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Conflict Resolution from Cultural and Emotional Aspects:

The Case of Israeli-Palestinian Young Politicians Peace Dialogue Programme

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses unofficial, track three, possibilities in conflict resolution and studies conflict resolution from cultural and emotional aspects. The subject is illustrated by a case study of an Israeli-Palestinian grassroots peace programme called Young Politicians Peace Dialogue. My research question is, whether or not the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme is able to create a degree of shared reality among its participants. Moreover, I want to examine what are the practices and processes that enable the creation of shared reality. In addition to the cultural aspect, i.e. the creation of a shared reality, this study discusses the role of emotions in an inter-group conflict resolution process.

This study draws on theories of cultural conflict resolution that are combined with social psychological approaches about the role of emotions in protracted conflicts. The model of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is used as a framework for this thesis. The focus of this study is on empirical work, which has been conducted in Israel and the Palestinian territories in 2008. Data consists of project reports, evaluations and interviews.

The analysis shows that the participants of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme highly value the process as a means of building peace at the grassroots level. The programme increases understanding of the enemy on cognitive and emotional levels. In the programme, the parties have an opportunity to discuss mutual fears, prejudices, stereotypes and interests, as well as innovate solutions to the conflict and learn some conflict resolution skills. The purpose of the programme is to influence young politically active individuals in order to begin a peaceful change in the young generation.

This thesis shows that inter-group interaction in a controlled environment is an effective way of increasing understanding and promoting the creation of shared reality, which is the foundation of cultural conflict resolution. The Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme, which is reminiscent of the problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model, is able to evoke a degree of change in the young generation at the grassroots level.

Key words: Middle East conflict, Israel, Palestine, cultural conflict resolution, emotions, problem-solving workshop conflict resolution

Contents

1. Introduction

When I was working in Israel in 2008, the totality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict really surprised me: it was overwhelming to actually see the two people living side by side and experience the deep-rooted hostility, which penetrates the two societies. The efforts of the political leaders to solve the conflict seemed insufficient and the political will to delve into the roots of the conflict seemed to be lacking. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to join a meeting of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue project – a grassroots programme to promote peace among the young representatives of both peoples. The project impressed me with its unique approach: it consisted of intercultural workshops with an attempt to create mutual understanding between Palestinians and Israelis on cognitive and emotional levels. I was fortunate to meet some those people who were committed to attaining peace; even on a small scale within the project. Those people gave me hope about peace in Middle East and also gave me an incentive to start studying *problem-solving workshop conflict resolution*.

This study is an attempt to theorise the turn away from the realist win-lose conflict settlement and power-based third party intervention and take a look at *conflict resolution* that relies on the willingness of the parties in a conflict to gather and genuinely discuss solutions to the conflict. Focus is on track three diplomacy: grassroots peace building efforts by non-state actors. I will approach this subject by using John W. Burton's problem-solving workshop conflict resolution theory as a framework for this study. However, Burton's theory is not strictly applied to the case analysis and the empirical study does not follow the Burtonian model. Burton's theory offers a suitable framework or a useful *background* for this study: the subject is approached from a viewpoint that is reminiscent of Burton's model. Moreover, as thorough as Burton's theoretical framework may be, it does not go without criticism. I will argue that Burton's theory is insufficient in explaining cultural and *human* diversity and, therefore, I will add a cultural aspect to problem-solving workshop conflict resolution mainly by following the works of Tarja Väyrynen. Finally, I am going to discuss, how emotions may contribute to problem-solving workshop based conflict resolution.

The ontological foundation of this study is on social construction. I will discuss how reality is connected to perception and how reality, the *life-world* of an individual and a social group, is constructed in intersubjective practices. In particular, I will focus on the construction of *shared reality* through intercultural communication and how the creation of a shared culture affects conflict

resolution. In fact, this is the core of my thesis: does Young Politicians Peace Dialogue project enable the participants to create a degree of shared reality and what are the practices and processes that help creating it? In addition, I will discuss whether or not individuals can make a difference in the peace process and whether or not the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme has any significance on the road to peace. To shed some light on the subject matter, I will first start with introducing some conflict resolution approaches and then move on to discussing problem-solving workshop conflict resolution in detail. Second, I will discuss the theory of cultural conflict resolution and introduce ideas related to an emotional approach to conflict resolution. Third, I will discuss the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme in detail and in relation to the problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model. I will also elaborate how the participants of the programme have experienced it. Finally, I will analyse how the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme encompasses cultural and emotional factors in conflict resolution in relation to the theory of cultural conflict resolution and emotions in an inter-group contact. In the end of this study, I will also assess the significance of the programme to the peace process in Middle East.

This research is unique in two ways. First, the subject of this study is one of a kind. The methods of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue are unique – at least in Europe. The way in which the programme combines both cognitive and emotional factors in conflict resolution workshops is out of the ordinary. Emotional factors are often neglected in conflict resolution and replaced by an excessive reliance on human rationality. Second, my way of combining emotional factors with a hint of social psychology to cultural conflict resolution and problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is also a fresh approach. In this way, I attempt to give a comprehensive picture of the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme by integrating such fundamental elements as the structure of the programme, cultural factors and emotional factors in the analysis. I am going to argue that the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue can be analysed in the framework of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution and that cultural and emotional factors play an important role in such a process.

2. Conflict Resolution Approaches

2.1. Classical Ideas in Conflict Resolution

Political realism is more or less a product of Cold War thinking, but there are also more recent examples of the dominance of the realist thought, e.g. the so called Bush doctrine that has been characterised by very hawkish policies. Political realism encourages the use of competitive

processes in conflict resolution. Competitiveness refers to "power-based, adversarial, confrontational, zero-sum, 'win-lose' approaches to dealing with conflict". Realists believe in a negative human nature, which is a defining feature of human behaviour. The proponents of this "Realpolitik" deny the existence of international conflict resolution mechanisms, because war is an inseparable part of human nature and, thus, nothing can prevent it. The basic ideal of realism is survival, and an individual or group (the state) must guarantee the success of survival; this often leads to warfare, which is inevitable and acceptable in face of survival. Realpolitik was dominant in Cold War thinking and it is still visible in the behaviour and perception in such areas as Northern Ireland, Middle East and Sri Lanka. Realpolitik and its competitive processes are associated with *destructive* outcomes.[1]

Supporters of *political idealism*, "Idealpolitik", may agree with realism about the alarming frequency and intensity of violence, but disagree over the reasons for violent behaviour and the means to respond to violence. Idealists perceive that there are multiple factors contributing to violence, including learned responses to frustrated goal-seeking behaviour. The range of responses is varied, from counter-violence (in self-defence) to non-violent measures including political, social and economic change and eliminating causes and conditions for violent behaviour. As opposed to Realpolitik, idealism is associated with *constructive* outcomes emphasising non-adversarial, non-confrontational, positive-sum and "win-win" approaches to conflict. The difference between Realpolitik and Idealpolitik is simply "nature vs. nurture". Realism puts emphasis on containing, deterring and coping with a biologically determined situation, while idealism stresses changeability of environment and behaviour. Realism is utterly pessimistic in outlook whereas idealism is more prone to optimism.[2]

One very typical approach to conflict resolution is putting emphasis on defending *interests*. This relates to political realism too: state leaders are expected to defend national interests and contain the interests of other states if a conflict of interests occurs. Interest-based conflicts are often characterised by lose-lose and zero-sum outcomes. Traditionally, therefore, conflict resolution has dealt with helping the parties to take a positive sum direction through negotiation. The task is to make the parties re-perceive the conflict so as to make them see that their interests are not necessarily conflicting and also win-win outcomes are possible.[3]

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[1] Sandole 1993, 4-5
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ramsbotham & Woodhouse & Miall 2005, 13-16.

2.1.1. Traditional Third Party Intervention

When two parties are in a violent conflict, the "spiral of hostility" easily escalates as the parties react to each other's actions. This destructive spiral may be halted by an intervention of a third party that can change the conflict structure and provide different patterns of communication. Thus, the third party enables the parties to reflect and filter their messages to each other, which possibly renders interaction less hostile and more productive. Although third party intervention has been successful in some cases, "pure" mediators have quite often been seen as powerless. Therefore, the mediator is expected to have a degree of power that would allow for the mediator to *pressure* the parties to stop violence.[4]

Conventional third party intervention consists of action to achieve a goal: stopping violence in the conflict. The goal – stopping violence – is not necessary the goal of the parties of a conflict, unless they are utterly exhausted and looking for e.g. a truce. Their goals most probably are something that would have to be satisfied on the expense of the other side: these goals would include, for example, territory, political power, representation, civil rights and so on. Therefore, the intervening party would add an additional third goal to the conflict; a goal that the main parties do not recognise, which creates an additional problem.[5]

If the intervening third party has enough leverage to suppress the violent behaviour of the rivals, it seems that the conflict has been solved: violence was the problem and now that it has ceased, the problem has also been unmade. In the language of conflict theory, this would be a form of conflict *settlement*, but the conflict would not have been resolved, as in conflict *resolution*. This kind of settlement is not likely to promote sustainable peace and is an undesirable outcome.[6] According to John W. Burton (1993), conflict resolution is a recent concept, and quite often the terms *dispute* and *conflict* are used synonymously, as are *settlement* and *resolution* too. In the literature of conflict resolution, however, dispute and conflict have different meanings: Disputes "involve negotiable interests" while conflicts "are concerned with issues that are not negotiable, issues that relate to ontological human needs that cannot be compromised". In the same way, "settlement" refers to negotiated or arbitrated solution of disputes, and "resolution" refers to a conflict situation that has

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[4] Ramsbotham & Woodhouse & Miall 2005, 18.
[5] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 3.
[6] Ibid.

been solved in a way that the needs of all parties have been satisfied. Therefore, we have *dispute settlement* and *conflict resolution*.[7]

Then, why is conflict settlement by third party intervention an undesirable process if the outcome really *is* the cessation of violence? Mitchell and Banks (1996) present three reasons. First, third party interventions are often difficult, expensive and dangerous because the goals of the third party contradict with the goals of the initial adversaries. Thus, the adversaries can resist the negotiations (separately and even in temporary combination) so long and so hard that the intervening party has to give up and withdraw in defeat and humiliation. Second, an uninvited intervening party rarely comes to the negotiation table without interests of its own; the intervening party might even have its own hidden agenda in the negotiations. In practice, an intervention often favours one party or another and a settlement of this kind can be a form of a disguised or partial victory for one party. When this happens, a *fourth* party may intervene in support of the underdog, which results in a new approximate balance in relative power and the violence may even get worse as this balance would be tested in a renewed conflict. Third, an intervention leading to a settlement is a victory for the intervening party, but a defeat for both of the rival parties. Violence ends, but the objectives of the adversaries are not achieved and their interests are not met. Therefore, the violence is no longer *manifest*, but it is *latent*: bubbling under what seems to be a calm surface.[8]

2.2. New Developments in Conflict Resolution

The emergence of so called new wars in the 1990s also inflicted a change in conflict resolution studies and generated more varied ways of modelling conflicts. These new developments saw conflicts as arsing from *social change*, "leading to a process of violent or non-violent conflict transformation, and resulting in further social change in which hitherto suppressed or marginalized individuals or groups come to articulate their interests and challenge existing norms and power structures". In response to this new development, the idea of third party intervention has also been broadened and challenged. Whereas the traditional third party intervention has concerned with entering the conflict and ending violence by helping the parties to resolve their disputes in non-violent ways and/or using power leverage to pressure the parties to stop violence, the contemporary approach takes a wider view of the timing and nature of intervention. New conflict resolution attempts to relate appropriate and coordinated resolution strategies to different phases of the conflict

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[7] Burton 1993, 55.
[8] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 4-5.

thus dealing with the conflict in more subtle ways. In addition, emphasis has shifted toward "bottom-up" processes that recognise the importance of middle-level leaders and grassroots actors. Instead of imposing conflict settlement from above by outsiders, conflict resolution capacity should be searched from local societies and domestic cultures, which would enable the use local actors and resources. This is called the *multi-track model*.[9]

2.2.1. Multi-Track Conflict Resolution

According to John W. Burton, the non-forcible approach to conflict resolution is adopted for "reasons of political realism". Whatever the ultimate goals are, they are best achieved by problem-solving procedures that communicate goals accurately and take step-by-step moves towards achieving them. The problem-solving approach is the most economical and reliable means of solving conflict situations. The focus is on promoting change within the system by affecting decision making processes rather than changing the system externally by using the power leverage of a third party. In Burton's words, the approach could, therefore, be termed "radically conservative". Burton asserts that there are two tracks in conflict resolution: Track 1 is the formal one, the official channel including the government, law enforcement, public policies and the like; Track 2 is the informal one, an "analytical track that explores options and feeds into the first track".[10]

In addition to Burton's two-track approach, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005) introduce a multi-track model in conflict resolution. As many contemporary armed conflicts are very "hybrid" in their structure and spread across the international, state and societal levels they become quite difficult to resolve, or transform as the three researchers put it. Armed conflicts can no longer be considered as occurring between two sovereign states, but they have regional and international dimensions too, and often include non-state actors and different social and/or cultural groups. Therefore, conflict resolution should operate simultaneously on all these levels, including vertical relations from top of the states and the international system down to the local actors and horizontal relations connecting the social actors involved. Conflict resolution hence forms a multi-track system that consists of three tracks and multiple actors. *Track I* is the official track comprising of the UN and other international organisations, governments and international financial institutions. Track I deals with the top leaders of the parties. *Track II* consists of international NGOs, churches,

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[9] Ramsbotham & Woodhouse & Miall 2005, 22-25.
[10] Burton 1990, 120-121.

academics and private business and cooperates with middle level leaders. *Track III* involves grassroots actors, which collaborate with embedded parties. The embedded parties interact with middle level leaders, top leaders and the grassroots level. Figure 1 below illustrates the multi-track approach.[11]
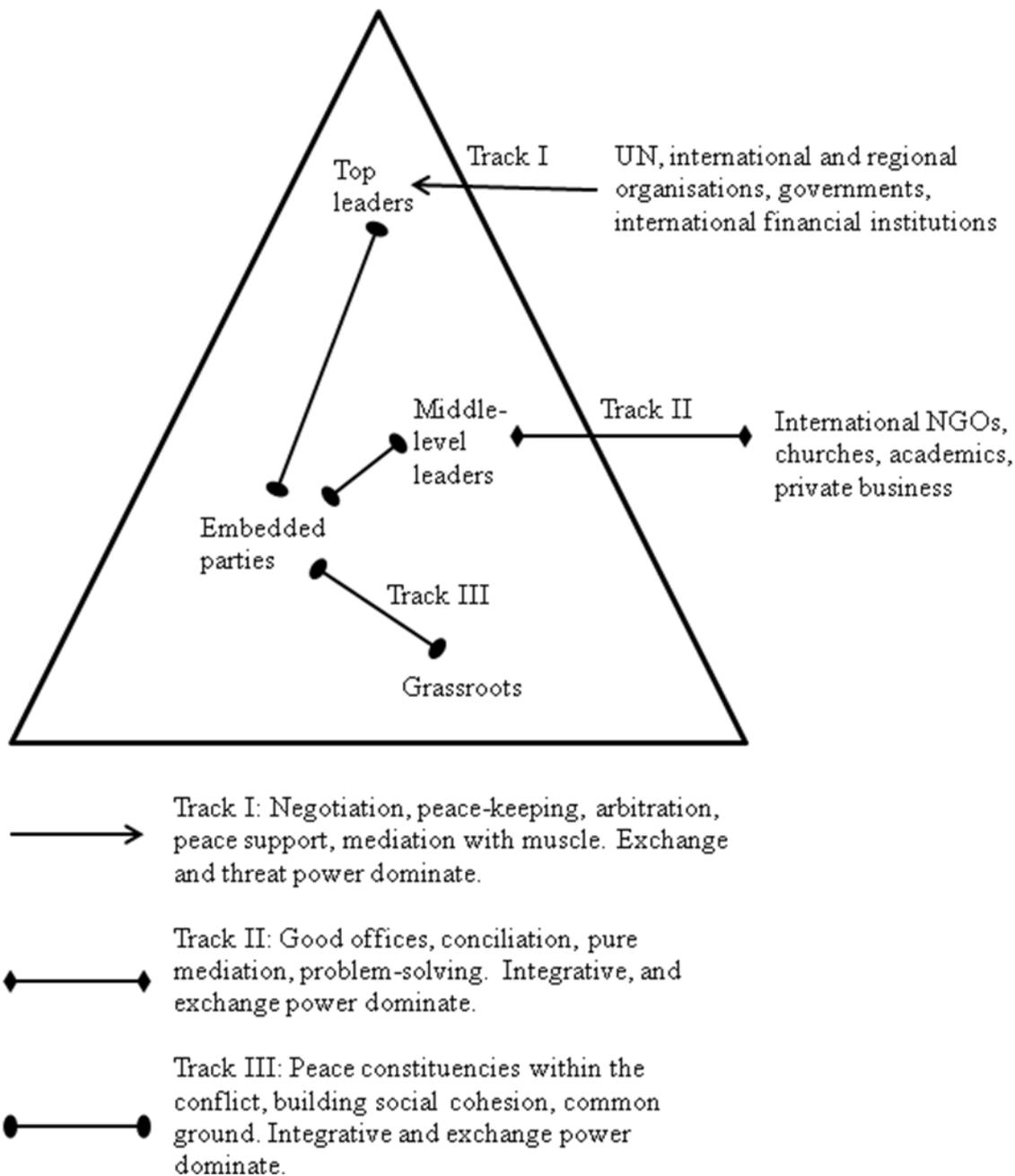

Figure 1: Multi-track Conflict Resolution[12]

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[11] Ramsbotham & Woodhouse & Miall 2005, 25-26.
[12] Ibid., 26.

