International Studies Perspectives (2000) 1, 273–288.

The Role of the Scholar-Practitioner in International Conflict Resolution

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Can unofficial, academically based, third-party approaches contribute to the prevention and resolution of international and intercommunal conflicts? The article focuses on one such approach, interactive problem solving, which the author has applied primarily in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After describing the central tool of the approach, the problem-solving workshop, the article goes on to address the role of interactive problem solving and related approaches to the larger process of conflict resolution. In this context, it discusses the relationship of the microprocess of problem-solving workshops to the macroprocess of international conflict resolution; the relationship between official and unofficial diplomacy; the relationship between practice and scholarship in conflict resolution; the role of the university in the process; and the possibilities for institutionalizing this model of conflict resolution.

Keywords: interactive problem solving, unofficial diplomacy, scholar-practitioner model

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Many of the violent conflicts that have dominated the world scene in the post–Cold War era, and that are likely to persist and proliferate as we move into the twenty-first century, are deep-rooted conflicts between ethnic and other identity groups within and across nation-states. These conflicts are often protracted in nature; they are perceived by the antagonists as conflicts about the continued existence of the group, the nation, or the state; they have been marked, time and again, by violence against civilians, brutal repression, ethnic cleansing, systematic mass killings, and genocidal policies. The challenge to the world community is to find ways of preventing and resolving such conflicts and building new relationships conducive to stable peace and mutually enhancing cooperation.

In this spirit, my colleagues and I have been developing and applying an unofficial, academically based, third-party approach to the analysis and resolution of international and intercommunal conflicts, which we have come to call *interactive problem solving* (Kelman, 1998b). My primary regional focus for the past quarter of a century has been on the Middle East, with special emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But my colleagues at the Program on International

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Author's note: This article is a revised and expanded version of "International Conflict Resolution," a chapter that appeared in G. Mageri, H. Rumpler, and C. Smekal, eds., *Wissenschaft und Zukunft: Beiträge der Wissenschaften zur Bewältigung globaler Krisen* (Vienna: Verlag Böhlau, 2000). That chapter, in turn, was based on a lecture presented at Austrian Science Day in October 1999. The paper is reprinted here with the kind permission of the editors and publisher. The work reported here is carried out under the auspices of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR). I am grateful to the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, for providing a home for PICAR; to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for providing financial support for PICAR over a number of years; and to Donna Hicks, Nadim Rouhana, and my other PICAR colleagues.

Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs have also worked on other protracted ethnic conflicts, such as those in Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and Colombia, and have applied the model to Cuba-U.S. relations, to ethnic conflicts in an American city, and to conflicts in Canadian and American Native communities.

This paper will briefly describe our problem-solving workshops with political influentials, which are the central tool of interactive problem solving, using illustrations from the Israeli-Palestinian case. It will then address five questions about the role of interactive problem solving and related forms of unofficial diplomacy in the larger process of international conflict resolution: the relationship of the microprocess of problem-solving workshops to the macroprocess of international conflict resolution; the relationship between official and unofficial diplomacy; the relationship between practice and scholarship in our model of conflict resolution; the contribution of the university in this model; and the possibilities for institutionalizing interactive problem solving as a vehicle for conflict resolution.

Interactive Problem Solving: The Microprocess

Interactive problem solving is a variant of what is now often called *track II diplomacy*. My own approach derives from the work of John Burton (1969, 1979, 1984), who was a senior Australian diplomat when he decided to move to academia. He taught International Relations at University College of London, where he founded the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict in the 1960s. There he pioneered an approach designed to help parties move beyond settlement to *resolution* of deep-rooted conflicts, by bringing together high-level representatives of the parties in an academic setting, to engage in private, confidential, unofficial communication under the guidance of a third-party panel of social scientists. I had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience with Burton's form of practice when he invited me to come to London in November 1966, to serve as a member of the third party in an exercise on the Cyprus conflict that he conducted at his Centre.

My colleagues and I, following Doob (1970) and Walton (1970), have come to refer to such exercises as *problem-solving workshops* (Kelman, 1972). Since problem-solving workshops are at the heart of our practice of interactive problem solving, I shall try to give a brief description of what they entail and what they are designed to accomplish. I shall describe a typical "one-time" workshop for Israeli and Palestinian participants. By "one-time" I mean that this particular group of Israelis and Palestinians convenes only for this one occasion. Some of the individuals have participated in more than one such workshop, and the one-time workshops that we have held over the years have had a cumulative effect within the two societies. But, until 1990, we made no effort to reconvene the same *group* of participants for another occasion.

