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On the Cover

TITLE: ART BIENNALE VENICE 2019

GIANT JOINED HANDS SCULPTURE "BUILDING BRIDGES"
BY LORENZO QUINN. HELP AND WISDOM. EXHIBITION AT
ARSENALE, CASTELLO, VENICE..
(MATTHIAS SCHOLZ)



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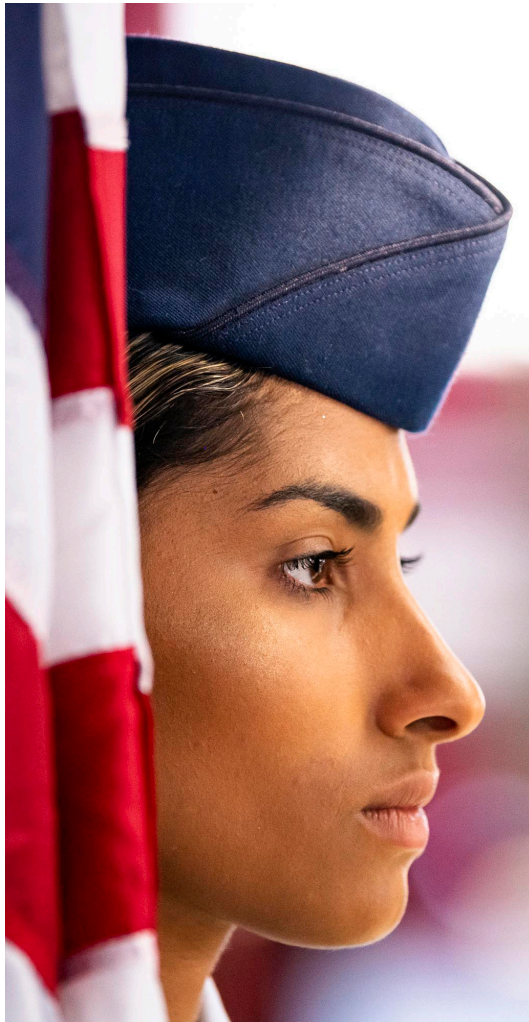


Table of Contents

Director's Note3

Editor's Welcome.....4

Featured Articles

Civil Discourse : When the Other Side Is Not Civil 5

Book Review of Radical Candor 19

The Application of Negotiation Skills to Bridge the Military's Multigenerational Divide 24

Enticing China to Join Nuclear Arms Control Negotiations : Applying Lessons from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty..... 38

Communication & Diverse Environments : A Perspective in Civil Discourse 60

The Sword in the SCIF : How a Black Swan Can Derail a Negotiation..... 74

A Story is a Good Start : Civil Discourse and Strategic Communication..... 89

Negotiating Up : Lessons Learned from Negotiations with Senior Leaders during the COVID-19 Pandemic..... 113



Director's Note

Thank you for your interest in the Journal of Military Conflict Transformation (JMCT). The purpose of this publication is to foster an intellectual platform in which scholars, students, researchers, and subject matter experts can contribute original content that enhances the theory and education of conflict management, negotiation, mediation, and facilitation with an emphasis on the military environment.

The theme of this edition is The Art of Civil Discourse. But what makes discourse "civil" and why is it important? Civil discourse is more than just being nice. It's more than just polite conversation. Civil discourse is communication that is true, authentic, and respectful. In my opinion, the most important attribute of civil discourse is that it is productive. Uncivil discourse leads to escalation, misunderstandings, and damaged relationships. Conversely, civil discourse diffuses unproductive conflict, leads to understanding of opposing positions and interests, and brings the parties together towards resolution.

This volume contains articles that will challenge you to think about what you say, how you say it, and maybe most importantly, how your audience receives your message. We explore empathy and identifying and prioritizing the interests of opposing parties. We discuss communicating with those from different cultures, different generations, and those that approach you with threats and deception. I encourage you to think about how you communicate and ways you can use these tools and techniques, not just in negotiations, but in every aspect of your life.

Enjoy the latest edition of the JMCT.

Chad N. McLeod

Chad N. McLeod, P.E., PMP
Director, Air Force Negotiation Center



Editor's Welcome

Greetings JMCT Fellow,

I am the Editor-in-Chief for the Air Force Negotiation Center's (AFNC) *Journal of Military Conflict Transformation*. I count myself very fortunate to have the honor of serving with our team of dedicated professionals here at the AFNC. It is our endeavor to provide an informative resource for academics, leaders, professionals, facilitators and the like in advancing the work of conflict transformation.

Our nation faces polarizing challenges on many fronts. Some examples of these polarizing challenges are popup wars in various countries, international trade policies, conflicts regarding land, air, space, cyber, and sea domains. As one will note, each of these items involves the dynamic interaction of people. Active engagement is an essential component in addressing this dynamic. One person may employ a *go-it-alone* mechanism to secure order. Another individual may settle on the use of collaborative action to diminish chaos. Others may even consider use of a hybrid of the two approaches. In most instances, the goal of any mean(s) used is to assemble

a viable way forward in order to achieve an intended end.

The art of civil discourse is an approach that affords constructive dialogue between individuals. The use of active listening, critical thinking skills, and evaluating differing perspectives other than that of your own is essential to engaging in this art. Suspension of judgment also facilitates creation of a neutral space in which contemporaries can work to obtain agreement. The contributors for this edition of the JMCT present *thought pieces* that can be used in shaping guidance related to instruments of national power and beyond.

I defer to you. The floor is yours...

Sandra L. Edwards

Sandra L. Edwards, Ph.D.

Editor-in-Chief, JMCT



Civil Discourse : *When the Other Side Is Not Civil*

CHAD N. MCLEOD, P.E., PMP

Abstract

Negotiations sometimes feel like a battle of good versus evil. It's easy to label the other side as the bad guy, and hard to remember that your opposite is also a person with needs and desires, just like you. When the other side uses threats, deception, or acts like a narcissist, negotiating with civility is even harder. There are ways to meet your negotiation goals while taking the high road, despite the antics of your opposites. This article identifies some ways an opposite may use underhanded ploys in negotiations, and ways to respond.

Key Words

Civil Discourse, Threats and Deception, Active Listening, Conversational Narcissism

One of the best books I've read this year was *A Higher Call* by Adam Makos. It's the story of two pilots in World War II, one German and one American, who met over the skies of Germany on December 20, 1943. A decision is made by one pilot which decides the fate of his opponent, whether he lives or dies. The part I like best is that identifying the good guys and the bad guys is challenging, because it's real life, and real life is complicated. It's a story about bravery, honor, friendship, and loyalty. However, the book was almost never written because the author had a rule. In the negotiation world, we'd call it a position.

The author, Adam Makos, grew up idolizing American pilots. He started writing about his heroes in middle school with a newsletter telling the stories of World War II fighter pilots and the planes that they flew.¹ This newsletter morphed into a magazine that required Makos to interview many World War II veterans to share their stories. In the introduction to *A Higher Call*, he said that he had few rules for his magazine, one being that they would never honor the enemy. His writings were an ode to the good guys; the American heroes who vanquished the evil Nazis that were trying to take over the world. Makos said he agreed with the line from



<https://www.aces-high.com/news/view/a-moving-story--franz-stigler-and-charlie-brown>

Indiana Jones: “Nazis. I hate these guys.”
But when Makos interviewed Charles Brown, an American B-17 pilot and one of the main characters in *A Higher Call*, the old war hero said that if he wanted to understand his (Brown’s) story, he needed to talk to Franz Stigler, a German pilot. Going against his rule, Makos interviewed the German Ace, and this is what he said of the encounter:

“

I ended up spending a week with Franz. He

was kind and decent. I admitted to him that I thought he was a “Nazi” before I met him. He told me what a Nazi really was. A Nazi was an abbreviation for a National Socialist. The National Socialists were a political party. As with political parties in America, you had a choice to join or not. Franz never joined them. Franz’s parents voted against the Nazis before the Nazis outlawed all other political parties. And here I’d thought it was in every German’s blood. I never called Franz a “Nazi” again.²



If Makos had stuck to his “rule” (position), he never would have captured this amazing story. Makos had no interest in understanding the other side because of bias. He was guilty of thin slicing; decision making based on limited information or “thin slices” of reality.³ It was only by going past his position and digging deeper into what the opponent (Stigler) was really all about that this amazing story came to be. Of course, there are evil people in the world. Adolf Hitler and Hermann Göring are not spared the honest and accurate assessment they deserve in the book, but as the old saying goes, never judge a book by its cover.

Leaders often negotiate with difficult people, those who use threats and deceptions to get their way. That is when the art of civil discourse is most challenging but also when it is most important. It starts with recognizing that the other side (in negotiations we call him your opposite) is a human being worthy of respect. It starts with recognizing that although that difficult person may be attacking you in underhanded ways, their problem may still be worth solving. It starts with recognizing

that the “Nazi” label you’ve applied to your opposite may prevent you from seeing the full picture. It starts with recognizing that **civil discourse starts with you.**

Deciding to engage in civil discourse with a challenging opposite can be a difficult step, but it’s only the first step to successful dispute resolution. After deciding to engage with your opposite, the real work begins. Your opposite may resort to any number of underhanded approaches to “win” the negotiation. Nefarious tactics can’t be defeated solely with logic and reason. Savvy negotiators consider logic and reason when preparing for a negotiation, but also recognize the emotional aspect of an opposite’s attack and respond, not react, appropriately.

In the remainder of this article, I will identify a few of the most common ways an opposite may use threats and deception against you and the tools you should have in your toolbox to defend against them. Keep in mind that although I use labels based on types of behavior with names like bully and trickster, just like with Adam Makos’ “Nazi”, things are not always as they appear. Once you get past the uncivil

behavior of an opposite, there are still positions and interests that need to be addressed. Positions are the “what” and interests are the “why” of negotiations.⁴ Positions are usually easy to see, like the top of the iceberg above the surface, but looking below the surface at the interest is where the real magic happens.

The Bully

In the 2010s, two of the most popular movies in China were *Wolf Warrior* and its sequel, *Wolf Warrior II*. The movie’s protagonist is the Chinese equivalent of America’s Rambo, a lone soldier defending the weak and oppressed. In the sequel, the enemy is a group of imperialists from the West. Around the same time these movies came out, political scientists noticed a change in the behavior of Chinese diplomats. They were more confrontational and combative, exhibiting behaviors like storming out of international meetings, shouting at diplomatic counterparts from other countries, or even insulting foreign leaders.⁵ Their aggressive approach began to be referred to as *Wolf Warrior Diplomacy*. Of course, this type of behavior is not new, and it’s not only found in the international



Wolf Warrior 2 - Theatrical release poster
(Release Date - 27 July 2017)

arena. Ever since the invention of the school playground, there have been bullies. They’re on Instagram, in rush hour traffic, and in the workplace.⁶ Their goal is to win and for you to lose. Bullying is a classic distributive negotiation approach based on a zero-sum gain.⁷ Every point a bully “wins” coincides with a point lost by the other side. Negotiating with a bully is more challenging than with someone who is fighting fair. It’s harder, but not impossible to still accomplish your goals when the other side uses aggression and confrontation to get his way.