2.2.2. Problem-Solving Workshop Conflict Resolution

Collaborative problem-solving is also an alternative to the traditional third party intervention approaches. The logic of collaborative problem-solving is recognizing the fact that violence is created by the parties themselves and, therefore, it is only them who can stop it. Thus, an intervention or settlement forced by a third party is unreliable. Given this logic, there are two options left: to let the parties tackle their problems alone, or to provide them with non-coercive assistance. The problem-solving approach purports that the third party does not impose any forced settlement upon the adversaries, but it provides a safe venue for productive discussions aiming at genuine exchange of ideas, free analysis of the situation and non-binding exploration of options. The ultimate goal is a win-win situation, in which the parties recognize the problems, discuss them and explore mutually satisfactory solutions. The role of the third party is limited to providing a venue and giving professional assistance.[13]

One form of collaborative problem-solving is *problem-solving workshop conflict resolution*. As suggested above, problem-solving workshop conflict resolution, also called third party consultation model, does not accept the idea of a three-cornered negotiation system, where the mediator acts as a third party in a role of an activist, advocate, mediator or enforcer. In the traditional three-cornered system, the outcome reflects the power relations of the parties involved, which likely renders the solution resting on power relations short-lived and at least unstable. It is also claimed that ethnopolitical conflicts that deal with very fundamental issues, such as identity, can not be solved by a traditional third party intervention. Instead, alternative means are needed in order to address the existential dimension too.[14]

Problem-solving conflict resolution is critical towards post-Cold War conflict resolution within the Clausewitzean framework. It does not assume that negotiation occurs between instrumentally rational actors within a successful mediation process. As opposed to the logic of traditional third party mediation, problem-solving conflict resolution allows for a free discussion outside the so-called instrumentally rational interests, and encourages the parties to explore a wide variety of issues, such as identities, values, needs and threat perceptions. Problem-solving workshop is a method of bringing together the representatives of parties that are active in conflict. The workshops are academically based, unofficial small-group discussions that provide an opportunity for genuine

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[13] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 4-5.
[14] Väyrynen 1998, 50-51.

discussion. The discussion is facilitated by a panel of scholars, who provide the venue for talks and promote communication. The facilitator does not suggest or enforce any solutions, but works to create an atmosphere "where innovative solutions can emerge out the interaction between the parties themselves". The main objective of the workshop is to create analytical communication and create inputs to the political processes on the first track.[15]

2.3. Burton's Human Needs Theory

John Burton's conflict resolution theory is based on human motivations, of which some are universal and characteristic to the development of human species, some culturally specific and transitory in nature. Thus, Burton divides human motivations to three categories: one that is universal in the human species, and the others that are cultural and transitory. Those three categories are labelled respectively as "needs", "values" and "interests".[16]

Burton argues that *needs* are universal for the human species and form an essential part of the human being. Burton concurs with Maslow that there are biological needs of food and shelter and needs that relate to growth and development. In fact, Burton suggests that basic human needs might even be genetic in their nature. In terms of conflict studies, Burton has observed that needs are pursued by all means available. He places an ontological claim that human beings are conditioned by biology to pursue their needs by any available means – possibly including violence as well. In practice, if human needs are not satisfied within the societal norms, human beings will resort to behaviour that is outside the legal norms of the society.[17]

Values consist of ideas, habits, customs and beliefs that are particular to social communities. Values are linguistic, religious, ethnic, class etc. features that construct cultures and identity groups. As opposed to needs, values are acquired and not universal or perhaps genetic. If human beings experience, for example, oppression or underprivilege, the need of personal security and identity is compromised and there is an urge to defend these needs. In this sense, values overlap needs and can be confused with them. Preservation of values leads to defensive and aggressive behaviour as a symptom of defending your identity and security. Burton argues that values may change over time through interaction between social groups and absorbing features from other cultures. However, he

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[15] Väyrynen 1998, 51-52.
[16] Burton 1990, 36.
[17] Ibid. 36-37.

claims that different cultural features are more likely to face discrimination than to be integrated and accepted in the majority culture. Therefore, discrimination leads to defending your values and identity.[18]

Interests "refer to the occupational, social, political and economic aspirations of the individual, and of identity groups of individuals within a social system". Interests are shared with groups in a society, but are rarely held in common nationally. Interests are competitive and have a high win-lose potential. Interests are transitory and dependent on circumstances. They are not inherent or universal as needs are. Interests typically relate to material goods and influence policies and tactics in terms of needs and values. Burton asserts that the relationship between interests and needs is a very important one in practice. In many societies, interest groups are let to operate uncontrolled in promoting their interests, which can lead to exploitation and endangering the environment and security. Such societies are characterised by high levels of inequalities and alienation, which may become a cause of conflict. In relation to public policies, Burton identifies a clear lack of articulation in terms of interests (and of needs and values too): policy disagreements often stem from a lack of precision in the use of these terms, which leads to confusion and misunderstanding.[19]

The difference between these three sets of motivations is that interests are negotiable, whereas needs and values are not. In terms of different societal systems, Burton argues, "we are concerned mainly with the degree to which individual interests are curbed or given free expression in the promotion of social good". As interests are negotiable, it follows that there can be many types of societal systems that change in time. As said above, needs and values are not for trading. Especially needs are inherent in human behaviour, including the need for identity and recognition. Therefore, a human being can not make a decision to trade his/her needs. Denied or oppressed needs may result to abnormal behaviour in relation to existing social norms. For example, Burton strongly questions the "great powers" that still operate internationally with the assumption that nations can be forced into behaving in certain ways. Great powers are working under the label of democracy to impose alien forms of government to other nations that attempt to establish competing or alternative social and political systems.[20]

According to Burton, the distinction between negotiable interests and non-negotiable needs and values is a recent discovery, which has been made in facilitated conflict resolution processes.

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[18] Burton 1990, 37-38.
[19] Ibid., 38-39.
[20] Ibid., 39-40.

Problem-solving workshop conflict resolution seeks to be analytical and reveal the underlying motivations – needs, values and interests – of the parties to a conflict. In a facilitated controlled communication, the parties can learn about each others' motivations and, thus, discover what goals and objectives they have in common. Values and interest may be different, but needs are the same because they are universal, as Burton asserts. Therefore, if the parties can identify their shared needs, they can find a mutual starting point for resolving the conflict, which is, according to Burton, best achieved in an analytical problem-solving workshop context.[21]

3. The Logic of Problem-Solving Workshop Conflict Resolution

In this section, I will introduce the problem-solving workshop conflict resolution theory as it is formulated by John W. Burton. Within the context of this study, Burton's theory serves as a starting point for analysis – a framework in which the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme can be discussed and analysed. Nonetheless, the programme is not organised entirely in the Burtonian way. Nor is the empirical research of this study conducted in conformity of Burton's theory. Burton's model, however, is an illustrative viewpoint to this subject matter and has thus been chosen as the basis of the theoretical approach in this study.

3.1. Communication and Conflict

In John W. Burton's (1969) words, there is communication in all relationships. In human encounters, there is a flow of communication with or without direct messages or transactions. Communication without messages occurs e.g. when a group of people, a nationality for instance, is aware of each other and feels sympathy for the other members of the group. This is the kind of communication that connects, for example, the Jews, coloured people, people of the same ethnic or religious background, and so on. Communication can also be antipathetic and transmit demonstrations of hostility, which prevents the communication of other messages and, therefore, influence the behaviour of the people concerned. In some relationships, communication is merely a potential, like an unused telephone system. There may be communities that share values and traditions, but they are unaware of each other and, at the same time, still have a structural and functional possibility of communication or antipathetic transaction. As Burton argues, there is

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[21] Burton 1990, 40-42.

"interdependence and mutual influence, sympathy or antagonism between sub-systems, or potentiality of such communication". As messages and transactions are a source of knowledge, they are quite as likely a source of false information and misperception too. Communication is as much a tool of peaceful relations as it is a tool of conflict; communication can be harmonious or conflicting depending on its content and how the content is *perceived*.[22]

Burton argues that conflict arises as a result of ineffective communication, which is the basic idea behind the technique of controlled communication. Hence, conflict resolution has to involve processes that enable effective communication in controlled circumstances. By effective communication Burton means "the deliberate conveying and accurate receipt and interpretation of what was intended should be conveyed, and the full employment of information as received and stored in the allocation and re-allocation of values, interests and goals". The assumption behind controlled communication is that a conflict of interests is a subjective phenomenon that happens when there are conditions, which prevent an "accurate assessment of costs and values, and consideration of alternative means and goals". If, as Burton asserts, conflict is based upon misperception, false information and failure to see alternative means to attaining one's objectives, it would follow that there is mutual interest and gain in resolving the conflict. Therefore, the first step in conflict resolution is making communication effective.[23] As outlined above, problem-solving workshops are particularly designed to improve communication and offer a safe venue for constructive talks. Hence, we need to elaborate the meaning of problem-solving workshops and delve into the notion of socially constructed reality.

3.2. Construction of the Life-World

In Culture and International Conflict Resolution (2001), Tarja Väyrynen writes about phenomenology of the social world. Väyrynen retells the theorising of A. Schutz about an intersubjective nature of human reality. "Life-world" is a sociohistorical construction of the set of experiences that are shared with fellow men and women, experienced and interpreted differently by everyone sharing the same world; in other words, it s a world common to all of us, but with different perceptions and interpretations of it. The life-world is the space in with we encounter "the other" and perform our actions and convey messages to others. It is historical in nature and does not

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[22] Burton 1969, 48-49.
[23] Ibid., 49-51.

depend on our birth or death – its history reveals in the form of moral codes, economics, religious practices, values and so on.[24]

Väyrynen describes the life-world as a cultural world that refers to a social group. Life-world does not exist in a vacuum, but it has a sociohistorical context: every life-world represents a certain social group in a given historical moment. Hence, every life-world is interpreted and perceived subjectively by a social group whose life-world is in question. Life-world is also taken for granted by the group involved in it: a so called "natural attitude" characterises the life-world. That is, the world appears as taken for granted and the perceived reality seems self-evident until proven otherwise. Natural attitude, therefore, means that we do not question the intersubjectively formed life-world, its objects and what occurs in it. This leads us to believe that the life-world experienced by us is the uppermost reality for us; our reality is built upon the world, in which we act and understand our fellow men and women. However, the life-world is not imposed on us, but we create and modify it by our actions. Our action, communication, and messages that we convey shape the reality in the intersubjective context.[25] As Burton argues, successful conflict resolution requires effective communication, and conflicts actually are a result of ineffective communication. As reality is a construction of a sociohistorical life-world based on the actions and language of a specific social group, conflict is actually a clash of different life-worlds, a conflict of different realities. In conflict resolution, therefore, the task of the parties involved is to explore their life-worlds, see their "natural attitudes", the taken-for-granted assumptions, and finally try to find a shared reality, in which a win-win outcome becomes possible. One fundamental priority in conflict resolution talks is to reveal and overcome the typifications, stereotypes and biases that the parties have of each other.

3.3. Perception and Reality

Burton (1984) asserts that the only reality that is relevant is that of the actors involved in a conflict, not that of the observers or other irrelevant parties. Only the rival parties are empowered to judge, what is relevant in the conflict and its resolution. Therefore, as Burton says, "the conflict that is to be resolved is the conflict perceived by those involved". In this sense, reality is not objective, but it is constructed by the actors. Furthermore, since there are two or more actors in a conflict, there are also as many different life-worlds, i.e. multiple realities to deal with. Reality appears different to the involved actors and their realities depend on the perceptions and interpretations of the situation at

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[24] Väyrynen 2001, 93.
[25] Ibid., 92-93.

hand. However, the perceptions of reality are not immutable: as the actors gain more knowledge and information of their adversary, facilitated by a third party, their perceptions change and, at the same time, their realities converge.[26]

In The Social Psychology of Intergroup and International Conflict Resolution, Ronald J. Fisher (1990) defines conflict as follows: "a social situation involving perceived incompatibilities in goals or values between two or more parties, attempts by the parties to control each other, and antagonistic feelings by the parties toward each other". Subjectivity is a defining characteristic of conflict: the processes of perception, cognition, communication, motivation, valuing, and emotion are highly subjective. The subjectivity of a conflict implies that the perceptions and interpretations that the parties make of each other are a crucial determinant of how they will respond in a conflict and how the conflict interaction will be carried out. Thus, communication becomes an essential factor in unfolding the perceptions and interpretations. Social psychologists stress the importance of face-to-face, interactive methods of de-escalating and resolving intergroup conflicts. One such approach is the problem-solving method of small-group discussion and interaction between the parties, which Fisher sees as "essential for any moves toward resolution to occur".[27]

As argued above, contemporary social science and conflict resolution has moved away from normative approaches of religion and law that are characterised by dichotomies of right or wrong, legal or illegal, just and unjust and defensive or aggressive. Emphasis is moving towards social psychological study of behavioural responses to conflict situations and possible false perceptions. Burton (1969) argues that conflicts can not be solved through traditional diplomatic power practices, in which the parties are tied into a negotiation framework allowing only win-lose situations. The underlying assumption is that one side will gain and the other will lose. On the contrary, it is much more likely that altered perceptions and attitudes achieved in a genuine discussion between the parties will lead to outcomes not expected by the parties. Negotiation is not, therefore, a contest based on an economic struggle for scarce resources, in which a gain for one is a loss for another. As perceptions are "corrected", as Burton puts it, the parties involved in a conflict may realise that compromises are needed on both sides and a win-win solution to the conflict may be found. In other words, as the parties start to understand the view-points of the adversary, perceptions on the conflict converge and a common ground can be found.[28] There are many factors that affect the emergence of false perceptions. Perceptions arise in intersubjective practices within a social group. Perceptions

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[26] Burton 1984, 135.
[27] Fisher 1990, 6-7.
[28] Burton 1969, 70.

are subjective, but also shared: they become a part of the life-world of a social group defining their attitude towards the "other", e.g. their adversary in a conflict, and, also, define their own identity in relation to the other. Factors causing false perception include, for example, typification, stereotyping, mirror images, in-group bias and intergroup discrimination.

According to Väyrynen (2001), *typifications* are a "stock of knowledge" that are acquired from our previous experiences and are formed within a system of relevance, which derives from what is familiar to us. Objects of the life-world are perceived through typifications, which form our deposit of knowledge. The stock of knowledge, our collection of typifications, is largely socially derived, approved and distributed. The stock of knowledge is by no means static; on the contrary, it is in a constant process of change. In other words, typifications are needed in order to understand the unfamiliar to us by referring to the things that are familiar. Our understanding of the other is based on familiar attributes that we attach to the unfamiliar, which often leads to false perceptions of the other. Therefore, the recognition of relevance systems is important in the context of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution, because they form the basis of communication. If the parties in a conflict hold different relevance systems, effective communication between them is impossible. Hence, the parties need to establish a common relevance system through social interaction, which then provides for the establishment of mutual discourse.[29]

Stereotype is a mould that now has a meaning of a "fixed mental impression". We have a certain image of people and expect the people to fit our images and expectations. Stereotypes are everywhere and they are quite persistent: our images of e.g. Chinese, Japanese or Americans are widespread and persevering.[30] As emphasis in social psychology has now been shifted to social cognition, researchers have begun to study stereotypes as cognitive structures. In Fisher's words, stereotypes are defined as "expectations that a set of traits is associated with membership in a particular social group". Stereotypes are reinforced by cognitive processes that create biases of attention in a way that stereotypic expectancies are confirmed: knowing someone is a member of a specific group leads us to attend selectively to information that strengthens the stereotype, and dismiss information that weakens the stereotype.[31]

Burton (1972) claims that there is a universal habit of seeing the "others" as untrustworthy, deceitful and aggressive. Nations see themselves as peace-loving and trustworthy while other

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[29] Väyrynen 2001, 96-97.
[30] Burton 1972, 75.
[31] Fisher 1990, 41.

nations are likely to be aggressive and deceitful. Interestingly, the parties to a conflict have a same view of each other and say the same things about each other. They attribute same characteristics to each other while seeing the self as totally the opposite. This phenomenon is called a *mirror image*, one feature of the human psychological make-up that distorts our perception and observation. Mirror imaging is a psychological defence against the unknown and its foundation is in identifying with a familiar social unit. First, we identify with our family and then step by step with larger groups. Burton argues that there are only a few people who can identify with the whole human race; more usually, we identify with a linguistic, religious or ethnic group. Our limitation in identification leads to group solidarity and antagonism towards the other, unknown social groups. Antagonism creates cohesion in a social group, which acts as a defence against the strangers, the unknown that we might find threatening. This is why we tend to relate negative attributes to the other, while at the same time the other relates the same attributes to us.[32]

According to social identity theory, human psychology is susceptible to social categorisation that produces *intergroup discrimination* and favours the in-group. Fisher (1990) says that intergroup discrimination occurs even without real conflict of interest, history of antagonism or intergroup interaction. Thus, intergroup discrimination is based on simple social categorisation, which is inherent in social interaction. This phenomenon is related to creating and defining ones place in society and providing self-reference. Individuals derive their self-image from a membership of a social group and try to maintain a positive image of their group – at the expense of the other social groups that are perceived as negative to maintain in-group cohesion. *In-group bias* is a derivative of social categorisation: the social fabric of the in-group is oversimplified and the cohesion and similarity of the group is exaggerated while deviances are ignored or downplayed.[33] Therefore, individuals in a social group may have false perceptions on their own social group to which they refer, in addition to false perceptions on the other. In-group bias is a more subtle and hidden phenomenon in social interaction, but should be taken into account in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution; the involved parties should also separately discuss their in-group motivations and dynamics.

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[32] Burton 1972, 75-76.
[33] Fisher 1990, 28-29, 44-45.

3.4. Goals of Problem-Solving Workshop Conflict Resolution

The starting point of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is relationships and human behaviour, not law or history. However, parties to a dispute tend initially to base their argumentation on legal and historical grounds because these justifications are familiar to them and they have been relying on them possibly for a long time. In a problem-solving workshop context, the discussion should be diverted away from legal-historical argumentation and turned into an analytical approach, which consists of *analysis of relationships.* [34] Therefore, the goal of the problem-solving workshop is to promote analytical communication in terms of the conflict, which can then be fed back to the official track one diplomacy. The ultimate goal, of course, is the resolution of the conflict but the immediate objective of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is to promote interaction between the parties and explore innovative solutions.[35]

The objectives of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution are rather different in contrast to traditional third party mediation. Traditional mediation seeks ending violence and arriving at a settlement by agreements and compromises, often strongly pressured by the third party. Problem-solving approach or controlled communication, as Burton calls it, strives to "establish a condition in which the parties see their relationships as posing a problem to be solved". At the outset, neither party is more right or wrong than the other, even if the other party has been a victim of unprovoked aggression; the aggression was a result of some circumstances, which pose a problem and it is in the interest of both parties to help solve the problem. Both parties believe that they have been acting in ways that appear to them to be in their best interests – a belief that is based on the knowledge that they possess. Thus, the objective of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is to help the parties identify and define problems, check their perceptions of each other, and dedicate oneself to exploring solutions through interaction with the other side. The process is to be facilitated by a panel of political and social scientists who are professionals in the field of conflict resolution.[36]

3.5. Role of the Facilitator

The role of the facilitator in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is not a role of a chairman, mediator or judge. On the contrary, the facilitator is an observer in a scientific role and

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[34] Burton 1990, 206.
[35] Väyrynen 1998, 53.
[36] Burton 1969, 62-63.

makes no assessment, judgement or value interventions. The facilitator has an active role in promoting interaction and communication between the parties and providing theoretical knowledge about conflict and human behaviour. The facilitator directs communication to productive grounds and enables the parties to innovate solutions to the conflict. The role of the facilitator is supportive and he/she takes a neutral position in terms of the conflict. Also, the facilitator does not need to be an expert on the particular conflict nor an expert on the region in question; the facilitator only has to be professional in the field of conflict resolution and human behaviour. The role of the third party is, therefore, to apply general theories about conflict to the situation at hand, enable the parties to explore each others' perceptions of the conflict and analyse the situation in light of the knowledge that the parties possess.[37] In one sense, the role of the third party in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is less active than that of a mediator. The facilitator does not persuade or judge the involved parties, nor does he/she evaluate the success of the negotiations. In another sense, the role of the third party is very active: he/she is there to explain the conflict, its origins and escalation. He/she makes reference to other similar conflicts using analytical means but always stays in the context of a continuing discussion between the parties.[38]

Burton (1969) refers to the third party, or facilitator, as panel of academics. Panel members are "political and social scientists who have worked in the fields of conflict, including the related areas of decision-making, perception, deterrence, escalation, functionalism, and the very many other aspects that are now the subject of empirical research". Burton argues that historians, diplomats, journalists and non-academic people make poor facilitators because the role of the third party is to provide a body of (academic) knowledge, which the parties can rely on, and also specialised knowledge that the parties do not have. However, it is not the role of the third party to impose theoretical explanations on the actors – it is also not supposed to impose any practical solutions either.[39]

In Conflict Resolution and Provention (1990), Burton refers to the third party as a "'filter' to screen out false assumptions and implications from existing knowledge, cultural and ideological orientations and personal prejudices". Participants use the filter, the third party, to eliminate false information in order to perceive realities accurately and to assess the available information correctly. The activities of the facilitator provide the filtering process: the facilitator directs discussion, feeds in theoretical knowledge and analytical tools enabling the parties to focus on the essential, i.e.

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[37] Burton 1990, 204-205.
[38] Burton 1969, 61-62.
[39] Ibid. 63-64.

interaction and discussion, and innovating solutions to the conflict at hand. As false assumptions have been eliminated the vacuum of information that is left invites to the introduction of alternative theories and means of conflict resolution.[40]

Väyrynen (2001) criticises Burton's view of the facilitator as a filter. According to Burton, the facilitator is a scientific outside observer that has an objective viewpoint to the conflict and its participants. Burton claims that the facilitator has superior knowledge on human behaviour in a conflict situation, which is something that the actors in a conflict do not have. Thus, the facilitator would be an omnipotent force among the participants in a problem-solving workshop being the sole holder of true knowledge. Väyrynen rejects Burton's approach to the facilitator as an outside scientific observer and asserts that the facilitator "is an ethical participant with a theoretical interest whose position arises from three sources: ethicality, participant observation and theorising". As opposed to Burton's thinking, the source of good facilitative conduct derives from *skill acquisition*, not from superior knowledge and objectivity that has its basis in human needs theory. The facilitator goes through a skill acquisition process improving his/her skills as a facilitator in a problem-solving workshop context. Skill acquisition applies to both knowledge on human behaviour and ethical comportment. Learning through experience is the foundation of the expertise of the facilitator. A skilled facilitator does not appeal to rules and maxims; an ethical expert knows how to behave according to the situation and use his/her intuition. Thus, principles and theories serve only in the beginning of learning. As the facilitator gathers experience through a learning process, he/she can rely on intuition rather than abstract principles.[41]

3.6. Facilitative Conditions

The facilitative conditions of intergroup contact are outlined by Fisher as follows:

1. A high *acquaintance potential* by which the contact situation offers the opportunity for the participants to get to know one another as persons and not simply stereotypical members of the other group. This requires interaction that is informal, personal, and intimate as opposed to formal and impersonal.

