

APPLICATION OF JOHN BURTON'S INTERACTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHOP METHOD BY HERBERT KELMAN TO ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY FOR BANGLADESH-MYANMAR ROHINGYA CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

Political scientist John Burton developed interactive problem solving workshop ('IPSW') that is yet ensuing in an unprejudiced and enduring peace accord but it is operative in resolving intractable conflicts those are deep rooted conflicts arising out unjustified deprivation of both individual-collective human needs. If the process is relentlessly used, it would pave the way of a stable peace agreement. This article reviews the application and efficacy of Burton's IPSW basically through close examination of two books of Burton and a sequence of journals of social psychologist Herbert Kelman describing their process; along with a relevant review on the characteristics of intractable conflicts developed by psychologist Daniel Bar-Tal. In IPSW, arguably, the core need of intractable conflict – psychological components of intractable conflicts and contentment of human needs – is addressed. Outsider – who are beyond the conflicting parties – recommendations are not fruitful in addressing intractable conflicts as it is imposing seemingly without a good consideration in psychological essences. Here workshops use is recommended to resolve the dispute exist between Hamas and Fatah; as well as think tanks and high profile leaders from both conflicting sides are persuaded to attend workshop and accordingly own it. This article, as an example for endorsing qualities developed by IPSW, also refers that a full complete – yet implemented – peace agreement exists at the Geneva initiative accumulated by the concerned

persons of both Israel and Palestine. This study, due to scarcity of theoretical perspective based study to address Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya conflict, is ultimately designed intending to address IPSW in resolving the existing Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya conflict.

Keywords: Human Needs, Intractable Conflicts, IPSW, Conflict Resolution.

1. PRELUDE

Conflict has been defined by different scholars of different times with different meanings such as conflict in view of Coser (1956) is a struggle between opponents over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources; whereas in view of Fisher & others (2007) conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals. That is conflict is the chase by more than one person against any incompatible goals. Conflict is an integral part of our daily life as different people – being physically and psychologically different – look at a thing in different ways. Of the two people – in front of glass half water poured – the optimistic would say that the glass is half full and the pessimistic would say that the glass is half empty. Conflict itself thus is not a bad thing rather it teaches us tolerance, better understanding of the world etc. In terms of time, conflict may be short-lived and protracted; as well as in terms of complexity, it may be simple or extreme that may be associated with irresolvable factors and thus the latest one (extreme) is categorized as intractable that is naturally protracted

(Burton 1969, 1). This article will focus on this intractable conflict. Bar-Tal in consensus like some others scholars pointed out that intractable conflicts are most hinder in peaceful settlement and this type of conflicts is critical to resolve (Bar-Tal 2013, 36). This type of conflict is typically also violent. Today unfortunately there exists numerous such type of conflicts between/among states and community such as Kashmir conflict (Pakistan and India), the Turks and the Kurds conflict, Russia and Chechnya conflict, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Rohingya conflict (Bangladesh-Myanmar) etc. 'Terrorist' may also be counted in this category right now as none intends to handle it without deadly force. The purpose of this article would be to examine a method through which intractable conflict may be resolved or at least vapid, the development of this method, how practiced this method in Israel-Palestine conflict, and to the end how much prospective this method for Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya conflict.

2. OBJECTIVES

Due to constraints of money and time, this qualitative study has been conducted relying on the secondary documents like book, journal and article. The objectives of this article are: (i) To expound John Burton's Conflict Resolution Method particularly IPSW, (ii) To appraise the efficacy of IPSW to the conflict of Israel-Palestineas applied by Herbert Kelman, (iii) To assess the prospective efficacy of IPSW in respect of Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya Conflict, as well as (iv) To find out a speedy-cost effective feasible strategy for Bangladesh to address Rohingya conflict.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Late Professor John Burton generated Conflict Resolution Method ('CRM') that is used prior to starting formal negotiations. Burton during his lectureship (1963-1978) in London University College compiling the findings of a research program published his book *Conflict and Communication: The Use of Controlled Communication in International Relations* from which we can understand the development of Burton's CRM. The research program envisaged out of the thought that the then available documents regarding conflicts could not sufficiently be enough to address many questions pertinent to conflicts. He believed that those questions be answered by exploring perceptions and misperceptions, interactions and topographies of state policy which are mostly seen when the parties to conflict are interacting mode (Burton 1969, x).

