

Conflict resolution and negotiation: Curating intelligence analysis

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The term conflict resolution and negotiation is sparingly used in political dialogue or in foreign relations parlance and the usual term we hear is peace. It can be argued that conflict resolution and negotiation is the process that leads to peace. Politicians who slogan the terms, "peace talks" project the assumed outcome from the discussion which is fine when you are dealing with social issues but what about the situations where one side or other doesn't want peace or are not willing to push toward the goal of peace in the conflict? In those cases conflict resolution and negotiation might be the two best all-encompassing phrases to use to explain the process of communication between the parties involved. It is clear that, unless both sides are focusing on the same goal, whether it is peace, a ceasefire, drawing borders, armed conflict, release of prisoners, unfair justice, a division of resources, etc., they must both be on the same page or at least move away from the deal feeling they got something out of it. If one or both parties feel they got a raw deal then it is almost inevitable that both parties may end up back at the bargaining table discussing that same issue as the conflict was not resolved to each party's satisfaction.

Peter Wallensteen defines conflict resolution as "a situation 'where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other.' Negotiation is essentially the process that takes place within conflict resolution and guides the agreement resulting in the targeted goal whether it is peace, better understanding, etc.

There are many variables that must be understood and taken into account when dealing with the conflict resolution and negotiation process, these variables may be based on past perceived slights or affronts by each side, i.e. US occupation in Afghanistan, delegitimization of Alqaeda, etc. It can be said that the variables most commonly

affecting the framework of conflict resolution aren't tangible, they are ideological differences, i.e. Jewish vs. Muslim, Deobandi vs. Ahle-Hadith, Sunni vs. Shia, Pashtun vs. Pakhtoon etc. Whether the ideologies are religious, political or ethnic, these ideologies are important and cannot and should not be ignored or the risk of an unsuccessful negotiation process is most likely going to be the end result. According to John B. Thompson in his book, "Studies in the theory of ideology", "ideology is essentially linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power – that is, to the process of maintaining dominance." Analyzing ideology means studying conflicting viewpoints, while reflecting on language, culture and politics within the area studied

As the U.S. and other countries have strategic and financial interests in the Afghanistan region as well as a concern about the rampant Alqaeda movements within the area, it is very important to understand the intricacies of ideology when dealing with conflict resolution and negotiation. As the biggest elephant in the room, the U.S. will inevitably get called into conflicts through their own nations or in bilateral or trilateral cooperation with supranational organizations like the United Nations (UN), League of Arab States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU). It is paramount to fully understand the ideological components involved in each case that occurs in order to avoid misunderstanding the case or not taking into account each party's concerns. Negotiations are most successful when both sides win. Anything less than a win-win in the negotiation process will result in future conflict and more requirements for conflict resolution and negotiation in the future. To prevent this from occurring, it is important that peace negotiators and government leaders understand not just the culture and issues but the ideological issues that all parties involved feel are pertinent to the issue at hand. Keeping

ideological differences at the forefront of the negotiators mind will allow the negotiator to keep in mind the push and pull between traditional culture, religion and politics while dealing with the current conflict. In order to ensure that agreeable decision is achieved between all the parties acting peacekeepers alike need to ensure they understand the people and their way of life including culture, religion and politics.

Governments and agencies need to ensure there is a subject matter expert (SME) involved in the negotiation that has broad based analytic behavior assessment skills, speaks the language and knows the history, tradition, culture and religion of both groups involved in the conflict. Most importantly negotiator's cognitive abilities are up marked and he is able to parse the issues while being sensitive to the ideological issues between the parties. Upon being tasked to the negotiation process, the first rule for the negotiator should be to ensure he has a complete understanding of both sides concerns, history between the two parties, ideological issues and any conflicting viewpoints in order to take both into account when drawing a decision.

While being an SME in a specific area of the world is important, further training in behavioral assessment and analysis should ensure that those SME's understand the conflicts between the different ideologies in each region. This line of thinking will provide topics that the government can assign to "Behavioral Analysis Wing" to brainstorm research and analyze. Second, after these future issues are discovered, intelligence agencies units like "Behavioral Analysis Wing" depending on the sensitivity of the issue and the national security community should research national security policy to implement in case these issues become a reality in

the future. Third, selected policies created should be selectively disseminated to the countries involved and used to create relationships with the important parties in each country by showing that Pakistan government is trying to assist them in securing and stabilizing their region. Finally, this process should provide a robust channel of communication with all other different civil and military national security agencies to utilize this information as part of cohesive inter-agency network. The implementation of this process would assist the Pakistan government in a two-fold process: it keeps a constant flow of information flowing through the national security community as well as fresh ideas from sub intelligence units like "Behavioral Analysis Wing" and would assist Pakistan government in collecting regional data base, similar to the FBI's Behavioral Analysis.

There is a lot to be gained by understanding the role that ideology plays in a conflict; it is not enough to look at the situation through a pragmatic lens. A strategist or specialist dealing with conflict resolution and negotiation in the Pak-Afghan region must understand the underlying ideologies, the conflicts between the ideologies and the history that has led to the current conflict. Through a better understanding of situations, the people and the issues as well as ideologies, and introduction of intelligence analysis units the national security agencies and political players in Pakistan will be able to resolve conflicts and assist other countries in keeping the peace throughout the region.

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Conflict of Interest: None declared
Rec. Date: Aug. 12, 2013 Accept Date: Nov. 25, 2013