

Which strategies for conflict resolution would you employ?

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Which strategies for conflict resolution would you employ in cases of violent ethnic conflict? Explain why giving examples of success and or failure. 3, 534 in Northern Ireland. Approximately 140, 000 in Former Yugoslavia.

Approximately 800, 000 in Rwanda. The list goes on. Violent ethnic conflict is simply a harsh reality of life that has cost millions of innocent civilians their lives.

We have witnessed its atrocities first hand in our lifetimes, and have sometimes felt powerless as individuals to curtail it. We can employ successful strategies for conflict resolution but the question really is how do we implement them successfully? There are strategies working, but the key now is to identify the successful strategies and be quicker to implement them in the future. In July 2010 Stefan Wolff declared that casualties from ethnic conflict have decreased by two-thirds in just over a decade - 12, 000 killed in ethnic wars of 1997/1998, today this figure stands at just over 4, 000 (Wolff, 2010).

Ethnic conflict is unlikely to ever go away, but the death toll has reduced somewhat. Is reducing the death toll the best success we can hope for in resolving conflict? Will ethnic conflict ever go away or can we only moderate the violence? Have we eventually learned that war is not the answer or have we simply become more efficient at peacekeeping? Are these deaths simply down to ethnic pride or is there another reason which spurs man on to kill his own people? This essay will attempt to determine the true meaning and motives for ethnic conflict.

It will then examine what the “ strategies” for resolving ethnic conflict are, and examine the application of these strategies as the causes and resolutions to various conflicts throughout the globe. It will draw a helpful analysis of the cases of Rwanda as a failure and Northern Ireland as a success and what we can learn from it. Ultimately it will try and discover what the best strategies for conflict resolution are in order to minimise the trail of destruction left behind by violent ethnic conflict...

US President John Adams once asked “ Do I have to study politics and war so that my sons may have the liberty to studymathematicsandphilosophy”? We must first look into the reasoning of ethnic conflict before we can achieve peace and freedom. The theories behind the motives for violent ethnic conflict are rooted in the origins of nationalism. Connor Walker describes the nation state as “ a state that self-identifies as deriving its political legitimacy from serving as a sovereign entity for a nation as a sovereign territorial unit” (Walker, 2004, P. 2). Theorists argue that this is an evolution from the simple meaning of the word “ nation” (a community that share a common ancestry) per se. Ethnic conflict may simply be a process of evolution as nations look to establish themselves and represent a community of belonged people -the citizens. Perhaps there must be a common bond for a nation to remain at peace. Anthony Smith notes that ‘ not only must nations be founded upon ethnic cores if they are to endure’ (Smith, 1986, p. 207).

Therefore if a nation is colonised or artificially planted with a different tribe, a friction is likely to occur. This of course is the starting point of ethnic war. Ethnic violence ensues. By studying the origins of their motives we can

understand their ailment better and it's then easier to cure. The very first rule in employing successful strategies is having a deep understanding of the motives of the conflict. Engaging in conflict resolution without knowing the full purposes of the conflict is political recklessness.

We must sympathise before we can strategize (Hutchinson, Breuilly, and Smith, 1994, P. 104). Nationalism and ethnic identity are the core tenets of ethnic conflict hence the phrase “ ethno-nationalism”. Extreme nationalists will harbour a need for identity and this involves being amongst their own citizens. It is these very people, extreme nationalists, who are the principle actors in ethnic conflict; it's essentially a mass crusade driven by unsatisfied nationalists (Hastings, 1997, p. 27).

Ethnic conflict therefore in lay man's terms is the struggle for man to be amongst his own people in a community. Furthermore they are likely to want this community to be the chief and sole power in a nation as in the case of the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in Rwanda. The one question that remains to be answered however is why experts believe that ethnic conflict has become more prevalent since the Cold war? Academics like Samuel Huntington predicted a proliferation of conflicts fuelled by tribalism, resource scarcity and overpopulation (Huntington, 1993, P. 2). The reality is that this period witnessed a rise in ethnically-informed secessionist movements – mainly in the former communist states like in Former Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Wallensteen and Sollenberg hold that “ the displacements of capitalist states were accompanied by a decline in total warfare, ethnic wars and the number of refugees and displaced persons” (Wallensteen and

Sollenberg, 1995, P. 350). Ethnic conflict certainly seems to be a “ new phrase” but the reality is that unrest and disillusionment always occurred in states.

