

IAU International Conference 2009 – Notre Dame University, Lebanon, November 2009

Parallel Session on: **Dialogue as a means to conflict prevention, management and resolution: a Lebanese case study**

Presentation

Has dialogue contributed to conflict management, conflict avoidance or conflict resolution in addressing the Lebanese crisis?

by Professor Michel Nehme, Notre Dame University

Introduction

The general objective of my talk is to specify, in the area it covers, the indirect role and responsibility of universities in general and Lebanese universities in particular as units in their own societies who in my opinion are de-facto responsible for creating conditions allowing for the promotion and construction of a civilization based on intercultural dialogue and respect of cultural diversity, as well as contributing to the creation of conditions favoring the prevention of violent conflicts, the management and control of conflicts and post-conflict reconciliation. This objective should be reached through the implementation of cultural action programs involving all generations and aiming at bringing cultures closer, through constructive dialogue and cultural exchanges in all their tangible and intangible components whether in the sub-fields of Sciences or Arts, e.g.: archaeological, architectural, artistic, economic, ethnic, historical, linguistic, religious and social. What is important respectively is the undertaking of universities to expand on the deep meanings of communication and dialog concepts not only through class rooms but also through the creation of instrument institutions to be used as channels of communication with the different units of society.

In an attempt to explain Einstein's relativity theory Professor John Vasquez posed the following question: If the whole universe and every single thing in it and on it is to expand five times its size, can the eyes of human beings detect such an enlargement? All answers to this question were negative. No one will be able to see the difference.

My question now is what if the world, meaning our planet earth, is to shrink ten times its size, would we be able to realize such a decrease? The answer to that is yes, because the fast acceleration of technological advancements and use are causing the world to shrink in terms of geography, distance and time, but not yet in multiplicity of culture, convictions and interests. The globe has truly shrunk to become one diversified Global Village.

In a global village of different concoctions of human societies there will always be a disparity of views and interests. But the reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue. The promotion of a culture of dialogue and non-violence for the future of mankind is thus an important task of the international community and specifically Universities.

In a speech to the "Forum 2000" Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, 4 September 1997, the Dalai Lama stated that the task of building a co-intelligent culture is different from many other

kinds of social change and utopian vision because there's no arrival, not even in our dreams. The "final result" is a culture that can keep on going, a sustainable, co-evolutionary culture that can learn from its experience and adapt and create in harmony with its circumstances. That means that such a culture will be always changing. Of course, our culture is already changing -- but those changes are not coming from people learning and envisioning together, as a culture, as whole communities. That's what we need to change most -- the amount of conscious, collective intelligence at work. And we can start doing that right now, right here, wherever we are. Mostly this involves creating what the Dalai Lama calls "a culture of dialogue." Who is better in doing this than universities? A culture of dialogue is one in which people habitually gather together to explore their lives, their differences, their dreams. Every facet of such a culture would contribute to people learning together, building healthy relationships with each other and the natural world, and co-creating better prospects for their shared future. Let me first suggest, in terms of mechanical solutions, that economics has always played a significant role. I wonder if a culture of dialogue can be a mass-consumption culture such as the one that dominates our world today. Co-intelligence requires community, some sort of stable interconnection, people knowing each other and committed to each other -- exactly the conditions that are undermined by anonymous, temporary global market relationships that ask only "what is the price?" and steady erode the local, the interpersonal, the mutually answerable, the ecologically and culturally responsive.

This is a gigantic subject which I can only hint at here. But I want to at least raise this issue before I proceed to more direct efforts to assess the possibility a co-intelligent culture of dialogue in Lebanon. The creation of that culture will probably require a change in our material conditions -- and a change in such conditions will probably only come about through our efforts to build a culture of dialogue. The two are necessary conditions for each other, and so will likely evolve together, step by step.

We must be aware of the vital importance of culture as a primary vehicle of meaning and a tool for understanding, a democratic agent and instrument of individual and collective human development, and as a forum for rapprochement and dialogue between all men and women, and we must be concerned that new forms of conflict, increasing the difficulties of dialogue between cultures, may be used by certain groups with the avowed or unstated aim of fuelling hatred, xenophobia and confrontation between different communities. At the outset there is a need to emphasize the fact that nobody should be harassed on account of his or her lawful opinions, and that every individual therefore enjoys an inalienable right to define and choose his or her cultural and/or religious affiliation and identity, There is an increasingly strong tendency academically and intellectually to imply that cultural "impoverishment" and marginalization, on the one hand, and prejudice and ignorance, on the other, are among the prime causes of increasing violence and stereotypes of others, thus altering the nature of peaceful and constructive relations between different cultural communities. Taking this view it is appropriate to ensure that rapprochement between cultures and intercultural dialogue become a means of conflict prevention at every level and in all its contexts and components.

