

Chapter One — The Learning Process

Wales was lovely that time of the year.

I was in Wales on a sunshine rich day in 1987 to advise a local health care authority about some ways they might improve their health care delivery. The health system that I served as President and CEO back in Minnesota at that point in time had several visible successes in both care quality and care effectiveness, and some people who advised the Welsh health care people thought they might want to hear from me both about what we had done and why we had done the things that we had done to make care better.

I was delighted and honored to be in Wales talking about those issues.

I made the mistake of telling the people in that room how beautiful the place they lived in was.

The problem was that I called the lovely place they lived in “England.” I said to the group, “I had no idea that the English countryside was this beautiful.”

The anger in the response from the people in that room was visceral. Palpable. It took me completely by surprise. The leader told me in very clear

terms that Wales was not England and he told me that he personally was deeply offended that I didn't know the difference.

I should have known the difference. Those sets of issues, however, were not on my radar screen at any level at that point in time.

In fact, I had known for a long time that the heir apparent to the English Throne was always given the title, "Prince of Wales," so I had actually vaguely assumed in a slightly muddled way from that singular data point that the Welsh and the English must be functionally very similar and were probably very fond of one another.

I was wrong. It was subsequently explained to me very clearly both by the Welch and by several people in England who told me they were very much Welch sympathizers that England actually was seen by many Welsh people as an oppressor — an occupying force in Wales — and their reality and their belief was that the English discriminated economically, socially, functionally, politically, and culturally against the Welsh.

I heard from those people that England had unsuccessfully tried to suppress and eliminate the Welsh language. I heard that people from Wales were often belittled, stereotyped, and even caricatured by the English.

I heard that the Welsh were often insulted in various very personal and very direct ways for being Welsh when they physically traveled into the adjacent piece of equally lovely land on that particular island that was actually appropriately and more accurately called England.

What surprised me the most on that trip to Wales was the fact that I heard many of the same intergroup complaints in some of the same language with roughly the same level of basic anger from the Welsh about the English that I had heard a number of times in our own country from both Black Americans and Native Americans about White Americans.

It very much surprised me when I heard that same anger and those same words on those very basic discrimination and prejudicial behavior issues in that new setting. I wasn't very clear on the issue, but I had generally believed up to that point in my life that we Americans had actually invented racism...and I had believed that our own levels of intergroup prejudice and intergroup discrimination were either unique to us or had at least been perfected by us.

The Welsh in Wales seemed to think that the English had actually invented and perfected both ethnic prejudice and intergroup discrimination.

I had also basically believed up to that point in time that Great Britain had become one single homogeneous country. I thought in a fairly vague way that there was a relatively uniform array of British people who lived in a unified country called Britain. I learned very quickly when I started looking more clearly and directly at that specific situation that there are actually five very distinct ethnic groups in the British Isles and I learned that only one of those groups is actually English.

The Irish, Welsh, Scots, and Ulstermen were, I learned, very much, very clearly, and very proudly not English. Like the Welsh, I learned that the Scots, the Irish, and the men of Ulster also each had their own tribal and ethnic alignments and their own clear tribal identity.

The Irish issues should have been obvious to me. Ireland had been openly fighting with the English for many years. I had known about some aspects of that particular conflict long before my trip to Wales.

I did not know about the Welsh or the Scottish issues, however, before that eye-opening day. I learned on that first journey that a number of Scots also currently wanted very much to secede from Great Britain and I learned that there were a significant number of Scots who wanted Scotland to become an independent country.

The accuracy of that information was verified fully two decades later by the very recent Scottish independence referendum, where nearly half of the Scottish voters voted to secede from Great Britain.

I did know a little about Mary, Queen of Scots at that point in time, and I had read about a number of historical wars between Scotland and England, but I had assumed that everyone on the British Isles had given up on those old differentiations and those time-distant squabbles and that all of the residents of the island had either erased, forgotten, or simply surrendered those old negative intergroup emotions when they had formed the new unified nation they called either “Great Britain,” or the United Kingdom.

I was very wrong. Scotland, Wales, and both parts of Ireland each had their own separate ethnic identities and groupings, and each had its own sets of people who were unhappy with the English and who wanted their own tribe to leave the British conglomerate.

The Irish Issues Are Tribal At Their Core

I had, of course, often heard stories about the famous troubles in Ireland, but I had erroneously assumed up to that point that those issues in that specific setting somehow stemmed in some basically logistical way

more from the fact that the Irish were physically located on a separate island with a completely separate geography.

I did not think clearly at that point about the fact that the Irish are very much a separate ethnic group and a different tribe from the English and I did not appreciate at that point the fact that the two tribes clearly have had a very long history of intergroup conflict at many levels.

I also had believed before I took that trip to Wales that the issues that did exist in Northern Ireland were primarily religious... theological in some important way at some key level.

There was a very good reason for me to have that belief. Those issues and those conflicts were generally mislabeled in our media as being about religion. Religious labels were always used in the news media to describe the various conflicts in Northern Ireland. I had believed that there were Catholics in Ireland who hated the Protestant population who lived there for purely religious reasons and I had believed that there were Protestants in that setting who hated the Catholics for those same religion- anchored reasons. Up to that point, I had simply assumed that there actually had to be some level of deeply theological underpinning to those Irish isle conflicts. I vaguely thought that the two religions must be competing with each other in some way for converts — and that something in the conversion attempts and

proselytizing process made at least some people from each group angry with each other.

On closer examination, I learned fairly quickly and fairly easily that Ireland basically had a very clear inter-ethnic tribal conflict going on. The issues were not religious. They were clearly and purely tribal. Northern Ireland, I learned, had two very different ethnic groups — two clearly separate tribes — who each have a very long history of intergroup hatred, intergroup violence, and deep levels of intergroup division.

I had casually wondered in my earlier thinking about Ireland before that trip to Wales why the Catholics and the Protestants in our own country had somehow managed to co-exist in close proximity for several centuries without actually bombing one another in any American setting that I know about while the Catholics and the Protestants in Ireland seemed to be in a perpetual state of intergroup bloodshed and conflict and literally had their local bomb squads at that point in history on permanent alert.

That conflict in Ireland between those two religions had never made any sense to me. I had studied religion a bit in college. I had not heard of any set of theological issues between Protestants and Catholics that could cause blood to be drawn and bombs to be set off at this point in the history of either church. The rhetoric of the intergroup conflict in Ireland had religious

language woven into it at relatively inflammatory levels, but when you drilled down to see who was fighting with whom — it was clearly tribe versus tribe and there were no conversions of any kind going on that had people from either side changing sides or converting to the other groups religious alignment.