Most of the workshops have been held at Harvard University, although on some occasions we have met at hotels or conference centers in Europe or the Middle East. The workshops usually begin with two pre-workshop sessions, about four hours in length, during which the third party meets separately with each of the two parties. The workshop itself typically meets for about two and a half days, perhaps an extended weekend, starting Friday afternoon and ending Sunday evening. The participants include three to six Israelis and an equal number of Palestinians, plus a third party of three or more members.

The Israeli and Palestinian participants are politically involved and often politically influential members of their societies, but—with some exceptions—they are not officials. They may be parliamentarians, leaders and activists of political

parties or political movements, journalists, editors, directors of think tanks, or politically involved academicians—i.e., scholars who not only write academic papers but also write for newspapers and appear in the media, who serve as advisors to political leaders, and some of whom move back and forth between government and academia. Some of our participants have been former diplomats, officials, or military officers, and many later became negotiators, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and leading figures in the media and research organizations. We look for people who are within the mainstream of their societies and close to the center of the political spectrum. At the same time, they have to be people who are at least willing to explore the possibility of a negotiated solution and to sit down as equals with members of the other party.

Ground Rules

Workshops follow a set of ground rules, summarized in Table 1, which are presented to the participants in great detail. The central ground rule of problem-solving workshops is the principle of privacy and confidentiality. This rule stipulates that whatever is said in the course of a workshop cannot be cited for attribution outside of the workshop setting by any participants, including the third party. In the early days of our work, confidentiality was particularly important for the protection of our participants, because the mere fact that they were meeting with the enemy was controversial and exposed them to political and, at times, legal or even physical risks. Confidentiality is equally important, however, for the protection of the process that we are trying to promote in workshops. It enables participants to engage in the kind of interaction that is crucial to achieving the purposes of the enterprise.

TABLE 1. Ground Rules

1. Privacy and confidentiality
2. Focus on each other (not constituencies, audience, third parties)
3. Analytic (nonpolemical) discussion
4. Problem-solving (nonadversarial) mode
5. No expectation of agreement
6. Equality in setting
7. Facilitative role of third party

The nature of the interaction that the workshop process is designed to encourage and that the principle of privacy and confidentiality is designed to protect is specified in ground rules 2–4. We are trying to encourage the participants to focus on each other, rather than on their constituencies, on an audience, on third parties, or on the record (ground rule 2): to listen to the other, with the aim of understanding the other's perspective, and to talk to the other, with the aim of making their own perspective understood. We want them to think out loud, to experiment with ideas, to explore different options, without having to worry about how others would react if their words in the group were quoted outside. This is why we have no audience, no observers, no publicity, and no record.

Focusing on each other enables and encourages the participants to engage in a type of discussion that is generally not feasible among parties embroiled in a bitter conflict—a type of discussion that, indeed, deviates from the conflict norms that usually govern their behavior. The discussion is intended to be analytic rather than polemical in nature (ground rule 3). Its purpose is to help the parties gain an understanding of each other's needs, fears, concerns, prior-

ities, and constraints; and to develop insight into the causes and dynamics of the conflict, particularly into the ways in which the conflict-driven interactions between the two sides tend to exacerbate, escalate, and perpetuate their conflict. An analytic discussion is not intended to exclude expressions of emotion, but to use them as raw material for enhancing the participants' analytic understanding of the concerns of the other side and the dynamics of the conflict.

Analytic discussion helps the parties move to a problem-solving mode of interaction, in contrast to the adversarial mode that usually characterizes conflict interactions (ground rule 4). The participants are asked to take the conflict as a shared problem that requires joint effort to find a mutually satisfactory solution, rather than try to determine who is right and who is wrong on the basis of historical or legal argumentation. We do not expect participants to abandon their ideas about the justice of their cause, nor do we claim that both sides are equally right or equally wrong. We merely propose that problem solving is more likely to be productive than an attempt to allocate blame.

The fifth ground rule states that in a workshop—unlike a negotiating session—there is no expectation that the parties will reach an agreement. (Our current project, a Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations, to which I shall return below, is an exception in this respect.) Of course, as in any conflict resolution effort, we are interested in finding common ground. But we stress that the amount of agreement achieved in the workshop discussion is not necessarily a measure of the success of the enterprise. If participants come away with a better understanding of the other's perspective, of their own priorities, and of the dynamics of the conflict, the workshop will have fulfilled its purpose, even if it has not produced an outline of a peace treaty.

