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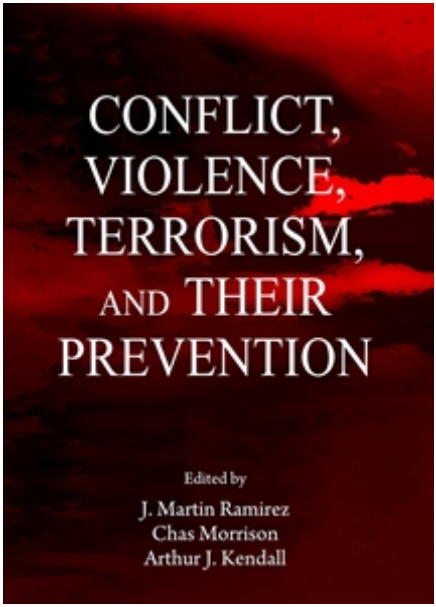

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MOVING TOWARDS PEACE[1]

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Abstract

In the late 1970s, the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA) launched a committee dedicated to studying whether there was anything that biologically prevents reducing violence. In 1986, more than

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twenty scholars from different scientific disciplines and from all corners of the world presented their final product, the Seville Statement on Violence at the *VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Cerebro y Agresión* (CICA) in Seville. Three years later in Paris, it was endorsed by the 25th General Conference of UNESCO. Its main message was that violence is avoidable and aggressiveness can be tamed. Our next step is to show how we can reduce the problems of violence and war and achieve a culture of peace. We hope to do this by deepening our understanding of aggression, violence, and war; explicating the meaning of peace; joining other scientists in working for human rights; stressing the importance of peace education; learning about schooling emotions; and developing techniques for nonviolent conflict resolution.

Keywords: aggression, violence, war, peace, human rights, schooling of emotions, nonviolent conflict resolution

Introduction

The Seville Statement on Violence (SSV) was written in the early 1980s by scientists from all over the world and from many different disciplines. It was presented in its final version at Seville in 1986. Its main message stated that peace is possible and that wars and violence can be ended. It made clear that nothing in biology stands in the way of a world without war (Adams, 1991). It specifically countered a view that because of biology nothing could be done about aggression. The SSV was followed by its endorsement by the 25th General Conference of UNESCO (1989), the creation of UNESCO's Culture for Peace Program (1994), and the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence (2001-2010).

This 'scientific step' toward peace concluded that aggressiveness can be tamed and consequently ending violence and war is possible. Far from condemning humanity to violence and war, it avoided falling into the psychological trap of believing that people cannot change and that peace is therefore impossible (Tyler, 2012). On September 14, 2012, the World Academy of Art and Science (*WAAS)* met in Dubrovnik Croatia. Its president Ivo Šlaus reminded us that history proves that war and even possession of destructive weapons does not guarantee victories in any conflicts and consequently "war is useless" (Šlaus, 2012). The very same day, during his visit in Lebanon, Pope Benedict XVI (2012) stated that peace is the only thing that works "violence destroys . . . it is not useful at all".

We are now aware that violence, and consequently war too, is avoidable, that aggressiveness can be tamed (Ramirez, 1994, 2003, 2013, in press), and that peace is the only thing that works. Now we scientists have to analyze how to achieve a culture of peace.

Obviously achieving peace is not an easy task, even if the wish for peace expresses a much-felt need in our days. The main message of the SSV, quite in the *spirit of the WAAS*, is that we should never forget that peace must begin in our minds with the belief that it is possible. As Albert Einstein (1931) said,

> Concern for man himself and his fate must always form the chief interest of all technical endeavors… in order that the creations of our minds shall be a blessing and not a curse to mankind.

Where and how can we counteract the prevailing culture of violence that has pervaded so many societies and transform them into a culture of peace? Let me offer a few precise suggestions, perhaps a little bit disjointed, and without the pretension of being comprehensive.

First, we have to understand the problem and its possible solutions. There are a few fundamental questions. What are aggression, violence, and war? What do we mean by peace? What are the main effects and interactions of biological and cultural factors?

Second, we want to emphasize the potential value of education. It provides a major contribution to the control of aggression, in the prevention of violence, and in the achievement of peace. We stress the importance of comprehensive and global education from a transdisciplinary approach. This education may allow us to school our emotions and teach us the value of peace. Learning self-control and developing our behavioral repertoire in handling conflict is especially important during the early critical periods of development. We should convince society about the benefits of investing adequate resources in such extensive educational efforts. Our schools need to develop their own behavioral repertoires in controlling aggression and solving conflicts beyond the use of threats or punishment.

