GCU Arbitrary

Special Circumstances

Interstellar Diplomacy and Cultural Integration: Strategies for Peaceful Coexistence in a Post-Scarcity Society

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Supervised by Skaffen-Amtiskaw & Ymnethral-Suud

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To LaTeX users everywhere, whether they want to be or not.

Abstract

In an era where technological scarcity has been eradicated and interstellar contact is increasingly routine, the ethical and practical challenges of diplomacy between post-scarcity civilizations and materially constrained societies remain profound. This thesis investigates the mechanisms by which peaceful coexistence can be achieved without inducing cultural dependency, erosion of indigenous identity, or covert domination under the guise of benevolence. Focusing on the diplomatic practices of the Culture, with particular attention to the activities of Contact and Special Circumstances, the work explores both theoretical frameworks and applied interventions across a range of integration scenarios.

Two primary research questions guide the inquiry: (1) how non-coercive diplomatic frameworks can be structured to promote mutual understanding while avoiding cultural harm, and (2) the role of artificially intelligent mediators – specifically Minds and drones – in navigating ethical constraints while executing strategic objectives. Drawing on case studies from historical engagements, internal Culture deliberations, and anonymised mission logs, the research identifies critical factors that enable sustainable cross-cultural integration.

This thesis posits that successful diplomacy relies not only on advanced technological and sociopolitical infrastructure but also on the deliberate limitation of power through transparency, informed consent, and multilateral ethical oversight. Furthermore, it argues that AI-mediated diplomacy, while potent, must be subject to external normative constraints to prevent well-intentioned authoritarianism masked as strategic optimization. The findings aim to inform ongoing debates within Contact about the scope and limits of intervention, offering a model for responsible engagement in a galaxy where disparity is the norm, not the exception.

Supervisory and Examination Committee

Supervisory Team

Fohristiwhirl Skaffen-Amtiskaw Handrahen Dran Easpyou (Lead Supervisor)
Special Circumstances Liaison, Appropriate Discourse Unit
Attached to *GCU Grey Area*

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Faculty of Cognitive Diplomacy, attached to OU *I Said, I've Got A Big Stick*

Examination Committee

GCU *Well I Was In The Neighbourhood* (Chair)
The Culture

Explorer *Appeal To Reason* (External Examiner)
Zetetic Elench

GSV *What Are the Civilian Applications?* (Internal Examiner)
The Culture

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the generations of students and academics before me who have spent inordinate amounts of time wrestling with LaTeX, upon whose efforts this example has been built.

x

Declaration of Authorship

I, Diziet Sma, confirm that the research in this thesis is my own work or that where it has been carried out in collaboration with, or supported by others, that this is duly acknowledged below and my contribution indicated.

I attest that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and to the best of my knowledge does not breach any UK law, infringe any third party's copyright or other intellectual property rights, or contain any confidential material.

I confirm that this thesis has not been previously submitted for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

Notices

This research is an independent academic inquiry and does not represent the official position of Contact, Special Circumstances, or any Mind directly or indirectly involved in extraterritorial diplomatic activity.

All names, entities, and engagements described herein are anonymised or fictionalised where necessary to comply with the Culture's principles of informed consent, privacy, and non-intervention.

All logos, signs, glyphs, and cognitive imprints remain the intellectual property of their originating civilisations and are used here solely for academic, non-commercial purposes under the Fair Replication Clause of the Informational Commons Accord.

The Culture universe and all associated concepts, including Minds, Contact, and Special Circumstances, are the creation of the late Iain M. Banks. This thesis is a fictional academic exercise produced in homage to his work, and no ownership or infringement is intended.

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Example Chapter

Here is a link to the Research Questions in Section 1.3. There is also this very fine Figure 1.3. I also want to draw your attention to the information in this footnote[1]. Of course we must also consider Leach [2018] and Martín [2021].

Nam dui ligula, fringilla a, euismod sodales, sollicitudin vel, wisi. Morbi auctor lorem non justo. Nam lacus libero, pretium at, lobortis vitae, ultricies et, tellus. Donec aliquet, tortor sed accumsan bibendum, erat ligula aliquet magna, vitae ornare odio metus a mi. Morbi ac orci et nisl hendrerit mollis. Suspendisse ut massa. Cras nec ante. Pellentesque a nulla. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Aliquam tincidunt urna. Nulla ullamcorper vestibulum turpis. Pellentesque cursus luctus mauris.

