

Conflict resolution approaches: Western and Middle Eastern lessons and possibilities.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer

Abstract: Conflict resolution processes exist in every society. However, a comparison between Western and Middle Eastern procedures of dispute resolution processes reveals different assumptions underline each approach. The comparison is based on the analysis of two case studies, the first case study is a description of dispute settlement process between Christians and Druze in an Arab village in Israel (mediated by Muslims). The second case study describes a collaborative problem solving process implemented in Cleveland, Ohio in a community racial conflict. Distinctive cultural and professional assumptions that underlie both intervention processes are identified. Also, it is noted that the third party roles and the main outcomes which were achieved in both cases were different. Two sets of principles and concepts, which can be applied interchangeably in both Middle Eastern and Western settings, and those which are unique to each context, are explored.

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I

Introduction

Western governmental and nongovernmental organizations have intensified their efforts to expose and train Middle Eastern academicians, professionals, and politicians in various democratic approaches since the end of the cold war, and even more so since the 1990 Gulf war. American trainers travel to Middle Eastern and Eastern European countries to introduce western intervention models and strategies to promote democratic participation and non violence. An important part of this training is focused on effective strategies to deal with community and organizational conflicts.

Intervenors can propose more effective strategies if they are aware of the local communities' prior processes for dealing with conflict. This article delineates various basic approaches in dispute resolution in a Middle Eastern context. These culturally appropriate methods of handling disputes can be informative for Middle Eastern and Western intervenors who usually rely on models shaped by the Western culture.

The article's main emphasis is on identification and comparison of the underlying assumptions and procedures of dispute resolution processes involving the analysis of two cases of community conflict; one that took place in a Palestinian Arab village in northern Israel, and the other that occurred in an American city, namely-Cleveland, Ohio. The data on the Palestinian case was gathered by the author through in-depth interviews, informal conversation, and personal observation of the events. The data on the American case was extracted from a report published by the Community Problem Solving Project-an organization based in Washington D.C., which monitors community dispute resolution in various American cities.

As in any other comparison of specific cases, hypothesis and conclusions in this paper are confined properly to the two case studies and cannot be applicable to all Western and Middle Eastern conflict resolution approaches.

To compare the two dispute processes, several themes are explored: concepts of conflict resolution in both contexts; basic assumptions, philosophies, and practices that underlie both Middle Eastern and Western conflict resolution procedures; and points of overlap between Western and Middle Eastern approaches.

II

Western Conflict Resolution Intervention Models and Processes

Conflict resolution has been developing as a field since the 1950s. Its emergence as an interdisciplinary field can be traced to the human relations and intergroup relations movements which followed the Second World War. The creation of conflict resolution as an academic discipline and field of practice grew out of five movements: 1) the industrial and labor management based on the work of Shepard and Mouton (1964) which emerged from the organizational relations in the 1960s; 2) the problem-solving workshops and mediation which was introduced in international relations by Burton (1969), Kelman (1976), Doob (1971), and Mitchell (1981); 3) religious figures redirected their work in peace-related endeavors to an emphasis on "peace-making" (Scimecca, 1987); 4) lawyers and the court system were criticized by the general public which resulted in what is known today as alternative dispute resolution (ADR); and 5) the interpersonal and family disputes practices emerged as another level of conflict resolution derived from human relations practices, as led by Walton (1971), Hynes (1981), and Coogler (1978).(1)

Out of these movements, several intervention approaches are being developed and applied to different levels of conflict. However, the main processes of conflict resolution are: conciliation, facilitation, negotiation, mediation,

and arbitration. While conflict resolution scholars disagree on the boundaries of this field, some scholars include arbitration as a conflict resolution intervention process, and exclude conciliation processes. For the purpose of this paper, Western conflict resolution will include all five intervention processes.

III

A WESTERN CONFLICT CASE

The Cleveland Roundtable Racial Unity Program illustrates some of the main assumptions that underlie the conflict resolution processes in a Western context.(2)

Although blacks had contributed to the community of Cleveland since the 1800s, and the change in civil rights laws had already influenced many other cities, it was clear in the mid 1980s that Cleveland's black community had not benefitted as had black communities elsewhere in the past 25 years.

