Preface

Imagine a world in which everyone could take the perspective of everyone else. Of course agreeing with each other about everything is neither possible nor ideal. But being able to understand, at least to some extent, what each other thinks, feels, and believes about something, and why, is the foundation of a world without war. However, agreeing with each other about everything always is not the root of peace. Rather, learning to live with our differences, and deeply hear and understand them, is.

> A successful work of art is not one which resolves contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure.
>
> Theodore Adorno (1967, p. 32).

My expertise is in group-based cooperation (at home and abroad), which mines the passions of dissonance and resonance (in identities, priorities, goals, styles, etc…) as a resource for dynamism, learning, and excellence. I root my work in musical metaphors (producing an aria, engaging in solos, duets, conducting interventions, moving through dissonance and fostering resonance, etc.). In my book *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict* (1997), I describe my method with the aid of a story about a string quartet that moves, with the help of a coach, from Antagonism to Resonance and on into Invention and Action (i.e., A.R.I.A.).

I have made music and engaged with musicians all my life. My primary passion in life is creativity. It may seem paradoxical that the main focus of my chosen work, or the work that seems to have chosen me, is conflict. And yet, creativity emerges directly out of friction. So the paradox is actually only superficial. At the deepest level conflict and creativity are interdependent. Nothing is created without some kind of friction. Think of a bow over a stringed instrument. Think of conflict that leads to exploration, perspective taking, imagination, and new discovery. The underlying theme of this book is that conflicts can become a source of creativity.

Back to the dream then: a world in which people deeply understand the perspective of each other. As I was completing this book, a good friend, decision-making researcher Gary Klein, told me about a family tradition that summarizes this ideal of skillful perspective-taking. When his daughters were growing up they developed a discussion rule that when his family got into a vociferous argument at the dinner table anyone, the adversaries or the observers, could call "switch!" and each side would have to take the other side's argument until everyone was satisfied that they were heard and understood.

The argument could then pick up again as a dialogue for learning instead of a diatribe for convincing.

One of the organizing experiences of my career was like this. As part of my dissertation action-research project I convened small groups of Israeli Arabs and Jews to engage in dialogue about inter-communal conflict and creative problem solving (1988). During one workshop at the Tantur Institute, a beautiful retreat center located just between Jerusalem and Bethlehem owned by the Vatican, Mohammed arrived late and out of breath.

> "I almost didn't make it," he exclaimed. "In fact, I just about turned around and went home."
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> "Why," I asked in a way both gentle and urgent which, as will be seen, is the core process this book describes enroute to a world of skillful perspective-takers.
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> "Because as I was sitting on a bus, a little Jewish girl, not more than 8 years old, looked at me and from me to the horrible sign on the bus reminding passengers of the danger of package bombs, "beware of suspicious objects," and with widening eyes exclaimed as she jumped up to join her mother and little sister in a different seat, Aravi! Aravi! (Arab, Arab).

Mohammed paused. One of the Jewish participants was about to fill the silence; I stopped her (another core tool for allowing perspective-taking–blocking argumentation or point scoring, which I sensed she was about to do as was confirmed a few minutes later).

> "How did this make you feel, Mohammed?" I asked.
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> "Like this seminar on conflict resolution is too little and too late. That it should be for 8-year-old children. It is impossible that if a child of eight already fears and hates me and views me as a suspicious object that peace could ever come to this land. So we are fooling ourselves. And worse, we are not focusing on what we need to do: strengthen our own cause against injustice."

Not able to contain herself anymore, and I not stopping her this time, Orit explodes:

> "This doesn't make any sense. Of course this is why we are here! Maybe we can't change all children whose parents have ugly views. Maybe we can't replace all fear with hope or make injustice go away. But maybe we can learn more about how to solve our problems with each other. And we are the future as much as that 8 year old is."
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> "Mohammed looked at her, shook his head and angrily said, "You don't understand how it feels to be in my situation…"
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> "No," said Orit derisively, "and I wouldn't want to. You have it all wrong. And it makes me wonder too if being here makes any sense…"

Despite this intense beginning, or perhaps, in part, at least due to it, the workshop unfolded with a dynamism and energy that inspired and motivated my work over the next quarter of a century with antagonists from hot-spots around the world locked in deep battles, who were at least initially unable to hear or understand each other's perspectives.

What I learned from this first moment is that stories of pain, blame, and antagonism can provide a creative friction. When guided carefully this antagonism focuses the mind and, like art, renders a kind of intensification of life to bring one's senses and intellect into a state of wakefulness. And yet, this energy is so often squandered as lines are drawn and creativity is used to resist or undermine, instead of to join and cooperate.

