Transforming the Relationship Between Former Enemies: A Social-Psychological Analysis

Herbert C. Kelman

In this chapter, I examine the process of reconciliation within the framework of interactive problem solving, an approach to conflict resolution anchored in social-psychological principles. Interactive problem solving is a form of unofficial diplomacy, derived from the work of John Burton and epitomized by the microprocesses of problem-solving workshops. These workshops are unofficial, private, confidential meetings between politically influential members of conflicting parties, designed to develop new insights into their conflict and new ideas for resolving it, which can then be inculcated into the political process within each community. My work in this genre has focused primarily on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the approach can be—and has been—applied to other protracted conflicts between identity groups.

The concept of interactive problem solving can also be used as a metaphor for the microprocess of negotiation and peacemaking, for both descriptive and prescriptive purposes. What happens—or ought to happen—in negotiation can be captured by the three words that make up the term: First, negotiation treats the conflict as a problem shared by the parties—in essence, a problem in their relationship; the relationship has become wholly competitive and mutually destructive, such that each party's pursuit of its own needs and interests underestimates or disregards the needs and interests of the other. Second, negotiation explores ways of solving this problem, not by eliminating all conflict and potential conflict between the parties, but by addressing the underlying causes of the conflict and reversing the cascade dynamics of the conflict relationship. And, third, negotiation is an interactive process, capable of producing viable for solution of the problem that are responsive to the parties' fundamental concerns and
to which they are committed. This process itself contributes to building a new relationship between the parties.

Transforming the Relationship as the Goal of Negotiation

Within an interactive problem-solving framework, the ultimate goal of negotiation is to transform the relationship between the parties. Negotiations are designed not merely to produce a minimally acceptable political agreement, but to provide the basis for a viable, long-term peace and a cooperative, mutually enhancing relationship that contributes to the welfare and development of both societies.

Transforming the relationship becomes increasingly important the more intense and destructive the conflict is and the more interdependent the parties are. The ethnic conflicts that have dominated the world scene in the 1990s—such as the conflicts within and between the states of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, or in Rwanda and Burundi, or in Northern Ireland, or between Israelis and Palestinians—are high on both of these dimensions. They are entrenched conflicts, marked by a recent history of massive violence, at times involving genocide and other gross violations of human rights, and they raise profound concerns in the embattled communities about national and personal survival. In such conflicts, there is no substitute for an agreement that addresses the parties’ grievances and existential fears and transforms the relationship between them, since they cannot continue to live together in the same confined space.

Conflicts among parties that are less interdependent may not require an equally encompassing transformation of their relationship. Still, the degree of global and certainly regional interdependence among states in such domains as security, economic affairs, natural resources, environment, health, and migration requires an approach to conflict resolution that addresses the long-term relationship between the parties. The desired relationship is not one devoid of conflict, but one in which mechanisms of communication and problem solving are readily available so that conflicts can be resolved before escalating and becoming mutually destructive.

If the ultimate goal of negotiation is to transform (or recreate) the relationship between the parties, what kind of outcome must the negotiations seek? The sine qua non, in my view, of a solution that can provide the foundation of a new relationship is that it addresses the fundamental needs and fears of both parties. Conflict is calmed and escalated to a considerable degree by unfulfilled needs—not only material needs, but also such psychological needs as security, identity, recognition, autonomy, and a sense of justice. Parties in conflict, in pursuit of their own security and identity and related needs and interests, undermine and threaten the security and
Identity of the other. To resolve the conflict and begin to build a new relationship requires an agreement that satisfies the fundamental needs of both parties and recognizes that their fundamental fears are no longer warranted. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, for example, an agreement that meets these criteria must be based on mutual recognition of the other's national identity and on arrangements that assure each side's political independence, security, and survival.

The microprocess of interactive problem solving in workshop settings is specifically geared toward exploring the overall shape of a solution that would meet such criteria. It is helped by the fact that such psychological needs as identity and security—in contrast to more material interests like territory and resources—are not inherently zero sum in nature. Although identity and security are often perceived in zero-sum terms in intense, protracted conflicts, it is often the case that each party's own security and identity are actually enhanced by agreements that meet the other's needs in these domains. Only integrative solutions of this kind enable the parties to move from a relationship in which each sees the other as blocking the fulfillment of its own needs to one in which they actively work toward promoting the fulfillment of both sets of needs.