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[40] Burton 1990, 208-209.
[41] Väyrynen 2001, 127-129.

2. *Equal status contact* in which the interaction is on co-equal basis as opposed to the common minority group member's experience of being less than equal. Higher status on the part of minority group members is also deemed to be facilitative.

3. *Social norms*, including institutional supports that set expectations for friendly, respectful, and trusting interaction. This includes formal prescriptions and sanctions as well as informal customs and preferences.

4. A *cooperative task and reward structure*, which involves participants in functionally important activities directed toward common goals. This creates a cooperative atmosphere that is pleasant and rewarding in addition to the tangible benefits of cooperation.

5. The *characteristics of individual participants*, including moderate to high competence and mild to moderate prejudice. The competence of minority group members is particularly important in confronting the typical majority stereotype of incompetence, whereas majority group members who are less intense in their prejudice will open enough to take in new information and to experience positive attitude change.[42]

The facilitative conditions as mentioned above are part of what Fisher calls the *contact hypothesis*. Contact hypothesis helps to explain why some situations of intergroup interaction lead to positive outcomes and why some do not. The hypothesis offers a surface explanation of why cooperative, equal status, face-to-face interaction leads to positive attitude change, while conditions of inequality, competition, tension and frustration do not. Fisher elaborates this hypothesis by the notion of *intergroup anxiety* that originates from contact with out-group members. Anxiety stems from fear of negative evaluations by either peers or out-group individuals. Conditions that increase intergroup anxiety include e.g. intergroup cognitions such as knowledge, stereotypes and ethnocentrism. High levels of intergroup anxiety results to biases in information processing, intensifies self-awareness, heightened emotional reactions and polarized evaluations. Intergroup anxiety can be reduced by controlled facilitative conditions directed by a skilled third party in possession of knowledge of the full range of variables that affect intergroup dynamics.[43] Establishing facilitative conditions consists of various stages and factors. An outline of the facilitative conditions in terms of arranging a problem-solving workshop include preparation, preliminary arrangements, manipulation of the physical environment, modelling of conflict and leaving the workshop structure.

Preparation
As a preparatory measure, the "academic panel and other scholars", as Burton calls the facilitative third party, meet before starting the workshop to discuss what seems to be relevant in the particular

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[42] Paragraph cited from Fisher 1990, 181.
[43] Ibid. 181-182.

situation, what might be a comparative conflict that could be referred to, and what would be the main questions in the conflict. This is helpful in order to ensure that the greatest advantage is taken of the workshop and also enables the panel members to choose upon the most contemporary theories of conflict resolution and social behaviour. Burton points out that the effectiveness of the workshop rests on the ability of the facilitator to bring relevant knowledge and skills to the intergroup contact. Thus, preparation is essential in making the most out of the workshop.[44]

Preliminary Arrangements

When representatives of a conflict meet for the first time, there is an atmosphere of acute tension. Tension is increased by the intimate level of interaction in a problem-solving workshop – intimacy if far more intense compared to a public meeting where participants meet mostly for the reason of scoring bargaining points. The participants in a workshop have agreed to sit together and seriously discuss a solution to the conflict. Due to the tension and high degree of emotionality involved in the situation, the first meeting (as well as all meetings) has to be carefully planned. At this point, manipulation of the physical environment becomes important, not just for the sake of practicality but for the fact that people are highly sensitive to symbolism and eager to point out whatever they feel as being unfair. Physical details of the meeting space have to be planned; the round table is not just a metaphor of the negotiations, the round table offers the participants an equal physical position in the room and enables them to address the chairman or the facilitator without hindrance.[45] The principle of symmetry should be kept in mind in all arrangements of the workshop. Participants should be equal in numbers on both sides and location should be easily feasible for both sides and should also provide a degree of isolation and neutrality if possible. However, the workshop should not be too isolated so that the parties would not become detached from the reality they are from and they would not develop an illusory feeling of friendship. Identification of the participants is one demanding task too. The participants should be able to represent the adversaries and be capable and willing to analytical problem solving; the participants should also be of equal social status to facilitate the conditions for intergroup contact.[46]

Modelling of Conflict

After the preliminary arrangements have been thoroughly planned and carried out, the workshop can be started following the principles of controlled communication. Discussion is performed within the framework of problem-solving conflict resolution elaborated in this chapter: conflict

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[44] Burton 1969, 65.
[45] Ibid., 66-67.
[46] Väyrynen 1998, 54-55.

resolution is explored in a genuine inter-group discussion, in which the parties can freely innovate solutions facilitated by a third party. In this way, the parties should be able to surmount prejudices, stereotypes, fear and antagonism, and create a shared reality enabling the parties to have a common viewpoint on the problems and solutions. At the outset, the parties have an opportunity to state their positions, and to question and confront each other. As the initial tension has been somewhat reduced, there is an opportunity to gradually introduce appropriate models of the conflict at hand. Resolution models and theoretical approaches are introduced by the panel of facilitators but, at the same time, keeping in mind that the actual propositions for a solution should arise from the parties themselves and not to be induced by the facilitators. The danger is that the facilitators slip into a role of a mediator or conciliator, who become too dominant in the discussion and make suggestions that should come from the parties themselves – the model building has to arise from the discussion between the parties and not be imposed by a third party. The modelling of conflict is often the part, in which traditional mediation fails because the conventional models that mediators propose not necessarily fit into the reality of the conflict in question. Therefore, modelling should be case-specific giving the parties an opportunity to create their own models that correspond to the needs and desires of the parties – the facilitator merely injects ideas and incentives to modelling.[47]

Leaving the Workshop Structure (Re-Entry)

The objective of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is, of course, that some of it could be transferred from the workshop to the outside "real world". The ideas developed in the workshop should either spread at the grassroots level or be fed to the political process. How the workshop experiences will be transferred to political decision-making depends on the political status of the workshop participants. Ideally, the outcomes of the workshop would be automatically transferred and lasting, but this is not always the case; the structures developed in the workshop may be inapplicable to the world outside and only relevant in inter-personal understanding in the framework of the workshop. Väyrynen (2001) calls this phenomenon the question of "relevance structures". According to Väyrynen, the relevance structures, i.e. how outcomes of the workshop are transferred outside, are not merely dependent on the status of the participants. Rather, the relevancies are more likely to be transferred if the workshop deals with the "real" word and is able to find the core of the conflict in question: its roots, problems and possible solutions. If the relevancies do not produce any motivational change in people outside the workshop, the structures of the workshop are not transferred. An individual is a "carrier of social groups", whose knowledge is socially derived and who is also capable of transmitting his/her knowledge to a social group thus

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[47] Burton 1969, 83-85.

forming a common stock of knowledge. Language is the fundamental process of transmission: language is a way of "objectifying" knowledge making it part of a common stock of knowledge and, therefore, part of our everyday life. Language has an important function in changing intersubjective reality, and creating shared definitions that lie in cultural and institutional patterns.[48]

Difficulty of re-entry can also be of psychological origin. When leaving the workshop and entering the outside world, the participants may feel rejected in their own community. The participants have adopted new ideas and new ways of thinking about the conflict and the enemy and these new ideas are not necessarily welcome by the social group of the participant. New thinking patterns of the participant are confronted and tested by his/her peers, which can lead the participant to question the achievements of the workshop and even abandon what has been learnt in the workshop structure.[49] However, the ability of the participant to transfer the achievements of the workshop depends on his/her status in the society and also on how the relevance structures correspond to the reality of the conflict.

4. Culture and Conflict Resolution

I have outlined above the logic of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution mainly based on the formulation of John Burton. Burton's conflict resolution theory is founded on human motivations: universal needs, cultural values and transitory interests. Burton has also been an advocate of analytical problem-solving workshops facilitated by a panel of objective academics. I have fulfilled his theory by social psychological inputs by Ronald J. Fisher and other conflict resolution researchers such as Tarja Väyrynen. In this section, I am going to introduce some more criticism to Burton's theorising and bring forth some additional aspects to conflict resolution; namely its *cultural aspect*. First, I am going to discuss shortly some approaches to culture. Secondly, I am going to integrate culture and the creation of meaning into the conflict resolution logic relying mainly on the works of Tarja Väyrynen and Kevin Avruch.

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[48] Väyrynen 2001, 125-126.
[49] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 136.

4.1. Approaches to Culture

Avruch (2004) argues that our conceptions of culture are often quite inadequate: they fail to reflect the complexity of the world culture represents. Our conceptions of culture can also be connected to a political or ideological agenda, directly or indirectly, but oversimplification is the issue that Avruch wants to emphasise. One rather common oversimplification is exaggerating cultural coherence. Cultures are often seen as monolithic and unitary even though cultures in fact possess varying levels of coherence, which differs from culture to culture and from time to time. Coherence is maybe greatest when it is connected to specific social practices and not viewed as a connective abstraction. Coherence does not rule out every contradiction or paradox, but cultures are always in a constant flux of changes and in crossfire of inner paradoxes. Avruch claims that cultural coherence is most problematical during times of deeply rooted social conflict.[50]

Avruch points out six oversimplifications in terms of the essence of culture. These ideas are often found in the writings and practice of individuals, who borrow an "outmoded anthropological view of culture" seeking to use a cultural approach in their research; these include researchers of conflict resolution too:

1) *Culture is homogenous.* This presumes that culture exists free of internal paradoxes and variances in a way that it supposedly provides "behavioural instructions" to individuals and programmes them to act.
2) *Culture is a thing.* This idea reifies culture and makes "it" a thing that can act almost independent of human beings. An example of this is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" argument. This kind of reification creates a cognitive image that leads to oversimplification of intracultural diversity.
3) *Culture is uniformly distributed among members of a group.* The assumption of uniformity among a culture results in ignoring or dismissing any deviance of what is perceived as representing "normal" in the culture.
4) *An individual possesses but a single culture.* Culture is synonymous with group identity: individual is just, for example, an American, Israeli or Palestinian. An idea of a single culture derives from the "political culture" using the nation-state as the unit of analysis. In practice, individuals possess multiple cultures: tribal, ethnic, religious, linguistic etc.

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[50] Avruch 2004, 12-13.

Cultures always come in the plural and overlap with others creating a unique combination of cultures within one person.

5) *Culture is a custom.* Culture is structurally undifferentiated to a simple idea of "what you see is what you get" and what you see is a custom – often a rule for correct behaviour. Culture is made synonymous to tradition or customary way of behaving. Thus, culture is reduced to a simple "surface-level etiquette", which again downplays individual agency and variance within a culture.

6) *Culture is timeless.* The idea of a timeless culture is closely related to all of the above mentioned views. It suggests that culture has a changeless, everlasting quality, especially in the so-called traditional cultures. For example, we speak of the "Arab culture" as if it would be unitary throughout the whole extremely vast Arab population across the world.[51]

The notion of culture is therefore often reduced to behaviour: "knowing" a culture is simplified to being able to predict the behaviour of a certain group based on the expectations and stereotypes about the culture in question. This is especially true in intercultural conflicts, where "culture" and "ethnicity" are used synonymously. The synonymous use of these terms is not necessary intentional, but it can happen unconsciously by the parties to a conflict, which renders the conflict ever more confusing. In contrast to this view of culture, Avruch describes culture as a "conception of social life in which culture is seen to be a fundamental feature of human consciousness". Culture constructs the human reality and shapes our thinking about human behaviour: how we see a conflict for instance. Avruch speaks about culture metaphorically as a "perception-shaping lens", which signifies a way of producing and structuring meaningful action, i.e. a "grammar" of social behaviour. Thus, understanding the behaviour of the parties to a conflict means understanding the "grammar" they use to make behaviour meaningful. When a conflict has an intercultural dimension, the notions of the root causes of conflict and the local acceptable ways of resolving a conflict have to be made visible because they may drastically differ from one another. The first task of a third party intervener is, thus, to pay analytical attention to cultural dimensions of the conflict, which Avruch calls a cultural analysis of the situation.[52]

As discussed earlier, John Burton's human needs theory relies on universal needs, cultural values and transitory interests. Burton gives these motivations an objective notion and even a biological origin. He emphasises the individual actor and claims that the needs underlying a conflict are

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[51] Avruch 2004, 14-16.
[52] Avruch & Black 1993, 132-133.

universal as if born in a vacuum. Väyrynen (2001) pursues to challenge this view. She argues that human existence is socially constructed and focuses on a phenomenological analysis of the life-world. Following the works of A. Schutz, Väyrynen studies the socially constructed world in terms of cultural patterns, which consist of valuations, institutions, systems of orientation and guidance such as habits, laws, customs and fashions. The reality, needs, values and identities of individuals are constituted within these cultural patterns. Any member of a social group accepts this cultural pattern, or patterns, as an unquestioned scheme of reference to social behaviour. The cultural pattern consists of "'recipes' for interpreting and for handling things in the social world". These "recipes" guide action and tell how to behave in a certain situation. The recipes within a cultural pattern also provide solutions for typical problems. The cultural pattern constructs what is viewed as the "natural world", which consists of symbols, myths and central ideologies that justify the existence of a social group and create foundations for self-interpretation. What we think as the natural world or the reality is often taken for granted and commonly shared.[53]

Väyrynen continues her theorising on cultural patterns to in-group and out-group dynamics. When a member of an out-group enters and tries to adapt to a new group, he/she does not have the "tools" of the cultural pattern to behave "normally" and react to situations as the in-group members do. An out-group person misses the "scheme of translation" needed to translate and interpret the cultural pattern at hand. Because the out-group person does not have any tested "recipes" for behaviour, his/her knowledge about the culture is inadequate. The out-group person may be capable of interpreting social situations, but he/she lacks any tested recipes for appropriate behaviour: these recipes are acquired through trial and error and it takes a long time to learn them. This is what Väyrynen calls cultural adjustment. According to Väyrynen, cultural adjustment can be applied to the conceptualisation of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. In case of a workshop, the parties do not have to adapt to the world view or culture of the other. Instead, the parties have to find ways of interaction without one-sided adaptation through discovering a common "scheme of translation" that enables the parties to understand each other. The workshop is a mini-society, in which strangers meet and test recipes for interpretation of culture and behaviour by trial and error. The result is slow adaptation and a creation of a *shared culture*.[54]

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[53] Väyrynen 2001, 105.
[54] Ibid. 106.

4.2. Culture, the Creation of Meaning and Conflict Resolution

Culture has become of interest in international relations for two reasons: First, because negotiation is about communication and communication involves a human element, i.e. subjectivity, cognition and context. Second, international negotiation is an area where active practitioners have something to contribute and something to say. For example, the memoirs of Kissinger, Carter and Nixon are rich with references to cultural characteristics and their effects to negotiation; for example, the national traits of Chinese, Arabs, Italians etc. But the practitioners that try to minimize national character aspects and moralizing attitudes provide more fruitful insight into negotiation and culture by paying attention to relevant regional history and linkages to social science theory.[55]

There are some sceptics that try to downplay the importance of culture to negotiation. Culture is often dismissed for methodological reasons: it is seen as insufficiently operationalisable and too vague for causal modelling to predict human behaviour. Another argument for marginalising culture in negotiation is the claim that negotiation and diplomacy are universal. Sceptics of the cultural approach say that negotiation is based on human behaviour that is universal. Negotiation processes can be carried out similarly indifferent to the cultural backgrounds of the parties. Diplomacy is treated likewise. Sceptics claim that there is a common culture of diplomacy that has a strong historical foundation and solid norms, habits and procedures. Over time, diplomacy has become so well established throughout the world that it has become universal in a way that the diplomatic rules and processes can be referred to no matter which culture the parties represent.[56]

Despite of the scepticism, culture has found its way to international relations because academics and practitioners have encountered the problem of simplifying cultural characteristics and human behaviour. Rather than focusing on cultural typifications in terms of negotiation, contemporary conflict resolution pays attention to the *cultural interpretation of meaning* and its ramifications to negotiation.

Avruch and Black (1993) argue that a conflict may be a result of different interpretations of meanings of the same events. Differing interpretations can occur in terms of the initial noncomprehension and/or combined with misapprehension. However, conflicts are quite rarely *caused* by culture *per se*, but culture may have a crucial role in resolving them. Avruch and Black

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[55] Avruch 2004, 40-41.
[56] Ibid. 42-45.

point out that it is "always the case that culture molds the ways in which the parties understand what the conflict is about, how to carry it through, and what the possible resolutions look like". This claim is valid even though not all conflicts are caused by cultural differences, noncomprehension or misapprehension. Especially deep rooted conflicts or protracted conflict can not be simply reduced to a "failure to communicate".[57] As Avruch and Black say, culture shapes our thinking and forms a foundation for our conception of reality. In a conflict situation, the reality of an individual is shattered, which Väyrynen calls the "breakdown of shared reality".[58] The breakdown of shared reality and *finding* one is the core of the cultural aspect in conflict resolution.

