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Culture of Peace?

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Abstract

Every society contains within itself internal conflicts that are resolved or remain dormant for long periods of time. Occasionally, conflicts evolve into violence and can even lead to wars. The international community is working to prevent those, promoting the "Culture of Peace". However, what is meant by "Culture of Peace"? Throughout this article we will discuss the relationship between political rhetoric, social conflict and violence, and the role that the Culture of Peace can play in preventing armed conflicts arising from social conflicts.

Keywords:

Conflict, social conflict, violence, psycho-cultural provisions, Culture of Peace.

Introduction. Violence and Conflict

"..... peace is not absence of conflict: it is the ability to limit conflict without resorting to armed violence." - Julien Freund[1]

Hostility and escalation are two typical characteristics of all conflicts. One of the differences between conflict and competition is due to the absence of hostility in the latter[2]. By hostility, we understand the intention of damaging the opponent. Conflict is impregnated in violence (direct or indirect) as a result of the presence of such hostility[3].

The fact that the indistinct aim of competition and conflict is to try to impose itself on the opponent's will implies escalation[4]. In conflict, the combination of escalation and hostility could mean surpassing the threshold of direct violence[5]. The aggressiveness common to large competitors may lead us to project hostility on the opponent in our effort to break his will, and this could mean resorting to aggression if the surrounding conditions are adequate.

The way in which escalation takes place may be fortuitous, but it can also be premeditated under the driving force of those who wish to obtain something from the conflict, and from the way it develops.

While for some authors like Lewis Coser, direct violence serves society to be able to evolve the social conflicts that have become deeply entrenched[6], other authors like Lucian Pye argue that it is the social changes that bring about direct violence as a consequence[7]. Whether it is a solution to the conflict, or a consequence of it, the close relationship that exists between the two seems undeniable. In any case, conflict is a means of confrontation, which Giddens defines as the contradictions of social organization and its structures[8]. Such contradictions arise as a consequence of the

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[1] FREUND Julien, "The work of Gaston Bouthoul", *Empresas Políticas* nº 13, 2nd semester 2009. pgs 97-98.

[2] FREUND Julien, *Sociology of Conflict*, Madrid, Servicio de Publicaciones del EME, 1995, ISBN 84-7823-385-7. pg. 121.

[3] *Ibid.* pg. 10.

[4] *Ibid.* pg. 165

[5] According to Freund, by direct violence we mean the violence carried out during an aggression, from threat to physical violence, with or without weapons, as opposed to the concept of indirect violence, which is the one that is not openly manifested, and has an insidious and hazy character. *Ibid.* pg. 85-86.

[6] Apud BIENEN Henry *Violence and social change*. Chicago, 1968 pg 21 Apud KHAN Rasheeduddin, " Violence, and economic and social development " in JOXE A. (coord.), *La Violence et ses Causes*, París, Unesco, 1981, ISBN 92-3-301809-1. pgs. 202-03

[7] PYE Lucian *Guerrilla communism and Malaya*, Princeton 1956; *Politics, personality and national building: Burma´s search for identity.* New Haven, 1962; *Aspects of political development.* Boston 1966; and, PYE Lucian and VERBA Sidney, *Political culture and political development*, Princeton 1965 apud KHAN Opus cit. pg 206.

[8] GIDDENS Anthony, *A contemporary critique of historical materialism, Vol. 1. Power, property and the state.* Londres, Macmillan, 1981. pg. 28-29 *apud* CAIRO Heriberto and PASTOR Jaime, "The Discursive Construction of the Conflicts: global war and the conflicts located in the new world order". In CAIRO

evolution of society, sometimes due to problems not faced in the past for different reasons[9]. If the conflict is maintained within reasonable levels, it can cause an evolution, but when these levels are exceeded, a revolution can take place, and is associated with direct violence[10].

As a result of the contradictions we previously referred, the claim of a social group over something to which another group is entitled in response to things the former lacks. The problem is not social contradiction in itself, but rather the possibility that this contradiction may be used to justify the conflict[11]. Social contradiction requires solutions, but some agents may be interested in the presence of conflict to reach objectives different from the resolution of social contradiction. Thus, such agents will try to stimulate the conflict by justifying it in the presence of that contradiction.