An outcome that addresses the fundamental needs and fears of both parties will almost certainly be imperfect from each party's point of view. Neither party is likely to feel that all of its interests have been fully met or that the agreement has given it everything it justly deserves. Insofar as the agreement entails division of territory and appropriation of resources claimed by both sides, or cession of rights claimed by one side or the other (such as the right of return of refugees, the right to settle in the other's territory, and the right to exercise full sovereignty in military or foreign affairs), it will inevitably require a compromise shaped in heavy distributive bargaining. And the outcome of such bargaining is likely to reflect the conditions on the ground and the relative power of the two parties. Granting the inevitability of compromise, however, it is essential that the negotiated agreement not require either party to sacrifice its fundamental needs—the needs that it considers nonnegotiable—or to jeopardize its national existence.

Does the outcome described here meet the criteria for a just solution to the conflict? One of the hallmarks of the practice of interactive problem solving at the microlevel is the nonadversarial character of the approach. Without implying moral equivalence in the positions and actions of the two parties, interaction proceeds on the basis of the "no-fault" principle. No attempt is made to establish who is right and who is wrong in terms of legal or historical criteria (although participants are not discouraged from discussing their perceptions of legal and historical rights as part of the process of sharing their differing perspectives with each other). The presumption
is that such a process will not yield ideas for a mutually satisfactory resolu-
tion of the conflict. While emphasizing a juridical and historical approach
to determining a just solution, interactive problem solving is not oblivious
to the issue of justice. The search for a solution that addresses the funda-
mental needs and fears of both parties can be viewed as the operational-
ization of the quest for justice in this approach. To the extent that the so-
lution is responsive to these needs and fears, it does justice to each party.

From an interactive problem-solving perspective, there is another way
in which considerations of justice enter into negotiations. To provide a
basis for changing the relationship between the two societies, an agree-
ment must have widespread support within each population so that a national
consensus in favor of the new relationship can evolve. Public support de-
dpends heavily on the perception that the negotiated agreement is just and
fair. Insofar as the agreement addresses fundamental needs and fears, it is
likely to be perceived as just. Indeed, in a protracted and bitter conflict,
people's sense of justice—the feeling that at least minimal justice has been
achieved—is itself one of the fundamental needs that the agreement must
satisfy. Perception of justice also depends, however, on people's convic-
tion that the process whereby the agreement was achieved was fair; that
their side's concerns were seriously considered; that the other side did not
take advantage of their leaders' weak bargaining position in order to im-
pose an unacceptable agreement; that third parties did not interfere in
the negotiations to their disadvantage. In other words, procedural justice in-
teracts with substantive justice in people's satisfaction with the negotiated
outcome. People judge the fairness of the process on the basis of both what
they knew about the process itself and what they infer from the outcome.

Two important elements in assessing fairness are equality and recipro-
city. In the microprocesses of problem-solving workshops, these are two prin-
ciples governing the interaction between the parties. Within the workshop
context, the parties are equal in the sense that both parties' needs and fears
are addressed and given equal weight in the deliberations, regardless of
whatever asymmetries of power or of moral standing may characterize
their relationship at the macrolevel. Similarly, both in the discussions and
in formulations of possible solutions, there is an emphasis on reciprocity
in the sense that each party is urged to give to the other what it demands
for itself—whether it is reassurance about its security, acknowledgment of
its identity, or understanding of its political constraints.

At the macrolevel, the negotiated agreement—though it is bound to be
characterized by inequalities in outcome (in the Israeli-Palestinian case,
for example, in the size of the territory or of the military force granted
to the two parties)—can and ought to reflect a process incorporating the prin-
ciples of equality and reciprocity. Equality is conveyed by instructions that
the needs and fears of both parties have been given serious and thoughtful
consideration. Reciprocity—perhaps the most powerful foundation of a new relationship—is conveyed most clearly by the terms of the agreement itself: each party extends to the other the same kind of recognition, respect, and assurance that it receives from the other.