We had the same religions in our country at that same time, and no one was triggering those levels of intergroup anger based on those alignments here. There has clearly been some intergroup religious prejudice and intergroup challenges at various points in our country and we have seen a variety of religion-linked discrimination issues in many settings in the U.S., but no one was bombing anyone in our country based on people's religion.

It was obvious very quickly that the two battling “religious” groups who were bombing each other in Northern Ireland were actually — at their most conflicted and purest essence — two tribes. It really wasn't a religious war. It was a tribal war. Tribes were killing tribes.

What I learned in Ireland when I visited Ireland was that the original indigenous Irish tribe — with its own Gaelic native language — had all converted centuries earlier to Catholicism. The other tribe in Ireland — the Protestant tribe — was actually the direct descendants of people who had

been strategically imported to large numbers into Ireland by the English from both Scotland and England to take control of the land away from the indigenous Irish.

It was a pure and intentional tribal invasion of Irish turf — and the two tribes who lived on that island hated each other for good logistical reasons that had turf instincts and turf realities at their core. The religious labels were used to describe those conflicts and helped to exacerbate those conflicts because the original residents of the island had become Catholic and the invading set of people had a separate tribal culture whose religion was basically Protestant.

The two tribes fought in Ireland for turf, political control, and economic position. They hated one another and they killed each other as conflicted tribes — as dueling ethnicities — rather than as dueling, conflicted, and contentious theologians. It wasn't a religious war. It was tribal war fought using religious labels. Our media always used Catholics and Protestants in the news stories as the labels for the warring groups — but the core sets of issues that were involved in those conflicts did not result from people in that setting feeling a need to use guns, bombs, or prisons to support their different theological belief systems.

Most Religious Wars Turn Out To Be Tribal At Their Core

I later discovered that same pattern of underlying tribal conflict holds true in just about every war in the world that is labeled as a religious war. Tribes fight tribes — using religion as a banner for the battles. The Sunnis and the Shiites who fight in multiple settings in a number of countries all tend to be from separate tribes in each of those settings. That used to confuse me. I actually did not know that there were any tribes involved. I thought that people in settings who believed in the Muslim faith each made individual choices about which sect to believe in. When I first learned that there were religious conflicts of that nature in those settings, I believed that individual people made individual religious choices and I believed that individual people personally chose to be either Shiite or Sunni — and then fought one another at the group level. That was wrong. Those battles are clearly not a matter of dueling and contentious belief systems in those countries with individual people choosing sides and individual people choosing their religious faith in each setting based on their own personal religious beliefs.

I looked at a lot of sites and I talked to a lot of people. I could not actually find any settings where people converted as individuals to either of those sects. Those are not individuals who are at war with one another in all

of the places where people fight under those labels. They are — once again — tribes. Entire tribes in each of those conflicted settings are either Shiite or Sunni. They have each had their alignment for a very long time. Centuries. Tribes fight tribes in those settings, with each tribe carrying a religious label.

I learned that converts to the other sect in all of those settings were extremely rare. I also learned that when any conversions by any individuals to another religion do happen in those settings for any reason other than marriage, the converts are generally each labeled as traitors by their original group and those converts are often killed by people from their ancestral tribe for switching their religious alignment. Converting to another religion or to another sect is a capital crime in some settings. Those cultures do not allow conversion. People are expected by the values embedded in those sets of cultures to be loyal forever to the sect they were each born into.

When I looked more closely at all of those conflicts, I discovered that the Shiites and the Sunnis in each of those conflicted settings are all very clearly in tribes and I could see that each of the warring tribes had their own tribal cultures, their own tribal hierarchies, their own tribal turf, and they all had long-standing intergroup animosities with the other tribe. Religion serves more as one of the clear collective identifying differentiation categories that describe an entire tribe rather than serving as a personal

motivator for any individual person's religious alignment decisions, choices, beliefs, or conflicts.

Tribes, I learned, fight tribes. When the religions of the two tribes are different, then that particular difference between the tribes can add very powerful additional levels of energy and motivation to the tribal conflicts. Adding religion, I could see, can increase the intensity levels for conflicts. People tend to fight hard when people perceive God to be on their side in a conflict.

It was not at all clear to me why God would decide to choose sides between two contentious tribes in Ireland, but it was absolutely clear to me when I actually visited Ireland and when I talked to people who live there that there are a number of people killing each other in Ireland who feel justification in doing the killing because they believe their killing of the other group to be God's will. Those people in that setting do believe that God has a favorite group in that conflict and those people believe God has chosen their side.

In Belfast, I saw the massive stone and barbed wire "Peace Wall" that has been set up to keep the tribes physically separated in that city and I heard people on each side talk about their intense distrust, dislike, and even hatred that they felt for people from the other tribe. That is a massive wall. I suspect

it can be seen from orbiting space stations. I had a picture of it hanging on my office wall for years. I asked a theology student in Belfast if any Catholics at all lived in his neighborhood that butted up against the Peace Wall. He said, “There is one Catholic girl. She married one of our lads. We know exactly where she is and we keep an eye on her.” He clearly would have been happier if that young woman had continued to live on the other side of that huge wall with her own people.

InterGroup Anger Can Look Similar Wherever It Occurs

What I began to understand in Wales on that beautiful sunny day was that we tend to align as tribes in multiple settings, and that the angers, emotions, and the often highly destructive behavior patterns that result from that alignment as separate tribes are remarkably consistent in very negative ways across multiple intergroup settings. I heard language about discrimination, distrust, division, and anger in those settings that sounded very much like language I had heard on civil rights issues in the United States.

A friend of mine who is an African American social worker just told me that he was giving a speech a few weeks ago in Scotland and people there told him how pleased they were to have a Black speaker from the U.S.

because only a Black American could fully appreciate all of the damage that had been done to the Scots by the English.

I had been personally involved in some civil rights issues in the U.S. before traveling to Wales. I had taken steps to help integrate a couple of work forces and I had some highly sympathetic conversations and contacts with both American Indian Movement activists and tribal leaders in Minnesota. I had a clear sense of the level of intergroup anger that existed in our own country before I went to Wales.