Social Conflict and Political Rhetoric

In all social conflicts, that is, in conflicts where the opposing parties are groups of people that live together in the same space and time in an area of the planet defined by the territorial demarcation of a state, the political rhetoric can play a deciding role in the process of stimulating the conflict towards exercising violence. The important role those in charge of the political rhetoric play in mass movements was already acknowledged by Eric Hoffer in 1951[12].

Although in many cases political rhetoric fails to stimulate the conflict to levels in which direct violence is present, there is always the risk that this may happen, regardless of the will of those who try to encourage it. Sometimes the motivation of the conflict is due not only to the performance of visible actors, but rather to the influence of other agents that, as we previously pointed out, can get the conflict to go further than what those who visibly stimulate it desire. On other occasions, circumstances produce a cascade of events that may lead to an uncontrolled evolution of the conflict with respect to what those who stimulate it would really desire.

An example of the evolution of a social conflict into an armed conflict beyond what those who initially stimulated it expected is presented by Austin Currie, one of the Ulster nationalist leaders who promoted civil resistance (non-violent action) during the second half of the sixties. He would later admit that he would have never taken that initiative had he known that it would lead to an armed conflict like the one Ulster would live for nearly

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Heriberto and PASTOR Jaime (comps.) *Geopolitics, Wars and Resistences*, Madrid, Trama, 2006, ISBN 84-89239-65-7. pg. 13.

[9] FREUND Julien. *Opus cit.* p.77.

[10] FRAGA Manuel, *War and Social Conflict*, Madrid, Institute of Political Studies, 1962. pg.21.

[11] FREUND. *Opus cit.* pg.124.

[12] HOFFER Eric. *The true believer. Thoughts on the nature of mass movements.* New York, Harper Perennial, 1989. ISBN 0-06-091612-5. pg. 130-42.

25 years. Undoubtedly, it would not be fair to blame Currie for what would happen later, because such an evolution was no more than the result of the concurrence of agents and circumstances beyond his control[13].   As Erik Hoffer illustrated, normally, all political movements called to impose their will on the basis of a conflict is initiated by people like Currie, whom Hoffer calls "men of words". In the course of the events, if the men of words lack the necessary conditions, they are replaced by other types of leaders, more willing to lean towards violence, as happened in Ulster[14].

Political rhetoric must keep the conflict alive so that it doesn't lose its effectiveness and appeal to the group. The Palestine-Israeli conflict is a good example; the solution to this conflict, so desired by international diplomacy, is not profitable in terms of domestic politics for the politicians from both sides[15].

The Association between political rhetoric and social discourse about the diference in social conflicts

Political rhetoric may achieve that its claim be combined with some antagonisms that already exist in society, and which are associated with the existence of a "social discourse of the difference"[16]. This is a social discourse that emphasizes the differences between two or more social groups as elements that discern and separate the members of each group making them immiscible, and even incompatible. The differences may be real, but they can also be fictitious.

The wise combination of a political rhetoric claim with the social discourse of the difference inevitably stimulates the conflict, but the concurrence of other agents and circumstances can make such stimulation faster and deeper than expected by those who

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[13] CURRIE Austin, *All Hell will break loose*, Dublin, O,Brien Press, 2004, pg. 10 *apud* ENGLISH Richard, "The Interplay of Non-violent and Violent Action in Northern Ireland" in ROBERTS A. and GARTON ASH T. (edit.), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present.* Oxford University Press, 2009, New York. ISBN 978-0-19-955201-6, pg. 79.

[14] HOFFER Erik, *Opus cit..* pg. 131-32.

[15] Ver GUARDIA Anton La. *War without end. Israelis,Palestinians and the Struggle for a Promised Land.* New York, St. Martin´s Press, 2001. ISBN 0-312-27669-9 pg. 397.

