and in which new options for co-operation can be explored without loss of face by political leaders.

The combined impact of different actors and approaches in ethno-political conflict management has yet to be systematically investigated. An initial descriptive-cum-analytical overview has been provided by John Paul Lederach.¹¹ For

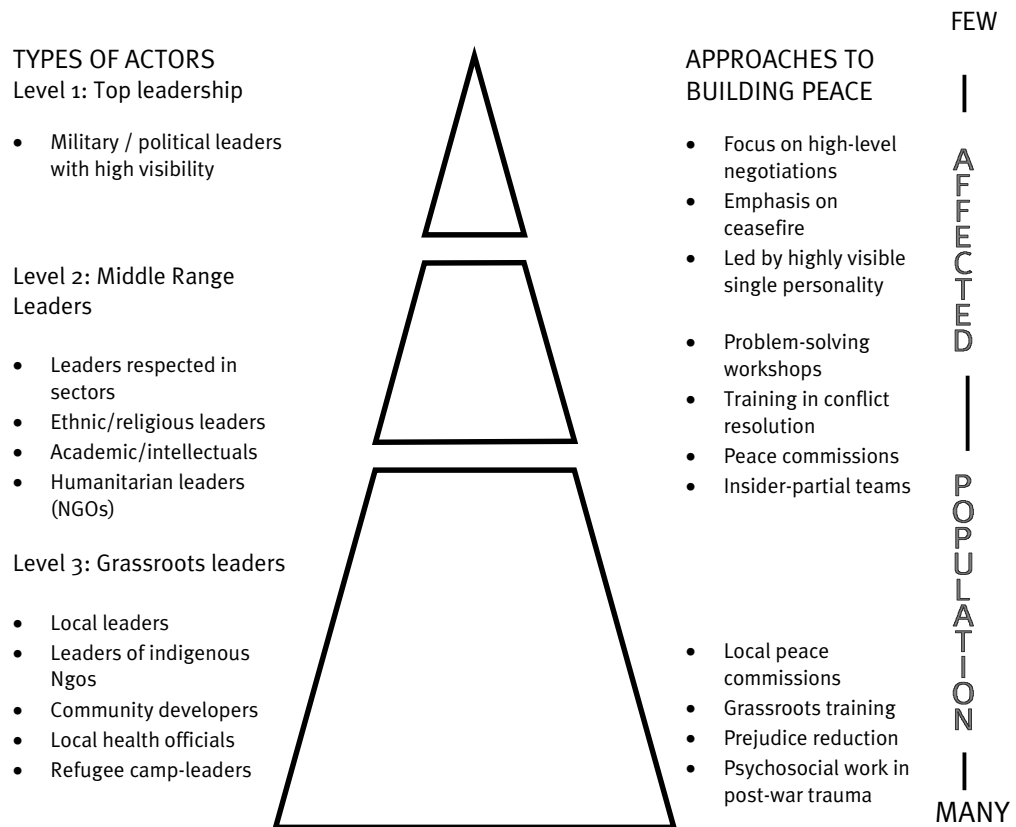
9. See Herbert C. Kelman: *Informal Mediation by the Scholar/Practitioner*, in Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (eds.): *Mediation in International Relations*, (London, 1992), 64–95.

10. A view first put forward by Ronald J. Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly in: *Third Party Interventions in Intergroup Conflict: Consultation is not Mediation*, *Negotiation Journal*, 4 (1988), 381–93.

11. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, paper submitted to the UN University Tokyo, Nov. 1994.

pragmatic reasons, Lederach distinguishes three categories — top and middle-range leadership and influential individuals at the grassroots level — and then ascribes characteristic forms of conflict management to each (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Pyramid of Levels of Involvement in Ethnopolitical Conflict Management, after John Paul Lederach



According to the Lederach scheme, issue-based mediation is directed primarily at the top leadership, whereas relation-based approaches are a matter chiefly for the medium-range and lower levels. The question of what strategies of action result from this will be examined in greater detail below. To begin with, however, we need to take a look at the framework conditions and dynamics of the conflict.