It's also a certainty that it's in man's natural instinct to defend himself and what he loves until he is secure and established - much like his state. Each case of violent ethnic conflict is different, but the motives remain largely the same. Those who plan strategies for ethnic conflict should be well briefed on the case. Understanding is crucial; otherwise the results are severe... There are common themes in the *raison d'etre* of ethnic nationalist violence - lack of belonging, lack of understanding and a lack of true leadership. Edward Everett once said that “ education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army”.

It's the very people who commit the atrocities that don't have these basic needs. The case of Rwanda provides us with the perfect breeding ground for violent ethnic conflict - uneducated peoples led by a brainwashed Government. In April 1994 two tribes strived for these basic needs as a longstanding ethnic struggle culminated with 20% of an entire population being wiped out by genocide. This case provides us with all the ingredients of mismanagement of conflict strategy which only coerced further violence - approximately 800, 000 deaths in just over 100 days.

It was managed so badly that it prompted former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to declare in 2000 that “ the international community failed Rwanda and that must always leave us with a bitter sense of regret” (Doyle, BBC, 2004). In this case the minority Tutsi tribe were overthrown by the Hutu tribe

in the rebellion of 1959-62. The Tutsi tribe looked to seize back power when the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front - a Tutsi dominated rebel group) invaded Rwanda from the Ugandan border. The small East African country was in crisis until an eventual ceasefire in 1993 with assistance from neighbours Tanzania.

This however came to an abrupt end in April 1994 when leader Habyarimana was assassinated by the RPF leader Paul Kagame (Hintjens, 2008, P. 5-7). The Hutu's responded with mass slaughter (genocide) of the Tutsi's and their own people who they believed to be collaborationists. The ceasefire in 1993 provided Rwanda with an opportunity to resolve the conflict peacefully but as we will see the Government provided weak strategies to consolidate the peace. The only solace we can take from 1994 is what we can learn from it in order to strategize better in the future.

All the elements are present to encourage violent ethnic conflict; the strategies employed only incited more violence. In Rwanda there was a lack of education at all levels, from the people on the ground right up to brainwashed Government officials who were obsessed by power and sought to accomplish it all costs. Education comes from liberal thinking, being open to a variety of sources and having the resources in place to attain this (Dewey, 1994, P2). None of this was possible in a country of authoritarian rule with little choice or democracy for voters.

The then incumbent Prime Minister Jean Kambanda revealed in his testimony before the International Criminal Tribunal that genocide was openly discussed at cabinet meetings, and that the people believed that Rwanda's

problems would be over without the Tutsi (Doyle, BBC 2004). The people were blinded by myths; they believed that peace pacifists were collaborating with the other side. A large part of this comes down to how the media was run. The Hutu's controlled the radio and the many who could not read bought into their propaganda campaign (Melvern, 2006, P. 7).

For those who could read would read the Hutu run journal "Kangura", and its "ten commandments", one of which being "the Hutu should have no mercy on the Tutsi's" (Melvern, 2004, P. 49). The ancestral divide in Rwanda called for conflict resolving strategies to be put in place. Instead the authorities increased the divide by insisting on "tribal ID's" and encouraging identification myths about the other tribe such as skin colour etc. The Government for their part organised two militia groups to assist the killings – the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi (Melvern, 2006, pp. 4-27). We can still see the effects of poor leadership today as Libya has been torn apart under the Gaddafi regime. Ethnic conflict like this highlights the importance of citizens to fight for democracy, to fight for freedom, and fight for choice. The leader of a country has a monumental bearing on the outcomes of a nation. We must fight for our freedom to choose. This involves participating in democracy to help maintain it (Diamond, 2009, P. 12). Strategy starts on the ground with the citizens; afterwards power is vested in the Government.

