Religious-Values Negotiation
in the Military Environment

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Introduction

Military officers are increasingly negotiating with religious stakeholders. However, these military negotiators are not prepared to identify religious value language or to engage in negotiations fixed to religious values. A solution to this problem was designed in the Philippines in 1901 by General, then Captain, John "Blackjack" Pershing.[1] Pershing was compelled to design a negotiation strategy that allowed him to engage positively with the Moro, a strategy based on his experience and capacity to acknowledge the role of religion in negotiation. The challenges Pershing confronted negotiating with religious stakeholders then remain with us today.

Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq indicate that negotiations between military and religious stakeholders played a substantial role in daily operations. But military officers returning from the Operational Environment (OE) reported feeling unprepared to engage in cross-cultural, multi-party negotiations involving members of religious groups.[2] Despite its efficacy in settings of hard-bargaining, Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) tactics and techniques do not prepare individuals for negotiating with members of religious groups. While religious groups pursue material interests, those interests are typically pursued in service to sets of religious values that group members consider mandatory. Military negotiations with religious stakeholders are therefore asymmetrical. Assuming that their negotiation is a straight-forward competition of interests, military negotiators will mistake the stakeholders' value-interest goals and strategies for direct interest-interest goals and strategies. The result is often mission failure. Miscalculating the other parties' value-based arguments, negotiators may employ tactics that make no sense to the religious stakeholders, and stakeholders may respond in ways that make no sense to the military negotiators. In addition, negotiators may seriously offend stakeholders by restating

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[1] The nickname was a pejorative given to him by the cadets at West Point in 1897 while he was on the Tactical Staff referring to his time as a troop commander of the 10th Cavalry (Colored). As you can surmise, Black was not the term the cadets used.

[2] David. M. Tressler, *Negotiation in the New Strategic Environment: Lessons from Iraq*, (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Press, 2007), 71.

stakeholder value-language in material or interest-based terms. Stakeholders may perceive such restatements as efforts to denigrate sacred beliefs and vocabularies.

RVN, or Religious-Values Negotiation, is an alternative approach for negotiating specifically with religious stakeholder-groups. RVN applies to military negotiation the fruits of a twenty-five-year academic study of religious-group tension and conflict, culminating in a language-based tool for diagnosing the behavioral tendencies of religious or value-based groups in regions of conflict.[3]

By examining comments from officers returning from the field, the necessity of achieving proficiency in negotiating with religious actors is apparent. Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) currently frames negotiation education and training within Professional Military Education (PME), but it clearly has limitations. The Religious-Values Negotiation model for negotiating with religious group members, an approach that builds on an awareness of *value signals*, moves beyond the IBN approach.

The Need

Confidential interviews with senior U.S. and international military officers at both the U.S. Army War College and the Air War College who recently returned from assignments in Afghanistan identified the need for instruction on the role of religion in conflict.[4] Their observations were supported by senior and mid-career Army and Air Force officers who attended professional military education classes on religion and violence. They consistently mentioned how the study of conflict resolution with religious stakeholders "should be part of the core" PME curriculum. Several students stated, "I wish I had this class (on religion and conflict) before I deployed to Afghanistan." Individuals acknowledged that when engaging with religious stakeholders at tactical, operational, and strategic levels "you only get what you can negotiate."

Negotiators can increase opportunities for successful negotiations with religious groups when they are aware of how religious values are present and influence religious stakeholders' behavior. The "moral, social, and spiritual consideration of religion will characterize the way the military engage with local civilians in their host communities."[5] For that reason a nuanced awareness of religion vis-à-vis negotiation is important.

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[3] Peter Ochs, Nauman Faizi, Jonathan Teubner, and Zain Moulvi, "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2019) 58.1, 93-113.

[4] All interviews in this section were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

[5] Yvan Ilunga, email to author, December 29, 2020.

During interviews with military leaders it became clear that the ability to negotiate with members of religious groups only becomes important to the military during deployments. Military actors often view religion as little more than an identity marker and feature of the broader culture, failing to acknowledge how local persons *practice* faith out of "spiritual necessity," not simply as a cultural performance. Officers routinely spoke to the absence of religious instruction in core PME curricula.

A senior officer in the German army who focuses on civil-military interaction confidentially shared that he was advised "not to use the term *religion*; rather, use *grand-narrative*." Senior leadership noted how religion is a charged term and the goal of steering away from religion is due to its divisive nature. A more appropriate attitude would be to steer toward religion, recognizing its positive potential.

A leading member of the Slovenia Ministry of Defense privately explained that while in Kosovo he came to "realize[d] how important…religion (Orthodox and Islam) [is] to customary law." He recognized "religious leaders are a part of (an) influential political 'party' influencing most of the aspects of daily life at the university." In Kosovo, people's "way of life" is most "influenced by religious people." He further suggested "military as experts of their business should understand the basics of religion, beliefs, and customary laws and traditions. Religions and customs are part of any holistic approach to peacebuilding." He stated that educating individuals about religion is useful in building relationships that can result in their support of development projects.

A U.S. military attaché assigned to the embassy in Israel explained: "based on my limitations and background I was not culturally prepared." He explained how while attending attaché school he had classes on how to behave at a formal, state dinner; however, he never had a class or lecture on the role of religion in Israel. Prior to deployment "classes were given on culture, but they were at the 'politeness' level." He shared an example of how military actors failing to understand religion can communicate disrespect. "Meeting on the Sabbath. Delegations would come to Israel and plan or even demand formal meeting on Saturday which is the Sabbath. It was difficult to explain this was not going to happen. It was the law that these engagements would not occur…. A classic U.S. reaction might be 'don't they understand we are coming a long way to see them, and we are always helping them survive in a rough neighborhood.'"

A former member of the U.S. Department of Defense explained how as a military interrogator, and supervisor of interrogators, at GTMO (Guantanamo Bay Naval Base) she had to deal with a "we don't talk about religion military background." She further noted that when teaching at the U.S. Army War College one reason her students "gave for wanting to learn about religion was, beyond the obvious that it is a huge part of the lives of many they deal with overseas, that nothing in our U.S. education system prepared them to understand or even know

how to go about learning about religion. It is because religion is not in our K-12 system and very seldom at universities that we need it in PME."

A U.S. Army colonel with multiple tours in in the Middle East said, "If you don't understand their (Muslim) religion practices, there is a high probability that you will offend the very people you are trying to build trust with, or even worse try to implement policy and justice reform that directly opposes their belief system."

Interviews with military leaders returning from the field, as well as those conducted in Senior Service College classrooms, strongly suggest there is a need to move beyond the limitations of Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) presently at the center of PME. Rational actor negotiation models leave religious values unattended.[6]

Current Practices of IBN

Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) remains the dominant approach presented in military negotiation education and training today.[7] In the 1980s, IBN gained prominence as a means of correcting the shortcomings of transactional negotiation, which employs tactics, tricks, and techniques to create a win-lose engagement. Transactional negotiations can be thought of as zero-sum, win-lose. Transactional negotiation is hard bargaining.[8] IBN, or Principled Negotiation, was developed as a way of achieving mutual, beneficial win-win outcomes for all parties to the negotiation. When win-win is achieved, relationships remain intact and outcomes are fair and lasting. IBN training prepares officers to identify their interests and those of the other party then to explore ways for each party to achieve their interests. A win-win approach to negotiation remains foundational for training in the military. Military officers routinely attend IBN training sessions sponsored by The Harvard Program on Negotiation (PON) at Harvard Law

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[6] Military doctrine speaks to the need for cultural competency. Though there is recognition of the need, little addresses the unique character of specifically religious stakeholder behavior, which cannot be categorized as mere identity marker. This point is discussed in greater detail in the conclusion.

[7] Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In (2nd Edition)* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991).

[8] In military PME, negotiation training approaches "focus(es) on two central paradigms," *distributive* adversarial approaches (transactional) and *integrative bargaining* promoting win-win outcomes (IBN). See: Stefan Eisen, Jr., *Practical Guide to Negotiating in the Military,* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2019).

School, a leader in negotiation training and development, or attend PME classes based on the PON approach.[9] The program is primarily structured around interests and *deal-making*.[10]

In IBN training, officers learn a structured approach to address the complex negotiations they will face in the field: an approach that begins with a set formula that anticipates all that is needed to be known. Officers are introduced to a pre-formulated method for addressing any possible interlocutor, or negotiation setting, so the officer can then employ a pre-given method that identifies each successive step.