The sixth ground rule states that, within the workshop setting, the two parties are equals. Asymmetries in power, moral position, or reputation clearly play an important role in the conflict and must be taken into account in the workshop discussions. But the two parties are equals in the workshop setting in the sense that each party has the same right to serious consideration of its needs, fears, and concerns. Within the rules of the workshop, Israeli participants cannot dismiss Palestinian concerns on the grounds that the Palestinians are the weaker party and, therefore, in a poor bargaining position; nor can Palestinian participants dismiss Israeli concerns on the grounds that the Israelis are the oppressors and, therefore, not entitled to sympathy. Each side has the right to be heard in the workshop and each side's needs and fears must be given equal attention in the search for a mutually satisfactory solution.

The final ground rule in Table 1 concerns the facilitative role of the third party. The third party in our model does not take part in the substantive discussion; it does not give advice or offer its own proposals, nor does it take sides, evaluate the ideas presented, or arbitrate between different interpretations of historical facts or international law. The task of the third party is to create the conditions that allow ideas for resolving the conflict to emerge out of the interaction between the parties themselves. The facilitation of the third party, however, is an important part of the process. The third party sets the ground rules and monitors adherence to them; it helps to keep the discussion moving in constructive directions, tries to stimulate movement, and intervenes as relevant with questions, observations, and even challenges. Third-party interventions may focus on the *content* of the discussion, e.g., by summarizing, highlighting, seeking clarification, or pointing to similarities and differences between the parties; on the *process* of interaction, e.g., by suggesting how interactions within the group may reflect the dynamics of the conflict between the two societies; or on *theoretical formulations*, e.g., by offering concepts that might be useful in clarifying issues under discussion. The third party also serves as a repository of trust for parties who, by definition, do not trust each other: they feel safe to come to the

workshop because they trust the third party and are confident that it will see to it that confidentiality is maintained and that their interests are protected.

Agenda

One of the tasks of the third party is to set the agenda for the discussion. In the typical one-time, free-standing workshop, the agenda is relatively open and unstructured with respect to the substantive issues under discussion. The way in which these issues are approached, however, and the order of discussion are structured so as to facilitate the kind of discourse that the ground rules are designed to encourage. After personal introductions around the table, a review of purposes, procedures, and ground rules, and an opportunity for the participants to ask questions about these, we proceed with a five-part agenda, outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Agenda

1. Information exchange
2. Needs analysis
3. Joint thinking about solutions
4. Discussion of constraints
5. Joint thinking about overcoming constraints

The first discussion session is devoted to an exchange of information between the two sides (agenda item 1), which serves to break the ice and set the tone for the kind of interaction we hope to generate. Each party is asked to talk about the situation on the ground and the current mood in its own community, about the issues in the conflict as seen in that community, about the spectrum of views on the conflict and its solution, and about their own positions within that spectrum. This exchange provides a shared base of information and sets a precedent for the two sides to deal with each other as mutual resources, rather than solely as combatants.

The core agenda of the workshop begins with a needs analysis (agenda item 2), in which each side is asked to discuss its central concerns in the conflict—the fundamental needs that would have to be addressed and the existential fears that would have to be allayed if a solution is to be satisfactory to them. The parties are asked not to debate the issues raised, although they may ask for clarification of what the other says. The purpose is for each side to gain an adequate understanding of the other's needs, fears, and concerns, from the other's perspective. Only when the parties have demonstrated that they understand the other's needs to a significant degree, do we move to the next phase of the agenda: joint thinking about possible solutions (agenda item 3). We discourage participants from proposing solutions until they have identified the problem, which stems from unfulfilled and threatened needs. We want the participants to generate ideas for solution that are anchored in the problem—that address the parties' felt needs. What they are asked to do in this joint-thinking phase of the agenda is to develop, through an interactive process, ideas about the overall shape of a solution for the conflict as a whole, or perhaps a particular issue in the conflict, that would address the needs and fears of both sides. They are given the difficult assignment of thinking of solutions that would meet not only their own side's needs, but the needs of both sides.

Once the parties have developed some common ground in this process of joint thinking, we turn to the next phase of the workshop: discussion of the political and psychological constraints within the two societies that would create barriers to carrying out the ideas for solution that have been developed in the

group (agenda item 4). This is a very important part of the discussion because parties in conflict usually find it extremely difficult to understand the constraints on the other side—or even to recognize that the other, like themselves, has constraints. But we prefer to leave the discussion of constraints to this later phase, so that it does not hamper the creative process of jointly generating new ideas.

Finally, depending on how much progress we have made and how much time is left, we ask the parties to engage in another round of joint thinking—this time about ways of overcoming the constraints that have been presented. The participants are asked to come up with ideas about what their governments, their societies, and they themselves might do—separately or jointly—that would help to overcome the barriers to negotiating mutually satisfactory solutions to the conflict. On some occasions, participants have come up with ideas for some joint efforts—for example, publication of two adjoining op-ed pieces in the *New York Times*. With one major, fairly recent, exception, however, we have been very clear that there was no expectation of a joint product—or indeed of agreement.

