

Weekly Standing Assignment 5: Diplomacy

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Barash & Webel

The authors, as indicated from the title of the chapter, are interested in the ways that negative peace between conflicting parties can be realised via diplomacy. As someone once said, nobody has to negotiate with their friends, and this fact evidences why diplomatic processes can appear absurd or quixotic to observers. Third parties employing their good offices are often instrumental to enabling communication and resolving disputes, though not always successfully in the long-term.

Track II diplomacy, as it is known, involves informal negotiating between lower officials or even unofficial actors who speak on behalf of their country. These talks may not necessarily be secret, but usually they are informal in nature.

They differentiate between “positional” and “integrative” bargaining, writing that positional strategies are often not conducive to successful compromise. By contrast, integrative strategies, which they describe as “principled negotiation,” seeks to transcend the immediate dispute and address the interests of the parties at odds. By considering *why* parties are in conflict, a resolution can be reached which accommodates the different needs of both, which may not be incompatible after all. An example not discussed by the text would be the Shanghai Communiqué between the US and the PRC: by identifying the Taiwan Question as intractable and setting it aside, the two nations were able to find common ground in other areas and build confidential diplomatic rapport.

Key to building confidence between conflicting parties is information sharing. Useful information can run the gamut from independent verification of commitments to awareness of the opposite parties high-priority issues. In conflicts which appear intractable, triangulating the issue by “bridging” the issue can circumvent the logjam.

As general advice, the authors emphasise empathy and allowing one’s opponents a “way out” that saves face. Negotiating in good faith also has its limitations, since that presumes that states (and by extension, their diplomats) have perfect information of their own capabilities and plans; the authors mention the ambush at Pearl Harbour, which caught Japanese diplomats as much by surprise as their American counterparts.

Hampson, Crocker, & Aall

The authors cite Licklider’s observation that longer intra-national conflicts typically result in negotiated ends of hostility. On the one hand, these negotiated

peaces might be exercises in measured punishment; on the other, the ends of these civil wars might only have been possible thanks to the bi-polar Cold War order and exhaustion from the foreign patrons of each side.

They mention the concept of ‘ripeness’, when a conflict reaches a mutually harmful stalemate and the possibility of victory seems impossible for either side, as a condition conducive towards negotiated endings. Even with the calamities sparked by sudden realignment at the end of the Cold War, international peace-brokers and NGOs were able to demonstrate the validity of this approach, which encouraged others to follow suit.

They describe two alternative models of negotiation – communicative dialogue to build trust, and risk-management processes which modify the incentives of each party to make negotiation preferable to continued conflict. The former prefers to seek out and address the *needs* of parties rather than their interests. By bringing together mid-level “influentials” to identify the causes of disputes, these same people are in a position to chip-away at the “us vs them” mentality which often handicaps negotiations. The latter approach, characterised as “realist,” weighs the cost of negotiation against sunk-costs and future-costs of conflict. Thus, third parties serve as enforcers or guarantors of the negotiation, rather than intermediaries. In this model, the concept of “ripeness” is especially important, since the incentives are aligned just so as to make dialogue desirable.