International Center for Conflict Resolution (ICCR)

CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY AND MAKING IT POSSIBLE
A Far Out Crazy Idea Worth Considering for the Long Run Existence of a Civilized World

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Everyone agrees that several international conflicts and terrorism today carry the seed of prolonged and deadly military confrontations and wars and also to the overt or covert spread and use of weapons of mass destruction and to continuous conflict worldwide. Minority groups in pursuit of their goals resort to acts of terrorism. Killing or incarcerating terrorists appears to be the only mode of reply. But there can be another more positive way to deal with terrorists that is in harmony with the preservation of law and order and the function of international institutions. The potential use of dirty bombs with material taken from unprotected sites will keep western nations nervous, alert and worried for a very long time into the future. There are nearly a dozen countries with nuclear capability and their number gradually grows. History teaches us not to trust short lulls of peace. The world needs an effective approach to conflict resolution more than ever before to ensure a lasting peace and better relations and understanding among disadvantaged peoples and among feuding nations, such as India and Pakistan, China and Taiwan, North Korea and the United States, Israel and dissatisfied Palestinians and other groups that support their resistance. A major problem of international conflict resolution today, however, is how to avoid war rather than how to attain peace. The continuation of a conflict through terrorism may be the new style of unsettling the established order in the world. This attitude needs a new way to seek out the parties to understand their grievances and try to address them in a workable way.

With the possibility of escalation of conflicts and terrorism to a dangerous degree threatening our survival, an international body needs to be established whose sole purpose is to manage these conflicts. What is required is an International Center for Conflict Resolution (ICCR) that will offer direct assistance to conflicting parties, offering understanding and negotiation both to those to whom terrorism becomes a desperate way of reacting to a fast changing world and to powerful nations who are themselves threatened. The Center will also support the existing international organizations like the United Nations. The Center would utilize the talents of diverse individuals including former terrorists, with records of past accomplishment in the field of conflict resolution. Such a body would provide a forum for these individuals to think coordinate and offer advanced mediation and assistance when an actual inflaming issue or issues seems imminent.

While many organizations are devoted to studying arms control, conflict resolution, and the conditions of peace, none is committed to providing direct assistance to the conflicting parties and disadvantaged or angry groups to resolve disputes through involvement in defining the problem. Further, the means do not now exist to encourage conflicting parties to engage automatically in an explicit, systematic and reliable bargaining process to estimate potential outcomes and best policies, internationally recognized and accepted, as the way to deal with a conflict. Currently there is no

organization (including the United Nations and the World Court at the Hague) whose objectives and methods cover the spectrum required for effective conflict resolution.

International law and diplomacy can aid in conflict resolution only to the extent that conflicting nations or alienated groups accept their legitimacy. Unfortunately, the intricacies of international diplomacy and the fact that U.N. decisions reflect the current balance of world power often serve to thwart the proper role of fairness, reason, and negotiation in conflict resolution efforts. Neither the U.N. nor the U.S. can monitor and enforce decisions, except with consent of the parties involved. Many conflicts, moreover, are not amenable to their actions frequently based on the use of force, since the issues may not concern the realms of law and diplomacy, or solutions may be prevented by the need to maintain public positions and appearances. At times also the sheer bulkiness of large, official, deliberative bodies may interfere with the resolution of a conflict. The compact structure of the International Center for Conflict Resolution, its flexibility, and impartiality would enable it to facilitate the resolution of conflicts that cannot be addressed or managed in the public arena.

Further, the problem is not so much a lack of international institutions or facilities, but a more profound disorder of the international system itself. Thus the central issue is how to deal rationally with what is generally considered to be an irrational phenomenon: violent conflict. Arms reduction agreements might diminish the number of casualties and the amount of destruction resulting from war, but our world is interdependent. A war between relatively small countries may escalate to a violent large power confrontation. Fear of such confrontation may drive nations to leave conflicts brewing in ways that worsen and intensify the conflict. The purpose of <u>ICCR is to provide an impartial vehicle for advancing our understanding of effective conflict resolution and eventually taking it out of the hands of power politics and the use of force.</u>

We live in a time when the Internet and the spread of information on the web can inflame world opinion about the abuses of power. No nation or group can hide behind secrecy for long. (But the Internet can also be a powerful medium for helping the ICCR to function and to gain traction, as discussed later in this proposal.)