I had some friendships at that time with a few people from other races and ethnicities in Minnesota. I did a little work for a local African American newspaper and I valued the publisher of that paper as both a mentor and a hero of mine. I knew about levels of current and historic racial discrimination in the state and in the town I lived in. I had seen some of that discrimination very directly in work settings and I had taken steps to address some of those sets of issues in the places where I worked.

I believed very strongly at that point in time that we had made some significant progress on intergroup issues in our country, but I knew beyond any doubt that we still had real challenges to face and that we needed to continue to make progress in our country relative to achieving full equality

for all races and both equality and full opportunity for all ethnic groups and for women.

I had a very clear sense at that point in my life about discrimination against women. I knew we had a long way to go in our country to end both intergroup and intergender discrimination. I was actually a very early member of NOW — the National Organization for Women. So I was not neutral or uninvolved relative to multiple sets of ethnic or gender related discrimination issues before going to Wales. I strongly believed at that point in my life that we needed to deal with the damaging issues of both racism and sexism much more effectively in our country.

I did believe, however, before going to Wales that our issues and our problems in both of those areas were unique to us. I had thought that we had invented racism and I even thought that our oppression of women was unique in important ways to us. I was wrong. We have done a number of bad and too often evil things in this country relative to multiple groups and sets of people who live here, but I learned in Wales that we do not have a unique behavior pattern of people doing very bad things to one another based on their group, race, or ethnicity.

My experience in Wales was an eye opening experience. It jolted me. It gave me a new way of looking at our own intergroup issues. I started to

see a number of key issues in our country as being part of similar and basic patterns of human behavior, rather than seeing each of our issues as grim, circumstantial, and situationally unique negative intergroup realities that were only happening in the U.S.

That broader perspective initially shocked me — and it very directly started me down a new path in my thinking. I wondered, at that point, about the universality of those kinds of intergroup issues and behaviors. I decided to look personally for other examples of those behaviors in other places and settings. On that trip to Great Britain, I made the life changing decision to begin my own personal and direct survey and study of the extent that those issues were also happening in other places where people interacted as groups with other people.

At that point — in that place — I began my own search and my own research into those behaviors. I started looking very directly at a number of other countries after that paradigm-adjusting day in Wales to see if I could find any other instances of those kinds of negative intergroup behaviors in any of the other countries where I could see that there were multiple ethnic groups, races, or tribes.

Similar Patterns Of Intergroup Conflict And Discrimination

Were Widespread And Easy To Find

I was shocked again — and more than a little saddened and frightened at what I found. When I started to look at other countries, I learned very quickly that people all across the planet tend to do evil, discriminatory, divisive, destructive, dysfunctional, and damaging things to the other people in their relevant settings when the other people in each divided setting are part of some other clearly defined group of people.

I looked for those kinds of negative intergroup behavior patterns in a wide range of settings. I saw them everywhere. I also saw that there were some common trigger events and common trigger circumstances for those sets of behaviors and I saw that those kinds of negative intergroup behaviors happened in settings regularly when and where the right set of triggers are functionally activated.

I personally began both a physical journey and a fairly comprehensive research process to seek out those situations and to look for those sets of behaviors in other countries and other settings after that meeting in Wales. I literally found those factors and those behaviors to be relevant in every single multi-group setting that I could see or find.

Those sets of intergroup behaviors, I could see, were the rule — not the exception. People tended to discriminate against other groups of people in just about every setting where multiple groups co-exist.

I have personally traveled to more than three-dozen separate countries since that day in Wales, and I have talked directly to people from at least 30 more countries. I have found my on-site visits to those settings to be extremely useful. Hearing people in Chile or Kenya talk about intergroup issues that affect their lives in those countries significantly enriched and reinforced my personal levels of learning on those issues.

I also have, of course, read books, articles, journals, and Internet pieces about those issues. I have also looked at a wide range of electronic media reports and web sites about those kinds of conflicts across the planet.

The evidence is overwhelming. What I have seen and learned is that those issues and those behaviors exist everywhere that groups exist and I have seen that there are some very ugly things being done by people to people in a lot of intergroup settings that are highly unlikely to disappear left to their own devices.

There Is A Sobering Consistency Of Negative Behaviors

After my initial 1987 experience with those sets of very focused intergroup anger in Great Britain, I was very easily able to find a sobering number of other settings around the planet who suffered from those same kinds of issues. That changed the way I thought about the world.

I used to think of history as being a string of incidents... historical events that happened to people in various settings for reasons that might even be unique to those settings.

I learned, instead, that history flows in patterns and when you understand those patterns it is easier to interpret history and even possible to predict the future with a high level of accuracy for particular settings.

I began to believe, recognize, and understand back in 1987 and in 1988 as I began my more structured research process into those issues that certain kinds of intergroup problems and intergroup behaviors tend to happen with a high level of very predictable consistency everywhere on the planet where we have relevant interacting groups.

When I began looking at those kinds of intergroup issues, I had not expected to see that negative and sobering behavioral consistency in so many places. It was sobering and it was literally more than a little frightening to me, because the behaviors I saw in so many places were so

embedded with intergroup anger and intergroup hatred that it was clear that they were not a temporary phenomenon that would be erased by some positive tides of history in ways that would lead us to higher levels of civilized behavior.

History was not at all on our side on this issue. I could see, in fact, that some very powerful tides of history were actually surging in the exact opposite direction — at frightening levels and with expanding scope. Once I understood that basic set of intergroup issues and circumstances, I began to study those particular tides.

My first step in that process was to functionally make an actual list of specific and clear ethnic conflicts I could see that were happening at that moment in various points in the world. My goal was to identify the scope of the problem and then to drill down into the list to see what patterns existed in either causality issues or energy levels. By 1989 — when I wrote a first slim draft of the initial predecessor version of this book — I had 187 current and relevant ethnic conflicts on my list.

The U.S. Media Avoids Tribal Names

That number was used on my first sets of speech slides on those issues back in the early 1990s.

That list of 187 ethnic conflicts was not an easy list to make back in 1989 using either U.S. news sources or American academic sources. The U.S. media almost always avoids any reference to tribes, so I had to get the names of the relevant ethnic groups in each of the conflict situations from various foreign publications and sources. Most foreign publications also avoid naming tribes, but enough did name names to give me a fairly long list relatively quickly.

