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Cultural Perspectives on International Negotiations

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The traditional Western diplomatic approach to international negotiation is compared with an intercultural approach. The implicit assumptions underlying the universal "culture" of diplomacy and the American values in which these assumptions are grounded are discussed. Individual levels of cultural awareness including cultural chauvinism, ethnocentrism, tolerance, minimization, and cultural understanding are described, and their influence on the interpersonal processes of international negotiation are illustrated through a consideration of the Iraq/U.S. diplomatic meetings in Geneva in 1991. Finally, the potential of the intercultural approach is discussed.

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Many misunderstandings and breakdowns in important international meetings and negotiations have resulted from the expectations about negotiation that the representatives brought to these encounters—expectations that were not shared by representatives from other societies (Adler, 1986; Cohen, 1991, 1992; Fisher, 1972, 1980, 1988; Weiss, 1993). A variety of implicit assumptions about the processes of negotiation—learned through being reared and educated in different common cultures—affect how individuals will behave in international meetings. One's own assumptions appear to be normal and realistic, because they are familiar and unquestioned when negotiating domestically. Most people believe that other negotiators should share their "common sense" assumptions, so it is natural for them to assume that those who do or say the unexpected in these international meetings are not as committed to and forthright about the negotiations as they are.

To develop a less presumptive, more empathic approach to international negotiation requires insights into one's own and others' subjective cultures (Tri-

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position and that are the focus of the negotiation are worked on in the give and take of the negotiation process.

Protocol. Negotiations are scheduled occasions that require face-to-face interactions among the involved parties. Effective use of time (efficiency) on substantive tasks is valued over ceremony and social amenities. During the give and take of formal negotiation processes, standardized procedures such as Robert's Rules of Order should be followed. Other social interactions are informal and should take place outside the scheduled negotiation meetings.

Reliance on verbal behaviors. Communication is direct and verbal. There is little deliberate or intentional use of nonverbal behaviors in the communication process. What is said is more important than how it is said, or what is not said. Honesty and frankness are valued. Communications tend to be spontaneous and reactive after the presentation of initial positions.

Nature of persuasive arguments. Tactics, such as bluffing, are acceptable in the bargaining process. Current information and ideas are more valid than historical or traditional opinions and information. Expert opinions and data are most persuasive; theory is not important. Timing is important in the presentation of positions and concessions.

Individual negotiators' latitude. The representatives at the table have a great deal of latitude in reaching acceptable agreements for their sponsors. Negotiators may not have a firm idea of their final positions (bottom line) until the negotiation process is well along. Whatever is not expressly forbidden by the negotiator's sponsor or the standardized procedures of the negotiation process is possible. A maximum of options is kept open.

Bases of trust. Negotiators trust the other parties until they prove untrustworthy. Trust is judged by the behaviors of others. Fair play, principled behavior, equity, and objective thinking are valued. Deception, coercion, elitism, unresponsiveness, and bribery are not valued. Past experience with the other parties is an important consideration in trusting.

Risk-taking propensities. Negotiators are open to different or novel approaches to problem issues. Brainstorming is good. Avoiding uncertainty is not important in the negotiation process. Fixed ideological positions and approaches are not acceptable. Negotiators are able to go beyond sponsors' directives on some occasions.

Value of time. Time is very important. Punctuality is expected. A fixed time is allotted for concluding a negotiation. There may be rescheduling and a deci-

and, 1972), those cognitive, perceptual, and communication habits individuals acquire as a result of their socialization. In essence, improving communication in international negotiations is a process of learning how to learn in intercultural encounters. A good place to begin this process is with an explication of one's own implicit assumptions about negotiations and the common cultural values in which these assumptions are grounded. It is very difficult to improve intercultural communication if the communicators remain oblivious to their own cultural assumptions and values. Let us examine some U.S. assumptions and values associated with negotiation.