ICCR will offer direct, practical assistance to conflicting parties and educate the public in the ways of dealing effectively and humanely with conflict. ICCR's activities would involve members of conflicting parties, impartial experts from other nations with knowledge of the history and evolution of the conflict, and negotiators and mediators experienced in resolving conflicts. Specifically ICCR's primary objective is to <u>intervene in conflicts that are potentially world-threatening with war or terrorism</u>, to interrupt the process of escalation before the conflicting parties are forced into public and private intransigence, and to provide a forum in which fair and well-structured negotiations can occur:

1. Terrorism is a major threat to the stability of the world because weapons of mass destruction will always be with us and knowledge about their acquisition and use is becoming more common and widespread. One purpose would be to identify nascent conflict, within and between nations, and disaffected groups that have a cause and the determination to deal with it by force and violence because they perceive no non-violent

alternative. Currently, there is no way in a nationally and internationally organized world to listen to failures of the existing system and how it inflames the minds of the young and the idle cause seekers.

2. To bring conflicting parties into a process of intensive and structured negotiation aimed at resolving the conflict. This requires leadership, prestige, and tenacity.

3. To make the world aware of the disaffection and potential conflict and to encourage and channel their influence to resolve the conflict.

4. To create a worldwide atmosphere such that public opinion can be mobilized in support of fair-minded solutions to diffuse the seemingly irresolvable and excessive claims of the opposing parties.

5. To sensitize nations and peoples to the benefits of rational approaches to conflict resolution, and to encourage them to act and speak more responsibly in their dealings with each other.

6. To make the parties to each conflict aware of where each stands with respect to the conflict and what is likely to happen if resolution is or is not achieved.

7. To establish a reliable, credible source of information, techniques, and expert assistance in conflict resolution, to make these resources readily available to the representatives of conflicting parties, and to encourage widespread use of ICCR's resources.

ICCR Organization

   In order to achieve these objectives it will be necessary for ICCR to be neutral, flexible, credible, and easily available.   ICCR should not be perceived as the agency of any particular government or coalition of nations. A first step would be the location of its central office in a truly nonaligned country. In addition, the staff, governing board, negotiators and other experts will be drawn from an international pool of respected individuals possessing diverse backgrounds. ICCR will offer a bargaining framework, not influenced by national or bloc politics, in which conflicting parties can themselves be flexible. ICCR will be able to respond quickly to establish dialogue opportunities and bargaining processes in near-crisis situations. While the credibility of ICCR will depend upon the success of the Center in resolving conflict, this does not imply simply successful mediation of specific conflicts but also encompasses the realm of increased awareness of how conflicts can be effectively resolved.
   A crucial element in securing the reputation of the Center will be the involvement of internationally respected world leaders and intellectuals in the founding of ICCR. Their participation will serve to alleviate initial problems of entree into conflict situations.   The knowledge and wisdom of the world's successful leaders and negotiators has never been collectively used before, or distilled and made available for use by others. One of ICCR's early tasks will be to collect a file of conflict resolution cases, and to ascertain from them the relevant factors

that facilitate or insure success.

<div align="center">PLAN TO ESTABLISH ICCR</div>

Phase One - ICCR's Formation

    The foundation of ICCR requires funding for an initial three-day conference to be held in neutral country. The conference will draw from internationally respected negotiators and other experts, reflecting diverse countries and interests. The goals and operating policies of ICCR will be defined at this conference. Participants will also be concerned with identifying the kinds of distinguished world leaders to be invoked to participate in the Center's formation and serve as ongoing affiliates. The result of this conference will be a basic operational plan for ICCR.

