

THE PRAGMORA PROCESS – A SUMMARY

The Pragmora Process is a rigorous research and analysis methodology for identifying those nonviolent actions that are most likely to contribute substantially to conflict resolution if implemented, *and* most likely to be implemented if well advocated.

INEFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Today, armed conflicts rage in more than 2 dozen countries around the world. More than 30 million people are now displaced having fled the violence.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, the United Nations has poured more than one *trillion* dollars into peacekeeping with much more spent on humanitarian aid by the international community over almost 20 years. And yet, rebel militia continues to inflict the horrors of war on ordinary citizens young and old.

In an effort to resolve ongoing conflicts, the international community has very often marshalled the necessary will and resources and yet, in spite of these serious commitments, its actions routinely have had minimal impact on conflict resolution in the short- and medium-terms, and sometimes even in the long-term.

Why is the international community so ineffective in preventing armed conflicts from arising, resolving ongoing conflicts, and establishing long-term stable peace in post-conflict regions?

One fundamental reason is the lack of *rigorous* and *relevant* conflict resolution analysis.

CONFLICTING OPTIONS, WRONG FOCUS

Conflicting Options

When decision-makers in governments, the United Nations, and other organizations consider implementing new measures to help resolve a conflict, they naturally seek input from relevant experts. Each individual expert, however, provides his or her own perspective on what should be done, which can result in a complex array of conflicting opinions.

Faced with conflicting reasonable options proposed by respected sources, policy-makers, decision-makers and peacebuilders may inadvertently select a less than optimal solution, or even a counter-productive solution. Or they may be paralyzed by a prolonged 'apples vs. oranges' debate over the best course of action.

What's missing is a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the many proposed options. This kind of objective 'meta analysis' is commonplace in most spheres of public policy, but is wholly absent when it comes to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

For decision-makers to have the ability to select and implement the most effective actions for conflict resolution, they need access to systematic comparative analyses of the many diverse recommendations offered by experts.

Wrong Focus

A second substantial reason for the implementation of less than optimal conflict resolution measures is the tendency, indeed the norm, for conflict resolution recommendations to be based on analysis of how a conflict arose, rather than on analysis of how to resolve it. There is a

strong push in the field of peace and conflict studies to look backward instead of forwards, to explore "root causes" of a conflict rather than to explore solutions... to conduct "conflict analysis," rather than "conflict resolution analysis."

Actions that can effectively help resolve a particular conflict do not necessarily address root causes of that conflict, since the events of the war itself almost always generate new issues and new grievances—especially if the conflict is drawn out over an extended period of time. Some peacebuilding options can be successful precisely because they circumvent intractable conflict issues.

If experts are going to put forward the most effective measures for conflict resolution, they must focus their analysis on forward looking conflict resolution options, while equipped with a deep knowledge of the conflict and its history, as well as its root causes and key drivers.

THE PRAGMORA PROCESS

The Pragmora Process is a rigorous research and analysis methodology for identifying those nonviolent actions that are most likely to contribute substantially to conflict resolution if implemented, and most likely to be implemented if advocated.

At its core is the development of an inventory of all

Conflict resolution analysis must focus squarely on identifying effective solutions.

nonviolent conflict resolution options that have been proposed, and systematic evaluation and vetting of each option by diverse experts using three defined evaluation criteria.

The Pragmora Process can be utilized to identify realistic advocacy actions that can help:

- ▶ Avert the eruption of an armed conflict,
- ▶ Prevent the escalation or expansion of an existing conflict,
- ▶ Resolve or reduce an ongoing conflict, and/or
- ▶ Foster long-term peace in a post-conflict region.

Decision-makers will find the inventory of conflict resolution options along with the comparative analysis of options to be invaluable assets for selecting policies and actions that better produce the desired substantial positive change.

Peace advocates can have a more direct and substantial impact on peacemaking by utilizing the outputs of The Pragmora Process to inform, advocate and support decision-makers in implementing the most effective conflict resolution measures.

It identifies advocacy actions that are conflict-specific – relevant to one conflict at a particular period in time.

PHASES OF RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

Phase 1. Create a timeline of the conflict.

The conflict timeline is a presentation of facts, not analysis. Through the process of creating the timeline, the research analyst gains factual information about key players, key events and the sequence of events from a neutral perspective. It is vitally important that analysts possess this strong base of unbiased knowledge about a conflict *before* engaging academic sources and analytic reports that advance a point of view, and therefore, are necessarily selective in their presentation of facts.

To ensure accuracy, research analysts draw on primary sources, whenever possible, with every statement of fact supported by two or more independent credible sources.

A primary source is original information that was created at the moment in time under study.