According to the July 1987 edition of "Black Enterprise," Cleveland was 32nd in the nation in black economic development. Statistical reports showed Cleveland with a black median income that was only 56 percent of the income of Cleveland's whites of comparable education and training. Cleveland had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and a disproportionate number of those unemployed were black. Some surveys done by Cleveland's organizations also showed few blacks sitting on boards or rising to high management positions. In the preceding years, the number of reported incidents of racial and religious intimidation had increased substantially.

The Greater Cleveland Roundtable was established in 1980 to encourage revitalization of the metropolitan area. It was an urban coalition of chief executive officers (CEOs) of major area corporations, senior local political officials, clergy, and other civic leaders. The group was about one-third black, two-thirds white and "People of Other Color." The organization's mandate was "to foster racial harmony, cooperation and the empowerment of all segments of Cleveland's diverse population in a unified effort to improve the quality of life enjoyed by every resident."(3)

In 1986 a series of shootings in residential neighborhoods in the Cleveland area took place. Government assisted housing was being located in traditionally white, low-and middle-income neighborhoods, and minorities were moving into these communities. Rumors and the agitation which often accompany such a change were on the rise and racial tension was high. Although, a few local programs, funded by philanthropic organizations and businesses, were addressing some problems in these neighborhoods there was no effort

to coordinate such programs.

The Roundtable recognized the need for averting further tension and easing the potential explosive situation. In the early fall of 1986, an ad hoc group of 14 community members was created to begin looking at the issues in response to the shooting. The racially mixed group met every two weeks for a period of four months. It consisted of a city councilman, a representative of Case Western Reserve University, a member of the City of Cleveland Community Relations Board, a police representative, members of the clergy and civic, and neighborhood groups. By early 1987, they recognized that the discussion needed to be more inclusive. The Roundtable, with the help of race and organizational development consultants, and the ad hoc group, negotiated the inclusion of 40 additional groups that it felt should be represented in efforts to adequately address discrimination in Cleveland. In 1987, the Race Relations Forum was established with the Greater Cleveland Roundtable as a major sponsor.

The group met every three weeks for approximately five months, using consensus-based decision making and facilitators to manage meetings. Members reported back to their individual community organizations between meetings and solicited their input for the larger Forum. Ten committees were formed to work on specific problems and issues. The Forum developed a list of 12 initiatives to be addressed, and developed a report entitled "Facing Reality: Progress Through Racial Unity in Greater Cleveland." It then continued to meet on a quarterly basis to monitor the progress of the initiatives.

The outcome was a more comprehensive way of looking at discrimination and the factors that lead to it. In its analytical final report, the Forum reached unanimous agreement that piece-meal, band-aid approaches would not solve longstanding problems. The Forum's report was meant to serve as a catalyst for continued collective action.

The specific outcomes of 12 initiatives were grouped into four categories (1) A hot line, designated the "cool line," would respond to calls regarding housing discrimination, racial violence, racial or religious harassment, neighborhood or school tensions, rumor control, and hate group activities. (2) "Turning point 88," a community based organization was developed to create programs to reduce racial tension in neighborhoods and to provide leadership training for neighborhood leaders, (3) Race relations training was developed for, and targeted specifically at police, business, clergy and civic agencies. A resource center was set up to coordinate training and the collection of training materials in the Greater Cleveland area. (4) A committee on "Bias in media research" was established to produce a report on bias in the print, electronic, and advertising media. Media personnel were involved in the study, and both positive and negative examples regarding the treatment of racial matters were to be gathered. The goal

was to achieve more unbiased reporting and develop criteria for the media to best serve a multi-racial community.

Nine months elapsed from the first meetings of the ad hoc group to the final report of the Forum, which was presented to the general public on the one-year anniversary of the shootings that prompted the process. The process cost \$50,000 and was paid for through operating funds of the Greater Cleveland Roundtable and contributions from the Cleveland and the George Gund Foundations.