Conditions for Transforming the Relationship

I have argued that negotiation of a protracted conflict must aim toward transforming the relationship between the parties if it is to yield an agreement conducive to a stable and durable peace that allows the foreign enemies to coexist and cooperate to the benefit of their respective societies. Peace manifests itself not only in the diplomatic agreements and strategic arrangements signed by governments, but also in the relationships established between societies and peoples. Moreover, peace goes beyond ending belligerency to creating a new state of affairs that can be defined in positive terms. A positive peace in the relationship between nations or communities with a long history of conflict and way has four essential components:

1. Mutual acceptance and reconciliation
2. A sense of security and dignity for each nation or community
3. A pattern of cooperative interaction between the nations or communities
4. Institutionalization of a dynamic process of problem solving

Transforming the relationship between former enemies toward such a peace is of necessity a gradual process, one that is not confined to the peace treaty hammered out as the negotiating table. What happens at the negotiating table and the nature of the agreement that emerges from the negotiations have significant effects on the future relationship, as discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter: transformation of the relationship is more likely if the agreement addresses both sides’ fundamental needs and fears; if it is perceived as fair; and if it emerges from a process that is perceived as fair and consistent with the principles of equality and reciprocity. But negotiations are most likely to produce such an outcome if the process of building a new relationship begins at the prenegotiation stage and continues in unofficial interactions—at the elite and grassroots levels—alongside the official negotiations. Moreover, the nature of the new relationship that evolves after the signing of a peace agreement depends on the way the agreement is implemented, on the way it is communicated to the two populations, and on subsequent activities in the public and private sectors. The period on which the present volume focuses—that is, the period following the signing of an incomplete agreement that does
not yet establish a firm peace—is particularly crucial for the transformation of the relationship. What happens at that stage may well determine whether the conditions for building a new relationship consistent with peaceful coexistence are put in place.

Some of the conditions for transforming the relationship between former enemies can be identified by examining each of the four components of a positive peace that were distinguished above.

Mutual acceptance and reconciliation. To establish a state of peace between communities that have been engaged in a protracted, hurtful, destructive conflict over many years presupposes a process of reconciliation, whereby the former belligerents come to accept each other not only diplomatically, but also psychologically. What are some of the conditions required for mutual acceptance and reconciliation between former enemies in a protracted identity conflict?

First, the peace agreement itself must entail a solution that satisfies the fundamental needs and fulfills the national aspirations of both parties, rather than one that is experienced as defeat and subjugation by one of the parties. A humiliating defeat is never a good basis for reconciliation, but in conflicts that are clearly internecine in character—such as that between France and Germany or between the United States and Japan during World War II—reconciliation could be achieved in the wake of a total defeat. By contrast, in prolonged identity conflicts—such as those in Israel/Palestine, Baltic, and Northern Ireland, in which both sides’ national existence is at stake and in which they must find a way to live together in the same small space—it seems virtually impossible to build reconciliation on the defeat of one of the parties. Total defeat in such conflicts is tantamount to destruction of the losers’ national community and deprives them of the hope to give political expression to their national identity. The resulting demoralization and resentment are not likely to leave an opening for reconciliation.

Second, reconciliation requires the parties’ mutual acceptance of each other’s national identity. The history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been particularly marked by systemic attempts on each side to deny the other’s identity. The parties have tended to view their dispute as a zero-sum conflict with respect to national identity and national existence. In other protracted conflicts as well, the parties seek to delegitimize each other and to redefine significant elements of the other’s identity in ways that suit their own narratives and strengthen their own claims. Mutual acceptance of each other’s national identity therefore requires a process of negotiating identity, based on separating out the different components of
The transformation of the relationship between former enemies is crucial for the transformation stage to well determine a relationship consistent with the nature of reconciliation. Each party should address the root causes of the conflict and work towards a peaceful resolution. This requires mutual acceptance of past wrongdoings and a commitment to building trust through joint efforts. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mutual recognition is essential for both sides to acknowledge the rights of each other.

Mutual recognition involves acknowledging the legitimacy and identity of the other side. This can be achieved through dialogue, negotiation, and the establishment of mechanisms for resolving disputes. The process of reconciliation is complex and requires patience, understanding, and a willingness to compromise. The ultimate goal is to create a sense of security and dignity for all parties involved, fostering a lasting peace.

