# Proactive Intervention: Strategies for National Security Decisions and Policy Formulation

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## Abstract

*This manuscript demonstrates that international conflict can be reflectively analyzed and preventative measures can be ascertained from these reflective examinations. Yet, for many laypersons, diplomacy decisions between the United States and the global community associated with international conflict seems to produce dubious outcomes that defy any sense of logical consistency. With this in mind, an analysis of relevant conflict theories is provided that are integrated with specific conflict genres. Based on this analysis, we propose that mediators should operate from a Person-Centered perspective, similar to that developed by Carl Rogers. In addition, we propose a template that is designed to enhance dialog and empower national security decision makers and United States policy formulators in the peacemaking process.*

## *Introduction*

The problem of when, how and why to intervene in international conflict is extremely important. The impact of intervention on both the nations in conflict and the intervening nation can be enormous. Conversely, a lack of intervention could result in a sociological impact of equal proportion. Careful steps must be taken when deciding to intervene in international conflict. When the decision is made to do so, the intervening nation must proceed with caution. A comprehensive review of the problem and the participants must be undertaken to fully understand how to move the peace process forward in a positive direction. Additionally, realistic, achievable goals must be set in order to measure success. There are also certain qualities that must be present in the participants as well. According to Deutsch (1949) effective conflict regulation requires the development of certain rules that both sides will agree to follow, even while continuing their conflict. Deutsch (1949) postulated that such rules will most likely be developed when the following conditions are present:

1. Each party must be coherently organized to allow its actions to be effectively coordinated.
2. Each party must be willing to recognize the legitimacy of the other.
3. Both sides to the conflict see themselves as part of a larger community.

The rules that Deutsch postulates boil down to a type of mutual respect. They also allude to each participant being vested in the international community. This suggests that each party *care* about the appearance of legitimacy in that community. Deutsch also emphasizes honest communication, a non antagonistic prior relationship, an issue that is relatively small or well focused, the avoidance of rigidity, and focusing objectively on the problem. For all of these qualities to be present in any conflict would be unrealistic, however, to have the majority, or even a few could be enough to keep or bring the participants to the negotiating table.

In his book *The Functions of Social Conflict,* Coser (1956) expounds on the nature of group conflict itself by reformulating the propositions of Georg Simmel who focused primarily on the nature of individual conflict. Of particular note are the following propositions which directly correlate to peacemaking strategy development in the context of national security decision making:

Proposition 9:     Conflicts with Out Groups Increases Internal Cohesion
Proposition 10:    Conflict with Another Group Defines Group Structure and
                   Consequent Reaction to Internal Conflict
Proposition 12:    Ideology and Conflict

These propositions address the major dynamics of out group conflict, that is, conflicts between groups that have few ties if any.      More recent relevant research points to the work of John Burton.  In his book *Global Conflict: The Domestic Sources of International Conflict*, (Burton, 1984) contends that international conflicts can only be settled, managed, or suppressed when using traditional forms of intervention such as negotiation, mediation and arbitration.  Burton (1984) postulates that conflicts approached in this manner can only be resolved when the needs of all parties concerned are met.  This end-state while optimistic is not always an option.  Despite the proposed end-state, the overall concept contributes to the development of strategy towards dealing with conflict. As demonstrated later in this manuscript, Burton's theory lends understanding toward realistic outcomes.

Burton also contributes greatly to understanding the motivations behind concerned parties in a given conflict, albeit described as human motivation in general; the concept can easily be applied to a particular group. Understanding the motivations of all parties concerned in a given conflict is paramount to strategizing an amicable end to conflict.  According to Burton (1990), there are three basic forms of human motivation: needs, values, and interests.  Unlike Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), focusing primarily on individual needs of the psyche, Burton's *needs* focus on those traits necessary to function as a member of society.  Burton further postulates that *values* are culturally specific, in a sense; they are the identity of a particular community. Burton surmises that *values* can often become an obstacle to conflict resolution due to a need to defend them. This is particularly true regarding religious conflicts.  With regard to *interests*, Burton theorizes that interests change with a given set of circumstances.  Robust political, ethnic, economic, and religious climates within a conflict itself can effect a change of interests.