I enjoyed showing that initial list of 187 current conflicts to a number of people at that time. Many people who saw that initial list challenged me on its validity and a few people scoffed — but each of those doubters was forced to withdraw each of their challenges when they each looked more directly at each of the listed issues and settings.

Conflicts were happening in a lot of places. Very specific tribes, I could see, were clearly relevant to the conflicts almost all settings. Most conflicts were very much tribal — people with one tribal identity doing battle with people who had another tribal identity.

The Zapatista rebels in Mexico turned out to be ethnic separatists — not a contentious and militant local political party. The Tamil Tigers turned out to be purely and directly a tribal separatist group, not an ideological

movement or a belief system that somehow created an armed and dangerous political-theory focused spinoff group.

Tribes anchored every conflict at that point. After two years of looking at conflicts, I challenged myself to find an internal conflict in any setting that did not have tribes, separate ethnic groups, or separate races as the dividing factor for the conflict.

I actually could not find any exceptions to that rule for a couple of additional years. Tribes fought tribes. The people who were in local conflict in Kosovo and in Kenya were not ideologues — they were ethnicity-anchored tribes who hated one another as tribes and who fought with each other as tribes.

And even though tribes were clearly at war with tribes in all of those settings, our American news media very consistently refused to name the actual tribes in their coverage and reporting about any of those events. It was almost an obsessive refusal at that point in time by our media to actually name tribes. The media covered the wars and they covered the conflicts in many settings, but my experience for years was that the media never actually named the tribes that were involved in any conflict setting.

Stories were written about the bloodshed involving the Zapatistas. Try to find the tribal name that actually is the Zapatistas in any media report from that time frame. Our news media wrote about the Zapatistas as a political movement. The Zapatistas who were in local rebellion in Mexico tended to be labeled by the media as an ideological organization that wanted local separation and local autonomy for political reasons. Wrong. They are a separatist tribe.

That is not an ideology or a political theory. It is a deeply held, embedded, historic, and highly relevant tribal alignment. That particular tribe wants to own its own ancestral lands as a group and does not have the land broken into separate pieces of property. That is an issue of tribal culture, not of political ideology.

The news media always gave the intergroup conflicts in any setting another label. That made my intergroup conflict research more challenging. The media sometimes went to great lengths to avoid naming tribes. Intergroup conflicts in all of those various settings were generally labeled as either ideological conflicts or they were referred to as religious conflicts. They were sometimes described as political and even public policy triggered conflicts.

To be fair to our news media, the warring groups that were involved in many local conflicts often very intentionally carried political party names. Those names could be confusing. The news media reported, for example, that there was a left wing set of people in Angola who were killing right wing people in Angola.

Each of the groups at war in that country gave itself a name that sounded more political than tribal. One called themselves the people's movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the other called itself the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola — or UNITA. The media simply accepted that political concept and those names and used that group branding by those tribes in stories written about those conflicts. In fact, to confuse the issue further, our news media added cold war ideological terminology to their description of the events and our media actually told us for years that the right wing people in Angola were shooting back at the left wing people in that country.

That erroneous differentiation of the two warring groups in that particular setting into battles that were based on each group's supposed right wing and left wing ideology initially surprised and confused me. As I was making my list of intergroup conflicts in the world, that kind of pure ideology-linked local warfare in that particular country made no sense to me.

I could not figure out who had connected people who lived in that setting to both communism and capitalism at a level that would cause people there to form local armies, buy guns and artillery, and then kill each other for ideological reasons.

I could not figure out how pure, theoretical, and somewhat esoteric Cold War ideology commitments could somehow cause significant groups of people in a major part of Africa to actually kill each other? That was, however, the label that our media gave to those battles.

Nearly half a million people died in those conflicts in Angola and 1 million people were ethnically displaced. Because the ethnic issues were invisible in our news stories, I asked myself why large numbers of people in various Angolan villages would choose to be either Marxist or Capitalist and then kill one another in large scale, bloody ideology-linked conflicts that had obviously lasted in that country for years?

Like the mislabeled religious wars that I saw in Ireland and in The Middle East, what I discovered when I looked more deeply into that particular setting, was that the “leftists” in Angola were basically from one tribe and the “right wing” soldiers were all from another tribe.

When I drilled down — using as my sources a few foreign publications who tended to write slightly more accurately about the ethnic groups involved in various local conflicts — I discovered that there were completely separate tribes who were in a longstanding conflict with one another in Angola.

Those misleading group labels existed because both of the tribes had created their own efforts to drive Portugal — as their colonial ruler — out of their turf and those original names for those tribes were focused on that set of issues relative to Portugal. No Cold War ideology was particularly relevant to those particular Angolan combatants. It was a very old tribal war with a new ideological label. Tribes fight tribes.

There were also, I quickly learned, tribes killing tribes in Kenya, Lebanon, Kosovo, Spain, Nigeria, The Sudan, and every other country where there were intergroup conflicts happening. With great consistency, our news media was referred to them all as being some kind of internal political struggles.

Separatists Inside Spain Want Tribal Autonomy Now

Spain also turned out to have several of those kinds of conflicts. The Basque in Spain — and the Catalans in Spain — are both very clearly

separatist tribal groups who are not members of the Spanish basic tribal group. Those groups inside Spain each have their own language, their own sense of tribal turf, and they each want their own tribal autonomy. Those sets of separatists in Spain are not political parties who want self-governance and people who want more group autonomy for ideological reasons. They are tribes who want autonomy for tribal reasons. I saw the same patterns at the heart of conflicts everywhere I looked.

There were a lot of conflicts to look at.

When I started looking for those kinds of intergroup issues, I saw that the world was awash in intergroup conflicts. Some of the conflicts had current flash points that made them very visible. Others existed as long-standing intergroup problems that triggered very clear levels of on-going local intergroup conflict, but did it at a very low level of visibility.

I began my study of the impact and the extent of intergroup interactions and intergroup conflicts at an amazing and fortuitous time to look at those issues. Several major historical forces were combining in the world at that point a time to create almost a “perfect storm” of intergroup conflict across a wide range of settings. The world was changing at that point in time in a number of ways that actually significantly increased the

number of settings where groups of people became actively conflicted with other groups of people.

My timing was perfect to look at those sets of issues because we were actually on the cusp of a worldwide explosion in those sets of intergroup issues. I did not anticipate or expect that explosion when I began my intergroup research, but that explosion happened while I had my new intergroup telescope almost serendipitously aimed in that direction.

