

Culture of conflict



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Culture of Conflict Ala Z. Shbib WRI 102: Reading Across Curriclm Zofia

Reid American University of Sharjah April 5th, 2010 All over the world there are nearly 195 countries and every single country has its own culture. Culture is the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular society and between every country there are certain conflicts or disagreements. Despite of the tremendous development that mankind has achieved there are armed conflicts; blood is being shed, and also other unarmed ones occur. The question that arises is that why there are conflicts between cultures Conflicts rose from differentiation in religious believes, getting hold of natural resources, and imperialism. Religious conflicts arise by the kind of people who do not accept other believes and stick to the word and not the spirit of their scriptures so they fight those who do not follow what they believe in. Some fundamentalists believe that they are God??™'s tool to spread the religion, have divinely right; and other conflicts are of sectarian nature. Muslim fundamentalists believe that modernization which influenced even Muslim countries has resulted in evil deeds and behavior.

They see themselves as God??™'s tool to correct behavior and remove regimes looking forward to make the whole world submissive to Islam. Zack Beauchamp (2007) in his essay titled ??? Islamic Fundamentalism Causes Terrorism??? argued that ??? Al Qaeda??™'s goal is not merely to drive the west out of the Middle East but to establish a new caliphate that will create an Islamic world order???. Furthermore, Muslim Brotherhood groups are pressurizing governments to implement Islamic Sharia being the word of God. Revealing the group??™'s goals, Hasan al-Banna the founder and Supreme of Egypt??™'s Muslim Brotherhood said: ??? That a free Islamic

state may arise in this free fatherland, acting according to the precepts of Islam, applying its social regulations, proclaiming its sound principles, and broadcasting its sage mission to all mankind??? (al-Banna, 2008, p. 20). The group has and is still pressurizing the government to become a Muslim country despite the fact that there are minorities of other religions such as Christians. Should a government do not positively respond the result would be ??? Jihad??? attacks and blood shedding.

In addition to killing, persecution is another result of religious conflict. Israel killed, blockaded, and imposed curfew on the Palestinians in order to push the Palestinians leave their land. The Jews believe that they are divinely chosen people and that the land of Palestine is promised by God to be given to Abraham as per the Old Testament.

In the name of religion, they are fighting not only the Palestinians but also have aggressive attitude towards any nation or individual who may oppose their cause. The Jews lobbied and described whoever opposes their cause as anti-Semitism. They succeeded in spreading this propaganda worldwide through the United States of America. As Richard Webster (2005) a British essayist, author, and scholar said: ??? The root cause of anti-Semitism in the Middle East can be found in the history of that region, especially in Palestine. Without a solution to the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, anti-Semitism can only increase in the Middle East???. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is between people of different origin.

However, there are conflicts that occur within one community. Sectarian unrest is found within one society depriving people from social and economic

development. Muslims and Christians are fighting in Nigeria, for example, over power. The north of the countries is Muslim, whereas, the south is Christian.

Most fights and attacks are centered in Jos which is located half the way between the north and the south. Several sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria have resulted in deaths, burn of churches and displacement from homes of thousands of Christians (Wikipedia. org). In spite of the lap of hundreds of years over the first spark of hatred, Muslims and Hindus in India are unable to live harmoniously and are fighting up-to-date. Instead of paying efforts to help the multi-sectarian country live peacefully, the ethnic nature conflict was supported by the ruling Hindus party Bartha Janata. Muslims form a minority ethnic group in the multi-sectarian country which is of Hindus and Sikh. The hatred between the two sects is dated back to hundreds of years and in the eyes of many Hindus no Muslim can ever truly belong to India (countercurrents.

org, 2003). Getting hold of natural resources such as fertile land, oil, and water is another cause behind conflicts in the world. Land is the most important resource for living and the key to wealth and power and individuals who do not have lands are treated as inferior and subsequently cannot enjoy their legitimate rights. Some African countries have this kind of conflict within their boundaries. Dr Mona Ayoub a teacher of local government and public administration at the University of Khartoum said: ??? Sudan??™s conflicts have many causes, but at the root of each conflict are questions over the control and distribution of resources??? and continued saying that Darfur ??“ a region in Sudan ??“ people and

government are fighting for the sake of the wealthy and fertile agriculture lands which led to have conflicts between the Midoub and Berti in Northern Darfur and the Beni Halba and Fur in Southern Darfur (c-r. org, 2006).