Security and dignity are interconnected concepts. Security provides a foundation for dignity by ensuring that individuals and communities feel safe and respected. Reconciliation efforts should aim to create a secure environment that respects the rights and identities of all parties. This can be achieved through the establishment of trust-building measures, such as confidence-building initiatives, confidence-building measures, and the implementation of mechanisms for dispute resolution.

In summary, the transformation of the relationship between former enemies requires mutual recognition, reconciliation, and a commitment to building a peaceful future. This process is complex and requires ongoing efforts to address the root causes of conflict and work towards a lasting resolution.

The sense of security depends on the kinds of security arrangements that are put into place, such as demilitarized zones, early warning systems, and other measures designed to ensure that all parties feel protected and respected. Reconciliation is an essential step towards achieving this goal, fostering a sense of security and dignity for all involved.
international observation posts, or joint patrols. But there are also some perhaps less obvious psychological conditions for ensuring that security arrangements are consistent with the dignity of both sides.

First, security arrangements must be based on recognition that security is a matter of mutual concern. It is of the nature of inter-state, or inter-group, conflicts that each side feels keenly threatened by the other, even where there is considerable disparity in the two sides' military capabilities. Although the fears may at times seem exaggerated, they have a realistic basis in the history of violence that characterizes such conflicts. Whether or not the other side's fears are (or appear to be) warranted, each side must recognize that those fears exist and must respect the other's security concerns. President Anwar Sadat's acknowledgment of the depth of Israel's security concerns when he visited Jerusalem in 1977 had a powerful impact on the Israeli public, who had felt humiliated by Arab dismissal of Israeli fears. Today, Palestinians feel dehumanized by Israeli policies that give primacy to Israeli security without regard to the security, well-being, and dignity of Palestinians. Security is inconsistent with dignity if either side ignores or dismisses the other's security concerns or claims a monopoly on security needs.

Second, careful distinction must be made between genuine security requirements and the use of security as a cover or justification for other policies or practices, such as expulsion, control, or punishment. Arrangements that are designed to meet specific security purposes can be worked out between the parties and accepted much more readily if they are clearly defined and separate from other considerations. It is interesting in this connection that the Israeli Labor government and the Palestinian National Authority were quite successful, by and large, in establishing cooperation between their respective security forces. Such cooperation, when addressed to specific, joint security concerns, can become a vehicle for building trust and transforming the relationship between the two sides. However, when the term “security” is used broadly and loosely—as it has been used, for example, by Israeli authorities, to justify the confiscation of Palestinian lands or imposition of collective punishment—it becomes a convenient commodity that erodes the peace-building effort.

Third, to be consistent with the dignity of both sides, security arrangements must be based on the recognition that security ultimately depends on mutual trust. Military and strategic capacities may contribute to security by deterring attack and ensuring each party that it is able to defend itself if deterrence fails. They cannot, however, substitute for the development of trust, which provides assurance that the other has no intention to mount an attack and no interest in doing so. The search for military and strategic advantage may have the paradoxical effect of damaging long-run security by undermining trust and, in fact, setting an escalatory process into motion. Positive peace requires an active effort to search for security arrangements
But there are also some for ensuring that security for both sides, or recognition that security is of intense, protracted concern, even where there is some realism in the history. Whether or not the other side must recognize that security concerns, President of Israel’s security concerns will impact on the Israeli political, of Israeli fear. Today, that give priority to Israeli security and dignity of Palestinian side ignores or dismisses whether it is national security needs, among genuine security responsibilities for other polity. Armistic arrangements. The spirit can be worked out beyond if they are clearly dear. It is interesting in this review. The Palestinian National in establishing cooperation is cooperation. Where actions become a vehicle for the two sides, safety and security, or as it has justified the confinement of punishment. It becomes a laboring effort. Security arrangements uniformly depends on may contribute to the development of an interdependent need between the two sides. Security arrangements for the development of an interdependent need between the two sides. Security arrangements or for security arrangements help to build trust, rather than destroy it. Such efforts are exemplified by cooperative security arrangements and by confidence-building measures designed to promote a de-escalatory process—along the lines, perhaps, of C. E. Osgood’s GRTY (Graduated Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension Reduction) strategy.