Johan Galtung provides interesting conflict perspectives as well.  Galtung (1989) theorizes, there are but two types of conflict: direct conflict and structural conflict.  Galtung posits that direct conflict occurs over clearly articulated values between conscious and strategy-planning actors, whereas structural conflict occurs between parties over interests embedded in social structure (Galtung, 1989).  Galtung contends that the parties involved in structural conflict may not necessarily know the nature of the problem causing the conflict (Galtung, 1989). Galtung theorizes that conflict as a whole contains three crucial elements that act upon each other, they are: attitude, behavior, and the conflict itself (Galtung, 1989).  Galtung's hypothesis states that conflict resolution is dependent on correcting the attitudes of both concerned parties, adjusting behavioral polarization and willingness to take destructive action, and removing any incompatible goals set by opposing parties (Galtung, 1989).  Galtung also presents a unique final point to conflict resolution that he coined "conflict processing".  Processing according to Galtung (1989), can mean either repressing or resolving the conflict itself.  It can also lead to changing the definition of the situation or change in the situation itself.  This is of particular importance with regard to developing strategy to prevent conflict before it actually takes full form.

Despite this attempt at developing preemptive strategy for international conflict, some argue that such conflict is inevitable.  Hans Morgenthau (1973) cites each nation is engaged in a struggle for power that is designed to secure its national interests, and as a result, conflict is not only inevitable, but will usually take the form of war. Analyzing the Problem and the Participants When considering the postulate posed by Morgenthau (1973), pre-conflict intervention seems pointless.  However, if all conceivable aspects of a potential problem are analyzed objectively, and a clear understanding of the parties involved is ascertained, a strategy can be developed to prevent Morgenthau's ultimatum.  This means first analyzing the problem itself and discovering its true nature, is it religious, political, ethnic?  Each of these dynamics requires a different approach to resolution.  They also require varying degrees of understanding as well.  For example, in order to understand politico-religious conflict, one would have to be familiar with the respective religious ideology and its relation to political theory.

Burns (1960) offers creative insight into the nature of the relationship between religion and political theory. Burns (1960) suggests that there are modern theories which support the idea of political problems lending themselves to religious answers.  According to Burns (1960), those that support this concept also adhere to the proposition that religion constitutes the very foundation of civilization and in its absence, civilization would inevitably collapse.  Imagine the difficulties that could (and most likely would) arise if third party mediation attempted to approach this situation from a standpoint void of religious tone.  Burns' (1960) summation highlights the necessity for those involved in intervention to thoroughly investigate the problem objectively but also from the eyes of those in conflict. Furthering this point Avruch, (1998, p. 57) states when concepts of peace building are introduced at a macro level, an etic analysis of the challenges to the study of peace building in Islamic culture and conflict resolution draws on the generic patterns of Islamic cultural behavior.

In such an approach, the researcher focuses on the "objective" conditions of the conflict, that is, the political, socioeconomic, and geopolitical factors to understand and classify the cultural patterns. Abu-Nimer (2003, p. 6) clarifies stating the purpose of examining those macro and generic obstacles to conflict resolution in a Muslim context is not to construct a list of cultural and social attributions that are valid in all Muslim societies but to identify those factors that might assist in the analysis and design of conflict resolution approaches in a given Muslim community. According to Abu-Nimer (2003, p. 6), integrating both emic and etic approaches to the study of Islam and peace building is the best way to understand the diversity and complexity of violent and nonviolent micro and macro responses to conflicts in a Muslim community, and thus to forge specific and effective conflict resolution methods for these concepts.

