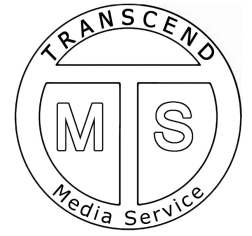


# Rational Conflict Resolution: What Stands In the Way? (\*)



*Johan Galtung, 14 May 2012 - TRANSCEND Media Service*

Basel, Switzerland, World Peace Academy

Six conflicts, four current, one past and one future are shaping our present reality. Conflict is a relation of incompatibility between parties; not an attribute of one party. It spells danger of violence and opportunity to create new realities. Thus, to understand the shoa the narratives of unspeakable German atrocity and infinite Jewish suffering are indispensable. But so are the narratives of German-Jewish relations, Germans to others, Jews to others. Failure to do so blocks rationality: if conflict is in the relation, then the solution is in a new relation. This is not blaming the victim. What matters most is changing the relation. Are we able?

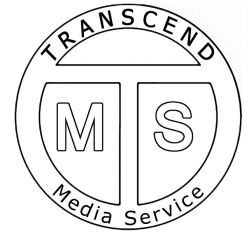
First case: USA vs Latin America-Caribbean. The recent meeting of the Organization of American States ended 32 against 1, USA. The 32 wanted Cuba readmitted and decriminalization of marijuana. Obama vetoed both; the relation a scandal, overshadowed by a sex scandal.

Solution: The USA yields to democracy on both, negotiates some time for the transition, and a review clause after 5 years. The USA also welcomes CELAC--the organization of Latin American and Caribbean states without USA and Canada--with OAS as a meeting ground for equitable and amicable South-North relations. Washington would be embraced by CELAC and the whole world. A sigh of relief. And the world could continue its fight against the far more lethal tobacco.

What stands in the way? A falling empire clinging to the past, fear of looking weak, elections, huge problems like a crisis economy and social disintegration: Charles Murray Coming Apart and Timothy Noah The Great Divergence. Backyard treatment of the US backyard.

Second case: Israel vs Iran; the nuclear issue; war or not. Uri Avnery[i]: "--in our country we are now seeing a verbal uprising against the elected politicians by a group of current and former army generals, foreign intelligence [Meir Dagan, Mossad] and internal security [Yuval Diskin, Shin Beth] chiefs--condemn the government's threat to start a war against Iran, and some of them condemning the government's failure to negotiate with the Palestinians for peace."

# Rational Conflict Resolution: What Stands In the Way? (\*)



*Johan Galtung, 14 May 2012 - TRANSCEND Media Service*

Diskin: "Israel is now led by two incompetent politicians with messianic delusions and a poor grasp of reality. Their plan to attack Iran will lead to a world-wide catastrophe. Not only will it fail to prevent the production of an Iranian atom bomb--it will hasten this effort--with the support of the world community.

Uri Avnery on the not exactly dialogical, talmudic response:

"They did what Israelis almost always do when faced with serious problems or serious arguments; they don't get to grips with the matter itself but select some minor detail and belabor it endlessly. Practically speaking no one tried to disprove the assertions of the officers, neither concerning the proposed attack on Iran nor the nuclear issue. They focused on the speakers, not on what was said: Dagan and Diskin are embittered because their terms of office were not extended. They felt humiliated--venting personal frustration". Then Diskin on Netanyahu: "a Holocaust obsessed fantasist, out of contact with reality, distrusting all Goyim, trying to follow in the footsteps of a rigid and extremist father--altogether a dangerous person to lead a nation in real crisis" according to Avnery.

Solution: A Middle East nuclear free zone with Iran and Israel; 64 percent of Israelis are in favor, Iran the same provided Israel is in it. Could also be a model for the Korean peninsula. Agreement to try, a sigh of relief all over, both countries would be embraced.

There are problems: under whose auspices and whose monitoring. How about Pakistan and Ali Bhutto's "islamic bomb", impossible without India that has superpower denuclearization as condition?

