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# Identity and Victimhood

Questions for Conflict Management Practice

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You can turn the world upside-down but fail to change it. To change the world you need to break out of the world view of not just the cat but the rat, not just the settler but the native.  
Mahmood Mamdani.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction<sup>2</sup>

In considering the violence of “yesterday’s victim” in postcolonial Africa, Mahmood Mamdani warns of the danger of becoming locked into the world of the rat and the cat. This is the political world of the victim and the perpetrator, the Hutu and the Tutsi, the Palestinian and the Israeli, or to use Frantz Fanon’s terms, the native and the settler;<sup>3</sup> a world in which identities are generated endlessly in binary pairs. The rat believes there is no worse enemy than the cat, not the lion, the tiger or the elephant, while for the cat there is nothing more delicious than the rat. In a world in which cats are few and rats are many, one way cats have stabilized their rule, according to Mamdani, is by “tagging” rats with a discourse on ethnic and racial origins. It is then quite possible that in a world where rats have managed to triumph over cats, rats may continue living in a world defined by cats, that is, by identities generated in the era when cats ruled.<sup>4</sup> While Mamdani’s specific concern, the Rwandan genocide of 1994, illuminates with chilling clarity the necessity of breaking out of the worldview of the rat, I want to point to a broader relevancy in the following paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, “Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa,” in *Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation. Documenta 11, Platform 2*, ed. Okwui Enwezor et. al. (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank the Berghof community for many stimulating exchanges on these issues and ideas, and for their warm hospitality during my visit in June, 2006. I am especially grateful to David Bloomfield, Astrid Fischer and Beatrix Schmelzle for their insightful comments on this paper. Appreciation also goes to my industrious research assistant, John McCurdy, and to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this project.

<sup>3</sup> See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

While recent conflict transformation literature attests to dramatic changes to the face of violent conflict in the world, due to the post-Cold War increase in ethno-political conflict, there is much work to be done both in understanding identity formation and in pointing the way out of the cycles of violence which identity struggles can perpetuate. Much of the literature seems to take for granted that human attachment to an ethnic identity category is natural and therefore stops short of sufficiently interrogating the difference between an identity that is experienced as cultural, and one that becomes politicized, pitted in stark relief against another or several other identity categories.<sup>5</sup> That is, ethnicity or race is naturalized, assumed to be fundamental to one's selfhood or subjectivity, and the process of *racialization* or *ethnicization*—in other words, the *politicization* of race or ethnicity—is not taken into account. The social and political construction of identity—the fact that we are *invited* to identify with this or that category, that we *identify* ourselves as belonging to this or that group, and that this identification can be used as a powerful political tool, including the justification of extreme acts of violence—should factor into the discussion of ethno-political conflicts. More importantly, I want to argue that we need to look for ways to create political communities that resist this politicization of identity. Conflict transformation or management practices have an extremely important role to play in this task.

This issue is particularly salient today because along with the increase in conflict that is purportedly rooted in identity groups hostile to one another, in recent decades we are witnessing an increasing focus on the suffering and injury of the victim, in a range of discourses and practices from human rights scholarship, political theory and psychology, to peace and conflict studies and conflict resolution practice. Scholars and practitioners have been calling attention to this, although it is not clear to me whether actual conflict management practices have taken this trend into account. Luc Huyse states that there has been “a shift from the cult of the hero to the cult of the victim. Suffering instead of heroism now attracts public and political

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<sup>5</sup> There are, of course, important exceptions. See Vamik Volkan, *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflict* (Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing, 2006); and Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (NY: Westview Press, 2004). Others such as Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*, 1999), Richard Kearney (*Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy*, 1997) and Dubravka Ugresic (*The Culture of Lies*, 1998), although not explicitly about conflict resolution, address this politicization of identity and its deleterious consequences in relation to ethno-political conflict.

consideration” and adds that “victim empowerment is not a blessing in all circumstances. It can become an obstacle to peaceful coexistence and mutual trust.”<sup>6</sup>

Dialogue or encounter groups in regions that have experienced ongoing ethnopolitical conflict have burgeoned in recent years, and here especially, we find that the emphasis on how to heal the psychic pain of victims traumatized by political violence often trumps attention to strategies for political change. An effect of this focus is that the victim has assumed the status of an identity, and in the same way as all other identities, is susceptible to politicization and abuse. But victims obviously need to be identified, acknowledged as victims and empowered, for justice and reconciliation to take place. How then do we account for the injury and suffering of victims without locking them forever into a binary logic of victim and perpetrator—the world of the cat and the rat? What happens when the victimized continue to identify as victims in ways that sabotage their own political agency?

In a discussion of collective guilt as it was assigned to the German people and its collective past, Hannah Arendt wrote that “where all are guilty, no one is.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, we might say that where all are victims no one is a victim. When thinking about the slippage between victim and perpetrator in cases of violent conflict in which one’s belonging to this or that identity category is essential to how one will be treated—even whether one will live or die—the question of who is a victim appears to be paramount. Can we regard all victims, including victims who become perpetrators, in the same light ethically, politically or legally? This question becomes critical when thinking, for example, of the protracted struggles of the Palestinians against the occupation by Israel, a state founded in order to provide a home for surviving victims of genocide, or of the reconciliation processes in Rwanda where victims-turned-perpetrators-turned-victims poses a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to justice and reconciliation.

In this paper I will address these issues in order to pose some probing questions for conflict management practitioners. This is a theoretical discussion drawing from a diverse body of literature from political theory, philosophy, and the social sciences, to the work of peace and conflict studies and practitioners of reconciliation and conflict management. Sweeping perhaps, but I believe it is

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<sup>6</sup> Luc Huyse, “Victims,” *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*, eds. David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2003), pp. 54-66, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), p. 21.

important to bring into dialogue these various perspectives. While this discussion does not go far enough in describing or recommending specific practices, it is my hope that it will be useful theoretical background for those thinking in concrete terms about reconciliation strategies. At any rate, given the particularities of the historical, cultural, social and political contexts in which conflict develops, the recommendation of specific practices may not always be the most effective approach. Therefore, I do not focus on a specific case in this paper (although Israel and Palestine figure more prominently) which always risks over-generalizing, but at the same time reveals important macro or global issues that can be overlooked when exploring in detail one particular site of conflict.

I will begin with a general discussion of identity as it relates to politics, looking briefly at North American discussions of the social construction of identity and relating this discourse to conflict management in the twenty-first century. Secondly, I will demonstrate what Mamdani means by the “worldview of the rat” in the context of the Rwandan genocide and outline the dangers of the binary logic such a worldview imprisons us within. My third section will discuss in more detail the condition and status of the victim today, keeping in mind the question: “who is a victim?” particularly as it pertains to the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine. Fourth, I will explore current discussions of the efficacy of dialogue groups, again mostly in Israel and Palestine, and attempt to draw out the implications for conflict management practice. Finally, I will draw some conclusions regarding the remaking of political community that does not have the production of binary identities at its origin.

## **2 Identity Politics and Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Twenty-first Century**

### **2.1 Identity and Difference**

The fact that identity is not a given, not unmediated by socio-cultural norms and political institutions, has long been taken for granted in the Western academy. The critique of enlightenment notions of the subject coming from postmodernism or poststructuralism as well as discourses on the social construction of race, class and gender have led to vigorous debates about the importance of identity and the human need to belong. While believed to be socially constructed and therefore without fixed boundaries, but porous or fluid, identity has come to be privileged in the political work and discourses of equality and liberation. In fact, proponents of these discourses have severely criticized postmodernists for calling into question the status of the subject at precisely the historical moment when those relegated to the margins of history have begun to claim their own subjectivity. Emancipatory discourses caught up in feminism, multiculturalism, or anti-racism, at least in North America, have for the most part defended a firm attachment to the idea that we have to act in the name of this or that identity category in the interests of emancipatory politics, despite the risk of setting up an exclusionary political community that is founded on an essentialist notion of what it means to be black, female, or gay, for example. The argument is so strong in some cases, that any interest in imagining or forming a community not based on an attachment to identity—in a raceless society, for example—is criticized for sabotaging the process of emancipation for the oppressed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Patricia Williams, for example, argues that promoting “color-blindness” in a society that is still racist, is a denial of this racism. The ideal of color-blindness is utopian and naïve, she argues, for it imagines away the unique obstacles racism presents to the racialized subject. We have to ponder our differences, she states, before “we can ever agree on the terms of our sameness.” See Patricia Williams, “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” *Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), pp. 4-7.

These arguments have arisen out of an academic preoccupation with difference, the politics of recognition, and the incommensurability of the “other.” The increasing moralism of this preoccupation with difference and general suspicion of a solidarity or community premised on human commonality rather than on a specific identity category has often prohibited any counter-critique. Proponents of such a position are likely to dismiss, for example, the work of such writers as Neil Bissoondath, whose controversial book *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* argues that such an emphasis on difference, particularly manifest in Canadian multiculturalism, has simply led Canada down the road to further social divisiveness; or Paul Gilroy, who argues for a “planetary humanism” that will take us “beyond the color line.”<sup>9</sup> Gilroy cautions us to interpret the “habitual resort to culture as an unbridgeable division” with care, for “it has often been a defensive gesture, employed by minorities and majorities alike when they wrongly imagine that the hollow certainties of ‘race’ and ethnicity can provide a unique protection against various postmodern assaults on the coherence and integrity of the self.”<sup>10</sup>

This brand of North American identity politics also has trouble answering to the fact that killing is done in the name of identity. If the spectre of ethnic- or race-based violence is raised to point out the possible outcome of a politics based on absolutist notions of identity, it is argued that those regions embroiled in ethnic conflict such as the Middle East or the former Yugoslavia are not comparable to the United States. Both Linda Alcoff and Seyla Benhabib, two very well-known American philosophers, make this argument. Alcoff worries that the focus on such places as Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in discussions on identity, misses the “obviously different nature” of problems in the United States, a country not constituted by multiple ethnic groups with long histories of border disputes, but rather by forced immigrants and a history of slavery.<sup>11</sup> The unspoken assumption here is that these “multiple ethnic groups” have a history of antagonism responsible for the violence.