You must respond but not react to a bully. The difference between a response and a reaction is the former maintains control while the latter does not.⁸ The first and probably most difficult task when responding to a bully is to stay calm. Former FBI hostage negotiator Chris Voss said that when negotiating in a hostile situation, he would use his “late-night FM DJ voice.”⁹ Voss isn’t just talking about the words you’re saying. The late-night FM DJ has a smooth tone and a low volume that doesn’t get excited and raise the temperature of the conversation. If your opposite can upset you and get you to react irrationally, then on some level, he owns you¹⁰ and has already won. There is no easier way to ruin a reputation than to lose control and respond in anger. Although you may win the battle with a good snarky comeback, you rarely win the negotiation war. Former police officer Chris Thompson said,



The most dangerous weapon you carry is a cocked tongue.¹¹

James from the Bible puts it in even more dire terms, comparing the power of the

tongue to a spark that can set a whole forest on fire.¹² Staying in control of your emotions is critical for success in negotiations with a hostile opposite.

The second thing to remember when dealing with a bully is that de-escalation is usually more successful than escalation. Escalation normally leads to more escalation, not resolution. When someone says something hurtful to you, you’ll want to fire back with something more damaging. Then they will fire back with an even more elevated response, which snowballs into more conflict with both sides suffering casualties, meanwhile you’re drifting further away from resolution. You might be tempted to fight fire with fire, but by escalating the conflict, it’s like adding gasoline. Trying to out-bully a bully rarely works.

If you’re dealing with a bully in the workplace, you might be inclined to get the lawyers involved, or immediately escalate to your boss to resolve the problem. It is the Department of Defense’s policy that disputes should be resolved at the lowest possible organizational level.¹³ If you constantly bring your problems to your boss to solve, it’s not going to improve your boss’



impression of you. There may come a time when your boss or the lawyers need to be involved, but good negotiators and good leaders first try to resolve the problem at their level.

Staying calm and de-escalating conflict is hard to do when your opposite is a bully. One thing that can help is to identify your audience. It's not just the bully on the other side of the table who is watching and listening to you. By taking the high road, you improve your reputation.¹⁴ Rhetoricians (fancy word for people that are good at persuasion) call it *Ethos*, or your character.¹⁵ You may not persuade the bully to come to your side, but you might win over other stakeholders who witness the opposite's bad behavior and your calm, de-escalating, measured response. If you're a leader, those that follow you will imitate your behavior. If you want an organization known for its high character, then it starts with the example you set.

Lastly, consider focusing on the problem and not on the person. Jay Heinrichs suggested using aggressive interest, responding with sympathetic curiosity while continually asking for definitions, details, and

sources.¹⁶ What does the opposite want (his position), and even more importantly, why does he want it (his interest)? This is more challenging with an aggressive opposite, but the concepts of negotiations remain the same. The best negotiators recognize the positions of the opposite but focus on trying to understand the underlying interests.¹⁷

None of these techniques imply backing down. Letting a bully walk all over you only encourages the bully to continue using bad behavior, but lowering yourself to his level is also not effective. Find ways to take the high road and solve the problem without stooping to his level. You may not be able to correct the bully's behavior, but if you stand firm on your interests and focus on the problem, you can still be successful.

The Trickster

Dirty tricks are another type of underhanded tactic a negotiator may face. There are many ways an opposite may try to trick you. The trickster may use personal attacks to get a rise out of you with the hope you'll be distracted from the actual issue. Some use the room setup for a psychological advantage by giving you the lower chair, so you'll feel inferior or having you face the



window with the sun in your eyes to distract you. A negotiating team may try the good-cop-bad-cop routine like in the movies, with one member playing hardball while the other takes on a more reasonable tone.¹⁸ A trickster may try to ambush you with hidden information until you're at the table or change to aggressive behavior when you're not expecting it. He might just outright lie to you.

In his book *Negotiations*, Lewicki identifies three ways to respond to this type of chicanery; ignore it, respond in kind, or call it out.¹⁹ Ignoring the tactic may be appropriate if the trick doesn't hamper your ability to

negotiate, but most of the time this is not the case. So, if you must address the bad behavior, responding in kind is usually not a good option because of your own ethics, moral code, and risk of escalating tensions. I find the third option, calling it out, to be the most effective response to the trickster. If you call out the behavior, you might find that the perceived trick was unintentional, or a misunderstanding. If it was deliberate, identifying the bad behavior decreases the tactic's effectiveness.

For the trickster who will outright lie to you, there are a few responses that might be effective.²¹ You can directly accuse

Responses to Tricksters

Personal attacks

It appears we're talking more about your feelings about me than the problem we're trying to solve. Maybe if we shift our focus, we can find a solution.

Room setup

It looks like I've got a lower chair than you. Is that some type of psychological ploy? Or, The sun is in my eyes over here and it's distracting, could we move things around or close the blinds?

Good cop bad cop

It seems like you two aren't agreeing with each other. Should I come back another time so you can get on the same page?

The ambush

This is new information that I wish would have been made available earlier. I may need some time to think through this and get back with you.

(Adapted from Lewicki 2017)²⁰

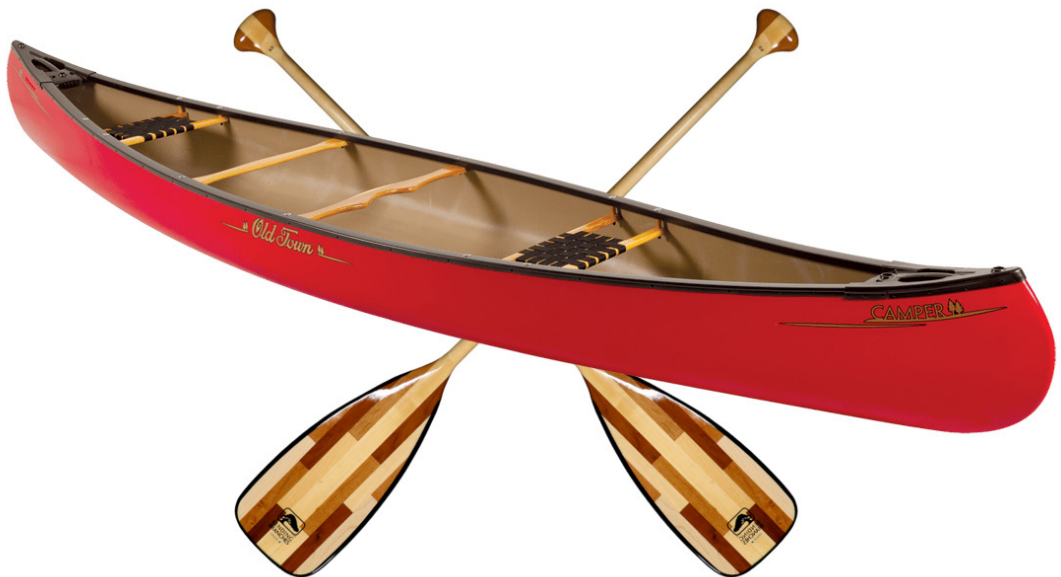
the alleged liar, but this is risky if you're not certain the other side is actually lying. Calling out a liar may also lead to undesirable escalation, even if you're in the right. I find the best way to respond is to ask more questions. If you continue to probe the opposite's story, the liar will often expose himself through his own inconsistencies.

It is usually best to address the trickster's behavior, but like with the bully, you should then try to draw the conversation back to the problem you're trying to solve.²² When calling out the behavior, don't make it personal by name-calling. Take the

high road. Separate the people from the problem,²³ correct the problem, and then move on.

The Conversational Narcissist

A narcissist is someone who thinks the world revolves around them. *It's all about me and what I want. What you think, and what you need is not important and not worth discussing.* Negotiating with a narcissist is like trying to paddle a boat upstream. You find yourself pushing against the current of his ego and willpower. One tell-tale sign that you're dealing with a narcissist is that he constantly changes the subject back to himself. Even when he lets you talk, he

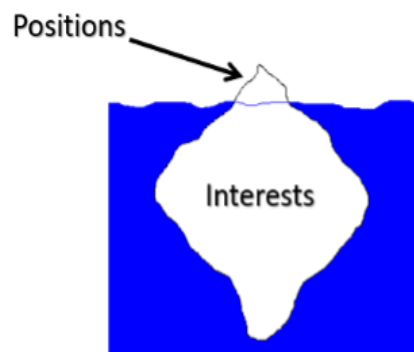


uses a shift response to return to his needs instead of a support response, trying to understand you.²⁴ A close cousin to the narcissist is the person who thinks they're the smartest guy in the room.

The first thing to recognize when negotiating with someone who is only focused on himself is that you can't out-narcissize a narcissist. In other words, don't be a narcissist yourself. That might seem like common sense, but it's actually somewhat counterintuitive. When dealing with someone who's only focused on his own positions and interests, it's tempting to try to talk over him, get louder, and be more aggressive. After all, you have your own position and interests and it's only natural to want to be heard. However, just trying to talk louder rarely works. When you try to talk over a narcissist, both sides end up talking past each other. Everyone is talking but no one is listening, and no one is being heard. A narcissist will most likely not listen until he knows he's been heard.

The way to get through to a narcissist starts with listening; **actively listening**. Active listening isn't just being quiet and letting the opposite walk all over you. It requires

you to ask questions, digging deeper in the opposite's mind to understand what's below the surface. This goes back to positions and interests. Think of an iceberg, the opposite's position is what you can see above the surface. *It's the initial ask in the negotiation. I want a new boss, or I want \$300,000.* His actual interests on the other hand is the "why" behind the position; what lies below. Why does the opposite want a new boss or \$300,000? Proverbs 20:5 says "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."²⁵ Active listening draws out of that deep water.



There are many ways to actively listen to your opposite. One technique is called labeling or paraphrasing, which is summarizing what the opposite says. A good way to label is to start with "it seems

like, it looks like, or it sounds like.”²⁷ *It seems like you’re having a hard time with these new requirements. It sounds like being on time is important to you and when we’re not, it stresses you out.* Another great way to label is to start with the sentence,

“*Let me make sure I understand what you just said.*”²⁸

Labeling is a way to show that you heard what the opposite is saying. It shows that you are listening. Labeling doesn’t constitute agreement, but it does establish that you care about your opposite’s position and will validate to him that he has been heard.

Another good technique is to ask open-ended questions. Good open-ended questions generally start with what or how. *What does success in this agreement look like to you? If we go with your choice, how do you think that will affect the other stakeholders?* Unlike who, when and where questions, which only require short answers, what and how questions get below the surface and draw out your opposite’s interests. Although what you’re really looking for is “the why” or interest of your opposite, using questions that begin with

why is also not recommended as they can seem accusatory, even when that is not your intention.²⁹

By labeling or asking open-ended questions, you are neither agreeing nor disagreeing with your opposite’s position. You’re gaining a better understanding of your opposite’s interests. You’re showing empathy, which George Thompson calls the most powerful word in the English language.³⁰ Taken from its Latin and Greek roots, the word empathy literally means to see through the eyes of another.³¹

Active listening is effective with almost anyone, but it’s especially so when dealing with the narcissist. Again, the narcissist may be willing to listen but only after he feels heard.