The Newly Freed Satellite Countries Had Ethnic Conflicts

There have been a couple of truly major historical forces at play in the world over the past couple of decades that have combined to create a massive upsurge in the number of settings and situations where groups end up in conflict with one another. My timing was fairly good to observe those conflicts. I began my study those issues at a point in history where several forces were changing the world in important ways relative to intergroup interactions and intergroup conflict.

For the prior couple of centuries, the key elements and the key factors that have driven and shaped much of world history has been national interests and the functioning empires that existed and controlled many settings. Wars were all fought between nations. Nations ran the planet.

Nations each had their own agendas and the core nations in each of the colonial empires had their own sense of tribal destiny. The functional reality was that nations periodically fought wars against other nations.

Both World Wars were wars between nations. The Hundred Years War was a war between nations. Nations had armies and military forces, and nations tended to be the key shapers of world history and current events. Some of the stronger nations had accumulated empires.

Most of the major European nations had colonies, and those nations each ran their colonies as part of colonial empires. The colonies were policed and managed by colonial armies — and the world accepted and used a paradigm of governance and ownership that allowed colonial nations and empires to own and govern other nations.

Major parts of that massive infrastructure collapsed in the second half of the last century.

After World War Two, we began to see the ending of empires, the weakening of many nations, and the rise of locally governed countries that had been colonies or satellites for very long periods of time. After World War II — and with an exploding series of key developments that have emerged in the 1990s and in the first decade of this century — we have seen

a growing set of smaller and more local multi-ethnic nations as the key organization unit for governments.

That has changed the recent history of war.

Instead of seeing external wars between nations, we now have civil wars inside multi-ethnic nations. Tribes have been central to that process. We have seen a powerful emergence of the role of tribes inside many nations. Tribes are replacing both empires and nations as the key cause of conflicted intergroup interactions and as the primary sources of historical change for many parts and many pieces of the world.

The world changed hugely when the colonial powers stopped being colonial powers in the second half of the last century and when the Soviet Union stopped functioning as the Russian Empire in the early 1990s.

A very large number of the more obvious current flash points and a high percentage of my 187 list of negative intergroup interactions that I created in the world when I began looking at actual intergroup issues came from that end of colonialism and from the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Conflicts in many settings were the direct and logical consequence of those two huge historical factors. Both of those hugely important events, I

could see easily, had resulted in the creation of a wide array of newly independent, self-governing countries.

I could see, as a student of intergroup issues, that each of those new and self-governing countries suddenly had their own major internal ethnic issues to deal with. A significant number of multi-tribal nations that were created by the collapse of colonialism and by the collapse of the Soviet Empire had major internal sets of ethnic issues to deal with — issues that had been very deliberately and effectively suppressed in most local settings for years by the colonial armies and by the Russian military.

The new nations that had been created from the freed Soviet satellite captive countries, I could see, each tended to be built around their primary local ethnic group. Those local ethnic groups assumed local control of their new countries as soon as they could assume that control. The pattern of ethnic interaction inside those new countries was clear — and it was exactly what could be expected from a basic understanding of intergroup instinctive behaviors and thought processes. The local ethnic group in each newly independent setting immediately created very clear local ethnic supremacy for their own group. They created that supremacy for their group as soon as they became independent and had control of their government.

The patterns of post-liberation ethnicity-linked behaviors that occurred in each of those former Soviet satellite countries were almost identical. They each tended to replace Russian immediately as their official national language with the historic ethnic language of their group. In many cases, the new ethnic majorities in those settings then discriminated very deliberately, intentionally, clearly, and even enthusiastically against anyone who wasn't part of their core ethnic group — including and even focusing on the significant numbers of people of Russian descent who still lived in each country. Expulsions happened. Ethnic Russians and other ethnic minorities were forced out of some countries relatively quickly and they were reduced to second-class status in those countries even more quickly.

Other Groups Also Purged

Some of those newly independent nations also did other levels of ethnic cleansings to rid themselves of other groups of people — like people of Turkish descent, Albanian descent, or gypsy ancestry — who had sometimes actually lived in those settings for generations.

Those expulsion issues in each of those countries were purely ethnic. Some of the ethnic purification processes that happened in some of those settings were brutal. Our own media tended to ignore or mislabel all of those

stories. When 50,000 Turks were expelled from a city in a freed satellite country in a pure ethnic cleansing strategy, it was referred to in our media as a “repatriation of Turks” to Turkey. Those stories actually did name the Turks as the people being expelled, but those stories generally ignored entirely the extremely relevant fact that those “expatriated” Turkish families had actually lived in those new sites and countries for multiple generations and those displaced people functionally had no place in Turkey to return to because their own ancestors had not physically lived there for generations.

It was very much like the Haitians who are being expelled from the Dominican Republic today — even though the Haitians who are currently being evicted from that country now have also lived in the Dominican Republic for generations and those displaced people from that country have no place in Haiti to return to.

I could see very early in the 1990s that those kinds of purely ethnic expulsions were happening in several of the freed satellite countries. Those people who were expelled from those countries do not disappear from the planet. They become refugees. They go into exile.

Many of those ethnically purged people from the satellite countries became part of the huge and growing number of refugees and displaced persons who are now looking for asylum and new homes in other countries.

Our media at that point in time ignored all of those intergroup issues, in part because our government was choosing very carefully not to get involved in any of those issues or even to maintain publically that they were happening.

The intergroup sins in many settings were clear, but the people who knew that they were happening did not point them out to the world.

The End Of Colonialism Also Triggered And Unleashed Local Ethnic Conflicts

As I was looking for intergroup conflicts, I saw those intergroup issues everywhere. I saw multiple waves of displaced people from the newly independent Soviet satellite countries and I saw even more people being displaced and damaged as tribes of people and as ethnic groups by the end of colonialism. Massive ethnic conflict and some very negative intergroup behaviors were a basically unexpected and unintended consequence of ending colonialism in many countries.

This book has a long chapter dealing with those issues that resulted from the collapse of colonialism. The end of colonialism obviously created its own waves of ethnic conflict when dozens of former multi-tribal and

multi-ethnic colonies were freed and the local groups in each setting were also granted control as new nations over that formerly colonial turf.

The new nations that were multi-ethnic and multi-tribal generally faced massive internal ethnic and tribal challenges and conflicts when colonialism ended and when the colonial power police forces and armies stopped enforcing local ethnic Peace.