3 Process-based and Structure-based Intervention

A realistic assessment of the possibilities and limits of peaceful intervention in ethnopolitical conflicts cannot be made without consideration of the structural framework-conditions in which such conflicts are rooted and which crucially affect the way they proceed. Of course, each of these conflicts has its own history, and as a rule that history is influenced by a complex collection of diverse factors. None the less, a number of common structural points can be discerned, which are decisive in driving the escalation forward.¹² The two chief ones are, first, massive difficulties with, if not the complete breakdown of, socio-economic modernization, and, secondly, attempts made by ruling groups to favour individual ethnic groups to the detriment of others in the process of political integration and social development.

One of the prime requirements in regard to constructive intervention by third parties must therefore be that such parties should help bring about a massive improvement in the economic framework-conditions in the transforming and developing societies of this world. Development is *one* of the crucial preconditions for peace; this observation is now common currency in almost all programmatic declarations of intent at the international level.¹³ But the global assertion ›peace through development‹ is of little help in planning concrete measures of support in situations threatened with an escalation of conflict. Furthermore, many (transitional) development strategies propagate a kind of social differentiation that harbours considerable explosive potential in social terms.

12. See the overview in Donald L. Horowitz: *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley et al., 1985), and Ted Robert Gurr: *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict*, (Washington DC, 1993).

13. On this, see the close links between conflict management and the *Agenda for Development* in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the work of the UN: UN General Assembly, 51st session, New York, Aug. 1996.

One important task both for development and peace research and for corresponding practical action is therefore to work out more precisely which strategies of development co-operation, which economic programmes, and which conditions for stabilization imposed by foreign or international institutions have which effects on the particular country's tendency to conflictual behaviour. Up to now, this question has been posed primarily from a standpoint that *postdates* military confrontation — in other words, in the form: How can a war economy be transformed into a peace economy?¹⁴ It would be a good thing if the connection between economic development and the capacity for peace appeared on the agenda at an earlier stage. And finally, as regards external third parties' options for action, one is also talking here about negative and positive sanctions as a means of influencing the dynamics of the conflict.

The second task in regard to influencing the structural framework-conditions of ethnopolitical conflicts is that of altering forms of governance from exclusive to inclusive political systems and from power-sharing set-ups that impose homogeneity to those that accept heterogeneity. Only in this way will there be any chance of bringing about permanent changes in major causes or aggravators of conflict such as: the denial of basic needs in regard to the preservation and development of cultural identity; the exclusion of the possibility of political co- and self-determination; insistence on the supremacy of central-government authorities against regional concerns and interests; and, under certain circumstances, actual threats to the existence of a particular group.

Permanent peace-making therefore cannot escape having to tackle the fundamental conflict of goals between state sovereignty, the right of peoples to self-determination, and the international imperative to intervene in order to safeguard human rights.¹⁵ A possible solution to this conflict of goals is to have

14. See Tobias Debiel: Von der Kriegs- zur Friedenswirtschaft: Kosten des Krieges und sozialökonomische Bedingungen der Friedenskonsolidierung, in Volker Matthies (ed.): Vom Krieg zum Frieden: Kriegsbeendigung und Friedenskonsolidierung, (Bremen, 1995), 58–82.

15. See Günther Bächler: Gewaltfreie Regelung von Minderheitenkonflikten durch Föderalismus? Die *Basler Charta* als Diskussionsgrundlage, in Friedensbericht 1996: Theorie und Praxis ziviler Konfliktbearbeitung. 1. Jahrbuch für Konfliktlösung, (Zurich, 1996), 279–88.

territorially based federal state structures or other forms of *power-sharing* which envisage either gradations of territorial autonomy or non-territorial participation by the ethnopolitical groups that make up the state. In extreme cases and under certain conditions, even secession should not be excluded as a constructive form of conflict management. Third parties can, on the one hand, assist the implementation of these models in concrete individual cases — for example, within the framework of OSCE long-term missions, by recommending the elaboration of constitutions with strong federal elements. On the other hand, they are also faced with the challenge — particularly if they are multilateral institutions — of promoting regime-formation in the domain of the protection of minorities.

When one takes into account the two structural aspects of constructive ethnopolitical conflict management, it is clear that third-party interventions must be viewed in a considerably broader context than that of *ad hoc* reaction to crisis situations. It is therefore a good idea to classify the different approaches to conflict intervention according, amongst other things, as to whether they are *process-oriented* — i.e. seek to exert a direct influence on the actual course of a conflict — or whether they strive to bring about *structural* changes — i.e. a change in the institutional framework-conditions in which the conflict is played out. If one combines this division with a classification of each third party as belonging either to the world of states or to the societal world, what emerges is a four-field scheme of constructive conflict interventions (see Fig. 3).¹⁶

16. On this division, see Ernst-Otto Czempiel: *Weltpolitik im Umbruch: Das internationale System nach dem Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1993).

