

On identity issues as the starting point for normative conflict analysis

Los problemas de identidad como punto de partida para el análisis normativo de conflictos

Ángel Rodríguez Aurrecoechea
arodaur@outlook.com

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18543/djhr-3-2018pp77-97>

Submission date: 23.04.2018
Approval date: 13.10.2018

Summary: Introduction. 1. Theoretical considerations. 1.1. The problems of mainstream conflict analysis. 1.2. Peace journalism: taking the focus off the endpoint of conflict. 1.3. Identity issues: the main focus in the context of globalization. 1.4. Identity issues: from globalization to other contexts. 1.5. Identity issues as the starting point for normative conflict analysis. 1.6. Context and target group considerations. 2. Application. 2.1. Case study: the Basque conflict. 2.2. Objectives: bridging the normative gap through high level & grassroots solutions. 2.3. Initiative proposal. 2.4. Objectives. Conclusion. Bibliography.

Abstract: In the current context of globalization, it has become apparent that identity issues are a key aspect leading to conflict. However, I argue that the extent to which identity issues are an underlying cause of conflict is more nuanced and more encompassing than generally acknowledged. Analysing conflict from an identity issues framework can help us shift our focus from the endpoint of conflict to the normative nature of the conflict itself. I will then use this framework of analysis to set out an initiative for the Basque conflict in order to illustrate the efficiency of this approach. I also hope to provide insight into how institutions working on identity issues related to multiculturalism can realize their potential and have a broader impact in civil society.

Keywords: Conflict analysis, identity, identity issues, globalization, Basque conflict, normative conflict, peace journalism.

Resumen: En el contexto actual del mundo globalizado se evidencia más que nunca cómo los problemas de identidad son un aspecto clave que da lugar a conflictos. Sin embargo, aquí se postula que en otros contextos de conflicto los problemas de identidad pueden ser una variable importante, aunque no parezcan tan evidentes. Los problemas de identidad nos pueden ayudar a enfocarnos menos en el final del conflicto y más en el aspecto normativo,

mejorando nuestro entendimiento del mismo. Más adelante, este enfoque es utilizado para exponer una iniciativa para el conflicto vasco que demostrará la efectividad de nuestro marco de análisis y cómo las instituciones centradas en problemas de identidad relacionados con el multiculturalismo pueden tener un impacto más amplio en la sociedad.

Palabras clave: Análisis de conflictos, identidad, problemas de identidad, globalización, conflicto vasco, conflicto normativo, periodismo de paz.

Introduction

We tend to associate identity issues with the cultural clashes that have resulted from globalization. There has been a lot of mainstream media coverage of the results of juxtaposing radically different cultures together. Those who favour multiculturalism will stress the opportunity for progress that comes with different intercultural interaction. Others may view these clashes as something to avoid, and highlight the difficulties of having different ways of life coexisting in civil society. However, both groups will agree that identity issues are a key challenge and a source of conflict in Western societies. While this interest in globalization has put multicultural identity issues in the spotlight, by sheer force of its sensationality it obscures other identity-based conflicts that do not involve the same kind of confrontation.

To this problem we should add our natural tendency to look for quick solutions to conflict. When we aim for expedient solutions, we bargain for hurried compromises based on the goals of the parties involved in conflict. I will try to highlight the importance of identity issues as a key manifestation of the normative aspect of all forms of conflict, which will allow us to shift our focus from goals and results to its origins and sources.

First, I will attempt to broaden our definition of identity issues by separating it from the context of modern multicultural societies. From this starting point, I will develop a normative framework of analysis detailing how broadening our understanding of identity issues can lead to more thorough conflict analyses and solutions that do a better job of preventing misperceptions. I will exemplify this by laying out two analyses of the Basque conflict—one endpoint-based, and one identity-issues-based—and compare their conclusions. And finally, I will set out an initiative proposing to expand the reach of Biltzen, an institution focused on promoting integration in the context of multiculturalism, to include the identity problems related to the Basque conflict, effectively putting into practice the argument of this paper.

1. Theoretical considerations

1.1. *The problems of mainstream conflict analysis*

Conflict resolution is often understood as the method to facilitate the end of conflict. This means that the focus is usually put on ending

conflict; the more recent variables such as the most immediate context, the latest actions and events, and the needs and goals of each side in particular.

This leads to a framework that makes ending conflict the first priority. Endpoint-based approaches become the first option, favouring negotiation and bargaining strategies which leverage the ambitions and needs of each side. However, we should bear in mind that there are many types of strategies, and many types of conflict. Goals should not be considered as relevant in facilitation, prevention, or mediation strategies as they are in negotiation. It is also clear that we should not apply the same strategy (negotiation, bargaining on goals) when dealing with a financial dispute as we would with an ethnic conflict. A strategy that would be effective in preventing violent conflict would not be very useful in the context of negotiation strategies, and vice versa. While it is true that combining different approaches can be useful, it is obvious that there is nuance. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy: every conflict requires its own strategy, and every strategy has its priorities.