If we want to guide society to prevent and control harmful aggression, we should integrate the various domains of science engaged in the study of aggression and peace from a transdisciplinary approach. The psychobiological development of the human organism has to be considered, given the special importance of early critical periods in the handling of conflict and violence.

Understanding aggression, violence, and war

While problems are obvious, effective solutions are not. Solutions depend on understanding problems. An effective means of understanding them is a systematic study of aggression, violence, and war using scientific techniques. We need an appropriate definition and measurement of aggression and a greater knowledge of its many causes and manifestations. With these, we can develop an appreciation of the possibilities to control it, and an understanding of some reasons why we have failed to control it in the past (Ramirez, 1997).

Biology and environment, taken separately, are not sufficient to cause anything in an organism's development. Neither can be a sufficient cause because they are always interacting with each other. The human brain should not be considered solely a generator of occurring aggressive behavior. Implicating only some humoral factor, such as blood fluid, or even a single gene is not valid. On the one hand, we have the organism with its physiology, memory, cognitions, perceptions, mental capabilities, and physical capabilities. On the other hand, we have the linguistic, social, cultural, and physical environment. The brain mediates between the organism and its environment. Because so many influences are involved, we can only clarify the reasons for becoming aggressive through transdisciplinary efforts. Biology is the foundation of all behavior only in the same way that bricks and paper are the foundations of all (traditional) libraries. The content of the library, while being printed on paper, is not otherwise dependent on the bricks and paper.

Biology is the means by which information is accumulated and transmitted both in day-to-day interactions among people (in the brain), and in the generation-to-generation transmission of adaptations right up to speciation information (in the genome). The environment is the source of the content of behavior and the interaction between the environment and the individual is what determines which behaviors will be selected, i.e., reinforced. Behavior, then, is the selection of what can be done from what is available. Successful behavior will have a higher probability of being repeated. Physical and physiological traits that contribute to surviving will have a higher probability of being passed on. In humans, survival of nonphysical elements may be prioritized over the physical. One's reputation, legacy, knowledge, religion, people, country, political belief, and so on may be the purpose of behavior beyond one's physical survival, inheritance and legacy (Robert Karl Stonjek, personal communication, 2012).

In a few words, organisms are open systems in many ways. Behavior is not solely controlled by biological characteristics, mainly of the brain and nervous system. Behavior is controlled largely by environmental events

surrounding and impinging upon that brain and nervous system. Human beings possess biological structures conducive to the use of language, but without a "linguistic environment", those structures would not function. When children who have been language deprived are discovered, they are unable to speak. This is frequently attributed to the lack of an appropriate linguistic environment during a developmentally critical period and/or lack of learning opportunity.

Control of aggression is a reality in innumerable settings, and further control of aggression is a realistic goal for society. Since no one factor overwhelmingly produces aggression, we need a comprehensive approach. This approach has to integrate different perspectives on violence, with an appreciation for the various objectively supported contributions of biology, learning mechanisms, social experiences, and, above all, their dynamic integration.

Basic scientists, within their experimental settings, are able to deal with variables a few at a time separating biological, psychosocial, and environmental influences. However, if we want to reach the ultimate goal of applying scientific information in the real world, we need to integrate those findings with findings from other methods. There is a constant and circular interaction among the findings from different disciplines. The phenomena we are studying also have many constant and circular interactions. Craig Ferris aptly said, "aggression is 100% environment and 100% heredity", in a dynamic interaction (Ferris & Grisso, 1996).

What does peace mean?

Within this task of constructing peace, the first challenge is to explain what we mean by peace. If we understand peace to be everything people need, personally and socially for their happiness, development is a very good way for achieving it. Even more, *development* may be a more exact new name for real peace. Development embraces dimensions as distinct as culture, economy, education, politics, protection of the weakest, and a profound respect for human dignity, for human life, and for our environment.

An optimal social approach toward peace would be to prevent the problems of violence and war with political, cultural, and economic interventions. Some interventions would be to alleviate poverty and other social conditions that breed violence (Ramirez, 1996, 2009). However, these physical goods and technical resources have to be subordinated to the human dignity. This real development of humanity is the only sure foundation on

which to lay a better welfare state, a happier society, and a more pleasant life.

Peace has to be supported by development and social justice, with a fairer distribution of the world's resources within and between societies. Therefore,

peace = development + justice.