Fig. 3: Approaches to Constructive Conflict Intervention in the World of States and the Societal World

	World of states	Societal world
Process-oriented approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis management • Mediation (Track 1) • Peace-making • Peace-keeping • <i>Ad hoc</i> regulations for the protection of minorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace-building • Consultation (Track 2) • Civilian Peace-keeping
Structure-related approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal embodiment of protection of minorities • Regime-formation for the protection of minorities • Power sharing • Autonomy • Federalism 	<p>Macro-political peace building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of ›peace constituencies‹ and a ›culture of peace‹ • Promotion of multi-ethnic structures and loyalties

This very rough grid can do only partial justice to the complexities of the real situation, with its multifarious overlaps between the world of states and the societal world, and its fluid transitions from repeated *ad hoc* interventions to structural changes. Nonetheless, I do think it useful as a means of underlining the thesis that if conflict management is to be durable, one has to press for measures or changes *in all four fields*. I have already pointed out why this is necessary for the field of structural reform in the world of states: only when there is a fundamental acknowledgement of the basic need of all ethnopolitical groups for security,

identity, and participation, and only when that acknowledgement is implemented in a corresponding institutional form, will lasting peace-making be achieved.

That said, institutionalized acknowledgement is not sufficient *of itself* to ensure that this goal is achieved: a one-sided implementation of that acknowledgement harbours the danger of a prolongation and intensification of the ethno-political differences. Measures for bridging these differences, and putting them into perspective, are therefore also crucial. These include, in the world of states, the parallel reinforcement of the idea of a civic political identity, and also systems of power-sharing that contain incentives to form coalitions across ethnic boundaries.¹⁷ However, most of the options for reinforcing multi-ethnic or trans-ethnic loyalties and affinities are located in the societal world: successful processes of modernization clearly ultimately lead to socialization along criteria other than ethnic ones. But for the actors of the societal world, the question arises of how, precisely under the conditions of transition, such processes can be fostered.

This question is easiest to answer at the micro-level, because the core of many peace-building measures lies precisely in the formation of links, in exchanges, and in encounters between members of the feuding groups. But this approach cannot simply be generalized, particularly in divided societies, in which even superficial contact with the other side prompts accusations of betrayal. The creation of a pan-societal ›culture of peace‹, as propagated recently by UNESCO, can therefore only occur at the end of a long process of changes in attitudes, collective identities, and institutions.¹⁸ An interim step along this path could be the establishment of *peace constituencies* (see below).

Finally, it has once again to be stressed that, despite all the structural similarities, each conflict is unique, and that, as a consequence, there cannot be any macro-political patent remedies. This needs to be particularly emphasized in

17. One example of this is *cross-voting*, which enables split voting-populations in divided societies to have a say about the composition of political representation in the other part of the country. See Leo Tindemans et al.: *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, (Washington DC, 1996), 164.

18. See David Adams (ed.): *UNESCO and a Culture of Peace: Promoting a Global Movement*, (Paris, 1995).

regard to those disputes that are escalated to a crucial degree by single-minded and consciously calculated measures on the part of ruling groups. In these cases — particularly where violence, which has a fatal momentum of its own, is involved — crisis management and power-based intervention are often the only remaining ›constructive‹ forms of intervention.

4 Partiality and Impartiality: A Continuum

The traditional model of third-party participation in conflict management treats the parties in dispute as more or less homogeneous actors. This model scarcely does justice to the reality of ethno-political conflicts: for one thing, ethnic groups are often conglomerations which have the appearance of single unified ›parties‹ only by virtue of their subjectively determined classification according to particular attitudes and types of behaviour. For another thing, in ethno-political conflicts, there is, as a rule, a more or less broad spectrum of political-cum-social groupings on all sides, each representing different interim or mixed positions in regard to the conflict.