It was easy for me to see — as I began looking around the world to find intergroup conflicts — that the recently freed colonial nations also all tended to have their own major internal interethnic problems and challenges.

Evil things happened in too many of those settings. I saw that the issues in the newly freed colonial nations often triggered major levels of horrific behaviors — and I could see that those newly triggered intergroup conflicts in the old colonies sometimes even created local genocide after the peacekeepers from the colonial armies returned to their homelands.

Interethnic killings were happening on very large scales in many settings as colonialism ended. When I looked at the extent of the damage, I saw that more than 1 million people died in India and Pakistan alone as a result of their internal ethnic division and separation.

I could see that the major new nations that had been formed on that site by that separation of Colonial India into two separate countries actually were still at war with one another decades later.

Immigration Is Surging As Well And Creating It's Own Ethnic

Conflicts

That whole explosion in local interethnic conflict inside countries that has resulted in both people fleeing those countries and in people being expelled from those countries then clearly played a major role in creating another very damaging set of interethnic conflicts in a growing range of settings.

Immigration creates its own set of intergroup issues. Those various internal conflicts in all of those countries have created an explosion of immigration that is triggering its own sets of issues in additional countries.

It was clear that all of those internal ethnic division problems that were occurring in all of those multi-ethnic countries and newly autonomous have been triggering high and growing levels of immigration into what had been ethnically pure countries in many settings.

Refugees have to go somewhere. They are going to places where they significantly change the ethnic and cultural realities for the places that they go.

It was clear to me as I began looking at those issues that those new immigration realities that were created by those refugees were also highly likely to create another major and extremely difficult to resolve set of problems for those formerly ethnically pure countries.

I predicted some of those immigration related issues and problems back in the book drafts I wrote in the early 1990s. I could see the new immigration trends into a number of countries and I knew that a whole range of instinctive intergroup issues and intergroup problems can very easily happen and be triggered when any settings significantly increase their local ethnic group diversity.

Countries That Had Been Ethnically Pure Suddenly Become **Diverse**

It was clear to me then that the immigration levels that were developing for many countries were highly likely to trigger local ethnic reactions in many settings. Time has proven my predictions to be true.

I saw that many countries in the world that had basically been ethnically pure for a very long time — like France and Austria — were suddenly being faced with significant numbers of immigrants from other settings. Those new immigrants were not from the traditional ethnic groups that existed in each site. Diversity moved on a very fast track for some of those countries.

Some of the new immigrants were moving into those countries for economic reasons. Many immigrants were moving into their new countries because of their own tribal refugee issues and because of ethnic cleansing situations in their homelands.

I had been oblivious to all of those interethnic conflict points and to all of the intergroup stress factors in the world before my sunny day in Wales — and I discovered huge numbers of them once I began looking for them and began making lists of who they were and what they were.

Every part of the world that I looked at that point in time had its own set of intergroup conflicts and each of those conflicts echoed in their own way what I had heard that day in Wales. It was obvious that the world around us had several categories of intergroup stress and conflict and I could see that each of those categories of conflict was in a growth point in their

history that was going to change major parts of the world in very significant ways.

The Existing Separatist Groups Gained New Momentum

It was clear to me that each of those sets of conflicts in each of those new national settings had significant impact on the people in each relevant setting. The total impact of all of those conflicts, I saw, had growing momentum. Each set of intergroup issues created its own set of problems.

I could also see, at that point in time, that when new levels of separatist activity began in some of the new multi-tribal nations, some of the old separatist situations in old multi-tribal nations that have existed for a very long time and had been under control by the local ethnic majority group were beginning to be re-ignited to some degree.

The old multi-ethnic countries that have had long-standing internal group issues began to experience a resurgence of energy and group support for their own internal ethnic separatist groups.

The old separatist groups in several countries had all very clearly wanted autonomy of some kind for a long period of time. The changing world re-energized some of them. Those internal separatist groups, I could see, became increasingly resistive.

The Welsh fit that category. The Catalans fit the category. So did the Kurds. It was particularly fascinating for me to look at the situations faced by and created by the Kurds.

The Kurds Epitomize Separatist Aspirations

The Kurds had not been on my radar screen at any level before that day in Wales when I started looking to see which countries had similar inter-ethnic and inter-tribal issues. The Kurds, I quickly learned, are almost the perfect example of that whole array of intergroup autonomy aspirations and internal ethnic suppression issues. Kurds are in a state of conflict in multiple countries. The Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran all are all under the governance of other ethnic groups who each, in their own way, tend to oppress and suppress the Kurds.

People from the majority ethnic group in each of those countries have been trying to suppress the Kurds for literally centuries. The local majority groups in each country have managed to oppress and dominate the local Kurds. But the amazing tendency that I saw in so many settings of tribal groups to be able to maintain their own group identity and to sustain their group infrastructure under pressure has allowed the Kurds to survive and

even thrive as separate tribes for a millennium in each of those oppressive settings.

We had a similar history in the U.S. of attempting to erase the cultures and the identities of a number of our Native American tribes. Those efforts tended to fail here as well — but the intent in our settings was clear and damage was clearly done to those tribes.

Sadly, in some cases, the suppression effort for our tribes succeeded. Some tribes in our own country are gone forever. Most of our Native American tribes continue to maintain their identity, however, and the Kurds have also continued to be Kurds — with their own sense of tribal identity, tribal survival, and tribal autonomy. Those issues are permanent issues for each country that the Kurds are part of.

Today, the Kurds in a couple of countries are beginning to gain some autonomy leverage because other tribes in their host countries are now at war with each other. The Kurds in Iraq and Syria are facing national governments that each have their own internal civil war issues — and the Kurds in those settings are working hard to turn that piece of history into higher levels of local autonomy for Kurds to the extent they can make that happen.

The Intergroup Interaction Evidence Is Clear And It Is

Everywhere

In any case, it was easy to see when I started looking at those issues that there were several major historical developments that were actually increasing the current of intergroup conflict in the world. Four chapters of this book describe those situations and those conflicts in more detail because I feel obligated to share that information in this book after spending two decades painfully learning it.

I also believe that a very high percentage of people who I have discussed those issues with very much want to believe that those issues are not real and that those historical and behavioral trends and patterns are either not true or they are not as serious and dangerous as I believe them to be.

I feel a bit compelled to make those points about those intergroup conflicts in multiple settings with more evidence in the next several chapters of this book to help people understand what those situations and those realities actually are for us and for all of the other countries facing those issues.