[16] "Social discourse" does not only consist of a doctrinal text but rather a typical way of thinking, at a particular point, reflected in all aspects (facts, cultural products, organization, behavior, etc.) within a society. In order to compile these aspects it is necessary to turn to all types of texts and cultural manifestations. SAID Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Barcelona, Anagrama, 1996, *apud* CAIRO Heriberto and PASTOR Jaime, "The Discursive Construction of Conflicts: the global war and conflicts located in the new world order." In CAIRO Heriberto and PASTOR Jaime (comps.) *Geopolitics, Wars and Resistances*, Madrid, Trama, 2006, ISBN 84-89239-65-7. Pg. 13. The term "social discourse" should be understood as a set of statements that depend on the same discursive education, expressed not only through language (written or artistic), but also on social practice, in a whole integrated by institutionalization and practice. FOUCAULT Michael. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1966 and *The History of Sexuality 1. The will to Knowledge.* Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1978 *apud* CAIRO Heriberto Opus cit. pg. 12-13. Thus, social discourse differs from political rhetoric in that the latter does follow a doctrinal text, and only belongs to the world of politics, particularly domestic politics.

promote it. Sometimes the presence itself of a social discourse of the difference constitutes evidence of the presence of a traditional claim from a group, which may also be included in a political rhetoric that initially lacked it. The greater the number of claims from the group, and the more powerful they are, the greater the capacity of the political rhetoric to motivate the group to develop the conflict

A widespread concept among public opinion is that of the association between "the difference" and the causes of conflicts; in other words, the idea that ethnic or religious differences can be the cause of conflict. This idea is the one that attributes the causes of most of the conflicts in post-colonial Africa to the artificial mapping of its borders without respecting the demarcations occupied by the different ethnicities. As Sanchez Rojas points out, the cause of African problems is not the presence of the different ethnicities, but rather the manipulation of the different ethnic groups by the political and military leaders that exacerbate the present conflicts making them much more difficult to resolve[17]. This traditional thought has been the basis for actions on a diplomatic level to solve armed conflicts at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the current one. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is a clear example of this; the international negotiators always began by assuming that it was a conventional confrontation between two parties over the control of a territory, but the real conflict was between the nationalist leaders and the minorities that they tried to expel from their territories, as a result of a political rhetoric that led all of them to win the elections[18].

National myths and symbols, religion, and the reinterpretation of history are characteristic of rhetoric aimed at the stimulation of parts of the population to support political options that are usually associated with geopolitical representations of the territory in the collective mentality of the ethno-cultural groups to whom the political message is addressed[19], such as "the promised land" of the Jews in Palestine, the creation of Serbia in the province of Kosovo, or the former Umayyad caliphate for radical Islamists.

The identity singularities act by stimulating the collective mobilization in favor of specific political objectives that differ from the aim they seem to claim[20]. The political rhetoric based on the identity of the groups is a strong substitute of consistent projects when the circumstances drag the group toward the feeling of frustration as related to social conflict[21]. The feeling of frustration combined with feelings of injustice and of the possibility of changing the *status quo* usually provokes strong in-group favoritism and

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[17] SÁNCHEZ DE ROJAS Emilio, "The conflicts in Africa. An analysis" in SALAZAR DE GUERRA Ana María (Dir.) *Africa.* Ministry of Defense, 2015, ISBN 978-84 9091-091-7. pg. 161.

[18] KALDOR Mary, *New and Old Wars: Organized violence in Global Era*, Barcelona, Tusquets, 2001. ISBN 84-8310-761-9. pg. 80-81.

[19] FERRERO TURRIÓN Ruth, "Self-determination, territorial integrity and national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. The Albanese and Transylvania issues" in CUETO Carlos de (coord.), *Security and Diversity in contemporary societies*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2005. ISBN84-9742-388-7. pg. 53.

[20] CUETO Carlos de, "Religious violence in India. The new expectations regarding the process of pacification of Kashmir " in CUETO Carlos de *Opus cit.* pg. 21.

[21] KALDOR Mary, *Opus cit.* p. 21-22.

hostility toward the group which considers itself dominant[22].