III

Basic Assumptions of Western Conflict Resolution Processes

The intervention in this conflict was designed and led by existing business, civic and religious institutions. Its aim was to reduce racial tension and improve the quality of life for all citizens, particularly those who belonged to the black community. The agencies and institutions which comprised the third party, the problem solving framework or committee, included local politicians, governmental officers, and community leaders.

The decision making process implemented by the third party was based on reaching consensus among ad hoc group members. The third party structure reflects the balance of power among the parties (whites, blacks, and people of other color).

The recommendations of the third party took a preventative approach to future conflict and its consequences. The specific recommendations respond primarily to an important cause of the dispute, namely the lack of tolerance among community members. But the recommendations did not, and could not address a root cause of the problem; unequal economic opportunities between blacks and whites in Cleveland. However, the initiatives reflect an agreement among the parties on the need for a collaborative approach to the problem.

Based on this specific approach to conflict resolution and other Western conflict resolution approaches, a set of assumptions become apparent. These assumptions may not represent all Western conflict resolution techniques or approaches. Nevertheless, they reflect the general nature of the emerging field of conflict resolution in the United States. Some of these assumptions are: (1) Conflict resolution can benefit both parties, and has the potential to satisfy conflicting interests and needs of the parties, particularly those of the underdog parties. By establishing a conflict resolution mechanism, the disputant communities hoped to improve their economic and racial relationships; (2) One can rely on interest-based negotiation and a cooperative approach to achieve a task. In this case the parties used a collaborative decision

making process to reach consensus over an action plan; (3) Existing civic laws are accepted as a main framework for intervention in a dispute (Merry, 1989). The roundtable involved government and police officials. In addition, third party and the general communities perceived the law as rules to be preserved and used for achieving their goals, therefore, the outcomes had to be according to legal procedures; (4) Since Western society is based on individualism (Bellah and et., 1985), then people who are not related directly to a conflict have minimal involvement in the process and outcome of any settlement. Social pressure and relationships do not operate as influential factors that increase parties' commitments to the settlement. Parties are committed to the process as a result of legally binding procedures or because the process serves their individual interests. The general public is alienated from the process. Also, the clear emphasis on the individualization is apparent when examining the recommendations in Cleveland case to protect the individual's rights and focus on the individual's desires and needs. (5) Conflict is not necessarily a negative interaction that should be avoided. On the contrary, facing and confronting a conflict is a basic assumption in the Western conflict resolution approach. For the third party in Cleveland case, confronting rather than avoiding the racial tension issue was an effective method to promote understanding and harmony in the larger community. An additional illustration of such assumptions could also be identified when examining the model of Fisher and Ury in Getting to Yes (1991), they suggest direct and straight discussion of the core issues of the conflict. They recommend "don't beat around the bush." Face-to-face negotiation and bargaining is assumed to be the most effective approach for dealing with disputes.

The Western model calls for a direct method of interaction and communication. Also the language of emotions and values is perceived as an obstacle to reaching an agreement. The focus on tangible interests and substantial issues is also the main concern of the conflict resolver in the American public policy disputes context (Carpenter and Kennedy, 1988). In addition, the assumption in Western society is that every behavior is calculated according to rational measures. Therefore, there are generally between 5 and 12 major steps to solve a conflict. These steps are pre-determined and fixed for disputes in the different areas of conflict resolution. This structured model provides the third party with rules and guidelines for behavior. These guidelines include norms such as "behaving according to professional codes," "maintaining a business image," etc., which legitimate the third party's intervention in public policy, community, interpersonal, or international.(4)

IV

Conflict Resolution in a Middle Eastern Context

A community dispute resolution process in a Palestinian village in Northern Israel reveals a different set of conflict resolution assumptions.(5)

There are about 14,000 people in the village, 60 percent Druze, 23 percent Christians, and 17 percent Moslems. Although the Druze are the predominant group in the village, in this largely Moslem region, they are minority. The balance of power changed in this village in 1952, when, due to a new Israeli policy, young Druze males started joining the Israeli army. Still, today, only the Druze are obliged to serve in the Israeli army. Christians and Moslems in Israel are exempt from mandatory military services because of security considerations stated by the Israeli defense minister in 1952 (Lustick, 1980). Members of the Druze community who have fought in the Israeli army against Palestinians and Arab armies found it difficult to associate their political identity with such groups. This factor divided the village into two political camps, those who supported Israeli government policies, and those who opposed them.