Individuality and specificity play a major role in understanding the nature of a given conflict. Although Abu-Nimer (1998) states the necessity in identifying Islamic values and notions of quality of life for an individual and a community as being key to understanding how basic human needs are satisfied in Muslim communities. Some could argue that the same holds true for all communities regardless of religious affiliation (or lack thereof). The generalness of this approach and wide ranging applicability is apparent. Abu-Nimer (1998, p. 7) concludes that a lasting resolution for any conflict requires both systemic and individual perceptions. Therefore, a lasting resolution for any conflict requires both systemic and individual analysis and intervention. The analysis as presupposed by Abu-Nimer was also supported by Kriesberg in his 1991 manuscript entitled: *Conflict Resolutions Applications To Peace Studies*. Kriesberg (1991, p. 408) stated that a major source of international conflict are the conditions within each society, and conflict resolution ideas can be used to modify those conditions at each stage of conflict. Thus they may also be applied to prevent the emergence of a conflict, alleviating the underlying conditions for a fight. This supports the notion that conflict can be averted via intervention with the appropriate means. Those means entail a detailed understanding of the problem and the participants.

*Laying the Groundwork for Success: Cultural Climate Survey*

Understanding the population's cultural climate is essential to message delivery as well. Developing a keen understanding of a given population's feelings toward their governing body, potential adversary and the mediator/practitioner all assist greatly in both message development and delivery. Proper understanding of population climate can also assists practitioners in developing resolution ideas that are culturally palatable to the population. In some cases appeasing the local populace's desire to be understood is the only obstacle to peace mitigation. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005, p. 302) support this argument citing cultural understanding as the most important issue of all in conflict resolution. Also in concurrence is Najafbagy (2008, p. 146) when he stated that many failures in international cooperation and conflict resolution seem to be related to communication problems and cultural differences. In other words, Najafbagy (2008, p. 146) cites, the establishment of realistic, proper and effective communication, based on mutual cultural understanding and goodwill, would solve many national and international disputes. Yet despite all the arguments supporting the importance of cultural understanding, conflict resolution practitioners still relegate cultural understanding to a mediocre role in the process. Brigg and Muller (2009, p. 122) concur stating that the practical efforts of conflict resolution tend to neglect the conceptual perplexities of culture.

*Influencing the Target Audience*

From a preemptive standpoint, communication with the proper audience is imperative. In order to be effective, practitioners must have a clear understanding of the power base in a given corner of the world. In those countries where the population holds some measure of power, be it via potential revolt or actual elective authority, practitioners can utilize that audience to influence the actions of the actual decision makers. In order for that potentiality to become reality, a means to influence that audience must be ascertained. For those countries where communication with the outside world is not strictly controlled, the media proves to be a great asset for this purpose. For practitioners, the media can provide a means to set the tone of discussion, characterize the key role players, and provide a cloak of neutrality for those facilitating mediation. With that being said, the populace becomes the "audience within the audience. That is to say, there are the decision makers that are to be influenced and then there are the people, who support or back the decision makers e.g. "the audience within the audience." This theory of the audience within the audience is not only true in democratic venues, it may also be true in countries where even if the people do not have an actual "voice" in how their country is run, the leaders (elected or otherwise), feel a need to appease the people for fear of revolt, or fear of a loss of international support because the people lack a voice.

In the eyes of the international community, the mere image of peaceful protest disrupted by government backed violence can bring about worldwide condemnation and swift economic sanctions. Globalization facilitates the large role the media can play in how the international community views and responds to such actions. Supporting this point, McQuail (2010) states that mass communications research has repeatedly documented the significant impact that the media can have in shaping the public's attitudes about a given issue, such as conflict. McCombs, Shaw & Weaver (1997) agree stating that the media often helps determine what the public perceives the issue to be about, its causes and consequences, whether it is important, and how to think about it. Castells (2009) equates (albeit subtlety) the media to a kind of power. According to Castells (2009, p. 10), power is the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actors will, interests, and values. With that, the inherent power that lies within the media itself must be carefully utilized. The media itself must maintain the appearance of neutrality when conveying its message. Media Reputation, likeability, and past political allegiances' all play a critical role on how the practitioner's message is received.