Furthermore, conflicts occur when the government puts its hand on a land where people are living and force them to move in order to use this area for an incompatible use such as a dam or natural resource development making the moved citizens react violently.

Countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Mozambique are examples of citizens suffering from their government's treatment (usaid. gov, 2005).

No matter how much rich a country is, it always seeks for more and more resources of wealth even if it had to violate norms, ethics and even neighborhood rights in order to achieve its goal. An armed savage attack was done by Iraq against its neighbor Kuwait in August 1990 over oil. Iraq has invaded Kuwait to get hold of the oil-rich country claiming it is one of its cities. Defending its welfare in the Gulf, the United States, which is the main importer of the Kuwaiti oil and its neighbor Saudi Arabia, rushed to kick out the Iraqi army. Michael T. Klare (2008) the Five College Professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, interviewed by Julian Brookes an editor of MotherJones.

com, said: ??? So when George Bush, Sr. announced U. S. intervention in the Persian Gulf conflict in 1990 it was explicitly to protect oil, the oil of Saudi Arabia.

And that led to a massive deployment of American forces to the region, to the acquisition of more military bases, and later to the quarantine of Iraq???

However, keeping its military bases in the region, the USA aggravates another tension and fears of war in the Middle East. As well, conditions of conflict may escalate when countries attempt to get hold of resources in other countries.

The United States, Russia, China, and Japan are trying to control the sources of the natural gas in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Klare addresses in the same interview that this is not going to have an immediate conflict but will create the conditions in which a local conflict can escalate into something very much bigger. Although scientists have found alternative to oil and gas for producing energy such as solar and wind energy, they are unable to generate water, the source of living on earth, and the cause behind conflicts among countries. Such conflicts are found especially in areas where there is scarcity of water and high population.

In the Middle East there are conflicts between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq on the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers and also between Israel, Jordan, Syria, and the West Bank on the Jordan-Yarmuk River. The problem with Turkey, Syria, and Iraq is that around 70 percent of the Tigris-Euphrates River is being used by Turkey leaving Syria and Iraq with insufficient water. Christine Drake (2003) is a professor of geography in the Department of Political Science and Geography at Old Dominion University in Norfolk said: ???..., Syrias claims that Turkey is deliberately reducing the flow of the Euphrates are countered by Turkeys claim that the region suffers from periodic droughts???. Moreover, Scarcity of water has aggravated conflict between fighting nations such as the Arabs and the Israelis.

Israel, Syria, Jordan, and the West Bank are in conflict on the water of the Yarmuk and Jordan Rivers. The economies and societies of the countries in the basin of the Jordan-Yarmuk are very vulnerable to any restrictions in their water supplies; hence, the situation is highly volatile (Drake, 2003). In the animal world, the head of a group of bulls, for example, is determined after fights occur and the strongest survive. Having such an attitude represented in practicing imperialism in political, economical and social forms of domination, is more or less inhuman. When a country sees itself superior and has the power, it tries to dominate other countries and control destinies of what it sees inferior countries and communities. For instance, the United States has exploited the tension and political vacuum in Afghanistan and the region to have control on it. Instead of genuinely help that area settle down, America has used individuals such as Osama bin Laden, and militias such as Taliban aggravating the tension in the region. In 1979 the CIA cooperated with the Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) to reduce the Afghan's energy which led to have tens of thousands of radical mujahedeen consequently emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan (Roy, 2005).

As well, Osama Bin Laden was America's tool to carry out terror attacks. Roy (2005) continued in her article and said about Osama Bin Laden He's America's family secret (p. 343). The US, has appointed itself the president of the one-pole world and is playing a policing role not only in this region but also in the whole world. President Bush's ultimatum to the people of the world " Either you are with us or you are with

terrorists???" is a piece of presumptuous arrogance. It??™s not a choice that people want to, need to, or should have to make.???" (Roy, 2005, p.