As a result of intensive confiscation of lands, this village, like other Arab villages in Israel, is no longer agricultural (Rosenfield, 1978). The community is economically at a transitional level in which people do not depend on agriculture as their main source of income and there is a relatively high level of education among the younger generations. Army service is the essential source of income for the Druze. Christians rely on small businesses and on administrative and educational positions in the village for their income, while Moslems work outside the village in the Israeli construction companies. In comparison with other communities in the area, this village is certainly considered more traditional than the surrounding communities.

The social structure of the three communities in the village is based on clan units. However, the Druze emphasize community interests and religious identity more than the other two communities. Moslems and Christians are less unified on the basis of their religious affiliations, but they identify themselves with the broader national Palestinian identity and the Arab world.

Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, the relationship between the three religious groups has been perceived as being peaceful and respectful. This was reflected in mutual visits among the leaders of the communities particularly during weddings and funerals, and other social events. Younger generations attended ethnically integrated schools and their members were separated only for religion classes.

The dispute arose when a group of Druze youths threw stones at a wedding of a Christian leader's son.(6) Two days later, some of the Christian clans'

heads visited the houses of the suspected Druze youths. They complained about the disturbance at the wedding. The youth were warned by their fathers not to repeat this shameful behavior, which, as Christian leaders argued, could destroy the good relationship between the two communities.

One month later, a violent confrontation at midnight with a group of Christian youths (not from the family whose wedding celebration was disturbed) resulted in the hospitalization of two Druze young men. The incident began when some Christian youths tried to convince a group of Druze youths to leave and return to their homes, because they were screaming and disturbing the neighborhood's residents. The following day some of the Christian clans' leaders visited families of the injured youths. They suggested beginning a process of reconciliation and apologized in an attempt to prevent further violence. The Druze families rebuffed their apologies and announced that they would talk only when their sons were released from the hospital.

The following day, as a result of a rumor that the two injured Druze had died, approximately two thousand Druze attacked the Christian neighborhood. They destroyed furniture in some houses, injured several Christians, and caused damage to stores owned by Christians. As a result, many Christian families took shelter in surrounding villages.

A few hours after this attack began, delegates from surrounding Moslem villages in the area entered the village and stopped the Druze youths who were still threatening the Christian neighborhoods. During the disturbance, the Israeli police patrols had left the village, and did not return until the morning of the next day.

Throughout the following week, Christian stores were closed, and Christian students did not attend schools. Their neighborhood was paralyzed. This situation, of course, disrupted all aspects of village life. Meanwhile, the Druze leaders of the attack were discussing in open meetings at the "Khilwi" (the Druze religious center) political, economic, and social sanctions against the Christians. Many of the Druze elders and religious leaders did not attend these meetings, and some of them (including the current and former mayors, and other clans' leaders), even expressed their rejection of sanctions.

A few days later, many outside delegations (comprised of elders of major clans from many of the surrounding villages) visited Druze leaders in an attempt to settle the dispute. Some of these delegations tried to intervene because Christian leaders asked them to, and others did so on their own.

The third party: A group of 25 regional leaders which was led by a steering

committee of 7 members took the responsibility for settling this dispute. The committee visited several Druze houses, especially the leaders' houses (mayors, heads of clans, and religious leaders). They also visited the Christian leaders houses and inspected the damages caused by the crowd's attack.

The composition and strategies of the group gave it the credibility and legitimacy it needed to mediate successfully: (a) All of the group members were outsiders. They had no direct clan relationship with any of the disputants, and did not include clan leaders from the village, except some Moslem religious and community leaders from the specific village; (b) The average age of the group was over 50 years old. Age is a very important source of respect in traditional Arab society, and provides legitimacy and credibility for intervention in social conflict, regardless of the nature of the dispute; (c) All religions were represented in the third party to illustrate balance and justice in the process; (d) Members of the group were very familiar with the history of this village, the history of mediation and third party intervention in the region, and the customs and norms of the three religious communities; (e) Several members of the third party were mayors of large villages in the region, and a few were members of the Israeli parliament, elected by the Arab minority inside Israel. Also among the group were several Druze who held high military positions.