One approach teaches separating the people from the problem: focusing on interests, not positions, inventing options for mutual gain, and insisting on using objective criteria.[11] Another introduces the Seven Elements of Negotiation: interests, options, alternatives, legitimacy, communication, relationship, and commitment.[12] In PME instruction employing the IBN approach, individuals and teams may, for example, participate in mock exercises that might involve negotiating the release of an embassy member whom a foreign government is detaining. Another may be a negotiation regarding resource distribution, while another may be a cross-cultural negotiation regarding land usage. In each case, the goal is to arrive at a single optimal outcome, a single "right answer" for each situation. An additional instructional technique is to role-play the purchase of a car.[13] The goal of instruction in each of these scenarios is to show officers how to succeed in a stable negotiating environment.[14]

The Limits of IBN

IBN is ill-suited for military negotiations with religious stakeholder groups. While a "win-win" approach sounds appealing, IBN presumes that each side to the negotiation wants to "win" in the same way - by maximizing their interests. Evidence shows, however, that religious

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[9] Roger Fisher and Danny Ertel, *Getting Ready to Negotiate: The Getting to Yes Workbook* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995). Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In (2nd Edition),* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991); David A. Lax and James K. Sebenius, *3D Negotiation: Powerful Tools to Change the Game in Your Most Important Deals* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006); Daniel Shapiro, *Negotiating the Nonnegotiable: How to Resolve Your Most Emotionally Charged Conflicts* (New York, NY: Viking, 2016); William Ury, *Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations* (New York, NY: Bantam, 2007).

[10] "Harvard Negotiation Master Class," Program On Negotiation Harvard Law School (July, 22, 2021), https://www.pon.harvard.edu/courses-and-training/master-class/negotiation-master-class/
"Leadership Center," West Point Negotiation Project, United States Military Academy at West Point, https://www.westpoint.edu/leadership-center/west-point-negotiation-project.

[11] Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In (2nd Edition,* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991).

[12] Roger Fisher and Danny Ertel, *Getting Ready to Negotiate: The Getting to Yes Workbook* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995).

[13] Stefan Eisen, Jr., *Practical Guide to Negotiating in the Military* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2019), 14-21.

[14] Tom Fox, Zachary Griffiths, Marcus Millen, and Nicholas Tallant, "Negotiation Education: An Institutional Approach," *Military Review* (Jan-Feb 2019).

stakeholders seek to maximize only those interests that serve their religious values. Trained in IBN, military negotiators will assume that there is a single, stable, and communicable way for each side to explain its interests to the other side (by talking, for example, about desires for land, or water, or political authority). They will also assume that a single system of exchange exists for all sides to compare their contrasting desires (where gaining some measure of land might, for example, serve as *quid pro quo* for losing some access to water or to political rights). But there is no single mechanism for communicating interests and measuring exchange values with religious stakeholders. Each stakeholder group's religious values belong to a unique language, unique historical memory, and unique system for distributing interests and values. It is indeed possible for members of one group to live for some years with another group and thereby, over time, to learn how to recognize and discuss its values and interests. Military negotiations belong, however, to a shorter time frame that disallows such depth of communication.

IBN succeeds only when all parties to a negotiation can communicate their interests according to a single system of exchange. Negotiators trained solely in IBN will be forced either to overlook the value-specific claims of religious stakeholders or to operate outside the strictures of their training, drawing on field experience and intuition to make ad hoc decisions about how to engage religious stakeholders. [15]

Three features of the IBN approach need to be addressed to extend its utility when negotiating with religious stakeholders:

1. *Formulaic training*: Formulaic approaches that dominate negotiation instruction assume stable settings. Worksheets are employed as a way of ensuring negotiators work through the formula in a business-like manner.

2. *Adopting only one, unchanging formula*: Interest-based negotiation is a functional approach to problem-solving. In the scenarios presented in classroom situations, there is a "right answer." Instruction is a set piece and imagines a stable negotiating universe that is knowable.

3. *Reducing real-life settings to the terms of a single formula and ignoring all features of the setting that are not anticipated by the formula:* Officers may, for example, participate

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[15] An increasing number of conflict-resolution and negotiation theorists recognize the limitations of IBN models that are highly Western in scope and based on economic exchange theory where value is treated as a commodity that is created and traded in the conflict resolution marketplace. But, negotiation is more than bargaining. It is about communication. Arguably, power in all its manifestations is changing from top-down elite-driven approaches to participatory decision-making. Negotiation is now viewed as an ongoing conversation that is supplanting win-win strategies that seek hard-stop conclusions. And, to communicate successfully, command of the language is crucial. Moses Naím, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches, to States Why Being in Charge Isn't What It Used to Be (*New York: Basic Books, 2013).

in mock exercises that involve negotiating the release of an embassy member detained by a foreign government. In one such scenario, an officer became intoxicated at an embassy party, then drove and crashed into the car of a local senior government official. The officer was arrested and held as a negotiating pawn. Following the IBN approach, officers would learn a preset procedure, recognizing the military's interest is to get the officer released. The foreign country may want to detain him until they receive airplanes that they previously requested. Officers would enter brainstorming sessions with foreign officials to seek some mutually beneficial gains. Officers are trained to assume that both sides have explicit material interests that each side can recognize.

However, these three features of IBN are maladapted to the real-life comportment of religious stakeholders:

1. *Formulaic training*: Formulaic approaches are useful only if the formulae are flexible enough to adapt to contexts of highly variable real-time negotiations. Religious stakeholders tend to continually adjust their negotiation strategies according to premises that will not be visible to the negotiators.[16] Humanitarian and military actors in the OE report sharing the same frustration: business and legal approaches to negotiation and conflict resolution fall short of what is needed.[17]

2. *Adopting only one, unchanging formula*: Single unchanging formulas that are static will not accommodate a continually shifting context. Military negotiations are rarely stable and what becomes known is often an outcome that results from the negotiation itself. Absent from PME is coursework allowing students to comprehend a continually shifting negotiation context and how a recognition of context is essential for successful negotiations. Flexible models would adjust to a shifting negotiation landscape and adjust for changes in negotiator behavior at the table as well as the *back table* occupied by *influencers.* Spoilers are also accounted for using flexible negotiation approaches. Linear rational negotiation models based on game theory can miss the complexity *living* within a conflict.

3. *Reducing real-life settings to the terms of a single formula and ignoring all features of the setting that are not anticipated by the formula.* IBN trains negotiators to overlook all features of the negotiating setting that do not fit a single formula and fails to address issues because they appear too complex and complicated. When addressing religious stakeholders, this can mean mission failure, since, of all stakeholders, religious group strategies are the least evident and most changing. Religious values remain an

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[16] Aram Donigian and Jeff Weiss, "A Failure to Engage: Current Negotiation Strategies and Approaches," *Military Review* (May-June 2012), 47-54.

[17] Francesca dell'Acqua (International Affairs Consultant) in discussion with the author Thomas Matyók, October 2019.

understudied and undertheorized aspect of negotiation. Failing to recognize the presence and role of values when dealing with members of religious groups can lead to a collapse of the negotiation process. By contrast, RVN provides a rational procedure for addressing value-centered partners to a negotiation.

IBN has proven to be a positive step forward in negotiation strategy, moving away from hard bargaining negotiation that can negatively impact short and long-term relationships. Irrespective of its positive attributes, IBN is not *the* answer to all negotiation situations. And when religion and religious values are involved, it does not go far enough.

General Pershing Case Study

Without any formal education in negotiating with religious stakeholders, General John "Blackjack" Pershing was obliged to craft a negotiating strategy from his personal experience alone. Pershing's circumstances in the Philippines anticipated the need for professional education and an approach to negotiation with religious stakeholders that recognizes religious values and their influence on negotiating behavior.

Much can be learned from General Pershing's experience in the Philippines. With no formal education in negotiating with members of religious groups, Pershing was forced to learn on the job and build a context-specific negotiation strategy. He identified the presence of religious values as a critical component of negotiation.