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<sup>9</sup> See Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Books Ltd, 1994); and Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000). See also Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, Alcoff believes the critique of identity politics in the “progressive” academic community “has worked effectively to discredit much antiracist and feminist work being done today” and has thus once again contributed “to the divisions that keep us from moving forward.” (x) It is a reiteration of the time-honored complaint that self-critique among emancipatory movements harms their political aims; solidarity essentially requires then the silencing of dissent within the group. See Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) x.



Benhabib similarly distinguishes between two kinds of identity politics: one emerging in liberal capitalist democracies, the other out of the politics of racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious difference in North Africa, the Middle East, and the former communist nations. In the first case, Benhabib argues, identity politics demonstrates a use of identity that is necessary for emancipatory purposes, for it allows the expression of difference and is based on negotiation and contestation, whereas in the second, identities are only secured by *eliminating* difference.<sup>12</sup>

Certainly there are social, political and historical contingencies that must not be overlooked in discussions of the politics of identity occurring in various locations, within a nation or state as well as without, but there is a similar underlying logic—a binary economy of victim vs. perpetrator that essentializes identity categories into one camp or the other—that should make us pause. We don't have to argue that what happened in the former Yugoslavia could happen in the United States or Canada (although this of course *could* be argued) to find reasons to critique the politicization of identity. We need only ask what are the effects of such a politics? What kind of political future is created when we operate within the same binary that functioned in the selection, segregation, and victimization of individuals and groups to begin with? Important also, we must inquire into the social, political and economic conditions that make the transition from what Benhabib defines as identities based on the *negotiation* of difference and those based on the *elimination* of difference. It is this transition that should concern us the most. Thus, I would argue that while forceful arguments continue to be made for the necessity of identifying with this or that politicized category—even if temporarily—in the face of global sites of violence perpetuated in the name of identity, it is becoming harder to justify these claims. The notion of belonging is not innocent.

In spite of Alcoff's protest against the comparison, I think it is important to bring the North American debates on identity politics into conversation with those who know ethnopolitical conflict well. Bringing these perspectives together will show us what is problematic about an over-emphasis on difference; not to disregard the valuable lessons learned through the concern with marginality or otherness, but to recognize the limits or dangers of institutionalizing difference, and of rendering

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<sup>12</sup> Seyla Benhabib, "The Democratic Moment and the Problem of Difference," *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 4-5.

cultural difference between identity groups as an insurmountable challenge to understanding.

## 2.2 “New” Dilemmas

By the end of the 1990s conflict resolution scholars were generally agreed on the need for new paradigms in the field, due to the changes in the kinds of conflict that were springing up around the globe at the end of the Cold War. Although it is difficult to establish significant trends in post-Cold War conflict, one trend that is clear is the decline in the number of interstate wars;<sup>13</sup> the predominant type of conflict has become *intrastate*, in particular “ethnonationalist” conflict.<sup>14</sup> Similar to civil wars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—indicating these “new” conflicts are not so new—the overwhelming majority of civil wars in the post World War II era were fought in the name of “ethnonational autonomy or independence”<sup>15</sup> and since the 1950s these continued to increase, reaching a peak in 1993-94.<sup>16</sup>

Jay Rothman and Marie L. Olson claim that although the analysis of identity groups has not replaced the nation-state as the dominant conceptual tool in the field of international relations, identity is a growing focus of global peacemaking, indicating a “new landscape” for international conflict. There is of course a corresponding increased desire to understand and manage these conflicts. As Andreas Wimmer puts it, ethnic conflicts have become “a testing ground for a new morality of promoting peace, stability, and human rights across the globe.”<sup>17</sup>

This new landscape requires new approaches. In his 1992 study of 81 peaceful and violent international and civil conflicts, from 1945-85 in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Hugh Miall concludes that civil wars were more likely to exhibit major

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<sup>13</sup> Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse (eds.), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> See Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, “Armed Conflict, 1989-99,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37 (5), pp. 635-646.

<sup>15</sup> Christian Scherrer, *Ethno-Nationalismus als globales Phänomen: Zur Krise der Staaten in der Dritten Welt und der früheren UDSSR* (Duisburg, Germany: Gerhard-Mercator-Universität, 1994), p. 74. Cited in Andreas Wimmer, *Facing Ethnic Conflict: Toward a New Realism* (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Andreas Wimmer, “Introduction: Facing Ethnic Conflicts,” *Facing Ethnic Conflict: Toward a New Realism*, ed. Andreas Wimmer et. al. (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp.1-20, p. 1

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

violence than interstate wars. The fact that ethnic conflicts mostly involve the rights of ethnic groups to maintain their identity, gain equal recognition and share equal status with other groups, according to Miall, renders traditional interest-based bargaining and negotiation insufficient.<sup>18</sup>

Wimmer explains that there exists a wide range of responses to this increase in ethnopolitical conflict, from the argument that ethnic minorities are in need of self-determination not because of “a genuine sense of community and drive for cultural autonomy,” but rather because foreign powers aim to weaken the state, which results in the encouragement of minority discourses, to the idea that the feeling of ethnic belonging is a subjective reality.<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, identity is considered to be socially and politically constructed—ethnicity is *useful* for political purposes—while on the other, identity is thought to be about an inherent need for culture and belonging. Is this desire the consequence or the cause of a conflict? That is, does the need to belong become an absolute and exclusionary need only when it is threatened by external forces, only when through discriminatory practices one’s belonging suddenly becomes an act of resistance? Do we ask only how hatred has been made in a community but never how that community has been made out of hatred?<sup>20</sup>

Wimmer and the contributors to *Facing Ethnic Conflict: Toward a new Realism* (2004), conclude that what is necessary is a more realistic assessment about how to face ethnopolitical conflict. This “new realism” proposes increased attention to the complexity of ethnic conflicts, including an acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of ethnic groups and the fact that conflicts spill over borders; a certain modesty about intervention possibilities; an understanding of conflicts as individual, requiring particular responses and policy recommendations; and a recognition of conflicts as deeply and closely related to political institutions.<sup>21</sup>

While these proposals certainly acknowledge the particular requirements of ethnopolitical conflict, and appear to be fundamental premises on which to build any conflict management practice, they do not interrogate identity itself, neither what we consider a human need to belong, nor the dangerous transition from what we might call an innocent belonging to a deadly one. Do we not need more than emergency

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<sup>18</sup> Hugh Miall, *The Peacemakers: Peaceful Settlement of Disputes Since 1945*. London: Macmillan, 1992. Cited in Rothman and Olson, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Wimmer, *Facing Ethnic Conflict: Toward a New Realism*, p. 334.

<sup>20</sup> Boris Buden, “Truth and Reconciliation Are Not What We Really Need,” *Experiments with Truth, Documenta 11, Platform 2*, p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> Wimmer, *Facing Ethnic Conflict: Toward a New Realism*, pp. 337-343.

measures? If ethnic hostilities are not natural but driven by certain political and socio-economic factors, are they not preventable, or at least can we not intervene with preventative measures? This would require thinking through how we form our political communities to begin with.

The terms of identity—ethnicity and race in particular—must not be unquestionably assumed. It is not simply an attachment to one’s ethnicity or traditions that necessarily leads to conflict—no facile “clash of civilizations” then—but the use to which ethnic identity is put, its mobilization for political purposes. Then, as Norbert Ropers remarks, identity becomes “a key feature of the disputants’ self-image.”<sup>22</sup> Ethnic identity is the criterion on which these new intrastate rivalries are based, leading to their characterization as ethnic conflicts, but Ropers urges us to be wary of these terms:

This kind of description should not, of course, be regarded as tantamount to an explanation—as if membership of a particular ethnic group automatically produced a situation conducive to conflict. In most cases, it is possible to point to a host of causes and material factors that have little to do with the ethnic features of the parties in dispute. It therefore makes more sense to talk about ethnopolitical conflicts, given that, as a rule, it is only when ethnic features are politicized that they acquire a key role in the conflict process.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, ethnopolitical conflict is the “main challenge” faced by peace policy at the end of the twentieth century, according to Ropers, and those embroiled within these conflicts are “making increased use of the argument about ethnic membership to mobilize their adherents.”<sup>24</sup> In the following two sections, I will look at two specific cases in which this mobilization has become brutally efficient, and discuss what we might learn from it.

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<sup>22</sup> Norbert Ropers, *Roles and Functions of Third Parties in the Constructive Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Berghof Occasional Paper No. 14 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Norbert Ropers, *Peaceful Intervention: Structures, Processes, and Strategies for the Constructive Regulation of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Berghof Report No. 1 (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ropers, *Roles and Functions of Third Parties in the Constructive Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, p. 1.

### 3 The Worldview of the Victim: Rwanda

It should be recognized that the list of binary pairs of victims and perpetrators in my opening paragraph are only binaries in very general terms. In reality, as so many of the current ethnopolitical conflicts around the world demonstrate, there are not always clear boundaries between the victim and the perpetrator, as these designations shift over time, and the line between them blurs. Victims can become perpetrators, and can in turn be re-victimized yet again, or victims can be perpetrators simultaneously. Israel, with its legacy of the Nazi Holocaust, in turn victimizing the Palestinians whom it displaced, and Palestinians victimized by the violence of the occupation in turn killing innocent Israelis, is a conflict that exemplifies this slippage between victim and perpetrator, to be addressed in the following section. The Rwandan genocide raises other questions, although in both cases, we are given cause to inquire into the brutality justified in part by victimhood. Mahmood Mamdani's study *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, reveals the urgency of understanding the violence of victims turned perpetrators. Unprecedented for the massive civilian participation in massacring the Tutsi population as well as many Hutu who refused to participate in the killing, Mamdani seeks to show how the 1994 genocide was tied inextricably to the political world set in motion by Belgian colonialism: a world divided into natives and settlers. But such political identities are *artifacts*. Mamdani makes a distinction between ethnicity as a *cultural* identity—an identity that is consensual, based on a shared culture, voluntary and multiple—and ethnicity as a *political* identity, enforced by a political authority and its legal and administrative institutions. When law imposes a cultural difference, this difference becomes reified or frozen; it is neither voluntary nor multiple: "The law recognizes you as one and as none other."<sup>25</sup> It is Mamdani's particular engagement with this issue that concerns me here—a perspective that is not without its critics—rather than a more comprehensive or general analysis of the Rwandan genocide.