Another problem that arises from aiming for quick solutions is the same conflict reappearing or even escalating over time. "Speed is normally a positive thing in any dispute resolution process; however, when it comes at the expense of a fair hearing of both sides' views (...), dissatisfaction and resentment is likely to be the result" (Strutt 2014, 24.) This is particularly the case in situations of asymmetric power and cultural imbalances: "Speed—in the form of ambush—and power in the negotiations can lead to an unbalanced settlement. (...) Relative cultural differences can be devastating to successful communication even when the most conciliatory and deferential approach is taken. The danger presented by these differences can be obscure and a serious problem for the unwary" (Strutt 2014, 25). I would argue that the power balance between the sides involved in conflict is never perfectly symmetric, which makes time constraints all the more problematic.

Our unwavering focus on a swift end to conflict is questionable because (i) prioritizing goals and outcomes does not work for all strategies and forms of conflict, and (ii) haste can lead to unbalanced settlements that increase the risk of recurrence and/or escalation, especially in asymmetric and multicultural contexts. In practice, this would mean that an endpoint-based approach may not be ideal in the long run, especially in political and social instances of conflict, which tend to be more complex, unbalanced, and deep-rooted.

1.2. *Peace journalism: taking the focus off the endpoint of conflict*

All aforementioned problems considered, the standpoint from which we view conflict still adheres to the endpoint-based, expeditious framework as described above. To detach ourselves from this framework, I propose the idea of “peace journalism,” as detailed by Galtung and Lynch in their writings on the subject (Galtung 1998; Galtung y Vincent 1992; Lynch 2007). I will also provide an analysis of the impact of the many initiatives inspired by his work, and which stand in stark contrast to mainstream journalism.

According to Galtung, mainstream media focuses on the most immediate and traumatic events only. McGoldrick summarizes Galtung’s definition of mainstream journalism as ‘violence-orientated, propaganda-orientated, elite-oriented (rather than grassroots-oriented), victory-orientated’ (McGoldrick 2006). These orientations all revolve on the aforementioned endpoint focus-approach to conflict (recent violence, propaganda towards an outcome, the most influential personalities and a particular outcome, respectively).

In fact, studies have shown that “positive peace stories make up just 1.6% of the total number stories examined”, and prove that “the media perceives positive peaceful events as lacking newsworthiness” (Institute for Economics and Peace 2010, 1, 12). Other authors go as far as to argue that this journalistic approach (specifically in the United States) should be regarded as ‘jihad journalism’, which has become ‘the hallmark of the post 9/11 era’ (Pintak 2006, 44) due to the common practices of creating vivid imagery and justifying interventions around the world. Through the writings of Galtung, Lynch and others, we can see how the focus of the mainstream media on the end outcomes of conflict contributes directly to escalation.

To work against this trend in mainstream media, peace journalism would strive to include the less obvious, apparent, and immediate issues surrounding conflict in their reporting. In-depth investigations of the larger context behind current events (as opposed sheer description of the latest outbursts of violence) and the grassroots peaceful initiatives that may be taking place in the region (as opposed to the elitist-oriented reporting mentioned above). This different way of reporting would aim to contribute towards facilitating understanding and peace in civil societies affected by conflict, as well as balancing the perceptions of those learning about the conflict elsewhere in the world. Peace journalism takes the focus off the endpoint of conflict and highlights less evident, underlying aspects of conflict that are often overlooked. This is vital to gaining better

insight into the conflict at hand and to reaching effective, long-lasting solutions.

The problem is, in journalism it is rather simple to come up with examples of alternative things that journalist can decide to report on when choosing not to focus solely on the endpoint of conflict. But in the context of our theoretical considerations, however, it is not so clear which (less evident) variable(s) we should prioritize to analyze conflicts in general, once we have removed our focus from the goals and outcomes. Fortunately, there is a distinct context of conflict in modern Western societies that will give us the key starting point to develop more comprehensive and effective conflict analyses.

1.3. *Identity issues: the main focus in the context of globalization*

Currently, the conversation surrounding identity issues focuses on the formation of our identities within the globalized world. Kymlicka views cultural identity as providing people with an “anchor for their self-identification and the safety of effortless secure belonging” (Kymlicka, 1995, 89). Here, ‘belonging’ is the operative word. Defining our identity based on fixed ideas of belonging to a nation-state, religion, race, or culture has become more difficult than ever before. Until very recently, these ways of being ‘part-of-a-whole’ were instrumental in defining who we were.

Globalization complicates developing identity this way. According to Berger, “the man in the street is confronted with a wide variety of religious and other reality-defining agencies that compete for his allegiance or at least attention, and none of which is in a position to coerce him into allegiance” (Berger 1967, 131). I propose that this competition between ‘reality-defining agencies’ is not exclusive to religious identity; individuals are challenged with different frames of reference to define all aspects of their identity. There are multiple aspects, affiliations, and layers that coexist and become more or less evident in the context of their circumstances.

Different ways of life in modern, multicultural societies are constantly influenced by one another. Our cultures are more interconnected than ever before. As a consequence, identity definitions based on belonging that used to be fixed and constant due to relative isolation from one another have become open to the influence of alternatives that challenge them.

