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Trends. Honest Broker as Broken Concept: A Middle East Example

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Can there be an honest broker to the conflicts between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, between Israel and Palestinians, between Israel and various Arab populations and governments, between Israel and various Islamic populations and governments?

An honest broker--even if honest--will in all likelihood not be perceived as honest by the sides to a conflict. The psychologies of social cognition, psychodynamics, and need-based perception are but three research areas that support this contention.

An honest broker--even if honest--striving for equality among the sides to a conflict will be almost necessarily stymied by the sides not being equal. A forced construction of perceptual equality will distort perceptual accuracy and violate an honesty to the world. Acting as if there were perceptual accuracy will violate phenomenological honesty of the moral agent. Honesty also will be stymied by the psychologies mentioned above.

An honest broker--even if honest--striving for equity among the sides to a conflict will be almost necessarily stymied by equity serving as prima facie evidence of not being an honest broker, as the sides are necessarily treated differently as dictated by what is equitable. Honesty also will be stymied by the psychologies mentioned above.

An honest broker--even if honest--will be stymied by the necessity of the broker not being in a system including the sides to a conflict (if that broker is to be recognized as honest). Of course, actions of the sides to a conflict affect the broker as well and concurrently subvert the honesty of the broker.

The honest broker serves as the necessary cover for dishonesty to resolve conflict. And in this dishonesty honesty is broken, but so may conflict be broken. (See Baron, R.A. (1999). *Attributions and organizational conflict: The mediating role of apparent sincerity*. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 41, 111-127; Dees, J. G., & Cramton, P. C. (1999). *Shrewd bargaining on the moral frontier: Toward a theory of morality in practice*. In R.J. Lewicki, & D.M. Saunders (Eds.). *Negotiation: Readings, exercises, and cases* (3rd ed.). (pp. 234-258). Irwin/The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.; Raiffa, H. (1986). *The Camp David negotiations*. In H.R. Arkes, & K. Hammond (Eds.). *Judgment and decision making: An interdisciplinary reader*. (pp. 322-332). Cambridge University Press; Sack, K. (October 14, 2000). *Gore again alters day to meet on Middle East*. *The New York Times*, p. A13; Syna, H., & Pruitt, D. G. (1986). *Impact of the total equality norm on social conflict*. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 1, 143-148.) (Keywords: Honesty, Israel, Palestinian National Authority.)