U.S. Assumptions About Negotiating

Listed below are 11 topic areas that have been used to describe international meetings and negotiations (Weiss & Stripp, 1985). I have used these dimensions to categorize some of my observations of typical U.S. assumptions about negotiation based on my work with international negotiators (Kimmel, 1989) and business persons (Kimmel, in press). While I will allude to other cultural perspectives on negotiation in the latter parts of this section, I prefer to focus primarily on the implicit assumptions and values that I have firsthand (emic) knowledge about as a citizen, trainer, and researcher in the United States. There are pitfalls in any study of cultural variables and their influence (Weiss, 1987, 1993). These are multiplied when trying to describe the assumptions and values of a common culture other than one's own. Throughout this discussion, I will distinguish between *common culture*—the externalized, mutually shared perceptions of a peoples' symbolic environment—and *subjective culture*—the internalized, cognitive, perceptual and communication habits unique to the individual.

Conception of the negotiation process. For the U.S. negotiator, negotiation is a business, not a social activity. The objective of a negotiation is to get a job done which usually requires a mixture of problem-solving and bargaining activities. Most negotiations are adversarial with other parties seen as opponents who are trying to get as much as possible. The flow of a negotiation is from prenegotiation strategy sessions to opening positions to give and take (bargaining) to final compromises to signing and implementation of agreements. All parties are expected to give up some of their original demands in the process of reaching an agreement. Success can be measured in terms of how much each party achieves its bottom line objectives.

Type of issues. Substantive issues are more important than social and emotional issues. Differences in positions among negotiators are seen as problems to be solved or overcome. The substantive issues that are the basis of each party's

stop to eat, they may have to finish a negotiation on time or the clock may be stopped. Negotiators may skip over difficult points and return to them later to keep a negotiation on schedule.

Decision-making system. Majority voting and/or authoritative decisions are the rule. Certain team members are expected to be authorized to make binding decisions. Those who disagree with major decisions are expected to express themselves at the time (e.g., a minority report), but to abide by the decisions of the majority.

Forms of satisfactory agreement. Oral commitments are not binding. Written contracts that are exact and impersonally worded are binding. There is the expectation of contractual finality. Lawyers and courts are the final arbitrators in any arguments after contracts have been signed.

U.S. Values Related to Negotiation Assumptions

If most of these implicit assumptions about the processes of international negotiation seem familiar and sound reasonable, it is because they reflect dominant procedures in many Western nations and especially within the U.S. These procedures are based on some of our basic values, values that represent our ideals, goals, and norms. Some of the important U.S. values (Stewart, 1972; Stewart & Bennett, 1991) that underlie these implicit assumptions about negotiations include the following:

1. Time is a precious commodity. It should be used efficiently to accomplish goals, make plans, set deadlines, chart progress, and schedule activities. There is an emphasis on the near future.
2. Specialization is desirable in work and social relationships. One has different friends and colleagues for different occasions. There is little emphasis on being harmonious or consistent.
3. Individuals control their destinies. One should do something about their life, environment, and social activities.
4. There are few absolute truths, what works is good. Problems can be solved and differences resolved through compromises.
5. Conflicts should be resolved through democratic processes. Everyone with an interest in an issue should have some say in how things are done.
6. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to develop their abilities.
7. Authority is resisted, independence valued. Everyone has a right to privacy.
8. One must compete with others to get ahead. Achievements are rewarded through upward mobility and income. Nepotism and welfare are disliked.

Table 1 shows the connections between these eight values and the implicit assumptions U.S. negotiators make about international negotiations. Some of the connections between the selected U.S. cultural values and implicit assumptions about negotiations are obvious, such as seeing time as a commodity and the value of time in international negotiations. Precise scheduling of a negotiation and punctuality are more important in a common culture like ours in which time is considered precious than in a common culture in which time is experienced as a natural succession of day and night or the seasons and thus considered plentiful. For those with these more polychronic beliefs and values about time (see Hall, 1959), scheduling and punctuality are not as likely to characterize negotiations. Such negotiators are also likely to have a different temporal focus than the American emphasis on the near future. They may pay more attention to the past with its history, precedents, and traditions, or may think in terms of the more distant future, considering the consequences of a negotiation for their descend-

Negotiators who value time as a precious commodity are not as likely to "take" the time needed to develop relationships in their negotiations. They will focus instead on substantive issues and tasks. Our norm of different friends for different occasions is also relevant to forming relationships in negotiations. This approach to friendship is part of our time-conscious, fast-paced, and mobile society. U.S. negotiators have too many obligations and other commitments to allow them to "spend" much time socializing or getting acquainted with the other negotiators—especially those they do not need to influence—hence, a general lack of amenities and a more impersonal approach to socializing during negotiations.