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<sup>25</sup> Mamdani, "Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa," *Experiments with Truth*, pp. 30-31.

In the case of Rwanda, Mamdani argues that the identities of “indigenous” (Hutu) and “immigrant” (Tutsi) came straight out of colonial history books and colonial law.<sup>26</sup> Before 1959, he claims he could not find any significant episode in which battle lines were drawn between these two groups as political adversaries. It was Belgian colonialism that, for the first time in the history of Rwanda, came to identify two groups, and justified Tutsi privilege as the privilege of a group identified and exalted as racially alien. Identity cards issued by Belgian authorities sealed the differences between them, legally categorized them as two biologically distinct races. This “race-branding” was not only a state ideology, but became a social ideology as well, which helps to explain why the killings were carried out by ordinary people—one’s neighbours, workmates, teachers, doctors, priests, or even one’s own husband.<sup>27</sup>

Mamdani points out that writings on Rwanda have given us a picture of a simple moral world. Journalists, for example, looked for victims distinguished from perpetrators, and failed to understand the forces that motivated the perpetrator. But how many perpetrators were yesterday’s victims? Mamdani asks,

What happens when yesterday’s victims act out of a determination that they must never again be victimized, *never again*? What happens when yesterday’s victims act out of a conviction that power is the only guarantee against victimhood, so that the only dignified alternative to power is death? What happens when they are convinced that the taking of life is really noble because it signifies the willingness to risk one’s own life, and is thus, in the final analysis, proof of one’s own humanity?<sup>28</sup>

Continuing to act in the name of an identity once an economy of violence has sprung out of the binary logic of victim and perpetrator, does not enable political transformation, but prevents it. This is Mamdani’s argument when he makes the radical claim that the great crime of colonialism went beyond the expropriation of the native, “*the greater crime was to politicize indigeneity in the first place.*”<sup>29</sup> It is a controversial argument when viewed in light of the important status which North American proponents of identity politics want to ascribe to identity in the name of liberation. Mamdani includes in this politicization both the negative libeling of the native by the settler, *as well as* the positive self-assertion of the native response to

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

this libel. The genocide was a natives' genocide, a victim's genocide; a struggle by the majority, the Hutu, to cleanse the country of a threatening "alien" presence, the minority Tutsi, a group with a privileged relation to power before colonialism. This was a violence not against neighbours therefore, as it is generally portrayed, but against a population viewed as foreigners; a violence that thus sought to eliminate a foreign presence from home soil. Rather than focusing on the origin of a racial or ethnic difference, the crucial task according to Mamdani is to ask when and how Hutu was made into a native identity and Tutsi into a settler identity, and to understand how violence is the key to sustaining the relationship between them.<sup>30</sup>

Significantly, one of the effects of this politicization of identity is what Mamdani calls a "victim psychology":

Ever since the colonial period, the cycle of violence has been fed by a victim psychology on both sides. Every round of perpetrators has justified the use of violence as the only effective guarantee against being victimized yet again. For the unreconciled victim of yesterday's violence, the struggle continues. The continuing tragedy of Rwanda is that each round of violence gives us yet another set of victims-turned-perpetrators.<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately, according to Mamdani, the failure of Hutu power consisted in the inability to transform the political legacy of colonialism, choosing instead to build on the very racialized political identities generated by colonial rule. Hutu power had the potential "of liberating the rat from the terror of the cat" but also the risk of "locking the rat forever in a world driven by fear of the cat," blind to larger possibilities, and it chose the latter.<sup>32</sup> Instead of transforming the world of colonialism, they simply confirmed it. The lesson of Rwanda, therefore, is to recognize that group identities are institutionally, politically and legally produced, and thus of limited historical significance. Without acknowledging the limits of these identity categories, questioning the historical context of their instigation and reification, a "native" or victim identity "is likely to generate no more than an aspiration for trading places, for hegemonic aspirations" and "every pursuit of justice will tend toward revenge, and every reconciliation toward an embrace of institutional evil."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 267-8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

Mamdani argues that there are two forms of justice that could be pursued at this historical crossroads Rwanda faces: the first is a victor's justice that follows the example of Israel. It would build a Zionist-type of state on the ashes of the genocide. This is indeed what is happening in Rwanda presently, according to Mamdani. There is an overwhelming global sense of moral responsibility for the survival of Tutsi, combined with the idea that only power will ensure Tutsi survival; therefore they must have a state of their own. The moral ideology that underlies Tutsi power is the memory of the genocide and the moral imperative that it *never happen again*. As in post-Holocaust Israel, the moral certainty about such a "never again" ideology provides a moral justification for the pursuit of power with impunity. A victor's justice comes with a price, however: the increased need to secure one's position as victor. The "jailor comes to be tied to the jail as much as is the prisoner" and so the victor must live in fear of the next round of battle. A permanent civil war ensues. Victor's justice seems to be revenge masquerading as justice.<sup>34</sup>

Ultimately, while post-independence regimes in Africa pledged to change the world of the settler *and* the native, to "deracialize" civic rights, according to Mamdani, not everyone was agreed that the native was also a colonial construct and needed to be reformed just as urgently.<sup>35</sup> The second kind of justice Mamdani proposes—"survivor's justice"—is an attempt to rectify this problem. What is demanded is a different political future built on different political identities to avoid turning the post-genocidal reconciliation into an embrace of the colonial legacy in the same way the postcolonial pursuit of justice confirmed its colonial past and turned justice into revenge.<sup>36</sup> To transcend the terms of the earlier victim/perpetrator opposition, based on a strict demarcation between Tutsi and Hutu, a new community of survivors must be formed; survivor here referring not only to surviving victims, but to all those who are "blessed with life" after civil war.<sup>37</sup> Rwandans must find a way to live together, and in order to do this, Mamdani argues, "ways must be found to reconcile the logic of reconciliation with that of justice." Rather than merely demonizing perpetrators, the key is to focus on political justice, on the reform of institutions and institutional rule. This would shift the ground of political rights from ethnicity or race to the mere fact of residence, for example, and initiate a commitment

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 270-272.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 273.



to living under a common roof rather than sharing a common history.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, survivor's justice would cease to make distinctions based on ideology, but search for a "broad base" of power; one that would include Hutu and Tutsi regardless of political or ideological perspectives, but that would exclude all those not willing to disarm as a precondition of being invited into the reform process.<sup>39</sup>

A cursory look at Mamdani's extensive study of the Rwandan genocide gives us reason to seriously doubt the political potential of identity politics, and shows the chilling outcomes of a "victim psychology." The latter, in fact, is revealed to be inextricable from the former. It also gives some insight into a notion of justice and reconciliation that attempts to overcome the binary logic of victim vs. perpetrator, and so avoid furthering cycles of grievance and retributive violence. While Mamdani stresses that the idea of "survivor's justice" only makes sense in situations where there have been few beneficiaries in a civil war, and many perpetrators, as in Rwanda, unlike apartheid South Africa, for example, he has pointed to an alternative political community and idea of justice that unsettles some of our assumptions about the relationship between identity and politics, and between justice and reconciliation. Is there a risk, however, in using the language of survival, that *all* will identify as victims? Are there conflicts in which we need to be more vigilant about distinguishing perpetrators from victims, as challenging and imperfect a distinction as that may be? And if so, how do we know who is a victim?

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 272-6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 278-9.

## 4 Who is a Victim?

In the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985), “victim” is defined as “persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that do not yet constitute violations of national criminal laws but of internationally recognized norms relating to human rights.”<sup>40</sup> There is nothing in this broad definition to suggest that a victim can also be a perpetrator, and it assumes that all victims are morally comparable, an assumption any Palestinian or Israeli, Hutu or Tutsi, might vehemently contest. On what understanding of victimhood do conflict management practices base their work? How do we account for the fact that the appeal to victimhood is one of the psychic roots of the normalization of brutality; that one of the effects of identity politics is “the conversion of all Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc., into the permanent theoretical victims of their enemies”?<sup>41</sup> Dilip Simeon asks where is the innocent victim in situations such as that in the former Yugoslavia where “women widowed by one atrocity picket the roads to prevent medical supplies from reaching the survivors of another atrocity” and where young men take up arms “to do unto others what others have done unto them.” Furthermore, he asks, how do we define the child soldiers who are filling the ranks of the paramilitaries from Sri Lanka to Liberia? Are they victims or perpetrators? Simeon concludes: “We have to accept the uncomfortable truth that the ubiquitous language of brutality has pushed victims and perpetrators together into a seamless whole.”<sup>42</sup>

If this is the case, it seems an impossible task to address both the psychological and political needs of victims of ethno-political violence. Ropers explains that lengthy disputes in ethno-political conflict typically operate on two levels: “the more or less openly negotiated level of political demands and interests,

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<sup>40</sup> David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005), p. 57.