4.2.1. Breakdown of Shared Reality

According to Väyrynen (2001), "conflicts are characterised by a breakdown of shared reality". An individual constitutes his/her reality through typifications that are produced and distributed in social interaction. Fundamentally, typifications are interpretations of the world and its phenomena around us. Therefore, "a common reality is defined through shared typifications". If shared typifications are denied, challenged or if they completely break down, the structure of shared reality collapses. The breakdown is an anomie in a society, which may turn into a conflict. The result is that conflict is, after all, culturally constructed. Conflict may occur between in-group members or in an in-group and out-group context. Examples of the breakdown of shared culture are numerous in internal conflicts, but the world has witnessed many colliding typifications in an intercultural setting too.[59]

Väyrynen aptly says that the "location of conflict is over definitions of reality". Conflict is about the power to impose one's definition of reality upon the other. In other words, conflict is about whose description of reality is taken seriously and who can decide which reality will be referred and acted upon. Thus, structural power becomes one of the core questions in conflict analysis. In Väyrynen's words, "power should be considered as an attribute of discourse and manifest in the production and contestation of consensus". In conflict resolution it is, therefore, essential to discuss and possibly reveal the machinery behind dominant definitions of reality.[60]

In a breakdown of shared reality, the notion of relevance systems becomes of importance again. Relevance systems form a precondition for communication and a basis for typifications. Relevance

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[57] Avruch & Black 1993, 138.
[58] E.g. Väyrynen 2001, 117.
[59] Väyrynen 2001, 117-118.
[60] Ibid. 118.

systems may 1) unite the social group, 2) polarise the group, 3) or even construct the *raison d'être* for the group in question. Examples of these include national loyalties, team spirit, religious beliefs, tribal and ethnic grievances and so on. In an individual, the relevance systems are characterised by an urge to pass on the attitudes and outlooks of the group to other group members. A social group characterised by its unique relevance system may even become antagonistic towards other groups, a phenomenon which is rooted in typifications in relation to the other group. In terms of conflict resolution it is necessary to deal with typifications by *harmonising relevance systems and creating shared typifications*. This kind of approach to conflict resolution assumes that relevance systems and typifications of the parties need to be changed and new interpretations of the reality found in order to find a common ground for cooperation. A new reality is negotiated in an intercultural process.[61]

4.2.2. Finding a Shared Reality in a Problem-Solving Workshop

In order to find a shared reality, the parties to a conflict need to encounter each other face-to-face and attempt to change their interpretative and motivational relevance structures. The problem-solving workshop is, therefore, "an attempt to find a shared reality between the parties in conflict for the purposes at hand without causing a further breakdown of 'sociality' and cooperation". The workshop mainly encompasses the interpretative schemes of the participants by giving them an opportunity to negotiate a shared reality. Since negotiation equals communication, the finding of a common language facilitates the negotiation process.[62]

As said, the problem-solving workshop offers a venue for mutual adaptation and an opportunity to reduce mutual misperceptions and prejudices. However, it should be kept in mind that a workshop can not deal with the whole conflict but it has a situational nature. A workshop can capture a sector of the conflict giving the participants a chance to define the agenda themselves. Also, it is premature to claim that a face-to-face encounter in a workshop automatically reduces hostilities and provides for changes in typification. Also, a thematic understanding of some particular issues does not necessarily bring forth harmonisation of other, or all, relevance structures. Most importantly, an increased interpersonal understanding does not necessarily change the way the participants perceive

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[61] Väyrynen 2001, 119-120.
[62] Ibid. 121.

the conflict. Despite this precaution, problem-solving workshop conflict resolution can produce harmonisation of thematic relevancies and enriched typifications.[63]

A problem-solving workshop can be based on two foundations. First, the parties may acknowledge a shared need for conflict resolution and seek for negotiations. In this case, their relevance structures already have some similarities: they both realise the existence of a conflict and see it as a problem to be solved. This relevance structure facilitates the harmonisation of other relevancies as well. Second, the workshop can have a functionalist structure. The parties can assemble to discuss some practical matters relevant to both of them and try to find functional solutions. A uniting functional issue may be, for example, economy, environment, tourism and so forth. Thus, the parties agree on *what* but may disagree on *why*. However, even in a functional workshop, the parties need to have some degree of equal relevancies before problem-solving attempts can be made.[64]

The harmonisation of relevancies does not need to rely entirely on similarities. Väyrynen claims that "the parties must go 'beyond similarities' and learn 'how to deal with difference' instead of trusting in abstract similarity". Relying on these "abstract similarities" is what the human needs theory is about: it assumes that all people are essentially the same and share similar drives at an individual and social level. Instead, problem-solving workshop conflict resolution aims at learning to live with differences and cope with other groups in an intercultural environment. Therefore, conflict resolution can not be reduced to substituting differences by the conception of universal human needs.[65]

However, there are some similarities that need to be found and encouraged. Some degree of similarity of languages or *language games* is required for effective communication in order for the resolution process to be successful. Väyrynen argues that a typificatory schema is given in a language and "since the relationship between language and typification is mutual, a shared language game enforces shared typifications founded on equal relevancies." That is to say, that the language of the negotiation does not need to be the same, but the ways of speaking, creating meanings and attributing things need to be somewhat similar to create understanding between the parties. Nonetheless, the role of the native tongue should not be undermined when it comes to finding a common language. Participants should be able to take part in the discussion in their native language in order for being able to understand and participate in the language games. A dominant language,

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[63] Väyrynen 2001, 120-121.
[64] Väyrynen 2001, 122.
[65] Ibid. 123.

English for example, may be out of question in many cases since it discriminates the participants not fluent in English and, thus, not able to understand language games in it.[66] What Väyrynen does not question here, is the accuracy of translation: if the parties need to communicate in their native tongue, translation should be faultless and extremely accurate so that the parties can convey their messages to each other accurately. Translation should also be able to communicate language-specific and culture-specific meanings and metaphors in a way that is understandable to the other side. The task of translation is, therefore, very demanding and may even harm the negotiation process.

Väyrynen argues that human behaviour can not be rational and instrumentally utilitarian. All rationalities are historically and culturally constituted and arise from traditions, not from a purely rational and faultlessly calculating human mind. Therefore, Väyrynen claims that discursive rationality is fundamental in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. Discursive rationality prevents the breakdown of "sociality" and enables the participants to find a common language game. Because the problem-solving workshop is a venue for cultural adaptation, conflict resolution is based on "discursive possibilities". The participants to a workshop can negotiate a common rationality in discursive practices and create a consensus across cultural and interpretative differences; this consensus does not arise from instrumental rationality. Väyrynen says that understanding the cultural conception of the other side and finding a shared language game can be achieved through discursive designs. This type of intersubjective search for discursive rationality promotes "sociality" and cooperation because it requires harmonisation of relevance structures between the parties. Rationality produced in the workshop does not need to be universal in any way. Similarly to the workshop itself, the rationality discussed in the workshop is situational and relevant to the participants only. This type of rationality is limited to the situation and problems at hand and leads to a consensus that is negotiated between the parties in a conflict in that particular workshop. The consensus is not universal either, but it originates from the issues that are discussed.[67]

5. Problem-Solving Workshop Conflict Resolution and Emotion

Above, I have introduced the cultural aspect to conflict resolution in a problem-solving workshop context relying mainly on Tarja Väyrynen's and also some of Kevin Avruch's theorising. Adding to this, I would also like to take a small leap to social psychology and reflect the meaning of *emotions*

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[66] Ibid. 122-123.
[67] Väyrynen 2001, 124-125.

to problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. As I talked to the participants of the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue project, they all mentioned one thing at the outset: the project was emotionally very challenging and mentally hard, especially in the beginning. Therefore, I would like to shortly explore the meaning of emotion in conflict resolution.

5.1. Emotions in Interpersonal Encounters

Problem-solving workshop encounters are potentially characterised by harsh attitudes, such as "the only language those people understand comes out of the barrel of a gun" or "we will not negotiate with terrorists". Harsh attitudes are understandable because conflicts are usually harsh: protracted conflicts permeate all societal levels, people are forced to live in the middle of violence and fear, and many people lose their family, friends or neighbours in battle. In a protracted and long-lasting conflict, such as the Middle East conflict, no member of the society is left unaffected by the conflict; everyone has experienced the horrors of the conflict one way or another. People have suffered injuries, losses of loved ones or, at least, know someone who has died or been injured in hostilities. In a region such as Israel and the Palestinian territories, the parties to a conflict live geographically and socially close to each other, they even share the some religious holy sites. Therefore, it is very difficult to escape the conflict – physically or mentally. Harsh attitudes are adopted for emotional and strategic reasons, which is something that has to be taken into account in a workshop. Harsh attitudes may serve as a strategy to show the counterpart some determination and to assert that the party is not willing to compromise. Most importantly, harsh attitudes derive from emotional motives. What we need to bear in mind, is that a problem-solving conflict resolution workshop is not a negotiation. It is not public and not necessarily related to any political activity at all. Instead, it is a "commitment to analysis and research".[68]

The definition of Mitchell and Banks (1996) of the problem-solving conflict resolution workshop as a "commitment to analysis and research"[69] makes me think about the interpersonal dimension of the workshop. The workshop is not necessarily about politics, political parties, social groups or representatives of cultures – it can as well be an encounter between individuals who are concerned with their own well-being, interests, hopes and fears. Interpersonal encounters operate on an individual and emotional level. Therefore, the workshop has to respect the emotions of its

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[68] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 65.
[69] Ibid.

participants and the facilitators need to be attentive to appreciate the variety of emotions, alleviate negative emotions and encourage positive ones.

Especially the first stage of the workshop is potentially volatile due to emotive factors. As the parties meet for the first time, the participants have a need to "tell their story", to make the other party aware of what they have experienced, what atrocities they have been forced to witness and what kind of losses they have lived in their lives. This stage is very difficult, but extremely necessary: the participants need to be allowed to communicate their emotions and share their stories. As the stories have been told at the outset, the participants feel satisfied and ready to move on to analysing the conflict.[70]

In a protracted conflict, such as the Israeli-Palestinian one, it is fundamental to treat the conflict on a societal as well as individual level. Herbert C. Kelman, known for his extensive studies of unofficial conflict resolution in the Middle East, argues that social psychological factors are essential in conflict resolution[71]. Intra- and intersocietal processes need to be taken into account in order to disclose the dynamics of public opinion of both sides. Revealing the dynamics of intra- and inter-societal processes is required for consensus building and coalition forming. This is especially important with regard to images of the enemy that are very resistant in terms of how the opposite side is perceived. Images often comprise of demonic enemy images and virtuous self-images, which lead to the formation of mirror images, which was discussed in chapter 3.3. Mirror images are dangerous in the way they contribute to the escalation of the conflict and further increase the resistance to change. Thus, a wider array of approaches needs to be adopted to conflict resolution; the traditional or "typical" approaches to conflict relationships are not sufficient. Kelman suggests that a key element in resolving an international conflict is to "create opportunities for mutual influence by way of responsiveness to each other's needs". Responsiveness to needs can be promoted by "mutual reassurance", which involves encouraging each other to reduce mutual fears by negotiating seriously. A problem-solving workshop, according to Kelman, is a most suitable venue for mutual reassurance.[72]

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[70] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 104.
[71] Kelman 1998, 6.
[72] Ibid., 9-11.

5.2. Relational Empathy

Broome (1993) argues that the existence of difference is one fundamental characteristic in interpersonal conflicts. For understanding and managing differences, Broome proposes a concept of relational empathy, which deals with the communicators' attempts to see the perspective of the other person. Empathy as being defined as "*accuracy* in predicting another's internal state", "*emotional identification* with another individual", "process of *cognitive role-taking*" and "*communicating a sense of understanding* to another" is a relevant concept in a conflict resolution context. However, there has been little attempt to incorporate empathy into the research of conflict resolution.[73]

Similarly to Väyrynen's view about conflict resolution as harmonising relevance structures in an intercultural context and, thus, creating a shared reality, Broome also talks about the creation of *shared meaning* through interpersonal encounter. Relational empathy promotes understanding in interpersonal encounters and goes beyond individual psychology. Understanding is viewed as a dynamic process and a "tensional event", which is achieved through relational empathy and results to the construction of shared meanings. Understanding is affected by the "context, cognitive and affective characteristics of the perceiver, the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived, and developmental and cultural factors". Broome points out that we are never fully able to understand the lived experiences of other human beings including emotions, which makes interpersonal communication an important factor in promoting understanding in a conflict. Understanding is not something that does or does not occur, an "all-or-nothing phenomenon". Instead, we understand the world through successive approximations: the approximations for understanding are constructed, tested, maintained or reformulated and then again retested. Understanding is an intersubjective process – it is developed in a discourse between the participants. Thus, Broome defines empathy as "part of an ongoing, corrective process that is dynamic and circular [and] reflects the interdependence of the participants and the transactional nature of communication". Therefore, relational empathy enables the parties to move towards varying degrees of understanding.[74]

Broome asserts that empathy is not purely a cognitive or emotional activity, but a combination of the two: empathy requires the concurrent usage of the areas of brain that allow reasoning and

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[73] Broome 1993, 97-98.
[74] Ibid., 98-100.

emotion. As actors seek to understand each other, they construct an affective and cognitive assimilation of the other's values, meanings, symbols and intentions. A degree of understanding is achieved as the actors start becoming aware of each other's world- and self-view, which includes feelings and emotions too.[75]

In terms of conflict resolution, and the problem-solving workshop approach too, the facilitators need to pay a lot of attention to the communication process that influences the development of understanding. Since understanding is, according to Broome, based on relational empathy, emotive factors should also be taken into account in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. Interpersonal encounters lead to the development of understanding and meanings that the actors share: the actors develop a "third culture" through communication with each other. Therefore, Broome's argument about the third culture is reminiscent of Väyrynen's theorising, but it underlines the importance of interpersonal relational empathy instead of harmonised relevance structures in an intercultural setting. Broome says that "the emergence of this third culture is the essence of relational empathy and is essential for successful conflict resolution".[76]

5.3. Interactive Problem-Solving and Related Studies

Herbert C. Kelman and his colleagues have applied a problem-solving workshop conflict resolution method in the Middle East between 1979 and 1990. The method is based on Burton's model and it is academically conducted. Kelman's approach is anchored in social psychology and called "interactive problem-solving". These workshops have brought together influential Israelis and Palestinians for direct communication in a controlled environment. The workshops follow the Burtonian setting and their purpose is to promote "interaction of a special kind", i.e. honest communication and seeking analytical solutions to the conflict. Additionally, the workshops aim at an elevated level of understanding the other side with its fears, interests, concerns, constraints, and priorities. The participants of the workshop are "unofficial" parties to the conflict, but the ultimate goal is to transfer the new insights and ideas to the official diplomatic process and internal decision making of both sides. This approach follows the idea of second track diplomacy.[77]

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[75] Ibid., 101.
[76] Broome 1993, 103-104.
[77] Kelman 1999, 596.

From 1979 until 1990, Kelman and his colleagues applied a one-shot problem-solving workshop method on an annual basis. In 1990, Kelman together with Nadim N. Rouhana started a continuing workshop amongst high-ranking Palestinian and Israeli officials. This workshop process ended in 1993. In 1994, Kelman and Rouhana began the Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations, which also consisted of continuing workshops. The workshops have been based on the idea of interactive problem-solving that is guided by human need theories and Burton's problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model. The studies and workshops of Kelman and Rouhana represent a quite considerable social psychological contribution to the unofficial conflict resolution in Middle East.[78]

Kelman has conducted interactive problem-solving workshops also in Cyprus and studied protracted conflicts in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Rwanda-Burundi, the former Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union. His focus has been, however, on the Middle East conflict. The studies and workshops have been quite strongly tied to the Burtonian workshop model. The participants have often been politically influential members of their communities and the workshops have occurred under academic auspices. The workshops have been facilitated by a panel of scholars: social scientists that are professional with international conflict, group processes, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[79] The difference between Kelman's and Rouhana's studies and this particular study at hand is that Kelman and Rouhana draw on Burton's model of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution, whereas the case of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme does not represent a Burtonian method. By introducing the works of Kelman and Rouhana, I wanted to illustrate how social psychological approaches to conflict resolution have been applied in the field. Moreover, I wanted to demonstrate how the Burtonian method has been interpreted and modified in time: Kelman and Rouhana, for example, have included a notable social psychological aspect to problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. Therefore, it is justified *both* to use Burton's model as a framework (or background) in this study *and* to combine it with culture and social psychological aspects (emotions) too.

6. Research Setting

Most of the research material was obtained by the courtesy of the General Director of Friendship Village, some by the Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace. This material includes the

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[78] Rouhana & Bar-Tal 1998, 768.
[79] Kelman 1997, 214.

participant lists of the programme and eight reports concerning the programme (project summaries, management reports, interim reports, final reports, and financial reports). In addition, Friendship Village delivered me a project evaluation 2005-2006 conducted by an independent statistician and a feedback survey concerning the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008, as well as some verbal evaluations by the project graduates. The feedback surveys were conducted by a structured quantitative method supplemented by verbal qualitative comments. All reports and other documents are in English and the participant evaluations were translated from Hebrew or Arabic by YPPD organisers.[80]

The other part of the research material consists of interviews of the YPPD participants. I attended a Young Politicians Peace Dialogue meeting on October 25th 2008 in Beit Jalla, West Bank and this meeting was a seminar for all YPPD graduates from all three rounds. I had an open interview with five YPPD graduates; two Israelis, two Palestinians and one Israeli Arab. Two of the interviewees were female and three were male. These interviews were conducted on behalf of the Embassy of Finland where I was working at that time. Embassy of Finland funded the YPPD 2008 round and the purpose of the interviews, in the first place, was to monitor the "success" of the programme and evaluate the prospects for continuing financing the programme. A report based on the interviews was written by me for the Embassy.

The third part of the research material consists of email interviews with the YPPD participants. I sent an email inquiry to 67 YPPD participants asking them to write about their experiences of the conflict in relation to the YPPD programme. I was looking for narrative research material and asked the recipients to write freely about the following themes:

1) How do you see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
2) Is it possible to resolve the conflict? If so, how? What do you see after the conflict?
3) How do you see your own contribution to the conflict and its resolution? Do you think that an individual can make a difference? How do you think that the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue helped in trying to make peace? Please reflect your own role in the peace process in relation to Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme.

The recipients of this inquiry were asked to write freely and reflect on their own ideas. They were asked to write in English, but responding in Hebrew or Arabic was also an option if English was not

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[80]All quotations are, here as well as elsewhere, translated from Hebrew or Arabic to English by YPPD organisers.

fluent enough. Despite of various attempts and detailed instructions, only three out of 67 replied to this inquiry, most of them very briefly. All of the respondents were Israeli; one female and two males. The small amount of responses surprised me. One explanation for this could relate to cultural differences: Israelis and Palestinians seem to prefer a personal contact to "faceless" email inquiries, many of them asked for e.g. a phone interview. In addition, it seems that qualitative research is much less valued than quantitative in Middle East – this was my personal impression. It seems that the recipients of my inquiry did not really grasp the idea of narrative research and the representatives of the organisations in questions did not seem to value qualitative research very highly.

This research studies the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme in 2005-2008. There has been an YPPD round in 2009-2010 as well. This round is, however, not included in the research, since all my data, interviews and other encounters with the participants and organisers have happened before the 2009-2010 round. However, the 2009-2010 round was conducted similarly to the other rounds, so I would claim that my analysis applies to it as well.

7. Background on the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue Project

Long-lasting violence and hostility between Israelis and Palestinians has lead to a situation where honest dialogue between the parties has become almost nonexistent at the grassroots level. Therefore, and despite of this, two non-partisan organisations wanted to create a program, in which the parties would be able to have a genuine dialogue in terms of the conflict, its history and the interests of both sides. Two organisations, the Israeli *Friendship Village*[81] and the *Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace* (formerly Center of Citizenship and Democratic Transformation), developed a program called *Young Politicians Peace Dialogue*[82], in which young Israeli and Palestinian participants take part in a series of bi-national and uni-national encounters, lectures, discussions, study tours and meetings that the organisations call "dynamic workshops".

Friendship Village is a registered, non-profit organisation. It is not affiliated with the government or any Israeli political party. The organisation was established in 1996 as an international centre for educating young people to live in a multi-cultural environment. The Friendship Village aims at "intercultural understanding, respectful coexistence and intercultural cooperation based on real

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[81] see: http://www.friendshipvillage.homestead.com
[82] In 2005-2006, the programme was called Talk Peace – Make Peace.

equality, tolerance, democracy and peace". The organisation focuses on finding a common ground for people of different culture and ethnicity and it sees that education for peace and democracy is a "logical conclusion of multiculturalism". The main activity of Friendship Village is education of young Jews and Arabs in Israel through workshops and seminars.[83]

Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace (also known as Center of Citizenship and Democratic Transformation) was founded to support the People's Campaign for Peace and Democracy, which is a non-partisan initiative to mobilize grassroots support for the two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; in other words, the campaign aims at establishing a Palestinian grassroots peace camp. The campaign was established in 2003 and it has since focused on "convincing people of their power to shape their destiny through non-violent means by soliciting their support for a vision of Peace". The campaign is a model democratic organisation that reaches out to communities across West Bank and Gaza holding town hall meetings, conferences and other grassroots activities to encourage local people to take an active role in developing the Palestinian peace camp. The campaign pays special attention to the underrepresented parts of the Palestinian society, women in particular.[84]

Young Politicians Peace Dialogue gathers young Israeli, Palestinian and Israeli Arab people to discuss the conflict, its history and background, interests of the two parties and the suspicions and prejudices that the participants might have of each other. The participants of the project also study and learn conflict resolution skills and methods. In addition to bi-national meetings and workshops, the participants hold uni-national meetings in an effort to reflect on their *own* identity. The participants, age 20-35, are all active in politics and/or civil society. The underlying idea behind the program is to influence these *future* decision-makers by affecting their perceptions of the conflict and the "enemy" and by teaching them peaceful means to cope with conflict situations. All in all, the project has two purposes:

1) To train young Palestinian and Israeli political community leaders, who will possibly be in a position of political power in the future, to build open relationships and trust between the parties through learning about each other on the personal, cultural, social and political levels.

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[83] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 7.
[84] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 7.

