

Book Reviews

Second Track/Citizens' Diplomacy: Concepts and Techniques for Conflict Transformation

John Davies and Edward (Edy) Kaufman (eds.) 2002

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As the subtitle indicates, this book is about concepts and techniques for conflict transformation. But as the title shows, it is especially about getting more people involved, and about taking culture seriously.

The focus on culture is written into the title indirectly, but strikingly – by the slant mark and the two qualifiers of ‘diplomacy’. At first sight one may be inclined to ask why such a double description was chosen. One realises quite soon, however, that the rationale was a strong cultural sensitivity, which led to a combination of the terms used in the North and the South. Protracted social conflicts, which occur in both halves of the globe, are almost always based on a lack of respect for culture, race, religion or language – mentioned in this order on page 2. The crucial importance of bridging cultural divides is therefore stressed (pp. 7-8). Conflict is a social phenomenon, ‘inseparable

from the cultural frameworks in which it has emerged', and in dealing with conflict, facilitators have to put aside their own cultural preconceptions. They have to elicit from the parties what *their* perceptions are, and what *they* regard as a suitable process through which the conflict might be addressed.

Such a cultural open-mindedness is promoted and practised throughout the book. A chapter is devoted to 'Mapping Cultures' and developing 'Strategies for Effective Intercultural Conflict Resolution'. A very useful 'Wheel of Culture Map' is used to help us understand the contexts in which cultural similarities and differences function. Suggestions are given for initiating dialogue and negotiation cross-culturally, and for responding with appropriate flexibility. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding why people of another culture think and act as they do.

This book, however, promotes more than just cultural inclusiveness. In line with the main thrust of second track or citizens' diplomacy, it propagates the involvement of more people in processes of dealing with conflict. Official diplomacy often complicates a conflict situation through power-greedy obstinacy or duplicity. (Double-mindedness was included in the semantic fields of the Greek adjective that contributed the 'diplo' of 'diplomacy'.) Official diplomacy may also play its role to de-escalate and/or resolve a conflict. In both cases, however, the unofficial diplomacy of professionals, opinion formers, and *influential* community members can be of wide- and far-reaching significance. It can counteract stubbornness and craftiness, and it can complement tactfulness and sincerity.

In a series of very informative and stimulating chapters, non-official possibilities before, during and after talks are thoroughly discussed. Very valuable insights and skills are emphasised with regard to preparatory stages, the pivotal phase of problem solving, and the ongoing work of empowerment and reconciliation.

In the first section of the book, the dynamics of complex social conflicts and of interactive conflict resolution are explored. The importance of human needs, especially the need for recognition and acceptance of identity, is highlighted. Particular attention is therefore given to ethno-political conflicts and the risk factors for ethno-political violence. At the same time encouraging recent trends are discussed, including the extent to which minorities have made significant gains through peaceful means.

The remarkable evolution of the field of Interactive Conflict Resolution, of which Citizens' Diplomacy forms an important part, is outlined and discussed. This overview can fill one with appreciation for what has already

been accomplished, and for the privilege of being involved in such a meaningful field. So much can indeed happen when members of conflicting identity groups or states get together and engage in effective communication. People can move from a rigid preoccupation with positions towards a willingness to understand the needs of the parties and undertake creative problem solving. Impartial facilitators with social science expertise and appropriate practical experience can play an important role. Frank analyses can be made. Root causes can be probed. Mutual understanding can emerge. Surprising solutions may be discovered. And from the unofficial but influential representatives of the conflicting groups, such insights and options may radiate to wider constituencies and to official decision makers.

The second section takes us further into what is announced by the subtitle of the book: concepts and techniques for conflict transformation. As throughout the book, the contributions of the various authors are based on clear-sighted scholarship and experienced practitionership. Theory and practice are integrated in mutually enriching ways, and current insights are convincingly presented. For instance, conflict prevention, management and resolution are acknowledged as specific agendas, but the persistent emphasis is on the comprehensive objective of conflict transformation. Effective ways are discussed in which complex social conflicts can be approached and responded to – from addressing root causes, through finding satisfactory solutions for the real problems, to facilitating the emergence of reconciliation.