<sup>41</sup> Dilip Simeon, “A Finer Balance: An Essay on the Possibility of Reconciliation,” *Experiments with Truth, Documenta 11, Platform 2*, p. 137.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

and the deeper level of collective experiences, stances, and attitudes integral to the formation of identity.” These collective experiences become the collective memory of a group’s or community’s trauma, and are frequently handed down, “deliberately kept alive” over generations. If, therefore, in such cases conflict management “is confined to the negotiating level and to an apparently ‘reasonable’ balance of interests, there will be a danger that the neglected ‘deep dimensions’ of collective experiences, traumas, and attitudes will manifest itself as an inexplicable ‘irrational’ derangement.”<sup>43</sup>

How do we empower victims (and victims turned perpetrators), acknowledge their trauma without reducing them to impotent victims without responsibility, at the same time that we acknowledge the injustice and inequality of the political situation that victimizes them—a task which appears to necessitate the distinction between victims and perpetrators? In other words, how do we maintain a focus on justice and peaceful reconciliation at the same time? These are particularly crucial issues for understanding and managing the conflict in Israel and Palestine. As a result of the special circumstances under which the State of Israel was declared—the displacement of the Palestinians for the good of a displaced population of genocide survivors—the ongoing conflict poses unique questions. Here we have an extraordinary example of violence justified by victimhood on the part of both Israelis and Palestinians. This does not, of course, negate the fact of the extreme asymmetry of the conflict, a fact which renders even the term “conflict” a misnomer, suggesting as it does two antagonistic but reasonably equal sides. There is no parity here, yet analyzing the culture of victimhood and martyrdom among Palestinians as well as among Israeli Jews is important if we are to make the argument that an attachment to victimhood can be seriously debilitating in the process of reconciliation.

In his controversial book *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (2000), Norman Finkelstein distinguishes the actual historical event of the Nazi holocaust from what he calls “The Holocaust,” defined as an ideological representation of the Nazi holocaust, which like most ideologies bears a tenuous connection with reality. It has proven, in fact, to be an indispensable ideological weapon according to Finkelstein: “Through its deployment, one of the

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<sup>43</sup> Ropers, *Roles and Functions of Third Parties in the Constructive Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, p. 8-9.

world's most formidable military powers, with a horrendous human rights record, has cast itself as a 'victim' state..."<sup>44</sup>

Finkelstein states that the Israeli Palestinian conflict is not the exceedingly complex issue it is constantly characterized as in the United States, but quite simple: Israel, with the support of the U.S., is violating human rights and international law. In a recent UN report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (OPT), John Dugard gives a summary of these violations, including, among others: the devastating impact of economic sanctions on Gaza; brutal military incursions; the construction of the Wall; demolitions of homes and institutional buildings; the system of over 500 checkpoints and roadblocks within the OPT that denies freedom of movement; the imprisonment and ill-treatment of over 9000 Palestinians; the targeted assassinations of over 500 Palestinians since 2000; the separation of families due to Israel's refusal of visas to foreign residents; and the humanitarian crisis in the OPT arising from the withholding of funds owed to the Palestinian Authority by the Israeli government and from the economic isolation of the OPT by the US, the EU and other States reacting to the election of the Hamas government. Dugard concludes that the OPT "is the only instance of a developing country that is denied the right of self-determination and oppressed by a Western-affiliated State" and is therefore of special importance to the future of human rights in the world. It has thus become a test for the West by which to judge its commitment to human rights; a test it appears to be failing.<sup>45</sup>

In the name of security against terrorism, Israel defends these measures, backed by the U.S. government. Consider the following justification for the Israeli "security fence" given by Reserve General Amos Yaron to Simone Bitten in the documentary *Mur*:

First I want to tell you why we needed to go and build a fence. The reason is clear. It is an effective way to significantly reduce the penetrative capabilities of Palestinians who come to commit terrorist acts inside the State of Israel in the populous urban centers along the coastal plane, and in

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<sup>44</sup> Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York: Verso, 2000), p. 3. Finkelstein's own parents were the only surviving members of their families of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Nazi concentration camps. He states that his purpose in writing this book is to fight for "the integrity of the historical record". His indignation at "the falsification and exploitation" of the Nazi genocide grew out of the fact that the holocaust has been used to justify the criminal policies of the Israeli state and the U.S. support for these policies (see pp. 7-8).

<sup>45</sup> John Dugard, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967," Human Rights Council, Fourth session, Item 2 of the provisional agenda, 29 January, 2007, pp. 2-3, p. 24.

other areas. It is a very effective way to prevent terrorists from committing their crimes inside Israeli territory.<sup>46</sup>

The second reason he gives is that the wall will ensure the security of Israelis who experience tremendous insecurity as a result of the fact that Palestinians consider Israel to be “an unlimited resource for stolen goods, especially cars and agricultural equipment.”<sup>47</sup> As the General puts it, the case is clear: the world is divided into innocent Israelis who need protection and criminal Palestinians who need to be separated, kept at bay.

Against these egregious human rights and international law violations, it seems unfair to point to Palestinians’ own “victim psychology” but this too bears scrutiny, for the long term effects it has on communities traumatized by war and repression. Consider one particular discourse that has emerged in recent scholarly discussions of Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation around the question of despair as a motivation for suicide bombing. Destroying one’s body and murdering innocent bystanders in order to exact revenge on the occupiers for initiating the violence now turned against them, has been read as a legitimate response to despair; a violence of self-defense, of political resistance in the name of self-determination and the struggle for human rights. Such an act of violence could then be interpreted as a recuperation of meaning for a life that found it increasingly impossible to create such meaning: a redemptive act, in other words, one which restores significance to a life without any. As Edward Said explains, the Palestinian revolution is “a liberation from nonentity” and self-determination is only possible where there is some “clearly seen ‘self’ to determine.”<sup>48</sup>

Others have described the appalling conditions of life in the refugee camps, breeding grounds for young men and women willing to sacrifice their lives for a better

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<sup>46</sup> Amos Yaron, *Mur*, directed by Simone Bitton (Lifesize Entertainment, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* The juxtaposition of Amos Yaron’s statement with Finkelstein’s argument in *The Holocaust Industry* raises some questions that cannot be addressed here. It is clear that Israel’s main justification for its occupation of Palestine and the military force necessary for its maintenance (including the wall), is security against the threat of terror. It is arguable then, how significant the Nazi holocaust is to present-day Jews living in Israel and dealing with the daily politics of security and terror, believing themselves to be inhabiting a democratic island in a sea of Arab hostility, and therefore how correct Finkelstein is *today* in his argument. In personal conversations with Canadian Jews and with others living in Israel or Palestine, I have heard both that Israelis are only preoccupied with Middle East politics and want to forget the Holocaust, and, on the contrary, that references to the Holocaust are ubiquitous. This requires further investigation. We cannot overlook the historical circumstances for the displacement of the Palestinians. It also bears considering that the Holocaust may be more “present,” as a justification for military force, for Jews in the diaspora, especially in the United States, and explains to a large extent the reluctance of non-Jews to speak out against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The tremendous fear of being considered anti-Semitic is certainly one legacy of the Holocaust.

<sup>48</sup> Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 118.

Palestinian future. The refugee camp has symbolized the expulsion of the Palestinian, the place where, as Faisal Darraj puts it, conditions are so wretched that rebelling and taking up arms eventually becomes *the only understandable response*.<sup>49</sup> The “social unavailability” of the opportunity to make something of one’s life in the camps means that throwing stones, facing the tanks, risking death, and wishing for martyrdom all become—paradoxically—meaningful events that create the strong sense of individual or collective identity Palestinians are normally denied. When fifteen year old Mohammed Dauoud was killed while throwing stones at a main clash point in Al-Bireh, his sister Soha said in an interview with Wendy Pearlman: “How can you express yourself other than going to the checkpoint and throwing a stone?...You feel like you have to do something, even if you know that the stone won’t even reach them—even if you know that, in the end, it’s useless.”<sup>50</sup>

This argument regarding despair has been forwarded by international scholars in response to the demand for the moral condemnation of suicide bombers. They have urged the Western public to seek an understanding and analysis of the motivating factors that give rise to such brutal acts. Most suicide bombers have lived through the first Intifada, witnessed acts of violation, killing and expropriation, and experienced what Ghassan Hage calls “colonial humiliation”: the experience of being psychologically demeaned without the capacity to redress the situation. Not only on a national level but on a personal level: “being shouted at, abused, searched, stopped, ordered around, checked, asked to wait, ‘allowed to pass,’ and so forth.”<sup>51</sup>

There are some, like the British philosopher Ted Honderich, who would extend this argument on despair to an appalling end, rendering it much less morally ambiguous. For Honderich, suicide bombing is a legitimate and morally just response to despair, a paradigmatic case of what he calls “terrorism for humanity.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, he argues that Palestinians have a moral right to their terrorism as it is their only effective and economical means of self-defense and liberation.<sup>53</sup> The suicide bomber

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<sup>49</sup> Faisal Darraj, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, May 2-8, 2002, Issue No. 584.  
<<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/584/op2.htm>> Emphasis added.

<sup>50</sup> Wendy Pearlman, *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press/ Nation Books, 2003), p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> Ghassan Hage, “‘Comes a Time We Are All Enthusiasm’: Understanding Palestinian Suicide Bombers in Times of Exiphobia,” *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003), pp. 65-89, p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> Ted Honderich, *Terrorism for Humanity*, 4 March 2004, p. 6.  
<[www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctyho/terrforhum.html](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctyho/terrforhum.html)>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

who kills an Israeli child, therefore, in Honderich's words, "was morally permitted if not obliged to do what she did."<sup>54</sup>

Even if we do not take the argument to this awful extreme, we must carefully consider the implications of such a discussion. Understanding is critical, to be sure, but to suggest that suicide bombing might be "the only understandable response" when it has been devastatingly counter-productive, disastrous even for the Palestinian people, is entirely problematic. The supreme irony of the Israeli Palestinian conflict is that these claims to victimhood mirror each other. In the name of security and self-determination, each side justifies its violence towards the other side. But it is not a situation of parity. Should we distinguish between these victims, between the victim of the Israeli occupation and the victim of a Palestinian suicide bomber? If we do not, what are we suggesting about the responsibility and agency of the victim? As Marie Smyth writes in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland: "The status of victim renders the victim deserving of sympathy, support, outside help. Victims, by definition are vulnerable, and any violence on their part can be construed as the consequences of their victimization. The acquisition of the status of victim becomes an institutionalized way of escaping guilt, shame or responsibility."<sup>55</sup> Are we living in times in which everyone is beginning to appear to us as a victim, and no one is asked for accountability? Hannah Arendt complained already in 1964 in the context of a discussion of the public outcry over her study of the Adolf Eichmann trial, that society has "a widespread fear of judging," behind which "lurks the suspicion that no one is a free agent, and hence the doubt that anyone is responsible or could be expected to answer for what he has done."<sup>56</sup>