This difficulty in creating identity definitions results in overly-complex and multilayered forms of identity, and in clashes that

precipitate conflict. We should not underestimate the importance of this uncertainty in regard to how we are to construct our identity in a globalized world. It has been argued that the confusion resulting from this new paradigm has led to marginalization (“experiencing themselves as excluded from both their local culture and the global culture, truly belonging to neither”) and even “problems such as depression, suicide, and substance use” among young people (Doku & Assante 2011, 7).

This turmoil may raise the question of whether we should avoid multiculturalism policies altogether, as this is a problem with real world consequences. This is a problem which may not have an answer independent from personal perspectives; thus I will not attempt to answer it in this paper. What is important to take away from this question, however, is that globalization effectively highlights identity issues as the most apparent point of reference in a very recognizable context of conflict; a point of reference that contrasts with our usual focus on the endpoint of conflict. The next section will look at how we can broaden our definition of identity issues in order to create an alternative starting point for conflict analysis, so that we can avoid the problems arising from endpoint-based analyses.

1.4. *Identity issues: from globalization to other contexts*

First, it's necessary to define identity issues in this context. Referring once more to Kymlicka's understanding, identity centres around the idea of 'belonging' to a group. Our chosen social groups, our cultural norms, the language we speak, our gender, our occupation, our nationality: they are all social-cultural constructs which influence our individuality. As mentioned above, globalization has brought along an environment wherein these variables are less stable and more challenged than ever before. Taylor (1994) stresses the idea of 'recognition' as a vital need in creating our identities in this context.

I argue that Taylor's idea of recognition could be regarded as the process by which we make up and justify our sense of group belonging (Kymlicka 1989) and identity. Drawing from this connection between recognition and belonging, a fair understanding of identity issues in the context of globalization would be: the modern difficulties in the processes of *recognition* that make up our definitions of group *belonging* in modern, plural societies.

Now that we have a primary definition of identity issues in the context of globalization, we have established the point of reference

that we should use when analyzing conflicts in this context. But can we apply this identity-issues-based approach as an alternative to our endpoint-based approach in all forms of conflict? Are identity issues a consequential variable in all contexts of conflict? That would require us to broaden our understanding of what identity issues are in order to encompass all conflict environments.

First, we should consider whether identity plays a key role in shaping conflict exclusively in the context of globalization, and whether it is a feature of modern societies in general. It is true that with globalization, the scale of said cultural clashes is bigger than ever before—but this does not mean that the same phenomenon has not been just as important in leading to conflict in the past, on a smaller scale. All historical events having to do with war and conquest throughout history can be regarded as such. Janet Gross Stein puts it best when she argues that ‘in both enduring interstate rivalries and bitter ethnic conflicts, interests are shaped by images, which are in turn partially shaped by identity’ (Gross 1996, 93-111): Groups with different identities will clash with one another and have done so historically not just because they have conflicting interests, but because of the threat presented by ways of life that challenge their beliefs and identity. These different identities shape the conflicting goals and interests they pursue. If we look at the cultural clashes associated to globalization as something that has happened before on a smaller scale, we can understand identity issues as a precursor to conflict throughout history, and further conclude that the issues related to the processes of identity recognition and group belonging are not exclusive to modern societies.

We are thus able to conclude that identity issues have been instrumental in leading to conflict in the same way that they do in modern societies, only on a different scale. But are there identity issues in contexts unrelated to these head-on collisions of different cultures? I will try to answer this question by examining three modern instances of conflict in which identity issues are just as apparent, while the role of globalization is not: the women’s liberation movement, the counterculture protests that started in the 60s, and workplace identity.

Women’s identity had long been restricted to their role in the household, holding them back from public society. The ongoing overcoming of traditional gender roles cannot be traced back to globalization, yet it is an issue deeply rooted in identity. How women perceived themselves and were perceived and defined by society can be regarded as a problem of recognition and belonging, even though there is not a defined, cultural group clashing against another one.

We can also look at the protests of 1968 (and in France in particular) (Jobs 2009, 376-404). While increasing interconnectedness played a role in spreading the protests worldwide, the lack of identification and cultural divide between the youth and the establishment that lead to the anti-war, student, 'hippie,' and civil rights movements did not arise from the clashing of two distinct ways of life that were formerly isolated from one another, either.

Workplace identity issues in modern societies are also a relevant topic of discussion, and in particular the integration of personal, social, and professional identities by students (Osteen 2013; Dalton 2003). While we can clearly see that identity problems arise as they struggle with recognition and belonging, as longtime students transition into workplace environments, here it is not exactly a clash of two cultures.