The U.S. approach of getting down to business in a negotiation is related to the values of personal control and pragmatism. Believing that it is possible and important to do something about one's situation and that one can affect the near future makes it obligatory for our negotiators to see the job at hand as the reason for the negotiation. Solving a problem and/or reaching an agreement are why they are there. Knowing that problems are to be solved and differences are why resolved, it is not surprising that our negotiators feel there is little time for anything but the task at hand, which is usually "tackled" with great enthusiasm whether it is to reach a compromise, strike a deal, or find a solution.

This task-oriented approach to negotiation has ramifications for the processes that take place during the negotiations themselves. With no cultural emphasis on harmony and a belief that all with an interest in an issue should have a voice in the discussion, it is not surprising that U.S. negotiators favor honesty and frankness in their negotiations. They prefer face-to-face interactions among the involved parties and engage in spontaneous and reactive communications. Their preference is for what Hall (1976) calls low-context communications, which what is said (the message) is more important than how it is said or what is

not said. The less direct, face-saving approaches characteristic of other negotiators who value harmony and cordial communication in such situations are not well understood by our negotiators. In their efforts to get down to "brass tacks," it is not surprising that they often appear brusque, insensitive, and even arrogant to those who rely more on nonverbal behaviors and paralinguistic signals in their "high-context" (Hall, 1976) communications.

Following impersonal rules of procedure and law, taking votes, working out deals and compromises, and signing contracts are other procedures that our egalitarian, task-oriented negotiators use to facilitate the negotiation processes they favor. These rules ensure that everyone gets heard, that power and influence are tempered by routinized procedures (e.g., one negotiator, one vote), that the majority rules, and that everyone understands what they are agreeing to. The values of equal opportunity and democracy are important to these negotiators. What they would see as elitism, favoritism, nepotism, and injustice may be viewed differently, however, by other negotiators who come from cultures that value differences in rank and status more than equality. These negotiators expect to rely on authority, to honor past debts and acquire new allies, and to follow orders from their superiors. Their values do not predispose them to the legal procedures or the democratic behaviors favored by the U.S. negotiators.

The U.S. negotiators' beliefs in the values of individual control, personal independence, and pragmatism combine to promote risk taking. They are willing, even eager to take responsibility for new ideas and initiatives in negotiations. Rather than avoiding uncertainty, as do other negotiators who are more concerned with authority and tradition, the U.S. negotiators enjoy brainstorming, using tactics such as bluffing, keeping their options open, and trying out novel solutions. These risk-taking behaviors are well served by their spontaneous and reactive communication styles and the individual latitude they expect in the negotiations.

These U.S. values and the implicit assumptions about negotiation that result from them promote a problem-centered, competitive approach to international meetings for U.S. negotiators. Other negotiators are seen as adversaries who are trusted only as long as their behavior merits such trust by Western standards. Behaviors such as honoring commitments, keeping confidences, playing fair, and being reasonable merit trust. Behaviors such as deception, breaking promises, using coercion and bribery, and being unresponsive destroy trust. Negotiators who hold other values and implicit assumptions about negotiating will have different approaches to international negotiations. They may prefer meetings in which the emphasis is on building interpersonal relationships through a more cooperative social approach. They might see other negotiators as strangers who cannot be trusted until they become well known through lasting reciprocal relationships.