This could be the global manifestation of a noticeable shift, at least in North America, from historically blaming victims too readily for the crimes of perpetrators, to denying victims any responsibility for their behaviour and for reactions to abuse. This is the argument of Sharon Lamb who states that "the current overemphasis on victimization and the concomitant overpurification of victims have actually been helpful to perpetrators looking to escape responsibility ... perpetrators who were

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<sup>54</sup> Ted Honderich, "Obligations to the Future: Palestinian Terrorism, Morality and Germany," *Counterpunch*, 25/26 October 2003. <[www.counterpunch.com/honderich10252003.html](http://www.counterpunch.com/honderich10252003.html)>

<sup>55</sup> Marie Smyth, "Putting the Past in its Place: Issues of Victimhood and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland's Peace Process," *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*, ed. Nigel Biggar (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 107-130. Cited in Huyse, "Victims," p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, p. 19. See also, Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963).

once victims themselves can now escape blame.”<sup>57</sup> Why would we allow victims to excuse actions comparable to those of a perpetrator, if we refuse to allow the latter’s excuses? In part, this is due to the new language of psychic trauma, produced by several decades of psychological work concerning the necessity of collective healing from political violence, a process which assumes that “rational” political behaviour is suspended until the healing is accomplished. Ethnopolitical conflict is pathologized, and those who are victimized by it thought to experience wounds that could fester into destructive rage.<sup>58</sup>

Victim empowerment is a crucial aspect of any reconciliation process, and it would be problematic to suggest that this work always leads to a dangerous identification with victimhood that sabotages the agency and political future of the victim. What is necessary is to find ways to empower victims that do not lead to the “exaltation of victimhood” as Paul Gilroy puts it;<sup>59</sup> that do not strip victims of responsibility for the future. This means recognizing that there are different *degrees* of victimization and that the historical context of an individual’s victimization cannot be forgotten.<sup>60</sup> Mourning a death perpetrated by a Palestinian suicide bomber is no different from mourning a death perpetrated by an Israeli soldier—they are mourned as any human death—but the historical circumstances surrounding these deaths are not the same. Personally, all victims are equal in the sense that they are equally reduced to suffering or grieving bodies;<sup>61</sup> politically, historically, they are not, and it is here, *on the collective level*, that we could argue the greater responsibility belongs to the Israelis, as it does to all those of us whose governments support the Israeli occupation of Palestine.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sharon Lamb, *The Trouble With Blame: Victims, Perpetrators, and Responsibility* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Bettina Marta Prato, “The Politics of Melancholic Reason: The Experience of the Israeli-Palestinian Parents’ Circle” *Parallax*, vol. 11:3, 2005, pp. 117-129, p. 117.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> I realize it is somewhat problematic to shift from personal victimhood to a collective sense of victimhood, and from psychological to political analyses. The question that must be raised, but that is beyond the scope of this paper, is how we can bring these analyses to bear on one another. A collective, after all, is merely a number of individuals grouped together. Is there a collective victim apart from singular victims that requires a different framework of analysis?

<sup>61</sup> An interesting dialogue group to investigate in this respect would be the Bereaved Parents Circle or Families Forum, an Israeli-Palestinian group of bereaved parents interested in embarking on political initiatives to prevent further deaths. For a provocative analysis of this group, see Prato, “The Politics of Melancholic Reason: The Experience of the Israeli-Palestinian Parents’ Circle,” pp. 117-129.

<sup>62</sup> I do not want to imply here that Israeli Jews are *only* yesterday’s victims, and therefore somehow less worthy of compassion and consideration. The claims I am making here do presuppose Finkelstein’s argument, that the Holocaust has been instrumental in shaping and perpetuating the security/terror paradigm. Israeli Jews could very well protest that they are victimized today by terror, and that this has



As Mamdani argues, the prerequisite for survivor's justice may be victory, for it presents alternatives to the victor which it does not to the vanquished: "Only the victor has the choice of reaching out to the vanquished on terms that have the potential of transcending an earlier opposition between the two, by defining both as survivors of the civil war."<sup>63</sup> When the power is as severely imbalanced as it is in the case of Palestine and Israel, we need to find an appropriate way to distinguish between victims and victims-turned-perpetrators, and methods for healing that do not pit the psychological against the political. Like the Tutsi, whom Mamdani argues must consider that the prerequisite to coexistence and reconciliation is to give up the monopoly of power, hence become vulnerable to their Hutu others, the Israelis too have something to give up. While the experience of the Nazi death camps will remain as permanent wounds or scars on its victims, the world's acknowledgment of the Nazi holocaust, the reparations, the memorials and Holocaust education, have done the work—however imperfect and incomplete—of healing. We are perhaps *more* responsible for the victims of the present, not because they are any more innocent than previous victims, but because they present us with all the immediacy and emergency of a crisis. The operative question then is perhaps not *who* is a victim, but *who* is a victim *today*, and under what historical circumstances? The recognition of a victim's victimization is a crucial factor in reconciliation, but yesterday's victims must let go of their status. "What victims need most is not to remain mere victims."<sup>64</sup>

Echoing John Dugard's claim that the OPT has become a test for the West, French philosopher Étienne Balibar states in a recent interview:

Something has to be *invented* and that's why Palestine is so important. It is a kind of concentrated and reduced but also intensified image of the kind of problem that has to be solved in a post-colonial era, if we are not to have prominent wars and latent or rampant processes of extermination everywhere in the world. In a sense, they are testing for us the possibility of inventing post-national politics, and in the most difficult of conditions since it is not a dialogue among equals. Equality itself, a vicious circle which is requisite for a solution, is in fact its product. So they are testing the possibility—maybe they'll fail—but since they are testing that possibility for all of us, and since the conflict has repercussions everywhere in the

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nothing to do with past victimhood, but this would require an erasure of the historical reasons for establishing the State of Israel. My attempt to think in political rather than personal terms, and evoke the call to responsibility and judgement, is not to deny the pain of any victim of violence and hatred, but to demand that we turn towards the future; towards a politics we must reinvent.

<sup>63</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, p. 272.

<sup>64</sup> Buden, "Truth and Reconciliation Are Not What We Really Need," p. 71.

world, throughout the Arab world and the European world ... we have vital interests in not imposing a solution, but helping.<sup>65</sup>

Balibar zeroes in on the crucial paradox here: that equality is required *for* a solution but is the very thing that can only result *from* the solution. No solution without equality, yet no equality without a solution. This is the excruciating impasse, and the reason why dialogue or encounter groups—the “peace, dialogue and coming-together industry,” as one writer has called it—are woefully inadequate and at times, it has been argued, utterly counter-productive in ushering in an alternative political future for Palestinians and Israelis. How can this invention Balibar describes be imagined and implemented? In the following section, I will look briefly at the literature on dialogue groups, by both critics and proponents, and reflect on the changes since the election of Hamas in 2006, which has made these attempts at encounters next to impossible. Such a policy of separation—of apartheid—is not conducive to understanding.

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<sup>65</sup> See Diane Enns, “A Conversation with Étienne Balibar,” *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 9:2, 2005, p. 390.

## 5 Apartheid and the “Peace, Dialogue and Coming-Together” Industry

If it is the politicization of identity that contributes to the cause and perpetuation of protracted violent conflict, and the consequent “cultural capital” and “commodification” of victims<sup>66</sup> that justifies retributive brutality, what are the implications for conflict management practice? Andreas Wimmer claims that there is an acknowledgement in the field that the complexity of ethnic conflicts means there can be no master scheme when it comes to dealing with conflict; each case must be treated individually. He suggests that this kind of “tailor” approach leads us to look for solutions that might be contrary to what Western academics, experts and policymakers suggest. For example, civic models are preferred over ethnic models, that is, “ethnicity- and color-blind institutions are morally and politically superior to institutions based on the compartmentalization of society along ethnic or racial lines.”<sup>67</sup> Here is a direct appeal to understand the limits of discourses stressing difference, which could lead to further divisions, and to emphasize commonality and civility instead. Yet if we look at the current disillusionment with efforts at civil society networking between Israelis and Palestinians, the question of how to achieve a “commonality” or “civility” not based on one’s place of birth is a difficult one, especially since the separation of Arabs and Jews has recently reached an apartheid-like state.

Exploring this issue will help us with a certain debate around the use of track I, II or III solutions for ethnopolitical conflict. While Wimmer states that the belief in “multitrack diplomacy” seems to have achieved “an almost hegemonic status” among scholars and professional negotiators,<sup>68</sup> the literature does not always bear this out, demonstrating a gap between political and psychological methods of dealing with conflict that often appear contradictory. This gap is associated with

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<sup>66</sup> For the use of these terms, see A. Kleinman, *Writing at the Margin: Discourse between Anthropology and Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), cited in Michael Humphrey, “From Terror to Trauma: Commissioning Truth for National Reconciliation,” *Social Identities*, 6:1, 2000, p. 23.

<sup>67</sup> Wimmer, “Toward a New Realism,” p. 342.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

others: do we approach conflict through an ethical response to another's pain, through empathy and pathos, or do we focus on political and institutional changes that may not always privilege such pain? An ethical or political project? Difference or identity? Empathy or judgement? If we are to address both political and psychological needs simultaneously, what are the necessary conditions for such a project, and what are the contradictions that stymie the process? What, ultimately, can we expect to change through grassroots dialogic projects?