SUMMARY OF THE PRAGMORA PROCESS METHODOLOGY

| PHASE | OBJECTIVE | RESEARCH / ANALYSIS |
|---------|---|--|
| PHASE 1 | Create Conflict Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research, using primary documents where ever possible |
| PHASE 2 | Identify Key Issues supporting conflict / peace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Environmental Scan • One-on-one qualitative interviews with experts |
| PHASE 3 | 3.1. Build Preliminary Inventory of Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Environmental Scan |
| | 3.2. Finalize Inventory of Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Experts to identify additional actions for inventory |
| | 3.3. Establish Short List of Effective Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate each action, using 3 defined criteria • Preliminary vetting by Experts of some actions • Additional research and fact-checking, as needed |
| | 3.4. Establish Final List of Effective Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vetting of all Short List Actions by Experts • Evaluate each action, using 3 defined criteria • Additional research and fact-checking, as needed |
| PHASE 4 | Select 3-5 Actions from Final List of Effective Actions for peace advocacy campaign | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the remaining options individually and as a set, guided by the four Selection Considerations. |

Contemporaneous newspaper articles from the time period are a credible source of primary data, and also easily accessible on the Internet. Other primary sources include: official documents (e.g., legislation, peace agreements, press releases, census data), pamphlets, speeches, photographs, interviews, diaries, and autobiographies.

Academic sources and analytic reports are secondary sources—that is, the authors obtained information from somewhere else. To verify the accuracy of this information, analysts must find that 'somewhere else' or another primary source, whenever possible.

Even with primary sources, care must be taken to ensure the accuracy of facts. Information in official documents may be incorrect, or even intentionally skewed. Newspaper articles may initially report erroneous information that may or may not be corrected later as events unfold.

Phase 2. Identify Key Issues

In this context, "key issues" are the grievances that must be addressed in order to resolve the conflict or prevent an escalation of conflict, plus the actions that contribute—or could contribute—to conflict resolution.

Without a keen understanding of the key issues, it is difficult to understand conflict resolution options.

The analyst first drafts a preliminary list of key issues. The challenge here is for the research analyst to hone in and articulate clearly and concisely the very specific key issues in the conflict.

The next step is for the research analyst to undertake a comprehensive literature review of academic sources and environmental scan of

relevant analytic reports, as well as one-on-one interview with experts.

Based on the review of secondary sources and information input from the interviews, the key issues are modified, as needed.

Phase 3. Identify Advocacy Actions

Throughout this phase, the researcher systematically solicits input and analysis from many diverse experts—both in the conflict region and internationally.

'Experts' are broadly defined here to include individuals (usually leaders) representing:

- ▶ Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and religious organizations
- ▶ Elected government officials, traditional leaders, and civil servants
- ▶ Military personnel and rebels;
- ▶ International and local journalists, academics, authors, and policy analysts
- ▶ International NGOs
- ▶ Regional and multinational organizations (e.g., African Union, United Nations, peacekeeping missions)

To identify potentially effective conflict resolution actions, the analyst begins by building a comprehensive inventory of all nonviolent measures that have been suggested for resolving the conflict and fostering peace.

Each measure is then evaluated by the analyst and other experts, using three criteria:

1. Could advocating the proposed action do harm?
2. To what extent would the proposed action contribute to conflict resolution and/or long term stable peace?

3. Is there a reasonable probability of the action being implemented, if included in an advocacy campaign?

Additional research is conducted, as required, to verify pertinent facts related to the proposed actions. Experts provide input on the actions through successive rounds of vetting with experts who hold diverse perspectives on the specific conflict.

Actions that clearly fail one or more of the three evaluation criteria are excluded from further consideration for a peace advocacy campaign. The result from Phase 3 is a list of potentially effective nonviolent actions.

Phase 4. Selection of Actions for an Advocacy Campaign

The list of effective advocacy actions must now be reduced to 4 – 6 actions for inclusion in a focused, manageable advocacy campaign.

In selecting the final advocacy actions, a number of factors are considered, including:

- ▶ **Don't duplicate efforts.** If there is already an advocacy effort underway on an action, it may be more effective to support and magnify that effort, rather than launch a parallel campaign.
- ▶ **Target multiple sets of decision-makers in multiple organizations.** The target decision-maker may have the authority to implement a number of the actions on the advocacy list, but an advocacy campaign is more

likely to be successful if each decision-maker is asked to do just one thing.

- ▶ **Ensure simple clear communications.** Can the advocacy measure be made easily understandable for individuals who will participate in the campaign? If not, perhaps it isn't the best choice for an advocacy campaign.

Then ... Start Again.

Conflicts evolve. The conflict resolution analysis and the advocacy campaign cannot be stuck in one moment in time. Key issues and key players can change, solutions evolve, and new possibilities arise. The completion of Phase 4 is not the end the analysis, but rather the end of its first iteration.

UNIQUE VALUE OF THE PRAGMORA PROCESS METHODOLOGY

- ▶ Focuses on finding solutions.
- ▶ Builds an inventory of *all* suggested nonviolent solutions for evaluation.
- ▶ Systematically solicits input from diverse experts.
- ▶ Employs explicit criteria to evaluate the potential effectiveness of each suggested solution.
- ▶ Is transparent.
- ▶ Is scalable and can be condensed to address urgent decision-making needs.

Pragmora is both a policy think tank and a grassroots advocacy organization. We advocate nonviolent actions that are most likely to help resolve a particular conflict and/or stabilize the peace in a specific post-conflict region.



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