2) To introduce the participants, who will possibly be negotiating the conflict in the near future, some methods of negotiation and peaceful conflict management.[85]

According to the organisers of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue, one major obstacle for establishing peace is mutual suspicion and mistrust: suspicion has to be overcome before a peace agreement can be accepted. Old norms, values and habits have to be changed and new ones formed. Friendship Village and the Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace assert that sustainable peace can not be founded without building a "culture of peace". Therefore, the change has to begin with the young generation and its young leadership in particular.[86] The organisers of YPPD also maintain that the programme is unique particularly in its orientation to future. It focuses on young social and political leaders that have an opportunity to become higher level decision makers and, therefore, they will have an influence on social and political processes in the future. The participants of YPPD are called *agents for change*: they are in the position to become future decision makers and even peace makers.[87] Altogether, there have been five rounds of YPPD between 2005 and 2010.

8. Description of a Typical Young Politicians Peace Dialogue Round

8.1. Framework and schedule

Friendship Village and the Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace believe that lasting results can be achieved only through a continuous educational process, in which both cognitive and emotional components are taken into account. Education should be parallel on both levels – cognitive and emotional – in order to get positive outcomes. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, holding continuous meetings is quite challenging. Despite living rather close to each other, the participants have difficulty in holding joint meetings. It is sometimes close to impossible for Palestinians to travel to Israeli territory and there are also travel restrictions for Israelis too; they are prohibited by law to enter certain areas of the Palestinian territories. Also, holding regular meetings in a neighbouring country is too expensive. Therefore, Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme has developed a composed approach: they hold joint workshops outside the Israeli and

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[85] Ibid, 2-3.
[86] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 2-3.
[87] Talk Peace – Make Peace (2005-2006) Project Evaluation, 1.

Palestinian territories in the beginning and the end of the project and hold single identity (uni-national) meetings in between.[88]

The educational methods of the programme are various and include e.g. cross-community and single identity workshops, lectures by experts, discussion working groups, evaluation groups and open discussion in plenary. Shortly, the schedule of the programme is as follows:

1) Long weekend (three days) meeting in Cyprus or Turkey, where it is cheapest to travel for Palestinians and Israelis. The purpose of this meeting is to become acquainted to one another, outline expectations of the project, present the programme and go through such themes as culture, stereotypes, self determination, the political situation, fear of peace, and interests of both sides.

2) Three monthly uni-national sessions, in which each side runs a parallel programme. That is to say, three Israeli and three Palestinian meetings with the same contents, for example getting familiar with the society and history of the "other side".

3) Three bi-national day-long sessions, in which the participants jointly consider such themes as impact of the occupation and violence, and narratives of the two nations. They also meet Israeli and Palestinian public figures.

4) In the end of the programme, long weekend (three days) meeting is held in Turkey or Cyprus. During this meeting, the participants learn basic methods of negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution, study violent conflicts of other countries and dwell upon possible ways to continue cooperation.

The whole programme with staff preparations takes ten months.[89]

8.2. Participants

The number of YPPD participants is 24 all together, aged between 20 and 35. All the participants are actively involved either in a political organisation or in their community. Some of them are already in a position of a middle level political or community decision making.[90] 10 of the participants are Israeli, 10 Palestinian and 4 Israeli Arabs. The Israeli group consists of centre-right, centre and left party representatives as well as community and socio-political leaders of some

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[88] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 3.
[89] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 3-4.
[90] Ibid., 4.

NGOs that the organisers consider "promising". All of the Israeli participants have an academic degree. The representatives of different political parties hold such titles as parliamentarian advisor, advisor in the Prime Minister's office, head of local party group, head of university student association, community activist and so on. The Palestinian group is entirely made of young Fatah party members, such as party activists, university association activists and security officers. They are highly educated and some of them have academic degrees. The Palestinians come from East Jerusalem or the rest of the West Bank; Gaza has not been represented in the programme.[91] Having participants from Gaza would be practically impossible and make the programme dysfunctional due to the difficult political situation under Hamas leadership in Gaza and the severe travel restrictions imposed upon Gazans by the Israeli government. In other words, it would be extremely difficult for Gazans to attend YPPD meetings outside Gaza and, similarly, it would be impossible and dangerous for e.g. Israelis to enter Gaza for a meeting.

The role of Israeli Arabs is somewhat problematic in the programme. Israeli Arabs live in Israel and have Israeli citizenship, but they see themselves as part of the Palestinian people. Therefore, having 10 Israeli participants, 10 Palestinians and 4 Israeli Arabs means, in practice, that there would be 14 Palestinians against 10 Israelis. The composition of each group is very important because of various uni-national meetings and the general sense of "fairness" in participation. The situation of the Israeli Arabs is perhaps the most complicated in the conflict, because of their double identity: they live in Israel but consider themselves, at least partly, as a part of the Palestinian people. Thus, they have a double role as being partly Palestinian and partly Israeli. In this sense, they have a possibility to bridge the gap between the Israeli and Palestinian people, because they know both cultures. The organisers of YPPD wanted, therefore, to emphasise the importance of including the Israeli Arabs in the programme due to their complex position in the conflict. In order to even up the numbers in participation, the Palestinian partners accepted to include two of the Israeli Arabs to the Israeli group, which made the groups equal in size and both of the groups had two Israeli Arab representatives.[92]

According to Tarja Väyrynen, the *principle of symmetry* is very important in conflict resolution[93]. In choosing the participants, Friendship Village and Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace have attempted to follow this principle. The number of participants on each side is carefully planned

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[91] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 1-2; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Israeli and Palestinian participants, 5.
[92] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 1; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Interim Report, 1.
[93] Väyrynen 1998, 54-55

and the participants represent the different parties in the conflict: Palestinians, Israelis and the Israeli Arabs in between. Selecting the participants is well reasoned and the organisations have attempted to choose participants of equal social status and age. Furthermore, as Väyrynen asserts, the participants should be capable and willing to analytical problem-solving[94]. The capability to analytical thinking and willingness to problem-solving is achieved through the active role that the YPPD participants have taken in their community. They have chosen to influence political and societal matters by working in political parties or NGOs and, therefore, they certainly seem to have willingness to make a difference and get actively involved in problem solving.

However, the YPPD programme has faced some difficulty in identifying participants of equal social status and age. In the Final Report of YPPD 2008, the organisers point out that the gaps of age and status between the participants have to be taken into account more carefully in the future. Overall, the Palestinian participants were younger and of "lower status" than the Israelis were. "Lower status" is not defined in the report, but it most likely refers to lower education, lower position in the organisation they represent (or work with) and lower social class. Especially lower age and lower education are factors that easily produce a feeling of inferiority in problem solving conflict resolution. Also, as Ronald J. Fisher maintains, *equal status contact* is very important in intergroup contact, because the minority group members often tend to feel less than equal. In addition, higher status of the minority group can also be facilitative and improve interaction between the groups.[95] In this case, the Palestinians can be seen as a minority group or, at least, the "underdog" in terms of the conflict. According to Fisher, the *characteristics of individual participants* are of importance too. Participants should have moderate to high competence and mild to moderate prejudice levels. The minority group members should be competent enough to confront a majority stereotype of incompetence while majority group members should be less intense in their prejudice to open enough and take in new experience, which leads to positive attitude change. Equal status contact and characteristics of individual participants are part of what Fisher calls the *contact hypothesis*. Equal status contact and individual characteristics are facilitative conditions that may lead to positive outcomes in conflict resolution.[96]

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Fisher 1990, 181.
[96] Ibid.

8.3. Location

As both Väyrynen and Burton argue, the physical location and details of a problem-solving workshop need to be well planned in accordance with the principle of symmetry[97]. With the YPPD programme the principle of symmetry in terms of location has been solved by holding uni-national (also called single-identity) meetings. For practical reasons, the Palestinians and Israelis can not meet regularly, because some of the Palestinians have difficulty in travelling to Israeli territory and vice versa. Thus, the parties gather in a three day long seminar in the beginning and the end of the programme and hold uni-national meetings in locations feasible to them. That is to say, Palestinians meet in the West Bank and Israelis in Israel between the seminars. Sometimes, bi-national meetings and, for example, joint study tours are also held between the seminars. The location for bi-national meetings can be challenging: some participants can not arrive to the location and some locations are not quite suitable for seminars and meetings. The weekend long seminars are held in Turkey or Cyprus, which are the most easily feasible foreign countries for all parties and the cheapest ones to travel to. As outlined by e.g. Väyrynen, Turkey and Cyprus provide neutral ground for the parties to engage to problem-solving. Abroad, the parties can also have a degree of isolation and fully concentrate on resolving the issues at hand without having a feeling of being pressured by your own / your rivals' environment. However, as Väyrynen asserts, the location should not be too isolated in a way that the participants would get detached from the reality and develop an illusory feeling of friendship[98]. In the context of YPPD, detachment from the reality and illusion of friendship do not seem to develop very easily. The time spent abroad is quite short and the programme is so intense that the participants are able to maintain their sense of reality.[99]

8.4. Facilitators and Staff

Both Friendship Village and Palestinian Institute for Democracy & Peace bring two professional facilitators and one translator to the programme, i.e. four professional facilitators and two translators are hired for Young Politicians Peace Dialogue. The seminars and meetings are planned by the facilitators and one educational director and one organizational director from each side. Translators are needed because the participants are given the opportunity to communicate in their

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[97] Väyrynen 1998, 54-55.
[98] Väyrynen 1998, 54-55.
[99] E.g. Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Interim Report.

native languages, which are Arabic and Hebrew.[100] YPPD reports do not say what actually is the profession, education and training of the facilitators, what makes them professional and what references they have. However, they are not *academic researchers* as Burton requires in his problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model. Burton refers to the facilitator as a "panel of academics" that has a role of a scientific observer but also has an active role in improving interaction and communication in the workshop. The panel of academics should consist of political and social scientists that have extensively studied conflict resolution both theoretically and in practice. The facilitator should provide theoretical knowledge and support the creation of innovative solutions within and between the parties.[101] The facilitator should take a neutral position in terms of the conflict and its parties and, at the same time, screen out "false" assumptions and implications[102]. Väyrynen, on the other hand, rejects Burton's view of the facilitator as on objective filter. According to Väyrynen, the facilitator does not possess superior knowledge on human behaviour but, instead, has acquired skills in conflict resolution, which render him/her a qualified, ethical and educated facilitator. The facilitator has, therefore, acquired knowledge and skills in human behaviour and ethical comportment and learned through his or her own experience. However, Väyrynen also maintains an academic aspect to the role of the facilitator. She says that the position of the facilitator arises from ethicality, participant observation and theorising. Theorising refers to an academic viewpoint to facilitation, but Väyrynen does not directly claim, that a problem-solving workshop should entirely be run by academic researchers.[103]

Young Politicians Peace Dialogue is not entirely Burtonian, especially when it comes to the facilitators and the "academic framework" that Burton strongly emphasises. In this sense, the programme is probably more closely related to Tarja Väyrynen's depiction of the problem-solving workshop setting. YPPD is organised by professionals: educational and organizational directors of the two organisations, and hired professional facilitators and translators. The programme is not academic in the sense of being organised by academic researchers, but the organisers are skilled and educated and have acquired professional skills in conflict resolution through their daily work in various projects concerning peace education in Israel and Palestine. The project is thoroughly planned and prepared in joint preparation seminars of the two organisations, facilitators and translators. Also, the facilitators and staff hold meetings throughout the programme to solve professional problems and personal frictions that may arise during the process. Acknowledging the

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[100] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 1-2, Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Interim Report, 1-2.
[101] Burton 1990, 204-205; Burton 1969, 61-62.
[102] Burton 1990, 204-205.
[103] Väyrynen 2001, 127-129.

fact that professional problems and friction exist is a reminder of the programme being run by *human beings*. Especially Burton's account of the problem-solving workshop is almost overly scientific and clinical. The workshop does not consist of rational, scientific and objective machines, but of human individuals with their personal worldviews, interests, weaknesses, and flaws. Burton's view of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution is an "ideal case", but not quite likely a realistic depiction of how a workshop may turn out in the real world.

The Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, for example, reveals what kind of problems may easily arise in term of facilitation. In YPPD 2008, the process was distracted by a facilitator that was very intelligent but also very "inhibited" as a person, which made him less and less connected to the process and his group. In addition, (s)he showed a quite harsh attitude towards the Israeli participants, which made the Israelis retreat to defensive positions. Later, his attitude became very one-sided and biased, which destroyed the prevailing good atmosphere. The report reveals that three out of four of the facilitators had very pro-Palestinian attitudes, which they could not fully conceal. The organisers had overestimated their professional skills even though the facilitators were all very professional in Israeli-Palestinian encounters. By professional, the YPPD organisers mean "objective, non-emotional management of the emotional process that the participants were carried through". Mostly the facilitators behaved professionally and correctly, but even a one careless sentence can damage the process by causing defensive reactions.[104] The question remains, is it even possible to take a completely non-emotional, unbiased and objective stance to the process? According to Burton, a professional academic facilitator would be able to eliminate or put aside all subjectivity and bias in his or her mind[105]. But, for example, the social constructivists assert that it is impossible to separate the research object from the researcher, i.e. the subject and the object have an influence on each other and, therefore, it is impossible to achieve neutrality or objectivity. A human mind can not observe reality fully objectively, as if outside the reality. Instead, a human being is always *in* the reality, making and moulding it in intersubjective practices. Therefore, it is impossible to attain objectivity. However, it is desirable for a facilitator to try to conceal his/her biased attitudes and, thus, help maintain a constructive and positive atmosphere in the workshop. Professionalism, in this context, probably means that one is able to act *intuitively* correctly (as Väyrynen puts it) through acquisition of problem-solving workshop resolution skills over time[106].

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[104] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 5-6.
[105] Burton 1990, 204-205.
[106] Väyrynen 2001, 127-129.

8.5. Contents of YPPD Seminars and Workshops

After choosing the participants and holding preparatory staff meetings, the YPPD process starts with a three day long seminar outside of Israeli and Palestinian territories (i.e. Cyprus or Turkey). The seminar is composed of seven bi-national and two single-identity units, each 1,5 hours long. The first workshop is bi-national and begins with getting familiar with the other side, that is to say, the first conflict group encounter is meant to coordinate expectations, clarify identities, and deal with stereotypes and prejudices. Later on, the workshop begins to touch some political issues. The general purpose of the first meeting is to create a positive starting point for upcoming discussions. Due to the quite emotional content of the workshops, bi-national workshops are followed by single-identity sessions, in which the facilitators lead discussions on difficulties and misunderstandings that may have occurred in the bi-national meetings. The role of the facilitator is to try to explain why the other group behaves in a certain way and also try to alleviate some negative feelings that may have risen in the bi-national workshops during the seminar. In addition, the participants have an opportunity for free interaction between the workshops, during dinner and in the evenings. Overall, the participants usually express their wish for "more" after the initial seminar abroad.[107]

Following the starting seminar in either Turkey or Cyprus, the staff holds a planning and problem-solving meeting, in which they discuss the problems encountered in the seminar in addition to possible personal frictions and professional issues among the staff. At this point, the organisers also discuss if anyone of the participants wants to leave the programme for dissatisfaction or other reasons.[108]

The seminar and staff meeting are followed by two single-identity meetings[109], in which the Palestinians and Israelis meet separately. During the first single-identity (also called uni-national) meetings, the Israeli group discusses the features of the Palestinian society, while the Palestinian group approaches the characteristics of the Israeli society. The meetings consist of lectures and are followed by workshops run by facilitators. The lecturers can be e.g. former politicians, journalists or other specialists in the Israeli-Palestinian issues. Both the Palestinians and the Israelis run a parallel programme in the single-identity meetings. During these meetings, the participants have a

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[107] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 1; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Interim Report, 1; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 1.
[108] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 3.
[109] YPPD reports say that the programme consists of three bi-national and three single-identity sessions between the seminars, but only two bi-national and two single-unity sessions were reported in 2006 and 2008 Interim Reports as well as 2008 Final Report.

possibility to reflect upon their own understanding about the other society and culture, as well as ponder the motivations and feelings of the "other side". The other single-identity meeting also consists of lectures and further elaborates different aspects of the two societies, for example, security concepts and security policies. The groups may also make study trips in order to actually see the problems with their own eyes and, thus, expand their understanding on the topics at hand. Lectures and study trips are, again, followed by discussions in a workshop.[110]

In 2006 and 2008 YPPD programmes, two bi-national meetings were held. Single-identity and bi-national meetings are held by turns; in 2008 the final bi-national meeting was after the weekend long seminar abroad[111]. In 2008, the bi-national meetings lasted for two days whereas they were only one day long in 2006. The bi-national meetings consist of mutual discussion and lectures followed by bi-national and uni-national working groups. The meeting is finished by a discussion in plenary. The topics of bi-national meetings cover, for instance, the current political situation, details on current political disputes, the issues revealed in previous meetings and hopes for the future. Bi-national study trips may also be held. In 2006 for instance, the groups made a study trip along the separation wall to see and discuss the different aspects and problems brought by the wall. This particular study trip serves as a good example of the everyday reality in Middle East: Israel was at war with Lebanon and the Israeli army was operating in the West Bank, which made it difficult for many to take part in the trip. Some Israelis were called to take up arms and others were stuck behind road blocks. Despite the intense situation, about half of the participants showed up and were willing to continue the programme. However, this is a very tangible example of how it is sometimes physically impossible for the parties to meet and how suddenly the political climate changes in this area that is extremely volatile politically and security-wise.[112]

The YPPD programme ends with a weekend long seminar abroad, in Turkey or Cyprus[113]. In 2008, the seminar was in Antalya, Turkey. The seminar consists of nine bi-national and three single-identity meetings, each 1,5 hours long. The participants arrived to Antalya on Thursday evening and the first day included an opening session in plenary and one workshop. The directors coordinated expectations and introduced ice-braking activities. On Friday, the discussions were deepened and workshop activities intensified. The topics of the day included e.g. the Israeli society and the status

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[110] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 3-4; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Interim Report, 3-4; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 3-4.

[111] Similarly to single-identity meetings, only two bi-national meetings were reported in 2006 and 2008 instead of three as was initially outlined in the YPPD programme plan.

[112] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 3-4; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Interim Report, 3-4; Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 3-5.

[113] In YPPD 2006 reports, the final seminar was not reported.

of the Israeli Palestinians. The evening, on the other hand, was fully devoted to social activity. The participants spent a casual evening on a sailboat with dinner, music and dancing. This interval of the seminar is reported as being highly important in terms of easing tensions and creating a positive atmosphere after a strenuous day in workshops. Saturday was devoted to peace negotiation simulations. Four issues were on the agenda: 1) the right of return of the Palestinian refugees; 2) the separation wall; 3) the status of Jerusalem, and 4) the character of the Israeli state when a Palestinian state will be established. The participants were divided to four mixed groups, in which they discussed one of the above mentioned issues. Then, the negotiations are completed in plenary with a summary of the results of the negotiations. In such a short period of time, the results of the negotiations are not very considerable, because all four issues on the agenda were so delicate and complex. Therefore, the negotiations easily turn to emphasising the complexity of the conflict. On the other hand, even realising the complexity of the conflict and its various dimensions is a result *per se*. On Sunday, the participants met in plenary, where Saturday's tensions and negative feelings were handled. The participants expressed an overall positive feeling about the experience and gave quite positive feedback. At that point, many of them expressed their willingness to continue similar encounters and wanted to recommend intercultural encounters to their friends and family too. The seminar ended with a short tour to nearby waterfalls, which again offered a chance to reduce tensions, change ideas, strengthen personal connections between the participants, and end the seminar in a positive and relaxed atmosphere.[114]

When comparing the YPPD programme to Burton's and Väyrynen's problem-solving workshop conflict resolution models, one can find some structural similarities in them. Both Burton and Väyrynen say that conflict resolution workshops are small and unofficial discussion groups, which provide a venue for genuine discussions and are facilitated by a panel of scholars. The purpose of workshops is to create innovative solutions to the conflict and provide inputs to the first track diplomatic process. The structure of the YPPD programme indeed facilitates small-group discussion and creates an opportunity for innovation, but it differs from the Burton's / Väyrynen's theorising in two significant ways. Firstly, YPPD workshops are not organised or facilitated by scholars, the academic panel, as Burton requires. YPPD is organised by educational professionals and facilitated by educated people, who are more or less experienced in the field of the Israeli-Palestinian issues. However, the requirement of having the workshop entirely organised and facilitated by researchers and academics can be criticised – especially the "scientific" and "objective" academic way that Burton demands. Burton's insistence on having the workshop run by an academic panel probably

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[114] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 4-6.

relates to the notion of acquiring "correct" and "scientific" information in terms of the conflict and, also, to the requirement of "objectivity" in the process.[115] As was evident in Väyrynen's criticism towards Burton, it is utterly impossible to have a facilitator that, in Burton's words, would act as a "filter" that screens out false information and false perceptions[116]. The social constructivist approach dismisses the idea of objectivity and objective information, even in science. By definition, knowledge and perception are constructed in intersubjective practices and, therefore, there are as many realities and "objectivities" as there are individuals. Having this in mind, the relevance of YPPD can not be totally undermined despite the fact that it was not organised by scholars. In the end, it was organised by professionals who have sufficient experience in peace education at the grassroots level. YPPD is closer to Väyrynen's requirement of the workshop being run by professionals, who have earned their right to serve as a facilitator (organiser) by acquiring theoretical knowledge and practical experience over time. Experience is the basis of the ethical justification of having the right to facilitate problem-solving conflict resolution workshops[117].