During his time in the Philippines, Captain Pershing was placed in command of a remote post amid a foreign culture, shaped by Islam and ancient clan conflict. He successfully used "smart power" to gain the respect and support of the various clans in his operational environment. He pursued a balanced application of the hard power of military force and the soft power of civil action.

In 1898, following the Spanish-American War, the United States acquired the Philippines. The U.S. Army was designated the agent of empire and directed to establish colonial rule over all the Philippine islands. President McKinley assured the Army that this would be a "benevolent assimilation" and that the Filipinos would welcome the benefits of American Rule.

Captain John Pershing arrived in Mindanao to carry out President McKinley's wish to impose U.S. sovereignty over the Moro where the Spanish had failed. The theater commander, General Elwell Otis, a Civil War veteran, emphasized civic action as the best approach. Brigadier General Kobbe, Pershing's immediate departmental commander, supported this civil

policy that took into consideration the diversity of race, *religion*, and habitat of the local peoples. Kobbe even suggested that the officers read the Koran to understand the Moro.[18]

Pershing, however, encountered a different attitude among his fellow officers and his troops, some of whom had fought Native Americans in the American West. Major Robert Bullard, an associate of Pershing from West Point and the Indian Wars exemplified the feeling:

> The only question with the average Moro, is when he can kill a Christian. It is never a question of whether he will do so or not. The Moro priests teach the murder of Christians as a requirement of their religion. The Moro is a born fanatic. He cares absolutely nothing for his own life if by risking it he can carry out the precepts of his religion. The Moro will hide their hate with cunning subtlety until the opportunity comes for them to secure revenge. It is for this reason that the American lives in constant fear for his life.[19]

Pershing, nevertheless, had learned different lessons from his engagement with the Cree, Sioux, and Apache. He understood that Ballard's ideas were myth. By understanding the cultural and spiritual world of the Native Americans, he had been able to avoid conflict and establish mutual trust.

On November 1, 1901, Pershing was given command of three infantry companies and two cavalry troops posted to Camp Vicars near Lake Lanao. His plan was to contact the clan leaders (dattos) and start a conversation to understand their position and identify mutual interests. He knew the clans were militant and engaged in constant blood feuds so it was important that he and his soldiers project power and confidence as a warrior force. He was also aware that Islam was key to the dattos' approach to life, and he had to understand and take that approach into consideration. Pershing began to learn the local language and had his interpreter teach him the basic fundamentals of Islam. While his first priority was to improve his compound, his second priority was to visit the weekly market where the local Moros would gather. There he let it be known that he wanted to meet with the dattos.

During his interactions in the market, he was told that the head datto, Ahmai-Manibilang would like to talk. Ahmai asked Pershing what right the U.S. had to come to Mindanao? Pershing answered that the U.S. had conquered the Philippines during their war with Spain and that they intended to govern much better than the Spanish. Pershing later wrote that Ahmai accepted the explanation as a warrior, but he was not pleased by the situation. Ahmai also wanted to know if the power of the dattos would be sustained by the Americans and if the

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[18] The Moros were an Islamic people living in Mindanao in the Southern Philippine Islands. Charles Phillips and Alan Axelrod "Moro Wars," in *Reference Guide to the Major Wars and Conflicts in History: Wars in the Early 20th Century (1900 to 1950)*, by Facts on File, 2015.

[19] Frank Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J Pershing, Vol 1* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1977), 248-249.

Americans would seek to convert the Moros. Pershing assured him that datto power was secure and that religious freedom was one of the basic tenants of the United States. Satisfied by the first meeting, Ahmai departed. Pershing hoped that his hospitality would prompt a reciprocal invitation to visit Ahmai and local dattos at their rancheria. It did a few weeks later.

Ahmai sent an escort and Pershing went alone and unarmed with just his servant and interpreter. His soldiers thought that he had completely lost his mind. This was a more substantive meeting with more difficult challenges that dealt with customs, religion, and sovereignty. At one point Pershing was asked if his God was the same as the Moro's God. Pershing, using his knowledge of Islam, responded that there is but one God. All accepted that answer.

Pershing obtained permission to meet all the dattos around Lake Lano under Ahmai's escort. Pershing's goal was to assess which dattos he could work with and which would never accept his presence. All the dattos talked with him as he was under the escort of Ahmai, but he could identify those who would oppose him and those who might support the Americans. He was identifying spoilers.

For those dattos that professed friendship Pershing gave them an American flag. They were to wave the flag if they were in trouble or if another American unit, who did not know they were friendly, was about to attack them.

After the visits Pershing wrote letters to every datto, reiterating what they had discussed. He extended an invitation to all the dattos to come to the American 4th of July celebration at Camp Vicars. Over 700 Moros attended. Not only was there a surfeit of food but Pershing arranged games of strength and agility pitting American against Moro.

Pershing was able to send the first reliable information about the situation around Lake Lano to his superior officers. They praised him in their reports: "By tactful methods he passed through many Moro villages without firing a shot, and, returning, kept in touch with Moro affairs on the north side (of the Lake)."[20]

Pershing's reputation as a fearsome combat leader who respected Moro customs spread throughout the region. In early 1903, he was invited to a gathering of Sultans, dattos, and Imams in the main house of the chief Imam with all seated around the Koran.

Pershing's successful engagement was informed by experience, intuition, keen observation, and a powerful mind. His success was also coupled to his reputation as a warrior. He was respected as a competent fighter. He called on his unique gifts to design a way forward

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[20] Vandiver, *Black Jack,* 276.

beyond any of his formal military education. Future negotiators need formal training in order to succeed as Pershing succeeded. Drawing lessons from Pershing's actions and enriching these lessons with evidence from more recent studies, extends the lessons into a practical and teachable program for negotiating with religious stakeholder groups. This new program, RVN (Religious Values Negotiation), is introduced in the following pages.

Lessons Learned from General Pershing

There are several fundamentals to negotiating with religious stakeholder groups:

1. *Carefully examine the specific context of a negotiation.* Detailed strategies must reflect familiarity with specific stakeholder groups: how they use language, how they narrate their local history, and how they have interacted with other stakeholders and with the U.S. military.

2. *Take time to engage each stakeholder group in its own setting.* Visit the group. Engage them with respect. Engage stakeholder leaders and negotiators as equals. When visiting, wait to see how they want to engage initially; take time to learn how to converse with them in a manner of mutual respect. Visit a second time (and more as needed). Learn which sub-groups or individuals appear more open to conversation and interaction. Among them, discern who has sufficient respect within the group. Do not be misled by those who rush to engage (they may lack standing in the community and may seek something irrelevant to the negotiation).

3. *The single greatest difference between negotiation goals is that, in most cases, religious stakeholders pursue material interests only in service to their religious values.* Presuming that the negotiation is a competition between "our interests and their interests" could lead to failure. By way of illustration: In Okinawa, in 1946, the U.S. Army wanted to extend the Awase Meadows County Club's golf course and needed to obtain the land from several Okinawan farmers. The Army was positive that they had an unassailable negotiating position. First, the American Army was protecting the Okinawans and needed recreation facilities to keep fit. Second, the Okinawan farmers could make much more money working for the Americans as servants, cadies, bartenders, and grounds keepers at the country club then farming small plots of land. The Okinawans were not persuaded by these positions, as their ancestral land had strong social and spiritual significance. The Okinawans bitter rejection of the proposal surprised the Americans. The Americans eventually evicted the Okinawans, confiscated the land, and created long lasting enmity.[21]

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[21] Arnold G. Fisch, Jr., *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands, 1945-1950* (Washington DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1988), 177.

4. *During these visits, there is no need to focus on spoilers*. Work with those who will eventually work well with the negotiation team.

5. *Consider both short and long-term goals*. Nurturing certain relationships may prove significant in the long-term, even if not critical immediately.

6. *While drawing on formal training, learn to be creative and adjust strategies to meet the unexpected*. Religious stakeholders may change their apparent goals and interests more frequently than expected. Do not assume that it is possible to think ahead and "figure out what they really want." Most likely, they will not share your assumptions about what "interests" are. There is a way forward, but it may not be the one that seems "natural."

   Religious stakeholders negotiate on the basis of two systems of value, not one. They recognize the economic value of land and aircraft, but they pursue economic goals only in service to religious values. Without any common system of religious value, it is impossible to predict when and how their devotion to a religious value may alter the way they accept or reject what appears to be a strictly economic agreement.

