“The Christian soldier confronting the challenges of intercultural conflict”.

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Although in the 2006 AMI-Assembly a working group has been tasked to produce a document with a discussion on the subject, it has appeared to be an impossibility to have the nominated nations to meet in discussions…

The presented document therefor only can be considered as a personal attempt to start the discussion on this subject within AMI.

Gerard Dijkers

Chapter 1. Definition of conflicts

"*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is week. [Matthew 26:41]*"

a. Internal conflicts (description)

Conflict commonly has the definition: "when two or more parties, with perceived incompatible goals, seek to undermine each other's goal-seeking capability".
One should not confuse the distinction between the presence and absence of conflict with the difference between competition and co-operation. In competitive situations, the two or more parties each have mutually inconsistent goals, so that when either party tries to reach their goal it will undermine the attempts of the other to reach theirs. Therefore, competitive situations will by their nature cause conflict. However, conflict can also occur in co-operative situations, in which two or more parties have consistent goals, because the manner in which one party tries to reach their goal can still undermine the other.

A clash of interests, values, actions or directions often sparks a conflict. Conflicts refer to the existence of that clash. Psychologically, a conflict exists when the reduction of one motivating stimulus involves an increase in another, so that a new adjustment is demanded. The word is applicable from the instant that the clash occurs. Even when we say that there is a potential conflict we are implying that there is already a conflict of direction even though a clash may not yet have occurred.

b. External conflicts (description)

In political terms, "conflict" refers to an ongoing state of hostility between two or more groups of people.

Chapter 2. Why Conflicts start

1. <u>Roots of the internal conflicts</u>

a. <u>Social</u>
Social distinctions have existed in most societies, such as the orders of the European feudal system or the castes of Indian society, but the modern concept of social class emerged during the nineteenth century. In the classic definition of German political economist Karl Marx, societies are divided into classes based on their socio-economic status, more particularly, those who own capital (factory owners, for example) and those who do not and must rely on wages for subsistence
An individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure. Socio-economic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and

place of residence. Sociologists often use socio-economic status as a means of predicting behaviour.

b. Political

Wars are a major cause of poverty, underdevelopment, and ill health in poor countries
The incidence of war has been rising since 1950, with most wars being within states
Wars often have cultural dimensions related to ethnicity or religion, but there are invariably underlying economic causes too.
Major root causes include political, economic, and social inequalities; extreme poverty; economic stagnation; poor government services; high unemployment; environmental degradation; and individual (economic) incentives to fight
To reduce the likelihood of wars it is essential to promote inclusive development; reduce inequalities between groups; tackle unemployment; and, via national and international control over illicit trade, reduce private incentives to fight.
Politics is the process by which groups of people make decisions, and can be described as "the authoritative allocation of values for a society". Although the term is generally applied to behaviour within governments, politics is observed in all human group interactions, including corporate, academic and religious institutions.
Politics consists of "social relations involving authority or power" and refers to the regulation of a political unit, and to the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply policy. A policy is a plan of action to guide decisions and actions. The term may apply to government, private sector organisations and groups, and individuals.
The goals of policy may vary widely according to the organisation and the context in which they are made. Broadly, policies are typically instituted in order to avoid some negative effect that has been noticed in the organisation, or to seek some positive benefit
In political science the policy cycle is a tool used for the analysing of the development of a policy item. It can also be referred to as a "stagist approach". One standardised version includes the following stages:

1. Problem identification
2. Agenda setting
3. Policy formation
4. Decision-making
5. Policy implementation
6. Policy analysis and evaluation (continue or terminate)

It cannot be stressed enough that to make a policy a person or group in a society should have the power

c. Ethnic

A definition of "ethnic conflict" is needed. (See http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/95-97/jourek.pdf) Often this term is used widely, to address a wide range of interstate conflicts that are actually not ethnic in their character. Chaim Kaufmann [1]defines “ethnic conflicts” as “disputes between communities which see themselves as having distinct heritages...” Another publication limits ethnic conflict to “a dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities.” Rodolfo Stavenhagen [2]