This summation of the effects of media power and influence was highlighted decades ago by Murty (1968) in his book *Propaganda and the World Public Order: The Legal Regulation of the Ideological Instrument of Coercion*. In it, Murty (1968, p. 17) states, that human beings may respond in a desired manner if they are conditioned by verbal or other symbols used in propaganda. According to Murty (1968), to accomplish such conditioning the symbols employed should be sufficiently exciting, and in order for that conditioning to stabilize it must be repeated continuously. Murty's ideas regarding human reaction carry a Pavlovian undertone, but have merit even today. However, some would argue that the information delivered to the audience within the audience must be credible and not subject to summation as mere propaganda. Propaganda as a term has an air of deceptiveness. Practitioners should avoid appearing deceptive and unfair. This emphasizes the need for a carefully crafted message. Failure to screen and vet message content could prove detrimental to mitigation efforts, erode public confidence and possibly pierce the veil of practitioner neutrality.

*Solidifying a Desired Outcome and Setting Realistic Goals*

From a practitioner's viewpoint, setting realistic goals relies heavily on the problem and its participants being fully and objectively analyzed and a keen understanding of the culture and climate of all parties concerned achieved. Simply put, goals set by mitigation practitioners cannot clash with cultural norms or volatile climates and still hope to be met. Additionally, a message and a planned method to communicate with and influence both the target audience and the audience within the audience must be developed prior to achieving a realistic mitigation outcome. Since the target audience is often influenced (directly or indirectly) by the audience within, a carefully crafted message and means of delivery must be in place in order to predict audience response and support the desired end-state.

With all groundwork in place, realistic goals can be established. The importance of setting realistic goals is highlighted by Burgess & Burgess (2007) who state that by setting realistic goals it becomes possible for people to measure their success. According to Burgess & Burgess (2007), a more focused evaluation process (that is, analyzing all aspects of the problem and its participants) is likely to give people the information necessary to refine processes which, for example, explain specific technical issues, break down unrealistic stereotypes, counter inflammatory and inaccurate rumors, and facilitate the generation of useful compromises on sub-issues. Deutsch, Coleman & Marcus (2006) concur citing that the identification of realistic goals and opportunities affords the practitioner the chance to use one's skills effectively. Furthermore, Deutsch et al. (2007) state that realistic encouragement to achieve an ambitious but attainable goal promotes a successful experience, which in turn, aids developing the sense of self efficacy; by contrast, Deutsch et al. (2007) surmise that social prodding to achieve unattainable goals often produces a sense of failure and undermines self-efficacy.

*Maintaining a Balanced Stance*

Maintaining a neutral stance is of utmost importance. But what does neutrality mean in terms of conflict resolution? According to Benjamin (1998), neutrality has many and varied meanings, but regarding mediators, Benjamin (1998), outlines six qualities of the classic "neutral" mediator, wherein mediators:

1. Will not intervene in the substance of the dispute
2. Are indifferent to the welfare of the clients
3. Have no previous or present relationships with the parties outside the mediation
4. Will not attempt to alter perceived power balance variances

5.   Are disinterested in the outcome, and
6.   Are unconcerned with the impact of the settlement on unrepresented parties.

In a perfect world this would be true, and to some extent these qualities seem reasonable and
potentially desirable for successful outcome.  However, in an age of almost complete globalization, finding
mediators who meet all, or even some, of the listed qualities would be difficult at best.  Investing in empirical
research on the participants as indicated earlier in this document could mitigate the fact that the mediator could be
considered somewhat impartial.  This research could also assist the mediator in establishing themselves as
knowledgeable and sympathetic to the plight of both parties concerned.  This is especially true in the case of
intervention, that is, mediation prior to any violent conflict.  In this instance, there are no violent acts to apologize
for by either party; therefore, neither party has to feel like they are coming to the mediation table at a deficit.
With that in mind, the mediator is free to express concerns without having to acknowledge the violent acts of one
party or another; in essence, a level playing field.