It must be admitted that in the past religions and cultural diversities have been responsible for wars, or have at least shared in responsibility for them, and we cannot say that this is no longer the case today. The wider picture contains both light and shadows. On more than one occasion in the course of history the religious and cultural factors have prevented or moderated violence. One thinks, for example, of 'the truce of God' during the Christian Middle Ages or of the strict conditions which Islamic Law attached to a 'just war'; or of the care for prisoners of war and innocent victims called for by the religions. However, the main reason for the so-called wars of religion and cultural diversities was not so much hostility between the religions and value oriented cultures themselves, but much more the pursuit of power on the part of individuals and

of human groups (empires, dynasties and nations), in the course of which religion and culture were used in the service of personal or collective ambition.

As regards contemporary conflicts, it is important to examine information critically before alleging simple religious or cultural motivation. It would, for example, be simplistic to designate as merely "religious" or "cultural" the conflicts in Lebanon, or in similar situations in countries like Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Philippines and Afghanistan. The reality is that in most of these cases the religious authorities and or cultural elite, far from having incited these conflicts, have on the contrary always been passionately committed to peace and reconciliation.

Cultural and religious pluralism contribute to the mystery and richness of Lebanon. At times this pluralism is explosive. For 15 years, from 1975 to 1990, Lebanon was plunged into a civil war that violently divided the country into regions controlled by religious and ethnic factions, including Sunni, Shiite and Druze Muslims and Maronite Christians adding to this the ethnic involvement. The diverse interests of the Lebanese, Palestinians, and other national groups fueled the war even as they each constitute an ingredient to the country's make-up. Seventeen religious communities inform the people's religious consciousness. Social discontinuity is also a major factor in Lebanon's pluralism pitching the poor (Christians and Muslims) against the rich (Christians and Muslims). On the fringes of this diverse, even fragmented social order stands the future of Lebanon.¹

How to Define Lebanon?

Lebanon is a vital element for Democratic existence in the Middle East, because the destiny of the democratic processes is profoundly bound to Lebanon's destiny and its particular mission.² Geographic Lebanon, according to the Exhortation, comprises the existing state with its internationally recognized boundaries. It is a Lebanon threatened by occupation in the south and by the presence of non-Lebanese armed forces on its territory.³ Lebanon's human capacity is composed of several communities, which are "at the same time its fortune and its uniqueness."⁴ Because it is composed of several different communities, Lebanon is regarded by its own intellectual people as an exemplary land. In fact, today as yesterday, these diverse religious and cultural communities endeavor to live together on the same land in order to build a nation of dialogue, of conviviality, and to cooperate in matters of state and nation building.⁵

The cultural value of Lebanon lies in being the cradle of an ancient culture and one of the Mediterranean's beacons. No one could ignore the name of Byblos, which reminds us of the origins of the alphabet. In his address to the Patriarchs and Bishops of the Catholic Church on May 1, 1984, the Pope confirmed that Lebanon has a "valuable cultural worth" and that Lebanon is "more than a country: Lebanon is a message and an example for the East as well as for the West." His Holiness considers that "Lebanon's historical message" is a "message of freedom," of democracy, and that it is "a land of dialogue and conviviality among diverse religions and cultures".⁶ His Holiness also reiterated the same idea during the opening of the Synod, saying, "Lebanon, this small country, is larger than its size in what it represents in terms of values. Lebanon is grand in its history, comprehensiveness, esteem and message".⁷

Therefore, Lebanon represents the sum of its geographic position, its human capacity and its cultural value, with all three attributes organically intertwined. These three intertwined attributes lie at the core of the autonomous concern of Lebanon. It is from this base that the Lebanese intellectuals resolutely object to any division of Lebanon and categorically reject any partial or total occupation or annexation of Lebanon by any state. The Army as it symbolizes the unity of Lebanon demands that Lebanon regain its full independence (territorial integrity), total sovereignty and unambiguous freedom.