    A second meeting will be held soon thereafter to further refine the objectives and plans of ICCR. In addition, ways to secure operational funding and the identification of specific individuals to be approached to serve in the Center will be discussed.

    The <u>ultimate success of ICCR is crucially dependent upon the outcome of these two initial planning conferences.</u> For this reason it is essential that the attendees represent a highly respected group of key international negotiators, intellectuals and other experts in the field of conflict resolution. These individuals would not only shape ICCR but would embody the spirit that should ultimately emerge as ICCR. It is envisioned that there will be l0-l2 attendees at each meeting.

Phase Two - ICCR's Foundation

    Following the founding of ICCR, its primary activities will be the organization of resources, creation of awareness of ICCR's existence, entree into conflict situation, and the development and maintenance of conflict resolution support services.

    Resource organization will consist of engaging a highly skilled and capable staff and the compilation of information on present and past conflicts. It is anticipated that ICCR will have a board of trustees and an executive director plus two assistants. There will perhaps be four primary divisions within ICCR each concerned with a specific conflict area, e.g., <u>national</u>, <u>economic</u>, <u>energy and natural resources</u>, and <u>human rights</u>.

    To facilitate acceptance of ICCR and to enhance the reputation of the Center, no attempts will be made to seek credit for conflicts resolved. Instead, ICCR will draw upon the official, professional, and friendship networks of internationally prominent individuals involved in ICCR's founding to make known the Center's existence and functions.

    Entree to potential conflicts will be obtained by initially seeking involvement in the resolution of small conflicts where ICCR is uniquely qualified to serve as the locus of information and necessary expertise. The Center will also establish confidence in itself by drawing on the services of retired world leaders associated with ICCR.

The maintenance of conflict resolution support services will be attained by:

1. The identification and briefing of an appropriate negotiator concerning research on past conflicts similar to the present one.

2. The presentation of social, cultural and other background knowledge relevant to the case.

3. Specification of issues and claims of conflicting parties.

4. Dissemination of analytical materials to all affected parties as a means of enhancing mutual understanding.

5. Analysis of the negotiator's experiences for indications of how best to proceed.

6. With the consent of all parties, distribution of information regarding the conflict.

Advantages of ICCR Over Existing International Conflict Resolution Vehicles

There is an important distinction that needs to be made between the private way the Center will operate and the much more public operation of the United Nations.
ICCR is not a formal deliberative body; it will do its work quietly and informally. Discussions of issues at the United Nations often lead the parties to sharpen their rhetoric and to become more determined to make their positions appear justified in the eyes of the world. Public declarations encourage people to affirm a position that becomes entrenched, making negotiations difficult. Regrettably, it does not appear feasible in the present world context to rectify this fundamental impediment to conflict resolution.

In contrast, ICCR would serve as a private counseling body working in an impartial capacity to make each side truly aware of the other party's position and perceptions. Conflicting parties are usually unable to fully appreciate each other's concerns. When a situations is already inflamed, they tend to either exaggerate or underestimate these concerns and often respond blindly, slashing away without being able to focus clearly on each other's words, beliefs and actions. The purpose of ICCR is to deal with problems by communicating with the parties individually and, if possible, jointly. Owing to its diverse talents and research capabilities, ICCR would be able to investigate the implications of such worries and concerns, and the intent of specific threats, in a more effective fashion, with its counseling thus being based on a wide range of evidence.

This body would also differ in terms of its membership and freedom of participation from such other efforts as that embodied by the United Nations. At times the effectiveness of the UN has suffered from various kinds of pressure and factionalism. Similarly, peace efforts initiated and supported by an ex-leader of an individual nation are likely to arouse suspicion and a stigma of partisanship from the start. In working for peace, individuals or nations should not find it easy to derive glory or propaganda value from a given initiative. ICCR's integrity and purpose would be

ensured by the single-mindedness of its charter and its openness to thought and action.