Members of this third party group had no direct power to levy economic or political sanctions upon the parties (the specific families). However, their political and social standing in the community enabled them to influence the Druze community's willingness to dialogue with their Moslem neighbors. (g) The fact that some members of the third party had either a direct or indirect political or social stake in the dispute - solving such dispute would add to the high social status of every member of the third party - encouraged them to take an active approach.

This seemingly minor incident came to involve increasing number of people because of the context in which it took place. Since there are other Christian and Druze villages in the region, the dispute was characterized by the third party, and by the parties directly involved, to have regional implications. It threatened the security and social order of the whole region. Also, the conflict escalated very rapidly to include the entire Christian and Druze communities. Therefore, neither the village's local Christian or Druze traditional mediators nor the leaders of the Moslem minority in the village were able to settle the conflict or even attempt to intervene without outside support.

The issues at dispute had no obvious economic implications or relate to explicit tangible resources, therefore, parties did not consider a legal battle in the Israeli court system. The issues as perceived by the parties

and the third party were to involve the honor, shame, respect, and the dignity of both communities.

There was an asymmetric power relation between the parties. The Druze youths were backed by a wider community that possessed a substantial number of weapons and close connections to Jewish political parties, and the police and military forces. The Christian community influence was more localized through economic and administrative resources, and some members had strong ties to the Israeli security services.

The main intervention processes or stages employed by the third party were: (1) selection of committee; (2) fact finding (home visits) back and forth; (3) separate consultation and caucus with the parties; (4) several sessions of negotiation and bargaining conducted separately with each party; and (5) reaching the settlement.

Throughout the process, the intervenors utilized a set of social and religious values and norms: (1) the importance of preserving and protecting the honor of the parties. The dispute threatened to bring shame and dishonor on many members of the village. (2) The unity of the families, village, and region should be maintained in order not to dilute power and solidarity in facing outside challenges. (3) The harmony of future generations is central to the socialization processes (religious and social). An individual and a community defined the meaning of their existence as working to create a positive environment for their children and next generation. A conflict of this magnitude could disturb the expected future harmony. (4) Since disputants and third party members derive their social values from their religions, therefore, they emphasized that Christianity, Islam, and Druze are three religions that stress values of tolerance and respect of elders. (5) A tradition of peaceful and respectful relationships in the village in the past. The village had no violent confrontations between any of its three communities since the establishment of Israel in 1948. In addition, elders described in various stories the social and political harmony that existed among the villagers prior to 1948 as well. (6) The Arab tradition of forgiveness and dignity, an important value which elders have traditionally utilized to encourage certain behaviors of tolerance and respect. While values of honor, shame, and dignity, are adopted in this Arab village in Israel, nevertheless they are core values of contemporary social systems in the Arab world, whether in an urban, village or bedouin community (Barakat, 1993).

Throughout the mediation process, elders, particularly third party members from the three religions, shared historical stories to illustrate the application of these values. Also these stories stressed the contribution of reconciliation and mediation processes in restoring harmony and peaceful coexistence between disputing communities.

The intensive efforts of the third party committee produced a settlement which indicated that: (a) the Druze would allow the Christians to return to their houses; (b) Druze families would not receive money for their injured youths, but the Christian families ought to apologize directly to the youths; (c) Druze leaders would guarantee to prevent any further attacks on Christian neighbors; (d) economic sanctions should be suspended immediately; and (e) Druze students would stop disturbing Christian students in the schools.

After the Christian families fulfilled the conditions of the agreement, the Druze families permitted the return of all Christian families to their homes. However, partial economic and social sanctions continued, led by some leaders of the mob which had attacked the Christian community, and who opened several new stores near Christian stores. These actions incited debate within the Druze community on the validity and effectiveness of the sanctions, and over the next ten months the commitment to the sanctions faded away. The economic dependency of the village on the Christian businesses also was an important factor in the erosion of support for sanctions.

Just one year later, a Druze elder described the dispute as a part of the village's history. Students and children were advised to avoid mentioning it (since it was a shameful and a dangerous event).