Relationship between violence and psycho-cultural attitudes

In the imagery of the individuals that are part of the group, there are some "reasons" that justify the confrontation with the other group. Such reasons, always legitimate from their point of view, may be real or fictitious. However, it is in that interpretative process of the causes of its attitude where justification to the actions they comment to defend them are found, regarding their intensity as well as to their means[23].

The reactions that the interpretative process produces are culturally learned, as are also others of an attributed nature of guilt, or those of normative belonging.

The processes of attribution usually end up with the allocation of culpability to people, not to the circumstances that surround the facts[24]. Likewise, the individual tends to justify the aggression against other people if the individual identifies in those people a clear aim of harming or of an intentional violation of the regulations[25]. The possibility of having a specific reaction to some events (normative belonging) is added to the aforesaid[26]. However, it is obvious that the individual can be brought up in managing these three elements that are part of the psycho-cultural attitudes.

Normative belonging has an even greater effect on the group than on the individual[27]. To this normative belonging, we should add the capability of the group to influence individuals due to their need of belonging (normative influence), and due to their informative conformity (informative influence)[28], as elements of the psycho-cultural attitudes capable of determining the inclination of the individual to resort to violence.

The studies carried out by Marc Howard Ross, professor at Bryn Mawr College, regarding conflict in societies, published in 1995, showed the preponderance of psycho-cultural

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[22] BROWN R. J. y ROSS G. F., "The battle for acceptance: an exploration into the dynamics of intergroup behavior" en TAIFEL H.(ed.) *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, *apud* BROWN Rupert "Intergroup relations" in HEWSTONE M. *et al.* (Dir. y Coord.) *Introduction to Social Psychology. A European perspective.* 3rd edition. Barcelona, Ariel, 1992, ISBN 84-344-0855-4. pg. 392.

[23] ROSS Marc Howard. *The Culture of Conflict*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995. Translated by José Real Gutiérrez, Barcelona, Ediciones Paidós Ibérica SA, 1995. ISBN 84-493-0166-1. pg. 244.

[24] HEWSTONE M. and ANTAKI C. "Theory of attribution and social explanations" in HEWSTONE M. *et al.* (Dir. and Coord.) *Introduction to social psychology. A European perspective.* 3rd edition. Barcelona, Ariel, 1992, ISBN 84-344-0855-4, pg. 128.

[25] FERGUSON T. J. and RULE B.G. "An attributional perspective on anger and aggression" in GEEN R. and DONNERSTEIN E, (Ed.) *Aggression: theoretical and empirical reviews* (vol. 1), New York, Academic Press, 1983 *apud* MUMMENDEY Amélie, "Aggressive conduct" in HEWSTONE M. *et al.* (Dir. and Coord.) *Opus cit.* pg. 277.

[26] MUMMENDEY Amélie. *Opus cit.* pg. 371-72.

[27] MUMMENDEY Amélie. *Opus cit.* pg. 281.

[28] ALLEN V. L. "Situational factors in conformity" in BERKOWITZ L. (ed.) Advances in Experimental Social Psychology (Vol. 2) New York, Academic Press, 1965, *apud* AVERMAET Eddy van, AVERMAET Eddy van, "Social influence on small groups" in HEWSTONE M. *et al.* (Dir. y Coord.) *Opus cit.*pg. 344.

attitudes in the greater or lesser inclination of a society to exercise violence to solve their disputes[29], coinciding with numerous studies undertaken previously in the field of social psychology, some of them mentioned in the two previous paragraphs.

The prevention of violence in social conflict

The fact that violence is something innate to human nature is something widely debated throughout History. The willingness of man to destroy those of his own species has no comparison in the animal kingdom. Aristotle used to say that violence can be repressed but not suppressed. Just as violence is, social conflicts are innate to all societies. Clausewitz described war as a social act[30].

The way in which social conflicts develop and become armed conflicts, and their relationship with political rhetoric is recurrent. The likelihood that a social conflict turns into an armed conflict seems to be always present. Sometimes, it is those who stimulate it who are seeking this outcome. Other times, the concurrence of different agents and circumstances in the conflict give way to a result that was not sought by those who stimulate it through their discourse. Obviously, the probability of developing into violence depends on the nature, quality, and quantity of the mentioned concurrence.