In fact, studies have shown that when seeking solutions to a conflict, identity issues play a decisive role in determining whether the parties will approach the conflict from a mutual-interests perspective or a zero-sum perspective. For instance, in the context of the Cyprus conflict, "even in the presence of adversarial ethnic ties, decision makers who have a shared (and salient) social identity are more likely to employ collective serving decision strategies and seek even-handed solutions that will not jeopardize their mutual interests. Here, Turkey and Greece—both NATO members—decided to settle on a commonly agreed negotiation outcome despite their ethnicity driven, clashing interests over Cyprus. In contrast, decision makers with severe ethnic fragmentation with no shared social identity (as with the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities) are more prone to employ self-serving decision strategies and seek zero-sum negotiation outcomes that will exclusively benefit them" (Sirin 2012, 413-439). This also demonstrates that, as mentioned above, including identity issues in conflict resolution is effective in making up for the limitations of focusing on the endpoint of conflict.

A quick look at identity issues throughout history and in modern contexts of conflict unrelated to globalization shows that the problems of recognition and belonging are not exclusive to the context of multiculturalism and globalization. We have also proven that identity issues are key precursors to conflict and effective agents in aiming for solutions once conflict has taken place, as seen in the example of Cyprus. However, now that we have broadened our understanding of identity issues and shifted the focus from the endpoint of conflict, we can see that identity issues can take many forms, and that they may be difficult to distinguish in different contexts of conflict. I would argue that the way to use identity issues as a viable starting point of conflict

analysis is to use Peter Berger's understanding of normative conflict. This, in turn, will give rise to new variables that improve our conflict analysis processes.

1.5. *Identity issues as the starting point for normative conflict analysis*

Once we have separated identity issues from the context of globalization, we are left with the normative side of conflict. As Peter Berger puts it, this has to do with who we are and how we coexist (Berger 1999, 520). The reason why identity issues are so apparent in the context of globalization is because these cultural clashes involve the very norms that make up our moral values.

To go back to Janet Gross Stein's claim: "in both enduring interstate rivalries and bitter ethnic conflicts, interests are shaped by images, which are in turn partially shaped by identity" (Gross 1996, 93-111). I would argue that although outside of the context of multicultural societies it may not be apparent on a surface level, the normative side of conflict is essential in defining all forms of conflict. It is easy to overlook due to our tendency to look for expedient solutions and focus on the endpoint of conflict, and our readiness to assume that all sides involved in the conflict have the same understanding of the conflict. When we look at identity issues outside of the context of globalization, we are left with the question of how each side of any conflict constructs their values system in that context. Any normative incompatibility, although small, between the sides involved in the conflict at hand may lead to complications that cannot be solved simply by looking at the endpoint of conflict.

In other words, different value systems will lead to different understandings and definitions of the conflict itself on the part of those involved. And these incompatibilities go to the heart of how each side *recognizes* the value system of the other. If we use a peace journalism approach, we should be able to focus on the normative side, the starting point of conflict, and assess how each side understands the conflict at hand from their own value system before rushing into hurried, endpoint-based solutions. This would allow all sides of conflict to *recognize* the norms that the other is using to define the conflict under the same terms, and then to engage more effectively in looking for a solution.

Understanding identity issues as manifestations of the normative starting point underlying conflict makes identity a variable that is key in determining the interactions between the parties involved and

their own perceptions of the variables that make up the conflict. Perceptions, as argued by Jervis, are an essential part of conflict that plays an important role in escalating conflict, and are often disregarded by policy makers:

Because the effect of initiatives and threats depends to a large extent on the other's intentions and its perceptions of the first state, people who are debating policy should not only realize what they are arguing about but should also ask themselves what possible behaviour on the part of the adversary would they take as evidence against the interpretation that they hold. (Jervis 1988, 125)

Focusing on needs and demands allows us to understand the parties' goals only, and leaves room for the parties involved to speculate on the other's intentions, creating misperceptions. It also implies that there is one objective way to define the conflict at hand. This objectivist view does not account for the different value systems that make up the perceptions of each side. Hence, starting an analysis by using a normative starting point allow us to look at the way those involved in the conflict perceive the variables that make up the conflict and assess what their motivations are. This would lead to recognition and transparency and avoid speculation and misperceptions.

By focusing on the normative starting point of conflict, we are able to 'step back' from the endpoint focus of traditional method and to bring the perceptions of each side to the forefront. This will allow us to better look at the endpoint variables of the conflict from the perspective of the parties involved (context, latest events, needs, goals) and consider the ways in which the perceptions of each side may have influenced the development of each of those variables. As a result, our analysis will include the motivations and intentions of the parties, avoiding speculation, misperceptions, mistrust, and incomplete solutions. Afterwards, we should be able to make use of mediation, facilitation, and negotiation techniques in a more efficient way.

We should not underestimate the importance of preventing misperceptions. As Jervis states the paragraph that opens this section, the perceptions of the intentions of the parties involved play a central role in how the conflict develops. The proposed framework of analysis allows us to bridge a gap between the perceptions those involved in conflict, of which is, according to Jervis, a factor that almost always coincides with war: "Although war can occur even when both sides see each other accurately, misperception often plays a large role" (Jervis 1988, 675).