Of particular importance, both theoretically and practically, is the chapter exploring seven strategies for dealing with social conflicts. As a starting point, general approaches are distinguished according to their basic sources of motivation: power, rights or interests. Then, however, two crucially important dimensions are brought into the discussion. The first is the dimension of forms of relationship, in which the main options are dependence, independence and interdependence. At the same time the behavioural tendencies typically corresponding to each of these options are emphasised: yielding, contending and integrative behaviour. The second dimension is the one of identity, in which different levels of collective identity are distinguished: contact groups, cultures/nations, and humanity as a whole. In the light of these three perspectives and nine subdivisions, an extremely useful discussion and a synoptic diagram of seven possible strategies are given. Although these perspectives and strategies are presented in an order revealing increasing degrees of social reasoning and awareness, the more complex ones are not supposed to replace the simpler ones. The different

strategies can function in complementary ways. In each situation a different one or a particular balanced set may be optimal. To facilitate the planning of the most appropriate approach in specific circumstances, twenty pages are devoted to most helpful descriptions and discussions of the seven strategies. Key aspects are outlined, and illustrative examples are referred to. Possible outcomes are mentioned, but also limitations that have to be taken into account.

Although all these approaches and their applicability are discussed without bias, no secret is made of the advantages of the interest-based approach, which figures prominently in three of the seven strategies. 'The bulk of this book is an exploration of how this interest-based approach can be applied in managing protracted intergroup conflicts' (p. 114).

Applications are offered, but not in prescriptive ways. Concepts and techniques are presented in a spirit of exploring and sharing. Significant suggestions can be found in each of the twelve chapters, but the two chapters of section three form an exceedingly valuable package of recommendations, which make up more than a quarter of the book. This section is focused on the 'Innovative Problem-Solving Workshop'. It is based on practical experimentation over a decade, and on the work of researchers and practitioners over more than three decades.

The rationale of the entire programme and of each part is given, in order to provide more insight to the facilitators and enable them to communicate transparency and encouragement to the participants. With regard to the overall planning, it is suggested that the first third of such a workshop be focused on establishing a working relationship among the participants, aptly called 'Partners in Conflict', and the remaining two thirds on searching for common ground and innovative solutions. For a series of fifteen days, practically tested and improved recommendations are made about items to be explained and discussed, exercises and activities to be used, and sensitivities to be respected. Of particular interest and importance is the incorporation of the ARIA technique, with ample time allocated to each of the four stages – antagonism, resonance, invention and action (p. 71). The fifteen-day pattern is not given as a rigid recipe, however, but merely as 'one model'. It is emphasised that the duration may vary from two days to several months, and that the contents have to be selected and the method designed according to the particular conflict and the needs of the participants.

There was a good reason for presenting in so much detail the section on innovative problem-solving workshops. It was done in response to urgent

requests from participants for written material ‘to build on in furthering the process of conflict resolution in their communities’ (p. 184). It is really encouraging that parties involved in complex conflicts experience participation in problem-solving workshops as so worthwhile that they feel the urge to share their experience with others. Quite appropriately, then, the last section of the book deals with training-of-trainers programmes and action evaluation. An ever-growing number of citizens should indeed be trained to develop and practise conflict transformation insights and skills.

In my opinion, this book can be strongly recommended. It should be of great theoretical, practical and inspirational value to all who are interested in the field of conflict transformation, and particularly to those already committed to work in this field. It provides introductory, additional and advanced material (plus references to more than 280 sources from the last four decades). It should help to get more people involved in solving the deep-rooted problems of unaccepted identity as well as the persistent problems of social, economic or political injustice. It should make more people aware of the possibilities of re-humanising enemies, restoring justice and promoting reconciliation.