You may say that you’ve put in the work of active listening and the opposite knows you’ve heard him, but your needs or interests have not been addressed. What can you do to cross the bridge from understanding to being understood? One last tool you can try is to channel your opposite’s efforts into addressing your interest. Arguing against the narcissist’s



position is like paddling upstream, but channeling his aggression may get you where you want to go. Instead of arguing against his position, explore his interests by considering options that may lead to mutual gain. If the opposite sees you considering his interests while attempting to solve the problem, they're likely to join you in your effort.³² *I understand that on-time delivery is most important to you, so how do we deliver the product you need on time without overextending my team and cutting into my profit margins?*

You can also ask the opposite what he would do in your position.³³ Maybe the greatest channeling question is *How am I supposed to do that?*³⁴ For example, *If I dedicate my staff to doing what you want me to do, how do I complete the main mission that my boss requires of me?* If you're dealing with the smartest guy in the room or a narcissist, he often will want to "help you" by telling you how to solve your problem. This question can lead to the opposite putting himself in your shoes and seeing things from your perspective. It also allows the narcissist to feel like he is in control, which is what he often wants.³⁵ He's likely to

realize that his position may not be the only way to go.

Conclusion

Negotiating is hard. It's even harder when the opposite is uncivil, acting like a bully, using threats and deception, or just unwilling to see any perspective but his own. But there are things you can do to respond (not react) to uncivil behavior and still meet your objective. First, take the high road. Don't try to out-bully a bully, out-trick a trickster, or out-narcissist a narcissist. Second, stay calm and deescalate. Be the grown-up in the room and consider your audience. Remember, everyone is watching, not just your opposite. Third, focus on solving the problem, not the opposite's behavior. Find out what's under the surface of the opposite's position and pursue ways to meet those interests in a way that also addresses your own. And last but not least, listen.... **actively.** And remember, civil discourse starts with you.

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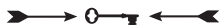
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Biography

Chad McLeod is the Director for the Air Force Negotiation Center (AFNC), Maxwell AFB, AL, where he is responsible for the design, development, and delivery of AF-wide training in conflict management as a core leadership competency for all Airmen (officer and enlisted) and Air Force civilians. Prior to joining the AFNC, Mr. McLeod worked for twenty years as an Army Civilian with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). While with USACE, he delivered construction projects and programs at military installations throughout the Southeast United States and in the Republic of Korea.



Book Review of *Radical Candor*

:

Be a Kick-[expletive deleted] Boss Without Losing Your Humanity

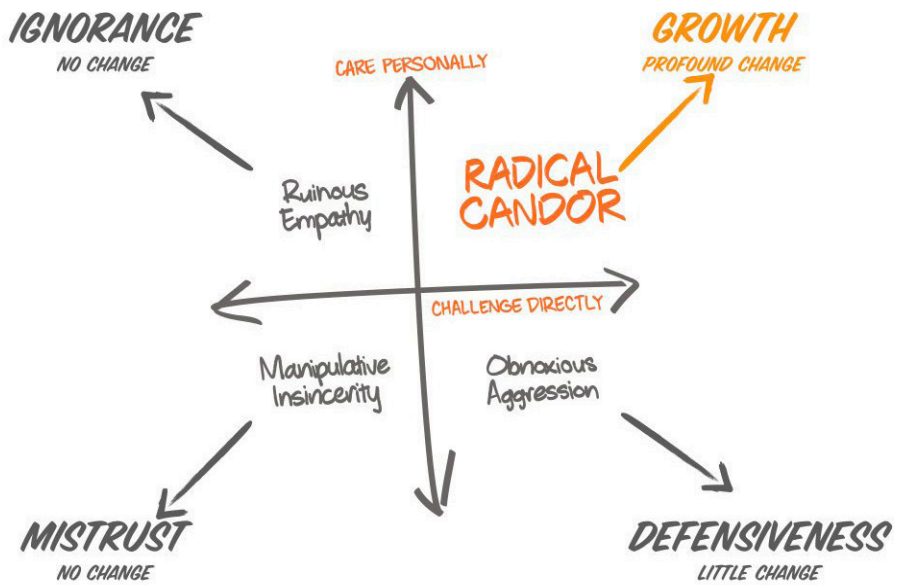
**TSGT MICHAEL J. ALLISON, USAF. MBA, BSL.
COMMANDER'S ACTION GROUP DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

Radical Candor by Kim Scott is a management book that provides practical guidance on effective leadership, with a specific focus on its application in the military context. Drawing from her experiences as an executive coach and leadership consultant, Scott offers tangible strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced by military leaders at all levels within the chain of command.

The book emphasizes the importance of caring personally and challenging directly in communication without being aggressive or insecure. This directly aligns with the military's need for clear and effective communication as it relates to mission success. By incorporating the principles of radical candor, military leaders can enhance their communication skills, address performance issues, build strong

relationships within their teams, and foster a positive work environment. The book's emphasis on open communication and trust-building can be particularly valuable as military leaders potentially work towards conflicts with near-peer competitors like China. By promoting collaboration, adaptability, and growth within their units, military leaders can navigate the complexities of leadership in a changing strategic environment.

One strength of *Radical Candor* for the military is its emphasis on open and honest communication. In the military, clear and direct communication is crucial for mission success, as it ensures that everyone understands their roles, responsibilities, and goals. The book's strategies for giving feedback can help military leaders address performance issues effectively, supplying



Cover image, *Radical Candor*, 2019

constructive criticism that enables individuals to improve and contribute to the overall mission. By fostering a culture of open communication, military leaders can create an environment where ideas and concerns can be freely shared, leading to better decision-making and problem-solving.

Additionally, the focus on building strong relationships in *Radical Candor* aligns with the military's emphasis on teamwork and camaraderie. In the military, trust and collaboration are essential for effective operations. By investing in building relationships with their subordinates,

military leaders can create a sense of unity and shared purpose within their teams. This can enhance morale, motivation, and cohesion, leading to improved performance and mission success. The book's strategies for building relationships, such as active listening, empathy, and recognition, can help military leaders foster a positive and supportive work environment that encourages collaboration and mutual respect.

However, there are limitations to consider when applying the concepts of *Radical Candor* in the military context. The hierarchical structure and chain of

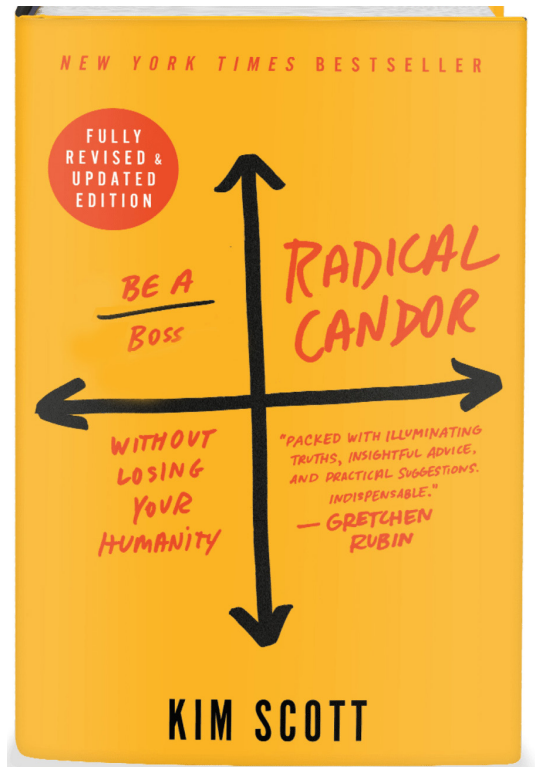
command in the military may require adjustments to the book's concepts. Military leaders must navigate a unique mission-oriented culture, where directness may need to be balanced with respect for authority. While open and honest communication is important, military leaders must also be mindful of the military's hierarchical structure and the need to maintain discipline and order. This may require adapting the principles of radical candor to fit within the military's command structure while still promoting effective communication and feedback.

Additionally, the book's examples and anecdotes may not directly align with military experiences, as military operations and challenges can differ significantly from those in other industries. Military leaders may need to interpret and adapt the principles and strategies presented in the book to fit the specific context of their military units and missions. This requires a thoughtful and nuanced approach to ensure that the principles of radical candor are effectively applied while considering the unique dynamics and demands of military leadership.

Despite these limitations, *Radical Candor* can still be valuable for military leaders, particularly as they potentially work towards conflicts with near-peer competitors like China. The book's emphasis on open communication and trust-building can help leaders foster strong relationships within their teams, enhancing collaboration and adaptability during times of conflict. By incorporating the principles of radical candor, military leaders can enhance their communication skills, promote growth within their units, and navigate the complexities of leadership in a changing strategic environment.

In the context of the United States Air Force's Doctrine, *Radical Candor* aligns with the principles of effective leadership and communication outlined in the doctrine. The Air Force places a strong emphasis on mission accomplishment, teamwork, and professional development. The book's emphasis on building relationships, providing feedback, and fostering a positive work environment resonates with these principles. By incorporating the principles of radical candor into their leadership approach, Air Force leaders can enhance

their ability to communicate effectively up, down, and across the chain of command within their organizations.



Kim Scott. Manhattan, New York: St. Martin Press. 2019. 336 pages.

Biography

Michael Allison is a Cyber Defense Operations Craftsman (1D771Q) and currently serves as the NCOIC of Network Systems Operations for 607th Air Control Squadron, Luke AFB, Arizona. Sergeant Allison has managed hundreds of Airmen across a multitude of AFSCs in the maintenance, flying operations, and support career fields. Michael is currently pursuing his Doctor of Business Administration degree from Trident University in Chandler, Arizona. He also possesses a Master of Business Administration degree and a Bachelor of Science degree in Leadership from Trident University and three associate degrees from the Community College of the Air Force.

The Application of Negotiation Skills to Bridge the Military's Multigenerational Divide

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Abstract

This essay explores the enduring issue of generational gaps in the U.S. Department of the Air Force (DAF) and proposes negotiation as a tool for addressing the associated challenges. Acknowledging the constant influx of new generations into the workforce, the author emphasizes the need for adapting to evolving workplace cultures. It delves into the cultural and workplace variables shaping generational identities and highlights their implications for cooperation and problem solving, particularly in a military context. The author advocates for incorporating negotiation skills into DAF training and professional development programs as a timeless and effective approach to fostering understanding and collaboration across generations.

Key Words

Generation, Generational Challenges, Negotiation, Military, Department of the Air Force

Introduction

Addressing the generational gap in the workforce, specifically within the United States Department of the Air Force (DAF), is not a revolutionary topic. Search in any academic database and you'll find countless articles and studies discussing how Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and most recently Generation Z can work together, tips for communication, what motivates each cohort, and so forth.