7. *Expect and embrace small failures positively.* What are perceived as small failures are really feedback and are not the negotiator's fault. It is unexpected change along the way to a negotiated outcome. Such failures are assurances that there is no single approach to a negotiation.

8. *Supportive command is crucial for success.* Mission command allows decisions to be made at the lowest level consistent with the overall intent of operations. This approach to decision-making is necessary to allow subordinates to exploit the situation on the ground. A mission command approach allows negotiators to adapt to unpredicted changes.

Introducing Procedures for Negotiating with Religious Stakeholder Groups

As recognized by a growing number of military professionals, "today's operational environments oblige leaders to develop situational competence in coalition building and cross-cultural communications, the foundational proficiencies of military negotiation." [22] RVN contributes to this competence and adds procedures for recognizing and addressing behaviors

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[22] Fisch, *Military Government,* 2.

that are unique to religious stakeholders.[23] Several aspects of RVN draw on and extend the lessons learned from General Pershing.[24]

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[23] The need for persuasion and influence to build agreement among multiple actors is compelling military professionals to adjust their thinking regarding the utility of a vertical command-and-control process as a unifying construct during operations. Coalition building and cross-cultural communication are human interactions that encourage negotiation and can push back against control. Negotiation has become a required competency. Thomas Matyók, *Military Negotiation as Meta-Leadership: Engage and Align for Mission Success* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 2019).

[24] RVN draws on five phases of academic research on interreligious relations, on language-based studies of the behavior of religious stakeholder groups, and on religious-value-based diagnostics.

- Phase 1 (from 1994 and ongoing): Establishing inter-religious focus groups in regions of potential tension around the world. Sponsored by the Society for Scriptural Reasoning (SSR, which Ochs co-founded in 1994), the work focused initially on Muslim-Jewish-Christian engagement and later expanded to include Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist engagement as well. Society scholars have sponsored and analyzed thousands of inter-religious focus-group events in the USA, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, Pakistan, Oman, UAE, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, China, France, and Germany. Society publications correlate methods of engagement with signals of inter-group behavior. Viz, D. Ford and C. Pecknold, eds. *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006); David Ford, Rumee Ahmed, and Peter Ochs, "Scriptural Reasoning," interview by Bob Abernethy (October 12, 2007); *Religion and Ethics News Weekly*; You Bin, "Scriptural Reasoning in China," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in China*, ed., K.K. Yeo (Oxford: Oxford University Press). DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190909796.013.25. See also Yang Huilin, *China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture* (Waco TX: *Baylor University Press*, 2014): of particular interest is Ch. 12, "The Possibilities and Values of 'Scriptural Reasoning' Between China and the West."
- Phase 2 (from 2005 and ongoing): Analyzing patterns of religious-group discourse, using tools of ethnolinguistics, logic, and semiotics. Reviewing data from over 4000 interreligious focus group events, a team of SSR analysts have constructed formal models of discursive patterns that can be compared and contrasted among different religious groups and among different contexts of intergroup meetings. The work has been sponsored by grants from the University of Virginia and the Henry Luce Foundation. Viz. P. Ochs, *Religion without Violence: The Practice and Philosophy of Scriptural Reasoning* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2019).
- Phase 3 (2011-2013): Building a diagnostic tool for identifying discursive signals of probable religious-group behavior in settings of tension and conflict. Ochs constructed an initial model of this tool while serving as Academic Consultant on Religion and Conflict for DOS in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations and its Working Group on Religion. Prepared for inclusion as Module 3 of the *CSO Manual of Religion and Conflict* (sponsored in 2013 by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jerry White in partnership with FSI), the model was designed to help FSOs identify religious stakeholder groups in the field and evaluate their behavioral tendencies toward other groups, including U.S. personnel (later re-formulate as *U.S. Department of State Religion and Conflict Training*, by TechChange in partnership with IPSI and CSO).
- Phase 4 (2011 and ongoing): Modeling and field-testing a language-based tool for diagnosing the near-future behavioral tendencies of religious stakeholder groups toward other groups. Reframing and refining the model constructed in Phase 3, a team of U.S. and Pakistani researchers has constructed and field-tested the set of diagnostic tools that contributes directly to the RVN model. Gathering data from the activities of focus groups in several parts of the world, the research team has conducted its most extensive field tests in several locations in Pakistan. Evidence is collected and processed in the field and reprocessed in the research team's offices at the University of Virginia. (*Viz*. Ochs et. al, "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict.") A team of UVA data scientists re-tests the evidence through computational expansion, analyzing thousands of online religious group writings through methods of machine learning. (*Viz*. S. Green, M. Stiles, K. Harton, S. Garofalo and D. E. Brown, "Computational analysis of religious and ideological linguistic behavior," 2017 *Systems and Information Engineering Design Symposium (SIEDS)*, 2017, pp. 359-364, doi: 10.1109/SIEDS.2017.7937746.).

***RVN offers negotiators*:**

1. *An adaptable, step-by-step procedure for gaining familiarity with the specific context of a negotiation.* RVN formalizes Pershing's effort to gain detailed familiarity with the Moro's local history, language, and political setting. His effort predates the work of theorists who encourage negotiators to recognize the strength of win-win approaches in nurturing fruitful relations with their negotiating partners.[25] To do this, negotiators need to visit with their partners, gain cultural competence, and nurture communication skills. In addition, when engaging religious stakeholders, they need to learn how to interact with stakeholders whose material interests serve non-material beliefs and values. Religious stakeholders will seek mutually recognizable material goods, such as armaments, food, or access to water. But stakeholders will seek these goods in service to unarticulated beliefs and values that military negotiators will neither perceive nor recognize. In such a setting, IBN strategies prove inapplicable.[26]

2. *An adaptable, step-by-step procedure for recognizing and interacting with religious stakeholders' uniquely value-centered practices of inter-group communication and negotiation.* RVN formalizes Pershing's effort to engage the Moro as equals, study their Muslim religious tradition and language, respect the freedom of their religious practice, and recognize the place of religious values and beliefs in Moro negotiations. The section "RVN Procedure for Negotiation with Religious Stakeholders: An Illustrative Model" outlines specific, concrete procedures for engaging religious stakeholders within the process of negotiation, procedures that negotiators must adjust in real time to the fluid patterns of religious-stakeholder communication. There are, however, some general guidelines and terminologies that are critical for addressing religious stakeholders:

   - *Addressing religion and the religions*: When describing or addressing stakeholder groups, negotiators should refer only to specific religions as named by the groups, rather than using the Western concept of "religions" in general. In the context of

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- Phase 5 (2020 and ongoing): The co-authors of this essay have fashioned RVN by applying the results of phases 1-4 research to current practices of military negotiation and of PME. See Peter Ochs, "Scriptural Reasoning and Peacebuilding" in *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Peace*, eds., Jolyon Mitchell, Lesley Orr, Martyn Percy, and Francesca Po (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), 264-274; Peter Ochs, with Essam Fahim and Paola Pinzon Hernandez, "Read the Signs: Detecting Early Warning Signals of Interreligious Conflict," in *Religions* (forthcoming 2022): 19pp.

[25] David Lax and James Sebenius, *3D Negotiation: Powerful Tools to Change the Game in Your Most Important Deals* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 200): 8. Oliver Ramsbothom, Tom Woodhoues and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution 3rd Edition*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012).

[26] Moses Naím, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches, to States Why Being in Charge Isn't What It Used to Be* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

PME, negotiators should think of each stakeholder religion as naming the group's most cherished beliefs and values, as defined below.

