THE ROLE OF SOCIO PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN MAINTAINING (INTER) NATIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts, as it is already well documented, are inevitable part of people's existence. They are neutral in their nature. Whether their outcome is positive or negative, depends on the approaches applied for their resolution. International conflicts, which are processes that affect international relations, also pervade the whole society. Therefore, when analyzing conflicts various dimensions should be accounted for. They include, but are not limited to, strategic, military and diplomatic, as well as the economic, psychological and cultural dimensions. All of these aspects interact with each other and define both intrasocietal and intersocietal processes that drive the conflict. This paper addresses several propositions about the nature of international conflicts which, according to Kelman (2007), are coming from the social-psychological perspective. One proposition is that international conflicts are processes driven from collective needs and fears. The other propositions claim that these conflicts are intersocietal, multifaceted processes of mutual influence, while in the same time they are interactive processes with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamics. As the same author points out, a new form of practice of international conflict resolution, called interactive problem solving, is based on social-psychological principles. We further analyze the potential of socio-psychological approach in resolving conflicts non-violently, by providing better understanding of the nature of conflict and highlighting the effective ways for building a culture of peace and thus maintaining peace and stability nationally and internationally.

Keywords: conflict resolution, international conflict, socio-psychological

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1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict resolution has a long history of development as a field of study, especially in the 1950s and 1960s where the pick in the Cold War took place. In such circumstances, the need for approaching conflict resolution more globally was clearly addressed. At present, as the context and the nature of conflicts are constantly changing, this need is even more affirmed. Thus, today we speak of international conflicts, which are processes that affect international relations and pervade the whole society. Therefore, when analyzing conflicts various dimensions should be accounted for. They include, but are not limited to, strategic, military and diplomatic, as well as the economic, psychological and cultural dimensions. All of these aspects interact with each other and define both intrasocietal and intersocietal processes that drive the conflict. In this sense, social-psychological perspective has much to offer in understanding and resolving international conflicts, especially those rooted in terrorist violence. Hence, a new form of practice of international conflict resolution, called interactive problem solving is based on social-psychological principles and has a potential for resolving conflicts nonviolently (Kelman, 2007).

Conflicts, as it is already well documented, are inevitable part of people's existence. They are neutral in their nature. Whether their outcome is positive or negative, depends on the approaches applied for their resolution. Sometimes they are highly destructive, but in other times they could stimulate creativity, or be a motivator of positive changes in the relations and personalities, i.e. a challenge for personal/mutual growth and development. Thus, as Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall (2016) would argue, conflicts are universal features of human societies and can arise in many domains of people's existence, such as between family members, families, organizations, communities, or countries. This legitimize conflict resolution approaches to be applied in all these domains as well. According

to Kelman and Fisher (2003), international conflict resolution can be placed in the context of a larger field of practice, applied at different levels and domains, and anchored in different theoretical disciplines and traditions. Despite this obvious diversity, there are certain common threads that run throughout the field. In this sense, crosslevel exchanges are very valuable for developing general principles, bur the application of these principles requires sensitivity to the unique features of the context in which they are applied.

2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Conflict resolution is usually defined as a complex set of approaches and techniques for resolution of conflicts by a third party. It is tightly connected to the process of peacekeeping. However, there are different views of conflict resolution parameters and of the major realms it encompasses, so there is lack of consensus about those characteristics among different authors. According to Kriesberg (2009; as cited in Ташковски и Танески, 2018), some authors relate this term to a specific kind of work (ex. engaging in mediation in a particular manner). For others, it refers to various ways of managing and/or ending conflicts, by using joint efforts aimed towards mutually acceptable agreements. Finally, there are authors who believe that conflict resolution can be applied to all stages of conflicts. They are focusing on constructive ways of conducting and transforming conflicts which provide secure and equitable relations afterwards. The evolution of this field is closely related to the dynamic interplay of conflict applications (i.e. practice), academic theories and research. The realm of practice includes actions that professionals undertake to affect the course of conflicts, by applying conflict resolution methods, whereas the realm of research includes the analyses that help test deductive theory and represent the bases for inductive theory building.