The sources are seemingly endless and based on this trend, the generational divide will continue to be an important topic of discussion since a new generation enters the workforce approximately every fifteen to twenty years.^{1,2} Despite the numerous differences between each individual generational cohort, one thing remains consistent over the course of time; when a new generation enters the workforce, they insert an entirely different culture into the



Undersecretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones speaks with Air Chief Marshal Fadjar Prasetyo, chief of staff of the Indonesian Air Force, before a meeting between Prasetyo and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., May 19, 2022. Brown and Prasetyo discussed partnership between their services. (U.S. Air Force photo by Eric Dietrich).

environment, which requires everyone to adapt by learning how to effectively interact.

Generational differences contribute to workplace miscommunications and misunderstandings which ultimately have the potential to hinder mission effectiveness if not properly addressed or managed. For this reason, an additional tool would be useful for military leaders within this multigenerational environment. Specifically, negotiation offers a comprehensive

framework to address this. Thus, the application of negotiation skills is pivotal in bridging generational divides within the DAF, particularly in fostering cooperation and problem solving. To navigate the complex challenges of a multigenerational military environment, comprehensive training and strategic integration of negotiation techniques are essential.

This article will explore the challenges posed by generational divides, specifically

how events and circumstances in a population’s formative years contribute to the overall cultural identity and stereotypes which affect general values further leading to differences in work ethic and preferences, communication styles, and ways of thinking. We will further explore how these challenges apply in a military and wartime environment, how negotiation skills can help mitigate the negative effects and challenges of the generational divide, and finally will offer recommendations on how the military can address these challenges by incorporating negotiation skills into training and professional development programs and strategically integrating those techniques into military operations.

Multigenerational Divides in the Workforce

Generations are cohorts of individuals born within the same time period and share broad social trends. While

“all people living contemporaneously experience the same historical events, they respond to those events differently on the basis of their life-cycle state at the time.”³

Thus, shared experiences such as the same

historical, socio-cultural, technological, and economic conditions in a cohort’s formative years affect their socio- and cognitive development resulting in common behaviors, attitudes, ways of thinking, and ideals.^{4,5} According to the research, new generations emerge when a shift in historical, social, or economic conditions occurs requiring either new skills, values, or life styles to thrive, and this new identity typically emerges as those individuals reach adulthood.

At any given time, there are four generations serving in the workforce, and the U.S. Air Force is no exception. The oldest generation serving currently are the Baby Boomers (Boomers) comprising about five percent of the enlisted force and ten percent of the officer force at ages between 59 and 75. Many of them are at or nearing retirement age and will be turning over the most senior positions to Generation X (Gen X), the 43- to 58-year-olds comprising 15 and 30 percent of the enlisted and officer corps respectively.⁶ Following Gen X is Generation Y, or the Millennials, currently aged 27 to 42 and comprising 40 and 50 percent of the enlisted and officer corps

respectively. Finally, Generation Z (Gen Z) is the newest cohort to have entered the workforce. Gen Z is currently between 11 and 26 years old and comprises 40 percent of the enlisted corps and ten percent of officers. In only a few short years, as they continue to enter adulthood, they will form the majority of the enlisted force. Those numbers do not even account for the civilian workforce who still have a significant Boomer population employed, contributing to some of the highest ever numbers of retirement eligibles that the DAF has ever seen at a single given time.⁷

The exact ages or periods for each generation can vary depending on the source, however, they are not integral to the purpose of this paper. Instead of delving into details of the specific differences of each individual generation, the focus will target the core challenges to which those differences contribute. Generational cohorts generally form unique cultural identities leading each group to communicate, work, and think differently, which often results in misunderstandings and misperceptions, especially in the workplace.^{8,9} The next paragraphs will discuss the cultural aspect

and various applicable workplace variables in more detail.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes a culture as a group of individuals with a

“set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices” or “the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time,” such as “customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits.”¹⁰

Culture, as it applies to generations, is derived from several factors; (1) the environment that the generation was born into and grew up in; (2) innovations and technologies which influence their future outlook; (3) influential people, places, or things that shape their attitudes and beliefs; (4) how the generation collectively assimilated and made sense of the world they grew up in; (5) natural bias and common traits which shape their adult behaviors; and (6) workplace ethos, career goals, and expectations.¹¹ These characterizations are clearly demonstrated within generational cohorts and influence their collective behaviors, attitudes, ways of thinking, and ideals.^{12,13}



Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall speaks with Chief of Space Operations Gen. John W. Raymond, left, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. and Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones, during his first staff meeting with the Department of the Air Force's service chiefs, at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., July 28, 2021. (U.S. Air Force photo by Eric Dietrich)

The phenomenon of shifting culture across generations manifested recently in Hofstede's Country Comparison Tool. This cultural insight model is a source for insight into various countries highlighting six dimensions which are important considerations offering broad context about the general population's values and behaviors. Specifically, in 2022 the model updated the individualism versus collectivism (the degree to which one views self-image in terms of "I" or "we",

the value of truth compared to harmony, and the value of task orientation versus relationships)¹⁴ dimensional score for the United States.¹⁵ The individualism vs. collectivism score dropped from a 91 to 60 (high to mid-range) indicating that the U.S. synchronously moved closer to a collective mindset on the scale.¹⁶ While overall, the U.S. is still considered individualistic or low context, this shift toward collectivism could be explained by Millennial culture and their tendency to be more team, society,



and diversity oriented, as compared to the preceding generations.

To expound further on a previous point, an important factor contributing to the delineation of generational cultures is related to the workplace. There are several variables which are important to consider and often drastically vary between generational cohorts: work values, work attitudes, work-life balance, career patterns, leadership preferences, and teamwork preferences.¹⁷ Work values hinge on aspects such as pay, autonomy, and working conditions, or on work-related outcomes such as prestige, accomplishment, and fulfillment.¹⁸ Generational differences in work values directly contribute to one's organizational commitment, job satisfaction levels, and one's perceived work ethic. In other words, one's values form the basis of their work attitude.¹⁹ Attitude and values are also both tied to generational preference for work-life balance which has historically increased over time becoming more important to each successive generation.²⁰ These three variables further affect generational career patterns. As values and attitudes change, such as having

an increased preference for job satisfaction over promotion opportunities, combined with an increased desire for a harmonious work-life balance, career patterns have shifted from a Boomer's preference for a stable career-for-life to the Millennial and Gen Z mindset of making lateral or occupational changes when they are dissatisfied.²¹

The remaining workplace variables are both related to generational preferences in human interactions. Leadership preferences, referring to both one's behaviors in a leadership position and in how one wishes to be managed, have shifted over time. Values and attitudes tend to influence the leadership variable and focus on leader and follower attributes such as credibility, resourcefulness, dependability, and supportiveness, and on transformational attributes such as ambition, forward-looking, and imagination.²² However, teamwork focuses less on personal attributes, and more on the dimension of individualism versus collectivism. Levels of desired teamwork, or a generation's approach to working with others, do not appear to have a linear

trend as is the case with many of the other variables, and tend to have a strong tie to the cultural factor of the environment or world that the generations grew up in.²³

The differences in generational cultural and workplace variables are all directly applicable within the DAF, and are significantly contribute to workplace challenges, individual personalities aside. The clashing cultures, values, and perspectives lead to differences in work ethic, preferences, communication styles, problem-solving approaches, interpersonal relationships, and approaches to resolving conflict resolution. These challenges can generally be summarized into two overall categories, cooperation and problem solving, both of which have profound importance in a military context, especially under the complexities of dynamic wartime conditions where lives are on the line and decisions can be fatal. Cooperation and problem-solving challenges may also have second- or third-order effects on Airman resiliency and overall mental health which contribute to Airmen readiness levels. Fostering effective cooperation and problem solving can be addressed through

negotiation education.

Negotiation as a Tool to Address Multigenerational Challenges

Most of the generational research focuses on understanding the specific differences between generational cohorts to mitigate the challenges and conflicts that arise. However, these studies often take place *after* a new generation enters the workforce, and the specific differences are nearly impossible to predict ahead of time. At best, researchers may be able to predict general behaviors based on prevalent technologies and technological growth rates in a generation's formative years, but these predictions are limited. Furthermore, as an approach, teaching generational cultural awareness to every Airman may be beneficial to foster a basic understanding, however an expectation that they all change their behaviors and communication styles based on the individual they are interacting with is unrealistic.

What is known for certain is that the next generation will arrive, and there will be challenges that affect workplace behaviors, relationships, and communication. This



consistency allows for the application of tools or techniques that are potentially timeless, meaning that regardless of the specific behaviors or preferences of a generation, the tool or technique can be applied with success. One possible tool is negotiation. The effectiveness of negotiation is rooted in psychology,^{24,25} and therefore contains the timeless techniques to use regardless of generational differences. Negotiations are “something that everyone does, almost daily,” often without even thinking about it. They occur to resolve problems, facilitate partnerships, and divide limited resources.²⁶ For these reasons, it is reasonable for the DAF to incorporate negotiation techniques to facilitate cooperation and problem solving for mission effectiveness in a multigenerational environment.

Often, when one hears *negotiation*, the concept of *bargaining*, a competitive win-lose situation, comes to mind. However, in the context of this research the use of *negotiation* specifically refers to win-win, or mutually acceptable solutions to complex conflicts.²⁷ At its core, negotiation is a communication process which enables

involved parties to navigate a conflict.²⁸ The framework offers a mechanism for problem solving, decreasing competition among involved parties, increasing collaboration, and offers a “common grammar” to facilitate decision making and communication.²⁹

Many guides, textbooks, or other educational material delve into the details of the various types of conflict (intrapersonal, intrapsychic, interpersonal, intragroup, inter group) and reasons for them (competition, misperceptions, emotions, rigid commitments, etcetera),^{30,31} the human cognitive processes (system 1 [fast] versus system 2 thinking [slow], critical thinking, heuristics, and biases);³² and communication basics and advance tactics (the importance of active listening, barriers to communication, body language, framing).³³ For those reasons alone, one could argue the benefits of incorporating negotiation education into Air Force professional education programs. Learning the basics of negotiation in addition to simply gaining a better understanding of how people function would further develop Airman into a force capable of garnering solutions that may not require kinetic force.





Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., and Chief of Space Operations Gen. John W. “Jay” Raymond talk prior to a meeting with Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., July 28, 2021. (U.S. Air Force photo by Eric Dietrich)

One of the basic negotiation concepts is that of pre-planning, or having a game plan prior to arriving at a negotiation. This concept requires a negotiating party to do their research ahead of time, but this effort pays dividends. The party will enter the negotiation with an idea of whom the other party is, what they want (their position), and why they want it (their interests). This will further allow for the development of a negotiation strategy which may be either distributive in nature, essentially a zero-

sum gain situation, or integrative where parties work together to determine mutually beneficial solutions. The pre-planning research can also give the party an idea ahead of time of a realistic zone for possible agreement, and a defined BATNA, or best alternative to a negotiated agreement, essentially the course of action in the event an agreement is not reached.^{34,35}

If learning the basics of human behavior is *good*, and learning the fundamentals of



negotiating is *better*, then learning more advanced negotiation topics is certainly *best*. Many of the more advanced topics can directly contribute to the facilitation of cooperation and problem solving that are so important within the military environment. In fact, many of the educational resources even outline specific problem-solving approaches, such as when to cooperate, when to insist on your position, when to comply with the other party's desires, and when to evade the negotiation all together. These approaches are dependent on both the importance of the task or issue at hand, and the importance of maintaining a relationship with the other party.^{36,37} Similarly, there are strategies for managing the various types of conflict which further contribute to communication and cooperation.³⁸

How DAF Leaders Can Address the Challenges of Multigenerational Divides

To fully address the communication and cooperation challenges which arise from the multigenerational divide, the DAF should consider developing comprehensive training and education of negotiation skills and strategically integrating negotiation

fundamentals and tactics into operations. Strategic integration will require Airman, especially DAF leaders, to develop negotiation proficiency. The only way to develop proficiency is over time, thus it is crucial that negotiation education and training be incorporated into Air Force professional development programs at all levels. Currently, the Air Force Negotiation Center (AFNC) hosts webinars and residence courses that any DAF employee can register for. The AFNC also has begun teaching at several professional development courses to include the First Sergeant Academy, Airman Leadership School, and even the Defense Financial Management Course, however, these are typically a one-time per career occurrence to teach the fundamentals of negotiation, and not nearly enough to garner proficiency. The basic framework is already there; the DAF only needs to expand the delivery.

In sum, the multigenerational nature of the DAF contributes to various workplace challenges which are further compounded by the complexities of the military and combat environment. To mitigate these challenges, the multigenerational workforce

must be able to cooperate with each other and learn how to mutually solve problems. Incorporating a negotiation framework into Air Force education and training programs with the intent of building proficiency over time is a viable solution which ultimately would pay dividends as complex problems at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels are solved with ease. Negotiation techniques offer a communications-based process which is effective and based in human psychology, which results in a timeless approach to managing multigenerational challenges.

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Biography

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Enticing China to Join Nuclear Arms Control Negotiations

Applying Lessons from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

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Abstract

China has repeatedly stated they wish to enter nuclear arms control agreements with the United States or with other nuclear weapons states. However, arms control negotiations can provide far-reaching benefits beyond simply a reduction in weapon systems or warheads. This article explores considerations for bringing China to the negotiating table for either a trilateral or multilateral nuclear arms control agreement. Using the trilateral and multilateral iterations of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations as a case study, this article draws parallels to the lessons CTBT negotiators learned, in order to enter trilateral or multilateral nuclear arms control negotiations with the greatest chances for success.

Key Words

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Negotiation, Arms Control, Nuclear Weapon States

Introduction

United States leadership has focused tremendous energy and resources towards understanding China's rise to power. China has focused its goals and long-term planning on shedding its previous perception of disgrace. Furthermore, China seeks reunification with Taiwan, yet currently feels pressured by how close "American nuclear deterrence" is to its borders.¹ Meanwhile, China's neighbors grow weary of its actions that push for a

shift in the global order. Historically such a precipice, in which a state seeks a change in the world order, and does so by projecting power, often results in war.² If the United States and China were to engage in a hegemonic war, not only could this prove disastrous for the warring nations, but the region could suffer untold devastation. Rather than continue down a path towards war, now is the time for the United States to explore arms control options and negotiate with China. By following the model of the



An unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile launches during a developmental test at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., Feb. 5, 2020. ICBM test launches demonstrate that the U.S. nuclear enterprise is safe, secure, effective and ready to defend the United States and its allies. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Clayton Wear)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), national leaders may find an opportunity to negotiation and control arms racing.

Treaties and Negotiations

Treaties provide an avenue for successful change, collaboration, and cooperation, but only after productive diplomatic negotiation. Even then, not all discussions result in treaty negotiations or approval. Negotiations are complex and generally time-consuming; however, negotiators can employ several approaches to maximize success while

engaging in pre-negotiation and negotiation talks. In Thomas Schelling's early work, he details how war may be to a small degree "a contest of military strength" but more often a "bargaining process."³ When parties enter the crisis and conflict phases of war, this 'bargaining' may manifest as the threat or use of force (or both), but deterrence and the buildup of military strength begins much earlier; thus, successful negotiation can help prevent parties from ever entering a conflict phase.⁴

Negotiation is a form of “social decision-making” where at least two parties seek to create a better outcome than if they had not agreed to anything at all.⁵ Successful negotiation requires diligence in several areas including pre-negotiations, the phase when parties focus on getting to the table and addressing “two functional needs, ‘defining the problem’ and ‘developing a commitment to negotiation on the part of the parties’.”⁶ In pre-negotiation, parties must embrace a mindset in which they “believe the solution is to be found *with*, not against the adversary.”⁷

Negotiators often model single interactions to the result that will best serve them individually. By examining the maximum desired effect from each side, and then calculating the area that comprises some middle ground, negotiators can map options that result in some nonnegative payoff. The Nash equilibrium models this middle ground, and specifically calculates a solution that “is fair in the sense that it gives to each side *exactly one-half* of the maximum payoff it can rationally expect to get.”⁸ Rational actors can maximize their gains by underrepresenting what

they stand to earn, so in single-instance negotiations, this may dissuade negotiators from continuing their efforts; however, if they work towards an agreement to avert a crisis, the Nash equilibrium can enable their collective advantage.

Applying this to real-world negotiations, the United States and China have never entered bilateral nuclear arms control negotiations before so negotiations may stall several times. However, it is more likely nuclear arms talks would proceed from a trilateral or multilateral position, rather than a simple bilateral US-Sino agreement.⁹

One additional consideration is that cross-cultural negotiations may be laden with “misunderstanding and doubt” so it is vital negotiators bridge cultural differences quickly to reach lasting agreements.¹⁰ Alternatively, Track Two negotiations, those that occur through trusted government agents, can aid in cross-cultural barriers. This tact worked well during the 1982 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) discussions between Nitze and Kvitsinski and again during 1995 US-Chinese discussions over intellectual property rights



and copyright abuse.¹¹ When negotiators could take a step away from the table and talk as individuals, they were often able to overcome cultural differences and make progress toward successful negotiations. Similarly, negotiators would be wise to understand the history and culture of the nation they are negotiating with.

China

China's history dates back thousands of years, and much of Beijing's rhetoric continues to thrive off territorial and belief-based claims from seminal moments in Chinese history. China has boasted a grand strategy of "national rejuvenation" for over 50 years.¹² When Mao Tze Tung came to power during the Chinese Revolution, he rallied the Chinese people with claims that "China's military power is weak, the economy is backward...and a lack of unity and solidarity is" rampant among the people.¹³ Mao adhered to a long-term strategy in support of the nation's security issues and set a political tone that permeates to present day.¹⁴



On October 16, 1964, China detonated their first nuclear weapons test, achieving this milestone before many American analysts expected. The US nuclear arsenal was far superior to China's, leaving the US undeterred, convinced they "did not need to consider any major policy changes," and they continued to build alliances with other Asian nations.¹⁵ Soon after, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) raced ahead to create a nuclear force comprised of bomber aircraft and medium range ballistic missiles (MRBMs). By the 2000s, China had upgraded to solid-fuel road-mobile ICBMs, a small fleet of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), and conventional MRBMs designed for regional conflicts that might persist below the nuclear threshold. Their most recent modernization efforts, starting just a few years ago, includes upgraded ICBM, MRBM, and SSBN capabilities as well as "a more active nuclear role for bombers that may include air-launched ballistic missiles."¹⁶

Traditionally, China boasted a nuclear posture of no first use and minimum deterrence, or the ability to survive a "first

strike and...retaliate with nuclear weapons”, yet their last 20 years of modernization imply a strategy of “minimum retaliation,” capable of delivering a second-strike if attacked.¹⁷ As of January 2020, it is estimated China has a stockpile of 320 nuclear warheads, with approximately 240 ready for use across its triad, while the remainder support future or reserve systems.¹⁸ Specific to arms control, China has valued “broad declarations of intent, behavioral rules, and self-control” over “specific qualitative limits” on weapon numbers or ranges.¹⁹ This differs greatly from US views on deterrence, so even if China’s posture continues to evolve during modernization, it may be difficult for negotiators to discover areas of commonality. However, it is imperative the US signal a desire for inclusive, on-going engagements.²⁰

Russia

Russia considers their nuclear weapons to be a hedge against America’s superior conventional strength, so Russia’s arsenal served as a bargaining chip with the



US over several decades. Furthermore, Russia sees nuclear weapons as central to their security strategy and international prestige.²¹ They tested their first atomic bomb in 1949 and their first thermonuclear weapon in 1953, then turned their focus to building an arsenal comparable to the US’ capabilities. By 1955, Russia’s bombers could reach the US and they test launched their first ICBM in 1957, after realizing that a monad of nuclear-capable bombers could not effectively penetrate US defenses.²² Currently, Russia boasts a nuclear triad designed to deter the US, NATO, and several nuclear states on its border. As of January 2020, they are estimated to have over 4,000 warheads in their arsenal, with over 1,550 strategic warheads and approximately 1,800 nonstrategic nuclear weapons, not accountable under New START limitations.²³

Russia and China have a complex history dating back centuries; however, starting in 1951, Russia secretly agreed to aid China in their nuclear pursuits: Russia trained hundreds of their scientists and provided valuable technology, not including “direct nuclear weapons transfers.”²⁴ By the 1970s,

Russia had short-range nuclear weapons ready to defend against China, using this class of weapons, not restricted by SALT, to ensure security for themselves.²⁵ When the Soviet Union collapsed, China sought to avoid Russia's pitfalls. In 2019 Russia stated it is "now helping our Chinese partners create a missile attack warning system" that "will drastically increase China's defense capability" and during the pandemic, President Putin and President Xi made several appearances together.²⁶

United States²⁷

The United States and China view national security issues quite differently. First, President Obama's administration pivoted to the Pacific through military, political, and economic means, to "counter China's growing power."²⁸ In 2011, the US Congress passed the Wolf Amendment, as a way to effectively halt collaboration with China in space.²⁹ Space was one domain the US could have created collaborative efforts with China. Additionally, China considers technology transfers to be a routine part of globalization and expects



many businesses to share technology with Chinese companies, in order to compete.³⁰

China has emphasized nuclear nonproliferation when the US focuses on weapons reductions, and has continually been disappointed by US lack of cooperation in nonproliferation.³¹ Furthermore, China has advocated for the US to clearly define nuclear 'red lines' when American leadership would use a nuclear weapon first in a conflict, as well as provide a convincing argument that the US missile defense program is not designed to defend against a Chinese attack.³² Ultimately, China is concerned about US missile defenses and space weapons development in addition to "US arms sales to Taiwan."³³ These significant national security differences will impede negotiations, unless both states can find even small common areas for discussion.³⁴

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The history behind the CTBT in both its original trilateral negotiations and its final multilateral treaty text, can provide insight for how multiple nations create consensus over contentious arms control

issues. Though the treaty has not yet entered into force, the treaty had a total of 182 signatories as of early 2021.³⁵ In order to build a model towards enticing China to negotiate, we can examine the CTBT trilateral and multilateral tranches by the following criteria: how the parties defined the problem, their commitment to negotiation, and what they presented as opening moves. The cases will also note if there was a negotiator present during any iteration. Table 1 chronicles the trilateral negotiations and Table 2 details the multilateral negotiations that resulted in the current CTBT.