From the purely analytical side, this normative, *starting-point* approach allows us to add another layer of analysis: we are able to understand not only the basic variables that make up a conflict (context, actions, needs, goals, etc.), but also how the parties involved in the conflict define, interpret, and interact with those variables, and to gain insight into the reasons why they have acted (or will act) on them in a particular way over time. Through this approach, identity issues bring motivations and intentions into the picture and therefore prevent misperceptions, unjust settlements resulting from asymmetry, and the reappearance of conflict or potential escalation in the future. From a theoretical standpoint, this effectively corrects the shortcomings of mainstream endpoint-focused approaches.

1.6. *Context and target group considerations*

While it is clear that globalization dominates the context of these conflicts and the modern world as a whole, the aim of this paper is to explore the nuance within this context and expand on it. The context of globalization works as the first touchpoint in the development of our argument, rather than the final application of this paper. Identity issues are a key aspect of conflict that is often overlooked in most instances of conflict analysis. In most cases, the normative aspect of conflict may not be as obvious. This is why I have identity issues as an integral first step in my argument.

Consequently, the aim of this approach is different from other models of conflict engagement, even though it is based on a similar premise. Let us contrast this proposal with the ARIA model of conflict engagement: “a mechanism for a systematic approach to interactive conflict resolution that specifically deals with the complex issues of identity” (Rothman & Olson 2001, 289-305). Rather than putting forward a specific engagement model for identity issues, this paper provides a way to use identity issues as a tool to shift to a normative analysis of conflict to be used in all contexts, hopefully leading to better solutions. Rothman and Olson claim that a new framework of conflict engagement is necessary for identity-based conflicts. However, I argue that, as mentioned above, identity issues should be taken into account as a manifestation of the normative aspect of conflict not only in the ‘identity-based, ethno-political’ conflicts of today, but in all contexts of conflict, modern or otherwise.

I would also like to highlight the fact that this proposal to shift our focus in conflict analysis to a normative approach can be useful not

only from a theoretical standpoint, but also for practical initiatives. Although the normative shift requires a fair amount of definitions and theory, this proposal is targeted to both academics and activists alike. I would encourage others to make use of this approach in diverse circumstances of conflict to create a positive impact in effective and original ways. In the following section I will compare the mainstream, endpoint-focused analysis of the Basque conflict with additional conclusions that can be reached using this normative approach, but I will also set out a practical initiative that shows how the proposals made here regarding the broadening of our understanding of identity issues can allow us to increase our reach and mitigate risks of overall escalation in all contexts.

2. Application

2.1. *Case study: the Basque conflict*

Although globalization has played a role in shaping the Basque conflict in modern times, its causes and identity issues can be traced back in history to a time before the effects of globalization became apparent. This makes the Basque conflict a good example of a conflict situation in which to make use of our broadened understanding of identity issues to develop a normative analysis. The issues of national and group identities that make up the Basque conflict are very complex and full of nuance. In order to gain a deeper understanding of these, I would like to refer to the following papers on the issue: First, (i) an account of the relationship between the social fabric of the Basque country and the legitimation of violence (Martín-Peña 2011). Second, the more recent developments of the Basque peace process that cover the (ii) negotiations until 2010 and correctly predicted the handover of weapons (Fisas 2010). And lastly, (iii) an assessment of the way the media has shaped the images and perceptions of the Basque conflict in a globalized world (Linstroth 2002). I argue that this final piece is intimately related to the ideas of peace and mainstream journalism mentioned above, as well as the specific links between globalization and the conflict in the Basque country.

Fisas starts his report with a good summary of the history of the Basque conflict and points out that Basque Country is an ancient society of millenarian people, with a unique language and cultural traits. After losing independence in 1,200, in the nineteenth century the Basques also lost a form of secular rights ('Fueros') in the

xix Century, which gave rise to a strong national consciousness in a part of its population. This led to emerging nationalism as a political expression in reaction to the centralizing nationalism of the Spanish state. During the Franco period, the Basque Country experienced a repression both politically and culturally, which further validated claims for self-determination, now known as 'the right to decide' ('derecho a decidir'). A sector of this nationalist movement also campaigned for several decades for unification of Euskal Herria, a geographical space that includes the three provinces of the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain (Álava, Gipuzkoa, and Bizkaia), the Autonomous Community of Navarre, and three regions located in the French State (Lapurdi, Lower Navarre, and Zuberoa). The notorious Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (commonly referred to as ETA) was born in 1959, as a dissidence of people who were active in the Basque nationalist circles. The ETA committed its first deadly attack in June 1968 and caused 829 fatalities until its dissolution in May 2018.

Without needing to further delve into the background of the Basque conflict, we can assess the current circumstances surrounding the conflict, and one may wonder whether any initiative is at all necessary. After all, the violent stages of the conflict seem to have ended since ETA declared a permanent disarmament in April 2017 and dissolved in May 2018. The mainstream takeaway from the Basque conflict, looking at it from an endpoint-based perspective, is simple: the conflict has ended. Having reached a scenario of nonviolence, there is no need for us to worry about anything else. However, if we look at the conflict outside of this framework and include identity issues in our analysis, we can see that there are still problems that need to be solved if we want to prevent future escalation.