Secondly, it is somewhat unclear, how the YPPD programme feeds into the political process on the first track. YPPD is a grassroots project arranged by grassroots actors, so how can it provide inputs to first track diplomacy? In the short term, YPPD does not quite have immediate influence on the official diplomacy. It is rather difficult to see, how young party members or community workers could make a difference in the current political situation in Israel or Palestine, how could they affect the decision makers in their respective societies, or how could they have their say in official peace negotiations. From this perspective, YPPD does not meet the purpose of problem-solving conflict resolution workshops. However, the YPPD has a *long term* objective, which appears in its structure and plan. The aim of the programme is to train and educate *young politicians* in the midst of the Middle East conflict. The target group of the project are young individuals, who have the willingness and possibility to become possible future decision makers. They are actively involved in either political parties or their own community and, thus, have the potential to be in a position of power in the near future; they are potentially influential young actors in the political and community life. These young politicians have gained insight and understanding, peace education and negotiation skills, as well as a personal connection to the adversary, which would be crucial factors in the future peace process that the YPPD participants can *potentially* participate in on a high political level. In this way, the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme is proactive and anticipatory in its nature in terms of having influence on the first or second track.

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[115] Burton 1990, 204-205.
[116] Väyrynen 2001, 127-129.
[117] Väyrynen 2001, 127-129.

YPPD is closest to the problem-solving workshop ideal when it comes to enabling communication and creating shared reality. YPPD seminars and workshops offer a venue for effective communication in controlled circumstances, which is the basis of conflict resolution according to Burton. Conflicts dwell in communication and in perception of the conflict. Therefore, different perceptions need to be communicated in order to create common ground for mutual understanding.[118] Väyrynen calls this the creation of a shared reality, i.e. the realities of the parties converge through effective communication, which creates and discloses common needs and interests of the parties. In order to find a shared reality, the parties need to engage in genuine face-to-face discussions and, thus, try to change their interpretative relevance structures and find a "common language". According to Väyrynen, language games are of great importance in conflict resolution and it is crucial that the parties can use their native language in the workshop. If the language used in negotiations is alien to the parties, some language games may be incomprehensible for some or all parties.[119] An important factor in YPPD is, therefore, that the parties may use their native languages – Arabic and Hebrew – in the process and they are offered professional translators. Moreover, YPPD is founded on one of Burton's main claims about conflict resolution: it is based on relationships and human behaviour, not on law and history[120]. Problem-solving workshops should concentrate on relationships, promoting interaction, and improving analytical communication. As Ronald J. Fisher says, a high acquaintance potential is one critical facilitative condition in conflict resolution. Parties need to meet personally and get to know each other personally and not just as a stereotypical representative of the categorical "other".[121] In this sense, YPPD uses acquaintance potential in the programme by actively promoting personal, informal relationships between the participants. The YPPD participants have an opportunity to state their positions, question and confront each other personally and try to relieve mutual tensions. Easing tensions is, according to Burton, crucial with regard to participants' capability to adopt new insights and theoretical models[122]. Väyrynen purports that it is not necessary for the parties to achieve unanimity on the issues; it is enough to agree on the *what* instead of the why[123]. Negotiating a shared reality will be discussed next in relation to the YPPD programme from the participants' point of view.

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[118] Burton 1969, 48-49.
[119] Väyrynen 2001, 119-122.
[120] Burton 1969, 70.
[121] Fisher 1990, 181.
[122] Burton 1969, 66-67.
[123] Väyrynen 2001, 122.

9. Experiences of the Participants

In this section, I will discuss the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue as it is viewed from the perspective of the participants: how did they experience the programme and how do they assess the effectiveness of the programme. I will concentrate on six different themes: 1) intercultural personal contacts; 2) emotional experiences; 3) intercultural understanding; 4) personal impact and change; 5) ways to promote peace suggested by the participants; and 6) suggested improvements, future and evaluation of effectiveness. This account is mainly based on YPPD feedback questionnaires[124], participant evaluations reported by YPPD and my personal discussions with the participants, which were carried out in Beit Jalla in the fall of 2008 and email discussions thereafter.

9.1. Intercultural Personal Contacts in the Programme

Very often the first thing that the YPPD participants mention about their experiences in the programme is that YPPD actually *provided them with the first personal encounter with people from the other side.* That is to say, many of the participants met a representative of the "adversary" for the first time in their lives. For anyone who realises how geographically close to each other the Palestinians and Israelis live, it is difficult to understand how physically and mentally isolated they are of each other. Simply put, the Israelis and Palestinians do not meet despite living side by side. Such isolation, therefore, enables only a stereotypical characterisation of the other, which is often filled with fear and prejudice. YPPD creates a framework for first actual meetings in a friendly environment. For example, all YPPD 2005-2006[125] Israeli participants admitted that YPPD was their first opportunity to meet Palestinians from beyond the Green Line. The situation was a bit different for the Palestinians in 2005-2006; all but one had met Israelis in the past.[126] However, the Palestinians emphasized the uniqueness of the opportunity to meet the other side in the YPPD framework.[127] A spokeswoman of a conservative Jewish community describes the experience as follows:

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[124] Questionnaires were conducted by the organisers of YPPD. There was also one evaluation that was conducted by an independent statistician. The evaluations and questionnaires were not carried out for this particular research, but mainly for feedback purposes for the organisations.

[125] In 2005-2006 the programme was called Talk Peace – Make Peace; the contents of the programme were, however, similar.

[126] It is not explained here what "meeting" means in this context. Palestinians quite often "meet" Israelis at the checkpoints, for example.

[127] Talk Peace –Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 2.

> This was my first continuous meeting with Palestinians. The meeting left a deep impression on me and influenced all my way of mind. It brought me to new insights.[128]

A Fatah party member and an NGO activist also says:

> This was the first time for me to be in this kind of meeting with the Israeli people. [..] I felt less alienation toward the Israeli participants.[129]

The Israeli participants of YPPD 2008 were asked[130] "how would you estimate this project as an opening to encounter with the 'other' – and as a way to open and honest thinking over peace". On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = the lowest grade, 5 = the highest grade) the participants gave an average grade of 4.3 to this question. Therefore, it seems that YPPD has provided the participants a very meaningful first encounter with the other side.[131]

In addition to offering the very first opportunity to meet, the YPPD programme also aroused a willingness to continue informal meetings outside the programme. Some of the participants openly expressed their will to continue meeting the "others" in projects similar to YPPD or in a more informal context. Project evaluation of 2005-2006 says that, for example, 40% of the Israeli Arabs thought that the encounters encouraged warm relationships with the Jewish participants and some of them even wanted to keep in touch with them and the Palestinian participants in the West Bank – this was a year after finishing the project.[132] A Palestinian participant from the Fatah party comments on the continuation of meetings:

> Result of the meetings surprised me. I felt that I would like to keep in touch with them, I would like to meet them again, I felt that we can do something together. I hope to meet more and more.[133]

An interesting aspect of the programme is how it enables the formation of interpersonal ties and even friendship between the Israeli and Palestinian rivals. One of the objectives of the programme is to promote personal connections between the participants of different nationality, which would

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[128] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 9.
[129] Ibid., 10.
[130] The questionnaire was only conducted to Israeli participants for reasons unknown to me.
[131] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 5.
[132] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 3.
[133] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 9.

enhance intercultural understanding and create a human face for the adversary.[134] A Palestinian security officer from Fatah describes how he developed a personal relationship to an Israeli participant:

> I would like to tell that still I keep in touch with [...] an Israeli participant, especially since we found his stolen car in Ramallah [a Palestinian city]. This incident created trust between us, we do good things together instead of bad things and he came to visit for my birthday.[135]

The purpose of Burtonian problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model is not to create personal ties or friendship between individuals on opposite sides. In fact, Burton asserts that the workshop is meant solely for improving analytical thinking and creating innovative solutions to the conflict. Emotions or personal contacts are not mentioned as important factors in Burton's theory.[136] Also, Väyrynen does not discuss the importance of interpersonal relationships in the problem-solving workshop, but she warns about the possibility of getting detached from the reality of the conflict if workshops are held physically and mentally too far away from the actual conflict scene[137]. From this viewpoint, the formation of personal relationships and even friendship might be harmful for the conflict resolution process, if the participants to a workshop focus too much on personal connections and making friends and not on analytical thinking and innovating solutions instead. On the other hand, making friends with the enemy could also be useful in the process, if it promotes understanding and new insights. Making friends with the adversary can be an eye-opening experience: it is an ultimate proof, that the rivals have something in common and they all are human beings in the end. The Arabs and Jews, who have become friends, have created a shared reality to its fullest potential, but on a personal rather than on a cultural level as referring to different social and cultural groups on a wider scale. There are examples of personal ties brought by the YPPD, which are quite difficult to condemn as being harmful to the process. For instance, an Israeli young leader in the conservative youth movement (who was also learning to be a rabbi) made very good friends with an Israeli Arab during the programme. Despite their different identities, different religions and very different world views, they both believe in peace and found a common ground in advancing peace at the grassroots level. These friends started a movie project to promote intercultural understanding between Israelis and Israeli Arabs. They both also wanted to learn the language of the "other": they taught Arabic and Hebrew to one another.[138]

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[134] Ibid, 3.
[135] Ibid. 10.
[136] See eg. Burton 1969.
[137] Väyrynen 1998, 54-55.
[138] Embassy of Finland Interview No. 2 and 3.

9.2. Emotional Experiences

Another recurring theme in the participants' accounts is a strong emotional experience. Meeting the "enemy" arouses very strong emotions and, thus, *emotionality* characterises the entire process, especially in the beginning. At the outset, and also before the programme has even started, many participants say that they are afraid; the other side induces a feeling of fear, which causes a multitude of other negative emotions too, such as mistrust, vengefulness, prejudice, and intolerance. An Israeli staff member of Friendship Village claims that fear is the "main motivation" behind the negative attitude towards the opposite side. The Israelis are afraid that the Palestinians will never accept the Jews in Palestine, they want to revenge and get rid of all Jews. Moreover, it is difficult for the Jews to get rid of their "inferiority post-trauma" and, as the interviewed Friendship Village staff member says, it is "easier to take the Jews out of the ghetto than take out the ghetto from the Jews".[139] Although the Palestinians do not express the feeling of fear as directly as some of the Israelis do, an element of fear can be read between the lines. The Palestinians are afraid that the Israelis do not accept a Palestinian state in Middle-East. In addition, the Palestinians suffer from their own "inferiority trauma", which stems from their harsh reality: the Palestinian quality of life is radically lower than that of the Israelis. The Palestinians feel that they are the underdogs in the conflict and the enemy is insurmountable with its powerful allies. Instead of referring to fear, the Palestinians more often talk about hatred and frustration, which are emotions that may arise from the feeling of inferiority.[140]

Almost all accounts of the experiences brought by YPPD included a reference to "harsh emotions". The atmosphere was described as emotionally charged especially in the beginning. The participants also mention "psychological difficulties" in dealing with the emotions that meeting the other side surfaced. The workshops are characterised by anger, insults, prejudices and high tensions – more so in the beginning than in the end.[141] Running the workshops can be pretty challenging for the facilitators, who are responsible in directing the discussion and keeping it on the right course. A member of the Fatah organisation / Palestinian security officer says after the first meeting in Antalya:

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[139] Email Interview no 3.
[140] E.g. Embassy of Finland Interview No. 4.
[141] E.g. Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report.

[I]t was s hard, that I felt we are in a speech war. I think we don't have a chance to live with each other, but the facilitators directed the dialogue in proper direction.[142]

Strong negative emotions and harsh attitudes were dealt with in single-identity meetings after bi-national workshops. Directed by the facilitators, the participants discussed difficulties and the emotional content of the meetings.[143] A member of Kadima party youth section describes the meetings as "exciting and deeply charged".[144] It is very common to describe the encounters as "charged" and "tense", but aggressive behaviour was not reported to appear very much. YPPD Final Report 2008 only mentions one individual, whose behaviour was characterised as "aggressive"; having an aggressive attitude, not physical aggression.[145] All in all, the notion of strong emotions is brought up repeatedly. In Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, the statistician who conducted the evaluation, concludes that strong emotional experiences throughout the process were emphasised.[146]

9.3. Intercultural Understanding

Out of the participants' experiences of YPPD, probably the most repeated theme is "understanding". When looking at the reports, evaluations and interviews, increased understanding is one of the most mentioned and most valued experiences that YPPD provided to the participants. In the YPPD framework, the Palestinians and Israelis learned to understand the culture, history, society, ideologies, and motivations of the other side. For many, YPPD is the first opportunity to really meet and discuss with the other side, which often elevated the level of mutual understanding quite considerably. An Israeli assistant to a Likud member of the Knesset says:

> This project contributes for understanding the other side and makes friendly connection among people who consider themselves 'enemies'.[147]

YPPD 2008 participants were asked, on a scale 1 to 5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest), "did the encounters help you to understand the positions and the situation of the other side". The average grade to this

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[142] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 10.
[143] Ibid., 3.
[144] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Final Report, 9.
[145] Ibid, 3.
[146] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 5.
[147] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 9.

question was 3.5, so the participants evaluated the process as fairly meaningful in terms of promoting understanding. Some of the participants commented on the encounters as follows:

> They helped to understand but not to justify violence.
> I felt that if I was in their place, I would feel just the same.[148]

YPPD 2008 participants were also asked "how much the encounters helped you to understand the complexity of the conflict". The average grade to this question was 3.6, i.e. the programme was seen as quite meaningful in increasing understanding about the complex reality of the conflict. Some participants, however, did not achieve much new understanding about the adversary or the conflict. There were, for example, following comments to this question:

> I was aware to some aspects of the complexity, but not as deep as it was presented here.

> It helped very much: the main issues in dispute were illuminated in strong light.

> We didn't go deep enough [...] Many subjects were discussed, however no new aspects that I didn't know about were presented.[149]

Most of the YPPD participants felt that engaging in an honest dialogue is an effective means to promote mutual understanding. YPPD workshops offered a safe venue to openly discuss, listen and learn to understand the other side. Discussion in a controlled environment enabled the participants to open up and share their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Open dialogue also reduced the feelings of mistrust and animosity. Some of the participants commented on dialogue as follows in 2008:

> [B]y honest dialogue common ground can be found, even in our violent reality that normally doesn't make such a dialogue possible.
> I see great importance in keeping on such a dialogue as the YPPD.[150]

In a dialogue with the adversary, the participants can develop tolerance and respect towards the other. Learning to understand the enemy seems to be a crucial step in learning to tolerate and respect the other in the YPPD framework. In the workshops, the participants have a chance to an

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[148] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 3.
[149] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 3.
[150] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue Summary 2008, 9.

open conversation, in which they can tell their personal stories, communicate their thoughts and express their feelings. In the process, the participants also learn about different values and world-views, which makes the outlook of the enemy more familiar and understandable. As the participants learn to understand and put themselves to the position of the other, their attitudes become softer and they become more responsive, and possibly even more open-minded. YPPD 2008 participants were asked, again on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= lowest, 5 = highest), "did the encounters help you to develop better tolerance toward peoples of other nation". The average answer to this question was 3.9, which reflects a quite meaningful development in increasing tolerance. In terms of this question, one participant said:

> Personal stories and experiences that I have been exposed to, made me try to understand and to listen with patience to reality as it is reflected by the other side.[151]

In addition to understanding the mentality of the other, YPPD also aims at improving understanding about "facts". One of the objectives in YPPD is that the participants are exposed to new knowledge and facts about the enemy. The programme clearly has an educational objective in terms of spreading knowledge too. As discussed above, the participants study such issues as the history of the conflict, the society of the other side, and current political developments in the conflict. Studying takes place mostly in single-identity workshops, but also in bi-national meetings. Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 project evaluation reveals that half of the participants considered new knowledge as meaningful, whereas half of them considered it less meaningful or not at all meaningful. The participants thought that the new knowledge they acquired in the programme was mainly informative, i.e. information about what is happening in the road blocks and beyond the separation wall, as well as how people live their daily life.[152] YPPD 2008 participants were asked, "how much did the encounters deepen your knowledge about the other people". The average answer was 3.0 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest), which is a neutral answer and quite similar to YPPD 2005-2006; about half of the participants felt that they were provided with new knowledge, and half of them did not get any meaningful new knowledge.[153] This question was commented as follows:

> I learned about events that happened just under my nose, but I didn't know, didn't recognize, didn't acknowledge them.

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[151] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 2.
[152] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 5.
[153] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 1.

I met in the past Palestinians. Every time my knowledge about their national and personal burden is expanded, however this time I didn't get any new knowledge on the level of new insights.[154]

The observation that new knowledge was not very highly valued in project evaluations could be explained by the political and societal activeness of the participants. I would claim that the participants, who are actively involved in politics and community work, are more aware of current political developments, more informed about facts, and possess more knowledge about the conflict than an "average" Palestinian or an Israeli person. In YPPD, the participants probably get more new insights from *learning to understand* than learning facts.

9.4. Personal Impact and Change

As discussed above, in terms of emotions, most of the YPPD participants say that the programme had a strong impact on them on a personal level. Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 report says that:

[T]he encounter had strong impact not only on level of political opinions and attitudes, but on the personal level of participants as well.[155]

The evaluation report maintains that not only the programme affects attitudes and opinions, but also has an effect on identity and even self-confidence. For some participants, the process clarified their national identities – especially in the case of Israeli Arabs. As the Israeli Arabs (or Israeli Palestinians) met Palestinians from the West Bank, their national identity was strengthened. The programme "empowered" their identity of being and Arab.[156] I interviewed and Israeli Arab in Beit Jalla meeting in October 2008, and this young man explained to me, how difficult the position of the Israeli Arabs is in the conflict. The Israeli Arabs have to look at the conflict from the Israeli and the Palestinian perspectives and choose which side to support in specific issues. In addition, the Israeli Arabs need to form an alternative third side to the conflict i.e. the Israeli Arab side. Thus, they have to look at the conflict from three different perspectives, which is psychologically hard and challenging. [157] The programme also influenced participants on a deep personal level. Some

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[154] Ibid.
[155] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 3.
[156] Ibid, 4.
[157] Embassy of Finland Interview No. 3.

participants say that the programme changed their personal identity. A participant of 2005-2006 stated:

> I discovered myself in a totally different way.[158]

Many of the participants, for example 83% of the Israeli Jews in 2005-2006, admitted that the YPPD programme helped to clarify their personal ideological and political positions. They had an opportunity to examine their political opinions in the process, or even reconsider them. An Israeli lawyer and a former adviser to a Shinuy member of Knesset explains:

> [I]t made me to reconsider my positions toward the Palestinians and the conflict with them.[159]

Political consciousness, on the other hand, did not change very much as it was very high already at the outset. The 2005-2006 evaluation report maintains that political consciousness was "improved" or "emphasised" instead of increased.[160]

YPPD 2008 participants were asked "how much the encounters strengthened or changed your political opinion". The average answer (1 = lowest, 5 = highest) was 2.7. In addition, the participants were asked "did you change your positions as following the encounters". The average answer was pretty low, only 2.0. It seems that political positions and opinions did not change considerably. The participants commented on these questions:

> [T]his was just the beginning of a process. My ears became more sensitive to aggressive terminology. My basic positions didn't change, still I became more tolerant and sensitive.