Living Together In Lebanon

If we are to envision a new formula for living together in Lebanon, this indicates that the existing formula does not conform with the requirements and expectations for a 'New Hope for Lebanon' and consequently does not serve the ideal aspirations for Lebanon.

In carefully reading and examining history, it becomes obvious that every time emphasis is placed on the issues of dialogue, patriotism, politics, society and the like, it calls for the establishment of new conditions and new structures. In this respect, the pivotal idea of any intellectual contribution is to arrive at a proposed national-political structure based on living together in a harmoniously interactive manner.

However, if the Lebanese people, i.e. the holders of Lebanese nationality, believe that they form a homogeneous society, is there need to discuss the issue of living together?

Yes, there is a need. The reality is that Lebanon's society is not a homogeneous one. It is a heterogeneous society, which has been and still is incompatible in social identity. There is a need to acknowledge that Lebanon's society is a heterogeneous society, i.e., plural.

Understanding the Terminology Related to the Issue of Plurality

Some of the terms related to diversity, such as pluralism and multiplicity, co-existence, living together and conviviality, are often interchangeable in common use. Their use in the case of Lebanon, however, calls for clarification of the true meaning of each.

Pluralism vs. Diversity:

There is a need to understand the distinction between the two terms "pluralism" and "diversity" and the two expressions "living together" and "conviviality." Many Lebanese object to the use of the term pluralism, which is often used by political and social scientists, and request that it be replaced with the term diversity. Although the term pluralism is often misinterpreted, I see no reason to yield it to the will of the opposition and use the term, diversity, because I believe that pluralism and diversity can be used synonymously.

However, the prefix "pluri" from the Latin origin "plures" means "plural", while "diverse" and "varied" are derived from "diversus". However, the Arabic version (the Arabic translation) alternately used both terms. Dr. Henri Kremona, in defining the terms 'diversity' and 'pluralism', stated: Diversity is quite different from pluralism. According to most social scientists, diversity is mentioned in the framework of diversity of cultural heritage. Diversity supposes a fundamental unity on the level of social commitment, which exists in the dogma of belief. As for the unity in pluralism, it remains a difficult task, because it tries to unify elements that are fundamentally and dogmatically different and culturally separate. Unity in one religion is realized through confessional diversity, and unity in the nation is realized through religious pluralism.⁸

The Imam Sheikh Mohammed Mehdi Shamseddin, who previously had categorically opposed the use of the term "pluralism," then seemed to change his position. He announced in an interposition [introduction of a remark or opinion during a debate or conversation] at the Beirut Book Fair, that "either we believe in dialogue, which inwardly encompasses an acknowledgement of pluralism. Or we can pretend that we are not pluralist or diverse, and thus we have no need for dialogue".⁹

Kamal Salibi¹⁰ in "A House of Many Mansions" speaks in his introduction about the different confessions in Lebanon whose historical roots are of a religious nature. These religious roots are

the roots of 'Lebanon's national identity and politics. This makes the connection between religious pluralism and cultural pluralism a totally organic one. In this regard, Lebanon has its own specificity. It is the fruit of its own history; it is inter-communal. It is our formula for conviviality and respect for the cultural identity of each of our communities. Each religion, because it is incarnated, manifests itself culturally. Therefore, our religious belonging, whether Christian or Muslim, has necessarily a sociological and communal dimension; it shapes our family, social and spiritual life.

Much of the Lebanese literature talks about cultural presence and its distinctiveness, as well as about connecting culture with religion. In their discussion about the life of fraternity and solidarity, many authors consider it to be based upon the affirmation that each person has the right to his own role in social, political and cultural life without compromising fidelity toward his spiritual and cultural tradition.

UNESCO in its communiqué in Mexico in 1982 stated that 'Culture is a series of distinctive characteristics, spiritual, material and intellectual, which describes a society or a social group. It encompasses, in addition to arts and literature, formulas of living and the fundamental rights of the human being, as well as value systems, traditions and beliefs'.¹¹ In this sense, the term 'culture' surpasses its pure meaning and embodies the living group characteristics of a particular societal identity. Accordingly, the pluralist culture in our society is not defined by the skin color of the Lebanese or in their appearance, or their language, or their origin or their race. It is rather a religious-cultural pluralism reflected in the group's concepts, views, values and formulas of living. It rarely leads to "a difference in education, traditions and behaviors," as stated by the Islamic Legal Council on December 4, 1996.