Unfortunately in Rwanda a corrupt power influenced the media, which in turn corrupted an unwitting population. Sometimes history and circumstances can be unfortunate on a country like Rwanda and the people may have little choice. A country in trouble may often require outside assistance to attain

peace. This is a major factor why Rwanda failed and Kofi Annan's words pay testament to this. In their hour of need Tanzania, other neighbouring countries and the UN were helpless. Rwanda was ultimately left with nothing but warmongering strategies and this is why it failed.

A case like Rwanda needs outside help, and hopefully we have learned to be more responsive. Unfortunately the circumstances were ideal for genocide in Rwanda which probably afforded the outside forces with little chance. Ultimately there was no democracy in the strategy in Rwanda. The natives and outside forces were powerless to strategize effectively and the result is a lesson we must take to future conflicts. The Northern Irish story began in 1609 with the Ulster plantations, but it's "The Troubles" which are commonly understood as beginning in the sixties (McGarry, O'Leary, 1995, P. 18).

The violence was led by the armed campaigns of the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force). Alongside the violence, there was a political deadlock between the major political parties in Northern Ireland over the future status of Northern Ireland and the prospective form of government. On learning from the case of Rwanda we now can now examine successful strategies for conflict resolution. . In May 2007 two men from contrasting backgrounds (Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley) met at Stormont and finally shook hands, sealing a horrible conflict that sentenced 3, 534 people to early deaths.

However 4 years later on June 20th of this year and the violence threatened to escalate again... Attaining peace may be a greater challenge than ever in

two communities of disenfranchised people. Assuming that fair democracy is being practiced the responsibility now rests with the powers that be - the Government. The role of the leader is central, a leader is the figurehead for an interest group and his/her attitude towards a conflict will be examined carefully (Ackerman, 2002, p. 32). In 1997 Ireland and Britain elected new Governments. Both leaders Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair made the Northern question a priority.

Tony Blair's first reaction in the North was to hand down the gauntlet to the IRA who refused to abide by a ceasefire at the time (incidentally a year before the Omagh bombings). Tony Blair stated " my message to Sinn Fein is clear. The settlement train is leaving. I want you on that train. But it is leaving anyway and I will not allow it to wait for you". The impetus that the new leaders brought to the table was a positive strategy; they brought a renewed energy and innovation reinvigorating the campaign. The primary strategy for solving conflict is peace-talks and negotiation.

This involves compromises, consensus-building and some level of mutual trust. The party leader must earn this and their personality is a key factor in an attempt to reach an agreement. A peace agreement or accord is a formal commitment between hostile parties to end a war. In the North a simple ceasefire wasn't enough, a state with its own Government had to be established (Bew, 1994, p. 32). Regardless of the political decisions made, negotiators have to prepare for " spoilers" (groups that have an interest in sabotaging the process) and public rejection of settlements.

When the public has experienced significant trauma, it may not be ready to make compromises or accept a negotiated solution, as happened repeatedly in the North. It is the task of the leadership to generate support for peace. The personality of the parties involved is a very significant in making peace talks a successful strategy. Peace talks are the primary means of conflict resolution so it could be said that appointing the right negotiation team is a fundamental strategy to success, which thankfully it was in May 2007.

Leaders have a role to play outside of peace talks too. The “ambassadorial” role in everyday society involves sharing with people who have suffered. Diplomacy is at the heart of conflict resolution strategy. It shows that a Government cares and is still in control in a society that still abides by law and order. In August 1998, Mary McAleese walked the streets of Omagh consoling the victims, while her husband Martin visited families of UVF militants. This showed that they were not isolated but that the World cared, Ireland cared and there was an urgency to end the conflict.

This was above strategy, it made strategy essential. Peace had to be achieved, and the leaders were relentless until it was achieved. Dr. Matt Cannon explained the need for a multi-level approach at a lecture in October. This involves all levels of the community coming together, the Government uniting and external sources showing interest in resolving conflict (Cannon, 2011). All tiers are uniting to create a powerful peace-building team. In Guatemala and Northern Ireland, civil society forums were established to promote wider societal involvement in the peace process.