It is worth noting that we should be weary of making predictions when it comes to violence in conflicts, or any kind of prediction at all. We may simply be wrong in considering the return of armed conflict or other forms of violence unlikely. As Milanovic puts it, "the number of variables that can and do change, the role of people in history ('free will'), and the influence of wars and natural catastrophes are so great that even forecasts of broad tendencies made by the best minds of a generation are seldom correct" (Milanovic 2016, 21). Taking precautionary measures is always advisable.

I also contest the claim that violence is unlikely in the first place. The risk of violence is still present in society, and this is proven by the fact that sizeable groups in both sides of the conflict are dissatisfied with the latest events surrounding the conflict. A good way to understand the perspectives of either side is to look at the claims that

are being made on both sides to understand whether their perceptions are in line with the mainstream understanding—that this conflict is over. On the Spanish side, it is sometimes asserted that ETA may still be stashing weapons in an unknown location; suspicions are still raised about the intentions of the nationalists. “Same as what occurred with IRA (...) many weapons were not returned and were then used by a new terrorist group” (Zuloaga 2017, 21). On the other side, there are sectors in left wing pro-independence groups that do not agree with the non-violence strategy led by Otegi (Europapress 10/02/2017).

Without addressing the question of whether these statements are justified, the real issue is that these claims are being made in Basque society. There are significant groups of people, on both sides, that are not satisfied with the current circumstances surrounding the conflict. These issues are not so apparent from an endpoint-based perspective, but as we have seen, dissatisfaction, speculation (and misperception) are factors that we should always take into consideration if we want to reach lasting solutions. As mentioned above, the Spanish side may be unwary of the intentions behind ETA taking the initiative to propose a ceasefire and dissolve. And conversely, there are in fact sectors amongst pro-independence groups that are not convinced about the non-violence strategy. It is easy to see how one side feeds the other because of misperceptions and distrust. I argue that my analysis highlights two factors that are deeply rooted in the definition of the conflict of each side and are the cause of misperceptions: the Spanish side may regard the non-violence initiative as something merely strategic—after all, ETA has ended previous ceasefire agreements. On the other hand, the other side may not believe in taking the initiative for non-violence because the Spanish side is regarded as a monolith, which is not willing to reach an agreement unless the threat of violence is a deterrent.

Both factors leading to the misperceptions that each side of the conflict has of the other are the result of the failures of previous negotiations. The fact that these have not been addressed (and are feeding mistrust in both sides) implies that the risk of violence is still there. And only when we are able to mitigate this risk we will be able reach long lasting solutions that give closure to both sides.

As opposed to the mainstream analysis, shifting the focus from the conflict endpoint to the broader normative situation of the Basque conflict brings to the forefront the risk of escalation. This is helpful so that we can take the necessary actions to mitigate this risk. The next section will aim to tackle the misperceptions that cause this risk both from the top-down (the ‘elite’ high-level negotiations) and the bottom-up (grassroots initiatives).

2.2. *Objectives: bridging the normative gap through high level & grassroots solutions*

The aforementioned misperceptions make it clear that future negotiations cannot be started the same way as they have in the past. To try to make up for the speculations and mistrust generated by the previous failures in negotiations, any future negotiation initiative would need first to be preceded by preliminary roundtable. Here, these previous failures can be revisited and examined in order in the open, to bridge the normative gap in the perceptions that both sides have of the other and the conflict itself. This will reduce misperceptions and should help take any speculative threat of violence out of the picture.

While a normative analysis highlights the absolute necessity of the aforementioned requisite for further negotiations by the figureheads of each side, we should also bear in mind that, as set out by peace journalism, we should not limit our approach to an elitist understanding of the conflict. The recommendation for high-level negotiations will not be able to fully address these misperceptions unless we also deal with the conflict from a grassroots perspective. What follows is an initiative that directly makes use of our broadened understanding of identity issues to tackle these misperceptions on a grassroots level. I would aim to do so by extending the outreach of Biltzen, an institution focused on promoting inclusion in the context of multiculturalism, so that it can use the same methods to include the identities of both sides of the Basque conflict in the picture.

2.3 *Initiative proposal*

While I considered contacting the Basque government with this proposal directly, I believe contacting Biltzen would do a better job of introducing this initiative in a way that is not dictated from the top. This way, it could be something that is discussed within the institution first—avoiding an elite focus, in the spirit of peace journalism. This would allow for a smoother implementation of our approach. Using this strategy could make things a bit slower, as it would be necessary to reach an agreement with those already involved in Biltzen first. However, in the event that the initiative is successful, having the prior approval of the institution will surely be appreciated by the Basque government, and will hopefully avoid any disruption to the daily workings of the organization.

The presentation of this initiative would first expand on the analyses of the Basque country example and the failures of previous negotiations. Rather than spending a lot of time exploring the theoretical underpinnings behind the normative approach, I would first set out the mainstream analysis of the Basque conflict, then make the point that our focus on the endpoint of the conflict and on expedient solutions (bargaining on goals) has played a key role in hindering previous negotiations. I would then contrast this with the normative analysis set out in this paper.