Is 'Conviviality' Possible In Lebanon?

'Living together' may be limited to cohabitation, being neighborly and to frequent interactions among people without the existence of cooperation, collaboration, harmony, affection and conviviality. 'Living together' may be governed by collision, as it has been in Lebanon during periods of crisis. In other words, 'living together' may be overshadowed by a basic sense of passive reality, of being in the same neighborhood without effectively living together. This is not bad, but it is not sufficient. This might lead to a confrontational situation. 'Conviviality,' on the other hand, elevates common living to a level of sociability and affection. 'Conviviality' as viewed in the social studies, is what should govern people's relations, whoever they are, wherever they may be and however they may differ.

The Lebanese productive collaborative diverse social groups provide a positive, convincing and definitive answer to the possibility of 'conviviality' in Lebanon. The Catholic Church sees the Islamic-Christian 'living together' as divine will in the sense of being neighborly, cohabiting, interacting with people. In its pastoral letter, the Council of the Eastern Catholic Patriarchs declared in 1992 that 'God in His wisdom wanted us [Christians and Muslims] to live together in this land of the world and we do accept His will with tolerance'.¹²

How to Attain 'Conviviality'?

Social scientists are aware that intention by itself is not enough to attain 'conviviality', although it is a fundamental requirement. Real 'conviviality' requires the existence of suitable circumstances, conditions, systems, regulations, and institutions, without which it cannot exist. Once these requirements materialize, 'conviviality' can take shape.

Undeclared author¹³ lists the five most important conditions for 'conviviality' to be realized: A just social and political system, rejection of secularization, true dialogue, common destiny and fidelity to cultural pluralism.

A Just Social and Political System

It is easy to be symbolic and principle oriented thinkers and ask the Lebanese people to erect a just and equitable social and political system, which respects the individuals and all the currents that form Lebanon, in order to build their common home together. These thinkers would not have called for the establishment of a just and equitable social and political system if the current existing system were effective. The system is inappropriate, simply because since independence it has not succeeded in preventing the occurrence of protracted severe crises, the last of which culminated in the 2008 political deadlock and a strife manifesting itself in bloody confrontations.

For optimum results, conviviality should come to life, become incarnate, within a political system. An un-incarnated conviviality remains sweet rhetoric, which does not become part of the conscience of people and remains a delusion. In working toward establishing such a political system, the respect of all the currents (political, social, ethnic, ideological ..Etc.) is essential. These currents are the inclinations and the desires of the Lebanese communities rooted in their cultural formation. The correlation between the social and political system and all the currents and the realization of complete acceptance of pluralism form the symbol, which unties the knot in the Lebanese dilemma over a future political system. Otherwise, each group will fail to consider the needs and the legitimate aspirations of the other.

Social scientists assert that an equitable sharing of responsibilities (the idea of responsibility sharing is a powerful tool to create commitment to decision making process) ought to develop in the heart of the nation and its system. Researchers of social stability believe that "the legitimate authorities have a duty to assure that all communities and individuals enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same obligations according to the principles of equity, equality and justice." This is a requisite to stability.

This is another confirmation of the importance of conviviality in a political system. We notice that social scientists repeat the term "communities' rights" in addition to individuals' rights, in order that no one will suppose that the Lebanese population is only composed of individuals. That is to say, unity is the responsibility of each individual and each cultural and religious group.

Rejection of Immediate Secularization

The Lebanese as people and Lebanon as a state in the region are called upon to reject immediate secularization. A secular system, if it is to happen by imposition in the Lebanese system and society, in its various aspects has the tendency to organize itself in the absence of common values. This leads to a dictatorship of an unclear majoritarianism coalition with dispersed values that, as soon as they subdue the rest of the communities, will themselves fight against one another taking Lebanon back to civil strife. This means that the values of authority, legislation, justice and even life itself should derive their criteria from the existing world of communities and not from the proclaimed Eminent One.

Laicism is considered today as a system which places the government in a neutral position in regard to the belief of citizens, allowing them to live their beliefs the way they want and allows the religious institutions to perform all its duties. It also allows for the establishment of religious schools and schools which belong to the diverse religious sects. Lebanon at this stage of its history should consider laicism as a fundamental principle in its development. It is therefore

misleading and confusing to equate the word laicism with secularization. Some Lebanese unwisely refuse the wise attitude towards secularization, considering that 'living together' and /or conviviality cannot happen except by severing the umbilical cord of religion's right to guide and advise people. They also call for confining the concerns of the religious leaders to the houses of worship. They promote the secularization of various pieces of legislation and give absolute priority to value vacant endeavor that does not really exist in true reality.