[1] Chaim Kaufmann, “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars”, *International Security,* vol. 20, no. 4 (Spring 1996), p. 138.
[2] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, *The Ethnic Question. Conflicts, Development, and Human Rights* (New York*:* United Nations University Press, 1990), p.76.

adds that "ethnic conflicts generally involve a clash of interests or a struggle over rights: rights to land, education, the use of language, political representation, freedom of religion, the preservation of ethnic identity, autonomy, or self-determination, etc." Thus, ethnic conflict arises as a result of the clash of ethnic group interests or group rights.

d. Religious

What is a "religious conflict"?

By the term "religious conflict" we do not refer only, or even mainly, to religious or theological disputes between different religions (for example, Islam and Christianity) or within a single religious tradition (for example, the Sunni[3]- Shi`a divide in Islam). Rather we use the term more broadly to designate any conflict that comes to be expressed wholly or partially in religious terms, whether by one or all parties. Since the core issues of many "religious conflicts" are not religious, it would be more correct in such instances to refer to the "religious dimension of conflict", but for convenience of expression we use the shorter term "religious conflict".

The nature and causes of religious conflict

One can embrace the premise that conflict expressed in religious terms usually reflects other kinds of secular tensions (economic, political, social, racial, ethnic, ideological), and that such conflict more often than not embodies several issues of contention. There is evidence that people tend to express their "secular" grievances in religious terms when such an approach is to their advantage .

(for example, when religion provides a common unifying bond), when other avenues of protest are blocked or have failed, or as a desperate attempt to protect threatened interests..

Another basic premise of the paper is that religious conflict arises, as often as not, as a component of broader cultural misunderstanding, involving an unwillingness or inability to comprehend and respect the aspirations, customs and values of an unfamiliar religion and culture. Such misunderstanding can occur between individuals, between peoples, and between a government and a governed people. When a government is perceived by a people to be unsympathetic to their cultural (including religious) traditions and heritage, such antipathy almost inevitably elicits anti-government feeling and action. Religious (and other) conflict is especially difficult to resolve when it takes place along cultural (and ethnic) boundaries. These tend to exacerbate disagreement by re-enforcing a "we-they" attitude. More deleterious still is the fact that cultural diversity can produce quite dissimilar perceptions, not only of the issues that need to be resolved, but of the means of resolution.

Groups in conflict may have real religious differences, but these differences in themselves are usually not sufficient either to explain the conflict taking place or to assess the nature of that conflict. When the basic causes of conflict are only partly religious, the conflict is not fully resolved by some kind of "religious" solution, for example, by giving Muslims their own Islamic Religious Education syllabus in secondary schools. A "religious" solution is commendable, for it resolves some aspect of conflict, but it may only be a partial remedy offering temporary conciliation. Comprehensive resolution begins when the key underlying causes of the conflict have been identified and addressed.

e. Cultural background

Throughout the world, people are increasingly on the move. Many are forced to leave their communities because of war, human rights violations, dire poverty, environmental degradation

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni

and social inequalities. But others leave because of a desire to explore new opportunities, to join family members, and for better jobs. Migration is a fact of life and has been since Biblical times. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, people are called to love and offer hospitality to strangers and exiles [4]. Christ's call to welcome the stranger [5] is central to the gospel message. As expressed in the July 2004 Faith and Order Commission meeting, "through the practice of true hospitality, which transcends somehow the distinction between 'host' and 'guest', a mutual transformation takes place." Today, one in fifty people on earth are living outside their home countries, millions more are displaced within their own countries and migration is increasingly becoming a women's issue. At the same time that globalisation is leading to freer movement of capital, goods and services, walls are going up to limit the movement of people. As the "human side" of globalisation, the phenomenon of migration means that virtually all societies are multicultural and multi-religious. Refugees and migrants enrich the societies in which they live, but the process of integration is often difficult. Social tensions are increasing in many countries as governments, churches and societies grapple with the implications of these population movements.