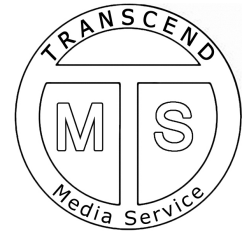
There are answers, all worth discussing, in depth, seriously.

Israel is wasting its time. A wonderful talmudic tradition, a precious freedom of expression--generally very present in Ha'aretz--and misused for personal abuse instead of for solutions to very real crises. Like Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, and Gershom Gorenberg, *The Unmaking of Israel* (2011).

What stands in the way? The horrors of the past defining the discourse. Like some Iraqis use the Baghdad massacre in 1258, some Israelis use the holocaust as a framework for world events, blind to the differences, and to what could have been done at that time. And many let this pass not to hurt Israeli-Jewish feelings or for fear of being labeled as anti-Semites or holocaust-deniers. Not Dagan, Diskin and some generals. Nor real friends searching for solutions: not anti-Semites, nor holocaust deniers, nor prisoners of the past.

Third case: Israel vs Palestine. I have argued since 1971 a Middle East Community of

# Rational Conflict Resolution: What Stands In the Way? (\*)



*Johan Galtung, 14 May 2012 - TRANSCEND Media Service*

Israel with five Arab neighbors, Palestine recognized according to international law, 1967 borders with some exchanges, Israeli cantons on the West bank and Palestinian cantons in northwest Israel. Solution: A two-state Israel-Palestine nucleus within that six-state community within an Organization for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (or West Asia). Model: Germany-France 1950, + EEC as of January 1 1958, + OSCE from 1990 onwards. Open borders, a council of ministers, commissions for water, border patrols, economy; capitals in the two Jerusalems; right of return, also for Palestinians: numbers to be discussed, as Arafat insisted.

What stands in the way? Key Israeli and Arab contra-arguments: "Surrounded by hostile Arabs we cannot let them in that close, they overpower us numerically, push us into the sea" says one; "The Jews penetrate us economically and run our economies", says the other.

There are answers: Decisions would have to be by consensus. Start slowly with free flow of goods, persons, services and ideas; settlement and investment perhaps later. Build confidence. Change a relation badly broken by naqba into a peaceful, evolving relation.

Fourth case: A recipe for disaster: minorities, outsiders in key niches like economy-culture: Turks vs Armenians, Hutus vs Tutsis, Indonesians vs Chinese. But not Malays vs Chinese due to Mahathir's discrimination in favor of the majority. Israel would gain from lifting the Arabs out of this social rank discordance; also a feature of Germany. Add the Versailles Treaty humiliation, Hitler and willing executioners.

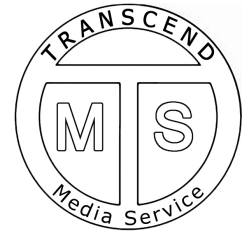
Solution? Cancel the Versailles treaty in 1924, lift the German majority through education and employment into equality and we might have avoided World War II in Europe. What is rationality? Not justify, but explain, understand, and then remove the causes!

What stood in the way? Very few thought of this.

So much for a major fourth conflict of the past. Fifth case: rampant US anti-Semitism, now latent, using scapegoating to explain the decline of the USA and Israel; failing to grasp solutions for their eyes, both lost in the past, one in glory, one in trauma.

Imagine USA losing even more: support from allies, the magic of being exceptional-invincible-indispensable gone, torn between misery at the bottom and incredible riches at the top, the dollar no longer a world reserve currency, etc. A real fear right now: rampant anti-Semitism in the USA. This must be handled constructively, not by churning out anti-Semitism certificates, scaring US congressmen from questioning Israel, thereby jeopardizing US democracy itself. The

# Rational Conflict Resolution: What Stands In the Way? (\*)



*Johan Galtung, 14 May 2012 - TRANSCEND Media Service*

tipping point from christian zionism to an anti-Semitism against Israel, Wall Street and American Jews in general may be close.