Table 1. U.S. Assumptions and Values Relating to Negotiation

Assumptions	Process	Issues	Protocol	Verbal behavior	Persuasion	Latitude	Trust	Risk taking	Time	Decisions	Agreements
Individual control	X				X			X			
Time as commodity		X							X		
Specialization	X		X								
Pragmatism	X									X	X
Democracy			X				X		X		
Equal opportunity			X					X			X
Independence					X	X	X				
Competition		X							X		

Becoming more cognizant of the U.S. values and implicit assumptions that affect communication in international negotiations involving non-Western negotiators is an important first step in facilitating such negotiations. It is also necessary to understand that there are other values and implicit assumptions that influence other international negotiators' perceptions and behaviors in international meetings. A number of Western students and practitioners of negotiation, however, do not believe this. The following statement is typical of their thinking: "cultural factors are peripheral to the understanding of the basic negotiating process" that is "universal" (Zartman & Berman, 1982, p. 226). These scholars believe that a universal, international diplomatic "culture" has been established that supersedes the idiosyncrasies of ethnographic cultures. "It is difficult to maintain . . . that the Western system of diplomacy and negotiation worked out over the centuries is in danger of imminent destruction. . . . To the contrary, the new nations have learned the Western ways well and are using them to their own purposes" (Zartman & Berman, 1982, p. 226). Since these scholars are usually members of the Western societies in which the current rules and traditions of international diplomacy were developed, it is not surprising that they find them to be reasonable and "culture free."

These scholars claim that the Western system of diplomacy, which embodies many of the assumptions about negotiation listed above, is the operative reality in international negotiations. They point out that protocol, diplomatic courtesy, international law, and other Western diplomatic inventions have enabled international negotiators to deal with each other in a variety of bilateral situations over the last century. But these diplomatic procedures and the implicit assumptions and values on which they are based are becoming increasingly less effective in enabling negotiators to reach common ground and creatively problem solve in today's more complex world of multilateral relations (Touval & Ruben, 1987). Examples of problematic international meetings appear weekly in the U.S. press: a diplomat in a problem-solving workshop on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict who left complaining of being treated like a "guinea pig"; a negotiator in the Iraq/U.S. meetings prior to the Gulf War saying, "I never thought you Americans could be so arrogant"; the Japanese coining the word, *kenbei*, to express their feelings about the perceived arrogance and self-righteousness of Western negotiators; and the head of the Canadian free-trade negotiation team telling the *Toronto Star*, "The Americans are bastards. They are behaving like real thugs these days in protecting their interests." The list goes on.

The key to success in any negotiation, and especially in international negotiations, lies in the successful exchange of meanings among the negotiators. At the international level, both verbal and nonverbal exchanges become increasingly complex as intended (and unintended) and perceived meaning varies,

sometimes in highly subtle ways. International negotiators who are unaware of (or unconcerned about) the influence of their own cultural values and implicit assumptions in negotiating situations are prone to expect all other qualified negotiators to share their values and assumptions about negotiations and international meetings. When the communications and behaviors of these other negotiators overtly belie this assumption, untutored parties usually attribute these "inappropriate" acts and messages to undesirable character traits (such as arrogance) and motivations (such as protecting interests) of the "misbehaving" or "unreasonable" negotiators, instead of attributing them to cultural differences (Jones et al., 1972).

The Intercultural Approach to Negotiation

I believe that a more intercultural, less ethnocentric approach to negotiation, especially by the more powerful Western nations is crucial in today's multicultural, multilateral world of business and politics where the communication contexts and the cognitions of negotiators vary more widely than they do in domestic situations. "Multilateral negotiation is more difficult than they do in policy making because the relevant actors come from very different backgrounds, and they represent nations that have occasionally worked out very different procedures for handling similar problems" (Winham, 1979, p. 196). An intercultural approach to negotiation is more relevant to multilateral negotiations than the traditional bargaining approach. In such negotiations, situations are more likely to be *new* (without familiar meanings), *complex* (with a great number of meanings to be taken into account), and *contradictory* (with different actors having different interpretations).

Multilateral negotiations put a premium on the ability to find integrative solutions by defining situations in ways that include and are responsive to the perspectives and needs of all the parties. Verbal persuasion replaces bargaining from strength, and consensus supplements compromise. Negotiators who can mutually define and redefine the problems being dealt with, overcome enmity and misunderstandings among themselves and their constituencies, and create interpersonal relationships and procedures that lead to creative solutions of their problems are most successful in such multilateral negotiations, and create process, Saunders (1987) recommends that nations focus on their relationships. He advocates a change in the perceptions of policymakers in bilateral situations from "us and them" to "we." To make such changes requires that policymakers and negotiators have the experience and training to achieve a level of cultural awareness and skill in intercultural communication that allows them to collaborate effectively, developing what Saunders calls mature relationships.