According to Galtung (as cited in Мурџева-Шкариќ, 2007), the essence of the conflict can be defined through the so-called "conflict triangle". Its essential ingredients are: a) conflicting attitudes; b) conflict behavior, and c) a conflict situation i.e. the contradiction. The cause of the conflict can start from any corner of the triangle, but it usually begins because of the contradiction. Conflicting attitudes can be cognitive and emotional, positive and negative, and represent a psychological state that arises from incompatibility, or contradiction. Conflicting behavior, can be physical and verbal, more or less violent and destructive, on the one hand, but also constructive and conciliatory, on the other. It is an action taken by the opposing party(s) that is (are) in a conflict situation. The intention of such behavior is the opposing party to give up its goals or to change them. Finaly, the conflict situation, i.e. the contradiction occurs between two or more parties advocating for different and conflicting purposes.

In this model, the conflict must be resolved with the application of a holistic approach. This means that all three aspects should be threated in the same time in order to transform the conflict. Othervise, when not taking into account the entire triangle, three types of errors could occur: a) an error in the attitude - occurs if the emphasis is placed only on the need for more love, and the contradiction is neglected; b) a behavioral error - occurs when it is considered that resolving the conflict is sufficient to reduce aggression and violence; and c) an error in the contradiction – which means that the inappropriate relation to the contradiction contributes to solving it in an inappropriate way. Galtung (as cited in Мурџева-Шкариќ, 2007), points out that in order to transform the conflict, the attitude of hatred, mistrust, indecision, etc., should be transformed into empathy. Furthermore, violent behavior should be transformed into nonviolent, while contradiction should be transformed into creativity.

Combining Galtung's triangles (the one for the structure of the conflict and the other for the types of violence – structural, cultural and direct), it can be concluded that structural violence (ex. children die from poverty) could be resolved by removing structural contradictions and

injustices. In the same time, cultural violence ends by changing the attitudes from hatered to empathy and love, while direct violence (ex. murdering civilians) - by stoping and changing the conflict behavior. These conflict resolution responses further relate to a broader strategies of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking. In sum, conflict resolution must include a set of dynamic changes that will bring de-escalation of conflict behavior, a substantial change in attitudes as well as transformation of the relationships or clashing interests that are placed in the core of the conflict structure (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall, 2016).

3. SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Building trust among enemies, as Kelman (2005) would argue, is the central challenge for international conflict resolution. This process is long and gradual. In its essence lie the interactive problem solving strategies, also known as unofficial diplomacy (term given by Kelman). The basic dilemma of almost all conflict resolution efforts addresses the question of how conflicting parties could enter into peace process while still distrusting each other, yet still having in mind that without entering the peace process it cannot be expected that the trust will occur and be maintained. Therefore, ways of interactive problem solving proved to be useful in confronting this dilemma, for example in the case of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and contribute to the wider and more complex process of building trust and establishing peace.

In relevant literature there is a consensus that trust is essential requirement for every conflict resolution approach to be effective and peaceful. Yet, although establishment of mutual trust is fundamental, its development is difficult to be achieved in deep rooted and highly violent conflicts between identity groups. The main difficulty in the later, is that conflicting parties believe that "the other" is focused on violating and jeopardizing their basic needs, their right to live peaceful life and so on.

However, if they become aware that negotiation and exchanging relationship is their only way out of the conflict, the peace process becomes possible. Here is the point where interactive problem solving takes over. Kelman (1997, 2001) describes this process as academically based, third-party approach to international conflicts, mostly effective for resolving conflicts between identity groups. It is based on conducting intensive workshops and face-to-face meetings focused on constructive problem-solving skills and strategies.