The main idea behind dialogue groups is that talking and sharing one another's pain is cathartic and therefore healing. Jan M. A. de Vries and Jacinta de Paor summarize this perspective when they state:

Talking about traumatic memories gives victims an opportunity for detailed processing. When this is done without pressure in a safe and supportive environment, it is expected to promote healing in one way or another.... Advocates of a 'cathartic approach' see expression as a prerequisite to releasing and extinguishing the emotions related to traumatic experiences...<sup>69</sup>

The underlying assumption is a Freudian belief in the talking cure; that talking leads to dialogue, which leads to empathy and understanding, as one moves from expression to healing. Consequently, the encounter between "enemies" or victims and perpetrators, is thought to lead to an easing of tensions and eventually conflict resolution or transformation. As Saliba Sarsar remarks, in an overview of Arab-Jewish dialogue groups in the U.S.: "Dialogue does not restrict, but liberates. It does not take for granted; it takes things into consideration. It empathizes. It stands for life and wholeness, not for ill and separation. It rests on knowing others in their own uniqueness and not simply as an extension of one's experiences."<sup>70</sup> Sarsar claims "a new opening of hearts and minds" is occurring in the gaining of momentum of such dialogue groups, what she also refers to as "strains of a new music."<sup>71</sup> Members of one such group called "Project Understanding," for example, believe that "the differences our two groups [Jewish and Arab] have experienced during the past century have obscured our humanity and common heritage and have blocked

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<sup>69</sup> Jan M. A. de Vries and Jacinta de Paor, "Healing and Reconciliation in the L.I.V.E. Program in Ireland," *Peace & Change*, vol. 30:3, July 2005, pp. 329-358, p. 331.

<sup>70</sup> Saliba Sarsar, "Making a Difference: Arab-Jewish Grassroots Dialogue Groups in the United States," *Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution* 1.3, December 15, 2006. <[http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/1\\_3sar.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/1_3sar.htm)>

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

understanding of each other for the other. Our goal is to create an opening... for the enhancement of such understanding and the promotion of human dignity.”<sup>72</sup>

It is difficult to be sceptical of such an approach when one considers only the personal, individual effects of the encounter. It has a certain seduction because it reminds us of the power of the human spirit and human solidarity to transcend antagonism. There is an immediate emotional appeal to these expressions of empathy and hope for a better relationship between two “enemies,” and to the heartwarming transformation of hatred into understanding that is often the outcome. Ifat Maoz examined a series of workshops in the spring of 1998 for Jewish and Palestinian high school students, the former from Jewish Israeli towns, the latter from Bethlehem, which took place at several locations in Israel where the population was of a “mixed Jewish-Arab nature” (e.g. in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, a cooperative Jewish-Arab village). The workshops were organized and directed by a jointly managed Israeli-Palestinian NGO in the framework of a peace education project, and had as their goal the promotion of reconciliation and peacebuilding. Twenty students from each side met for two days to discuss social, cultural and political topics, and were followed up at six months and one year.<sup>73</sup> Maoz concludes from this study:

Through such dialogue, the sides come to construct themselves and the other differently, extending the boundaries of the self and including parts of the other within the self, and thus including the other within the realm of relational moral responsibility. Perceptions and relations to the other are transformed, and greater understanding, acceptance and connectedness to the experiences and positions of the other are formed.<sup>74</sup>

The workshops, Maoz argues, demonstrated that intergroup contact can improve attitudes. The Jewish students realized their Palestinian counterparts were not merely destined to be “bombers or cleaners,” but rather had similar desires to attend university and aspirations for professions, while the Palestinians focused on helping the Jewish youth to alter harmful stereotypes of themselves.<sup>75</sup> Entirely unsurprising is the fact that the Palestinian students were far more motivated for the initial encounter than the Jewish students, and yet the latter appeared the most affected by the interactions.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* Mission statement of Project Understanding.

<sup>73</sup> Ifat Maoz, “An Experiment in Peace: Reconciliation-Aimed Workshops of Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian Youth,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 37:6, 2000, pp. 721-736, p. 724.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 722.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 728-9.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 727.

Such a conclusion speaks to the frequent criticism of such groups, that when the balance of power is asymmetrical, the encounter is mostly for the benefit of those in power whose negative stereotypes are responsible for discrimination of those without power; to assuage guilt and to allow participants to feel they are doing something. As Ami Isseroff, member of a small dialogue group that meets near Qalqilia, puts it, “We have few illusions that these individual efforts will influence the outcome of peace negotiations, but they are a reassurance to our participants that they are doing the right thing by being with us and a platform for recruiting support.”<sup>77</sup>

One of the most common criticisms of the dialogue approach to conflict resolution is that it does not challenge the status quo. Vivienne Jabri, for example, argues that traditional conflict resolution simply reinforced the unchallenged order which generated the conflict in the first place. It reproduced the monolithic entities that groups became in confrontation with each other when those attempting mediation interpreted the conflict through the definitions of its leading actors. This would merely “reproduce the exclusionist, violent discourses and practices which perpetuate it.”<sup>78</sup>

Mohammed Abu-Nimer cites several studies in full agreement with this critique, stating that Arab-Jewish encounters simply further the asymmetry of the situation because Jewish participants take part in these encounters in order to ease their consciences and to present Israel as a liberal state and themselves as tolerant people.

J. Kuttab, for example, sums it up when he suggests that dialogue can become a substitute for action, and result in both the soothing of the oppressor group’s conscience to the point where they feel they do not need to do more, and in the creation of a safety valve for the oppressed group’s venting of frustration. “In both cases it becomes a means of reinforcing the existing oppression and therefore serves to perpetuate it.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ami Isseroff, “Mid-East Dialog Groups: Building a Grass-Roots Force for Peace,” *Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, vol. 1.3, August 1998. <[http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/1\\_3nuss.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/1_3nuss.htm)>

<sup>78</sup> Vivienne Jabri, *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 180-81, cited in Miall et. al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, p. 58.

<sup>79</sup> J. Kuttab, “An Exchange on Dialogue,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 17:2, 1988, pp. 84-108, p. 89. Cited in Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “Education for Coexistence in Israel: Potential and Challenges,” *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*, ed. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, (New York: Lexington Books, 2001), p. 240.

We need to ask whether dialogue projects disrupt the politicization of identity that contributes to the division of groups and generating of hostilities to begin with. They appear to be carried out in the name of blurring the boundaries between self and other, reducing stereotypes, finding common ground across the divide of culture or ethnicity, but how can we judge the outcome when these encounters take place in completely artificial environments and controlled studies? Friendship cannot be legislated or fabricated in sterile environments that assume politics equals conflict, hence violence and irrationality. Better that the Israeli and Palestinian students meet in each other's homes or on the streets of the Occupied Territories, where the politics of the conflict is palpable. Arguably, those who participate in these group encounters are already open to the "other" to some extent, or at least open to the experience of vulnerability, and thus presuppose the very "coming-together" that is to be the outcome.

However ambivalent these responses to the efficacy of dialogue groups are, recent developments in the region have significantly altered the scene of these encounters. Walid Salem claims that hope among Israelis and Palestinians for a peace agreement is deteriorating, what with the escalation of violence and counter-violence, the settlement expansion and the closure of the Jordan Valley to Palestinians. This new context since the election of Hamas in January 2006, with both sides claiming there is "no partner" on the other side, has thrown civil society into grave jeopardy. In fact, Salem argues, civil society organizations have not adapted their strategies, which has led to their marginalization on both sides.<sup>80</sup>

Dr. Bernard Sabella, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, argues that some encounter groups are motivated "by the wishful thinking that changing hearts—primarily Palestinian hearts—would lead to peace and reconciliation. Other groups share a utilitarian concern and are directed to practical issues such as the environment or the situation of school children, while still others he describes as part of the "peace, dialogue and coming-together industry." All of these kinds of groups, in addition to international encounter groups, must re-examine their role given Israel's separation plans. Serious human rights infractions will follow the completion of the separation wall and exposing these infractions, Sabella argues, should be the focus of encounter groups. He asks whether there has "ever been a recorded case when reconciliation was attempted and achieved from behind separation walls and

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<sup>80</sup> Walid Salem, "Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society Cooperation: New Context, New Strategies, Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture, vol. 12/13, issue 4/1, p. 124.

across checkpoints.”<sup>81</sup> For Palestinians, Sabella suggests, the most important and most immediate agenda should be the building and welfare of their own society, while for the Israelis, the most immediate concern should be Israel.

Salim Tamari is equally critical of the possibility of dialogue given the recent changes in Israeli Palestinian politics. The people-to-people or “kissing cousins” ventures of the post-Oslo period aimed at breaking the stereotypes between Israelis and Palestinians as a prelude to reconciliation, assuming the Oslo Accords had resolved the main political hurdle of occupation, and that all that was left was the psychological work of reconciliation. Tamari is skeptical of the burgeoning of people-to-people groups that resulted, suggesting that the “few cases involving a genuine exchange of ideas and attempt at solidarity across the ethnic divide... were submerged or marginalized by the existence of donor funding for ‘feel-good’ enterprises.”<sup>82</sup>

Nothing will change in Israel and Palestine until the identities of Jew and Arab are no longer politicized to the highest degree, in an apartheid-like state with a complex and insidious system of passes, checkpoints, prohibitions, and above all, a security fence that effectively cordons off Palestinians into Bantustans. While in many ways the occupation of Palestine is not the same as apartheid South Africa, as John Dugard argues, it certainly has “many of the worst characteristics of apartheid, with the West Bank fragmented into three areas increasingly resembling South African Bantustans” as well as many features of colonization.<sup>83</sup> In fact, according to Dugard, the restrictions on Palestinians’ freedom of movement, imposed by a permit system enforced by some 520 checkpoints and roadblocks, are more severe than they were in apartheid South Africa. Israel’s practice of home demolitions, the leveling of agricultural land, military incursions and targeted assassinations “far exceed” similar practices in apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, no wall was ever built to separate blacks from whites.<sup>84</sup>

Israel destroys the fabric of its own existence in a desperate attempt to secure its borders against the Palestinians it has imprisoned within these borders by

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<sup>81</sup> Bernard Sabella, “Reconciliation with Separation: Is it Possible in the Palestinian-Israeli Case?” *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*. East Jerusalem, vol. 12/13 issue 4/1, 2005-6, pp. 55-58.