Those who have developed such awareness and skills can take account of their cultural assumptions and values in their interactions and communications

with other negotiators. They have learned how to learn in international meetings. I have suggested that the process of intercultural exploration (Kimmel, 1989) is particularly effective for such negotiators. In this process the negotiators consciously identify the major cultural assumptions and values that are affecting their own perceptions and behaviors in the negotiations; communicate these assumptions and values clearly as an explicit part of their negotiations; encourage and help other negotiators identify and communicate clearly their major cultural assumptions and values; and then move toward creative and collaborative problem solving. Intercultural exploration will avert or clarify misunderstandings and misperceptions by creating new meanings and relationships. It is possible that the intercultural exploration process can also help produce solutions to problems that combine the ideas and approaches of individuals with different subjective cultures into something new that none of them could have conceived alone.

Negotiations involving intercultural exploration are better suited to a world in which longer term relationships and multicultural problem solving are becoming increasingly important (Fisher, 1989; Winham, 1977). To use this intercultural approach effectively requires special training and experience to discover and get beyond one's own cultural blinders (Kimmel, 1989, in press). Without such training, international negotiators are likely to rely on their own subjective cultural assumptions and the culture of diplomacy. They will minimize rather than take account of cultural differences, attribute motivations typical in their common culture rather than empathizing with other cultures, ignore rather than explore values and assumptions, and essentially "negotiate with themselves."

Cultural awareness is one measure of the level of intercultural skills an individual has available. I have observed several different levels of individual subjective cultural awareness in working with thousands of international business people in intercultural training programs, ranging from the ethnocentric business power approach typified by a trainee who told me, "I'm representing America, I just tell them what to do," to very perceptive and sophisticated intercultural negotiators.

Individual Levels of Cultural Awareness

We are born culturally illiterate. We learn our folk psychology and our common sense from those who socialize us. The subjective cultures of individuals are constructions based on their history of symbolic exchanges with others with their environment (Stryker & Gottlieb, 1981). Through these exchanges, individuals develop deep-seated implicit assumptions about human behavior that underlie their understanding of and behavior in future exchanges (Tuch & Black, 1991). The wider the variety of symbolic exchanges we have in our lives, the richer our subjective cultures become. Our subjective cultures provide a highly selective screen between us and our environment, which enables

us to interpret our world and act purposefully in it (Hall, 1976). Subjective cultures characterize both the participants in a negotiation and the analysts and mediators who try to understand them.

I have noted five different levels of cultural awareness that can be used to categorize the complexity of an individual's subjective culture:

1. In the narcissistic and egocentric world of early childhood, individuals are unaware of other cultures. Since young children are only beginning to learn the rules of the common culture into which they are being socialized, any behaviors or communications that differ from these rules are attributed to others' ignorance and bad intentions. This egocentric approach to human behavior leads individuals to try to get any "nonconforming" individuals they encounter to do things their way; the right way. This level of awareness I have termed *cultural chauvinism*. Individuals at this level of awareness have little knowledge of or interest in people with different subjective cultures. This level is not typical of international negotiators.

2. With more socialization (a wider range of symbolic interactions), individuals move from cultural chauvinism to *ethnocentrism*, a level of awareness in which differences in important behaviors and communications among peoples are linked to observed ethnic, religious, racial, and/or national differences of individuals involved. Since individuals at this level of awareness have learned many elements of their common culture, these different actions are compared to their own cultures'. Given the human readiness to favor the groups to which we belong (Brewer, 1986), it is likely that most differences will be labeled as undesirable and those exhibiting them avoided or treated in an unfriendly manner. Those whose level of cultural awareness is primarily ethnocentric are utterly convinced of the superiority of their ways of doing and thinking about things. They communicate most easily with those who share and favor their own common culture. Thus, communication among ethnocentric individuals from different common cultures is not likely to be mutually satisfying or productive. Their differences are apt to be too great, their emotional attachments too strong, and their adaptability too little. Recent episodes of American and Japanese "bashing" are examples of ethnocentric negotiation behaviors.