Recent Efforts

It would be useful, at this point, to mention some of our recent efforts. In 1990, for the first time in our Israeli-Palestinian work, my colleague Nadim Rouhana and I organized a continuing workshop: a group of highly influential Israelis and Palestinians—six on each side—who agreed to participate in a series of three meetings over the course of a year, and in the end continued to meet (with some changes in personnel) until August 1993 (Rouhana and Kelman, 1994). The meetings of this group were punctuated by the Gulf War, the beginning of official negotiations in Madrid and then in Washington, and the election of a Labor Party government in Israel. In 1991, with the onset of official negotiations, four of the six initial Palestinian participants in this group became key members of the Palestinian negotiating team. In 1992, several of our Israeli members were appointed to ambassadorial and cabinet positions in the Rabin government. These were very exciting developments from our point of view, in that they enhanced the political relevance of our unofficial efforts, but they also created conflicts of interest for some of our participants (Kelman, 1998a).

In 1994, Nadim Rouhana and I started a new project: a Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations, which is still in progress (Kelman, 1998a: 21–24). The participants are similar to those in our 1990–93 continuing workshop. In fact there is some overlap between the two groups. For the first time in our work, the purpose of this group has been to produce joint concept papers on the final-status issues in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Three papers—one on general principles for the final-status negotiations (Joint Working Group, 1998), one on the problem of Palestinian refugees and the right of return (Alpher, Shikaki, et al., 1998), and one on the future Israeli-Palestinian relationship (Joint Working Group, 1999)—have now been published. A fourth paper, on Israeli settlements, is close to completion.

All of our workshops, both the one-time events and the continuing workshops, have a dual purpose: to produce change—new learning, in the form of new understandings, new insights, and new ideas for resolving the conflict—in the particular individuals who participate in the workshop; and to transfer these changes into the political debate and the decision-making process in the two societies. What is interesting—what I have called the dialectics of interactive problem solving (Kelman, 1979)—is that these two purposes may create contradictory requirements. The best example of these dialectics is provided by the selection of participants. To maximize *transfer* into the political process, we should seek out participants who are officials, as close as possible to the decision-making

apparatus and thus in a position to apply immediately what they have learned. But to maximize *change*, we should seek out participants who are removed from the decision-making process and therefore are less constrained in their interactions and freer to play with ideas and explore hypothetical scenarios. To balance these contradictory requirements, we look for participants who are not officials, but politically influential. They are thus relatively free to engage in the process, but, at the same time, because of their positions within their societies, any new ideas they develop in the course of a workshop can have an impact on the thinking of decision makers and the society at large.

Another example of the dialectics of workshops is the degree of cohesiveness that we try to foster among the workshop participants. An adequate level of group cohesiveness is important to the effective interaction among the participants. But if the workshop group becomes too cohesive—if the Israeli and Palestinian participants form too close a coalition across the conflict lines—they may lose credibility and political effectiveness in their own communities (Kelman, 1993). To balance these two contradictory requirements, we aim for the development of working trust—of trust in the participants on the other side, based not so much on interpersonal closeness, as on the conviction that they are sincerely committed, out of their own interests, to the search for a peaceful solution.

Contributions to the Macroprocess of Conflict Resolution

Let me turn now to the potential contributions of interactive problem solving and related forms of unofficial diplomacy to the larger process of international conflict resolution by discussing several issues pertaining to the relationship between the microprocess and the macroprocess and the role of the scholar-practitioner in unofficial diplomacy.

Relationship between the Microprocess and the Macroprocess

The dual purpose of problem-solving workshops that I have just described underscores the quintessentially social-psychological orientation of interactive problem solving. The goal of interactive problem solving is to promote change in individuals—through face-to-face interaction in small groups—as a vehicle for change in larger social systems: in national policy, and in the conflict system at large. The core of the work of interactive problem solving is a particular *microprocess*, best exemplified by problem-solving workshops. But this microprocess is intended to produce changes in the *macroprocess*, in the larger process of conflict resolution, including the official negotiations—in what is now commonly called the peace process (Kelman, 1997a).