<sup>82</sup> Salim Tamari, “Kissing Cousins: A Cautionary note on People-to-People Projects,” *Palestine – Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*. East Jerusalem, vol. 12/13, issue 4/1, 2005-2006, pp. 16-18.

<sup>83</sup> John Dugard, “Apartheid: Israelis adopt what South Africa dropped,” 29 November, 2006. <<http://electronicintifada.net/v2>>

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*



building a so-called “security fence,” enacting a double suicide. Consider Shuli Dichter’s poignant elaboration of this suicide as he travels alongside a portion of the wall near his kibbutz in the documentary *Mur*. He states:

We love this land so much that we seal it. It’s a postmodern interpretation of the saying: ‘Let me die with the Philistines.’ Commit suicide with the Palestinians. Take them with us to our death. What more can I say? This fence blocks the artery that feeds the Israeli heart. If there was some kind of osmosis, deranged as it may have been, between us and the Palestinians, if there was some chance that we would integrate into this region, that Zionism would flourish, that the Jewish people would have a home in this world, this fence has eliminated that possibility.... So as to console ourselves for killing ourselves, we’ll write in history books that we brought it upon ourselves. That will be our sole consolation.<sup>85</sup>

In this passage we gain clear insight into why dialogue groups will fail if unaccompanied by the radical political changes necessary to reverse the increasing drive to segregate Arabs from Jews. The “deranged osmosis” is what we might call the imperfect politics of coexistence, through which some kind of integration would occur among peoples of various histories, cultures and languages. The constant reinforcement of “sides” in this conflict forgets that Israeli is not synonymous with Jew (of European descent) and Palestinian does not equal terrorist. A two-state solution might not alleviate the tension, when what is needed is, as Virginia Tilley puts it, the authority of democracy, equal rights, and the rights of indigenous people to secure life in their homeland, combined with a “new appreciation for our common humanity.”<sup>86</sup>

This is not to suggest that grassroots attempts to bring people of opposing sides together in any conflict are detrimental to conflict management. On the contrary, as Ropers states, the most important conceptual contribution of the dialogue-project is “generally promoting a dialogue-based dispute culture.” Constructive dialogue should not be limited to the positive effects of a handful of intergroup projects, he adds, but should become “a basic paradigm of political culture.”<sup>87</sup> If it is the putting into practice of civil society, creating networks of

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<sup>85</sup> Shuli Dichter, *Mur*, directed by Simone Bitton (Lifesize Entertainment, 2004). Shuli Dichter is co-executive director of Sikkuy, the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel.

<sup>86</sup> Virginia Tilley, “‘If You Will It, It Is No Dream,’: Embracing the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in Israel/Palestine,” *The Electronic Intifada*, 1 November 2005, <<http://electronicintifada.net/v2printer4277.shtml>>

<sup>87</sup> Ropers, “From Resolution to Transformation: Assessing the Role and Impact of Dialogue Projects,” pp. 186-7.

individuals and communities building on commonalities not based on identity categories, and engaging in political initiatives that reverse the effects of the politicization and institutionalization of ethnic identity, it would seem to provide the kind of political vision we are sorely lacking. But these are serious “ifs”; we must not lose sight of the risks of depoliticizing the experience of suffering and trauma, of reaffirming the status quo, and of merely comforting those who feel guilty for belonging to an occupying power. The “talking cure” is not always a cure, as Michel Foucault pointed out, but an “incitement to discourse” that does not yield the truth about anyone’s story or past, but only comforts us with illusory truths.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

## 6 Conclusion

I have argued that an ethical attitude has been developing in certain fields of scholarship and Western culture more generally, and perhaps globally, in which the concern for the trauma and suffering of the victim has assumed such overwhelming significance that both the power and responsibility of the victim are denied.<sup>89</sup> In the process it seems we have, at times, abdicated politics for ethics. The solutions to conflict cannot be sought in compassion for the suffering of victims, but in politics. How do we negotiate the need for compassion and understanding with the need for political transformation and justice? In order to do this we need to go beyond the recognition of suffering and the acknowledgement of victimization. We need to break out of the world view of the victim *and* the perpetrator, for an attachment to victimhood is an attachment to the very divisions instigated and perpetuated by those in need of stabilizing their rule.

If the politicization and institutionalization of identity categories are responsible for violent conflict, then most promising for an alternative political future—one in which vulnerability to the other and a “dialogue-based dispute culture” are fundamental—are those visions and practices that struggle to create a community and politics founded on other relationships besides those tied to absolutist notions of identity. Mamdani’s articulation of a justice as survival is one such approach. Suggesting that groups be allowed to come to the negotiating table with only one criterion, that they lay down their arms, may seem utopian, but it quite concretely calls for another kind of disarmament: namely, the “laying down” of ideologies associated with this particular identity or that.

The fact that many observers and scholars of violent conflict follow Mamdani’s lead reveals the extent to which identity politics has harmed the globe, which is why I find it important to bring this discussion to bear on academic debates in North America regarding an emancipatory politics that is considered necessary and unrelated to violent struggles elsewhere. These identity politics have also led to

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<sup>89</sup> This does not mean, of course, *all* victims. It is important to ask *which* victims solicit pathos—for certainly the U.S. government bears no sympathy for Palestinian victims, and the world at large has ignored Darfur’s victims as it did Rwanda’s victims. Although this is not a question I can address here, I wish to thank Kate McGuinness for pointing out this obvious fact.

divisiveness, and in the context of feminism, what Ranjana Khanna calls “separate ethical universes,” produced by the reification of difference and effectively silencing any comment on another context.<sup>90</sup> In the name of “cultural sensitivity” and the incommensurability of the other, the divide between identity groups widens, and understanding diminishes.

In a discussion of the “instabilities” of truth and reconciliation within the sites of theater and public culture, Rustom Bharucha notes that,

the politics of identity can catalyze, metabolize, and disrupt the hierarchies of any given society, but there is no guarantee that in this process new hierarchies are unlikely to emerge, or that reconciliation across older divides is likely to be stabilized. To seek reconciliation beyond the constraints of specific identity constructions, we need to do more than posit the multiple or hybrid identities that have become postmodern tropes. Perhaps we need to counter the very concept of ‘identity’ with the enigmas of the ‘self’...<sup>91</sup>

This is where conflict management practices don’t appear to reach far enough, assuming, as they often do, that identity is natural and fundamental to human experience. But conflict management is caught up in the crisis of the day, in emergency measures, and unable to indulge in the luxury of theoretical creations of enigmatic selves. When faced with two hostile parties, each rooted staunchly in a historical and ideological understanding of who they are, who can speak of enigmatic selves that counter the very concept of identity?<sup>92</sup>

The gap between theory and practice must always be negotiated. We need both emergency measures and preventative measures, which explains my own ambivalence towards the “dialogue industry.” Here we seem to glimpse a different future through the discovery of commonalities among human beings who have been taught to hate each other. What better way to prevent future antagonism? It seems in keeping with the kind of sentiments Boris Buden shares when he states unequivocally that truth commissions and organized reconciliation processes are not what the people of the former Yugoslavia need. Rather, what they need is to “invent a new form of political solidarity, one that goes beyond their national, ethnic, cultural,

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<sup>90</sup> Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 209.

<sup>91</sup> Rustom Bharucha, “Between Truth and Reconciliation: Experiments in Theater and Public Culture” *Experiments with Truth, Documenta 11, Platform 2*, p. 386.

<sup>92</sup> It was a conversation with Wolfram Zunzer at the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management on June 23, 2006, regarding identity and conflict in Sri Lanka which led to this thought.

and religious identities, if they really want to build new bridges toward each other over the mass graves and ruins.<sup>93</sup>

For conflict management practice to effectively deal with what we might call a new terrain—not only due to the increase in ethnopolitical violence but also because of increasing claims to the status of victimhood—it must work to arrest the transition from a mere cultural identity to a politicized identity, as well as stall the transition from the empowerment of the victim to the victim’s call for violent retribution. A tall order to be sure, but recent attention to multi-track diplomacy, to both psychological and political approaches, and above all to the historical and socio-political conditions of every site of conflict, seem to point in the right direction.

The most difficult challenge is to know at what point the victim must let go of victimhood, sacrifice the tremendous need for recognition and reparation, even when it is known that victimization robs individuals and communities of something that will never be returned or repaid, and never fully repaired. Frantz Fanon, who gave us probably the best description of what it means to be victimized by colonization and who witnessed its festering wounds as a psychiatrist in French colonized Algeria, refused victimhood. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1962) he outlines the task of the native to “disalienate” himself. It is accomplished neither in the celebration of a black identity, nor in the attempt to be white, for both of these are projects defined within the framework of white colonialism. In other words, Fanon refuses the world view of the cat or the rat, for both are products of an oppressive regime. As a man of colour he does not claim the right to hope the white man will feel guilt, the right to destroy white pride, to claim reparations, or to “cry out [his] hatred at the white man.”<sup>94</sup> The only right Fanon does claim is “that of demanding human behavior from the other.”<sup>95</sup> It is a profound statement about the bare bones of political community; the responsibility one has to the other, both to demand and to bestow human consideration—compassion and political judgment—to the other on the basis of a shared life and world, rather than on recognition for the other’s identity. He refuses to accept the “amputation” of victimhood.<sup>96</sup> Coming from one who knew intimately the traumas of the colonized, Fanon’s words are a provocative and inspiring call to rethink both politics and community.

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<sup>93</sup> Buden, “Truth and Reconciliation Are Not What We Really Need,” p. 78.