This book addresses all of those behavior patterns from the context and perspective of instinctive behaviors. That is not where I started.

When I first started writing my first book on this topic, tribes were the clear focus of my initial book. I was frankly seduced by the topic of tribes. Tribes were easy to see. I saw tribal issues everywhere I looked. Tribes seemed to be at the heart of every conflict. Tribes — with their tribal names, tribal cultures, tribal history, tribal turf, and tribal language or tribal dialect — seemed to be at the center of every battle.

I saw that tribal involvement in all of those conflicts to be true and real. I also saw that no one in our media at that point in time was naming any of those tribes. As a result of that media approach, I could see that almost all of the people in our own country — including very large percentages of people at various levels in our government — were unaware of the impact and the role of tribes in all of those other conflicted settings.

“Sectarian” Was A Pejorative Term

Too many of our own government leaders at that time very often seemed to be unaware of the impact of tribes in all of those settings. That understanding level very much surprised and disappointed me. I discussed some of those issues directly with our ambassadors to a couple of relevant countries and a couple of the ambassadors I talked to in those settings either had no awareness of the relevant tribal and racial issues in their countries or

were under some kind of diplomatic positioning guidance not to acknowledge that those kinds of issues existed. I suspect that both of those factors might be true.

At that time, the term “sectarian” was used in a very pejorative way to talk about and label those issues. Both our media and our government officials seemed to use the term “sectarian issues” in an almost insulting and demeaning way to dismiss and reject any of those local group behaviors or issues.

Using the term often tended to involve a sneer. “I will not stoop to sectarian issues,” one embassy person told me. “We deal with national issues here — not sectarian issues.”

He sneered as he said that.

I was both disappointed and saddened by that response. He clearly did not understand the key local issues that were creating real problems.

My perspective and my concerns about what the real issues were and what the real factors were in those local settings was reinforced very early in the process when I had lunch with the senior leader of a multi-national oil company after talking to a couple of our ambassadors. The oil company

executive could name the relevant tribes in several important settings off the top of his head.

He knew exactly which tribal groups were relevant in each setting and he clearly knew what their role and their relevance was.

But our government officials that I talked to at that time about those issues seemed to have no knowledge that the tribes existed or that the local tribes were relevant in any significant way. They literally expressed disdain for what they called — “sectarian issues” — and a couple of our people told me they expected the local governments in those settings to deal with their own “sectarian” issues.

That alarmed me — so I initially decided to write a book about tribes. My first goal in doing the initial research I did for that first book was to create a set of proof points about the role of tribes that I could use to explain to the world how tribal we humans are. I used that topic as the basic organizer for my research.

I kept extensive files by nation that dealt with each nation’s tribes. My plan was to point out in my book that we couldn’t understand all of those key conflicts in all of those settings until we saw and understood the actual tribes that were directly involved in each conflict.

Anyone, I thought, who wanted to either explain or solve the issues in Iraq or Pakistan or Kenya or Sri Lanka needed to understand how central to the conflicts the actual tribes are in each of those settings.

Anyone who wanted to help reduce future conflicts in any of those settings needed, I believed, to do their work in each setting in the context of the intergroup reality created by those tribes. I decided to write a book that could make those tribal issues clear. Explaining those issues was an initial high priority goal for my writing and research project.

I Write To Understand, Learn, And Teach

I tend to write books and articles both to explain things and to understand things. The introduction to this book mentioned that I have written and published a number of health care reform books. Each health care book has helped me better understand the specific health care topic that I wrote about for each book. My book on ending racial, ethnic, and cultural disparities in American health care made me a lot smarter about that topic than I was on the day I started to write that book.

So I actually had several goals for writing the first draft of my 1989 book. One goal was simply to understand the relevant sets of issues better myself. I wanted to learn. I love to learn. A second key goal was to point out

to everyone how many tribal conflicts there are in the world and to prove to people how relevant the tribes are to each of those conflicts.

That second goal of reporting that set of issues to the world was probably inspired in part from my early training, my work experience, and my functional personality traits as an actual and active journalist. I used to write for a living. I was initially a writer for a daily newspaper in North Dakota (The Forum) and I did an internship early in my career with the Wall Street Journal.

I am forever grateful to both of those journalism-centered organizations for the training they gave me. I loved being a reporter. I gave that line of work up as a writer to run companies and to deliver health care, but I have never entirely stopped being a reporter. I sometimes thought of myself in my day job as being a reporter embedded in that setting under very deep cover.

At that point in time — after that learning day in Wales — my journalist side simply wanted to show the world — and to explain to the world — how tribal all of those conflicts were.

I Write To Tee Up Both Reform And Process Improvement

My third goal for writing the first drafts of this book came from my longtime role and my working career as a health care planner and a public policy strategist and activist. I tend to work on community improvement agendas in health care and I tend to spend time in legislative and congressional settings helping people understand some relevant public policy issues from a functional and operational perspective.

In that light, I wanted to offer public policy insight on those intergroup issues through my book in a way that would be helpful for the public policy thinking of our country. I wanted to figure out a policy related set of solutions that we could use to help resolve or avoid key issues of intergroup conflict and intergroup stress in America.

I have been a strong advocate for formal process improvement strategies in health care for a very long time. My health care organization was able to reduce HIV death rates to half of the national average and to reduce pressure ulcers in hospitals to what might be the lowest levels in the world by thinking systematically about the processes involved in those kinds of health care outcomes.

I have been applying those same kinds of systematic process improvement tools and thinking to this set of intergroup issues — looking systematically to see what processes actually create those issues and what

processes we can use to reduce the number of intergroup problem points and intergroup damages.

This book explains how I have applied that same basic process improvement tool kit to this set of intergroup conflict and intergroup Peace issues. I believe we can reduce the number and scope of intergroup conflicts in multiple settings very significantly by using better intergroup processes — and I believe we can achieve intergroup Peace in multiple settings if we understand the steps we need to take to create and protect that Peace.

One of my goals has been to create a teaching tool that can help us all use those process improvement thoughts and tools to create the outcomes we all need to succeed and survive.

In a somewhat similar vein, one of my side goals in writing these books related to my own day job as an executive. I have managed organizations for a living for a very long time. I have been the CEO for six different organizations over the past three decades. As I went through the learning process involved in writing that first book, I found that my growing insights into people's basic behavior patterns were actually extremely useful to me both personally and functionally in my job as a senior executive.