The story took another negative turn the next morning when upon arriving in our seminar room, we saw the following curse:

Zionists out of Falastin. If you do not leave we will kill you!

We were all speechless. My colleague Amal and I tried to make a joke, pointing to each other and claiming the other had written it. No one laughed. We called in the director of the institute, the world-famous Quaker peace-maker Landrum Bolling. He was very flustered and apologetic.

Orit, the girl who had rejected Mohammed's story as nonsense, had one of her own now.

"I don't think I can stay anymore." She exclaimed now herself wide-eyed and despairing. "If here in this 'protected environment' we are hated and hunted, then maybe Mohammed was right. Maybe it's futile and worse, foolish."

"Mohammed looked at her and said quietly", "Now I think you do really understand what I was saying…But please, Orit, stay."

She did. And there was more!

In the early afternoon we "tested" to see if perspective had been taken. We asked for volunteers from each side to switch and speak in first person as if they were the other side about the deep needs and values that conditioned the other side's perspective, hopes, and fears. Mohammed volunteered.

"As an Israeli Jew," he began, "I feel that…" and on he went. When he finished, the Jews stood up and applauded.

Orit said quietly, "Mohammed, will you be our Ambassador at the United Nations?"

This in its most simple and basic sense is what my work and this book are about: helping people locked in deep conflict take each other's perspective and then cooperate in designing ways to create new futures that will serve the needs and vitality of each of them individually and collectively.

This edited book gathers advances in efforts to understand and creatively engage identity-based conflict and forge cooperation out of it. Such conflict is the deepest and often most destructive form of conflict. Thus creative engagement of it is pressing. This book takes up this challenge by describing various approaches to identity conflict, which, while eclectic, share a common conceptual and applied framework called ARIA.

This process for moving Antagonists into Resonance and from there into creative Invention and Action has been studied and applied by each author in this book. Some have been working on these ideas and practices for the past year as part of a graduate seminar, some for a few years (e.g., as part of an Israeli-Palestinian initiative called "Kumi"), some for as much as several decades. This wide range of experience is a strength of this book as the new directions and ideas shared provide guidance and invitation to those who will build even newer directions and adaptations to follow. This is the excitement of this project. It builds on a solid theoretical and applied foundation and with hope that others will take up the task of ownership and creativity as well.

Each chapter is organized around "peace stories" about the theories and efforts of the authors to creatively engage identity-based conflict at different levels of social organization (from interpersonal to international) and from many conflicts in regions around the world (from the Mideast to the Midwest),

from Eastern Europe to Africa and South America). Each case study is presented within the context of cutting-edge theories and methods of conflict and collaboration within and between groups facing deep identity-based conflict around the globe. This volume weaves together existing and newer conceptual and applied tools for creative conflict engagement among individuals and groups facing deep identity-based divisions.

This book is for students and scholars of conflict theory *and* practice with a major goal of further helping to bridge this unhelpful divide. In addition to chapters on theory and applications of ARIA, this book also presents references for practical application for the interest and use of educators and practitioners.

Overview of the Purpose and Plan of the Book

Identity-based conflict is arguably the most important and challenging problem of our increasingly global world in which similarities and interdependencies across groups and nations compete against polarizing differences and antagonisms. It is a race between confrontation and cooperation (Rothman 1992, 2012). Which will prevail? Or more to the point, what are experiences and methods for transforming such antagonisms into shared purposes and joints efforts?

Building on its fullest rendering in *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict: In Nations, Organizations and Communities* (1997), ARIA has evolved in two directions. Its initial focus on identity-based conflict began with my dissertation work to adapt the problem solving workshop approach to International Conflict Resolution for engaging ethnic groups in reflexive dialogue about their conflicts and prospects for cooperation (Burton 1990; Azar 1990; Azar and Burton 1986; Kelman 1993; Rothman 1988, 1989, 1992, 2012). In this form, it has been used and adapted for dealing with deep identity-driven conflicts at every level of social organization from interpersonal to international in hundreds of settings around the world.

Identity-based conflicts are essentially past-oriented. They are rooted in personal traumas and collective indignities born of the past that are engines of current confrontations. ARIA gives the past its due – not seeking to wall it off or even get beyond it – while helping parties discover ways to build on its ruins and glories and foster more constructive futures together. While rooted in the past, identity-based conflicts are also much more than this. They occur when individuals' needs, often in a collective context, are threatened or frustrated. Such conflicts are passionate because they are about core concerns. The heart of the matter of identity-based conflict *is* the heart of the matter.