The view — widespread in the classical literature on conflict — that escalation brings with it unification and centralization within the affected groups has to be modified in relation to the complex situation in many ethno-politically divided societies.¹⁹ Even though radical parties and leadership groups seek to exploit this effect for their own purposes, there are countervailing forces as well. These may include, for example, all those individuals who have bi-ethnic or multi-ethnic

19. For the older literature, see Georg Simmel: *Soziologie* (ch. 4: *Der Streit*), (Leipzig, 1908), 310, and Lewis A. Coser: *Theorie sozialer Konflikte*, (Neuwied, 1972), 101–31.

loyalties, whether by virtue of origin, mobility, or family ties. Also included are all other non-ethnic interest-groups and coalitions in professional and regional walks of life and in various cultural and religious milieux.

In acute ethnopolitical conflicts in particular, vehement disagreements within the same ›camp‹ about the way in which the conflict should be conducted with the other side are not unusual — as has been the case, for example, in Israel, from the time the Rabin and Perez governments decided on a course of *rapprochement* with the PLO. Given these conditions, there is much to support the thesis that a lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians will only come about when each side has also been reconciled with itself.

In investigating the significance of the (im)partiality aspect, I shall here consider, for the sake of simplicity, only three levels of actors: partial, semi-partial, and impartial.²⁰ The *partial* actors are, as a rule, the political leaderships — in other words, the governments and the topmost members of the political groups involved. As soon as a conflict begins to be conducted militarily, the weight often shifts from the civilian to the military leaders, or the whole leadership-stratum is militarized. In a broader sense, this partial group may include all those persons who largely identify with the relevant ethnopolitical concerns and goals.

The *semi-partial* actors do not constitute a clearly definable group of political parties and social movements. The term implies to all those actors who, on ethnic grounds, can be ascribed more to one side or the other, but in whose self-image ethnopolitical issues play only a secondary role. In acute conflicts, this group finds it extremely difficult to secure a hearing. This category often also includes interest-groups of a more economic or social bent.

Impartial actors either do not figure at all, or do so only to a limited extent, *within* ethnopolitically divided societies. If ethnic membership is not automatically viewed as an expression of partiality, then this group is reduced to those individuals who have bi-ethnic or multi-ethnic affiliations, and to members of third

20. See Diana Francis and Norbert Ropers: Die Vielfalt der Aufgaben: Zur Friedensarbeit ziviler Akteure in nach-kommunistischen Gesellschaften, in Hanne-Margret Birckenbach et al. (eds.), Jahrbuch Frieden 1997 (Munich, 1996), 31–50.

ethnic groups within the country concerned. However, there are some persons and institutions who explicitly distance themselves from this blanket inclusion and put the emphasis on other aspects of political identity-formation. The group to which impartiality is most readily conceded is that of *external actors*, both at the state and societal level.

Constructive conflict management depends on the combined impact of all these groups of actors. Two foci are discernible here: first, the direct conflict management between and with the partial actors; and secondly, the indirect conflict management = relativization of the conflict through reinforcement of the semi-partial actors. In both cases, impartial actors can play an important role. However, their influence is often crucially dependent on outside support, particularly when it is a matter of assuming the role of an active third party.

Against this background, the widespread notion that peace work is primarily a task for the least ›partial« is highly misleading. It is much more a matter of finding constructive routes to conflict management even, and above all, within partial roles. The specific nature of these routes depends not only on the concrete configuration of the conflict, but also, and in particular, on the phase the conflict has reached.

5 Approaches to Intervention in the Course of a Conflict

One of the bestknown models for generalizing the course which conflicts follow is the concept of the ladder of escalation. According to this, a sustained conflict has a built-in tendency to stage-by-stage intensification. A systematic model for this concept has been developed by Friedrich Glasl, who distinguishes nine levels of escalation ranging from a ›hardening‹ phase to a »together into the abyss« phase.²¹ Applying the model to the course of ethnopolitical conflicts, Ronald J. Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly have reduced the number of levels to four: discussion, polarization, ›segregation‹, and destruction.²² In the view of these authors, the particular stage of escalation reached is crucial in determining the the nature which intervention must take to be successful. Their basic rule here is: the greater the escalation of the conflict, the more directive and intensive the intervention must be to be effective.

However plausible this rule may seem as a basic model for conflict intervention, it does make two assumptions that are problematic when it comes to ethnopolitical disputes, namely: relative homogeneity amongst the actors, and clearly distinguishable chronological phases in the escalation.²³ The problems posed by the assumption of homogeneity have already been mentioned when dealing with the aspect of (im)partiality. Partly related to this is the difficulty of

21. Friedrich Glasl: *Konfliktmanagement: Ein Handbuch für Führungskräfte und Berater*, (Bern and Stuttgart, 1990), 215 ff. One should, however, also add that Glasl developed this model primarily for use in meso-social conflicts.