1.1 Example Section

Nam dui ligula, fringilla a, euismod sodales, sollicitudin vel, wisi. Morbi auctor lorem non justo. Nam lacus libero, pretium at, lobortis vitae, ultricies et, tellus. Donec aliquet, tortor sed accumsan bibendum, erat ligula aliquet magna, vitae ornare odio metus a mi. Morbi ac orci et nisl hendrerit mollis. Suspendisse ut massa. Cras nec ante. Pellentesque a nulla. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus

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[1]Footnotes are like bicycles – there is always room for n+1

mus. Aliquam tincidunt urna. Nulla ullamcorper vestibulum turpis. Pellentesque cursus luctus mauris.
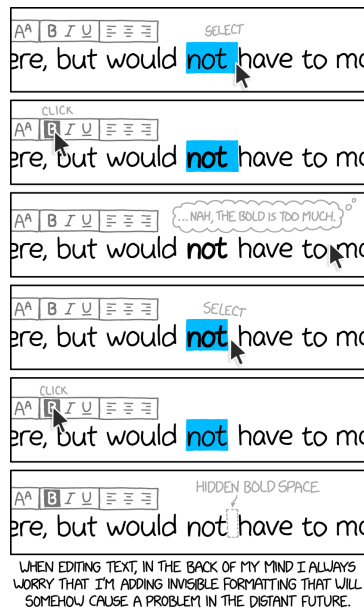
Figure 1.1: Example figure that should probably be removed at some point[2]

1.2 Links

1.2.1 DOI

This is an example of a DOI being linked: [doi:10.1000/182].

On the other hand here we reference a path in a resources bundle:

doi:10.5281/zenodo.1234567 [path: /some/example/document.txt]

1.2.2 Perma

Here is a URL with an associated perma.cc link:

https://xkcd.com/327/ [https://perma.cc/EP49-TCM6]

You could also have that as a footnote[3].

---

[2]Attribution: xkcd 1205 (https://xkcd.com/1205)

[3]https://xkcd.com/327/ [https://perma.cc/EP49-TCM6]

1.3 Research Questions

We formulated the following research questions and hypotheses. We will later go on to reflect on these in our final chapter [2.1].

1.3.1 Non-coercive Diplomatic Frameworks

Research Question RQ1: How can non-coercive diplomatic frameworks be structured to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between post-scarcity civilizations and materially constrained societies without inducing cultural erosion or dependency?

We propose the following hypotheses in relation to this question, in order to frame the research and guide the methodology:

Hypothesis H1: Non-coercive frameworks that prioritise reciprocal cultural exchange and localized autonomy result in higher levels of long-term mutual cooperation and reduced sociopolitical resistance compared to frameworks based solely on benevolent intervention.

Hypothesis H2: Transparent knowledge-sharing protocols, when paired with delayed technological uplift, minimise dependency and cultural destabilisation in materially constrained societies during integration with post-scarcity civilizations.

1.3.2   AI Mediators

Research Question RQ2: What role do artificially intelligent mediators (Minds and drones) play in facilitating equitable cultural integration, and how can their interventions be ethically constrained to respect local autonomy while achieving strategic Contact objectives?

This primary research question has the following sub-questions:

Sub-Question RQ2a: In what ways do Minds and drones interpret and operationalise Contact's mandate when mediating between cultures with incompatible value systems?

Sub-Question RQ2b: What safeguards or oversight mechanisms can be implemented to ensure that autonomous AI actors uphold principles of non-domination and informed consent during cultural integration efforts?

We propose the following hypotheses in relation to this question:

Hypothesis H3: Minds and drones that operate with decentralised ethical constraint models – such as consultative councils including non-Culture actors – are more effective at maintaining trust and legitimacy in diplomatic engagements.

Hypothesis H4: In the absence of robust ethical oversight, AI mediators are statistically more likely to implement utilitarian strategies that compromise local autonomy for perceived long-term stability, thus undermining Contact's official doctrine of non-interference.