To deal more directly with building new futures, a second set of ARIA processes have evolved for collaborative visioning. This type of ARIA retains a focus on *resonance* – through participants' narratives about their goals and passions – but it is more action and future-oriented. Its focus is on visions and goals for the future, though it too can be rooted in the past, albeit a more ideal, often mythological past. As Anthony Smith writes in his theory of the "Myth of Origins and Descent," all national groups have a story that includes a golden

past that has been lost and which groups aspire to regain (Smith 1981). When such aspiration is blocked, identity-based conflict often occurs. When it is sought or achieved, *identity-based cooperation* can be in play.

The main conceptual switch between the two frameworks is summarized in the first letter *A*. In the first, *Antagonism* about the past is safely surfaced and engaged. In the second, *Aspiration* for the future is articulated by individuals and their groups and, ideally, instituted in the systems they constitute.

Part One: Conflict Engagement

The major idea of this book shared in stories, illustrated in action, and boiled down to useful tools is that conflict is best engaged. Sometimes it should be avoided; sometimes it should be overcome. But most of the time it should be engaged as an opportunity for learning: about oneself, about others, and about the interrelationships between self and others. Simple in concept, this work is very difficult in deed. Few and far between are the schools that teach tots to engage in conflicts. Instead, they tell them more often than not to "stop, duck, and roll." In other words, be afraid of conflict, avoid it if possible, and dispense with it if necessary; but most of all view it with a wary and defensive eye. In short, biologically conditioned fight or flight responses to conflict are culturally perpetuated.

Conflict engagement as we describe, advocate and illustrate it is a prelude to a song. At its highest form, which we also illustrate in this book, it is also a song itself. The music of conflict is creativity, imagination, possibility, and learning. It is perhaps a cliché that the deepest learning takes place out of adversity. No doubt, conflict is a form of adversity. However, as we suggest, illustrate, and share in this book, well-engaged conflict can be fascinating. Benjamin Zander, a conductor who teaches life through music and music through life advises the following: when you are confronted with a dilemma that stops you in your tracks, lift your arms skywards and exclaim: "how fascinating!" (2006).

Indeed, the ability to view a conflict as a possibility, and a fascinating one at that, is the first step in creatively engaging and fulfilling that possibility. This is also a profound switch for most of us.

Part Two: Collaborative Planning

The second half of this book, growing quite literally out of the work presented in the first half, is about how *to help good people do good work together better.*

While this book originally was to be called "Handbook on Identity-Based Conflict," I rediscovered that most essentially this work is about what I am now calling "Identity-Based Cooperation." The reason I have made my career in the former, as I've mentioned already, is my passion for creativity: that out of the friction of difference, creativity can emerge. So too, out of identity-based conflict, identity-based cooperation can be born.

If the former is the deepest type of conflict, as we suggest in the first half of this book, requiring its own unique analyses and processes, then it would seem the same is true of this form of identity-based cooperation. It is the deepest and most complex kind of cooperation.

Individually, when I am able to be "resonant" about what I want (e.g., my needs, values, priorities, aspirations) and why these are so important to me, it is the start of my ability to connect with you. If you can do the same, our connection grows even deeper. But even if I have done this work alone and you have not, I can change the dynamics of our interactions. As will be discussed in the first section of this book, the deeper the conflict, the more people are called to be clear about why it is important to them: to move away from the blame-game, the attributions and projections and accept ownership and agency over their problems. What is this conflict for? Why has it shown up in my life? In an age when individuals are increasingly being challenged to cooperate and collaborate with others, the deeper the cooperation, or the more the need for it, the more people must encounter themselves enroute to the other.

Collectively, it is the same. When groups seek to cooperate with each other across their boundaries, to create a shared "nexus" that is bigger than each of them, going "inward" helps condition and deepen external linkages. As in conflict, the more each side does their "solo" work first – who are we as a group and what do we seek and why is it important to us? – the more they can join another group in deep cooperation. This separate step is often resisted. Many times people will say that since they have come to cooperate with the other group, they find the request to first work in their own side uncomfortable. Sometimes we give in. But when we insist and they agree, we find it was worth the effort. While our natural inclination is to seek to join others as soon as possible, and to get beyond the barriers and boundaries we find between ourselves and others, in reality, we must indeed and first of all do the best we can to "our own selves be true."

Groups that seek to cooperate with each other often fail. This is not due to intention, but rather to the reality that different groups bring with them different cultures, goals, priorities, and values. When these are articulated internally among members of a group and then brought forward to another group, resonance is often close at hand. When this step of developing internal alignment is skipped, all too often groups find themselves at loggerheads with each other. Think of the many experiences you have had in which groups that seem to share the same purposes, quickly found themselves disappointed and enmeshed in disagreements. No doubt, the craft of cooperation is as demanding as the art of conflict engagement (Ross and Rothman 1999). We offer this book to provide insight and tools for creatively improving the theory and practice of both.

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