The Iraq war amply demonstrates that when U.S. decisions involve strong stands that lead to hardened positions and to the deployment of massive forces, the U.S. becomes a supermilitary force whose will must be obeyed even by force. But the object and forlorn hope is to eventually eliminate militarism from the world. To diffuse mounting misunderstanding that results from the use of force, an objective, uncommitted and threat-free body is needed to mediate the situation, to create options not considered plausible by the parties including the U.N., and to explain and facilitate the process of resolving the conflict.

Funding of ICCR

It is envisioned that ICCR's initial funding will be derived from multiple sources to maintain the necessary condition of neutrality in its formation. However, because of its historical dedication to peace, its neutrality, and its success in dealing with all other nations, a really neutral country is unique in its ability to help with the establishment of ICCR. Initial support by it will serve to enhance the credibility of ICCR during the crucial formative stages when recruitment of prominent internationally respected individuals will be occurring.

We need to distinguish between the initial operating budget of the Center and the funds to support the two planning meetings. For the present what is needed is support for the two meetings.

Given that the first meeting establishes the viability of the concept, the second meeting would not only include distinguished and experienced leaders and conflict negotiators but also philanthropists whose interests (along with others they may suggest) might be stimulated sufficiently to inspire subsequent contributions to the operating budget of the Center.

Concluding Comments

To recapitulate, we propose to establish an International Center for Conflict Resolution drawing upon the resources of internationally respected negotiators, leaders, intellectuals, and other experts. The primary objective of ICCR is to intervene in conflicts that are potentially world-threatening, to interrupt the process of escalation before the conflicting parties are forced into positions of public and private intransigence, and to provide a forum in which fair and well structured negotiations can occur. No other organization, including the U.N. which operates politically by member nations and the varying opinions and prejudices of nearly 200 national governments with their short-term interests, and the World Court, covers the spectrum of activities envisioned for ICCR. The proposal is for the development of ICCR in two distinct stages. The first stage requires the initial support of an impartial, non-political organization to insure the projection of neutrality essential for ICCR's eventual success. In that stage it is hoped to establish the viability of the concept, the identification of sources of funding and the development of a plan of action. The second stage involves the implementation of the operational plan developed in the first phase of ICCR's formation. Here a pilot conflict situation would be addressed and negotiated as a means

of establishing the credibility of the Center. Thus far, distinguished negotiators and scientists, even the most cautious among them, have expressed a hope that the Center can somehow be brought into existence. Although it is difficult at this stage to envision all the details of its implementation, the ICCR is an idea with great potential.

The idea contained in this proposal is straightforward and simple and has already been circulated to a large number of people including several world leaders, and in the form of lectures and published articles in Letters of the Institute of Management Sciences, Human Systems Management of the University of Pittsburgh, and in The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

Some names of some leaders who may be appropriate for the center are people like Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, King Abdullah of Jordan, Secretary General of the United Nations, and similar others who can speak wisely and with a strong degree of reason and objectivity..

The Center would have to become a reliable international institution. Perhaps in time its members would have world citizenship and not need their national citizenship after they join it, so they can honestly speak their minds about their own governments. In addition, in time, all nations would have to sign that they accept its judgments. It must be backed by two kinds of sanctions, economic (a nation censured by it would be economically punished by all member nations who sign) and political, by denouncing that nation over and over and showing that it is not living up to obligations and agreements and is not acting democratically according to world agreements. The latter could be applied to rich countries like the US that are not so easily hurt by economic sanctions. The Center would in no way be backed by force but supported in every other conceivable civilized way and with vigor and persistence. It may not be successful at the start, but if humanity is going to survive, we need to abandon the use of force. It is a delicate matter to find other ways for punishment. In this country, beating young people is no longer thought acceptable and those who practice it themselves are punished. Considering the war and terrorism going on, if they do not escalate to nuclear war, which they might, we need to look at how we are running this world today through the UN and the US. The down-trodden, the miserable, and minorities in many cases see no alternative to violence. National borders would have to be replaced by trading borders, if any.