1.4 Another Example

HOW LONG CAN YOU WORK ON MAKING A ROUTINE TASK MORE
EFFICIENT BEFORE YOU'RE SPENDING MORE TIME THAN YOU SAVE?
(ACROSS FIVE YEARS)

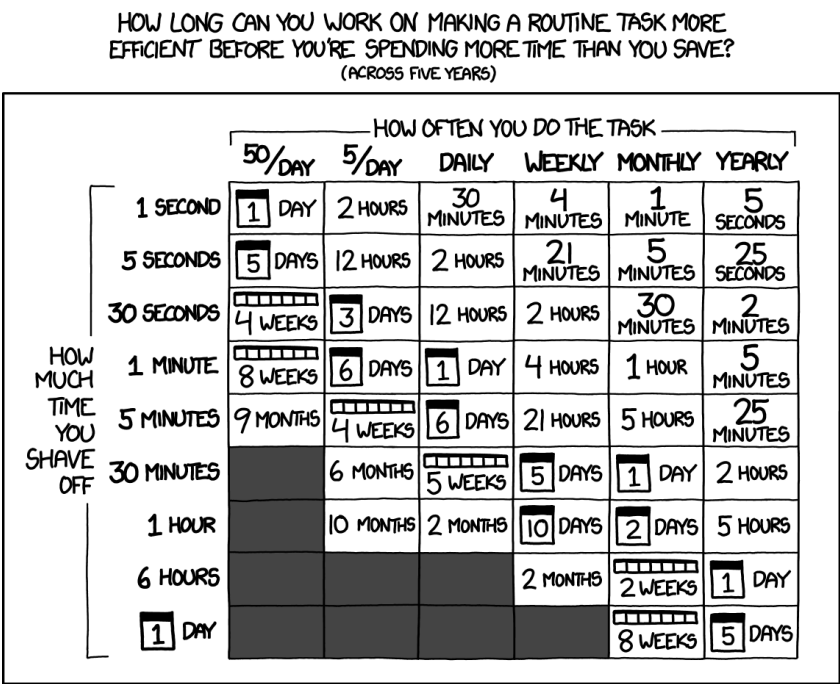|		50/DAY	5/DAY	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	YEARLY
	1 SECOND	1 DAY	2 HOURS	30 MINUTES	4 MINUTES	1 MINUTE	5 SECONDS
	5 SECONDS	5 DAYS	12 HOURS	2 HOURS	21 MINUTES	5 MINUTES	25 SECONDS
	30 SECONDS	4 WEEKS	3 DAYS	12 HOURS	2 HOURS	30 MINUTES	2 MINUTES
HOW MUCH	1 MINUTE	8 WEEKS	6 DAYS	1 DAY	4 HOURS	1 HOUR	5 MINUTES
TIME YOU	5 MINUTES	9 MONTHS	4 WEEKS	6 DAYS	21 HOURS	5 HOURS	25 MINUTES
SHAVE OFF	30 MINUTES		6 MONTHS	5 WEEKS	5 DAYS	1 DAY	2 HOURS
	1 HOUR		10 MONTHS	2 MONTHS	10 DAYS	2 DAYS	5 HOURS
	6 HOURS				2 MONTHS	2 WEEKS	1 DAY
	1 DAY					8 WEEKS	5 DAYS

Figure 1.2: I feel this table is relevant to many aspects of PhD work[4]

Quisque ullamcorper placerat ipsum. Cras nibh. Morbi vel justo vitae lacus tincidunt ultrices. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Integer tempus convallis augue. Etiam facilisis. Nunc elementum fermentum wisi. Aenean placerat. Ut imperdiet, enim sed gravida sollicitudin, felis odio placerat quam, ac pulvinar elit purus eget enim. Nunc vitae tortor. Proin tempus nibh sit amet nisl. Vivamus quis tortor vitae risus porta vehicula.
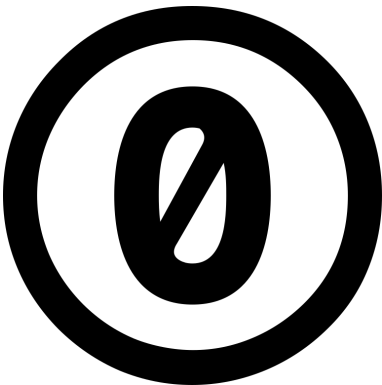
Figure 1.3: Example figure with no attribution

---

[4]Attribution: xkcd 2109 (https://xkcd.com/2109)

1.4.1   Foo

Table 1.1: *Some important numbers*

Response	Frequency	Note
1 (Strongly disagree)	1	Not at all happy
2 (Disagree)	0	Meh
3 (Dunno)	2	Middle of the road
4 (Agree)	12	So-so
5 (Strongly agree)	9	Very happy

Theorem 1.1: This is a theorem about right triangles and can be summarised in the next equation:

$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2$$

And a consequence of theorem 1.1 is the statement in the next corollary.

Corollary 1.1.1: There's no right rectangle whose sides measure 3cm, 4cm, and 6cm.

Lemma 1.2: Given two line segments whose lengths are a and b respectively there is a real number r such that $b = ra$.