The terms “ third side” or “ track three” are sometimes used to describe the effort of engaging and uniting individuals at the community level to generate “ people’s power,” public opinion and coalitions in support of peace. In Northern Ireland the communities have come together to rally against the violence and promote peace which is a massive help to the process. One practical example was the replacement of sectarian murals with peace-walls. A common memory and identity is now being created in Northern Ireland. A segregated community is being replaced by a common identity.

Both sides are remembering each other’s losses and giving up something for the common good. There is now evidence of shared features such as memorials, museums and holidays which are also finally being reflected by a common Government. Dennis Murray worked for most of his career as Northern Ireland correspondent for the BBC. This September BBC filmed a documentary covering his reporting of the Troubles. The documentary finished with Murray’s parting thought - “ we can’t build a new future without unravelling the past.

The story of conflict in Northern Ireland will never finish” (From Our Ireland correspondent, 2011). The case of the Troubles is as close as we may ever come to conflict resolution and it’s equally fascinating to analyse the strategies employed in this quest. The strategy that now needs to be employed in the North is maintaining peace. There may be no textbook strategy to resolving conflict; it is an ongoing effort to maintain peace in Northern Ireland. Each case is different. Peacemaking in Northern Ireland is a model for resolving ethnic conflict resolution throughout the World.

The one factor that appears to be in Northern Ireland's favour as opposed to Rwanda however is that Northern Ireland was a developed country with a better environment to carry out a conflict resolution. The first virtues in successful conflict resolution are patience and persistence. In Northern Ireland there was a persistence to achieve an end to violence and achieve peace by successful political means. The security forces in Northern Ireland enforced the law. This strategy of law enforcement brought the paramilitaries to realisation that they could not win (Ruane and Todd, 1996, P. 17).

There was no overnight solution to ending the violence. The British Government admitted that the IRA could not be eliminated militarily. Ultimately ethnic violence is a force. It requires a strong team to defeat it. International interest strengthens a peacebuilding team massively. Bill Clinton's regime shared an interest in the Troubles and appointed George Mitchell as special envoy. He was presented with the Liberty Medal in 1998, where he stated: " I believe there's no such thing as a conflict that can't be ended. They're created and sustained by human beings. They can be ended by human beings.

No matter how ancient the conflict, no matter how hateful, no matter how hurtful, peace can prevail" (Mitchell, 1998). Northern Ireland now had a combat team, this is where Rwanda failed where external sources were powerless. A case of violent ethnic conflict that becomes unmanageable is referred to the UN. The United Nations was established to replace the flawed League of Nations in 1945 in order to maintain international peace and

promote cooperation. Peacekeeping is a primary mission on the UN with the aim of helping countries torn by conflict and creating the conditions for lasting peace.

It is the last resort following peacemaking and peacebuilding (Bellamy, Williams and Griffin, 2004, P. 5). The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorise peacekeeping operations. The role of peacekeepers is to help uphold any agreements made during peacetalks. Peacekeeping provided ways to achieve self-sustaining peace.

Another viewpoint raises the problem that the peacekeeping may soften the troops and erode their combat ability, as the mission profile of a peacekeeping contingent is totally different from the profile of a unit fighting an all-out war. Before peacekeepers should be deployed the UN has a role in providing assistance in the development of human rights and democracy in the various countries and preventing these countries from becoming a breeding ground for ethnic conflict like Rwanda was (Jasper, 2001, P89). The UN also has a role to encourage more women to become involved in conflict resolution.

The lack of involvement for women has a negative impact on resolving conflict and in society. In this essay we have seen what works as successful strategies for conflict resolution. First of all we must be vigilant and defend democracy - preventing conflict from occurring in the first place. We must

also uphold law and order as a combat to violence. We must participate in peace and democracy and elect the right leaders and believe in their charisma and diplomacy to solve conflict. We must also acknowledge the roles of member and identity in building an imagined community as part of a three-tier approach.

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