22. Ronald J. Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly: *The Potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation within a Contingency Model of Third Party Intervention*, *Journal of Peace Research*, 28 (1991), 1: 29–42.

23. On this point, see the contrastive analysis of the Northern Ireland conflict in David Bloomfield: *Towards Complementarity in Conflict Management: Resolution and Settlement in Northern Ireland*, *Journal of Peace Research*, 32 (1995), 2: 151–64.

clearly distinguishing the phases of escalation for the totality of the actors involved: the current phase on the ladder of escalation can be viewed differently by the actors, depending on their bias, with the result that, at a given moment, there are often several escalatory phases co-existing in a single area of conflict.

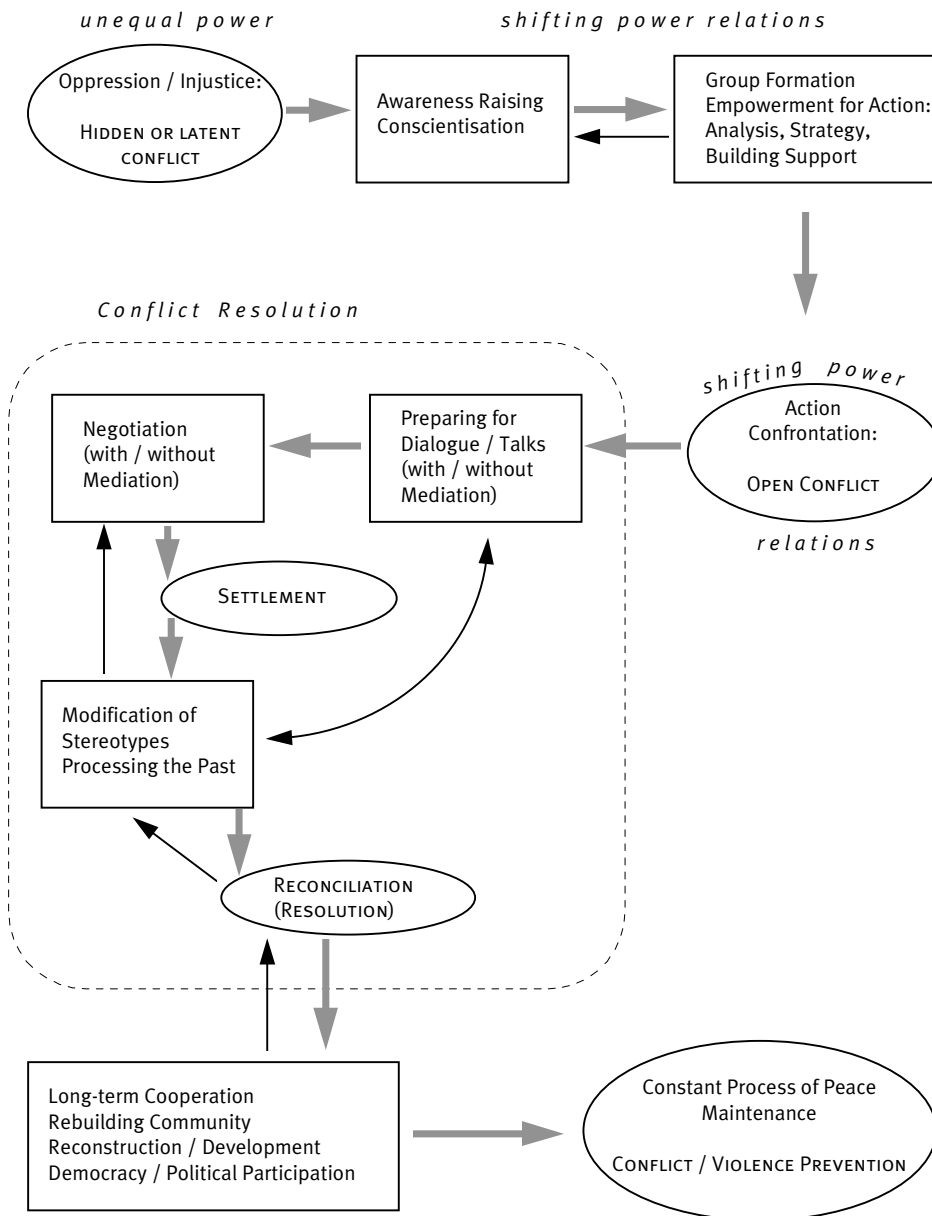
As far as comprehensive analysis and practical intervention in areas of ethnopolitical tension are concerned, the linear model of the ladder of escalation displays another weakness: it only comes into operation at the point at which both sides have constituted themselves as possible parties to a conflict. But many conflicts of this type cannot be understood without reference to their previous history, in which, because of the presence of clear but unarticulated injustices, one can only speak of a latent conflict. This phase has direct consequences for the role and function of the third party, because, at this early stage, the latter is faced primarily with a challenge to be ›partial«. In fact, in cases of extreme discrimination and disadvantage, an arrangement between the parties to the dispute can in most cases only be reached if the conflict is laid bare and the party with the upper hand is confronted with the concerns of the disadvantaged side.