The microprocess relates to the macroprocess in two ways. First and foremost, it provides *inputs* into the larger process. In this context, our efforts can be viewed as "workshops" in the literal sense of the term, such as a carpenter's or an artisan's workshop. They provide a specially constructed space in which the parties can engage in a process of exploration, observation, and analysis, and in which they can create new products that can be fed—exported, as it were—into the political debate and the decision-making process in the two societies. As already mentioned, these products take the form of new understandings, new insights, and new ideas for resolving the conflict. In our current Israeli-Palestinian Working Group, the participants take the next step of shaping these insights and ideas into joint concept papers (see Joint Working Group, 1998, 1999; Alpher, Shikaki, et al., 1998), which are made available to decision makers, political elites, and the wider public as the two sides move into the final-status negotiations. But that is not the only way in which workshop prod-

ucts can be fed into the political debate and decision-making process. Depending on their particular positions in the society, individual workshop participants have a variety of ways of communicating their new insights and ideas, through their writing, lecturing, political activities, and advising of political decision makers.

Many of the participants in our Israeli-Palestinian workshops, in their roles as professional journalists, academic analysts, or occasional columnists, have had the opportunity to write about what they learned as a result of their workshop experience. Such writings, for example, helped to inject into the Israeli political culture and political debate an increasing awareness that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the indispensable partner for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, that nothing short of an independent state will satisfy Palestinian aspirations, and that Palestinians are ready to accept a state in the West Bank and Gaza, alongside of Israel, as the *point final* of the conflict. On the Palestinian side, in turn, such writings helped to inject an understanding of the political divisions within Israel, of the elements of Israeli society that can be mobilized in support of an agreement based on a two-state solution, and of the limits of what even the Israeli peace camp can accept.

Other workshop participants have had the opportunity to utilize their new learnings in their roles of leadership within political parties and political movements. Still others on both sides have gone on to official positions in their respective cabinets, parliaments, embassies, or negotiating teams. I have already mentioned the involvement of members of our continuing workshop (Rouhana and Kelman, 1994) in the first Palestinian negotiating team, formed in 1991, and in the new Israeli government, elected in 1992. Today, alumni of our workshops can be found in both the Israeli and the Palestinian parliaments and cabinets, and in leading positions in the diplomatic corps, the media, and political research organizations. I do not know how these individuals have used or are using specific ideas and insights that have emerged from their workshop interactions. What I can say is that many workshop participants are in positions within their own societies that allow them to transfer what they have learned in the microprocess of the workshop to the macroprocess of political opinion making and decision making.

The second way in which the microprocess of interactive problem solving relates to the macroprocess is by providing a *metaphor* for what, at least in my view, ought to happen in order to resolve international conflict at the macrolevel (Kelman, 1996). The three words that make up the term *interactive problem solving*—problem, solution, and interactive—suggest what I have in mind. First, the conflict needs to be treated as a *problem* that is shared by the parties. Essentially, it is a problem in the relationship between the parties, which has become completely competitive, to the point of mutual destructiveness. Conflict itself is a normal and potentially constructive aspect of relations within and between groups, organizations, and societies, as long as both competitive and cooperative elements are maintained and balanced in the relationship. But in deep-rooted ethnic conflicts of the kind with which we are concerned, the relationship has come to a point where each party, in pursuit of its own needs and interests, threatens and undermines the needs and interests of the other party and seeks to destroy the other.

Recognizing that the conflict represents a problem in the relationship between the parties, the conflict resolution process needs to search for a *solution* to the problem. A proper solution is one that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict, which means essentially the unfulfilled or threatened needs of both parties, particularly their needs for security, identity, autonomy, justice, and recognition. A solution that addresses these needs ultimately leads to a transformation of the relationship between the parties.

Finally, the term *interactive* refers to the proposition that the task of solving the problem represented by the conflict is best achieved through direct interaction, in which the parties are able to share their different perspectives and learn how to influence each other by way of responsiveness to the other's needs and concerns. In conflict relationships, the normal process of influencing one another through mutual responsiveness is seriously undermined. The problem solving required for conflict resolution can occur most effectively in an interactive context in which the ability to engage in this process has been restored.

This view of the macroprocess of conflict resolution suggests some of the key components of the process, which must take place somewhere in the larger system. Table 3 lists four such components. The first is identification and analysis of the problem: the parties must identify each side's fundamental needs and fears as seen within each party's own perspective. Moreover, the parties have to become sensitized to the dynamics of conflict, to those interaction processes that are conducive to the escalation and perpetuation of the conflict.

TABLE 3. Components of the Conflict Resolution Process

1. Identification and analysis of the problem
2. Joint shaping of ideas for solution
3. Influencing the other side
4. Creating a supportive political environment

The second component of the macroprocess of conflict resolution is the joint shaping of ideas for solution of the conflict. This calls for opportunities for the parties to explore options, to reframe the issues in ways that make them more amenable to negotiation and conflict resolution, and to generate creative ideas. Such a process of "pre-negotiation," at all stages of conflict resolution, increases the likelihood that formal negotiations themselves will be maximally effective. The way the issues are framed has a major impact on the parties' ability to achieve a negotiated agreement and on the quality of that agreement from the point of view of producing a lasting peace.