> My political awareness has not been changed, however I met new insights and acquired new means and knowledge to observe the reality around me on different ways that I used to.[161]

I would have expected that the political positions and opinions would change more, especially as the experience has been described to have such a strong impact on the participants. However, this inconsistency is quite understandable: it is not easy for people to radically change their ideology, opinions and political positions in a short period of time. People tend to cling to their political

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[158] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 4.
[159] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 10.
[160] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 5.
[161] YPPD 2008 Project Evaluation, 2-5.

positions pretty stubbornly, which is very normal behaviour in the end: political opinions and positions are building blocks to individual ideologies that constitute to the formation of individual's identity as well. Identity can not be changed overnight. Moreover, the YPPD participants are almost all members of some political party, which renders changing political positions even harder. Party members are committed to party values, opinions and positions, so it is difficult to change them on an individual level in a short period of time. Equally difficult is it to *admit* that opinions have changed.

YPPD 2008 participants were also asked "how much did the encounters confront you with your own positions – and to clarify them". On a scale of 1 to 5, the average grade was 3.8 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest), which is clearly more than in the two previous questions. It seems that "change" was too strong expression for the participants' experiences when it comes to political opinions and positions. Instead of change, the participants were able to "confront" their own conceptions and "clarify" their own positions in the process:

> Clarification of issues all along the workshops, especially in the negotiations, made me think over all the issues and my positions toward them. My positions are built and develop all the time.[162]

Finally, one element of the strong personal impact is how the participants started to have a feeling of "being on the same side". Along the conflict resolution process, the Palestinians and Israelis begin to feel less alienated of each other. The different sides start to find common ground as they are given a chance to open dialogue in controlled circumstances. Moreover, the participants slowly develop a degree of "togetherness" as the programme proceeds and delves deeper into the various issues. The participants described the feeling of togetherness, for example, in the following way:

> I feel we are on the same side, not on two sides.[163]
> You meet the human being behind the 'enemy'. It is possible to talk, to develop a real dialogue. A feeling of closeness.[164]

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[162] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 2-3.
[163] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 10.
[164] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 2.

9.5. Ways to Promote Peace

I asked the YPPD participants of all three rounds (2005-2008) in an email inquiry, how they see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of the respondents[165] said that the core of the conflict is mostly national: it is a conflict between Zionist Israelis and Palestinian Arabs who both wish to claim their land. Outside the nationalist core, there are other layers, such as religion (Muslims/Jews) and the "colonialist" aspect. As a form of colonialism, the Middle East crisis is a dispute between the indigenous traditional Arabs and Western/modern new colonial powers supported by European and later by American imperial powers. Colonialism comes alongside with cultural differences, i.e. the dichotomy of modern Western culture and traditional Arab culture.[166]

Another respondent had a quite hopeless picture about the conflict. He claimed that both hope and motives to end the conflict are missing. Palestinians and Israelis are mentally too disconnected from each other that resolving the conflict seems hopeless. The Israelis do not know much about the Palestinians and their reality. The same problem applies to the Palestinians too; they are pretty oblivious of the Israeli hopes and motives. Thus, one of the major obstacles to peace seems to be obliviousness of the other side. In addition, one of the respondents also claimed that the Israelis have wittingly prolonged the conflict. Successive Israeli governments have been able to undermine genuine conflict resolution efforts and the formation of a Palestinian state because of lacking pressure from the Israeli citizens. The respondent maintains that the Israelis do not feel the conflict on a daily basis (except for the Israelis living close to Gaza) in the same way as the Palestinians do. The Israelis live in a hostile environment, but their physical freedom is not constrained. The Israelis are able to live quite normally in modern cities with a possibility to study, work and travel. Palestinians, on the contrary, are confined to a small area behind road blocks and walls. Their opportunities in life are rather restricted: many of them can not, for example, study or go to work, or travel outside their hometown. The conflict is much more tangible and devastating for Palestinians, especially in Gaza. Therefore, the Israelis probably do not have an urge to promote the peace process in a way that the Palestinians do.[167]

Moreover, it seems that defining the conflict is very challenging, even impossible for some. One respondent to my email inquiry said that she can not explain the conflict. Even after the YPPD process, the conflict seemed so complex that defining and explaining it was impossible. This YPPD

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[165] All respondents to my email interview were Israeli participants of the YPPD, Palestinians did not reply.
[166] Email interview No 3.
[167] Email interview No 2.

participant clarified her response by saying that she sees the conflict in different ways all the time; her perceptions of it change constantly. She lives in it and sees it all the time, but she can not rationally explain the causes and effects of the Middle East conflict, not even to herself.[168]

In the YPPD project evaluation and feedback forms, the participants do not often directly mention *peace* in the descriptions of their experiences. When asked about the positive outcomes of the programme, they usually mention dialogue, mutual understanding, increased tolerance, respect and so forth. But, the participants do not bluntly say that they have participated in the peace process by participating to the YPPD project. However, when asked in a questionnaire, 90% of the participants of YPPD 2005-2006 answered that the encounters in YPPD encouraged peace building. It is not clarified in the evaluation report, what is actually meant by "peace building", but it seems that the majority of the participants felt that, in the end, they are a part of the peace process in a way or another.[169] In their verbal accounts for the experience, the participants do not eagerly mention peace, if they are not asked about it straightforwardly. One Palestinian participant of YPPD 2008, a former prisoner and a current Fatah council member, carefully touches the subject of peace and peaceful conflict resolution in his own comment on the process:

> I was active in the first Intifada, but later on I started to think that the good way to take our right is the non violence one and the dialogue with the other side.[170]

I asked the participants of YPPD to explain, how they see the prospects for peace: is it possible to resolve the conflict and if so, how? Many of the respondents answered to this question in very practical terms: what compromises need to be done, what areas of land given to whom, what is the faith of the refugees et cetera. It seemed to be quite difficult to ponder what really needs to be done in the actual process, on the state level and on the level of an individual Arab or Jewish citizen. One respondent explained that the conflict can be resolved only after both people will recognise the legitimate right of the other people to the land. Both sides need to make difficult compromises in dividing the land. The Palestinian state should follow the borders of 1948-1967, the Green Line, with some modifications and exchanges of territories. The Palestinian should give up their demand of the right to return of the refugees. Israel can not take the refugees if it wishes to stay as a Jewish state. The returning refugees would make Jews a minority in their country. Instead of returning to their home country, the refugees should assimilate to their refugee country, mainly Jordan, Lebanon

[168] Email interview No 1.
[169] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 2.
[170] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 10.

and Syria.[171] Another respondent said that resolving the conflict is "very easy": the Israelis just need to leave all the occupied territories. Of course, leaving the occupied territories, tearing down the settlements and relocating the settlers (by force) are not easy tasks. Israel's decision to leave the occupied territories would likely be followed by internal conflicts between the Israelis, and between the state and the citizens.[172] According to one participant, the Palestinians and Israelis only need strong leaders and a "big umbrella" from the rest of the world in support of the peace process in order to resolve the conflict. Both sides need brave leaders who are willing to take political risks and make compromises. For example, the Palestinians should give up on their demand of the right to return of refugees and the Israelis should compromise in terms of Jerusalem. Therefore, peace would only be possible with strong and brave leaders coupled with difficult compromises.[173]

I also asked the participants of YPPD 2005-2008 that how they see their own contribution to the conflict and its resolution. Do they think that an individual can make a difference? How did the YPPD help in trying to achieve peace? Some of the answers were positive and encouraging. An Israeli social worker wishes to integrate his YPPD experiences to his daily work with youth in risk. He wants to influence the youth on the grassroots level: enable them to become more aware, tolerant and respectful towards the Palestinians. He strongly believes that an individual can make a difference in the process of attaining peace.[174] An Israeli leader of the conservative youth movement also believes that the programme and his own contribution has an effect on the peace process at the grassroots level. He believes that the key to change is learning to understand the other side and, therefore, peace would be attained simply through better understanding. This individual, who is also learning to become a rabbi, has started small projects with his Israeli Arab friend (who also participated in YPPD) to promote intercultural understanding and, thus, peace.[175]An Israeli staff member of the YPPD says that he is trying his best to contribute to the peace process on an individual level. He has worked in the Talk Peace – Make Peace and Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programmes as an organiser. With his individual input, he wishes to "promote dialogue and understanding that would lead to recognition and comparison". He also works for an NGO, which promotes cross-border cooperation in terms of environmental problems. In addition, the NGO organises some peace building seminars and other activities for youth and adults.[176] One participant of YPPD believes that an individual can make a difference by "being brave": writing

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[171] Email Interview No 3.
[172] Email Interview No 1.
[173] Email Interview No 2.
[174] Embassy of Finland Interview No 1.
[175] Embassy of Finland Interview No 2.
[176] Email Interview No 3.

opinions to different websites, demonstrating, being an "activist" in grassroots organisations and bravely going against the popular opinion in Israel and the Palestinian territories. He thinks that he has not yet been personally able to contribute to the peace process, even though he participated to the YPPD programme.[177]

Even though some YPPD participants see their own contribution to peace building at grassroots level quite positively, there are some critical voices too. An Israeli participant, who attended YPPD and a "Nemashim" theatre project[178], thinks that an individual can not make a difference on the road towards peace. She has tried to be an "activist" in matters concerning the conflict and the peace process but she does not believe that it will help. In her opinion, a peace agreement can only be achieved if there is sufficient international political pressure coupled with an economic embargo. From this viewpoint, the peace process is seen as a top-down project, in which an individual does not make a difference on the lower level. However, despite criticising the role of the YPPD in grassroots peace building, this respondent admits that the programme truly helped her to understand the conflict.[179]

Another critical voice was a Palestinian student, a member of Fatah, whom I Interviewed in Beit Jalla, West Bank, in October 2008. This individual was very reserved about the possibilities of the YPPD to promote peace on any level – as compared to the other interviewees in Beit Jalla. She said that the programme is very positive when it comes to understanding the other side and meeting the "enemy": interaction is very welcome because it happens rarely in the real life. Even though this young student thinks that the programme promotes intercultural understanding and influences young potentially to-be politicians, she is convinced that the conflict needs to be resolved by the heads of state. Grassroots interaction is, in her opinion, quite useless in the peace process, even though her overall experience of the YPPD was very positive. This individual was strongly affected by the harsh reality of the Palestinians. She believes that the everyday life of the Palestinians is more difficult than that of the Israelis, which makes her attitude towards peace building rather negative. Especially the low level inter-cultural efforts seem futile given the conditions where the Palestinians are forced to live in. For this individual, options seem to be missing and the future is grim, there is not much room for hope. According to my observations in West Bank and also with this female student, I noticed that many Palestinians, when meeting someone from Europe or the "Western" world, have an urge to draw attention to their crude reality and point out the evils of the

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[177] Email Interview No 2.
[178] Nemashim is an Arab-Jewish theater community.
[179] Email Interview No 1.

Israeli-Palestinian troublesome co-existence. The interview was held on a beautiful day, outside in the hills of Beit Jalla, in a positive atmosphere after an YPPD meeting. However, this young woman pointed towards a nearby check-point and wanted to be photographed with the check-point behind her down the hills. She wanted to communicate a message: "this is the Palestinian reality, don't forget about it".[180]

A slightly older Palestinian woman, one of the organisers of YPPD, saw peace building efforts quite differently. In the interview in Beit Jalla, she explained that the programme has been a very positive experience for the participants and herself. She wanted to emphasise the importance of personal, close interaction between the different sides of the conflict in order to create inputs to the peace building process on an intercultural level. In her life, she wants to appeal to the Israeli mothers that she meets; she appeals to the universal experience of motherhood and how it connects people regardless of cultural and religious factors, politics and war. Both sides have lost children in the conflict and both sides (mothers) suffer equally. She wants to draw attention to things that are common for everyone, i.e. motherhood and love for the children on both sides. Thus, she attempts to find common ground on *universal* human experiences and emotions. In her opinion, the YPPD programme is also a venue, where people can create mutual understanding and share things that are common to all people; concern for ones security, family and well-being. After all, the "ordinary" Palestinians and Israelis would just want to live their life in a peaceful environment that enables leading a normal life: studying, working and raising your family in a safe environment that would not endanger the life and well-being of your family and yourself. [181]

9.6. Suggested Improvements, Future, and Evaluation of Effectiveness

In general, the participants of YPPD are quite eager to continue meetings – formally and informally. For example, the participants of 2005-2006 would have liked to have a contact list of all participants in order to continue making contacts and meet again in an informal framework. The participants also wanted to get more knowledge along the process – and deeper knowledge too. Therefore, the organisers of the programme need to reconsider the proportions between lectures, discussion and workshops to be able to provide more knowledge and information as well as deeper insights.[182] After the 2008 YPPD, the organisers invented an idea of an advanced YPPD course,

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[180] Embassy of Finland Interview No 4.
[181] Embassy of Finland Interview No 5.
[182] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 5-6.

where the participants would have an opportunity to explore the related problems more in depth, investigate options more thoroughly and strengthen connections with the other side. The idea of an advanced course came from the participants themselves as they felt a need to continue the process.[183] In fact, an advanced course was introduced in a meeting in Beit Jalla, October 25th 2008. All interested YPPD participants can take part in the advanced course, in which "they will be able to extend their skills in methods of negotiation and conflict management". The advanced course would further enhance team work on specific issues in the conflict and it would also involve training in terms of practical cooperation between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders. Most of the participants expressed their willingness to take part in the advanced course.[184] The Beit Jalla meeting was, in fact, a conference, where all of the Talk Peace – Make Peace and Young Politicians Peace Dialogue "graduates" since 2005 were invited. The purpose of this meeting was to create a network of participants and lay foundations for future cooperation.[185]

The organisers expressed their concerns about facilitators as well as some participants in 2008. The facilitators need to be chosen more carefully and they have to be more thoroughly prepared for the process. There had been some problems with particular facilitators as discussed in chapter 8.4. In some cases, the skills and experience of the facilitators had been inadequate. Also, there were some problems that related to the status and age gaps between the participants of different sides. The Palestinians were younger and of "lower status" than the Israelis, which was discussed in chapter 8.2.[186] The Palestinian organiser wishes to increase the number of Palestinians from the West Bank[187] and recognises the need of recruiting participants from Gaza, where the conflict is most acutely felt.[188] Participants from Gaza would considerably change the dynamics of the programme because the Gazans are the greatest victims of the conflict in the Palestinian territories. Living in an almost completely isolated environment with severe social and infrastructural problems, the reality of the Gazans is quite different compared to Palestinians in the West Bank. Also, the Gazans live under the rule of Hamas and possibly possess more radical outlooks and ideologies. Including Gazans to the programme would represent the conflict more realistically, but it might prove too difficult to include them in practice due to strict travel restrictions in and out of Gaza.

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[183] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 6.
[184] Summary of Beit Jalla Meeting, 3.
[185] Management Report 2008, 3.
[186] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 6.
[187] Here West Bank probably refers to more remote cities in the West Bank; not only East Jerusalem, Ramallah, and such cities and towns that are closest to e.g. Jerusalem.
[188] Management Report 2008, 3.

The participants expressed following difficulties in the workshops and also mentioned some suggestions for improvement. There was some instability in participation. Some participants were absent at times (likely due to travel restrictions in check-points), and there were also participant changes. Some participants were replaced during the process, which created instability and discontinuation. Some participants complained that the time passing between sessions is too long; the groups should meet more often. And despite wishing for more meetings more regularly, some participants complained that the seminars (especially abroad) are too exhausting. Another concern for the participants was a level of detachment between the Palestinian and Israeli group. Participants wanted more interaction and joint activities, such as joint lectures, joint studies and more bi-national sessions.[189]

The YPPD programme seems to continue on a quite solid basis. Since 2005, there have been five successful YPPD rounds. 2009-2010 YPPD round is not included in this study, because all my encounters, interviews and other material concern the programmes of 2005-2008. However, the 2009-2010 programme continues with the same structure, objectives and methods as the earlier rounds. The faith of the advanced course remains unclear; the advanced course is not mentioned in the YPPD reports of 2009-2010.[190]

To sum up, I would like to conclude this section of participant experiences by a couple of evaluations about the project. The 2008 YPPD participants were asked, "did you get any added value from the encounters". On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest), the respondents gave an average grade of 3.9, which suggests that the level of added value to the participants was quite high. Some people commented this question as follows:

> This was an opportunity to meet Palestinians, to talk and to listen, to discuss over hard issues – all this was an important experience for me.
> It gave me a chance to see the other side, to be able to observe their humanity and pain.[191]

The 2008 participants were also asked in a feedback questionnaire, whether or not they would recommend the project to their friends or colleagues. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest), the average was 4.3, which was the highest grade in the whole questionnaire. This question enlightens the overall experience of the participants pretty well. Most of the participants would

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[189] Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Summary, 6.
[190] see Friendship Village Organisation http://www.friendshipvillage.homestead.com
[191] YPPD 2008 Feedback, 1.

highly recommend the programme to their friends and colleagues, which must be a sign of seeing the process as a useful and positive experience.[192]

10. Cultural and Emotional Factors and Creation of Shared Reality

When looking at the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue within the Burton's problem-solving workshop conflict resolution framework elaborated by Väyrynen's notion of cultural conflict resolution, we may look at the YPPD programme from three different perspectives. First is the *personal* individual experience, which the participants of the programme clearly underlined as the most important feature of the whole programme. The personal dimension includes emotional and cognitive elements that lay foundations for deeper understanding and personal relationships between the participants. Secondly, there is the *cultural* dimension, in which the different sides of the conflict can meet the enemy – often for the first time in their lives. In the programme, the groups can discuss their history, objectives, motives, values, religion, and worldviews in order to understand the foundations of the conflict and to promote intercultural understanding and a feeling of togetherness. Thirdly and related to the intercultural dimension, the YPPD programme can be viewed as an attempt to create a *shared reality*, which is the core of Väyrynen's theory of cultural conflict resolution. In the programme, the participants and representatives of different sides of the conflict have a chance to reconcile their conceptions of the conflict and negotiate a shared reality, in which the typifications of the conflict merge – at least to some extent. Finding a shared reality is essential in the process of conflict resolution, because it lays foundation for effective communication. In the following chapter, these three aspects – the personal, cultural and shared reality – are discussed in relation to the YPPD programme.

10.1. Cognitive and Emotional Aspects as part of the YPPD Process

The approach of the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme to conflict resolution relies on two aspects: the *cognitive* aspect and the *emotional* aspect. The approach of the programme is, as the organisers of the programme maintain, unique: the method of combining both emotional and cognitive aspects in conflict resolution is rare in Europe (quite commonplace in Israel), though similar methods have been used in e.g. Northern Ireland. Traditional methods concentrate on the cognitive level and tend to neglect the emotional one. YPPD organisers have labelled their approach

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[192] Ibid, 5.

as a *dynamic workshop*, which refers to emphasising the emotional factors on both personal and group levels. The cognitive aspect to the conflict is, however, also present in the workshop. The issues dealt with in the programme are first introduced on a cognitive level and, then, elaborated on an emotional level. This dual method creates dynamism in the process. The cognitive process consists of, for example, trying to understand the underlying reasons for the conflict, learning the history of the conflict, getting familiar with the backgrounds of the individuals and groups, disclosing the interests of the different parties, and discussing possible solutions to the conflict. The emotional factors, on the other hand, are made of fears, hatred, prejudices, stereotypes, hostility, mistrust and so forth. Emotionality occurs on two levels: the individual level and the group level.[193]

As discussed in chapter 5, in a social psychological slip away from traditional conflict resolution models and the Burtonian problem-solving workshop conflict resolution that concentrates on analytical and scientific thinking, emotions play a crucial role in conflict resolution. Mitchell and Banks argue that emotional factors rise especially in the first stage of the workshop and they require immediate attention. When the parties meet for the first time, they feel an urge to tell their personal story in order to make the opposite side to understand where they come from. The first stage is very difficult, but extremely important. As the stories have been told and initial emotions communicated, the parties achieve a certain level of satisfaction, which enables the discussions to move on to a more analytical handling of the conflict.[194] In addition, Broome also mentions recurrently the notions of dynamism. According to Broome, understanding, which is a crucial element in the YPPD programme, is a dynamic process and a tensional event that can be achieved via relational empathy. Relational empathy enables the formation of shared meanings; a notion similar to Väyrynen's shared reality. Understanding develops in a process, where the context, cognitive and emotional characteristics of the perceiver, the relationships between the perceiver and the perceived, and the developmental cultural factors merge. When trying to understand the experiences of other human beings, Broome claims, one is never fully able to grasp them. Thus, interpersonal communication, including the communication of emotions, is necessary in order to find a degree of understanding between the parties. Communication of emotions enables the creation of relational empathy, which is a vehicle for the formation of understanding. Empathy, for one, is a combination of cognitive and emotional activities, so both of these factors should be equally taken into account in conflict resolution in order to create relational empathy and, thus, understanding between the parties.[195] This is what the YPPD programme is about: combining cognitive and emotional factors in conflict

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[193] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 8.
[194] Mitchell & Banks 1996, 104.
[195] Broome 1993, 98-104.

resolution workshops in an attempt to promote understanding between the opposing sides and discuss possible solutions to the conflict.