Diana Francis's diagram for this kind of conflict-transformation (Fig. 4) highlights the need for the subordinate side to be *empowered* in the latent and extremely asymmetrical phase of a conflict. In her *conflict resolution* box, Francis also highlights the fact that, although this task is of central importance in the transformation of the conflict, it is only one of several methods of direct support and *community building*. The various steps which she distinguishes in the ›conflict resolution‹ field correspond to the major elements in the mediation and consultation approaches mentioned above.

Fig. 4: Diana Francis/Guus Meijer:Power and Conflict Resolution, typescript 1995.

Stages and Processes in Conflict Transformation

by Diana Francis, CCCRTE, UK



In order to be able to identify the roles and functions of third parties in the course of a conflict, it is helpful to distinguish them according to the number of persons affected and the level of leadership involved. With this in mind, Figure 5 picks up on Lederach's three-part pyramidal scheme. An additional fourth level is included, at which third parties can become involved without having a specific social group in view. This mainly involves the monitoring of human rights, lobby work for disadvantaged groups, and activities that help shape the structural framework-conditions mentioned above. The phases of the conflict are summarized in extremely simplified form in four and a half stages.

In the first phase, which extends from *latency of the conflict to political crisis*, a dual strategy is needed. On the one hand, the disadvantaged groups need to be bolstered. This task extends from economic assistance, through education and training projects, up to an including consultation about, and assistance with, the development of suitable forms of political representation of interests. A current example of this phase is the situation of the Roma in many European countries. On the other hand, the majority group's own long-term interest in maintaining thriving relations with the minority or minorities needs to be promoted, and common structures and loyalties need to be reinforced. In this early phase of *prevention*, measures by social actors positioned below the top level of leadership can set important signposts for the constructive management of a conflict — by creating a range of institutions for dealing with the ›nitty-gritty‹ of the dissension and by training individuals for these kinds of tasks.

Where there is talk of prevention, this almost always means intervention during the second phase, where the conduct of the conflict is already *confrontational*. This is traditionally also the phase in which mediation and consultation projects are initiated, in which training and further training in methods of conflict management are conducted, and in which peace commissions are given institutional form. Given the dynamics of the escalating forces, however, these approaches often come too late, affect only a small circle of — already open-minded — people with international contacts, and are far too inadequately geared to effecting the lasting mobilization of the semi-partial and impartial actors on the ground.

The point in the escalation of the conflict that is most fraught with consequences is the transition to the third phase — that of the *violent conduct of the conflict*. At a stroke, there are numerous additional motives for the conflict.