3. The next level in the development of cultural awareness is that of *tolerance*. Reaching this level requires a wider range of interactions and a greater understanding of cultural differences. At this level, the different behaviors and communications of foreigners are usually attributed to their socialization in a different society or country rather than being seen as inherent. These differences are not necessarily labeled as undesirable, as they are by those at the more ethnocentric level of awareness, but the practices of one's own society or nation are still regarded as more realistic and effective. Individuals who are tolerant will make some efforts to understand and be sympathetic to the differences that they experience in others and often disapprove of the more chauvinistic and ethno-

...members of their own and other cultures. However, these "tolerant" individuals will try to educate, legislate, "develop," or coerce those with whom they differ into adopting their own ways of thinking and behaving. International meetings among individuals who are tolerant of each other may be moderately successful, although often frustrating, as each tries to educate, control, or seduce the others to a more realistic way of doing things: namely, their own. The Camp David meetings provide many examples of tolerant negotiation behavior among diplomats.

4. The fourth level of cultural awareness is that of *minimization*. Bennett (1986) states that individuals who minimize cultural differences overtly acknowledge them and do not see them as something to denigrate or change. However, they trivialize (minimize) the significance of these differences and emphasize what they believe are more basic universal patterns of behavior—religious, economic, political, historical, or psychological "laws" that suggest all adult humans are in some ways basically alike. Individuals who "attempt to 'bury' [cultural] difference under the weight of cultural similarities" see such differences "as either superficial or even obstructive to the pursuit of communication. This is because communication is assumed to rest necessarily on the common ground of universal rules or principles" (Bennett, 1986, pp. 183–184). The practitioners of international negotiation or mediation who have this minimalist conception of cultural differences are the ones who are most surprised by the "idiosyncrasies" of other diplomats and negotiators (whom they thought they understood) when they do or say something unexpected.

Learning to minimize cultural differences may be culturally based. As Stewart and Bennett (1991) note, "Americans typically believe that everyone is basically alike, and other people have the same basic needs that they have themselves. Since the important differences among people are believed to be individual, not cultural or social, Americans are sensitive to similarities in others rather than to differences" (p. 151). U.S. social scientists who study or popularize negotiation processes often minimize cultural differences in their quest for universal human behaviors and generalizable findings.

5. The fifth level of cultural awareness and communication is that of *understanding*. Individuals at this level have discovered (usually through mediated intercultural experiences) that some of their own categories, plans, and rules are cognitively and perceptually arbitrary and that "appropriate" behavior and feelings and "realistic" thinking in intercultural situations are not necessarily givens. Those who understand that their common sense and the common sense of those from other cultures are different rather than normal and abnormal, realistic and unrealistic, have learned to be culturally understanding. They often try to put themselves in the other parties' shoes (this is called intentional empathy by Tyler, 1987) when communicating, realizing that their approaches to interpreting the world and acting purposefully in it are likely to diverge.

Few students or practitioners of international negotiation operate consistently at the level of cultural understanding because cultural understanding runs counter to human inclinations to define self and reality in a more or less permanent way. It also exposes the understanding individuals to charges of cultural relativity and disloyalty to their own groups, and to suspicion by members of other groups who are uncomfortable with "being understood." Being conscious of one's own implicit assumptions and motives and reflecting on one's communications to see if they are as empathetic as possible is hard work intellectually, but the potential of cultural understanding for empowering all parties and finding intercultural solutions to international conflicts is worth the effort.

To provide a more concrete sense of how subjective cultural understanding and common cultural value differences are related to intercultural communication and conflict in international negotiations, I will examine the meetings between the representatives of the U.S. and Iraq in Geneva in January, 1991. Some of the American assumptions and values related to negotiation discussed above will be highlighted and contrasted with those of the Iraqis.