In 1965, Burton along with colleagues formulated a tentative program to ease the situation under the shade of mere academic exercise wherein senior representatives of the invited three countries met Burton's scholars panel comprising of two political scientists, three social psychologists, two industrial relations experts, an international lawyer, a regional historian, and a chairman prudent to conduct small meetings (Burton 1969, 5) in order to hold a secret discussion. Participants were expected to be well-versed in their government's policies, knowledgeable about their political leaders' view, as well as flexible-open minded. Unpredictably extremists were welcomed by Burton presumably on the hope that "an atmosphere can be produced, by various means of control....., that enables participants to treat the conflict, not as a contest, but as a problem to be solved" (Burton 1969, 42).

Though it was a pre-negotiation process but tension prevailed as to the first time face to face of the parties' discussion – to designate the conflict as they observed it that is conventionally uninhibited – that was accomplished by the refereeing of the scholars (third party) panel. In view of Burton, it was "a highly sophisticated seminar discussion as might take place among experience staff members of an interdisciplinary university department" (Burton 1969, 67). Fair perception about conflict is important as perception breeds ultimately attitudes those lead to further perception. In this regard participants were made alert that all the evidence be tested to ensure correctly interpretation (Burton 1969, 83). In addition to, analysis of the conflict resulting to a resolution of conflict is the fundamental element in this process and thus the outcome is expected and acceptable by both sides.

In conventional technique for peace settlement, the third party usually as a mere mediator can help clear up misunderstandings, reduced emotional levels, balance somewhat any power imbalances, and encourage alternative viewpoints for consideration (Burton 1969, 61). But in CRM the role of the third party is slightly different: "The third partyis there to explain conflict, its origin, its escalation, sometimes by reference to other conflicts, sometimes by analytical means, but within the context of a continuing discussion between the parties" (Burton 1969, 61-62). The third party panel is reluctant to moral or other kinds of judgments to evade the quandary of right or wrong as the behavior of the parties is not judged at any stage of CRM (Burton 1969, 69-70). The representatives would convey the learned thing to their political leaders who would engage themselves in comprehensive negotiations.

This process of bringing representatives – not official negotiators - from both sides has become known as ‘Track Two Process’ unlike ‘Track One Process’ that is used conventionally between diplomats and official negotiators.

In assessment whether the hypothesis of the Burton was confirmed and to what extent actual achievement was gained in actual resolution of conflict, we may look rely at the thought of Burton as the very new experiment, further practice be needed before any conclusion making (Burton 1969, 216-17).

In the book, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, Burton (1990) modifies the earlier approach. Burton refers now to the Conflict Resolution Process (‘CRP’) still focusing on problem-solving process. The new in this method is adding the theory of human needs that provides guides both to problem-solving process as well as to an overall standard for intractable CRP. The prevailing view is the use of coercion is not effective particularly in case of deed-rooted conflicts (i.e. terrorism, ethnic violence) where analysis of the total situation, invoking remedy, changing in policy among others rather than mere containment of rebel behavior is necessary (Burton 1990, 15). CRP is designed by Burton to address such types of cases. Decision imposition by others is not effective in controlling human behaviors when human needs – indispensable for life – are denied vehemently (Sites, 1973). Satisfaction of the human needs is the foundation of the resolution process for intractable conflict.

Burton kept Kelman as one of the members of a third-party panel prepared by Burton. Kelman along with his colleague Stephen Cohen set up a pilot project with the students as members of the third-party panel. This panel is first among the series of panels conducted for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kelman 2010, 369-70). Kelman’s thought in modification of Burton’s thought is that the third party need not be disinterested in true sense rather must be like minded, conflict admittedly multilateral but interactive problem solving method is effective for achieving purpose where two parties sit beside a table (Kelman 2010, 371). In analyzing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kelman recognizes several barriers i.e. fear of recognition other state. Human needs should not be categorized – low ranked and high ranked – and large-scale blockings of basic human needs is a threat to peace and social serene (Kelman 1990, 283).