- *Speaking about "religion"*: Members of the military will most likely use the English word "religion" to talk about the beliefs and practices of traditions with which they are familiar: such as "Judaism/Jewish," "Islam/Muslim," "Buddhism/Buddhist," or "Christianity/Christian," or of denominations like "Methodist," "Baptist," or " Catholic." However, some stakeholder groups will not use the general terms "religion/religious" to describe themselves but will only use proper names like Muslim, Christian, etc. In such cases, negotiators may find it helpful to respect stakeholder customs and allow stakeholders to introduce their preferred names for their beliefs and values, some of which may be unfamiliar to the negotiators. Negotiators should take the time to learn and use these names, bearing in mind that each group may treat such names with honor or even consider it a sacred act to speak the names of some of their beliefs or practices. Religions (to use our familiar term) are intimately connected to language: to special vocabularies, special ways of speaking and writing, and special ways of referring to what we do in the world. [27]

- *Speaking about "being religious"*: As a rule of thumb, negotiators should avoid asking members of a stakeholder group if they are "religious." That notion may be unclear to group members or it may translate into local words that are used only in the privacy of local gatherings. When meeting members of a stakeholder group, it is best to listen first to terms they use and to ask what some words mean, learning gradually which terms may belong to the special vocabularies that involve what we might call "religion."[28]

- *Religious beliefs*: Religious belief narratives tell a group's story of origin: the most cherished narratives of events and heroes that gave birth to the group, sustained it through history, and direct its future life.[29] Belief narratives are central to a religion

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[27] See above, Note 24 on the history of our research on language-based studies of religious group behavior. Phase I demonstrated the significance of religious language study for anticipating and responding to religious group behavior. As summarized in Ochs, *Religion without Violence*, Phase II identified instruments for measuring linguistic signals of religious group behavior. Sponsored by DOS, Phase III introduced our initial predictive model, subsequently tested in Phases IV and V.

[28] Foreign policy analysts err when they presume that social or political scientists can directly identify the semantic meanings of statements by religious group leaders and influencers. Religious group discourses are not only coded but also bear a broad range of different meanings in different sociopolitical contexts. See Peter Ochs, et.al. "Read the Signs."

[29] Narratives are central to religious group practices and beliefs. To sample an extensive literature, see R. Ruard Ganzevoort, "Religious stories we live by," in R. Ruard Ganzevoort, Maaike de Haardt, Michael Scherer-Rath, editors, *Religious Stories We Live by: Narrative Approaches in Theology and Religious Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 1-17; David Yamane, "Narrative and Religious Experience, *Sociology of Religion*, 61:2 (2000), pp. 171–189.; Benjamin Schewel, *7 Ways of Looking at Religion: The Major Narratives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. The study of scripture remains central to many of the world's religions. In ways that are central to the study of

but not useful, practically, in negotiation. Negotiators should listen patiently and respectively to such narratives as they are inseparable from group members' sense of dignity and identity. Negotiators, however, should not make judgments about the narratives or try to draw any lessons from the narratives about current group interests or goals.

3. *An adaptable, detailed introduction to the kinds of religious values that guide the interests, vocabularies, and negotiating behavior of religious stakeholders.* What we will call "religious values" inform the self-understanding and behavior of religious stakeholder groups. Named by unique words that appear strictly within the indigenous language of a religious group, religious values signal sets of behaviors that group members should pursue or avoid at a given time, including group behavior toward other groups. Drawing on long-term academic studies of behavior between religious groups, there is a statistical correlation between certain quantitative and qualitative features of the value-terms and specific near-future group behaviors.[30] This correlation is described below. Below are more general characteristics of religious values:

- *Value terms appear only within indigenous languages.* These terms *do not correspond* to any accounts of "universal values" or any English-language terms for values or beliefs.
- *Religious stakeholders are not accustomed to classifying these terms as "values."* The term "religious values" is an abstract term, useful for instructional purposes, but negotiators will not find it helpful to use the term in discussions with such stakeholders.
- *RVN is a diagnostic tool that enables negotiators to recognize that stakeholders' explicit material interests are influenced or re-directed by beliefs and values* that

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religious values, scripture integrates language, narrative, and religious belief and practice. For an introduction to how the world's scriptures have influenced religious groups, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 1-91.

[30] See Green et al., "Computational Analysis," above Note 24; Robabeh Poorjebelli, Mahboobeh Babaei, and Mahsa Allahyari, "A Study on Religious Values," in *Management Science Letters* 4, (2014), pp. 1605-1610; Gerard Powers, "Religion and Peacebuilding," in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, eds. Daniel Philpott and Gerard Powers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 317–18; Peter Ochs, "The Possibilities and Limits of Inter-Religious Dialogue," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, eds. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 488–515 (491-492); Rogers Brubaker, "Religious Dimensions of Political Conflict and Violence," *Sociological Theory* 33:1 (2015): pp. 1–19 (Brubaker seeks to measure various attributes of religion's contribution to political conflict); Sergej Flere, et al., "Religious Sentiment as Peripheral: Cross-Cultural Study of Religious Orientation by Multidimensional Scaling," in *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 3:2 (2007). (Complementing our approach, this paper offers evidence that analysts should not overstate the binary character of religious discourse, since religious claims and performances are nuanced and shaped to meet the needs and terms of specific contexts.); Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Rittberger, "Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29:3 (2000): pp. 641–74. (Complementing our approach, the paper examines religion as a significant factor in political conflict and turns to language study as a significant instrument for examining religion's role in conflict.)

are not directly visible to observers. Negotiators will *not* be able to observe these influences. For this reason, an important lesson of RVN is for negotiators to be cautious, humble, and patient when engaging religious stakeholders. Negotiators should *not assume* that there is any measurable correspondence between military and stakeholder interests.[31]

- *When examined according to the discipline of RVN, a group's real-time value judgments signal the group's probable, near-future behavioral tendencies toward other stakeholder groups.* These are not either-or signals of something like "good vs bad behavior" (or "violent vs peaceful behavior"). RVN provides a discriminating scale for reading signals of more than eight different categories of group behavior. Drawing on RVN research data, command policy, and real-time evidence from OE, negotiators may correlate each category of probable behavior with a unique set of negotiating strategies.

- *Throughout twenty-five years of research on inter-religious tension and conflict, RVN researchers discovered field-testable correlations between more than eight types of change in stakeholder group language and more than eight categories of probable near-future group behavior.* Researchers discovered that these correlations are best observed through data-driven quantitative analyses. During eleven years of field research in different parts of the world, most extensively in South Asia, researchers refined and field-tested reliable methods for identifying linguistic signals and modeling correlations between signals and behavior. The following sections summarize the qualitative and quantitative research derived from RVN's best practices for negotiating with religious stakeholder groups. Negotiators need not study or engage in this technical research, it is summarized only for interested readers. Negotiators should be trained in general lessons learned through this research and in the on-the ground procedures recommended in this article.

4. *Background research on quantitative and qualitative measures for estimating each religious stakeholder group's likely disposition toward the negotiation, or – if pertinent – likely degree of aggressive or non-aggressive behavior toward the military and toward neighboring groups.* The 4th lesson drawn from General Pershing was not to focus on spoilers. Expanded within the terms of RVN, the lesson is not to rely on zero-sum (either-

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[31] For successful mission accomplishment it is important to move "beyond needs and interests" to recognize there is more to negotiation than economic bargaining approaches moored to linear, rational actor models that presume a stable negotiating environment. Instead, "negotiation is a dynamic and emergent process" that "changes everything that follows." (Kenneth Fox, "Negotiation as a Post-Modern Process," in *Rethinking Negotiation Teaching: Innovations for Context and Culture*, eds. Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, and Giuseppe De Palo (Saint Paul, MN: DRI Press, 2009), 13, 22. Negotiation with religious stakeholders is a pro-communal activity where the parties involved believe problem-solving is worth their time and effort. (Ivan Gan, "Advancing a Distributive-Bargaining and Integrative-Negotiation Integral System: A Values-Based Negotiation Model (VBM)," *Social Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2017).

or) models of stakeholder behavior: not, therefore, to devote time and expense to distinguishing simply between terrorists and non-terrorists or between violent and not violent groups. Religious value language signals much more sensitive distinctions among more than eight types of group behavior, of which "tending to extreme violence" is only one type.