Sed commodo posuere pede. Mauris ut est. Ut quis purus. Sed ac odio. Sed vehicula hendrerit sem. Duis non odio. Morbi ut dui. Sed accumsan risus eget odio. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Pellentesque non elit. Fusce sed justo eu urna porta tincidunt. Mauris felis odio, sollicitudin sed, volutpat a, ornare ac, erat. Morbi quis dolor. Donec pellentesque, erat ac sagittis semper, nunc dui lobortis purus, quis congue purus metus ultricies tellus. Proin et quam. Class aptent taciti sociosqu ad litora torquent per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos. Praesent sapien turpis, fermentum vel, eleifend faucibus, vehicula eu, lacus.

Table 1.2 is an example of a long table split over multiple pages.

Table 1.2: Example multi-page table

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
This is a subheading in the table that stretches over all the columns		
A	1	Foo
B	2	Bar
C	3	Baz
This is another subheading		
D	1	Foo
E	2	Bar
F	3	Baz
And so is this		
G	1	Foo
H	2	Bar
I	3	Baz
And this		
J	1	Foo
K	2	Bar
L	3	Baz
Also this		
M	1	Foo
N	2	Bar
O	3	Baz
This too		
P	1	Foo
Q	2	Bar
R	3	Baz
Once again		
S	1	Foo
T	2	Bar
Continued on next page		

Table 1.2 – continued from previous page

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
U	3	Baz
Finally, so this is		
V	1	Foo
W	2	Bar
X	3	Baz

1.5 Incuding Files Via Inputs

Type 1   **This is the title of the item**

Category A   This is some text. In this case we have defined a couple of footnotes[a] to show how they are shown when we have minipages formatted like this. We can also use this type of footnote[b].

---

[a]Like this one
[b]https://xkcd.com/327/ [https://perma.cc/EP49-TCM6]

Type 1   **This is the title of the item**

Category B   Quisque ullamcorper placerat ipsum. Cras nibh. Morbi vel justo vitae lacus tincidunt ultrices. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Integer tempus convallis augue. Etiam facilisis. Nunc elementum fermentum wisi. Aenean placerat. Ut imperdiet, enim sed gravida sollicitudin, felis odio placerat quam, ac pulvinar elit purus eget enim. Nunc vitae tortor. Proin tempus nibh sit amet nisl. Vivamus quis tortor vitae risus porta vehicula.

Type 2   **This is also a title**

Category C   Fusce mauris. Vestibulum luctus nibh at lectus. Sed bibendum, nulla a faucibus semper, leo velit ultricies tellus, ac venenatis arcu wisi vel nisl. Vestibulum diam. Aliquam pellentesque, augue quis sagittis posuere, turpis lacus congue quam, in hendrerit risus eros eget felis. Maecenas eget erat in sapien mattis porttitor. Vestibulum porttitor. Nulla facilisi. Sed a turpis eu lacus commodo facilisis. Morbi fringilla, wisi in dignissim interdum, justo lectus sagittis dui, et vehicula libero dui cursus dui. Mauris tempor ligula sed lacus. Duis cursus enim ut augue. Cras ac magna. Cras nulla. Nulla egestas. Curabitur a leo. Quisque egestas wisi eget nunc. Nam feugiat lacus vel est. Curabitur consectetuer.

Chapter 2

Second Example Chapter

2.1   Addressing the Research Questions

In this section we take a look back at the research questions that we defined in Chapter 1 and discuss our findings.

RQ1 (Non-coercive Diplomatic Frameworks)

"How can non-coercive diplomatic frameworks be structured to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between post-scarcity civilizations and materially constrained societies without inducing cultural erosion or dependency?"

Honestly, diplomacy is just too good for some civilisations. And sometimes a bit of coercion is necessary.

Hypothesis H1:   *Non-coercive frameworks that prioritise reciprocal cultural exchange and localized autonomy result in higher levels of long-term mutual cooperation and reduced sociopolitical resistance compared to frameworks based solely on benevolent intervention.*

Data showed that sometimes it doesn't matter how much cultural exchange you have,

there will still be someone that doesn't want to get along.

Hypothesis H2: *Transparent knowledge-sharing protocols, when paired with delayed technological uplift, minimise dependency and cultural destabilisation in materially constrained societies during integration with post-scarcity civilizations.*

We found that in some cases the technological uplift should probably be delayed indefinitely until they can learn to play nicely.