Many studies have been conducted by this time and also have been running relating to Rohingyas’ conflict. Like Siddiqui (2012) in his decades of studies found no people those are more persecuted than the Rohingyas of Myanmar. Jah (2013; 56) treated the

Rohohingyas as stateless people being facing state-sponsored persecution. Ullah (2014) found the Rohingyas are one of the most vulnerable people in the world by any count. Zaw (2009) found the nationality identity crisis of Rohingyas whether they are Bengali Muslim or Arakan Muslim. Some researchers also treat the Ronhingya conflict from other perspectives like economic, environmental, law & order, cultural, aid dependency.

It is evident that most of the researches or studies relating to Rohingya conflict pertain to human rights and/or diplomatic perspective. There is scarcity of study from theoretical perspective to address the Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya conflict and from that point of view this study intends to address IPSW to resolve the existing Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya conflict.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Intractable Conflict Theory

Bar-Tal studied on intractable conflicts over decades and developed the Intractable Conflict Theory envisaged in his book, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*, giving credit to Burton’s ‘deep rooted’ notion. Human needs are the pivotal of this theory wherein it is given message that vehement deprivation of individual and group needs – both psychology and self-esteem related - may lead to intractable conflict. Individual needs comprise of positive social identity, self-determination etc. whereas collective needs comprise of needs for security, positive identity, equality, justice, freedom, and well-being. Deprivation of these needs by one group may provoke another group to change the situation through vicious conflict (Bar-Tal 2013, 65-66).

As per Bar-Tal, there are seven inherent characteristics of intractable conflicts those are as follows:

- ‘total’ such conflicts are perceived as being indispensable for group survival (Bar-Tal 2013, 37);
- ‘protracted’ such conflicts have not only “accumulated increasing amounts of prejudice, mistrust, hatred, and animosity” but also evolved into “a socio-psychological infrastructures that include collective memory, ethos of conflict, and emotional orientations” (Bar-Tal 2013, 51-52);
- ‘violent’ such it escalate the conflict and are burned into the society’s collective memory. It ultimately develops a culture of conflict (Bar-Tal 2013, 43);

- ‘perceived as unsolvable’ for several reasons including a long history of failed attempts to address the same (Bar-Tal 2013, 47-48);
- ‘zero-sum condition’ in the situation where parties seem that any loss by other is their own gain vis a versa (Bar-Tal 2013, 44);
- ‘central’ such conflicts involved constantly and continuously i.e. Israeli-Palestinian conflict – exhibited in a number of ways but overall (Bar-Tal 2013, 46); and
- ‘investment’ to cope up the conflicts.

Intensity of intractable conflict may be reduced over time if the concerned societies change their views and/or conflict nature change. But leadership change is the must. “Reduced intractability begins when parties (at least the leaders and some segments of the society) begin to define the conflict as solvable and begin to negotiate. But the psychological change has to be accompanied by reduced violence” (Bar-Tal 2013, 59).

4.2 Human Needs Theory

Human needs are basic needs those are not malleable and those must be satisfied to check viable behavior (Burton 1990, 33). Deterrence theory is undermined as it cannot deter in condition wherein human needs are exasperated (Burton 1990, 33-34). Deckers relates those needs as inherent human characteristic (Deckers 2010, 33). Human needs comprise the needs for food, clothing, shelter, love, external stimulation and rest; and further major source of human motivation (Murray 1938). These needs will produce organic effects; “once instigated, a need will persist as an electrical chemical process in the brain, which corresponds to a feeling of desire” (Deckers 2010, 33). Maslow (1987, 17) theorized a hierarchy of human needs into five broad categories of basic needs consisting of foods, water, shelter, and those needs without which a human could not physically survive. Though Burton credits the work of Maslow and Paul Sites for their seminal work (Burton 1990, 102) but Kelman is reluctant to give credit in any categorization of human needs (Kelman 1990, 283). Once these needs are satisfied, new need emerged in the form of safety i.e. security, stability, etc. Once psychological and safety needs are reasonably satisfied, another categories of needs i.e. love, affection emerged, then esteem needs i.e. self-respect, then self-actualization needs emerged (Maslow 1987, 18-23). A conflict or frustration not being pathogenic rather occasions automatically when basic needs are frustrated (Maslow 1987, 30). Sites (1973) proposes eight needs of the individual: needs for response, security, recognition,

stimulation, distributive justice, meaning, to be seen as rational, and a need to control (Sites 1973, 43).