In sum, security is sought in a context of reciprocity and mutual respect, it can enhance dignity, rather than detract from it. An overarching condition for such recognition between security and dignity is mutual reassurance through actions, gestures, and acknowledgments that address the existential fear of each party and persuade each that the other is genuinely committed to peace. Belief in the sincerity of the other’s commitment, a peaceful coexistence, based on its own interests, is an essential condition for the development of the working trust on which a sense of long-term security must ultimately rest.

Pattern of cooperative interaction. A third component of positive peace in the relationship between former enemies in the development of a pattern of cooperative interaction between the two nations of communities. Promotion of functional relations between the parties in both may be viewed as a substitute for the political and diplomatic processes required for achieving peace. However, in the eyes of a political agreement, particularly one that has not yet solidified—cooperative activities in the economic sphere, as well as in such domains as public health, environmental protection, communications, education, science, and culture, can make significant contributions. By establishing cooperative ties, common interests, and personal relations, they can help stabilize and cement a new peaceful relationship and create commitments, habits, and expectations consistent with maintaining and perpetuating peaceful coexistence.

What are some of the conditions that cooperative activities must meet if they are to contribute effectively to a transformation of the relationship between the two communities? First, the emphasis must be on interactions that have a genuine functional value in meeting the real, interdependent needs of the two societies. The political and symbolic value of cooperation among former enemies should not be minimized, but activities that are selected purely on that basis are not likely to be meaningful to the participants and sustained over time. The political and symbolic impact is greater when it emerges as a by-product of activities that are inherently meaningful. It is the inherent value of cooperative projects to both of the parties that creates the cross-coupling and the mutual trust that help transform their relationship.

Second, the interactions must be based on a dynamic conception of each other’s society, rather than essentialist (or dispositional) assumptions that view the other as fixed by its culture, national character, religion, or...
ideology. Cooperative activities are conducive to a new relationship if they reflect a mutual effort to understand the other society's evolving needs and an appreciation of the other's changing character in response to changing realities—including the evolving peace. Interactions based on stereotyped conceptions of the other are likely to confirm old attitudes and inhibit the development of a new relationship. Moreover, they are unlikely to foster the mutual responsiveness to the other's needs and appreciation of the other's reality on which a new relationship must be built.

Viable, the interaction must be based on an awareness of the sensitivities and anxieties that the other brings to the relationship and a commitment to cooperation on the basis of equality and reciprocity. Cooperative ventures are particularly problematic when the parties are characterized by asymmetries in power and level of development. The sensitivities that arise in any asymmetric relationship are exacerbated by a history of conflict. The less powerful party is especially inclined to be afraid of domination and exploitation by the more powerful one, to react to signs of arrogance and paternalism on the other's part, and to be sensitive to any implications that it is being treated as inferior. The more powerful party is confronted with the often contradictory requirement of providing assistance without establishing a pattern of dominance, dependency, and interference in the affairs of the other society. There is inevitably an element of ambivalence in the relationship—the less powerful party expects and feels entitled to assistance but, at the same time, resents it and experiences it as a threat to self-esteem. In developing cooperative activities, therefore, both parties must work to make sure that the cooperation builds toward a relationship based on equality and reciprocity. This requires genuine respect—on the part of both parties—for the other's perspective and experience, as well as genuine interest in what the other has to contribute. A one-sided relationship, in which one party does all the giving and the other all the taking, is not conducive to positive peace. More generally, the way in which the interaction is conducted and the kinds of attitudes that are conveyed to the source of it—values of respect for the other's integrity, sensitivity to their concerns, and responsiveness to their needs—significantly affect the potential of cooperative activities for transforming the relationship between the parties.

Viable cooperative ventures between former enemies that meet these conditions confront major obstacles. In the Israeli-Palestinian case clearly illustrates. The history of a relationship between occupier and occupied creates structural impediments to cooperation on a basis of equality and reciprocity. In the economic sphere, for example, access to jobs in Israel is vital to the Palestinian economy, yet the reliance on these jobs reinforces the dependence of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy that resulted from the occupation. These difficulties demonstrate why functional relations cannot be meaningfully pursued apart from the
transforming the relationship between Israel and Palestine

political processes. In the context of political movement, however, cooperative
measures can gradually overcome the structural obstacles as long as the
participants have genuine and mutual respect for each other.