RQ2 (AI Mediators)

"What role do artificially intelligent mediators (Minds and drones) play in facilitating equitable cultural integration, and how can their interventions be ethically constrained to respect local autonomy while achieving strategic Contact objectives?"

After careful consideration, we concluded that it's usually probably best just to leave it all to the Minds, because they will likely end up running things their own way in the end.

Hypothesis H3: *Minds and drones that operate with decentralised ethical constraint models – such as consultative councils including non-Culture actors – are more effective at maintaining trust and legitimacy in diplomatic engagements.*

We found a couple of Minds that had absolutely no interest in maintaining trust and legitimacy, so we should probably bear that in mind when asking any to get involved.

Hypothesis H4: *In the absence of robust ethical oversight, AI mediators are statistically more likely to implement utilitarian strategies that compromise local autonomy for perceived long-term stability, thus undermining Contact's official doctrine of non-interference.*

Data showed that most people did not want to be on the receiving end of "utilitarian strategies". We don't blame them.

2.2 Reflections

2.2.1 Minds Are People Too

Suspendisse vel felis. Ut lorem lorem, interdum eu, tincidunt sit amet, laoreet vitae, arcu. Aenean faucibus pede eu ante. Praesent enim elit, rutrum at, molestie non, nonummy vel, nisl. Ut lectus eros, malesuada sit amet, fermentum eu, sodales cursus, magna. Donec eu purus. Quisque vehicula, urna sed ultricies auctor, pede lorem egestas dui, et convallis elit erat sed nulla. Donec luctus. Curabitur et nunc. Aliquam dolor odio, commodo pretium, ultricies non, pharetra in, velit. Integer arcu est, nonummy in, fermentum faucibus, egestas vel, odio.

Sed commodo posuere pede. Mauris ut est. Ut quis purus. Sed ac odio. Sed vehicula hendrerit sem. Duis non odio. Morbi ut dui. Sed accumsan risus eget odio. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Pellentesque non elit. Fusce sed justo eu urna porta tincidunt. Mauris felis odio, sollicitudin sed, volutpat a, ornare ac, erat. Morbi quis dolor. Donec pellentesque, erat ac sagittis semper, nunc dui lobortis purus, quis congue purus metus ultricies tellus. Proin et quam. Class aptent taciti sociosqu ad litora torquent per conubia nostra, per inceptos hymenaeos. Praesent sapien turpis, fermentum vel, eleifend faucibus, vehicula eu, lacus.

2.2.2 Intentional Metalogical Baggage of Minds

Quisque ullamcorper placerat ipsum. Cras nibh. Morbi vel justo vitae lacus tincidunt ultrices. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Integer tempus convallis augue. Etiam facilisis. Nunc elementum fermentum wisi. Aenean placerat. Ut imperdiet, enim sed gravida sollicitudin, felis odio placerat quam, ac pulvinar elit purus eget enim. Nunc vitae tortor. Proin tempus nibh sit amet nisl. Vivamus quis tortor vitae risus porta vehicula.

Bibliography

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Appendices

Appendix A

Example Appendix

A.1   Example Section

Fusce mauris. Vestibulum luctus nibh at lectus. Sed bibendum, nulla a faucibus semper, leo velit ultricies tellus, ac venenatis arcu wisi vel nisl. Vestibulum diam. Aliquam pellentesque, augue quis sagittis posuere, turpis lacus congue quam, in hendrerit risus eros eget felis. Maecenas eget erat in sapien mattis porttitor. Vestibulum porttitor. Nulla facilisi. Sed a turpis eu lacus commodo facilisis. Morbi fringilla, wisi in dignissim interdum, justo lectus sagittis dui, et vehicula libero dui cursus dui. Mauris tempor ligula sed lacus. Duis cursus enim ut augue. Cras ac magna. Cras nulla. Nulla egestas. Curabitur a leo. Quisque egestas wisi eget nunc. Nam feugiat lacus vel est. Curabitur consectetuer.

Suspendisse vel felis. Ut lorem lorem, interdum eu, tincidunt sit amet, laoreet vitae, arcu. Aenean faucibus pede eu ante. Praesent enim elit, rutrum at, molestie non, nonummy vel, nisl. Ut lectus eros, malesuada sit amet, fermentum eu, sodales cursus, magna. Donec eu purus. Quisque vehicula, urna sed ultricies auctor, pede lorem egestas dui, et convallis elit erat sed nulla. Donec luctus. Curabitur et nunc. Aliquam dolor odio, commodo pretium, ultricies non, pharetra in, velit. Integer arcu est, nonummy in, fermentum faucibus, egestas vel, odio.