The phenomenon of migration is a complex one, which raises questions for churches on many levels. As governments erect barriers to keep people out – often justifying this on security grounds – desperate people take desperate measures to escape their countries. Trafficking is increasing in all regions. Many host societies are experiencing an upsurge in racism and xenophobia while the countries from which migrants leave often experience "brain drain." Societies and churches are struggling with the issue of how migrants and refugees can preserve their culture and at the same time, be integrated into their new societies. At the same time, immigrants themselves are establishing their own churches. Churches are challenged not only to offer hospitality to those who arrive in their countries, but also to combat stigma and discrimination in their societies and to challenge their governments' policies. Even as churches are being transformed by the presence of migrants and refugees, opportunities for inter-faith understanding at the local level are growing. Building hospitable communities can sometimes be a costly undertaking.

f. Role of religions and churches

Religious institutions are human institutions first of all and often also mainly led by man. Religious institutions have their relationship to power. We have seen religious leaders blessing arms before military operations, other have been claiming the supremacy of one religion against the other , denying by it the respect of the other, we also have seen religious leaders becoming the voice of the people without voice, we also have seen some priest joining the guerrillas, in the name of the struggle against an unjust and criminal regime.

Chapter 3. Examination of conflicts AMI-member-countries are involved

Considering the preamble (no inputs from others) it is an activity with many risks to identify conflicts in which the individual countries associated with AMI are involved.

[4] Lev. 19: 33-34

[5] Matt. 25:31-45

The following member countries can be identified:

Austria	Belgium	Colombia	France
Ukraine	Germany	United Kingdom	Italy
Kenya	Nigeria	Slovakia	Slovenia
Spain	Switzerland	The Netherlands	The Philippines

However, the possibility exists to divide differently: ‘old’ world versus ‘new’ world countries.

In the ***Old World*** migration into these countries of workers from countries around the Mediterranean Sea after World War II has started to support the fast rebuilding of these countries. It had been planned that this additional labour force would stay only for the specified period. The labourers did not (and it was not encouraged to) integrate with the genuine autochthonous population. After some years it appeared that this ‘temporary’ stay lasted longer than foreseen, and the immigrants started to introduce under ‘family reunification’ their families into the ‘receiving’ countries. Generally speaking, due to the low income, not the best housing became available for the new arrivals. The result was that the original –foreign- language became the standard in the newly formed enclaves, where often a ‘foreign’ society arose, with its own leadership, economy and religious communities. Over the past decades this, with the additional influx of illegal immigrants, has resulted in problems with these minorities, like can be seen in the

(1) United Kingdom.

Areas of Birmingham such as Aston, Handsworth and Lozells are widely known as being ghetto because the ethnic make-up of the area is predominantly non-white. Other "ghettos" in the UK include Chapeltown in Leeds, Burngreave & Park Hill in Sheffield and Moss Side in Manchester. Racial tensions and the impact of illegal immigration are strongly felt in areas with a working-class majority

(2) France

The poorer banlieues, or suburbs, of France, especially those of Paris, house an impoverished population largely of North African and sub-Saharan African origin in large medium- and high-rise building developments known as "Cités".

(3) The Netherlands

Especially in the (major) cities concentrations of not ethnically Dutch people exist. Apart from the ‘own’ culture, including ‘youth gangs’, major problems exist -for example- with so-called ‘black schools’, where the foreign students (even 3rd generation now) outnumber the white Dutch. Clearly the underlying problem is that in the past not enough attention has been paid to ‘integration’, which nowadays has led to ‘segregation’ and even extremism on both sides (xenophobia versus extremism (of Muslims)).