Instinctive Intergroup Behaviors Were Also Relevant To Being

A CEO

I have learned a lot about instinctive behavior for both individuals and groups of people as I have been writing these books. I began very early in this writing process to use that knowledge of instinctive behavior very directly and explicitly in my work. Since I like to share what I learn in that area as well, one of my new goals in the early 1990s was to share some of those insights about instinctive group and individual behavior with other people who also manage organizations.

That additional communication goal about organizational leadership — when I embraced it fully for a short while — created whole new and unsustainable levels of complexity for my intergroup books. It was distracting.

At one point, I considered writing a separate business book about the instinctive patterns of behavior that are relevant to the office and to the work place. I outlined a first draft of that book. That particular business-linked focus for the teaching process was, however, a relatively low priority goal for me and I decided not to write that separate book.

Instead, a number of those relevant process-linked business and health care related approaches and procedures are described in these books and they are included in as part of the overall learning process.

Some of those points and those stories about how we can use this set of tools to manage organizations are included in this book because that is who I am and that is what I have done for a living. But this book isn't about how to be a better CEO. This is a book about how we can achieve intergroup alignment and intergroup Peace in multiple settings and why we need to do exactly that.

The business examples that I have actually used in the book, I think, help make my point about the larger set of issues and the successes from those settings that I discuss in those intergroup books will, I hope, reinforce the sense that those approaches do have merit and actual real world functional value.

InterGroup Peace Became The Goal Of The Learning Process

My overarching goal for the writing process as both an activist and as a functional and operational change architect and change agent in looking at all of those tribal behaviors in all of those settings has been focused on writing a book that could help us all deal with our own intergroup issues as a

country. The book is intended to help explain what I have learned about how we can actually create intergroup Peace for our increasingly diverse country and it is also intended to share what I have learned about how to create intergroup Peace and alignment in various settings inside our country.

I believe we can build intergroup Peace and alignment in various settings in our country and that we can build intergroup Peace for the entire country.

Wales has had its intergroup issues and intergroup problems for hundreds of years — and has made relatively little progress. Other countries, I could see, actually had worsening levels of intergroup interactions. Civil wars and ethnic cleansing are happening with depressing regularity in too many places. We can't let that happen here.

We, as people, have the same basic wiring and the same potential behavior patterns as all of those people doing all of those bad things to one another in so many settings. When I saw how bad those behaviors were in all of those settings, I had a sense of panic about the need for us to keep those same kinds of very bad outcomes from happening to us here.

InterGroup Peace for this country became the key goal for my research and writing roughly a decade ago. Intergroup Peace was reinforced

as a very high priority for me when I looked at some key demographic data for our country in the early 1990s. I could see from the trend lines that existed even then how diverse we will become as a country. I know that we would be at higher levels of risk for our survival and our safety if that growing diversity turned into growing divisions and growing intergroup anger.

We Need A Proactive Strategy To Achieve Intergroup Peace

Those predictions about our growing diversity in the future that I made back in the mid-1990s have been met and exceeded. We are moving from centuries of status quo with a huge White American majority population to a much more diverse future and we are moving there very quickly.

Half of all births in this country last year were to our minority Americans.

Next year, more than half of all students in our public school systems as a country will be minority Americans. The country is becoming one of the most diverse countries on the planet — and I believe that if we don't deal well with that reality, we run the risk of becoming just another multi-ethnic country at war with itself.

We need to have our growing diversity be an asset and not a liability.

Because I had been looking very directly at all of the directly horrific behaviors that were happening in so many diverse settings across the planet, I realized very clearly how dangerous our own growing diversity might be for us if we allow ourselves as an increasingly diverse nation to simply do the negative things that so many of those other multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-tribal countries are doing to themselves.

The prospect of us going down those same negative paths was terrifying.

We Need A Proactive Strategy For Us All

My goal at that point became to build a proactive strategy that we could use in our country to deal successfully with all of those issues here. I very much love proactive strategies. I know from my work environments that proactive strategies, anchored to real process improvement tools, can have very successful results.

In my day job as a health care executive, I have seen our care organization cut the number of heart attacks in half and reduce stroke deaths in half by going up stream in the disease process in order to have a proactive

impact on outcomes. I believe to my core that we need to do — and can do — something very similar for our intergroup issues.

After that jolting day in Wales, I knew that we needed to not end up as a country with the levels of intergroup anger that existed in that setting. I started down a path of intense learning at that point — knowing that I needed to learn before I could teach and knowing that I needed to test approaches before proposing them as solutions to the world.

I believe today that those approaches that are outlined in my three intergroup books can work. I believe that, in part because I have tested those approaches in real world settings and they have succeeded.

Being The CEO In A Resource Rich Environment Creates Opportunities

One of my personal blessings relative to this entire learning process has been to have had the job of being CEO for a couple of relatively resource rich organizations. Both of the companies that I have served as CEO since I began this learning process have tens of thousands of employees and great resources.

My most current job was to be the CEO of a company with more than \$50 billion in annual revenue. We had a highly diverse work force of nearly

200,000 people. Being the CEO in that complex, diverse, and resource rich setting gave me the vantage point to test many of the approaches described in these books and to learn in functional and operational ways about the kinds of factors, behaviors, and approaches we could use to deal as a society and culture with some of the issues that are relevant to this process.

I also have served as chair for several trade associations, industry groups, task forces, and coalitions — and those chair roles have also given me a great set of platforms for experimentation and learning in real world settings about a wide range of intergroup issues.

What I learned in all of those settings is reflected in this book — and the structure of the learning process in all of those work settings was shaped hugely by what I learned on the sunny and stimulating day in Wales.

The reaction to my words in that room in Wales triggered that journey. I have been forever grateful for having been in that room and for having been given that opportunity to learn the things since then that I have really wanted and needed to learn.

The learning journey has been so steep and so intense that it sometimes takes my breath away. I hope that I can convey some of that

experience and that intensity in this book in ways that let me share what I have learned.

There are two parts to this book.

A major portion of this book is about my personal learning journey and about how I personally came to believe what I now believe. A second major portion of this book is my attempt to share what I have actually learned on that journey with you in ways that might trigger your own learning processes.

I hope that both of those aspects of the book will be useful. I welcome your response and I invite you to share with me as well what you have learned and what you are learning.

Welcome aboard.