<sup>94</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 228-29.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

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## Berghof Reports

Berghof Report	Title	Author	Published
15	<i>Transitions from Violence to Peace: Revisiting Analysis and Intervention in Conflict Transformation</i>	Veronique Dudouet	November 2006
14	<i>On Good Terms: Clarifying Reconciliation</i>	David Bloomfield	October 2006
13	<i>Jugendarbeit und Friedensförderung in Ostbosnien. Ein Pilotprojekt von Ipak (Tuzla), Schüler Helfen Leben und dem Berghof Forschungszentrum</i>	Martina Fischer	August 2006
12	<i>A Difficult Encounter – The Informal Georgian-Abkhazian Dialogue Process</i>	Oliver Wolleh	October 2006
11	<i>Seminar Report: "Theories of Social Change and their Contribution to the Practice of Conflict Transformation: Developing the State of the Art in Conflict Transformation Theory and Practice", 26-27 September 2005, Berlin (Germany)</i>	Veronique Dudouet, Beatrix Schmelzle & David Bloomfield (eds)	March 2006
10	<i>Youth in War to Peace Transitions. Approaches of International Organisations</i>	Yvonne Kemper	November 2004
9	<i>Kollektive Traumata. Annahmen, Argumente, Konzepte. Eine Bestandsaufnahme nach dem 11. September</i>	Angela Kühner	February 2003
8	<i>Local Peace Constituencies in Cyprus. Citizens' Rapprochement by the bi-communal Conflict Resolution Trainer Group</i>	Oliver Wolleh	March 2001
7	<i>Macht und Differenz. Ein erweitertes Modell der Konfliktpotentiale in interkulturellen Auseinandersetzungen</i>	Anja Weiß	March 2001
6	<i>Die soziale Eingliederung von Kindersoldaten. Konzepte und Erfahrungen aus Mosambik</i>	Peter Steudtner	March 2001
5	<i>Friedensförderung in Bosnien-Herzegovina. Ansätze der Jugend-, Bildungs- und Kulturarbeit</i>	Martina Fischer, Julie Tumler	September 2000
4	<i>Krisenprävention und zivile Konfliktbearbeitung durch die EU. Konzepte, Kapazitäten und Kohärenzprobleme</i>	Tobias Debiel, Martina Fischer	August 2000
4	<i>Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management by the European Union. Concepts, Capacities and Problems of Coherence</i>	Tobias Debiel, Martina Fischer	September 2000

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3	<i>Konstruktive Haltungen und Verhaltensweisen in institutionellen Konflikten. Erfahrungen, Begriffe, Fähigkeiten</i>	Eva Maringer, Reiner Steinweg	June 1997
2	<i>Interkulturelle Mediation – eine schwierige Vermittlung. Eine empirisch-analytische Annäherung zur Bedeutung von kulturellen Unterschieden</i>	Frank Liebe (unter Mitarbeit von Nadja Gilbert)	May 1996
2	<i>Intercultural Mediation: A Difficult Brokerage. An Empirical-Analytical Attempt to Assess the Impact of Cultural Differences</i>	Frank Liebe (with the assistance of Nadja Gilbert)	Mai 1996
1	<i>Friedliche Einmischung. Strukturen, Prozesse und Strategien zur konstruktiven Bearbeitung ethno-politischer Konflikte</i>	Norbert Ropers	October 1995
1	<i>Peaceful Intervention. Structures, Processes, and Strategies for the Constructive Regulation of Ethnopolitical Conflicts</i>	Norbert Ropers	October 1995

## Berghof Occasional Papers / Berghof Arbeitspapiere

Volume	Title	Author	Published
28	<i>Identity and Victimhood. Questions for Conflict Management Practice</i>	Diane Enns	May 2007
27	<i>"Local ownership" in Conflict Transformation Projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?</i>	Hannah Reich	August 2006
26	<i>Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation</i>	Wolfram Zunzer	September 2004
25	<i>Kooperative Friedensförderung? Die OSZE und lokale NGOs in Mostar</i>	Anne Jenichen	July 2004
24	<i>War Veterans and Peacebuilding in Former Yugoslavia. A Pilot Project of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA)</i>	Oliver Wils	February 2004
23	<i>Contract or War ? An Essay on Institutional Logic in Violent Conflict</i>	Benedikt Korf	April 2003
22	<i>Constructive Discourse Transformation. Media Work in asymmetrical, intercultural Conflicts: The Case of the Middle East</i>	Hannah Reich	February 2003

Volume	Title	Author	Published
21	<i>Zypern: Gesellschaftliches Rapprochement im Spannungsfeld von impliziter Anerkennung und Repression (Griechische/Türkische Version)</i>	Oliver Wolleh	June 2002
20	<i>Handlungsspielräume und Hindernisse für die Beteiligung von Frauen am demokratischen Aufbau in Afghanistan. Ergebnisse und Interviewtexte aus einer journalistischen Recherche vor Ort</i>	Antje Bauer	August 2002
19	<i>Prevention of Ethnic Conflict. Lessons from Romania</i>	Wojciech Kostecki	August 2002
18	<i>Conflict Transformation by Training in Nonviolent Action. Activities of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (Sarajevo) in the Balkan Region</i>	Martina Fischer	June 2001
17	<i>Southeast European NGOs for the Stability Pact</i>	Martina Fischer, Giovanni Scotto	September 2000
16	<i>Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung deutscher NROs und Einrichtungen – Ein Wegweiser, 1998/99</i>	Cordula Reimann	September 1998
15	<i>The Intercultural Mediation Project: The Bléré Experience: A Study of Conflict Management in an Intercultural Context</i>	Jon Sebastian	November 1997
14	<i>Roles and Functions of Third Parties in the Constructive Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts</i>	Norbert Ropers	November 1997
13	<i>Natural Law, Agents and Patients, and Minority Rights</i>	Gabriel Andreescu	November 1999
12	<i>Peacebuilding Aktivitäten der bi-kommunalen Conflict Resolution Trainer Group in Zypern</i>	Oliver Wolleh	November 1997
11	<i>Advanced Networking: A Conceptual Approach to NGO-based Early Response Strategies in Conflict Prevention</i>	Anton Ivanov	October 1997
10	<i>Peace Work by Civil Actors in Post-Communist Societies</i>	Diana Francis, Norbert Ropers	September 1997
9	<i>Ethnopolitical Legitimacy and Ethnic Conflict Management. The Case of the Russian Federation in the Early 1990s</i>	Airat Aklaev	June 1996
8	<i>Eigeninitiativen einheimischer FriedensstifterInnen. Wirkungsmöglichkeiten in den neuen östlichen Demokratien</i>	Sonja Borski, Holger Hess	September 1998
7	<i>Strategies and Needs of NGOs Dealing with Ethnopolitical Conflicts in the New Eastern Democracies</i>	Anja Weiß, Aleksej Nazarenko	March 1997
6	<i>The Protection of National Minorities and Regional Stability</i>	Kinga Gál	September 1996

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5	<i>The International Relations of the DAHR 1989 – 96. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania. An Introduction</i>	Anna-Mária Biró	August 1996
4	<i>The Hungarian Concept of Autonomy for Romania. The 1993 DAHR Draft-law on National Minorities and Autonomous Communities and Reactions from Other Political Parties in Romania</i>	Kinga Páll	September 1996
3	<i>Warsaw Workshop for Peace Builders. 28. Januar – 2. Februar 1996</i>	Anja Weiß, Aleksej Nazarenko	September 1996
2	<i>Golitsino Workshop for Peace Builders. 25. – 29. September 1995</i>	Anja Weiß, Aleksej Nazarenko	August 1996
1	<i>Ergebnisbericht: Interkulturelle Konfliktbearbeitung. Einführungsseminar in neue Konzepte der innergesellschaftlichen und internationalen Mediation und präventiven Diplomatie. 30. November – 2. Dezember 1994</i>	Norbert Ropers	July 1996 out of print

## Berghof Reihe Konflikttransformation (LIT-Verlag)

Volume	Title	Author	Published
5	<i>Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina - Ten Years after Dayton</i>	Martina Fischer (ed.)	2006
4	<i>Friedensbildung in Mostar. Die Rolle der internationalen NRO</i>	Giovanni Scotto	2004
3	<i>Hilfe die nicht vom Himmel fällt. Gewaltprävention in der Entwicklungsarbeit von NGOs</i>	E. Forberg, U. Terlinden	2002
2	<i>Die Teilung überwinden. Eine Fallstudie zur Friedensbildung in Zypern</i>	Oliver Wolleh	2002
1	<i>Konfliktbearbeitung in der Zivilgesellschaft. Die Workshop-Methode im rumänisch-ungarischen Konflikt</i>	P. Haumersen, H. Rademacher, N. Ropers	2002

## Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation

([www.berghof-handbook.net](http://www.berghof-handbook.net))

Handbook	Title	Author	Published
	<i>Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict. The Berghof Handbook</i>	A. Austin, M. Fischer, N. Ropers (Eds.)	2004 (print)
Dialogue Series	Title	Author	Published
No. 5	<i>Social Change and Conflict Transformation</i>	D. Bloomfield, M. Fischer, B. Schmelzle (Eds.)	2006 (print)
No. 4	<i>New Trends in PCIA</i>	D. Bloomfield, M. Fischer, B. Schmelzle (Eds.)	2005 (online)
No. 3	<i>Transforming War Economies – Dilemmas and Strategies</i>	M. Fischer, B. Schmelzle (Eds.)	2005 (print)
No. 2	<i>Security Sector Reform</i>	C. McCartney, M Fischer, O. Wils (Eds.)	2004 (print)
No. 1	<i>Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment - Critical Views on Theory and Practice</i>	A. Austin, M. Fischer, O. Wils (Eds.)	2003 (print)

## Berghof Working Papers\*

(Downloads from the Homepage of the Center at: [www.berghof-center.org](http://www.berghof-center.org))

Volume	Title	Author	Published
3	<i>Friedensarbeit zwischen Kurzzeit-Evaluierung, Prozessbegleitung und Aktionsforschung</i>	Martina Fischer	2006
2	<i>Jugendförderung als Beitrag zur Friedensentwicklung. ‚Lessons learned‘ in Bosnien-Herzegowina / Youth Development: A Contribution to the Establishment of a Civil Society and Peacebuilding "Lessons learned" in Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	Martina Fischer / Astrid Fischer	2004
1	<i>Jugendförderung als Potenzial und Herausforderung für den Friedensprozess in Bosnien-Herzegowina/ Youth Development as a Potential and Challenge for the Peace Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	Martina Fischer	2004