In the ***New World***, generally speaking, one can observe the opposite movement. Either from abroad, or from within the own country, a relatively small upper-class has the power. Often this power is based upon the unilateral access to natural resources (oil, minerals) and/or a relative monopoly in primary necessities of life (trade, owning farm land etcetera).

Chapter 4.Goals and end state

Guidelines for the Christian Soldier?

a. Internal conflicts

It is (for sure in the Old World) an unusual situation, that the military organisation internally is used in conflict prevention or conflict solution. However this does not mean that the soldier has no role to play.
In his daily work as a soldier he should show compassion with and respect for soldiers (colleagues or subordinates) originating from minority groups. In his private life an active attitude towards integration not only has a positive influence on the minority groups, but also enriches his own life. As a citizen of his country he should not support political groups that try to increase xenophobia.

In general one can say, that the social issues to prevent conflicts are good education and economical prosperity. Churches can contribute to the prevention by mutual respect, renouncing dogmatism and looking for conformities (oecumenical approach).

The new role of military organisations, often called peace support operations (although often in the deployment areas no peace exist) brings the soldier in circumstances of being the third party in 'internal' conflicts. Here again respect for cultural and religious habits, might keep the soldier away from the unwanted role as 'intruder', and as such as a military target.

b. External conflicts

The Christian Soldier in the armed forces faces a moral dilemma: Is fighting in the armed forces unitable with the Christian values?
There are theologists who claim that a Christian can not be a soldier in the armed forces. (eg.L.M Vance). They believe that Christian Enthusiasm for the military, its wars, and its politicians is an affront to the Saviour, contrary to Scripture, and a demonstration of the profound ignorance many Christians have of history.
Throughout in history one can see that Christianity has always supported the armed forces on both sides of the conflict by blessing the troops and strengthen them in the believe that they are fighting for a just cause. But who was fighting for the "just cause"?
Others believe that the Christian soldier has an obligation to serve his country and defend his religion.

Centuries ago, Augustine of Hippo argued that a Christian may not harm another person, even in war, unless he does so with love in his heart. Augustine did not oppose Christian service in war—pacifism was widely preached at the time—but supported it. He believed war is sometimes necessary. He did not quarrel with Christians who chose to fight. But he insisted that the Christian fight out of love, not hatred. His advice was solidly rooted in the Gospels, for Christ's teaching that we should love the enemy was offered without any exceptions (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:35). Arguing that this world is less important than the next, Augustine struggled to explain how a Christian, acting out of love, could nevertheless kill. Although his argument is too complex to encapsulate here, I will say that Augustine's position, especially as refined by Thomas Aquinas, became the basis of just war theory and, ultimately, of today's international law of war.

The 1939 Synod of American bishops met in Grand Rapids, MI and issued a statement addressing the participation of Christians in war.

The Act of Synod articulated first the Christian duty to "promote mutual understanding and peace wherever possible between individuals as well as groups and nations for both citizens and governments."
In defining duty for the Christian, the Act states:
The solemn duty which the Christian has to exert himself to the utmost in behalf of peace and the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes, should at no time be used to cancel his equally solemn duty to defend his country against the attack of the aggressor, to protect the weak in the international family from the wanton assault of the strong, and in general to promote justice and fair dealings between the nations of the world. However much nations and individuals may and should stand committed to the prevention and suppression of war whenever and wherever possible, in a sinful world sooner or later situations will arise in which one nation resorts to aggression and attack upon another. And when in such a situation honest efforts to come to a just and peaceful adjustment of differences with the aggressor have failed, the moral right—if not duty—of the assaulted nation to defend itself against the aggressor is beyond dispute.