In 1954, the United States tested a thermonuclear device during the Castle Bravo shot that significantly damaged the Japanese fishing vessel *Lucky Dragon*, operating outside of the cordoned area. Subsequently, the US struggled to maintain a narrative boasting nuclear weapons testing was safe and necessary. India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and others called for a stop to nuclear testing.³⁶

Russia proposed the first moratorium on testing in mid-1957, following the UK's



first thermonuclear test.³⁷ Leading up to the 1958 Geneva Conference of Experts, the US, UK, and Russia had all declared intent to pursue or to propose nuclear testing limitations towards a nuclear disarmament agreement. Each state viewed the implications of nuclear weapons differently, but all agreed they wanted to avert the possibility of nuclear war, limit weapons buildup and impacts of an ensuing security dilemma, and maintain their own national security. Furthermore, each state was succumbing to public pressure to stop nuclear testing and limit fallout and radioactive contamination to bystanders, crops, and livestock.³⁸ The three nuclear weapon states (NWS) defined the problem similarly, yet they entered the negotiating



process with divergent goals.

The UK supported negotiations that might impose testing limits, but were unwilling to commit to a ban until they were able to test their thermonuclear weapon in 1957.³⁹ The US was focused on the technical aspects of testing and monitoring compliance. Russia was focused on negotiations designed to reach an outcome as soon as possible.

The US sent key scientists to discuss verification and detection methods, but did not prepare them with political or diplomatic advice. Conversely, the Russian delegation was heavily stacked towards experienced negotiators and senior diplomats, while still supported with knowledgeable scientists.⁴⁰ Ultimately, the US, UK, and Russia aimed to enter negotiations that would still help each side maintain their own security advantage while simultaneously appeasing international public opinion's fallout concerns.⁴¹ Contentious negotiation points surrounded treaty duration, composition of the controlling or monitoring agency, and the on-site inspection process.⁴² Though it is possible the test ban would not have been finalized by all three countries, or even ratified within the US, the highly publicized

U-2 incident occurring mid-negotiations thwarted any chance of signing a treaty.⁴³

By early 1961, negotiations began anew with almost no resolution from the previous issues. All three nations still agreed on the premise for the negotiating. The international community had still applied pressure to alleviate fallout concerns, but the US, UK, and Russia were now more concerned about nuclear proliferation. In this second round of CTBT negotiations, the US, UK, and Russia all entered negotiations to solve the problem of nuclear proliferation. The US and UK worked more closely together and shared a similar commitment to negotiate, whereas Russia felt they could not negotiate in a way that best served their national interests. Each country's opening moves reflected this same attitude and negotiations stalled several times. It was not until after the Cuban Missile Crisis that the US and Russia were able to find common ground towards negotiating, and subsequently produced the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty.⁴⁴ Though still not a comprehensive treaty, this treaty created momentum for several other incremental testing bans. The US, UK, and Russia

continued to work towards the CTBT, but in the next round of negotiations, seemed content to privately keep from entering such a holistic agreement.⁴⁵

In 1964, the US, UK, and Russia rejoined test ban discussions for a third time in the Eighteen-Nations Disarmament Conference (ENDC). Coming off the recent LTBT success, the Conference pushed the US, UK, and Russia to pursue the goal of a truly comprehensive ban.⁴⁶ The problem remained unchanged and still focused on nonproliferation. Specifically, the US and Russia were concerned by France's atmospheric testing, and China's first nuclear test, asserting the horizontal proliferation undermined the current world order and threatened the US-Russia superpower status.⁴⁷ Amidst these proliferation concerns, the US, UK, and Russia demonstrated less commitment towards a solution when compared to the previous iterations and opened negotiations with contentious demands that could easily be rejected by the other side, or would not be ratified within their own governments.⁴⁸ Sweden and several other groups within the ENDC proposed draft treaties, including one

in 1966, designed to make the execution of on-site inspections more palatable. The US, UK, and Russia did not accept the new on-site inspection terms during that round of negotiations, but the nuance was revisited in the last round of trilateral negotiations the following decade.⁴⁹ However, the ENDC was successful in establishing the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the five NWS signed the treaty in 1968.⁵⁰ Finally, the trilateral talks, ENDC discussions, and codified communication methods solidified the start of US-Russian bilateral treaty negotiations, starting with SALT I.

By 1969, as the US, UK, and Russia entered the fourth round of dedicated CTBT negotiations, the nations faced the same issues the previous rounds struggled with, namely the verification issue. The three countries, in addition to the ENDC, now renamed the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), all acknowledged they were compelled to negotiate as a political investment, not as a path towards disarmament or to resolve the differing views of verification.⁵¹ Unlike the previous negotiations, the opening move came from Sweden, not the US, UK, or Russia,



when they “took the unprecedented step of putting forward a draft underground test ban treaty.”⁵² The US, UK, and Russia all offered varying waning levels of support to this round of negotiations. However, most of the negotiation discussions transitioned to finalizing the Threshold Treat Ban Treaty and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty.⁵³

During the fifth and final round of trilateral CTBT negotiations, the US, UK, and Russia entered discussions starting from a Swedish draft treaty proposal. Unlike the previous discussions, Russia made a statement to concede portions of the on-site inspections stipulations before talks got underway.⁵⁴ With this progress towards a Nash equilibrium, the remaining

Table 1. CTBT Trilateral Traits

Iteration	Define Problem	Commitment to Negotiate	Opening Moves	Facilitator/ Influencer
1958-1961	Clearly defined	<i>US:</i> Moderate, poorly demonstrated through delegation selection <i>UK:</i> Strong once complete with thermonuclear test <i>Russia:</i> Strong, as demonstrated through delegation selection	<i>US:</i> Sought robust monitoring agency; short duration <i>UK:</i> Sought robust monitoring agency; short duration <i>Russia:</i> Sought limited monitoring; indefinite duration	India: co-led by Japan, called for initial test ban treaty Public opinion: environmental health issues from testing
1961-1963	Clearly defined	<i>US:</i> Strong <i>UK:</i> Strong <i>Russia:</i> Initially stalwart against US-UK position	<i>US:</i> Sought robust monitoring agency; partial ban; flexible <i>UK:</i> Sought robust monitoring agency; partial ban; flexible <i>Russia:</i> Sought limited monitoring; outwardly continued testing	N/A
1964-1968	Clearly defined	<i>US:</i> Publicly moderate but privately weak <i>UK:</i> Publicly moderate but privately weak <i>Russia:</i> Publicly moderate but privately weak	<i>US:</i> Sought robust monitoring agency; partial ban; flexible <i>UK:</i> Sought robust monitoring agency; partial ban; flexible <i>Russia:</i> Refused on-site inspections	ENDC, led by Sweden
1969-1976	Clearly defined	<i>US/UK/Russia:</i> Aiming for political gain versus finalizing treaty terms	<i>Sweden:</i> Draft underground test ban treaty with no on-site inspections	CCD, led by Sweden
1977-1980	Clearly defined	<i>US/UK/Russia:</i> Strong initially then waned	<i>US/UK/Russia:</i> Sought Nash equilibrium early.	CCD, led by Sweden

Source: Author's Original Work

Conference members were optimistic the three nations would sign a CTBT quickly.⁵⁵ In an effort to reach consensus and avoid the negotiation errors of the prior iterations, they reviewed each other's views first rather than proposing their respective stances.⁵⁶ This allowed each side to make progress, and accept incremental changes in their original views, while also moving past new sticking points, like France and China, the newest NWS, needing to be included in the negotiations.⁵⁷ However, by the summer of 1979, the US and Russia turned their focus to finalize and sign the SALT II negotiations, neglecting the CTBT for other global priorities.⁵⁸ As the US and Russia continued to compete and negotiate over weapons deployments in their sovereign territories and across Europe, CTBT negotiations ceased until the early 1990s.

When President Clinton signed the CTBT in 1996, he touted the moment as “the longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in the history of arms control.”⁵⁹ The Committee on Disarmament (CD) worked for nearly a decade towards the CTBT before pushing to enter multilateral negotiations. Even once signed, the US continued to send mixed

signals to the international community by not ratifying the treaty, asserting it was not in the best interests of America's national security. This may have influenced other states, like China, to postpone ratifying the treaty, or led India and Pakistan to deny signing altogether.⁶⁰ Regardless, once the CD started towards crafting the CTBT, they set ambitious completion goals that nuclear states approached with varying levels of support.

Similar to previous iterations of CTBT negotiations, the problem was clear from the start, and remained focused on cessation of nuclear testing that might eventually lead to disarmament. As was becoming tradition, Sweden proposed the initial treaty text, followed closely by another proposal from Australia.⁶¹ The US, UK, Russia, and France initially took ambiguous stances towards the draft proposals, so as to preserve their own security and continue low-yield reliability testing of their stockpiles.⁶² Though the four countries favored different limitations, China's position was that a test ban treaty must not have “loopholes or ambiguities” that would allow the other NWSs to gain an advantage



or manipulate the treaty provisions.⁶³ Ultimately, treaty progress from the NWS hinged on political issues. All but India, Pakistan, and North Korea have signed the treaty, but several states, including the US have not yet ratified the CTBT.⁶⁴

During the 40 years of trilateral and multilateral negotiations, several themes appeared towards the success or failure of each iteration. First, it was paramount all nations clearly defined the problem. Next, nations needed to be committed to negotiate. Finally, the most successful negotiations happened when the states sought to understand what each side found most valuable, and could then work towards a Nash equilibrium.

control treaty between the US, Russia, and China; alternatively, we can consider a multilateral arms control agreement between the US, UK, Russia, France, and China. If the US, Russia, and China can agree on solving the same problem through negotiating, then it will be easier to analyze each nations' commitments possibilities for opening moves. As evidenced by the third round of CTBT negotiations, if the US, Russia, and China explain their perspectives and openly listen to each nations' concerns, negotiators may successfully reach a Nash equilibrium and maximize their chances for an agreement. From the US-Russian Strategic Stability Dialogues in 2021, the US would likely "seek to capture new kinds of intercontinental-range nuclear

Table 2. CTBT Multilateral Traits

Iteration	Define Problem	Commitment to Negotiate	Opening Moves	Facilitator/ Influencer
1994-1996	Clearly defined	<i>US:</i> Strong <i>UK:</i> Constrained, then strong <i>Russia:</i> Strong <i>France:</i> Strong <i>China:</i> Limited, then willing <i>Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS):</i> Strong	<i>US/UK/Russia/ France:</i> Retain small testing provisions f/reliability/ security <i>China:</i> No loopholes, create full, not partial ban	CD, led by Germany, Sweden, Australia

Source: Author's Original Work

Bringing China to the Negotiation Table

We can use the negotiating framework for two scenarios: first, is a trilateral arms

delivery systems and nonstrategic nuclear weapons" whereas Russia may push for a

more comprehensive agenda that would include “ballistic missile defense, long-range strategic conventional arms, and weapons in space.”⁶⁵ China may push for limitations on missile defense, emerging disruptive technologies, and space or cyber technologies.⁶⁶ China is opposed to most transparency measures, and argues they are not seeking parity with the US or Russia so verification should not be required.⁶⁷ However, all sides have affirmed they are open to risk reduction methods and possibly confidence building measures.

