

Conflict Analysis, Settlement and Resolution : @PKO Now!

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Norimasa Tochibayashi

Program Advisor

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Conflict Analysis: Why can't we stop conflict?

Conflict is a "contest" between two or more parties who try to maximize what they consider as their important interests and values. Conflict is a universal feature of our social life and occurs at any level; international, national, social, and individual.¹Conflict, in many cases, is shaped based on economic differentiation, social change, cultural formation, psychological development, and political organization.²Ultimately, in the worst case, conflict escalates to armed conflict since the parties have no options but use of force.

Why don't people conform to social rules and norms? Why can't governments, laws and orders deter such conflict? In response to such questions, the "Conflict Analysis and Resolution" evolved.³There are two major approaches to the conflict analysis: "Conflict Settlement" and "Conflict Resolution".

Conflict Settlement: Compromising and allocating interests

One of the approaches to the conflict analysis is the "Conflict Settlement", often employed by realist scholars. Conflict settlement is based on a more objective point of view⁴and the conflict itself is understood as a zero-sum game. In conflicts, all parties primarily try to beat the opposition and win the contest. It is simply considered that interest and values of parties are maximized with no compromises. Given such conditions, third party plays a role as a

mediator. The mediator is expected to suggest a reasonable compromise and to allocate the proportion of slice of pie.⁵

However, needless to say, losers also come into the picture. In this regard, Burton indicates that winning actually leads to dangerous consequences as a whole, in a long-term.⁶ At the same time, the settlement leaves a source of problems and, thus, the conflicts recur. For example, after the settlement which enforced to compromise, frustration and desperation are left upon the "losers".⁷

Conflict Resolution: Solving root of the problem

Another approach to the conflict analysis, in contrast to the conflict settlement, is the "Conflict Resolution". This approach takes into account the needs of parties, rather than interests and values. Namely, efforts upon conflict resolution give more focuses on universal needs which relate to the parties' goals rather than specific interests and values dedicated to individuals, parties, and cultures.⁸

Conflict resolution expects the role of third party as a facilitator. This implies that the third party doesn't conduct mediation processes but clarify and analyze problems laid in the conflict. In this respect, the conflict resolution is considered as a "problem-solving" approach.⁹

Conflict resolution seems effective in terms of peace in a long-run. However, it is too simplistic to say that conflict resolution is better than conflict settlement. There are criticisms that conflict resolution is 'utopian' and 'idealistic'.¹⁰ As Uesugi indicates, the UN peacekeeping is functioned as an umbrella which covers both conflict settlement and resolution.¹¹ The most significant point is that conflict settlement works with transformation towards conflict resolution.

End Notes

- ¹ John W. Burton, *Conflict Resolution: Its Language and Processes* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 8-9.
- ² Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, "Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Concepts and Definitions," in *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts* 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 7.
- ³ Burton (1996), 4.
- ⁴ Yuji Uesgi, *Kawariyuku Kokuren PKO to Funsokaiketsu (Transforming UN PKO and Conflict Resolution)* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2004), 93.
- ⁵ John W. Burton, "The Procedures of Conflict Resolution" in *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, ed. Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986), 95.
- ⁶ Ibid., 92-93.
- ⁷ Burton (1996), 8.
- ⁸ Burton (1986), 96.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ramsbotham, et al. (2011), 399.
- ¹¹ Uesgi (2004), 284.