True Dialogue

The state of Lebanon should call for the formation of a constitutional committee whose job is to work for a true dialogue which respects the sensibility of individuals and various communities. This committee should be instructed to note that the Muslim-Christian dialogue aims in the first place at promoting living together between Christians and Muslims in a spirit of openness and collaboration, which is indispensable for each person in order to flourish and determine choices dictated by conscience citizenship.

This committee should connect the essential conditions for a true dialogue with having the Lebanese know each other better and fully accept pluralism. With this, the committee acknowledges that avowing pluralism is the door to all solutions and without which solutions remain unattainable.¹⁴

Common Destiny

According to its constitution, Lebanon is an integral part of the Arab world, and the same destiny links Christians and Muslims to Lebanon and to the other countries of the region. The Christians of Lebanon should maintain and strengthen their ties of solidarity with the Arab world without losing their distinctive values. The Christians are called upon to consider their further involvement in Arab culture most of which is enriching in a global world where old social values are diminishing. The Lebanese should know that by committing themselves to such a step especially the Muslim-Christian dialogue and collaboration in Lebanon can help that in other countries in applying the same approach.¹⁵

Lebanon is fortunate to have its Christians always open to dialogue. They have also always been part of the Arab world and have invariably contributed to Arab culture. There was never a dispute between the Christians and Muslims on such matters. The dispute has always been and will remain what is called the Islamization of Lebanon. The Islamists, whether Sunnis or Shiites Muslim, aspire to one of two objectives in this: a) either to annex Lebanon to what is called 'The Greater Nation of Islam', or b) to establish an Islamic or quasi-Islamic system in Lebanon. The Majority of the Lebanese reject both these aspirations.

Fidelity to Cultural Pluralism

The Lebanese are called upon to be faithful to their history and the continuity of their cultural and religious pluralism. 'Conviviality' does not cause pluralism to melt away or become diffused, which in turn leads to the loss of identity, culture and character of each group. Only dialogue, along with the process of mutual learning, which it involves, can open the religions up to each other so that people can learn to live together in diversity and get to know and understand each other better. Religious pluralism is a mystery. It has something to do, on the one hand, with God's respect for human freedom, and, on the other hand, with the natural conditions of human religious and cultural development. For thousands of years the main human groups lived in isolation from each other, in Europe, in Asia and in America. Today, in contrast, the world is characterized by a

diversity of interconnections and by a consciousness of mutual dependence. Of course there are still today various tensions and violent conflicts between human groups. The religions have an important role to play here; they share in responsibility for the achievement of greater justice and harmony in relations between the nations, the economic blocs and the cultural groupings of our world. All conflict between religions – such as polemics and insensitive proselytism – should be avoided, as should syncretism, which destroys the originality and authenticity of religion. This is not a matter of denying differences but rather of grasping what these differences really amount to. Neither does dialogue in any way exclude witnessing at times to one's own faith and inviting others to recognize what one has oneself come to know as true and valuable. Believers of different religions should try to identify those issues on which a shared, believing witness is possible, together with a genuine search for unity, in humble submission to God's will.

It is a fact that Islam and Christianity both claim to be universally valid. There is no reason why either should give up this claim. Everything depends on the methods used as the two religions seek to express and live out their universal claims. Today there should be no place for methods which rest chiefly on individual or collective ambition: violence; war; coercion in all its forms and manifestations, whether subtle or otherwise. The only way that is acceptable and worthy before humanity to obtain universal recognition for the values, which one holds to be true and valid is through frank dialogue, along with the necessary respect for the free decision of the human conscience.

Religious freedom is one of the inalienable rights of every human person. To suppress it, or even just to limit it, is to ridicule humanity. It is the union between essential values and the state. Any abuse of such a union would empty the responsible administration from its significant and symbolic power of decision making. All religions have the right to liberate themselves from such systems of value emptiness.