Framing the idea of peace as human rights law

One approach to social justice is to frame international human rights law. The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) starts

> Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,
>
> Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,
>
> Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,
>
> Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,
>
> Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,
>
> Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,
>
> Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge … (UN General Assembly, 1948)

The ideas in this aspirational document are very much in line with what we hope to achieve. Over the years, several conventions have been passed to lay down the obligations of governments to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights. The kind of work we are advocating is very much in

line with Article 27 of the UDHR (UN general Assembly, 1948) and Article 15 (b) of the covenant (UN General Assembly, 1966) that specifies the how to implement those aspirations (UN General Assembly, 1966). These assert that all people have the right "to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications". Clearly, application of scientific knowledge about aggression and violence is a benefit.

Human rights law should be a part of the ethics codes of our scientific societies. In practices, our treatment of students, research respondents, and other scientists should be based on those principles. In other words, we should model principles of peace and justice in out scientific work.

A large number of scientific, technological, engineering, and medical associations have formed a transdisciplinary coalition to foster human rights. As of August 2013, there are 50 such organizations (Science and Human Rights Coalition, 2013). Although many of the societies are "American", this is simply because the effort to form the Coalition took place in the USA and the AAAS hosts its activities.

The Coalition is actively seeking to expand its number of associations. It particularly wants to include more organizations that are international. The Coalition provides opportunities for our scientific societies and for us as individuals to promote peace and justice by working for human rights. Organizations and individuals do not have to become members of AAAS to join the coalition.

Our organizations can become full members or become affiliated members. Individuals can become Affiliated Scientists and/or participate in the Coalition's work groups and/or enroll as volunteers via the On-call Scientists system (On-call Scientists, 2013). The On-call Scientists has two functions. The first function is to provide a place for scientists, technologists, engineers, and health professionals to use their professional knowledge, skill, and abilities to help human rights organizations all over the world. The second function is to provide a place for human right organizations to request specialist help. As scientists working for peace and justice, we are in a special position to recognize when specialists could help. We can then let the HR organizations know about this resource.

The importance of peace education

If we want to live in a permanent state of peace and well-being, we have to lay down solid foundations to make peace education available (Ramirez, 1994b).

One way to contribute toward the transformation of a culture of war into a culture of peace is to shift attitudes, values, and behavior to promote peace and social justice, and the nonviolent resolution of conflict. This primary scope, which is the aim of UNESCO's Culture of Peace Program (1994), requires cooperation at all levels, in a **transdisciplinary approach,** everyone working together for peace and reconciliation.

Education becomes a preventive measure that creates a culture that recognizes the **value of human life** and is less conducive to aggression. Individuals and caregivers have to be informed how to deal with the causes of aggression and its control. For example, by emphasizing achievement rather than competitiveness and by removing triggers for aggression, they can help children acquire this culture (Hinde, Nelson & Wrangham, 2010).

A very specific point that has to be raised is the in-group versus out-group issue: **us vs. them**. It is well known that, whereas prosociality[4] is directed primarily toward the group to which the individual belongs, selfishness is much less inhibited toward out-group members. This explains why acts of aggression are usually shown more readily to strangers and members of other groups than to members of the same group. Aggression's most extreme act, killing, which is morally forbidden in virtually all human societies, except where legitimized by societal consensus, is sanctioned and even praised in war, because propaganda portrays enemies as strange, dangerous, and even subhuman, as nonpersons. Similarly, in many societies killing individuals who are seen as outsiders may be permissible because of their behavior or mental state.

Much depends on the perceived boundaries between in-group and out-group. Given the genetic uniformity of the human species, there is no biological justification for feelings of in-group favoritism and out-group exclusion. Loving one's own culture is possible and praiseworthy (patriotism), but we can do it without denigrating others (nationalism)[5]. In this way, we can expand the scope of the in-group, provide better

[4] Prosociality is a term from social psychology that may be defined as a list of norms or "peace code" created to develop a positive reciprocity among a social group aimed to stir up the unity of people and their social common interests and goals and to prevent "social violence" in the same community.

[5] Nationalism is understood as "exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism)

education that emphasizes our common humanity instead of our cultural differences, and thereby extends the perceived boundaries of the in-group (Hinde, et al, 2010).