The third component listed in Table 3 is influencing the other side. The essential requirement here is to shift from the heavy reliance on the use and threat of force, which now characterizes the international system, to the use of positive incentives, including incentives in the form of mutual reassurance and mutual enticement. For parties engaged in an existential conflict, such as that between Israelis and Palestinians, negotiations always loom as dangerous and threatening. The parties are afraid they might be induced to yield too much and to place themselves on a slippery slope, ultimately losing everything, including their national identity and national existence. Therefore, mutual reassurance that it is safe to enter into negotiations and mutual enticement through the promise of attractive gains are key elements for conflict resolution.

The fourth component of the macroprocess of conflict resolution is creating a supportive political environment for negotiations. One of the important features of a supportive environment is the sense of mutual reassurance, which depends on each side's conviction that the other is sincere in its commitment to negotiating a peaceful solution. Another important element of a supportive environment is the sense of possibility—the sense that, even though negotiations may be difficult and risky, it is possible to find a mutually satisfactory solution. This sense of possibility contributes to creating self-fulfilling prophecies in a positive direction, to counteract the negative self-fulfilling prophecies that result from the mutual distrust and pervasive pessimism about finding a way out that

normally characterize protracted conflicts. A supportive political environment is marked by a shift in the dominant political discourse from power politics to mutual accommodation.

I am proposing that the processes outlined here, suggested by the metaphor of interactive problem solving, have to take place somewhere in the larger system if conflict resolution is to become possible. Somewhere in the system, there have to be efforts to identify and analyze the problem, to engage in joint shaping of ideas for a mutually acceptable solution, to influence the other through mutual reassurance and other positive incentives, and to create a supportive political environment. Problem-solving workshops and related activities in the spirit of interactive problem solving seek to provide special opportunities for these kinds of processes to occur, which brings me to the relationship between official and unofficial diplomacy.

Relationship between Official and Unofficial Diplomacy

Unofficial or track II diplomacy, including interactive problem solving, is an important element of the larger process of international conflict resolution because it provides opportunities for inserting these necessary components of conflict resolution into the larger process. Since such opportunities are often not available in the context of official negotiations, track II diplomacy performs an essential complementary role to track I diplomacy.

We try to be very clear that our workshops and related activities are not negotiating sessions. They are not intended to bypass or substitute for negotiations or even to provide opportunities for back-channel negotiations. Negotiations can be carried out only by officials authorized to conclude binding agreements. Workshop discussions, by contrast (and by definition), are completely nonbinding. It is their nonbinding character, in fact, that is their special strength and their unique contribution to the larger process: they provide an opportunity for *exploratory* interaction, which is essential to negotiation at all of its stages, but which is usually difficult to arrange in an official context, especially around the negotiating table.

Even though workshops are not negotiations and are not meant to be negotiations, I view them as an integral part of the larger negotiation process, relevant at all stages of that process. They are relevant at the pre-negotiation stage, where they contribute to helping the parties move toward the negotiating table. Thus, I believe that our work from the 1970s to the early 1990s, along with other unofficial efforts, made a modest but not insignificant contribution to the breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represented by the Oslo accord of September 1993 (Kelman, 1995, 1997b). They helped to lay the groundwork for the Oslo agreement in three ways: Workshops contributed to the development of *cadres* prepared to carry out productive negotiations, as evidenced by the involvement of workshop alumni in the early phases of negotiation; the sharing of information and the formulation of new ideas in the course of workshops provided important *substantive inputs* into the negotiations, including shared assumptions, mutual sensitivities, and new conceptions of the process and outcome of negotiations; and workshops contributed to fostering a *political atmosphere* that made the parties open to a new relationship, by encouraging the development of more differentiated images of the enemy, of a deescalatory language attentive to each other's concerns and constraints, of a working trust, and of a sense of possibility about the achievement of a mutually satisfactory outcome.

Workshops and related track II activities are also relevant alongside of negotiations, performing a para-negotiation function: negotiations of intense, protracted conflicts—as we have observed in the Israeli-Palestinian and many other cases—are often marked by setbacks, stalemates, and loss of momentum. Problem-

solving workshops can contribute at that stage to creating momentum and reviving the sense of possibility. Furthermore, workshops can deal with issues that are not yet on the table, providing an opportunity for the parties to pre-negotiate some of these issues so that, by the time they get to the table, they can be framed in ways that are conducive to successful negotiation. Thus, our current Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations has sought to contribute to the final-status negotiations by writing and disseminating concept papers on the issues of Palestinian refugees (Alpher, Shikaki, et al., 1998) and Israeli settlements. Ideas from the papers have entered the debates and possibly the negotiations of these issues.