Thus, the dispute management in this context was achieved through existing traditional social institutions, operated by the local social and political leaders. It was not based on a legal framework, although this was an option since Israeli law is used at every other level.

This case illustrates the use of dispute resolution processes to restore social order and the power relation between the parties. There was no substantial action, or even recognition of the need, to change the power disparity between the parties, in spite of the fact that both parties recognized the power disparity as one of the major causes of the conflict escalation. Avoidance of the issue reflects a major tendency among traditional dispute resolution intervenors whose core values/motivations include values of harmony, avoidance of conflict, and maintenance of order. Researchers, particularly anthropologists such as Merry (1989); Nader (1978); and Witty (1980) similarly found support for such characteristics of traditional dispute resolution.

V

Basic Assumptions of Middle Eastern Conflict Resolution Process

From the process of resolution in the particular Middle Eastern dispute, one can abstract several basic assumptions about settling disputes in the area. First, conflict resolution aims to restore social order and the disrupted balance of power, rather than to change power relationship or the status quo.

Second, even though a dispute might begin between two individuals or two families, it soon escalates to involve the entire communities or clans. The group, not individuals, is a central locus of action.

Third, the initiation and implementation of intervention are based on the social norms and customs of the society. These social codes are utilized to evaluate an individual's status, therefore they operate as a pressuring tool to reach and implement an agreement between two families. Bargaining moves to reach a settlement are conducted on the basis of preserving the social values, norms, and customs. During the negotiation, negotiators refer to these values as a way to pressure the other side. These values are maintained and preserved by the disputants in their social context. Even if a dispute is over scarce resources (such as money or debts, or land) values such as "honor," "shame," "dignity," "social status," and "religious beliefs" are at stake.

Fourth, future relationships are very crucial elements in settling a dispute in this Middle Eastern context. The relationship between the disputants determines the intervention procedures, nature, size, and settlement. This dispute involved a powerful majority of Druze who, while they were heavily armed and closely united, recognized that their regional ethnic stability and balance could be jeopardized if the conflict was not contained. This recognition made them receptive to the intervention of regional third party.

Fifth, conflict is negative, threatening, and disruptive to the normative order and needs to be settled quickly or avoided. The intervenors' message focus on the damage and destruction that a conflict between two brothers, friends, or nations can bring.

Sixth, priority is given to people and relationships over task, structure, and tangible resources. In the intervention, there were no predetermined stages to complete; all the energies were concentrated on dealing with relationship and social status. The focus was on the nature of the relationship between the parties, rather than concrete, substantive compensations involved.

Seventh, in many cases, disputes are resolved without face-to-face bargaining or negotiation, which can be perceived by the parties as a further antagonistic step; In other cases it might be perceived as a humiliating act if taken

by the victim's party. In this particular case, allowing the parties to present their story separately to the third party was the most crucial part of the negotiation process. This avoided the risk of elevating the level of antagonism between the parties or of humiliating either side, rather it was an opportunity to reflect the parties' social status and power, which was used as a bargaining tool by each party. During these sessions, story-telling was a primary tool used by parties and third party to present their positions and interests, and the conditions for a desired settlement.

VI

Dispute Resolution Processes in both Contexts

An initial comparison on several levels, assumptions, process, third party intervention, and settlement, between the intervention in the Middle Eastern dispute and the American community dispute, suggests major differences.(7)

In the Middle Eastern case, immediate intervention takes place even without the request of the parties. The emphasis on social relations requires a quick and spontaneous act of intervention. In a Western context, third party intervention in community conflicts does not occur immediately. The disputants' primary expectations are directed to the legal system.

The third party in the Middle Eastern case often goes between the parties. In the Western context, the intervention is usually conducted in a face-to-face situation.

If a settlement includes material compensation, in the Middle Eastern context, the third party is responsible for delivering and arranging the payments in a social public ritual. In general, settlements are declared and agreed upon in a public forum. This process is called "Solha" (conciliation). In the Western context, the settlement is conducted in a private and formal setting accompanied with lawyers and legal experts. Compensation is directly delivered by the parties or through a legal format.