RVN is based on twenty years of technical background research. RVN training is recommended for negotiators seeking to engage religious stakeholders and is based on, but the training need not include these technical aspects. Outlined is a non-technical procedure that RVN-trained negotiators may follow in the field. It is important, however, that negotiators have a reach-back capability, such as electronic access to an advisory team technically-trained in RVN's quantitative models and research.[32]

***Selected features of the qualitative research*:**

1. *RVN researchers examine speech and writings by members of a religious group: if possible, by a group's cultural influencers, such as teachers.* The most reliable signals of probable group behavior are displayed in quantitative features of this speech and writing.[33]

2. *Whenever possible, RVN analysts have trained indigenous researchers, whose language skills and cultural knowledge elevate the quality of research.* Highest quality data is generated by focus groups within a religious group (or a neighboring group), who choose to examine speeches or sermons they have attended or other writings. Their analyses are translated into English for computational and other secondary analysis. Successful methods for training non-indigenous members of the RVN research team to analyze translated sources do exist.

3. *RVN analysis focuses on value judgments.* For the sake of RVN analysis, we have defined "value judgements" as judgements that predicate value terms of identifiable entities in the environing world. Restated in the terms of everyday English grammar, value judgements are sentences (subject-predicate) whose predicates are value terms and whose subjects name something in the environment, defined as something outside of the discourse itself: for example, "That puppy is beautiful," where "beautiful" serves as a value term. RVN analysts do not attempt to define what values "really are" either for English speakers or for members of a stakeholder group. The approach is strictly functional, which means that, over many years of trial-and-error research, that definition of "values" generates the statistically most reliable data: *values are terms or phrases that signal classes of behavior that are recommended or discouraged by a religious stakeholder group.*

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[32] See below, p. 21.
[33] Green et al., "Computational Analysis." See above Note 24.

4. *In more technical terms, RVN researchers focus their attention on value terms or phrases that typically appear as the predicates of value judgments offered by a group's teachers or cultural influencers.* (Through trial-and-error, RVN researchers have learned that value judgments offered by a group's political leaders are not reliable signals of near-future group behavior; such judgments tend, instead, to signal tendencies only within the group's leadership and between group members.) To use an English example, "Those leaders *are trustworthy*": "are trustworthy" is the predicate and "trustworthy" is the value term. Such predicates signal a group's probable approval of certain directions of group behavior. Group members know how to read these signals. In this example, since the leaders are trustworthy, the judgment signals that it is ok to negotiate with them. In the case of religious stakeholders, value terms signal meanings that will remain opaque to military negotiators as well as to other outsiders to a group's religious discourse. In this case, negotiators will not know how to read these signals and should not try. Misreading signals can result in confusing outcomes.[34] Negotiations are more complex when several different religious stakeholders sit at the table. Negotiators must learn to anticipate how each group's value range adjusts in relation to behaviors of the other groups, including the military group. Skilled negotiators will learn ways of adjusting the process of negotiation to minimize each group's perception of threat by the others. This perception tends to narrow each group's value range and thus reduce its flexibility in the negotiation. Negotiations may also fail if groups are encouraged to overstretch the range of primary group values. Among the negative consequences of overstretching are: 1) stimulating stakeholder representatives to agree to terms that a group's authorities will later reject; 2) encouraging schism or confusion among a group's representatives and its elders, thereby undermining the group's participation in and loyalty to the negotiations.

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[34] See: R. Todd Romero, Making War and Minting Christians: Masculinity, Religion, and Colonialism in Early New England. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011) 141-148.

The Plymouth colonist presents how a value term communicates probable behavior: In January 1622, Canonicus, the sachem of the Narragansetts, had decided to go to war with Plymouth Colony. The colonists had rejected his overtures of peace and had insulted him by giving inappropriate gifts with ambiguous spiritual meaning. Canonicus had been successful in channeling the spiritual force of war, Hobbemock, most often manifested by a snake. This spiritual power would be decisive if the Plymouth colonists could not also tap into its power. Canonicus had to know. In previous meetings the colonists had given no indications in their dress, symbols, words, and actions that they were able to access the spiritual world. But Canonicus sent a warning to them that would let him know for sure. A Narragansett messenger presented William Bradford with a "bundle of arrows lapped in a rattle snake-skin." Bradford and the colonists, steeped in their own biblical spirituality knew this was a threat. The snake was the Devil and deceit, and this "gift" must be evil. But what to do? Bradford decided to pack the skin with power and shot and return it, which he did. Without knowing it, Bradford's return gift convinced Canonicus that the colonists had greater access to Habbemock than he did and called off the War.

Properly interpreting signals is crucial for mission success when negotiating in cross-cultural and religiously informed contexts. In this example, the snake represented spirit and the goal was to determine if the colonists could conjure up as much spirit as the Narragansetts. Through misinterpretation, the colonists stumbled onto the appropriate response. But building a negotiation strategy on the luck of misinterpretation does not seem very sound.

5. *Within a religious group, value terms rarely change their linguistic root form, especially primary value terms, or those that appear most often in spoken or written judgments by group influencers*. A teacher in a religious Jewish group may, for example, say that "The land is holy: *haarets kedushah*." The term for "holy" will remain some conjugation of the root form *kadesh*, or *k-d-sh*. That root may appear in different conjugations (*kadesh, kadosh, kedushah*) but the root will not change.

6. *While religious value terms remain fixed in linguistic form, they often signal different meanings when spoken versus written and received in different settings or different times.* Negotiators have two lessons to learn about the meaning of a value term.

   The first lesson is not to identify a single religious value term with a single English term. For example, the English term "holy" has a range of meanings that differs from that of the Hebrew root *kadesh*, whose range (stated, still, within the confines of English) includes "designated or set aside for a particular purpose," "sanctified," "sacred," "altar," "off limits/forbidden," "differentiated from all else," and more. Each meaning also carries historical memories specific to each religious group, and the memories may extend the meaning and behavioral force of a value judgment. A military negotiator will not be able to recognize which set of subtle meanings is invoked at a given time. Because religious value terms are powerful behavioral signals, the negotiator should not risk guessing some approximate meaning; a small misreading could have unwanted consequences.

   The second lesson is that a value term's range of possible meanings may change over time, adjusting to the religious group's changing environment and experiences. In a negotiation setting, groups may adjust such meanings to fit the immediate conditions and demands of the negotiation. RVN researchers have discovered that religious stakeholder groups habitually allow or tolerate anywhere from one to more than eight acceptable meanings for any primary value term. Each habit corresponds to a probable type of group behavior.[35] By way of illustration, the Arabic term *jihad* has a broad range of meanings of which "armed struggle" appears only infrequently. In a given Muslim community, the term may connote many different kinds of "struggle," including a young man's struggle to become consistently pious, or a civic group's struggle to protect the rights of widows, or a violent struggle against an oppressive occupation.[36] Depending on the setting, a group's value judgment may bear any of these meanings.

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[35] Ochs, et. al., "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict," pp.102-105.

[36] Ainslie Embree, "Kashmir: Has Religion a Role in Making Peace?" in Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 33-75 (47-49); Khalid Abou El Fadl, "Conflict Resolution as a Normative Value in Islamic Law: Handling Disputes with Non-Muslims," in Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy*, pp. 178-209 (p.207 n68).

RVN researchers have examined years of ISIS online publications, manually and through accelerated machine learning tools. They have gathered evidence of the following types of consistent linguistic behavior: (a) *Reduced vocabularies*: While discourse gathered from traditional Muslim groups displays frequent use of well over sixty value terms, ISIS publications tend to display less than ten, with predominant use of approximately five value terms. (b) *A minimum range of meanings for each primary value term:* For traditional Muslim groups, the average range is four meanings for each primary value term; ISIS publications tend to display the minimal range of only one meaning.[37] Over the years, RVN analysts have observed numbers like these among groups whose communications with other groups are highly inflexible, whose governance styles are rigidly top-down, and whose members are denied freedom of expression. By contrast, communications from traditional Muslim groups tend to display a balance between high and low flexibility, governance styles integrate authority and democracy, and members tend to enjoy moderate freedom of expression.

When a set of religious stakeholder values prohibits agreement on a certain negotiation proposal, it may be possible to refine the proposal in ways that appeal to other acceptable meanings of these values. Skilled negotiators could work with stakeholder groups, individually, to learn which alternative proposals fall within the range of that group's primary values. Skilled negotiators could encourage participating groups to access the full range of value meanings when debating these alternative proposals.