Iraq and the U.S., Geneva 1991

Prior to the Geneva meeting between Secretary of State Baker and Foreign Minister Aziz, the U.S. and Iraqi officials behaved in ways that were not expected by their counterparts in Baghdad and Washington. For example, the U.S. appointed a woman, April Glaspie, as its ambassador. In many Middle Eastern common cultures the American value of gender equality is not well accepted. The ambassador's gender and her status as a "Westerner" made her a very weak representative in Iraq. Even if she had delivered a clearer (from the Western point of view) message, it would not have been treated as seriously as if it had come from a male. The ambiguity of the message, of course, complicated the issue and signaled to Hussein that the U.S. was not concerned with his "retaking of Iraq's territory." To him, what was not said by the U.S. was more important than what was said (high-context communication).

The meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Baker and the Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz in Geneva was plagued by several common cultural differences (see Halverson in Olsson, 1985). The U.S. approach was as follows: (1) task oriented—demanding Iraq withdraw from Kuwait; (2) abstract—appealing to international law; (3) impersonal—sending a letter from president to president with no personal meetings; (4) definite—demanding Hussein respond or else; and (5) fast paced—setting short time deadlines. According to Halverson, Easterners such as the Iraqis prefer a different approach to meetings, one that is more holistic, long term, and relational. The Iraqis in Geneva were more as follows: (1) group oriented—wanting to get to know the U.S. negotiators; (2) experiential—appealing to past history; (3) personal—asking for direct meetings be-

From the leadership of individuals making no commitments without more interaction with the U.S. representatives; and (5) slow paced—rejecting early deadlines. Indeed, some have argued that the U.S. could not have done a better job of alienating the Iraqis had they tried. And yet the Associated Press (AP) reported that Baker was “genuinely stunned” when Aziz said, “I am sorry, I cannot receive this letter.” Why?

Obviously, part of Baker's reaction was surprise at the audacity of a small nation flaunting a U.S. ultimatum. But equally important was the attribution process. Attributions are judgments about the causes of behavior (self or situation). An individual's attributions reflect those prevalent in his or her common culture. Baker knew that as the U.S. representative, he would have accepted such a letter in a similar circumstance. For the Iraqis not to do so was therefore inconceivable. Attributing American thought processes to the Iraqis, the U.S. decided that this behavior indicated that the Iraqis did not want to negotiate and thus must be dealt with through force. The possibility that they might have a very different approach to international negotiation and communication in conflict situations was apparently not entertained.

What might Aziz's reasons have been for refusing to accept the Bush letter? He is reported by the AP to have said, “If we had met several months ago we might have been able to reach some understanding.” His emphasis was not on the task at hand, but on the building of a relationship. In many parts of the world, including Iraq, one does not conduct negotiations or do business with a stranger. Unless there is a well-cultivated relationship involving the establishment of trust, no understandings or agreements can be reached. Such relationships are between individuals as people, not as representatives of their organizations or nations. It is likely that Aziz was suggesting to Baker that he did not know him well enough to negotiate.

In addition, Aziz said that the letter contained “language that is not compatible with language between heads of state.” Notice his emphasis on the form of the letter rather than its content. I believe that the foreign minister of Iraq was alluding to two important aspects of his common culture—saving face and proper protocol—when he judged the letter to be unacceptable. In common cultures that emphasize relationships and an intimate knowledge of those you deal with, much interpersonal communication is nonverbal or high context (Hall, 1976). That is, what is said is often not as important as how it is said, who says it, and what is left unsaid. In more impersonal common cultures, like the U.S., communication is more explicit; the contents of a letter or the spoken words of a conversation carry more of the meaning. Aziz judged the Bush letter too explicit to be presented to Hussein. Although we do not know the contents, the odds are high that they were blunt and unequivocal. Such communications are not acceptable to high-status officials who expect room to maneuver so that they and their constituents are not embarrassed (lose face).

For Aziz, proper protocol required the right kind of message to be sent in the right way by the right person. Written communications are less acceptable than spoken ones in high-context situations. Conversations provide more possibilities for nonverbal signaling. Also, people in high-context situations often prefer to use intermediaries or go-betweens to communicate so that any misunderstandings can be corrected without the principal parties losing face. An explicit written statement from one head of state directly to another was the wrong kind of message sent in the wrong way to the wrong person. The American deadlines and ultimatums compounded the disrespect inherent in this very low-context approach. Attributing Iraqi thought processes to the Americans, the Iraqis decided that these behaviors indicated that the Americans were not serious about negotiating and were insulting them.