Opening moves may proceed with the US seeking to create a three-way hotline for all three countries’ communications, while also encouraging declared policies in the cyber or space domains. These policies should not necessarily limit the US to a “no-first use” policy in either the cyber domain or regarding space weapons, but can pave the way for setting new norms. It is unlikely the US will yield on missile defense because it provides America with the ability to defend against countries with any number of nuclear weapons in their arsenal and the opportunity to “intervene militarily whenever and where” they choose.⁶⁸

Russia may open with desired caps on the US’ Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile program and push for the US to remove or deactivate ballistic missile defense systems, while seeking assurances from China that they will not emplace defensive technologies aimed towards Russia. China may open by pushing for diminished US presence and arms agreements in the Indo-Pacific region, a reduction or removal of ballistic missile defense systems capable of detecting threats across the Pacific Ocean, and demanding cyber no-first use policy declarations. Ultimately, risk reduction and confidence building measures may prove to be immediate areas for success; however, the US, Russia, and China will need to approach pre-negotiations with their most skilled negotiators and technical experts.

Informal or Track 1.5 discussions can help achieve some progress. Additionally, another country may facilitate, reminiscent of India and Japan’s requests during the first CTBT negotiation, or another country may draft proposals like Sweden did several times in CTBT history. The US, Russia, and China would be wise to accept such



outside influence and at least consider the possibility that a party not immediately impacted by treaty terms may draft a workable solution.

This approach may not result in a trilateral arms control agreement, but may encourage further discussions, and possibly develop agreements or treaties in other areas, similar to the US-Russian bilateral agreements following the second round of CTBT negotiations. It is also possible that these

consider the political tensions between nuclear states: China does not recognize India’s nuclear program as a legitimate program; Pakistan may not enter if they cannot limit India’s weapons; Israel’s nuclear opacity and concerns over an Iranian threat, also complicate the dynamic. North Korea is unlikely to join and appears to be in an active testing phase to grow their ballistic missile arsenal.⁶⁹ Finally, by opening negotiations beyond bi- and tri-lateral levels, Russia may seek a reduction

Table 3. Nuclear Arms Control Trilateral Treaty (US-Russia-China)

Define Problem	Commitment to Negotiate	Opening Moves	Facilitator
Not clearly agreed upon	<i>US:</i> Strong, domestic & int’l support <i>Russia:</i> Moderate, if security-focused and bilateral <i>China:</i> Resistant to trilateral bullying	<i>US:</i> Long-range delivery vehicles, NSNW, transparency & risk reduction methods <i>Russia:</i> Missile defense, conventional long-range delivery & weapons in space <i>China:</i> Missile defense, disruptive tech (AI), space/cyber tech; limited to no verification	Possible fourth-party influence

Source: Author’s Original Work

trilateral agreements will expand from the summary in Table 3 to a multilateral format, including all five of the nuclear weapons states in future discussions.

When considering a multilateral nuclear arms control treaty, it is paramount to

or termination of the “nuclear sharing agreements...of the Alliance.”⁷⁰ Proposing limits on an Alliance like NATO would introduce a new dynamic in multilateral negotiations, that none of the players have faced before. Therefore, the following analysis only focuses on the US, UK,

Russia, France, and China.

The five NWS could consider a nuclear arms control agreement, and cite their obligations to the NPT as a reason for joining together to reduce their nuclear footprint. Introducing the UK and France into negotiations may assuage Russia’s concerns regarding NATO’s posture and defenses. Conversely, both nations are assessed to have fewer nuclear weapons than China, and there is no evidence to propose China feels threatened by their arsenals.

Recalling the earlier analysis of US, Russia, and China’s commitment to negotiate towards an arms control treaty, the US may demonstrate a strong commitment, Russia is only interested in bilateral negotiations, and China is resistant to any perceived coercion at a tri- or multilateral level. The UK states they are committed to disarmament and have significantly reduced their arsenal numbers.⁷¹ France will not proceed if it threatens their security or international stability. Both the UK and France have stated they oppose the TPNW because it undermines the nuclear deterrent foundation of the current world order.⁷²

The opening moves that the US, UK, Russia, France, and China might offer could span a range of ideas from limiting specific classes or ranges of missiles, to requiring verification and crisis management mechanisms, to proposing restrictions on emerging weapons systems in other domains including AI, space, or cyber warfare policies. The same proposed opening moves from the trilateral analysis could apply in a multilateral situation.

The UK’s nuclear monad already operates off the minimum number of warheads required to provide deterrence to themselves, their allies, and to support their vital interests. Therefore, the UK will likely open with a requirement for further verification procedures and confidence building measures.⁷³ This may include on-site inspections, hotlines, or remote sensing capabilities that verify the safety and security of other nations’ nuclear programs, while incrementally enabling the NWS to eventually eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

Similarly, France has declared perceived transparency for its arsenal’s composition and has supported the establishment of



several nuclear weapons-free zones as a means to add to international stability. It is likely France would propose reductions to intermediate range classes of missiles and if this move helps reduce Chinese missiles, France may view this as a stabilizing proposal.⁷⁴ France may also propose verification measures and routine dialogues between the nuclear weapons states.⁷⁵

The possible opening moves may create an actual or perceived West vs. Russia or China environment, if not addressed early in the negotiation process. Alternatively, a declared neutral nation like Switzerland, or another facilitator nation, like Sweden, who has been active in previous negotiations, may help alleviate this concern. It is even possible a combination of TPNW nations may act as facilitators to debunk any perception West vs. Russia or China competition.

The best chance the US, UK, Russia, France and China have for successfully negotiating a nuclear arms control agreement comes from a willing attitude to understand each parties' perspective before offering opening moves. Then, they must seek to find a Nash equilibrium

and continue to work towards that goal, even when other side issues arise. A successful multilateral treaty will require years of dialogue, but it is paramount the nations take the first step now to engage in meaningful dialogue to foster trust and create a cooperative global environment.

At the start of 2022, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapons states signed a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to the NPT and pledged to “continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence, and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all.”⁷⁶

This landmark commitment was the first time the P5 committed to prevent a nuclear arms race and also restrain themselves from targeting “each other or any other State.”⁷⁷

This statement should be encouraging in a world where great power competition and the rate of weapons development continually create opportunities for miscalculation. The joint statement also offers further opportunities for common alliance between the original nuclear states

Table 4. Nuclear Arms Control Multilateral Treaty (US-UK-Russia-France-China)

Define Problem	Commitment to Negotiate	Opening Moves	Facilitator
Not clearly agreed upon; Western states may have similar approach	<i>US:</i> Strong, domestic & int'l support <i>Russia:</i> Moderate, if security-focused and bilateral <i>China:</i> Resistant to trilateral bullying <i>UK:</i> Strong, if no threat to security <i>France:</i> Strong, except total disarmament	<i>US:</i> Long-range delivery vehicles, NSMW, transparency & risk reduction methods <i>Russia:</i> Missile defense, conventional long-range delivery & weapons in space <i>China:</i> Missile defense, disruptive tech (AI), space/cyber tech; limited to no verification <i>UK:</i> Transparency & risk reduction measures, verification procedures <i>France:</i> Transparency, dialogues, restrict INF weapons	NNWS

Source: Author's Original Work

and may create an avenue for a trilateral or multilateral arms control treaty.

the nuclear weapons both countries find vital to their security? Only time, and clear communication will determine that answer.

If the US wishes to entice China to join nuclear arms control negotiations, negotiators and policymakers must understand China will not engage in nuclear arms control for the same reasons or in the same manner Russia did starting in the Cold War. All three nations can learn from the forty years of CTBT negotiations, and avoid the common pitfalls that plagued the discussions. Is it possible for US-Chinese arms control negotiations to find common ground and draft a treaty to limit

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Biography

Lt Col Jannel A. Black is the Deputy Director of the USSTRATCOM Commander's Action Group. She serves as a strategic planner and subject matter expert, leading her team to support Commander, USSTRATCOM's strategic engagements.

Lt Col Black entered active duty in 2007 after commissioning through the Air Force ROTC program at the University of Washington. She has earned the qualification of crew commander and instructor on two weapon systems: Rapid Execution and Combat Targeting (REACT) for Minuteman III ICBM and Airborne Launch Control System (ALCS) onboard USSTRATCOM's Airborne Command Post (ABNCP). Lt Col Black has served as an Assistant Director of Operations and Director of Operations. She has served on MAJCOM and CCMD staffs, focused on operations and strategic plans. Prior to reporting to USSTRATCOM, Lt Col Black was a student at the School of Advanced Air & Space Studies (SAASS).

*Communication & Diverse
Environments*

:

*A Perspective in
Civil Discourse*

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Abstract

When considering diverse environments, one often thinks about foreign cultures, but there is so much more to discuss. Regardless of where you live, stateside or overseas, you deal with diverse environments. These environments can lead someone to behave or communicate differently than we do. This article will attempt to shift from a broad spectrum of awareness, and complexity, to simply improving relationships through communication competence. You'll be able to use the information from this article in different cultures, but you can also use these concepts to improve communication and problem solving in your own workplace and life.

Key Words

Diverse Environments, Influence, Communication, Worldview, High and Low Context, Active Listening, Active Asking

When you think about diverse environments, what comes to mind? We often think about foreign countries and cultures we know little about. However, diverse environments can include military to military, military to civilian, interagency, and beyond. For example, each branch of service has their own culture, and even their own language which can lead to misunderstandings and communication issues.

Regardless of where you live, stateside or overseas, you deal with diverse

environments and the influence these environments can have on communication. Any of these environmental situations can lead to someone behaving or communicating differently than we do. We need to understand that not everyone thinks, acts, and communicates the same.

The Air Force Culture and Language Center describes Cross-Cultural Competence as the ability to quickly and accurately comprehend and then act appropriately and effectively in a culturally complex



environment. The idea is to achieve a desired effect, without necessarily having prior exposure to a particular group, region, or language.¹ This article will attempt to shift Cross-Cultural Competence from a broad spectrum of awareness, and complexity, to improving relationships with everyone through communication competence. The objective is to achieve a desired communication outcome while minimizing damaging misinterpretation or misunderstanding. You'll be able to use the information from this article in different cultures, but you can also use this information to improve communication and problem solving in your own workplace and life. To begin, understanding how people communicate through their own lens or worldview can be helpful.

Worldview

Bradford Hall, in his book *Among Cultures*, defines culture as a "historically shared system and beliefs through which we make our world meaningful!"² Does this cover everything we need to know about culture? Obviously not. It's a stepping off point to begin to explore culture, or diverse environments from a unique perspective.