Finally, workshops can be useful at the post-negotiation stage, where they can contribute to resolving the problems of implementation of negotiated agreements, as well as to the post-conflict process of peace building and reconciliation and to transforming the relationship between the former enemies. Indeed, the conflict resolution field has increasingly recognized that peace building and reconciliation must begin to be addressed at the peacemaking stage, in the hope of producing negotiated agreements that are conducive to a stable peace, a mutually enhancing relationship between the two societies, and ultimate reconciliation. Our Joint Working Group's recent paper (1999) on the future Israeli-Palestinian relationship represents an effort in that direction.

Relationship between Practice and Scholarship

Interactive problem solving is an approach to the resolution of international conflicts that explicitly follows a scholar-practitioner model: our form of practice is part and parcel of our role as academically based scholars. Although conflict resolution is of necessity in an interdisciplinary enterprise, interactive problem solving is in large degree anchored in the discipline of social and political psychology.

The practice of interactive problem solving is informed by a set of assumptions about the nature of international or intercommunal conflict and conflict resolution, derived from a social-psychological analysis that draws on the theoretical concepts and empirical findings of the field (Kelman, 1992, 1997c, 1998a). Five general assumptions are central to our approach:

1. Although war and peace are societal and intersocietal processes that cannot be reduced to the level of individual behavior, there are many aspects of international conflict and conflict resolution for which the individual represents the most appropriate unit of analysis. In particular, conflict is driven by the needs of individuals, as articulated through their core identity groups. Unfulfilled and threatened human needs, especially for identity and security, and existential fears must be addressed if conflict is to be resolved.
2. International conflict is not merely an intergovernmental or interstate phenomenon, but an intersocietal phenomenon. The view of diplomacy as a complex mix of official and unofficial processes is based on this assumption.
3. Conflict is an interactive process with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic. The cognitive and perceptual processes, as well as the normative processes, that govern interactions among conflicting parties tend to reinforce and perpetuate the conflict. Conflict resolution, therefore, requires deliberate efforts to promote a different kind of interaction, based on an analytic approach and a countervailing set of norms, which can set a deescalatory process into motion.
4. Conflict is a multifaceted process of influence involving a combination of negative and positive incentives. Conflict resolution requires broadening the range of influence processes that are typically used in conflict relation-

ships: shifting from the heavy reliance on the use and threat of force to influence through mutual reassurance, mutual accommodation, and responsiveness to each other's needs.

5. International conflict is a dynamic phenomenon, marked by the occurrence and possibility of change. Conflict resolution efforts are geared, therefore, to discovering possibilities for change, identifying conditions for change, and overcoming resistances to change.

These assumptions enter directly into our formulation of the structure, the content, and the process of problem-solving workshops. They are reflected in my earlier descriptions of the purposes, the ground rules, the agenda, and the procedures of workshops, the selection of participants, and the role of the third party.

The relationship between practice and scholarship in our model works in both directions. Not only is our practice informed by social-psychological theory and research, but our scholarly work, in turn, is informed by our practice. Our practice is as necessary to our research as our research is to our practice. It is by virtue of our practice that we have the unique opportunity to observe directly intense interactions between parties in conflict as they express, analyze, and try to resolve their conflict. Workshops have continued to be, for my colleagues and myself, a rich source of new learning about group identity, intergroup conflict, conflict resolution, and the particular conflict at issue. Our learning is not just an incidental bonus of the work, but an essential part of the entire enterprise. It not only feeds back into improving the practice, but it is also a key feature of our relationship with the participants, which is a partnership in which they know that they are helping us as much as we are helping them—and which is indeed the basis on which they accept our help.

In sum, the scholar-practitioner model involves a continuing interaction between practice, on the one hand, and theory development and empirical research, on the other.

Contribution of the University

The academic base of interactive problem solving is a central feature of the approach, as I have practiced it. Our academic base is a source of our credibility as a third party. Our credentials as academics, with expertise in international relations and, in my case, in the Middle East, provide some assurance to potential participants that we approach the issues with a degree of evenhandedness and scholarly objectivity, rather than a partisan political agenda. In the early days of our Israeli-Palestinian work, participation in an academic research project was particularly important to the participants as a rationale for meeting with the enemy. Meeting with the other side was highly controversial in those years and many people did not want to see themselves or to be seen by others as taking part in intergroup dialogue or conflict resolution. Participating in a research effort thus helped to justify their engagement in the enterprise. Of course, it was—and continues to be—essential to the integrity of the relationship that the third party's research interest be genuine and not just a convenient rationale.