Solution: The US mainstream media become more pluralistic, less monochromatic, opening up to a range of discourses and solutions. Criticism of Israel and Wall Street is not enough, constructive solutions are needed. A solution culture, not a blaming culture. Like the ideas above for USA vs CELAC, Israel vs Iran, Israel vs Arab states. Nothing extreme, outlandish, and much to discuss.

But mainstream media constructive discussions are few in the US. There are hundreds of points to be made, like there once were when Europe was emerging from the ruins of World War II. Instead of degrading and humiliating Germany two brilliant French invited them into the family (now with its problems). Let thousand good ideas blossom! There is too much about the Cartagena sex scandal and too little about new ways of lifting the bottom of US poor into dignity, reducing the ever increasing inequality devastating the US economy.

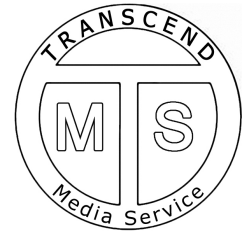
What stands in the way? Clinging to the past, vested interests, the war industry, a blaming culture rather than a solution culture. But vast majorities and new and old media should be able to overcome.

Sixth case, very much related to this: debt bondage. China-Japan-EU vs USA; Germany vs Greece-Italy-Portugal-Spain-Ireland (GIPSI); the World Bank vs the Third World, with John Perkins' Confessions of an Economic Hit Man as a gruesome illustration.

Yes, I have mentioned that fabrication by the Russian secret police, the Protocols--a conspiracy revealed long time ago. But like Mein Kampf condemnation is not enough, better know what one talks about. The Protocols read like a textbook on how to get others into debt bondage, starting with making workers believe they can be better paid and how these entitlements as they are called in the US debate can push a country into bondage. The first reaction to credit is a sigh of relief, the second is not knowing how to cut expenses or make some income to service the debt. The third is hatred mobilizing old traumas--look at Greece and Germany.

Solution: debt forgiveness, and contracting fewer debts. The time horizon can vary, and it must be accompanied by mobilization of all internal resources to lift the bottom up from suffering and into some acquisitive power, rejuvenating countrysides with agricultural cooperatives, trade among GIPSI countries. The threat to EU today is not only a single currency with no treasury--much better would have been the euro as a common currency--but a debt bondage gradient in what should be a more egalitarian

# Rational Conflict Resolution: What Stands In the Way? (\*)



*Johan Galtung, 14 May 2012 - TRANSCEND Media Service*

community. The material out of which aggression is made. Not only forgiveness but also stimulus would be in Germany's interest relative to the EU periphery, and the same goes for China relative to the USA (possibly coupled to agreed reduction of their arms budgets), and to the World Bank in general.

What stands in the way? Long on neo-liberal market ideology, short on eclecticism, of all good ideas, for alternative economies.

Conclusion: Humanity has vast positive and negative experiences. We should all join building on them, wherever they can be found.

(\*) Some recent statements of mine, quoted out of context, have hurt some feelings. I apologize most sincerely for that, it was entirely unintended. One such context was the Breivik case in Norway with its many ramifications. A deeper context are the six conflicts addressed in this presentation.

NOTE:

[i] Uri Avnery, "A Putsch against War." TRANSCEND Media Service-TMS May 7 2012.

---

Johan Galtung, a Professor of Peace Studies, is Rector of the TRANSCEND Peace University-TPU. He is author of over 150 books on peace and related issues, including '50 Years - 100 Peace and Conflict Perspectives' published by the TRANSCEND University Press-TUP.

Editorials and articles originated on TMS may be freely reprinted, disseminated, translated and used as background material, provided an acknowledgment and link to the source, TRANSCEND Media Service-TMS, is included. Thank you.

This work is licensed under a CC BY-NC 3.0 United States License.