In the Middle Eastern case, the process was based on the third party's authority as arbitrators and mediators. The outcome was reached after the negotiation processes between the parties was completed. In the American case, the process was based on collaborative decision making, in which the problem solving approach was utilized as the main tool.

In order to be effective and accepted by the parties, the process in the Middle Eastern case had to respond to the values and norms of the society, (honor, shame, dignity, religious and patriarchal identity). Such Middle

Eastern values and norms are quite different from the Western values and norms that underlie the Western process of conflict resolution.

In the Middle Eastern case, third parties have high community status and considerable power. In the Western context, third parties (mediators particularly) are usually strangers to the dispute and tend to be low-power court officials or community volunteers.

Since the third party members in the Middle East case are leaders who live in the community and region, they bring a considerable knowledge of events, the character of the dispute, and the disputants, and they are involved in the day-to-day life of the disputants. Mediators in Western context struggle to develop a coherent account of the dispute, and an accurate understanding of the feelings and mentality of the disputants. The Western intervenors lack the closeness and connectedness to the disputants, which is a natural component of the mediators in the Middle Eastern context. In fact, such distance in western context is appreciated and encouraged by conflict resolution scholars (Moore, 1987; and Burton, 1986).

Intervenors in the Middle Eastern case are often directive, and advocates for a settlement that accords with notions of justice which are accepted in their societies. Western third parties are more concerned with achieving lasting settlement and less concerned with enforcing societal norms.

The broader community in the Middle Eastern case often places enormous pressure upon disputants to settle and abide by the settlement. In the Western case such pressure, if it exists, comes from the Courts.(8)

The third party's credibility in the Middle Eastern case is based on kinship connections, political position, religious merit, previous experience, and knowledge of customs and community. In the Western case, the credibility is based on the training, professional degrees or certificates, and experience.

In the Middle Eastern context, the intervenors are involved emotionally in the dispute, through actual kinship relations, or through a specific interest in the settlement. The Western intervenors are expected and trained to detach themselves from the values of the disputants and be committed to the process itself.

The third party in a Western dispute resolution has no substantial power or authority over the disputant except by controlling the process. Particularly in mediation cases, the disputing parties control the resolution process, even when they invite the third party. In fact, some mediators themselves assert the parties' ownership of the process (Kolb, 1980). In the Middle

Eastern case, because the intervenors are very powerful and highly respected by the disputants, the disputants will try to maintain good relations with them. Therefore, authority to resolve a dispute is typically relinquished to a third party.

Moreover, in the Western case, all parties accept as legitimate the dominance of judicial institutions (Merry, 1989). Such notions were very clear in the outcomes of the Cleveland Roundtable process which involved legal and government official representatives. Thus, for Western third party (mediators particularly) techniques resemble the judicial forms. For example, intervenors function as legal clerks who use official documents, implement procedures of signing and funding, and construct an agreement similar to a legal contract. In the Middle Eastern case, instead of signing papers, the parties meet for final arrangements in a crowded public setting. The public nature of the settlement with numerous witnesses provides a strong social influence to remain committed to the agreement.

In the Cleveland case, most of the outcomes were designed to educate the community in how to deal with racial differences. The goal was to increase the level of tolerance among the community leaders with a hope that these leaders would influence their grassroots constituencies. There was an attempt to coopt the influence of the media toward managing and preventing future racial conflicts in the Cleveland area. Also, the outcome clearly indicated that the process cannot solve the root causes of the conflict. In fact, the third party explicitly stressed in its report their inability to correct the unequal economic opportunity among residents of the area and to other structural and power disparity between the parties. Similarly, in the Middle Eastern case, none of the outcomes address the roots of the conflict; economic opportunities in the village, ethnic and religious stereotypes and prejudice, and imbalance of power between the communities. The intervenors did not intend to handle the social and educational consequences of the dispute. There was no public program or initiative to educate community members on the need to be more tolerant and respectful of the different ethnic and religious groups in the area. The outcome/settlement did not deal with the future implications of the dispute or relationship between the parties. On the contrary it relates to the dispute as a crisis situation and on an immediate basis as if no conflict exists between the two groups.