This proposal is idealistic, but it or something similar must come about eventually, if we are to survive. It is like the Supreme Court of the United States. Everybody has been brought up to accept its authority and implement its decisions without question. Children around the world would be taught to respect the Center and its wisdom.

National Associations for the ICCR

As an adjunct to the ICCR itself, we propose the formation in many countries of national associations to support the ICCR. These associations can be organized via the Internet and can have local chapters throughout each country. They can support the work of the ICCR in a number of ways:

1. <u>Education and Study.</u> First and foremost, the national associations can focus on education for peace in the widest sense. Backed up by the thought and practice of the leaders for peace in the ICCR itself, the national associations can conduct educational programs in their own countries. This work can both pave the way for better understanding of the ICCR and make the ICCR more effective when it becomes involved in that country, and it can address broader issues that lead to conflict. Each association can study conflict using all the resources available in its country and feed this growing body of knowledge and expertise back to the ICCR.
2. <u>Political.</u> The associations can work to mobilize support for policies in their countries that will further the work of the ICCR and broadly advance the cause of world peace.
3. <u>Financial.</u> Each national association will be self-supporting. It has been proved many times in recent years that the Internet can be an extremely effective medium for organizing grassroots efforts and raising money. All over the world ordinary people are interested in peace (and may, in fact, be in advance of their leaders). An association with a clear mission statement that is aligned with an effective international Center should be able raise significant amounts of money, some of which can be used to help in the continuing operation of the ICCR itself.
4. <u>Community Conflict Resolution.</u> Finally, local chapters of the associations can become involved in helping to resolve small, local conflicts in their own communities. Such conflicts would be below the radar screen of the ICCR itself. This conflict resolution work both helps further the cause of peace, and also adds to the world community's body of experience.

<u>Organization</u>

Each national association will be organized in a manner compatible with the structure of other non-profit associations in that country. Typically, there will be a national office, a constitution and bylaws, officers, a small staff, and a structure for local chapters. It will maintain a website that will function as a primary communications tool in carrying out its activities. In some cases, it may be able to be share office space and some logistical infrastructure with an existing group.

<u>The National Associations and Other Peace Groups</u>

There are many peace groups. It is not our purpose to simply create Yet Another Peace Group but to forge an instrument that can work in concrete and practical ways to end violence as the means of resolving (or attempting to resolve) conflicts. Many people are passionately interested in peace and belong to various groups. Unfortunately, the current agenda of peace groups is primarily one of advocacy, but advocacy for what? One may be against war, but what is the substitute? If the alternative to war is to permit rogue nations and terrorists to prevail, peace will never come. There must be a practical alternative to violence in conflict resolution, and the ICCR lays out a workable approach. The national associations for the ICCR will permit ordinary citizens to become involved in helping to actually resolve conflicts.

PLAN TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Formation

The general approach to establishing the national associations will be similar to the formation of the ICCR itself, but should actually be simpler to create. The founding of the national associations needs to be done in concert with the ICCR but can be loosely coupled with it. Leaders involved with forming the ICCR can work with other citizens in their own countries to form the national associations. A definitive draft of the association Proposal needs to be created and first circulated informally among peace workers and other interested parties. A network of interested persons will evolve, and they can communicate through the Internet and informal meetings. When the time to launch is ripe, two planning meetings can be held as with the case of the ICCR itself. These actual meetings should be easier to organize, as they are national rather than international. Also, if done in concert with one or more existing peace groups, the expense should be minimal. For example, the meetings could be held in a cooperating church or college.

The structure of the association can be laid out in the first planning meeting, and arrangements made for Internet-based collaboration in working out the details between the first and second planning meetings. During this period, funding can be secured for the initial operating budget of the association. The second planning meeting can then formally ratify the structure and create an operating committee to proceed with the implementation. Initially, the association may be able to operate with volunteer staff, but at some point will need to hire some staff support. Office space may be able to be shared with another group.

Local chapters can be established within the framework established by the association.