The academic setting is particularly important to our work as a safe environment in which parties in conflict can engage in a kind of interaction that is distinctly different from the interactions that are characteristic of conflict relationships. The university has the advantage of providing an unofficial, private, nonbinding context, with its own set of norms to counteract the conflict norms that generally govern interactions between conflicting parties. Conflict norms require the parties to be militant, unyielding, and dismissive of the other's claims, interests, fears, and rights. To engage in a different kind of interaction, which enables each party to enter into the other's perspective and to work with

the other in the search for mutual benefits, requires a countervailing set of norms. The academic setting is not the only setting that can provide such countervailing norms; a religious setting, for example, could do so in its own way. In our work, however, we have found that the university setting is well suited to performing this function. The norms of this setting both permit and require participants to interact in an analytic, problem-solving way, in lieu of the polemical, adversarial way prescribed by the conflict norms. The fact that the discussions are noncommittal—"just academic"—makes it relatively safe to deviate from the conflict norms. The fact that the third party "owns" the setting gives us some authority to prescribe the nature of the interaction.

Institutionalizing Interactive Problem Solving

Finally, I come to the question of how approaches to international conflict resolution, such as interactive problem solving, can be institutionalized. Two different patterns of institutionalization suggest themselves.

At the level of a particular conflict, it might be useful to institutionalize interactive problem solving as part of the peace-building process that must accompany and follow the negotiation of a peace agreement. In conflicts between two societies that are closely intertwined and highly interdependent, such as the Israelis and the Palestinians, a long-term, stable, peaceful relationship will require the development of some civil-society institutions across national lines. One such institution could well be an ongoing mechanism of conflict resolution, in the form of an unofficial, joint forum for dealing with conflicts that will inevitably arise and exploring issues in the evolving relationship between the two societies within a problem-solving framework. Our current Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations can serve as a model for such an institutional mechanism, which would be relevant to many of the protracted conflicts around the globe (Kelman, 1997a).

At the global level, the persistence and proliferation of deadly conflicts between ethnic and other identity groups around the world—from Sri Lanka to the Sudan, from Bosnia to Rwanda, from Kosovo to East Timor—have persuaded me of the urgent need for a large, well-endowed, international, largely nongovernmental organization devoted to monitoring such conflicts as they evolve and ready to intervene with efforts to help prevent and resolve them. My conception of such an institution is heavily influenced by a proposal for a continuing seminar and an international facilitating service developed by John Burton (1983) some years ago. I feel the time has come for a concerted effort to create the kind of international institution that Burton envisioned.

The purpose of such an institution would not be to replace or duplicate the work of existing governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations devoted to peacemaking, peacekeeping, or humanitarian aid in the aftermath of violent conflict. Rather, it would be to carry out a function that, to the best of my knowledge, is not being performed systematically by any organization in the international arena today: bringing together politically influential representatives of the opposing sides in an active or impending international or intercommunal conflict for joint exploration, within a problem-solving framework, of steps toward preventing, deescalating, or resolving the conflict.

The institution I am proposing would have three components. A permanent staff would monitor on a continuing basis the events in various conflict regions, establish and maintain contacts with relevant individuals and organizations in those regions, and provide the funding, the infrastructure, and the logistical support for workshops as the need arises. A cadre of specialists, consisting primarily of academically based scholars with expertise in specific geographical areas and in conflict resolution methodology, would be available on short notice

to organize and lead workshops and related activities when their specific knowledge and skills are called for. And a cadre of well-connected, politically influential representatives of both sides in each of a number of potential conflict areas would be in regular contact with the permanent staff to recommend appropriate actions or to evaluate projects proposed by the staff. They would also be available, as needed, to help recruit participants *for* and themselves participate *in* workshops and related activities addressing their conflict.

There is no direct evidence at this point that an institution organized along these lines and dedicated to the systematic application of interactive problem-solving techniques to ethnic conflicts around the world could contribute to preventing such conflicts, or to defusing them once they have turned violent, or to rebuilding the relationship torn apart by violence. But research and observation suggest that the assumptions behind interactive problem solving are sound, and our experience with the approach suggests that it has the potential of promoting change in a conflict relationship. If the international community can generate the resources needed for a large-scale effort of this kind, there is at least the hope that we might begin to tackle a problem that has so far left us in utter despair.

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