When looking at the array of feelings that the YPPD participants describe, as discussed in chapters 9.2. and 9.4., the importance of feelings in the process can not be underplayed. One participant depicted the programme as an "emotional rollercoaster", which associates to a challenging psychological process of experiencing a multitude of strong feelings in a short period of time [196]. The workshops were characterised by such emotions as anger, insult, prejudice, nervousness, hysteria, mistrust, outrage, and misunderstanding[197]. The workshops were portrayed as involving "hot debate", "vivid discussion" and "speech war"[198]. Given this powerful emphasis on emotional factors in the process, especially in the beginning, it is inevitable that emotions play an important role in the conflict resolution workshop. At the outset, the participants need to express their feelings and communicate their stories in order to be able achieve a certain level of satisfaction and to continue the process towards analytical thinking over the conflict. Also, the participants need to understand the underlying emotional motives behind the cold facts, which renders the workshop dynamic. In this way, the workshop becomes dynamic as it combines the emotional and cognitive factors, which is utterly important in the success of the workshop. The organisers of YPPD claim that there is no greater mistake in an intercultural dialogue programme than to neglect the emotional aspects of the conflict. A meeting between the rival groups *per se* does not reduce hostilities between the parties if the emotional contents of the meeting are not properly dealt with.[199]

10.2. Considerations of Culture in the YPPD programme

As discussed in chapter 4.2., contemporary conflict resolution recognises the importance of cultural interpretation of meaning and its implications to negotiations. Avruch and Black have argued that conflicts may arise from different interpretations of the same events. These interpretations may be caused by initial non-comprehension that is often combined with misapprehension. Even though conflicts may arise from different interpretations, conflicts are still quite rarely caused by culture, but cultural factors may have a potential role in *resolving* them. Avruch and Black continue by claiming that culture always moulds the ways in which rivals understand the conflict and how they

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[196] Embassy of Finland Interview No 3.
[197] See e.g. Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2006 Interim Report, 2-3.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 8.

see possible resolutions to it.[200] This aspect is the idea behind cultural conflict resolution: recognising the differences in respective cultures, values, mindsets, ideologies, motivations, and interests. When the different (mental) cultures have been recognised through effective communicative processes, the parties have an opportunity to create a shared culture, in which their interests and motivations converge. The shared culture forms a common ground for fruitful negotiations and problem-solving.

Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme communicates that one of its most important purposes is the creation of a "culture of peace", which is elaborated in the project summary of 2008:

> No sustainable peace can [be] establish[ed], without structuring a culture of peace.[201]

By a *culture of peace*, the programme means that norms, values and habits of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples must change in order to complete the peace process. The main obstacles to peace are mutual suspicion and mistrust, which can be decreased by inter-cultural peace building programmes. A change at the grassroots cultural level is utterly necessary so that a peace agreement would be accepted by the two peoples. A top-down imposed peace agreement is not enough if the people reject it; a peace agreement finalised without the acceptance of the people would become illegitimate, unstable and obsolete.[202]

The YPPD programme recognises the problems that a *culture gap* between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples generates. Despite living close to each other on a rather small territory, the Palestinians and Israelis do not interact much on a cultural or personal level. The two people are isolated from each other. The purpose of intercultural lessons in the YPPD programme is to increase cultural understanding. Cultural, in this context, does not mean only habits, religion, history, or other perceptible or tangible characteristics, but it also refers to intangibles, such as values, norms and world-views. In other words, the programme attempts to disclose how the different sides perceive the conflict, what is their cultural interpretation of it, and how to find a common, shared culture of peace, in which the participants of the programme can agree on the conceptions of peace and conflict. Finding the culture of peace is crucial in the peace process and it has to be found early on:

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[200] Avruch & Black 1993, 132-138.
[201] Ibid., 3.
[202] Ibid., 2-3.

This change has to start with the young generations, above all with the Young Leadership of it.[203]

In order to build a culture of peace, the programme aims at opening a dialogue and building bridges between the rivals; introducing the respective societies with their problems, interests, worldviews, and values; creating personal connections between the participants; and, thus, decreasing the level of prejudices, stereotypes, mutual suspicions and fears. The temporal dimension of the programme is twofold. First, it affects the participants in the present. The mindset of the participants probably changes, and the participants have a possibility to influence their family, friends and immediate acquaintances. Thus, there is an instant, but confined, change at the grassroots level. Second, it affects the participants in prospective. It is envisioned that the YPPD participants will be in a position of political power in the future, so they will be able to make the lessons of YPPD operational in the future. Therefore, the influence of the YPPD process would be expanded to high political circles. This is, of course, speculative, but the YPPD programme might also have an effect at the high level, track I or II, peace negotiations in the future.[204]

10.3. Creation of a Shared Reality in the YPPD Programme

As discussed in chapter 4.2.1., conflicts are characterised by a breakdown of a shared reality. An individual constitutes reality through typifications, which are interpretations of the world and its phenomena, and produced and distributed in social interaction. Common reality, in other words, is defined by shared typifications. If shared typifications are denied or they entirely break down, the structure of shared reality collapses. The breakdown is a serious anomie in the society and may cause the formation of a conflict. Väyrynen says that the "location of conflict is over definitions of reality", i.e. who has the power to describe reality and impose it upon others. Typifications create relevance systems to individuals and groups of people. Harmonising relevance systems by creating shared typifications is essential in conflict resolution. Shared typifications, or new interpretations of the reality, are negotiated in an intercultural process, which enables the parties to find common ground for cooperation in terms of conflict resolution.[205]

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[203] Young Politicians Peace Dialogue 2008 Summary, 3.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Väyrynen 2001, 117-118.

Furthermore, the enemies need to encounter each other in a face-to-face situation in order to find a shared reality. As elaborated in chapter 4.2.2., inter-cultural face-to-face interactions enable rivals to change their interpretative and motivational structures. Therefore, an intercultural problem-solving workshop offers the parties an opportunity to *negotiate* a shared reality. Because negotiation is the same as communication, the parties need to engage in a communicative process within a controlled environment. The Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme does not refer to typifications, relevance structures or shared realities, because it operates on a quite practical, not theoretical, level. However, the project reports as well as participant accounts are full of allusions to the notion of what Väyrynen calls the shared reality.[206] To start with, many of the very first characterisations of Palestinian-Israeli relations is *isolation*. The parties are isolated from each other and, thus, they do not even have a chance to negotiate a shared reality.[207] Face-to-face encounters are almost non-existent, especially those that happen in a controlled environment. Social relationships between the Israelis and the Palestinians are not commonplace, which creates a problem of obliviousness between the different sides. The YPPD programme is designed to meet this challenge of isolation and obliviousness. The programme promotes social and personal relationships and offers much needed communication and negotiation in the workshops and other intercultural meetings. Meeting with the enemy creates a feeling of empathy and "being on the same side". The participants learn to acknowledge the suffering and despair of the other side via communication of personal stories and studying the history and facts of the conflict.[208] Some participants even try to appeal to "universal" human experiences, emotions and values. By finding a common ground on these universal[209] conceptions may enable the participants to harmonise their relevance structure and find a degree of shared reality on a certain perspective of the conflict.[210]

Discursive rationality is very fundamental in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution because it prevents the breakdown of sociality and enables the participants to find a common language game. Finding a common language game is crucial as it offers discursive possibilities to negotiate a consensus across cultural and interpretative differences. *Understanding* the other side can only be achieved through discursive designs, in which cultural conceptions are traded in order to harmonise relevance structures and, thus, in order to find a shared reality – that is to say, a *negotiation of a*

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[206] Ibid., 119-121.
[207] E.g. Talk Peace – Make Peace 2005-2006 Project Evaluation, 2.
[208] E.g. YPPD 2008 Feedback, 1-2.
[209] "Universal" refers here to the accounts of the participants; universality of e.g. values and norms is debatable, which will not be handled in this study.
[210] E.g. Embassy of Finland Interview No 5.

degree of converging cultural conceptions about the conflict shared by the opposing sides.[211] Understanding is another theme in the YPPD process, which between the lines hints to the creation of a shared reality in the programme. Understanding was, as discussed in chapter 7.4.3., one of the most repeated themes in the programme, especially in the project evaluations and participant comments. Understanding, as Väyrynen claims, does not occur without discursive processes that always involve some degree of enriched typifications and harmonised relevance structures. The ways of speaking, creating meanings and attributing things need to be more or less similar to create and find a level of understanding between the opposite sides.[212] Increased understanding was evaluated as one of the most important achievements of the YPPD programme[213], which is proof of the programme being able to promote the creation of a shared reality. In a protracted conflict such as the Israeli-Palestinian one, the breakdown of a shared reality can only be reversed by inter-cultural peace-building programmes, which attempt to re-establish the shared reality.

11. Conclusion

This research has discussed problem-solving workshop conflict resolution mainly as it is theorised by John W. Burton and Tarja Väyrynen. Then, these theories have been applied to the case of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme. Burton's theory of problem-solving conflict resolution was completed by Väyrynen's view of cultural conflict resolution and further elaborated to encompass emotional factors too. The Young Politicians Peace Dialogue is by no means purely Burtonian and also not quite what Väyrynen would characterise as an ideal setting for problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. The main difference to the theories of these two academics – especially that of John Burton – is that the YPPD process is not planned or executed by academics. The process is not facilitated by academic researchers, who are supposed to guide the process, inject facts and theories, screen out false assumptions and encourage innovative thinking in terms of conflict resolution. The YPPD does not completely fulfil the other criteria of an ideal problem-solving workshop either. It has encountered problems related to, for example, biased or unprofessional facilitators, too much variance in the participants, absences of participants from meetings, unsuitable locations for the workshops, volatile political and security environment in the area, and so forth. However, it should be kept in mind that the YPPD is not represented here as an ideal type of a Burtonian problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. Burton's theory is used

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[211] Väyrynen 2001, 124-125.
[212] Ibid.
[213] eeg. YPPD 2008 Feedback, 3.

here as a *framework*, against which the YPPD programme is reflected. Elements of cultural conflict resolution have been added to the framework with a pinch of social psychology; a notion of emotionality in conflict resolution setting. My approach of combining Burton's problem-solving workshop theory with cultural conflict resolution and emotional factors in conflict resolution is justified, because all these aspects embody some crucial elements of the YPPD programme. First, problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model applies to the structure of the YPPD programme. It consists of workshops, in which the rivals meet to discuss possible solutions for the conflict in a controlled environment, and which are facilitated by professional facilitators that steer the process. Second, cultural conflict resolution theory explains, how conflicts can be resolved in an inter-cultural setting by negotiating a shared reality. The objective of the YPPD project is in the very core of cultural conflict resolution: it aims at promoting intercultural and interpersonal understanding between the enemies and attempts to create a feeling of togetherness among the participants. Understanding requires a degree of harmonised relevance structures, which then leads to formation of shared reality. Third, the emotional factor was needed in this research to explain the reactions of the participants to the conflict resolution process in YPPD. Majority of the participants felt that the process was emotionally very challenging and psychologically hard. Emotionality was usually the first thing that the participants mentioned, especially in the interviews. Thus, emotionality could not be left out of this consideration, so I decided to apply a social psychological approach to emotions and conflict resolution with an emphasis on inter-personal relations and the notion of relational empathy.

Another debatable aspect in the YPPD programme concerns the difference between different tracks of diplomacy: what track does the YPPD programme belong to? Without a doubt the programme represents track III diplomacy. It is a people-to-people project, which promotes social and cultural change towards more peaceful relations with the enemy. The programme operates at a grassroots level and its organisers are non-governmental independent organisations. The immediate aim of the programme is to develop and improve inter-cultural and inter-personal relations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The impact of the programme is felt on the personal level, but as the programme expands and more and more people get involved in such peace building projects, the change affects people in larger groups and there is a possibility for a cultural change at the grassroots level. On the multi-track diplomacy model, the YPPD programme is thus on track III at the present. However, the YPPD objectives leave room for speculations, whether or not the programme would have track II or even track I possibilities prospectively. One of the core purposes of the programme is to influence young politicians, the future political decision makers. Even the name of the programme refers to this aspect: Young Politicians Peace Dialogue strongly suggests

that the programme has anticipations for the future. The participants in the programme are not quite politicians yet, they are actively involved in politics or their own community; some of them have connections to their parliament or government. Therefore, it is justified to assume that at least some of the YPPD participants would rise to a position of political power, for example, as a local leader or as a prominent party leader. Some of them may have a chance to become members of the parliament or even achieve governmental positions. From this perspective, the YPPD programme thus has a potential track II or even track I dimension in prospective. It is quite difficult to determine how realistic these future expectations are; it remains to be seen in the future if any of the YPPD participants have been able to achieve an important position of political power. If so, these individuals would have the YPPD experience with them and they would bring the skills learnt in the programme to, e.g. state level peace negotiations. Realistic or not, this future prospect is the underlying idea of the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue and the idea is valuable as it is. The objective of the programme from this viewpoint has been attained if even one of the YPPD participants becomes a powerful political figure and decides to engage in genuine peace building efforts in his / her position.

The effectiveness of the programme can be evaluated by various criteria. One criterion – and the most controversial one – is the above mentioned prospect of the YPPD participants becoming political leaders and putting the skills learnt in YPPD in action. This aspect and its effectiveness can not be evaluated at the present. Other more immediate effects of the project are easier to assess. Looking at the participant evaluations, interviews and the stories told by the participants about the programme, it is fair to say that the programme does have a strong impact, at least on the personal level of the participants. The programme succeeds in building bridges between the Israeli, Palestinian and Israeli Arab participants and creates understanding among them. The participants are able to achieve a feeling of togetherness – at least to some degree. Also, the participants learn some facts about their enemy and their society, and about the history and recent developments of the conflict. They are taught some conflict resolution skills too and they are given an opportunity to engage in a simulation of conflict resolution negotiations. In the process, the participants learn to know the representatives of the other side personally, which gives the enemy a human face; some of the participants even get life-long friends from the other side. Majority of the participants feel that the programme gives them some added value and most of them would recommend the programme to friends and colleagues. Given these evaluations of the programme, it is undeniable that it has been effective – at least on a personal and interpersonal level.

Even though the YPPD obviously has affected the participants on a personal and inter-personal level, it is fair to ask, whether or not the programme has been effective when it comes to the conflict itself? Do the inter-cultural encounters of YPPD really promote peace? Does the programme create a considerable degree of shared reality between the enemies? Face-to-face interaction between the enemies does not automatically reduce hostilities or bring about a change in typifications, so is it justified to claim that the YPPD programme has induced a change in typifications of the enemy in the Israeli-Palestinian context? It is extremely difficult to define what is a sufficient level of change in typifications, and what is a sufficient degree of a shared reality that a problem-solving workshop conflict resolution generates. I would claim that the question of "sufficiency" is irrelevant in this context. A problem-solving workshop always has a situational nature; it can not deal with the whole conflict at once, but it is capable of covering some aspects or some particular issues of the conflict. In addition, typifications and relevance structures are not always completely harmonised in a workshop setting. Harmonisation of relevance structures can be partial too. Also, if the workshop does not succeed in creating new typifications, pre-existing typifications may be enriched. Thus, partial harmonisation of relevance structures and enriched typifications are also important achievements in the problem-solving workshop conflict resolution model, at least from cultural conflict resolution point of view. Given that the YPPD participants have widely recognised the effectiveness of the programme in changing their personal positions and attitudes and in promoting inter-cultural understanding and togetherness, harmonisation of relevance structures or enrichment of typifications must have occurred on some level. If the different cultural groups have been able to enrich their typifications or harmonise their relevance structures even partially, some degree of inter-group shared reality has been created, which is an achievement *per se*.

The Young Politicians Peace Dialogue is one grassroots peace-building programme among many in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Programmes of this kind may be small in size, but there is power in numbers. The more there are such peace building projects, the more effective the grassroots peace process becomes. YPPD is one actor in the process of increasing inter-cultural encounters, promoting inter-personal relationships and creating a shared culture between the rivals in the area. The grassroots peace projects may be criticised of not being significant enough – even some of the YPPD participants think that individuals do not matter on the way to peace, but the conflict can only be ended by heads of state. It is true that the final peace agreements are finalised by the heads of state and the peace agreement will be imposed upon the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. But what happens if the people do not accept the peace agreement? A peace agreement that is imposed from top-down may bring about strong resistance and the people may refuse to obey the agreement. Such situation could result in internal conflicts and continuation of hostilities by non-

state actors. A peace agreement that is not accepted by the people would, thus, become unstable, illegitimate and obsolete in the end. Therefore, it is extremely important that the idea of peace comes from the people and it is the people who accept and legitimise it. In order to find legitimacy for the peace process, the initiative needs to come from the people and start from the grassroots, which is the reason for why projects such as the YPPD programme are needed in protracted conflict situations. The YPPD programme is small-scale; it consists of 24 participants at a time. Nonetheless, there have already been five YPPD rounds in 2005-2010, so the total number of participants rises to 120. If these 120 participants have undergone a personal change in the programme and if they are able to influence their circle of acquaintances, the programme has become successful in numbers too. If some of these 120 participants become political or community leaders and they decide to use their position and power to promote the peace process, the programme undoubtedly becomes significant.

The uniqueness of Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme lies in its way to combine cognitive and emotional factors in the workshop method. The programme calls this method a "dynamic workshop", which underlines the importance of both facts and emotions in the conflict resolution process. The way of including emotional factors to problem-solving workshop conflict resolutions is pretty unheard of in Europe, except for the Northern Ireland. The YPPD organisers maintain that it is a grave mistake to exclude emotional factors from conflict resolution efforts since they play a crucial role in the process of intercultural encounters and negotiations between the enemies. In this study, I have attempted to portray the YPPD programme through John W. Burton's model of problem-solving workshop conflict resolution elaborated by the theory of cultural conflict resolution. These approaches provide useful tools in analysing the programme: the Young Politicians Peace Dialogue programme combines many elements of Burtonian problem-solving workshop approach as well as elements of cultural conflict resolution and creation of a share culture. These approaches, however, neglect one of the most important characteristics of the programme, i.e. emotionality. In order to encompass the nature of a "dynamic workshop" with its recognition of important emotional factors in conflict resolution and inter-cultural negotiations, I have introduced a social psychological ingredient to this research and have attempted to look at a problem-solving workshop conflict resolution setting from a viewpoint of emotions and their role in conflict resolution context. This subject still needs further research, but I would strongly argue that, in addition to cognitive and cultural factors, emotions play a significant role in problem-solving workshop conflict resolution. As clichéd as it sounds, we are all human beings in the end: human rationality has its limitations and, therefore, cultural and emotional factors should not be underestimated in inter-cultural and inter-personal encounters between enemies to a conflict.

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