*Mediator Approach and Training: A Theoretical Orientation*

It is not widely known that one of the world's most notable therapeutic gurus was also involved with international
efforts related to peacemaking and conflict resolution (Neukrug, 2010). This individual is Carl Rogers, who is
known around the world for his Person-Centered perspective in providing therapeutic counseling (Kirschenbaum,
2007). Person-centered therapy, as it is sometimes called, emphasizes the importance of listening and exercising a
keen sense of empathy. The therapist or mediator (depending on the context in which it is used), primarily reflects
what the client is stating and this, in turn, encourages the client(s) to determine their own solution through
introspection (Kirschenbaum, 2007; Rogers, 1961). Further, this approach is steeped in unconditional positive
regard for the person and requires strict non-judgmental attitudes on the part of the therapist or mediator who uses
this approach (Kirschenbaum, 2007; Neukrug, 2010). It is not for the therapist or mediator to take sides or offer
advice on an issue.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that Rogers himself utilized these techniques in his own efforts to
negotiate peace between conflicting parties and he was quite successful (Neukrug, 2010). For instance, during the
1980's, Rogers used these techniques to facilitate encounter groups between Protestants and Catholics in Northern
Ireland, to effectively facilitate dialogue between Whites and Blacks in South Africa, as well as conflicting groups
in what was at that time still the Soviet Union. As a peace activist, Rogers believed that if individuals had the
opportunity to view the inner core of another person in a genuine and non-threatening setting, they would be more
prone to see and understand the views and feelings of others in that setting and under those circumstances
(Neukrug, 2010). In essence, this type of approach allowed for non-judgmental, non-defensive, and empathetic
communication. Rogers was a master at arranging such meetings and his techniques as well as his philosophical
approach to human nature proved to be very effective (Neukrug, 2010).

It is perhaps this optimistic view of human nature, coupled with the need to effectively and empathetically reflect
the thoughts and feelings of different parties while, at the same time, leaving biases and judgments out of one's
response when facilitating encounters that would be most effective for mediators to employ. While this approach
may seem to contradict the edicts of Benjamin (1998), in reality, they do not. First, mediators who use a Person-
Centered approach will not intervene in the substance of a dispute because, in fact, it is their role to simply reflect
the thoughts and feelings of the parties who are involved in the process. It is not their responsibility nor is it
expected that they provide a resolution or otherwise attempt some form of intervention (Kirschenbaum, 2007;
Neukrug, 2010). Likewise, while the Person-Centered mediator will be adept at empathizing with each party,
thereby demonstrating understanding of the party's views and feelings, the mediator is not expected to act in the
welfare of the client, per se, as much as they are to facilitate the client's ability to develop their own solutions to
their own problems. Next, a Person-Centered mediator, as with therapists using this approach would, due to
conflicts of interest and other ethical concerns, not mediate for parties with whom they have some other outside
relationship or interest (Kirschenbaum, 2007; Neukrug, 2010). This would completely contaminate the ability to
empathize equally with all parties concerned.

The additional points provided by Benjamin (1988) require that the mediator refrain from attempting to alter
perceived power balance variances, that they are disinterested in the outcome of the process, and that they not
concern themselves with the effects that this resolution may have on parties who are not involved in the process.