Support for the theory that the Iraqi delegation felt insulted by the behavior of the U.S. delegates in Geneva is provided by another quote in the AP news story. One Iraqi delegate said in a “quaking voice” as he left the meeting, “I never thought that you Americans could be so arrogant. Such a free and open country you have and still you refuse to see our viewpoint.” The emotions expressed here are those of an individual who has been condescended to and made to look bad in public, the very essence of losing face. In cultures where public appearance is of ultimate importance, the worst insult is to be shamed before one's peers. Humiliating an individual from a face-saving common culture can create an enemy for life. Rather than persuading him or her to change their behaviors or beliefs, such humiliation will stiffen their resolve and reduce the possibilities for change. The shame-oriented statements made by the U.S. officials (from comparisons of Hussein to Hitler to the lack of acknowledgment of the Iraqi viewpoint in Geneva) contributed to the Iraqi refusal to modify or apologize for their actions or to take part in the proposed negotiation framework of the U.S.

Conclusions

As the Iraq situation illustrates, egalitarian relationships are crucial in today's world of multilateral negotiations and consensual agreements. Without good faith and trust, negotiations will break down. Trust and good faith will only develop when negotiators treat each other as equals. The recognition and respect that emerge when negotiators genuinely feel they are equals provide a foundation upon which they can begin to debate and collaborate regardless of major differences in their subjective and common cultures.

There were few egalitarian relationships and little intercultural understanding evident in the Iraq illustration. All of the parties ethnocentrically believed they had the most realistic approach and the other side was not as wise as they. No one felt there was much to be learned or achieved through collaborating with all the others as equals, especially if they had to be more forthcoming and

flexible in their own behaviors. The perceived arrogance and disrespect that comes from a lack of intercultural understanding will continue to frustrate their efforts to negotiate.

Progress will come in these and similar negotiations when the negotiators gain the modesty and graciousness that come with cultural understanding and self-awareness. A great deal of effort has gone into getting nations that are in conflict to negotiate. Persuading them to recognize and talk to each other has not been easy (Saunders, 1983). Similar amounts of effort are required to develop and implement programs to train their representatives and the leadership they represent in the cognitive and communication skills necessary to make those negotiations more successful.

It is my hope that future policymakers will correct the current imbalance in our approaches to international diplomacy and invest in the research and development work and the training programs needed to produce negotiators who can learn how to learn interculturally. We are reaching impasses in our political, economic, and diplomatic negotiations on more and more occasions. Using the same ethnocentric, tolerant, or minimalist diplomatic approaches will not build international or interpersonal relationships. Coercion, force, and violence do not create acceptable "solutions." It is past time to begin improving our intercultural awareness and communication abilities.

The intercultural approach to international meetings will be especially effective in permanent multilateral negotiations such as those sponsored by the United Nations (which includes most such negotiations). Because their agreements are all recommendatory, U.N. negotiators require consensus in their negotiations. They have found that agreements are only effective if all parties feel a moral commitment to carry them out. When negotiating is secondary to other, more political goals, as it was in Iraq, agreements will break down. Moreover, the chances of gaining the support of important political groups in each country for any agreements that might be achieved at the U.N. are much less when the traditional, adversarial approach to negotiations is used. Diplomats from Wilson to Sadat have suffered the domestic consequences of the power politics approach to negotiation.

In an article in the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, Jonathan Rauch (1992) imagines the willingness to work of the Japanese public being combined with the flexible and open social and political institutions of the Americans: "Then what a country you'd have!" (p. 36). He laments that we will have to make do with the hope that the two countries will drag each other bumpily in the right direction. I believe we can do better than that. With more appropriate training of our international representatives, and through them the intercultural education of our leadership, we can build international relationships that will help create the kind of global village we need—a village in which we can all learn how to learn from and with each other.

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