

Pitt Creates New IC4CR Center to Utilize AHP in Resolving International Conflicts

Jerry Zoffer
Professor and Dean Emeritus
Katz Graduate School of Business
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
zoffer@katz.pitt.edu

The current failure to resolve conflicts worldwide highlights the need for a different approach to conflict resolution. A proposal by University of Pittsburgh professors Luis Vargas and Jerry Zoffer to create a new International Center for Conflict Resolution (IC4CR) was funded by University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick Gallagher and will be housed in the Katz Graduate School of Business. The mission of IC4CR is to provide decision makers with an in-depth understanding of the negotiating positions of all parties and recommend implementation guidelines, based on preferences and priorities, to facilitate resolution of otherwise intractable conflicts.

The Center will implement this mission by conducting studies of diplomatic and corporate conflicts using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) developed by the late University of Pittsburgh Distinguished Professor Thomas L. Saaty. This will require building tradeoff models by eliciting preferences and priorities through the AHP to create a negotiation model which is measurement-based.

Using the priorities derived from the preferences will allow the decision makers to compute gain/loss ratios of tradeoffs from each party's perspective. They will be able to identify win-win, non-zero-sum equitable tradeoffs that both parties can claim as a win and permit a road map to facilitate implementing a feasible solution.

IC4CR is unique because the use of the AHP helps reduce uncertainty between and among the parties, lessens emotion in the negotiations, and permits a more accurate assessment of the relative value that each side attaches to an issue.

IC4CR has already applied this approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the complexities of this conflict will require additional work, much progress has been made in identifying possible tradeoffs which could lead to a solution. Another project being developed in the city of Pittsburgh is how to reconcile, to the community's and the police department's benefit, policing and community interests. Another major proposal which may be financed by the federal government is to focus on the seemingly intractable issue of how to improve the recidivism rate and develop programs which will encourage those released from prison to begin more productive lives.