Fig. 5: Tasks for Third Parties in the Course of a Conflict

	FROM LATENT CONFLICT TO POLITICAL CRISIS	CONFRONTATIONAL CONDUCT OF CONFLICT	VIOLENT CONDUCT OF CONFLICT	END OF WAR	POST-WAR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
SUPRA-LEVEL-SPHERE	Monitoring of human rights/democratic media culture				
	Increased protection of minority rights/reinforcement of multi-ethnic structures/ sustainable and fair socio-economic development				
			Sanctions to bring about changes in conduct of conflict		Peace-keeping
TOP LEADERSHIP LEVEL	Empowerment of disadvantaged groups	Facilitation/ good offices		Crisis management	Support in power-sharing
			Mediation and pre-mediation		Political reconstruction
		Creation of conflict-management institutions		Power-based mediation	Demobilisation and civilization of militarized political structures
MIDDLE-RANGE LEADERSHIP	Empowerment of disadvantaged groups	Promotion of a democratic conflict-culture	Consultation projects	Support for impartial and semi-impartial actors on the ground	Social reconstruction
			Training sessions in conflict management		Reconciliation Workshops
		Training sessions in political organization	Peace commissions/ round tables	Public awareness work/ protest actions to bring violence to an end	
„GRASS-ROOTS“ LEVEL	Empowerment of disadvantaged groups	Peace and conflict education		Humanitarian intervention	Rehabilitation and trauma work
		Community building			Peace and conflict education
					Community building

Many who have previously refused to be drawn into the friend/foe schema 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. At this point, the peace work done by civil actors 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 war-zones. In practice, however, it is humanitarian help for the victims of the war that occupies centre-stage, together with attempts to contain 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 and pre-negotiations, undoubtedly play a major role in preparing the ground for a cease-fire or a (provisional) peace-agreement.²⁴

In many areas of tension, the fourth phase — that of *post-war conflict management* — is, tragically, the first in which any attempt is made to deal with the underlying conflict in any other way than through power politics or with threat and counter-threat. The tasks that have to be tackled are correspondingly huge.²⁵ In addition to the enormous tasks of working out a durable political solution, of rebuilding the fabric of the country, and of adapting to a peace economy, there are also the difficult issues of the (re)integration of refugees, war victims, and combatants, and of the whole complex of problems relating to reconciliation between the parties to the war. The major challenges here are, first, that of weighing up dissociative against associative principles in (re)building local communities, and, secondly, that of working through the past at both the individual and collective level.

24. Humanitarian intervention has now become an independent field of research and practice, in which a lively discussion is being conducted about the pros and cons of various forms of *interventionism*. See the overview in Tobias Debiel and Franz Nuscheler (eds.): *Der neue Interventionismus: Humanitäre Einmischung zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Bonn, 1996).

25. See e.g. Matthies (fn. 15); also Winrich Kühne: *Winning the Peace: Concept and Lessons Learned of Post-conflict Peacebuilding*, (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: Ebenhausen, 1996).

6 Third Parties as Catalysts in the Development of ›Peace Constituencies‹

The roles and functions of third parties as outlined so far may be summarized under the following heads:

First: The idea that ethno-political conflicts can be peacefully settled primarily or solely by means of a reactive outside intervention aimed at leadership groups is illusory. What is generally needed, rather, is both a change in the structural framework-conditions and a comprehensive mobilization of actors from the political and social domains in the affected region, in favour of an active transformation of the conflict.

Second: In many, if not most, ethno-political conflicts, making a durable peace is only possible if, in addition to the conflicts of interest being settled, the conflicts in relations are also dealt with. Most political third parties, but also many social ones, are overtaxed with this second task. In view of these demands, the institutions and repertoire of conflict management should be thoroughly discussed and expanded.

Third: Given the character of ethnicity, with its tendency, in principle, to lead to group formation, one needs, when engaging in the constructive treatment of ethno-political disputes, to adopt a dual strategy. On the one hand, one has expressly to acknowledge the plurality of ethnic traits as a basic form of socialization and a basic expression of collective identity-needs. On the other hand, one needs to promote non-ethnic traits and citizen-based loyalties and reinforce their institutional foundations.

Fourth: The notion, implicit in the concept of the third party, that the latter's partners in the area of conflict are more or less homogenous ›partial‹ actors, is not only far too simplistic; it can also be counterproductive, because it may weaken precisely those whose reinforcement is crucial — namely, the semi-partial and impartial groups on the ground. The concepts of ›impartiality‹ and ›neutrality‹ also merit investigation: taken *per se* and as static entities, they are of little use. The decisive factor, rather, is that third parties should have or acquire the skill to develop procedures and forums for conflict management that are acceptable to both sides, and the skill to adapt to the changing framework-conditions.²⁶

Fifth: One cannot stress often enough how much of an impact preventive intervention has on the way in which ethnopolitical conflict is conducted. However, one has to admit that, up to now, only rudimentary research has been done into the radical consequences which an imperative such as this has for the whole field of international relations.²⁷

The secretary-general of *International Alert*, Kumar Rupesinghe, suggests the term ›strategic alliances‹ to describe the combined impact of different actors in the transformation of ethnopolitical conflicts.²⁸ He is picking up on usage of this term in the globalized economy to underline the fact that, where there is a huge weight of problems, even influential actors will not be able to achieve any movement unless they combine forces through task-sharing, and pursue

26. See Frank Liebe: *Intercultural Mediation: A Difficult Brokerage: An Empirical-Analytical Attempt to Assess the Impact of Cultural Differences*, (Berghof Report 2; Berlin 1996).