Therefore, pacifism "is fundamentally to be condemned because it is in irreconcilable conflict with the teaching of Scripture and of our Creed or the duty of the government in the matter of war and the corresponding duty of the Christian citizen
Synod further notes that Soldiers refusing "to bear arms at the call of his government not only is disloyal to his country, but in so doing fails to discharge his solemn God-given duty to obey his government and to defend his country. The Church should bear witness against this pacifism, point out its unscriptural character, and warn its members against its subtle, religiously garbed propaganda. Synod warns against conscientious objectors in that "he who denies the right and the duty of the government to wage war on just occasions is not in harmony but in conflict with the Word of God. His conscience is seriously in error.
If one struggles with determining whether or not the occasion is just in waging war, the Act acknowledges this ethical struggle: "with the frequent complexity of the causes of modern wars and the difficulty of the average citizen to be adequately informed on this complexity of causes at the time the war breaks out,"[6] but warns that "uncertainty as to the justice of the given war can be no justifiable ground for refusing obedience to his government.
In an uncertain situation "the prior duty of each citizen to obey the government must have the right of way. This type of conscientious objector does not face the moral alternative: to fight or to do nothing; but: to fight or to disobey his government.
Therefore, in times of uncertainty, the obligation of the service member is to obey the government because "a state in which the citizen only obeys the government when it pleases him is no state and that government is no government. This is true in days of peace, and the principle gains intensified force in days of war, when the national safety is at stake.
Is this an unconditional obedience or are there limits to the obligation of obeying the Government?
The Synod answers this question:
Both Scripture and our Confession place a restriction upon our duty to obey the government. Peter at one time refused to obey the civil authorities and appealed to a higher loyalty, to God in doing so. And our Creed restricts the duty of the citizen to the State to "all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God." From this it is clear that the Church must not only recognize the right of Christians but even their duty *under certain definite circumstances* to refuse obedience to the civil magistrate.

The only time a service member can refuse obedience "is he who, recognizing his duty to obey his government and to defend his country in response to its call to arms, has intelligent and adequate grounds to be convinced that the given war to which he is summoned is an unjust war. When he is absolutely certain in the light of the principles of the Word of God that his country is fighting for a wrong cause, he cannot morally justify his participation in the given war.[7] The report concluded by urging prayer, careful reflection of the revealed word, and "to obey all lawfully constituted authorities for God's sake; and, if a serious conflict of duty should occur, to obey God rather than men.
Though the 1939 Act of Synod did not detail the "intelligent and adequate grounds" necessary to make the determination of participation or refusal in a given war, the Synod of 1977 presented the Guidelines for Justifiable Warfare. The guidelines stated that at any time when one's nation "has or is about to become involved in war or in any military action against another nation, Christians, as morally responsible citizens of the nation and of God's kingdom, should evaluate their nation's involvement by diligently seeking the answers to the following, drawing on the counsel of fellow-members with special qualifications as well as pastors and the assemblies of the church.

The guidelines included the following questions to use in the evaluation:

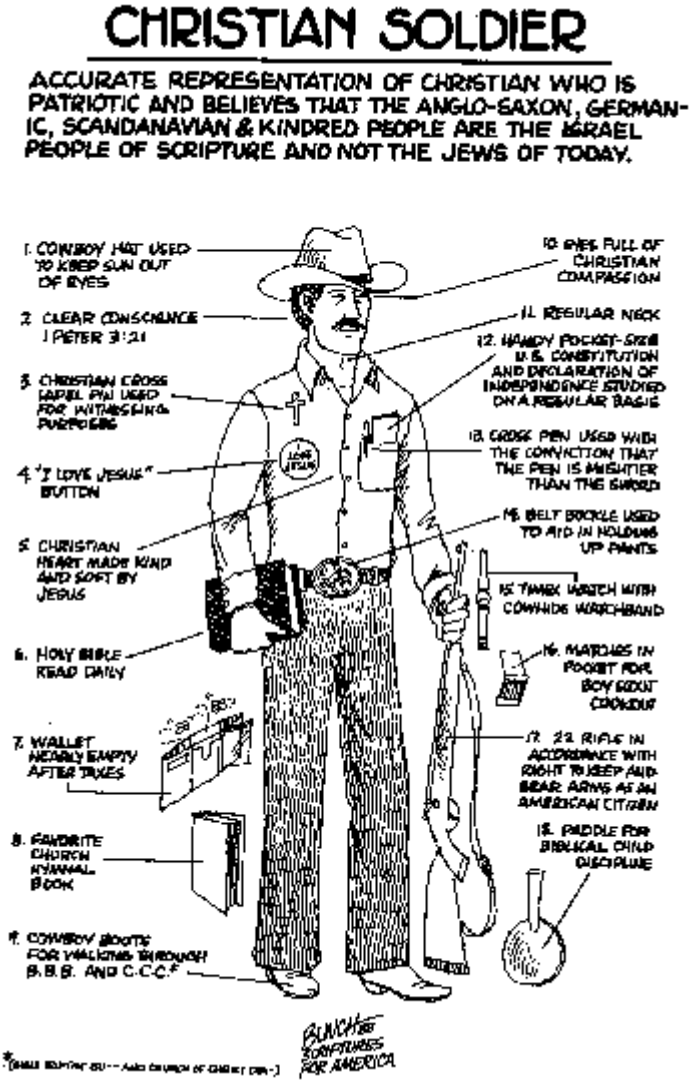
a. Is our nation the unjust aggressor?
b. Is our nation intentionally involved for economic advantage?
c. Is our nation intentionally involved for imperialistic ends, such as the acquisition of land, natural resources, or political power in international relations?
d. Has our nation in good faith observed all relevant treaties and other international agreements?
e. Has our nation exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the matters in dispute?
f. Is the evil or aggression represented by the opposing force of such overwhelming magnitude and gravity as to warrant the horrors and brutality of military opposition to it?
g. Has the decision to engage in war been taken legally by a legitimate government?
h. Are the means of warfare employed or likely to be employed by our nation in fair proportion to the evil or aggression of the opposing forces? Is our nation resolved to employ minimum necessary force?
i. In the course of the war has our nation been proposing and encouraging negotiations for peace or has it spurned such moves by the opposing forces or by neutral or international organizations

The Synod also advised:
The members of the church, out of reverence for the righteousness and justice of God, should be willing always to test the policies and practices of all governments by the teachings of Holy Scripture, and never assume a blind and proud nationalistic spirit that regards one's own nation as always above criticism. Moreover, they should consider it their duty under God to give discreet expression to their conscientious views in whatever manner is open to them.

If one can articulate intelligent and adequate grounds to conclude that a given war is unjust, the Christian should refuse to participate. This refusal "must be within the framework of law. He must expose himself to the due process and even the penalty of the state whose laws he has knowingly, publicly, and conscientiously broken. He should not "go underground" or flee the country except under conditions of extraordinary oppression or intolerably brutal tyranny

At the moment Christian soldiers are fighting in the middle east in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, fighting mainly against Islamic troops who want to subject the people to the "Islamic law"?
In the war in Iraq it seemed rather simple, the bad dictator Saddam had to be removed and the people given democracy. The tread of "weapons of mass destruction" was produced and the Christian West went to war to the Islamic(Middle)East. After Saddam was removed, the weapons of mass destruction were never found but the oilfields in the north of Iraq were secured. The coalition forces established a (western Christian) democratic government. Strangely enough the Iraqi people are now turning against there liberator and want to govern there own country in a more Islamic way.
European troops are also fighting in Afghanistan with Taliban troops. Rebuilding the country and estabeling a Government were the main objectives. A government is already established but rebuilding is slowly progressing due to heavy fighting with Taliban troops. And again the fights are between the Christian West and the Islamic (Middle) East.

- So how can a Christian soldier in the armed forces do his/her job without having moral dilemmas?
- Can we make guidelines for Christian soldiers?
- Can we give the Christian soldier the moral justification for his/her part in missions in Iraq and Afghanistan? Do we need to?



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