This, of course, narrows down the scope of what can be done in the mediation process but it does not undermine a Person-Centered approach. Rather, mediators using this approach are required to refrain from value judgments and the temptation to place blame and/or inpart their own views on power dynamics or issues of fairness. Instead, they are to allow parties involved in the process to determine, for themselves, what is most workable (Kirschenbaum, 2007; Neukrug, 2010). Likewise, Person-Centered mediators will desire that a peaceful outcome emerge (that is, afterall, the point and purpose to engaging in the conflict resolution process, in the first place) but the particular parameters that are developed in achieving a peaceful outcome is not dictated by such a mediator. In short, Person-Centered mediators would not extend their own value judgments to an outcome that might develop (Kirschenbaum, 2007; Neukrug, 2010). Lastly, it is not for the Person-Centered mediator to address the welfare of other parties who are not involved in the peacekeeping process. Instead, Person-Centered mediators would be required to provide their full attention and focus to their own clients who are at the table engaged in dialogue, not other parties who are not present, for whatever reason that may be.

From this brief overview of the Person-Centered perspective, as espoused by Carl Rogers himself (Rogers, 1961), it can be determined that mediators would be well served to use this theoretical approach and the techniques that were developed by Rogers. Indeed, this approach is ideal in optimizing the template pre-conflict intervention. It is at the pre-conflict stage where these techniques can be especially useful and Roger's approach was ideal for diffusing potentially disruptive and volatile situations. Therefore, we suggest that mediators who are selected for their mission based on Benjamin's (1988) six criteria also be well trained on the principles and techniques advocated by Carl Roger's in his Person-Centered therapeutic approach. This combination of requirements, though seemingly contradictory at first glance, are actually complimentary to one another and work, on against the other, to optimize the likely effectiveness of the mediator.

*A Succinct Template for Pre-Conflict Intervention and Peacekeeping*

We have provided a brief but relevant overview of the issues associated with pre-conflict intervention. A set of viable questions were asked; the answers to which provide a framework from which practitioners can draw (as applicable) and assist in mediation prior to violent contact. In its simplest form the framework has been laid out below.

1. What is the root of the problem?
   a. Religious?
   b. Financial?
   c. Ethnic?
   d. Political
   e. Mixture?
2. Who is the Target Audience?
   a. Populace (general)?
   b. Ethnic group?
   c. Political party?
   d. Religious sect?
3. What are the general societal norms for the target audience?
   a. Is there an audience that surrounds the target audience?
   b. What motivates the target audience and the audience that surrounds it?
   c. What is the current and historical political/religious climate?
4. What is the desired outcome?
   a. Is it achievable?
   b. How far are we (mediators) willing to go to motivate change?
      i. Force?
      ii. Coercion?

These questions are essential to developing a successful intervention plan. Mediators should enter discussions educated to the fullest extent possible regarding the participants. Such education lends itself (in the eyes of the participants) to someone who genuinely cares not only about the issues but the participants as well. In the end, it makes the mediator likeable, trustworthy, and maintains the appearance of neutrality since the mediator is educated about both participants.

## *Conclusion*

From this examination of pre-conflict intervention strategies, we have provided several circumstances where interventions required that mediators be both objective yet, at the same time, able to see the world through the eyes of various parties involved in a given disagreement. These two necessary yet competing objectives create a dichotomy of contrasting perspectives that set demanding requirements for mediators who will be utilized. Work from Benjamin (1988) and Rogers (1961) point to characteristics and qualities that mediators will either need to possess inherently or acquire through training. Facilitators who have these attributes are best suited for pre-conflict intervention processes but are rare.

In addition, the structure of the intervention can be quite critical to determining the success or failure of the effort to mitigate conflict before it has a chance to escalate. Based on prior research and incidents where critical information has been gleaned, a template that can guide mediators through the process of pre-conflict proactive intervention has been developed. This template has emerged after examining, in retrospect, shortcomings in prior peacemaking efforts. Learning from past circumstances and refining the process that we use in future scenarios that are potentially volatile allows us to optimize our prevention efforts. When coupled with mediators who meet identified skills and qualities, and when effective mediums are used to target the intended audience, the opportunity to circumvent conflict in a proactive manner is optimized.

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