Multiparty negotiations may fail if negotiators push stakeholders beyond their group's accepted range of value meanings. Overstretching may have the negative effect of stimulating stakeholder representatives to agree to terms that a group's authorities will later reject, or of creating confusion among a group's representatives and its elders. This schism can undermine the group's participation in and loyalty to the negotiations. Negotiations are more complex when several different religious stakeholders sit at the table. Negotiators must learn to anticipate how each group's value range adjusts in relation to behaviors of the other groups, including the military.

Selected features of the quantitative research:

Over the past twelve years, a team of U.S. and Pakistan researchers framed and field-tested the quantitative analysis that provides RVN's primary evidence and warrant.[38] Researchers discovered that a value term's variable range of meanings *displays the following quantitative features in addition to the qualitative features described above:*

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[37] Ochs, et. al., "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict," pp. 107-111.

[38] Ochs, et. al., "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict," pp. 93-113.

1. *Within the discourse of a religious stakeholder group at a certain place and time, each primary value term is associated with a fairly consistent number of acceptable meanings that ranges from one (minimal range, where the term lacks any variation in its meaning) to more than eight (maximal range, where the term displays more than eight possible meanings).* Recall the previous example: that a Jewish religious group might associate *kedushah* with a range of three meanings (such as "holiness," "off limits/forbidden," "differentiated from all else") or four (also "sanctified") and so on.

2. *At a certain place and time, each religious group displays a fairly consistent, average number of meanings among all its primary value terms.* This number, from one to more than eight, characterizes what we call a group's average semantic range (or SRA).

3. *Except for times of social unrest, intergroup violence, or environmental disruption, a religious group tends to display its characteristic semantic range for up to three months.*

4. *A group's semantic range tends to change when the group experiences a significant transformation, for example at the beginning or at the end of a period of unrest/disruption.*

5. *The degree of change of a group's semantic range signals a measurable change in its near-future behavioral tendencies toward neighboring groups.* RVN identifies a degree of change as a movement between a near-past and near-future group number: for example, from a three toward a one or from a two toward a four. Say, for example, the Jewish religious group (noted above) moved from four meanings down to only one (such as "off limits/forbidden"). *The key signal is not any of these linguistic meanings* but *the number of meanings*: a rapid move to one signals a probable narrowing of the group's goals and its use of language.[39]

6. *Through years of field study, RVN researchers have collected sufficient data to warrant several empirical observations*:[40]

   - Any religious group's semantic range number (one to more than eight) may, to a degree of probability, be associated with a group's dominant behavioral tendencies.

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[39] Ochs et. al, "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict," pp. 101-103.
[40] Ochs et. al, "Value Predicate Analysis: A Language-Based Tool for Diagnosing Behavioral Tendencies of Religious or Value-Based Groups in Regions of Conflict," pp. 98-101; Ochs, *Religion Without Violence*, pp. 158-191.

- A group's degree of change (such as three to one) may similarly be associated with more rapid change toward a new and typically more narrow range of behavioral tendencies.

- An increase in the number of value-judgments that appear in speeches and writings by a group's cultural influencers is typically associated with impending changes in group behavior.

- Drawing on evidence from both field observations and computational acceleration, RVN analysts model the types of near-future group behavior that may be associated with each of the more than eight semantic range numbers. Within that range, groups may adjust meanings to fit the conditions of the negotiation. For example:

  a. *Groups whose range of meaning is only one* will tend not to make such adjustments. Such groups tend to display what we call e*xtreme linguistic insensitivity,* marking language use that: does not change in response to changing social or environmental conditions; grants group members almost no license to interpret the meanings of the group's primary value terms; and displays verbal aggression toward all other groups.

  b. *Groups measuring a four* tend to display *linguistic sensitivity,* marking language use that: changes proportionally in response to changing environmental conditions; shows the full vocabulary typical of the religious dialect; grants group members moderate license to interpret the meanings of primary value terms; and displays probable interest in intergroup engagement.

  c. *Groups measuring an eight* tend to display *extreme linguistic sensitivity,* marking language use that: over-reacts to changing environmental conditions, generating wide ranges of semantic choice, few of which prove reliable in guiding behavior in emergent environments; displays highly reduced value vocabulary, unrepresentative of the religious dialect; grants excessive interpretive license, encouraging highly individuated semantic choices; is associated with community-wide linguistic dysfunction and social segmentation; and exhibits no evidence of community-wide policy toward other groups. Such groups may be victimized by predatory groups and individual group members may be absorbed into other groups.

In most field settings, negotiators will not have time or resources to evaluate stakeholder group tendencies with quantitative precision. Nevertheless, RVN training should prepare them to collect sufficient evidence for distinguishing among at least three broad classes of stakeholder

groups: those whose value judgments are extremely inflexible (corresponding to one to two in the researchers' scale), or excessively flexible (seven to nine), or balanced in degree of flexibility (three to five). Groups who honor the traditional practices of previous generations tend to allow from three to five meanings. RVN researchers report that such groups tend to adjust well to changes in their environments, participating in intergroup dialogue with restraint and cautious flexibility.

- *Negotiating with RVN.* RVN's guidelines for negotiation strategy integrate and expand the lessons learned from General Pershing: nurture relations for the sake of both short and long-term goals; be creative; be flexible, accept failures, and adapt to change**.** *RVN research correlates a group's probable behavior toward other groups (signaled by its semantic numbers) with recommended negotiation and peacekeeping strategies.* RVN recommendations must be adjusted to real-time field conditions.

    a. Negotiation *is counter-indicated for groups with semantic range of one (or with a rapid change from three or two toward one).* Such groups tend to adopt unyielding positions. They may feign flexibility, but such appearances should not be trusted. Contact should be avoided*.*

    b. *Groups with a steady semantic range between three and five should serve as good negotiating partners.* Despite their initial cautiousness, such groups may enter into mutually beneficial conversations. Negotiators who push hard for short-term gains may miss significant opportunities for long-term relations.

    c. *Negotiation is counter-indicated for groups with semantic range of eight* (or with rapid change from six or seven toward eight). Such groups show signs of social segmentation and linguistic breakdown. Verbal negotiations are counter-indicated because the groups lack predictable linguistic and social organization. Unless protected, these groups may be victimized by other groups.

- *When addressing religious stakeholder groups, successful mission accomplishment requires leaders with combat and contact skills competency.*[41] Situational skills such as negotiation are critical to *action competence.*[42] Contact skills are especially important as direct combat makes up approximately 20 percent of all military activities, while 80 percent of the time is directed to actions focused in the political

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[41] Ulla Antilla, "Military Pedagogy and Human Security Education," *Studies for Military Pedagogy, Military Science & Security Policy,* ed. Hubert Annen, Can Nakkas, and Juha Mäkinen (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 20130): 172.
[42] Antilla, *Studies for Military Pedagogy,* 174.

sphere.[43] Cross-cultural negotiation skills are essential leader competencies.[44] Simply stated, "the emphasis in modern military operations is…on talking, listening and negotiating one's way out of a difficult situation, and on building working relationships within an operational area."[45] Army and Air Force doctrine speak to negotiation as a critical leadership skill crucial for "building consensus and resolving conflict" [46] as well as "fostering collaborative relationships."[47]

- *Command should establish a reach-back capability, a technical team that negotiators can readily consult for a broad range of on-the-spot diagnoses and estimates.* This capability would allow negotiators on the ground to rely on real-time observations and judgments while military and civilian analysts electronically provide technical review and research-based support.[48]

RVN Procedure for Negotiating with Religious Stakeholders: An Illustrative Model

The following procedure reflects the implications of RVN research for on-the-ground negotiations.

1. *Preparation*: Before beginning to negotiate, negotiators must gain an understanding of the history and context of the negotiation setting and its stakeholders. It is crucial to gain familiarity with the local stakeholder groups' relation to the land and to each other.

2. *First Visit*: After background study, negotiators should (if conditions permit) visit each stakeholder group on their turf. They should accept each group's hospitality of coffee or tea, meeting stakeholder representatives and, where possible, conferring with elders or others who would monitor and authorize the negotiation process from home. Negotiators must listen carefully to each stakeholder group's narration of its history on the land and the relation of its history to other stakeholders. There is no need to try to consolidate all the stakeholder groups' histories and certainly no need to make any attempt to iron out differences. Narratives are for negotiators to hear; they are not for broader discussion and definitely not for resolution. Negotiators should converse for enough time so that they

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[43] Vanessa Gezari, *The Tender Soldier: A True Story of War and Sacrifice*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

[44] Thomas Matyók, "Military Negotiation as Meta-Leadership: Engage and Align for Mission Success," Air Force Negotiation Center METCAT Paper No. 1, Maxwell, AFB: Air University Press, (2019).