344). Unlike the earlier military occupation, a modern type represented in controlling countries via economy has appeared and dominated countries have no choice but to accept. China, for example is happy with the transfer of Western factories to its lands.

However, despite the fact that such transfer has helped in offering job opportunities, it negatively impacted levels of wages and pollution in China. In a letter to the editor (1994) published in The New York Times ??????, workers in the newly industrializing countries have little choice but to work for low wages if they are to earn a living.???" Instead of assisting undeveloped countries adopt technology, the developed world thought only of reducing costs of their industries and making more profits by transferring factories into low-waged countries. Moreover, some countries were deprived from getting technological needs as a penalty imposed on them because they were not ??? obedient??™. In 2002, America has asked the Syrian government to cease supporting terrorism which is representing in sheltering Hamas. Syria does not see Hamas as a terrorist group but rather a land and right defender. As Syria refused to listen to the dictated orders, America imposed different sanctions including a ban on military and dual-use technology exports to Syria (niacouncil. org, 2002).

However, controlling other nations did not stop at economy but went deeper to invade culture and life style. Globalization was the term created by the West to impose culture, habits, ethics and life style that they believe should

prevail in the whole world. The West urged other nations to open up claiming that such would bring nations closer. Such cultural invasion or social imperialism was subject to debates and opposition especially at conflicted areas such as the Middle East. Scaring from penalties should they disobey; and aiming at proofing openness with the West, some Arab TV channels, for example, has purchase the title of Western TV shows and produced Arabic versions such as the famous shows ??? American Idle??? and ??? Star Academy???. These shows resulted in having a generation whose only measurement of modernization is to what extent a person lives the American lifestyle in all aspects. As these shows present cultural concepts ethics and morals contradict with those of Arabs and Muslims, governments are struggling to help protect morals of youths and maintain the identity of their nations.

This is not only the situation in Arab countries but also in communities across the world. Mortimer B. Zuckerman (2006) said that: ??? The only things that “ every community in the world from Zanzibar to Hamburg recognizes in common” are American cultural artifacts–the jeans and the colas, the movies and the TV sitcoms, the music, and the rhetoric of freedom???.

Many analysts argue that conflict between countries is necessary for them to boom in all fields of life. Mario Vargas Llosa sees that conflicts between nations can be solved through globalization be it social or economic. He argued in his article ??? The Culture of Liberty??? (2005, p. 249) ??? Globalization will not make local cultures disappear; in a framework of worldwide openness, all that is valuable and worthy of survival in local cultures will find fertile ground in which to bloom???. Despite that

globalization might improve and boom nations; it makes people fight for their identity, and increases poverty and civil wars. Therefore, not only Arab and Muslim governments are struggling to protect their culture and identity, but also in Western countries such as the French government organized campaigns in defense of a French ??? cultural identity??? supposedly threatened by globalization as many of their industries such as fashion and dining, theater and art were negatively affected following the invasion of American fast food, fashion, and movies (Llosa, 2005, p. 244).

? As well, globalization has negative impact on society as it increases poverty and promotes civil wars. For instance, with globalization India??™s industry is getting affected by the open market and the removal of import restrictions. Vandana Shiva (2004) stressed that for many people in India, globalization has created for them poverty and destitution. Moreover, globalization creates conditions for the civil war to occur in societies. Steven Staples (2005) said: ??? There are more wars being fought today??” mostly in the Third World??” than there were during the Cold War. Most are not wars between countries, but are civil wars where the majority of deaths are civilians, not soldiers???. Living peacefully and harmoniously on Earth is the dream of people who believe in everyone??™s right to share life equally. However, people and nations will never reach that point, nor they will have agreement on every life aspect because the reasons behind having conflicts are considerably permanent.

The number of conflicts might decrease or they might be less severe but there will be no way to avoid conflicts because all the time there will be people who are obsessed with religious ideologies, have the desire to get

hold of natural resources, conquer the world, play a policing role, or dominate the world.? References Al-Banna, H. (2008). Between Yesterday and Today. In J. Calvert, Islamism: a documentary and reference guide (P. 20-25).

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