This increased connectedness of peoples around the world inspires a vision of a future in which the common humanity of all peoples will be globally recognized. This attitude matches quite well with the already mentioned spirit of the WAAS, which stated in its founding 1960 Manifesto

> Fellows share the ambition 'to rediscover the language of mutual understanding,' surmounting differences in tradition, language, and social structure which, unless fused by creative imagination and continuous effort, dissolve the latent human commonwealth in contention and conflict.

Probably this is the place to stress the importance of inculcating a culture of peace during early development. Humans are both biological and social beings. At birth, human brains are as yet only programmed for individual survival. This includes a tendency to take from the environment, which includes other people. During the different stages of development, our brains are socialized by community and culture. This process teaches habits of cooperation that require curbing unsocialized behavior. In other words, thefts from other members of the society and acts of violence against them are forbidden by cultural norms stored in developing brains by, for example, mimicking parents and role models. A culture of peace is a culture that bears such cooperation norms. A peace culture assumes that all human beings are members of one global community. Our norms apply not just to our tribal group, but apply to people of the world generally. Expanding the scope of the in-group can be expected to continue to promote increased prosociality to everybody. Instead of us versus them, "Us Plus Them" (Pittinsky, 2012).

We have to adapt education for peace to different developmental stages, starting with perinatal health care, progressing through raising and formal education of children, and continuing into adult social settings. Obviously, the family has a pivotal task in this education. Rearing by adults sensitive to the child's needs and exercising firm but reasoned control is especially potent in promoting prosociality. A positive task would be to foster **parenting programs**, helping parents to improve their skills, and ensuring that orphans are supported by others. A flagship program, known as the Triple P, "positive parenting program", was created by Matthew R. Sanders and colleagues at the University of Queensland in Australia. It evolved from a small "home-based, individually administered training program for parents of disruptive preschool children" into a comprehensive preventive whole-population intervention program invested in heavily by public bodies in the

UK and beyond. Although it has been hailed as a success around the world, rigorous applied social science methods (i.e., program evaluation) have not been used to evaluate it (Wilson et al., 2012).

Schooling of Emotions

Besides formal education, one needs to learn how to deal with emotion, how to transform anger and fear into love and compassion, how to develop forgiveness, how to communicate positively with others.

An important aspect of this global education is teaching emotional and social competencies within **prevention programs**. For instance, education should include competencies in impulse control, managing anger, and finding creative solutions to social predicaments. Emotional skills have to be also stressed: self-awareness; identifying, expressing, and managing feelings; impulse control; delaying gratification; and handling stress and anxiety (Goleman, 1995). **Schooling of emotions** is quite effective, given the influenceability and malleability of feelings, especially during the early years.

Chronic anger is a habit that **can also change** through education. For instance, teaching basic elements of emotional awareness, particularly mindfulness of anger as it begins to stir, ability to regulate it once it has begun (substituting reasonable thoughts for cynical, mistrustful ones), and empathy (learning to see things from the other person's perspective) are very useful. As Redford Williams said,

> the antidote to hostility is to develop a more trusting heart. All it takes is the right motivation. When people see that their hostility can lead to an early grave, they are ready to try" (Williams, 1989; see Ramirez et al., 2002).

Forgiveness of offenses is another ideal if one really wants to achieve peace in the world, because it can be a powerful means of healing. Although you still see the wound, you forget its pain. It helps you to continue in the face of adversity. In its broadest sense, forgiveness encompasses many virtues. Michael Henderson (2009) analyzes five critical components: (1) dialogue, addressing the root causes of conflicts, instead of searching for revenge; (2) reaching out to “the other”, because without forgiveness and trust many good initiatives will be doomed to fail; (3) moving beyond victimhood (Henderson refers to a very illustrative story: an Orthodox Jew, Yitzak Frankelthal, after Hamas kidnaped and killed his son Arik, founded an organization, “Parent Circle”, to bring together parents from both sides for personal support and for meeting with

governmental representatives and decision makers); (4) taking responsibility; and (5) creating safe space.

Forgiveness can be considered at personal level and in the public arena. Offenses are easier to forgive to the extent that they seem small and understandable and when we see that we could treat the offender similarly. Having been taught from an early age to be more empathetic, one would lean toward relationship building and would not emphasize the vengeful side of justice (Exline, Baumeister, Roy et al., 2008).

In the public realm, another pivotal piece of forgiveness is related to historic grievances, leading to apologies and reparations. Are we condemned to follow a wrong past, or can we make a break with it, if new situations allow us to adopt new truths?