[45] Deborah Goodwin, *The Military and Negotiation: The Role of the Soldier Diplomat,* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005): 127.

[46] Army Doctrine Publication, ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession (Washington, D.C., 25 Nov 2019), 5-10-5-11.

[47] See Air Force Policy Directive 36-26, Total Force Development and Management (Washington, D.C., 18 March 2019), 12; Aram Donigian and Jeff Weiss, "A Failure to Engage: Current Negotiation Strategies and Approaches," *Military Review* (May-June 2012), 47-54; Tom Fox, Zachary Griffiths, Marcus Millen, and Nicholas Tallant, "Negotiation Education: An Institutional Approach," *Military Review,* (Jan-Feb 2019).

begin to hear some of each group's religious language (directly or in translation), and how the groups typically express religious beliefs and values (see definition of religion above). Note that this first visit is simply a warm-up, *not* a time to discuss the negotiations at all. (These 'home visits' must be made by those from the military who will actually be at the negotiating table. Stakeholders need to get accustomed to them.)

After the first round of visits, negotiators should carefully review their observations of each stakeholder group's primary religious value terms, noting any initial evidence of how narrowly or broadly group representatives define these terms. It will take time to collect sufficient evidence. Negotiators must therefore revisit these observations after every interaction with stakeholder representatives, including local visits and every negotiation event. The goal is to estimate each group's probable value range. Determine the left and right limits of the negotiation. These estimates will enable negotiators to anticipate probable negotiating behavior by the representations, and to use these probabilities to craft best strategies for the overall negotiation.

3. *Second Visit*: After visiting all stakeholder groups, negotiators should prepare a second round of visits with three goals in mind: first, to strengthen personal relations with representatives; second, to increase familiarity with each group's religious discourse; third, to negotiate details about how the official negotiations will take place. Terms for the negotiation will themselves be influenced by stakeholder values. Negotiators should therefore engage group representatives in discussing the terms of negotiation, adjusting details within the range of value meanings. During all such visits, negotiators should continue to gain familiarity with each group's use of value terms. After visits, negotiators should review and revise their emerging estimates of each primary value term's range of meaning. They should discuss rough estimates of each group's overall habits. In this stage negotiators negotiate the negotiation.

Stages of RVN Negotiations

Stage 1: Military invites all stakeholder representatives to a shared meeting. This gathering is a time for mutual introductions and informal interactions about beliefs, values, and norms, without any mention of underlying needs or demands.

Stage 2: Representatives return home to narrate their initial experiences and review operative values and norms considering their perceptions of other stakeholder groups and representatives.

Stage 3: Negotiations resume. Military negotiators introduce their least controversial topic of negotiation: a dispassionate topic that enables all groups to practice voicing opinions about values, norms, and beliefs, without any application to political, economic, or other interests.

RVN training introduces best practices for inviting value-discussions that remain detached from the underlying topics for negotiation. A negotiators' goal is to accustom stakeholder groups to translating their indigenous value terms into the flow of discussion, an activity that may enable them, unselfconsciously, to exercise a full range of value meanings. Collecting *yesses* is a goal of negotiators. Short-term behavior can have long-term effects. Transactional negotiations are embedded within a transformational framework. Negotiations and negotiator tactics and procedures adjust along a continuum. Negotiations become fluid rather than set-piece. The goodwill that is developed during non-controversial negotiations will transfer to contested talks.

Another Cycle of Stages 2-3: Cycles of in-group and inter-group dialogue continue if necessary, until negotiators determine it is time to introduce explicit negotiating topics.

Stage 4: Negotiators introduce the least controversial issue for transactional negotiation. By now, negotiators should have developed a detailed estimate of the value range for each group's primary value terms. Stakeholder representatives will have done something similar, anticipating which value terms of each representative and each negotiator may allow for the greatest play of meanings and applications. This activity is comparable to conducting Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) determining the left and right limits of the negotiation engagement.

Stages 5 and beyond: Subsequent stages introduce additional topics for transactional deliberation and accompanying value discussion. Drawing on their growing familiarity with participants and values, negotiators should continue to refine their facilitation skills. They should judge when and how to introduce topics that address central tensions among stakeholders, as well as between stakeholders and the military. RVN training will further address the topic of *time*.

These stages of RVN provide a framework for PME curricular design and instruction, not necessarily a checklist to be followed unwaveringly while in the field. RVN introduces the skills and discipline that will enable military negotiators to engage productively with religious stakeholder groups. A central lesson of RVN is that negotiators should adapt these skills to changing conditions in the field, including shifts in religious group discourse and behavior. RVN skills and discipline may feel unfamiliar to negotiators trained exclusively in IBN. But recent feedback from individuals returning from operational environments in Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere lend significant credibility to RVN's research findings and to RVN recommendations to negotiators.[49] By way of illustration, Séverine Autesserre's *The Frontlines of Peace* (2021) identifies several RVN-like best practices from recent peacekeeping work in Africa and elsewhere that "remarkable interveners" would do[50]:

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[49] Feedback regarding the need and credibility of RVN resulted from confidential interviews with individuals who had experience negotiating with religious stakeholders. Identities are withheld by mutual agreement to ensure candor on the part of interviewees.

[50] Séverine Autesserre, *The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021). The list of best practices is drawn, in sequence, from pp. 153-58, 175, 160, 191, and 164.

- Know the local context well, speak at least some of the local languages, and have extensive local networks.
- Cultivate not just professional, but also personal and social relationships with local people, both elite and ordinary citizens.
- Humility is just as crucial as one's in-depth understanding of local conditions.
- Draw on the knowledge, networks, and assets of both insiders and outsiders. Don't pursue one without the other.
- Pursue long-term involvement. All these processes take time. Be patient; change happens slowly and progress must be continuously preserved.
- Above all, be flexible.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Integrating RVN into PME

The theory and practice of Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) has guided much of the development of the negotiation field. There is, however, room to expand its effectiveness in an increasingly religious world. Most future military negotiators do not even have education or training in IBN, let alone knowledge of what is needed for mission accomplishment when negotiating with members of religious groups. Negotiation courses offered at mid and senior-level command-and-staff schools and war colleges are primarily electives. The limited seating capacity of seminar rooms and limited enrollment capacity of elective classes dictates the finite number of students that are able to attend classes on negotiation.[51] In-depth studies in conflict management through negotiation are absent from most core curricula. And the influence of religious values in negotiation is fully absent.

Integrating RVN into core PME would allow for educating the largest number of officers in a research driven approach for negotiating with religious stakeholders. Training in RVN could be introduced in basic courses and revisited at mid and senior service college levels. Enhanced RVN instruction could be provided as needed by qualified RVN SMEs.

Frequently, it is not what negotiators believe; it is about what those across the negotiation table from them believe. Mission success in the military often depends on achieving sustainable, negotiated outcomes. And, when religion and religious stakeholders are part of the negotiation calculus, unique challenges can result from unexamined underlying values.

1. RVN should be integrated into core PME at all levels of instruction. In an increasingly religious world where military officers frequently engage in negotiations with members

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[51] Army and Air Force War Colleges and Air Command and Staff College seminar rooms dictate the number of students that can enroll in negotiation classes. All negotiation classes are offered as electives which also impacts the number of students able to attend.

of religious organizations, knowledge of RVN can contribute to overall mission success. Negotiations framed by the RVN model will contribute to just and lasting outcomes.

2. A reach-back capability should be developed and be available to negotiators in the field. Real-time reach-back will provide those engaged in negotiations with members of religious groups with Subject Matter Expertise (SME) regarding practice of RVN in specific negotiating environments.

3. Workshops should be integrated into PME. Case study and role play workshops can be tailored to provide initial education and training regarding RVN. Workshops can be offered in the field or at PME facilities.

4. Further field research is needed in hot conflicts supported by the military. It is recommended that RVN researchers and military negotiators work together to enhance and refine the RVN approach using data gathered in hostile environments.

About the Authors

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