Although it is not possible to nullify the probability of the evolution of a social conflict into an armed conflict, it is possible to reduce it in relative terms. The presence of psycho-cultural attitudes aimed at producing non-violent reactions may alter the probability that a social conflicts turns into violence, considering specific conditions with regards to the presence of interested agents and circumstances.

Ross's conclusions about the degree of inclination of societies to the use of violence to solve their disputes leads us to imagine the probability of developing societies with psycho-cultural attitudes clearly focused on preventing the use of violence. Putting huge efforts on prevention through strengthening psycho-cultural attitudes contrary to resorting to violence as a way to solve disputes could give dividends in this matter. However, such efforts must be made far in advance, long before perceiving the risk of armed conflict.

In 1999, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the Declaration on the Culture of Peace. The purpose of the declaration was to facilitate the orientation to governments, organizations, and the civil society to promote and strengthen a Culture of Peace in the new millennium. The idea underlying the concept of Culture of Peace is that of the development of a social discourse that promotes values, attitudes, behavior, and styles of life that act as mechanisms for the prevention of violence. However, all of this needs, as a starting point, the development of attitudes on the part of governments,

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[29] ROSS Marc Howard. Opus cit. pg. 91.
[30] CLAUSEWITZ, *On war,* Londres, Pelican Books, 1968 p. 202 *apud* KALDOR Mary *Opus cit.* pg. 29.

organizations, and the civil society, that will orient it[31].

In this declaration, the development of the Culture of Peace is linked with many factors that have traditionally been associated to the causes of conflicts. However, other have also been linked to the eradication of illiteracy, the guarantee of free circulation of information and the access to it, the development of the population in skills for dialogue, negotiation, the creation of a consensus, and the peaceful solution to controversies, or the promotion of understanding, tolerance, and solidarity with "others", as well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination[32].

The final objective intended through strengthening those factors is to achieve a society composed of individuals with the capability of eradicating violence as a form of reaction. Educating individuals in this behavior requires efforts through the different processes of instrumental conditioning (positive or negative reinforcements as a reward or punishment of a specific behavior), and the social modeling (observation of the behavior of other people)[33]. This challenge must be faced at the level of formal education, as well as the psycho-social level that all the environments where it happens provide, starting from the family environment to social discourse.

Conclusions

The prevention of armed conflicts is a constant concern at the international level, which is reflected in the production of documents such as the aforementioned document regarding "Culture of Peace", mainly focused on the attainment of long-term objectives that can contribute to the reduction of violence associated to the human condition in its Aristotelian conception of political and social animal[34].

Working on the prevention of violence derived from long-term social conflict must include great efforts dedicated to attaining societies with psycho-cultural attitudes not inclined to the use of violence to solve their disputes.

Ultimately, it is a question of developing societies in which the education of future generations and social discourse go through promoting the rejection of antagonisms and of the "difference" as a form of distinction, and to provide the individual mechanisms to manage the conflict in a peaceful manner to drive away the presence of conflict in social relations. The societies where education and social discourse encourage research, debate, and cooperation as ways to promote the individual personality against group thinking, and that promote an affectionate and collaborative society where trust in others

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[31] Resolution 52/243 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Declaration and Program of Action regarding the Culture of Peace, A/RES/53/243 of October 6, 1999 pg. 2-3.
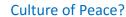[32] Ibid. pg. 3-4.
[33] MUMMENDEY A. *Opus cit.* pg. 267-70.

[34] ARISTOTELES, *Politics.* MARÍAS Julián and ARAUJO María (Trans.). Madrid, Institute of Political Studies, Madrid, 1970. Book I. 1253a . pg. 3.

is a value on the rise against the need of belonging to the group.

All of this is to attain societies resistant to the temptation of resorting to violence as a way to solve their disputes, that allows them to slow down, and even avoid, the possibility that the conjunction of certain agents interested in stimulating social conflict and of the circumstances that favor it may accelerate social conflicts typical of all societies in the arms of violence, and ultimately, of war.

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