There are five focal points in the process of building trust among enemies that are relevant for interactive problem solving. First of them highlights the necessity of successive approximations of commitment and reassurance in the context of low trust among parties which have to enter into dialogue. The second one relates to the role of the third-party as a repository of trust especially at the beginning of the peace process. Here, the main requirement is this third party to prove itself as trustworthy. The third point is to have, so called, working trust, i.e. to have conflicting parties who acts out of their own interest but still assume that "the other" will contribute in maintaining relationship and making it work. The fourth one highlights the awareness of the uneasy coalition across conflicting lines. Its uneasiness comes from the fact that in protracted conflicts between identity groups, the separation comes along peoples' core identities which make these types of conflicts very difficult to resolve. Then, there is also a fifth point that addresses the mutual reassurance whose main goal is to overcome the fear from "the other" and its motives to violate the security, identity and existence of one's own group.

The successful outcome of the conflict resolution is reconciliation between conflicting parties. It takes time and great efforts from all sides and comes at the very end. Reconciliation is both a process and an outcome. It does not come naturally neither automatically after reaching an agreement. Therefore, it needs to be started from the beginning of the peace process and be maintained throughout the whole process as its integral part. Reconciliation activities need to be set in the context of overcoming marginalization, alienation, and other psychological and social effects of violent conflict. It is a longer

process of solving antagonism and moving from competition to cooperation. According to some authors, it is part of the process called peacemaking, which also includes conflict transformation. The process of reconciliation usually include three elements: emotional, cognitive and behavioral. In its entirety, it helps individuals and groups in finding ways to effectively heal themselves and accept the opposing side as equally worth. This is very important, because without forgiveness, there is no future. The process often begins with the transitional or post-conflict justice which basically is the introduction to reconciliation. It ends by certain reconstruction of trauma and proclamation of understanding and compensation for the victims (Frckoski, 2012).

Reconciliation is one of the three processes (together with settlement and resolution) to peacemaking aimed towards achieving different, yet, often overlapping, goals. Sometimes they are congruent to each other, but could also be contradictory to one another. In its full form, reconciliation presupposes conflict resolution, as conflict resolution presupposes conflict settlement. The crucial difference among these three processes could be found in that they correspond to the three processes of social influence. The first one is called compliance, and refers to acceptance of another's influence in order to achieve acceptance, approval or reward. Second one, known as identification refers to acceptance of another's influence in order to maintain desired influence and self-definition, while the third process – internalization - refers to acceptance of another's influence in order to maintain the congruence of one's value system (Kelman, 2004; pp. 114-115).

The psychological aspects of reconciliation are particularly relevant to the elimination of residues of victimization feelings. Reconciliation and healing remain an important part of a conflict resolution process given that the legacy of past violence serves as a latent source of future confrontations. Thus, it is a process which points to the central needs and fears of the societies. Group healing and other activities can focus on individual and social well-being in overcoming the pathological, psychological and social conditions that are likely to harbor the conflict. Reconciliation and healing should be supported by social and institutional changes, such as democratization, development and security reform (Jeong, 2010).

4. CONCLUSION

Social-psychological analysis has significant contribution to understanding and resolving international conflicts aimed to maintain national and international peace and stability. It provides a framework for conceptualizing change in the system and in relationships among its components. International conflicts are dynamic phenomena which need to be approached holistically and interdisciplinary. In this sense, focusing on social-psychological dimensions could provide better insight into the causes, the impact and the effects of change both on national and international system. The analysis made on micro and macro level provide better understanding of cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects (and their interaction) of peoples' behavior in a given point in time (Kelman, 2007).

Conflict resolution efforts have to be focused on finding and providing the effective ways and strategies of how to provoke change, on the possibilities and conditions for change to occur, as well as on overcoming the resistance to change. Here, another important aspect that should be accounted for are the barriers to conflict resolution recognized in escalating, self-perpetuating dynamic in interactions between conflicting parties. Changing this interaction dynamic from conflicting to constructive would help overcome mentioned barriers and could contribute to the improvement of the relationship itself. This means that by using the social-psychological approach and by engaging in interactive problem solving workshops, individuals promote their knowledge and skills in changing perspective, building trust, negotiating, mutual responsiveness, reciprocity, perspective taking, open-mindedness and other essential elements of conflict resolution.

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