VII

What Principles Can Be Shared Between the Two Approaches?

Although there are basic differences between the Middle Eastern and Western approaches of settling conflicts, some principles can be exchanged and adopted by both sides.

The Middle Eastern approach can benefit from adopting the Western cooperative and collaborative problem solving approach. The collaborative/participatory process of decision making is crucial to reaching a lasting agreement. The intervention in the Middle Eastern context is based on a hierarchical system of mediators and procedures. One of the main problems in the Middle Eastern case is that the asymmetric power relations of the disputants determines the settlement and intervention processes. Similarly, this problem is not yet solved in Western conflict resolution approaches. Avruch, Black, and Scimecca (1991), argue that Western models of conflict resolution lack the tools to address the power disparity that usually exists among the parties. Nevertheless, there are several approaches that suggest interesting solutions for such limitations thus Burton's analytical problem process (1990), Kelman's approach to problem solving workshops (1990), and a group of scholars who propose empowerment as a cure for asymmetric power relationships (Susskind, 1983 and Laue and Cormick, 1978).

Western conflict resolution approaches, on the other hand, could adopt the involvement of the community and society in placing pressure on the disputants to reach an agreement rather than using legal procedures which focus on sanctions and relate only to tangible resources rather than relationships. Such a strategy (to create more involvement and interest of the society in settling the conflict) can be adopted in the Western approach instead of separating community members from processes and agreements that do not relate to their immediate interests.

It is extremely difficult and sometimes inappropriate to change the focus of disputants in Middle Eastern context from values and principles to interests, but in some cases, such a change of focus might assist in solving disputes, especially those based on scarcity issues. This may also permit a settlement of the dispute before it escalates into a dispute that involves the entire community.

The effective, holistic elements of the intervenors' process in the Middle Eastern case can suggest some new strategies to the professionalized, focused, specific, and well-defined intervention approach that is followed by Western third parties. The latter are often limited in their knowledge of the social and historical context and nuances of the dispute.

Finally, in order not to impose any of the above principles on either society, prior to any application in either context, a thorough analysis and study of the dispute's social context has to be conducted and comprehended by the intervenors.

While a complete adaptation of Western models in a non Western cases is inappropriate and ineffective, it still appears that there are several points of intersections when comparing the different approaches in the

two contexts. The strengths of each approach can be combined to encourage the development and expansion of the conflict resolution field in both societies. In order to apply and utilize these processes, parties and intervenors would have to become open to the notion that conflicts and dispute can be manipulated and redirected to produce collaboration and cooperation. Such change is in itself a powerful source of creativity and development, and the first step in dealing with conflicts constructively.

Notes

1. J. Scimecca (1987, 1990) lists only four movements which are identified as the source of conflict resolution; the human relations movement is excluded.
2. The case study is described in "Community Problem Solving Case Summaries" Volume II. By the Program for Community Problem Solving, 1989.
3. Ibid.
4. See Moore's description of 12 stages of mediation (1987), Ury and Fisher 6 stages of negotiation (1980), and Carpenter 10 stages of conflict management in public policy (1989).
5. The Middle Eastern context is a term that refers to the traditional, rural, and non industrialized society. However, since Middle Eastern societies are at different levels in the traditional-transitional-Industrial continuum, there are common norms, values and other social characteristics among the adherents of the traditional society, and those who adhere to a transitional society.
6. There are some speculations and rumors that the Druze youths' family had a land dispute with the Christian family who had the wedding. And that the stone throwing act was initiated by the Druze youths to threaten the Christian family in order to accept certain conditions or a deal.
7. Several of these differences were similarly identified by Sally Engle Merry (1989) in her study of industrial had non-industrial dispute resolution processes.
8. A main reason in explaining the lack of governmental and legal intervention in social disputes in the mutual distrust between governments and local communities (as a result of the foreign domination).

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[Mohammed Abu-Nimer, PhD., is assistant professor of sociology and anthropology at Guilford College, 5800 W. Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410.! Research support was provided by the College and editorial assistance received from Victor Robinson. Thanks are due to Professor William Zartman of Johns Hopkins University for his observations and to Professors Morien Dogan and Kevin

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