4.3 Human Needs and Conflict Resolution

Burton’s Conflict Resolution Method is thus inherently tied to human needs theory. It provides scientifically sound basis agreement as any agreement is arranged through the representation of a specific class without consideration of human needs; the resolution would not be conducive to the individuals at large rather a specific class of people of the society may gain benefit. Needs, values and interests are different from one another; as the basic needs required for survival, values accrued from society and interest is purely a personal gain issue.

Problem solving process (‘PSP’) is the corner stone of the conflict resolution process. Burton refers four characteristics of PSP: (1) it is an ongoing process, not an end product; (2) it frequently requires a change in conceptualization of a problem, new techniques and update synthesis of knowledge; (3) it deals with the total environment through which an interaction between outsider and conflict occurs, and (4) it address sources and origins of the conflict (Burton 1990, 204). Subject matter of conflict resolution is relationships and human behavior fundamentals comprised by the theory of human needs.

At the outset of PSP, review of perception of the parties and analyses of the perception is done. Parties can assess their cost and tactics and subsequently intend to explore alternatives (Burton 1990, 204). The main task of the third-party panel is to filter the suspected false assumptions and thus the parties may arrive at reliable deduction (Burton 1990, 208). There is an involvement of the use of the ability to analyze and thought common to general people and thus PSP is cross-cultural (Burton 1990, 211).

4.4 Outsider Recommendations

It is common as also pointed out by Burton that the leaders of the sovereign do not like outsider recommendation by means of it is humiliating and derogatory for the leaders. Leaders are supposed to know the better about the faced conflict than that of outsider experts. Outsider recommendations occasion another concern as frequently outsiders/negotiators are not psychologically prepared to address the problem behind the long term hatred and mistrust.

4.5 Insider Recommendations

Political leaders think that they are well versed with the conflicts those are faced by their own country than that of outsider. The thought would be face a question as to why – if the contemplation of the

political leaders is true and pragmatic – rejection of templates of agreements, such as the Geneva Initiative, arranged together by the former Israeli and Palestinian officials.

4.6 Value of Burton's Method

The core obstacles in intractable conflicts being emotional and psychological, well trained psychologist are needed to provide guidance. Conflict Resolution Workshop pays attention to this matter. The third-party panel comprises psychologists among others and such as the primary task is to be review and modify the perception at an expected level. As the method is pre-negotiation, it does not deal each and every issue of the conflict rather promotes a psychological and analytical base for making frame work and/or conveys gathered knowledge to the policy maker political leaders. The third-party panel guides the discussion and the concerned parties, after analysis- can propose suggestions and decision on them that is parties are insisted here to solve their own problem unlike mediation where mediator is supposed to offer suggestion about the solution of a problem.

4.7 Kelman's Role

Kelman was influenced by Burton's work and his book *Conflict & Communication*, to accomplish Kelman's own work. Kelman and Stephen Cohen set up a pilot project with the students as members of the third-party panel that is first among the series of panels conducted for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kelman 2010, 369-70). Kelman's thought in modification of Burton's thought is that the third party need not be disinterested in true sense rather must be like minded, conflict admittedly multilateral but interactive problem solving method is effective for achieving purpose where two parties sit round the same table (Kelman 2010, 371).

In the article "Creating the Conditions for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations" Kelman (1982) says – far earlier of Oslo Accord of 1993 when the parties finally recognized each other as legitimate negotiating parties – he and the colleagues conducted study over Arab-Israeli conflict since early 1970s using Burton format of workshop that named by the Kelman as "Interactive Problem Solving" workshop.