27. See Volker Mathies: *Vom reaktiven Krisenmanagement zur präventiven Konfliktbearbeitung*, aus *Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B. 33-4/1996, 19-28; also Tobias Debiel: *Gewaltprävention in innerstaatlichen Konflikten: Mögliche Konzepte für neue Herausforderungen*, (Arbeitsstelle Friedensforschung: Bonn, 1996).

28. See Kumar Rupesinghe: *Transformation innerstaatlicher Konflikte: Von den ›Problemlösungs-Workshops‹ zu Friedensallianzen*, in Ropers and Debiel (fn. 6), 304-20; also Rupesinghe (ed.): *Conflict Transformation*, (Houndsmills: London, 1995).

complementary strategies. This applies also and especially to ›protracted conflicts‹ in the ethnopolitical field.

In addition to this, the combined impact of external third parties and internal actors should be organized such that — as Lederach has put it — *peace constituencies* emerge on the ground.²⁹ The term implies networks of individuals who, firstly, have a personal interest in the lasting settlement of ethnopolitical conflicts, and, secondly, have the influence and skills to be able to make this interest a reality.

The term ›peace constituencies‹ is a back-reference to ›war constituencies‹, i.e. those social and economic structures that take shape within the affected society in the course of a lengthy military altercation and which — often independently of the original causes of the war — foster the continuation of the violence. Such constituencies include, most importantly, the immediate ›winners‹ in the militarized conditions — arms manufacturers and dealers, the army or the various armed militias, the ›security services‹ of varying provenance, the political ›hardliners‹, and also the beneficiaries of the redistribution of land, capital, and political posts, at least for as long as their gains do not seem permanently secured. In the wider sense, however, war constituencies also include those who have profited from the more or less improvised ›war economy‹ and all those who exploit the shattered structures and corrupt conditions in order to engage in illegal dealings. Finally, a long-lasting ›culture of violence‹ also changes the nature of civilian intercourse within the affected social groups, and the individual finds it ever more difficult to oppose the spread of violence and the hardening of social relations.

Creating ›peace constituencies‹ accordingly means lending support, within post-war societies, to interests, networks, institutions, and attitudes of an opposite kind to those just cited. From the point of view of prevention, the aim must be to win over a broad-based network of multifarious social forces to the idea of transforming the conflict. In this connection, Lederach puts the main stress on the

29. John Paul Lederach: Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework, in Rupesinghe (ed.) (fn. 28), 201–22. See also Lederach: Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures, (Syracuse, 1995).

mobilization of the potential for peaceful conflict-regulation that already exists in the particular society or region, and has its roots in traditional culture. This is undoubtedly *one* possible contribution; but because the dynamics of many ethnopolitical conflicts is determined precisely by changes in these cultures dictated by modernization, one also has to create *new* structures and processes of conflict management.

Third parties can play an important role here, by helping the actors on the ground to extend their horizons and to accept the fact that there is ultimately no getting round the need to *acknowledge* the fundamental change in situation brought about by the ethnopolitical conflict. Often, the parties to the conflict, even though they do not admit this officially, are hoping that the conflict — or, more precisely, the position of the opposing side — will ›somehow‹ disappear at some point or another. This leads on to the last heading under which the roles and functions of third parties may be summarized.

Sixth: External third parties have a special responsibility for creating local and regional ›peace constituencies‹ in crisis areas. They make resources available, pass on know-how, provide forums for exchanges and network-formation, as well as for direct conflict management, and they not infrequently act as ›models‹ for desirable changes on the ground. Of course, their success is to be measured not in terms of these — often impressive — individual measures, but in terms of whether their ›helping hand to self-help‹ leads to the creation of a lasting basis for peace on the ground. In general, this requires long-term commitment.