All people, whether Christian or Muslim, are committed to living in solidarity with their own religious community or group and to seeking its peace and prosperity, whether this is the *Umma*, the Church or other groups. At the same time it is important to show full respect for free decisions made in good conscience in regard to faith and religious adherence. The one binding principle in this sphere is to follow the voice of one's own conscience, that is, the conscience, which is genuinely seeking the truth. Faith and religion can only be genuine if people are totally free to choose or to reject them.

Which Political System Would Embody Conviviality?

In its repeated use of the following terms and expression, social scientists outline the elements required to assure a political system that would embody conviviality.

In which formula or pact would the following expressions, terms and sentences take on a meaningful life together?

- Living together or co-existence;
- Respect of every confession, fidelity of the Lebanese to their history and adherence to their plural cultural and religious heritage;
- Building a nation of dialogue;
- Lebanon's historical roots as it stands for the time being are of religious nature and are the base of its national identity and politics;
- Elevate living together to a higher level, that is, to conviviality;
- Acceptance of pluralism;
- Teaching a just and equitable social and political system which respects individuals and all tendencies;

- Equitable sharing of responsibilities;
- Assuring that all communities and individuals enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same obligations;
- Freedom of education and schooling;
- Guarantee freedoms and rights of the individual; and
- Religious freedom.

The above requirements lead us to envision the Lebanese State as a composed entity and its political system as a consensual democracy. Most of the Lebanese true intellectuals explicitly stated that the desired system should be based upon a 'consensual democracy'. At the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon, Reverend Jean Ducruet, President Emeritus of Saint Joseph University in Beirut, made clear the meaning of 'consensual democracy.' He believes that strengthening national unity requires a firmly established political system in which all confessions share in the making of national decisions and in which no one confession can impose on the nation what is not acceptable to the tradition of the other confessions. This system cannot function at the mercy of the ideology of the majority. Numerical majority is not compatible with consensual democracy. It can only be conceivable in a country without fundamental diversity. Consensual democracy necessitates a coalition government and a mutual veto on decisions that are seen as contrary to the vital interests of any of the communities. Official posts should be distributed in a manner by which no one group will dominate positions of responsibility by virtue of its power and number. This system requires the self-autonomy of some departments, such as the departments of personal status, which would remain the prerogatives of the various groups.¹⁶

Composed in this manner, the state and a system of consensual democracy constitute so-called unity in diversity. In other words, the formula of living together or coexistence in Lebanon is a complex concept. It is a unity in diversity system, which is tailored to Lebanon's body and answers to its needs, that is to say, it is accepted willingly and is not forcibly imposed.

Constructive Pluralism: International Perspective

The colloquium Towards a Constructive Pluralism took place at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from Thursday 28th to Saturday 30th January 1999. There were 40 participants from 29 countries: politicians, academics and representatives of civil society.

The colloquium was organized by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Commonwealth Secretariat. UNESCO, with its 186 member states, is dedicated to international intellectual co-operation to promote development for peace and peace for development. To this end, one of its key activities is the Culture of Peace Program inspired by the universal values of liberty, justice, equality, solidarity and social and cultural dignity. The 54-member Commonwealth is united by a set of fundamental democratic and other values, as embodied in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration, and a commitment to sustainable development. Both of these intergovernmental organizations are committed to the promotion of unity in diversity.¹⁷ Participants affirmed that ethnic, religious, cultural and other pluralism is a positive phenomenon, to be welcomed and celebrated. There was agreement that everything possible should be done to create conditions in which it can flourish within and between States.

At the same time, it was recognized that difference could be used to promote division and tension. It can be the excuse for marginalization, exclusion and oppression. And all too often it can be the occasion for violent conflict and even warfare. Participants gave examples of campaigns of genocide, civil war, and other violence, which had claimed millions of lives. It was pointed out that, according to one study, 79 of the 82 conflicts around the world between 1989 and 1992 were

intra-state in nature and that most of them were linked to ethnic, religious or cultural differences. It was argued that 'divisive pluralism' will constitute one of the key threats to peace in the twenty-first century unless appropriate action is taken. This document suggests ways to prevent such conflicts by promoting the positive alternative.

We as Lebanese should recognize that approaches on this issue need to take account of the significant changes that have taken and are taking place in the world. In particular, in as much as it highlighted the dual forces of globalization and fragmentation and the fact that the world is becoming increasingly homogeneous at a global level but more and more heterogeneous locally. This has important implications for attempts to accommodate the complexities and to meet the challenges of pluralism.