In analyzing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kelman recognizes several barriers i.e. fear of recognition other state, Israeli law prohibited government contract with PLO etc. Israel so would be represented for the work shop through private citizens and representative of Palestinian would be among the persons who were not officials of PLO. The purpose of the workshop was to explore any possibility for arrival

a negotiating framework. If the workshop conducted successfully, the gathered experience would be conveyed to initiate a formal negotiation agreement.

In the article "Applying a Human Needs Perspective to the Practice of Conflict Resolution: The Israeli-Palestinian Case" Kelman (1990) says human needs should not be categorized – low ranked and high ranked – and large-scale blockings of basic human needs is a threat to peace and social serene (Kelman 1990, 283).

Though it is presumed that the claims over land are zero-sum type claims and they can only be resolved by compromise but other important claims are open to resolution: "Paradoxically, focusing on the needs for identity and security and the existential fears associated with them may actually enhance the possibility of achieving conflict resolution." He credits Burton with showing that ontological needs are not zero-sum in nature, so that, for example, satisfying other identity does not necessarily thwart the satisfaction of one's own security need: they may be complementary. "Thus, if Israelis can be reassured that Palestinian self-determination can be achieved without threatening Israeli security, and if Palestinians can be reassured that Israeli security concerns can be accommodated without denying political expression to Palestinian national identity, the two parties can move toward a historic compromise over the issues of territory and sovereignty" (Kelman 1990, 290-91).

In the article "Group Processes in the Resolution of International Conflicts: Experiences from the Israeli-Palestinian Case" published later than Oslo Accord of 1993, Kelman (1997) further elaborates on the IPS workshop approach and discuss the contributions it has made to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. With the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Kelman's prophetic prediction as to non-implementation of Oslo Agreement of its 3-year-phase-in process was true.

Kelman and his colleague Palestinian academic Nadim Rouhana had a hand in creating the atmosphere for the Oslo negotiations (Kelman 1997, 213) but blatantly Kelman admits that neither he nor his colleague Rouhana had direct involvement in the negotiation processes that produced Oslo Agreement (Kelman 2005, 11). However Kelman sees three contributions in producing Oslo agreement as (i) development of cadre to engage in negotiations, (ii) sharing of information and new ideas gathered through workshops over the years, and (iii) creation of new political atmosphere which was also nurtured by other interacting group (Kelman 1997, 215-16).

In the article "Interactive Problem Solving in the Israeli-Palestinian Case: Past Contributions and

Present Challenges” Kelman (2005) recaps the contributions to the Oslo process that he feels were aided by team work efforts. In this article he also referred two articles named ‘People’s Voice’ and ‘Geneva Accord’ both are relating to conflict resolution between Israel-Palestine. Finally Kelman trusts that initiative needs to be framed in terms of a ‘principle peace’. The elements of a principle peace include: acknowledgment of other nationhood and humanity, affirmation of meaning and logic of a historic compromise, a positive vision of a common future (Kelman 2005, 22). Message is to be circulated that these formulations are responsive to the concerns and sensitive of each side without unduly threatening other side (Kelman 2005, 23).

5. CONCLUSION

The interactive problem solving workshop (IPSW) was an effective, ethical and positive method for promoting resolving Israel-Palestine conflict through Oslo agreement of 03-year-phase though the conflict between Israel-Palestine did not come to end ultimately due to assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Though IPSW - being a pre-negotiation process - seems lengthy process for conflict resolution, I would like to support for use of IPSW for Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya conflict as this is an intractable (i.e. protracted as well as deep rooted) conflict, comprising *inter-alia* ethnicity, race, religion, citizenship, human needs. Mere formal agreement - usually imposed and persuaded by third party who are usually heavy weight states and/or institutions - cannot stop this type of conflict as new sets of conflicts may emerge if the conflicting parties do not desire the resolution spontaneously thinking that it is a problem for both that should be solved by both and thus IPSW method is seemingly more conducive to address intractable conflict. The IPSW method should be incorporated in the course of the graduation level so that the graduates being taught this method may play a significant role in establishing a peaceful society.

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