Institutionalization of a Dynamic Process of Problem Solving. Interactive
type of problem solving, briefly described at the beginning of this chapter, is an
approach to the resolution of complex identity conflicts. Variants of this
approach may play a significant role in the peace-building process
after an agreement has been reached, as both a vehicle for transforming
the relationship between the parties and a component of the new relation-
ship. The institutionalization of an ongoing mechanism for conflict resolu-
tion through joint problem solving can be seen as a building block of a
new civil society formed across the old conflict lines and as an indicator of
positive peace.

The assumption here is that peace is not just a state of affairs created
by a diplomatic agreement and by the political and legal structures that it
puts into place. Rather, peace is a dynamic process, and a significant part
of that process calls for institutionalized mechanisms to resolve the prob-
lems that are bound to arise in the relationship between any two nations,
particularly nations emerging from a history of protracted conflict. An on-
goining process of conflict resolution through joint problem solving is es-
specially vital in the wake of a weak, incomplete agreement. The mecha-
nisms for engaging in such a process can be seen as a type of insurance
policy against the inevitable setbacks in the implementation and compli-
tation of the agreement. They can help the parties anticipate such setbacks
and deal with them when they arise. Availability of this resource makes it
clearer for the parties to regain the sense of possibility when the peace
process is on the verge of breaking down and to reestablish the relation-
ship when it has been ruptured.

The institutionalization of a process of problem solving must meet
several conditions if it is to contribute effectively to transforming the re-
relationship between the former enemies and help lay the basis for positive
peace.

First, the process must be based on a dynamic view of the relationship
between the parties. It must take account of the occurrence of change
within each society and in the relationship between them, of the possibili-
ties for future change, of the capacity of each party to encourage change in
the other through its own positive actions, and of the ways in which new
situations create their own dynamics for further change. As long as the
parties fail to recognize the dynamic character of their relationship, the
problems that are bound to crop up along the way are likely to magnify the
images and habits rooted in their long-standing conflict. As a result, they
would miss opportunities for discovering creative and mutually beneficial
solutions to these problems. Above all, a dynamic view of the relationship
allows the parties to ways of influencing the other by being responsive to the other’s needs.

Second, a central feature of the ongoing problem-solving process must be a readiness to engage in exploratory communication. Conflict resolution is impeded when each party enters it with a strong commitment to a specific outcome, which narrows the range of possible accommodations that they are likely to consider. This effect is mitigated when the parties make public pronouncements or take unilateral actions that make it difficult for them to retreat from their demands. What is needed, instead, is a commitment to a process that keeps the options open, allows the parties to explore each other’s concerns and priorities, and enables them to reframe the issues. This kind of communication broadens the range of mutual accommodations that can be considered as negotiating a viable solution. Institutionalizing a dynamic process of problem solving requires a venue in which exploratory communication can take place before the parties find themselves in rigid positions.

Third, the conflict-resolution mechanisms to be institutionalized must follow a nonadversarial model. They must approach conflicts within a nonfault framework, treating them as shared problems that require cooperative efforts in order to arrive at mutually satisfactory solutions. The aim of negotiation in this approach is to find integrative solutions in which both parties win, rather than strictly distributive solutions in which one party’s gain represents the other party’s loss.

This book conditions the institutionalizing a dynamic process of problem solving in the wake of a political agreement refers specifically to negotiating style, but it reflects the general attitude toward each other that former enemies must evolve as their relationship is transformed. It brings us back full circle to the first condition for mutual acceptance and reconciliation as a component of positive peace: the peace agreement itself must entail a solution that satisfies the fundamental needs and fulfills the national aspirations of both parties, rather than one that is experienced as defeat and subjugation by one of the parties. The negotiation of a final agreement inevitably requires distributive bargaining over specific issues, trade-offs between issues, and painful compromises. But the overall agreement must be based on certain basic principles shared by both sides. Only an outcome that both sides see as fair and just and that leaves them better off than they were before can give the way to reconciliation.

Notes
1. H. C. Kelman, “Informal Mediation by the Scholar-Practitioner,” in J. Bentovim and J. Rubin, eds., Mediation in International Relations: Multiple...
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Approaches to Conflict Management (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), pp. 18-20.