In this context, the Lebanese should agree on the importance of appreciating our common humanity and the shared and universal values this entails. Lebanese should refer to the importance of respect for difference, equality and non-discrimination, the upholding of human rights, and the democratic legitimacy of institutions, accountability, participation and qualitative representation. Lebanese should, and this happens only through state propaganda and education, accept that the aim should be equality and inclusiveness, not uniformity. The recognition of difference can strengthen unity by allowing individuals to enjoy the security of particular identities within an accepted social and constitutional framework.

There should be recognition to the need to balance the affirmation of particular identities and the requirements of an increasingly interdependent world in which we all have to coexist and cooperate. Identities can be mobilized or exploited for either negative or positive purposes. Finding ways to encourage positive uses of identity is important for all Lebanese, regardless of their minority belonging or socio-economic status. This issue is relevant to everyone, as all communities are vulnerable to division. It is the responsibility of universities and the prerogative of the Lebanese government to take a dynamic and positive view of ethnic, religious, cultural and other pluralism as an invitation for people to interact, to celebrate and to learn from difference, rather than a passive acceptance of the fact that pluralism simply exists. It was stressed that pluralism is enriching and that it can make an important contribution both to balanced development within particular countries and the building of positive relationships between countries. The UNESCO colloquium acknowledged that particular identities and society's means of dealing with cultural and other forms of difference involve arrangements and attitudes, which can be made and unmade. Consequently, there is always the possibility of improvement and dynamic evolution, whether this involves building new forms of identity or working with existing ones.

This colloquium recognized that there are problems of terminology and vocabulary and that lack of clarity can impede understanding and the development of consensus. For instance, terms such as facilitating, implementing, managing, accommodating, handling, empowering and sustaining were used and it was recognized that, while often relevant, each had its limitations. Participants this UNESCO colloquium also recognized that terminology might be a problem so far as the interpretation of pluralism in different contexts. They agreed, however, that none of the formulations used should be taken to suggest that there should be any national or international efforts to contain pluralism. In this context, Lebanese ought to recognize that greater clarity is needed regarding our understanding of the past and its relationship to the development of a constructive pluralism for the future.

Fields for action

While the fact of increasing pluralism has been recognized as universal, Lebanon should also acknowledge that each community (minority group) has its own particular character and history. Matters of pluralism within a state have to be seen in the context of a wider international environment.

How to respond to pluralism is an issue that concerns all Lebanese and needs to be addressed at the personal, social, cultural and political levels: the personal, because it is about who we are and how we define ourselves; the social, because it concerns how we interact with each other; the cultural, because it inevitably involves our beliefs, ideas and understandings; and the political because the accommodation of pluralism involves the distribution of power and access to resources. For this reason, intellectuals are to consider the role of both the State and Civil Society.

The State

Social scientists have always recognized the important and positive role that the State can play, for instance, by promoting a sense of belonging and common citizenship in a democratic framework, and the continual need for the renewal of its role. But State institutions can also play a negative role if, in a pluralistic society, they only reflect the priorities of one dominant group. In most States the ethnic and cultural composition of populations is changing and there is often an awakening of ethnic identities within these new demographic landscapes. There is no one particular model that can be applied in all circumstances, and social scientists usually stress the need for a flexible approach.

To help make ethnically, religiously and culturally plural societies work effectively, it is important to address the following:

- Processes of participation that include all groups and ensure qualitative, as opposed to merely quantitative, representation (i.e. such processes should not exclude minorities in the name of majority rule);
- inclusive and flexible approaches to constitution-making - and the working of constitutions- to ensure proper representation of all groups and full representation and participation by minority, deprived and marginalized groups;
- Decentralized or devolved structures, as appropriate;
- Sustainable development and equitable resource allocation;
- Codes of conduct for politicians and other leaders;
- Recognition and implementation of indigenous peoples' rights;
- The development of educational processes that promote understanding of pluralism and positive attitudes to people in other communities;
- providing conditions in which public and other media can reflect the diversity of society;
- facilitating the opportunities for inter-cultural contacts and equitable allocation of funding for cultural activities;
- A legal framework to safeguard rights;
- The building of oversight institutions such as human rights commissions and the ombudsperson, so that they become important role players in maintaining democratic governance.