A loose summary of this presentation might look as follows: First, I would start by mentioning identity issues in globalization. Second, I would provide the historical, political and social context and the importance of identity issues in the Basque conflict. I would trace the cultural clashes back in history and make the case that identity issues are linked to how we make up our value systems and the norms and perspectives by which both sides perceive the conflict. Third, I would point out that even though the mainstream view does not consider violence something to contend with in the Basque conflict and may consider the conflict over, the normative analysis highlights misperceptions that make the risk of escalation apparent, and the urgency for us to take action in mitigating this risk. Fifth, I would express the need to bridge the gap and foster mutual recognition from identity-issues, normative perspective. Sixth, I would draw heavily from the previous section, contrasting the high-level and the grassroots-level aspects of it and setting out the recommendation for a prerequisite in future high-level negotiations. Finally, I would then set out the following plan for the grassroots initiative.

Biltzen focuses on promoting multiculturalism, tolerance, and diversity in Basque society. Among its services, Biltzen offers the “promotion of diversity and coexistence in the community area” (Biltzen website). Under this section, Biltzen argues for the “recognition and visualization of cultural diversity”. Instead, I would argue for wording this as “recognition and visualization of diverse identities”; the reason for this being that when we talk about ‘cultural diversity’, we tend to refer to the context of globalization and multiculturalism. ‘Diverse identities’, however, manages to include cultures highlighted by multiculturalism along with identity issues that were already present before globalization, as is the case of Basque and Spanish identities.

This wording would effectively include identity issues outside the context of globalization in the picture, and allow Biltzen to aim for recognition between all forms of identity in the Basque Country. Out of the four projects Biltzen is involved in, the Zurrunbilan

initiative would probably work best for this proposal. The bigger part of this presentation would deal with the implementation of our approach in this project. It is very important to do this in a way that is not prescriptive and in a back-and-forth format, leaving room for suggestions and encouraging members of Biltzen to make use of the normative approach themselves, so that the inclusion of the identity issues related to the Basque conflict in this project is both effective and unintrusive.

After setting out the grassroots initiative, I conclude the presentation by highlighting the fact that expanding the reach of Biltzen would make this institution reach its potential, effectively including all of the diverse identities represented in Basque society. I would also stress the connection between the expansion of their reach and them bridging the gap of perceptions between both sides in the Basque conflict —on a grassroots level, and our in regards to the proposed future high-level negotiations. Finally, I would ask for Biltzen's support by explicitly endorsing the recommendation for future negotiations when putting forward our initiative to the Basque government. I would provide Biltzen with templates of press release for both proposals, overall strategy and timing, and documentation. I would also suggest a roundtable to discuss implementation at their convenience, within a month if possible.

As an alternative to Biltzen, this initiative should remain open to other non-governmental and grassroots organizations so as to promote the project on a smaller scale. While it is true that not having government support would make the sphere of influence much smaller and would diminish the repercussion of our recommendation for future negotiations in particular, starting by associating with a smaller entity would give the project the chance to be more independent. This would definitely allow for more improvisation, which is something that may not be possible while working with institutional support. In this scenario, an important practice would be produce reports to show higher institutions that we are obtaining results and demonstrate the potential of our initiative over time.

2.4. Objectives

(1) To propose a shift in our primary focus for conflict analysis from the endpoint of conflict to the normative starting point of conflict. This normative approach for conflict analysis should provide us with a perspectivist view that better deals with misperceptions in

all contexts. In order to do so, I have aimed to prove that identity issues are a manifestation of the normative side of conflict, and not something exclusive to the current context of globalization and multiculturalism. Rather than discard endpoint-focused approaches, this proposal would aim to create another layer of analysis that makes these strategies of conflict engagement more effective in reaching long lasting solutions.

(2) To set out a feasible application of this theoretical proposal and highlight the effectiveness of non-mainstream, grassroots approaches. My initiative would involve Biltzen (an institution promoting diversity and coexistence in the context of multiculturalism) by extending their reach and include the identities present in the Basque conflict in one of their projects. It would also endorse a recommendation to bridge the normative gap between the figureheads of the conflict for future negotiations. Ideally, this project would promote coexistence and dialogue, contribute towards ending the current stalemate in negotiations, mitigate the risk of escalation and set a precedent to encourage others to use our approach in their own initiatives.

Conclusion

Identity issues present us with a contentious subject matter. However, they are being discussed in the media, in academia, and in government institutions using mostly the language of globalization and multiculturalism. In contrast, this project aims to emphasise the importance of identity issues from a normative standpoint for all contexts of conflict, and analyse the case of the Basque conflict in particular.

All forms of conflict should involve careful parsing of situations, contexts, and participants. As we strive to alleviate suffering caused by conflict worldwide, we must simultaneously aim to address crises competently and to judge them prudently. What is necessary in the face of global change is a shift in focus —a change in perspective akin to a foreground-background switch. Conflict does not occur in a vacuum. We must use our resources to negotiate in a way that is context-aware and rooted in reality and takes into account the diverse perspectives of those involved in conflict. By taking a normative approach that utilizes peace journalism and broad definitions of identity, we can stay away from quick-fix conflict solutions aim for fast compromises and jeopardize our ability to mitigate the risk of escalation.