Conflict resolution

Nonviolent conflict resolution skills and habits can be instilled via education. Educations should foster a deeper understanding of conflict and violence prevention. It should lead to behavioral repertoire for dealing with conflict that is wider than passivity or aggression. Given the ultimate futility of violent tactics we should teach concrete skills. For example, when tension erupts, one can seek out a mediator to help settle arguments rather than have the conflict escalate.

I would also like to stress the importance of adequate training in preventive diplomacy for resolution of conflict between states. We need outstanding peacemakers to help resolve disputes in the world. Peacemakers must remember that successful politics is not about finding people who agree with you. It is about making difficult decisions without killing each other. Dialogue is the only way to peace.

A good agreement is one that is wise and efficient, which improves both parties' relationship. It has to satisfy both parties' interests and be fair and lasting, most notably where there is a major imbalance of power. This is the approach of a technique called “principled negotiation”, taught by Roger Fisher, a lawyer and peacemaker who spent 40 years on the faculty of Harvard Law School. This technique allows parties to decide questions on their merits rather than on the haggling skill – or willpower – of the people involved.

> In any negotiation—even with terrorists—it is vital to separate the people from the problem; to focus on the underlying interests of both sides, fine-tuning their demands, rather than stake out unwavering positions; and to explore all possible options before making a decision. The parties should

> try to build a rapport, check each other out, even just by shaking hands or eating together. Each should 'listen actively' to what the other is saying. They should recognize the emotions on either side, from a longing for security to a craving for status. And they should try to get inside each other's heads. (Fisher & Ury, 1981).

A few situations among many where Fisher put his theory into practice are below. At the Geneva summit of 1985, Ronald Reagan took his advice and did not confront Mikhail Gorbachev, but instead sat by a roaring fire with him while they exchanged ideas. More summits followed. The Middle East brought his most public success. Fisher's principles were used throughout the Camp David negotiations of 1978, from "brainstorming" over Jimmy Carter's draft of an agreement (23 rewrites) to the moment when Carter presented Menachem Begin, the Israeli leader, with signed pictures dedicated, by name, to each of Begin's grandchildren. Deeply affected, Begin began to talk about his family. The accords were signed that day. However, possibly the one that satisfied Fisher most was his success in ending apartheid in South Africa without resorting to violence. The Afrikaner cabinet and ANC[6] officials, trained separately by him in negotiation workshops, agreed to open the door to the New South Africa (The Economist, 2012).

The considerations mentioned above are valid not only in a public context, but also at a personal level. Negotiation is a fact of our daily life. We are all negotiators, whether we realize it or not. We negotiate something nearly every day: what to do today, what to have for supper, how, and where to spend the weekend. We try to agree on a price for a house or bargain for a souvenir in a market. Who has not tried some haggling tricks in a souk, pretending not to be interested, refusing to react to pressure, being prepared to walk away? All are examples of questions decided among people with different interests. Even if at first glance we may think our interests are competing, maybe they overlap, or they complement one another and only the positions of the parties are actually at odds. By focusing on the interests, rather than the positions, parties can invent options for mutual gain and resolve issues to everyone's satisfaction.

Final Considerations

6 ANC = African National Congress, the main party against apartheid, and since 1994 in the South African government.

This important task of achieving a culture of peace, which we suggested doing through a series of means, such as working for human rights, peace education, schooling of emotions, and conflict resolution, is not exclusively the domain of government, police and other security forces, or any other public institutions or authorities. On the contrary, achieving a culture of peace demands the participation of everyone in society: educational institutions, civic organizations, fraternal organizations, professional societies, religious movements, mass media, families and, last but not least, individuals. Each of us has a specific responsibility in this achievement. Although these tasks may be mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants.

> In the words of the SSV (1986), just as "wars begin in the minds of men, peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace." The responsibility lies with each of us!

On his 1987 visit to Gdansk, Poland, cradle of Solidarity, John Paul II told a youth group that

> Before there is a revolution in the world, it has to be a revolution in our hearts, minds and characters, out of which will come truth, life and justice (Luxmoore, Babiuch, 1999, p. 214).

The time has come to take on the commitment to heal our society, the world, and ourselves by the power of truth, life, and justice, especially through science.

I am aware that achieving peace and getting it into our mind and hearts is difficult. Consequently, patience must become a habit that allows us to deal with life more "peacefully". Nevertheless, with the confidence of knowing that peace is possible we can influence our surroundings positively and make the world better; even though it is indeed a hard task. To achieve this, we should never forget to **develop inner peace**.

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