Civil Society

There is a key role for a vigorous democratic civil society in empowering pluralism (although it is, of course, possible for elements in civil society to exacerbate tensions and deepen divisions). Civil society organizations have the advantage of being flexible, creative and able to promote

dialogue through their networks. The following component parts of civil society merit particular attention:

- Community groups, and other NGOs, which can bridge cross-community divisions;
- Local authorities, which can be effective instruments in strengthening intra-communal harmony;
- The media, in encouraging increased understanding of the realities and issues involved in constructive pluralism;
- Professional associations, which can encourage communication and co-operation between different members of different cultures;
- Businesses and trade unions, which can promote diversity in the workplace through inclusive working practices, diverse representation and culturally sensitive working arrangements;
- Religious groups, which can encourage mutual respect and understanding if they emphasize the inclusive aspects of their respective traditions;
- The academic community, through the encouragement of greater understanding of the nature of pluralism;
- Multicultural publications and media which provide for the positive self-expression of particular communities and combat divisions;
- Increased cultural diversity in the marketplace.

International bodies

While recognizing that international interventions can sometimes be negative, the grand NGOs leaders also recognize the important and sometimes decisive role that can be played by regional and international institutions and organizations in standing firm against the negative exploitation of pluralism and promoting appreciation and respect for human rights and ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism.

Recommendations

We as Lebanese should organize our universities to be able to inject modern concepts in the minds of intellectuals and students leading to the belief that all sections of society need to work in partnership to sustain policies which support, celebrate and popularize constructive pluralism. There is a particular need for positive leadership to make pluralism attractive and viable. Lebanese, in conjunction with other organizations as appropriate should do the following, to:

- Promote further discussion on issues of pluralism, including at regional level and through the media;
- Review the work of organizations already involved in this area and construct a database of those with technical expertise in the promotion and implementation of pluralism (e.g. in combating stereotypes);
- Produce a manual of 'best practice', a code of conduct and normative guidelines;
- Promote international recognition of the examples of States and institutions which are following best practice;
- Encourage the creation of 'early warning' mechanisms to detect incipient conflict in plural societies and combat divisiveness and ghettoization;
- Distribute all positive information as widely as possible.
- The Lebanese government should also stress that:
- Religious, ethnic, linguistic and other groups should be encouraged to emphasize those aspects in their traditions that foster mutual respect and understanding;

- Where appropriate and requested, assistance should be given to individuals and communities in reconstructing their identities when these have been disrupted by migration and urbanization;
- A range of educational processes should be developed to support interaction and encourage respect between communities;
- Academics, policy makers and practitioners should be encouraged to engage in dialogue with each other to inform the debate on pluralism.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance of a number of areas in which further research should be undertaken. In this context that a number of bodies could assist in work addressing the following areas:

- The implications of globalization on issues of identity in Lebanon and the capacity of groups to interact;
- The impact of technological change on various levels of pluralism;
- The affective as well as the rational dimensions of pluralism;
- The challenge of pluralism at rural, urban, regional and global level;
- The implications of cultural rights;
- The effect of existing measures to promote equality and respect for human dignity.¹⁸

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Endnotes

¹ For more information on the topic, read Dialogue at Times of War? Message by the Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures - Alexandria, Egypt, 27 July 2006.

² According to the Apostolic Exhortation (hereinafter Exhortation), (Exhortation 1997: 10).

³ (Exhortation 1997: 26).

⁴ (Exhortation 1997: 4).

⁵ (Exhortation 1997: 186-197).

⁶ (Al Khoutout 1993: 77 Arabic).

⁷ (Journal 1996: 280 Arabic).

⁸ (Kremona 1997: 15).

⁹ (Shamseddin 1994: 48).

¹⁰ Kamal Salibi. From "A House of Many Mansions - The History of Lebanon Reconsidered" (chapter 1, pages. 19-37) Published by I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993.

¹¹ (Journal, 1996: 66 French).

¹² (Al Khoutout 1993: 82).

¹³ Tools for Conviviality, <http://www.opencollector.org/history/homebrew/tools>.

¹⁴ See Najm 1993: 55.

¹⁵ Exhortation 1998: 149-150.

¹⁶ Slim 1997: 69; Message 1996: 65-66 French.

¹⁷ A Colloquium organized by UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat UNESCO Headquarters Paris 28 - 30 January 1999.

¹⁸ On this subjects see Leirvik and Kaymakcan in their book "Teaching Tolerance in Muslim Majority Societies" base their findings on a workshop entitled "Learning about the other"