Bibliography

- Berger, Peter L (ed). 1999. *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralist Societies*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Nueva York: Anchor; Reprint edition. October 1, 1990.
- Biltzen. Accessed September 26, 2018. <http://biltzen.org/>.
- Blackmore, Emily. 2015. "Changing Frames: Engaging Multiple Identities in Cultural Conflicts", *European Scientific Journal* 1: 403-417.
- Dalton, Maxine A. 2003. "Social identity conflict", *MIT Sloan Management Review* 45: 7-8.
- Doku, P.N. & Assante, O.K. 2011. "Identity: Globalization, Culture and Psychological Functioning", *International Journal of Human Sciences* 8(2): 294-301.
- Europa Press. 2017. "Otegi deja «claro» que ATA es «una escisión» de la IA contraria al abandono de la actividad armada de ETA", *Europa Press*, February 21. <http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-otegi-deja-claro-ata-escision-ia-contraria-abandono-actividad-armada-eta-20170210114133.html>.
- Fisas, Vicenç. 2010. "El Proceso de Paz en el País Vasco", *Quaderns de Construcció de Pau* 16: 5-16
- Galtung, J. & Vincent, R.C. 1992. *Global Glasnost: Toward a New World Information and Communication Order*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Galtung, Johan. 1998. The Peace Journalism Option. *Conflict & Peace Forums* (Taplow, Buckinghamshire, UK) transcript.
- Gross Stein, Janice. 1996. "Image, Identity, and Conflict Resolution", in *Managing Global Chaos*, edited by Crocker, et al., 93-112, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Jervis, Robert. 1988. "War and Misperception", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 675-700.
- Jobs, Richard I. 2009. "Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968", *The American Historical Review* 114(2): 376-404.
- Kymlicka, William. 1989. *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kymlicka, William. 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Linstroth, J. P. 2002. "The Basque Conflict Globally Speaking: Material Culture, Media and Basque Identity in the Wider World", *Oxford Development Studies* 30(2): 205-222.
- Lynch, Jake. 2007. "A Course in Peace Journalism", *Conflict and Communication Online* 6(1). http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2007_1/pdf/lynch.pdf.
- McGoldrick, Annabel. 2006. "War Journalism and 'Objectivity'", *Conflict and Communication Online* 6(1). http://www.cco.regener-online.de/2006_2/pdf/mcgoldrick.pdf.

- Milanovic, Branko. 2016. *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Martín-Peña, Javier. 2011. "The Legitimization of Political Violence: A Case Study of ETA in the Basque Country", *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 17(2): 132-150.
- Osteen, P.J. 2013. "Motivations, values, and conflict resolution: MSW Students Integration of Personal and Professional identities", *Journal of Social Work Education* 47(3): 423-444.
- Pintak, Lawrence. 2006. *America, Islam, and the War of Ideas: Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Rothman, Jay & Olson, Marie L. 2001. "From Interests to Identities: Towards a New Emphasis in Interactive Conflict Resolution", *Journal of Peace Research* 38(3): 289-305.
- Sirin, Cigdem V. 2012. "Examining the role of identity in negotiation decision making: the case of Cyprus", *International Journal of Conflict Management* 23(4): 413-439.
- Strutt, Keith. 2014. "Mediation vs. negotiation". London: *The Driver Trett Digest*. Driver Group, <https://www.driver-group.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/BYTE-9-MEDIATION-VS-NEGOTIATION.pdf>.
- Taylor, Charles. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zuloaga, J. M. 2017. "ETA no controla gran parte de las armas que dice que va a entregar", *La Razón*, March 21. <https://www.larazon.es/espana/eta-no-controla-gran-parte-de-las-armas-que-dice-que-va-a-entregar-JG14744782>.

Copyright

Deusto Journal of Human Rights / Revista Deusto de Derechos Humanos is an Open Access journal; which means that it is free for full and immediate access, reading, search, download, distribution, and reuse in any medium only for non-commercial purposes and in accordance with any applicable copyright legislation, without prior permission from the copyright holder (University of Deusto) or the author; provided the original work and publication source are properly cited (Issue number, year, pages and DOI if applicable) and any changes to the original are clearly indicated. Any other use of its content in any medium or format, now known or developed in the future, requires prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Derechos de autoría

Deusto Journal of Human Rights / Revista Deusto de Derechos Humanos es una revista de Acceso Abierto; lo que significa que es de libre acceso en su integridad inmediatamente después de la publicación de cada número. Se permite su lectura, la búsqueda, descarga, distribución y reutilización en cualquier tipo de soporte sólo para fines no comerciales y según lo previsto por la ley; sin la previa autorización de la Editorial (Universidad de Deusto) o la persona autora, siempre que la obra original sea debidamente citada (número, año, páginas y DOI si procede) y cualquier cambio en el original esté claramente indicado. Cualquier otro uso de su contenido en cualquier medio o formato, ahora conocido o desarrollado en el futuro, requiere el permiso previo por escrito de la persona titular de los derechos de autoría.