One perspective is worldview. According to Hall, worldview is how we understand what matters and is important to us.³ Can you imagine a workplace where people spend a little more time trying to understand what matters or is important to each other?

To understand why people believe and do the things they do, or what is important to them, you must look at how they see the world. A person's worldview is like a lens applied to make sense of things going on around them. This is how they interpret their own actions, and the actions of others. A person's worldview is made up of abstract notions about how the world is and often operates at the subconscious level. Each person's worldview and the subcategories associated with worldview can vary and may shift over time as outside influences come into play.⁴ That means you cannot stereotype or group everyone from a specific culture into one worldview. Also, what you see on the surface might not account for deeply held beliefs.

This lens or how people see the world is developed over many years and is influenced by many different factors. Some

of these factors include where someone was raised, who raised them, and what religion was or was not taught. Did you live in the city or the country? Influential examples, both positive and negative like these could go on and on.

On the surface, people tend to assimilate into an unfamiliar environment, but this assimilation may only affect the outer edges of someone’s lens. The core of who they are, or how they see the world, is often unchanged. As such, when someone is communicating in the workplace, how they understand others may have a direct correlation to their lens. If someone’s lens or how they see the world is clouded by additional stress and other workplace conflict, the way they interpret a message may be vastly different than the sender intended. To better understand how someone sees the world, worldviews can be analyzed in a variety of subcategories called high and low context.

High and Low Context

High context characteristics include communicating in an indirect manner. The listener may be more responsible for

understanding the meaning of a message. Meaning is conveyed using contextual clues or non-verbal messages. Low context characteristics include communicating in a more direct manner. The speaker is often responsible for establishing message meaning, using specific words.

Whether high or low context, neither is right or wrong. Awareness can simply help us understand and have better success communicating with those around us. When discussing diverse environments, a lack of high context & low context awareness can explain many misunderstandings. We’ll begin by looking at cultural implications, then tie the concepts to common workplace issues.

Low Context: US and Western European countries tend to be more on the individualistic or low context side. They exhibit individualistic values, have an “I” orientation, value “**truth over harmony**” and “**task over relationships**.”⁵

The individualistic norm of American mainstream culture is made possible by a relatively high and dependable standard of



living that allows self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency often results in people valuing mastery of certain skills or being able to perform under pressure by competing with and doing better than others. Personal independence is a virtue in low context cultures and often impacts the way we communicate, and problem solve.

An “I” orientation is not negative, simply how one was raised and the cultural influences that molded them into who they are. For example, when your children are young, do you say to them that you can’t wait until they grow up and can contribute to the household? This would begin to foster collectivistic values, not typically seen in western cultures. Most parents make statements like, “You can be who you want to be” or “Your success depends on your effort.” These simple statements are signs of an “I” orientation and/or low context characteristics.

Solving a problem means lining up the facts and evaluating one after another. Decisions are based on fact rather than intuition or feelings. Communication is expected to be straightforward, concise, and efficient.

When problem solving, low context cultures use direct communication with explicit verbal expressions. Accuracy, directness, and clarity of speech are valued.

High Context: Nearly three-fourths of the world’s cultures can be described as collectivistic or high context. Collectivistic values include having a “**We**” orientation, valuing “**harmony & face saving** over **truth**,” and “**relationships** over **task**.”⁶

Achievements or accomplishments are typically shared by the group and individualism is frowned upon. Words are not so important as context, which might include the speaker’s tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, and posture. A person’s identity in a high context society tends to be based on one’s roles and experiences within the group.

In direct contrast to low context behavior, in high context cultures many things are implied and non-verbal communication is critical. This method of communication can be complex, is normally well understood within a high context cultural group, but not well understood outside the group. This can

present a challenge and communication may be misinterpreted.

The person you're communicating with may expect you to pay greater attention to how something is said more than what is said. Someone may be much less direct than you. This is in direct contrast to a low context society where directness and clarity are valued. In a high context society, truth is not an excuse for bluntness.⁷

Consider for a moment the difference it could make, when communicating or problem solving with others, if we better understood with whom we're speaking to, and attempted to build trust through good communication.

At its most simplistic level, communication is an exchange of information. You have a sender, a receiver, the message, and typically some type of feedback. In this

Here's an example of how high and low context characteristics can influence organizational communication, even with people of similar backgrounds. Have you ever had a subordinate speak with you about something they disagree with? Some people get frustrated because the subordinate may beat around the bush and/or talk around the subject. They are showing you deference, not wanting to offend you. This is an example of high context characteristics, but often our reaction is impatience and frustration. We may want directness and someone to "get to the point," which is indicative of low context characteristics. Maybe the lower ranking person does not trust how you'll respond or they're afraid if they speak the truth, it could impact their career. Regardless of the underlying reason, this is a perfect example of high and low context characteristics impacting organizational communication. Awareness in the workplace and across cultures can help build or destroy trust.

Communication

We often go through life barely understanding our own worldview let alone understanding the worldview of others.

simplistic form, the message may merely be sent and received, but may not result in "good communication." Sadly, most people think about communication as only

the spoken word. How well one speaks is often a cultural indicator of their intelligence or status. Rarely does someone concern themselves with how well they listen; nor do they pay attention to how what they say is received by the listener.

Communication Barriers

Sometimes we get so caught up in our own voice, what we have to say, but fail to grasp the value of tuning into what someone else is saying. Duncan Brodie, in his article *The Consequences of Not Listening*, states that your voice is only as strong as your ability to listen. What are some dangers of not listening? How about disengaged people, missing great ideas, loss of respect and most importantly, damaged trust?⁸

Why is listening so hard? According to the Institute of Organizational Development, we think four times faster than a person can speak, and as such, only need about 25% of our mental capacity to listen. That leaves 75% of our brain to wander.⁹ When our minds wander, people can see this in our eyes. About 30 – 60 seconds into a conversation we get the “deer in the headlight” look. Consider for a moment a

spouse or loved one who is speaking to us. As they share something important, we are already thinking about how to respond, fix the problem, or worse, simply tune out. Think about the impact this has on building trusting relationships. Now consider how this can impact workplace relationships.

Many of us tend to also be conversational narcissists. This occurs when a person competes for attention by changing the subject to favor oneself.¹⁰ Changing the subject to favor yourself, overusing the shift response to bring the conversation back to you, or listening to respond versus understand can damage the intended outcome of the communication. The overuse of this practice is an obstacle to effective communication and ultimately detracts from building trusting relationships. If you're unaware of your own narcissism, the person you're communicating with may shut down, believing that you don't care about what they have to say. This battle for conversational control may go unnoticed to you, but can have a devastating impact to those around you.

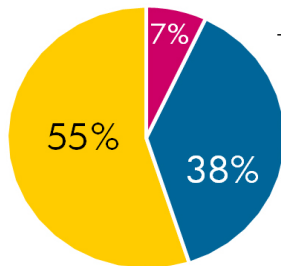
It's not our nature to control how we

communicate and/or learn from others. This simply goes against our propensity to be heard and a desire to drive conversation. We like to impress others with our knowledge and intellect, but there's value when we listen and ask questions. Cohen, in his book "Negotiating Skills for Managers," describes a concept called an obligation of reciprocity or the concept of responding to a positive action with another positive action. Your ability to listen and learn should spur your counterpart to do

manage a professional relationship, it is important to pay attention to the opposite's nonverbal cues. According to Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA Professor, (see Figure 1 below), 93% of our communication is non-verbal (55% body language, 38% voice, tone) and only 7% of our communication consists of the words we use.¹²

Volume, rate of speech, and use of silence or pauses can dramatically affect how we interpret a message. It's not just the spoken

Figure 1



Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55% Rule

Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

https://i2.wp.com/www.rightattitudes.com/img/7-38-55_body_language_voice_words.png?ssl=1

the same, thus improving the possibility for collaboration and building trusting relationships.¹¹

Non-Verbal Communication: Danger of Not Paying Attention

Most of us understand that communication goes beyond the spoken word. To actively

words, but how people interpret those words, based on their lens or worldview, can often give the same words vastly different meanings.¹³

There are far too many facets of non-verbal communication to discuss in this article, but there is one area of critical importance.

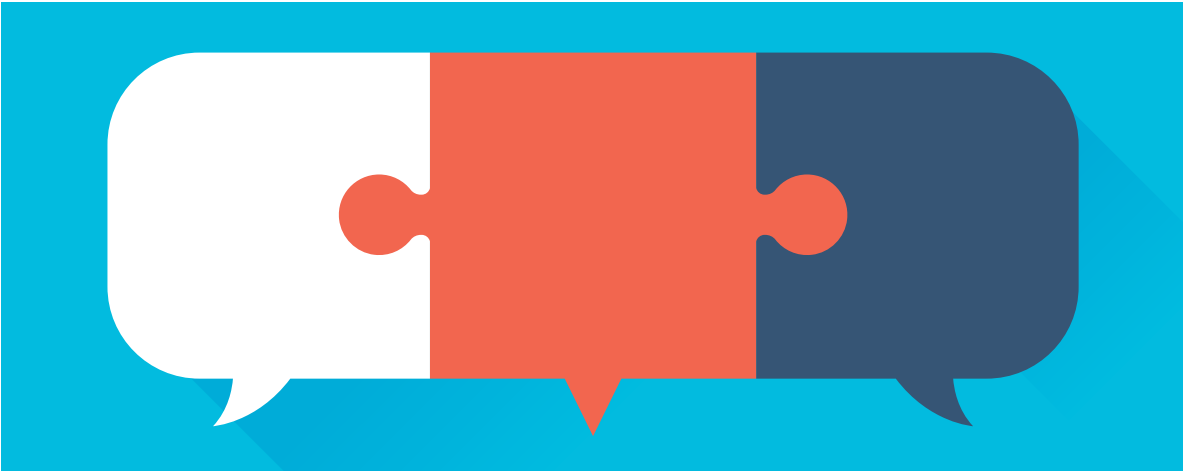
Can you imagine if your leadership paid more attention to how their message was received rather than simply being content to know the message was delivered?

might misinterpret a message. It's also understandable to think that most people will adapt to the cultural norms of those around them or the organizations they are

Here's an example of how a failure to pay attention to non-verbal communication can damage relationships. While teaching an elective at Air War College, there was a discussion about how history plays a role in negotiation planning. There were a handful of senior US Air Force officers and one international student from Botswana in the class. Every Air Force officer clamored to share their opinions about how history was not important in the planning process. Their opinion was not the issue; the issue was the non-verbal reaction of the international student. Clearly, by his non-verbal behavior, one could see that the Botswanan student was upset, but none of the other students noticed. In fact, they continued to jockey for verbal dominance. I finally interrupted and asked the gentleman from Botswana if he wanted to share his thoughts. As a sign of respect, the Botswanan student did not want to give the appearance of dissent. Finally, with additional prodding, he shared, stating that "there is no way to consider the future without first understanding the past." Every one of the U.S. students said they were sorry for not considering the Botswanan student's opinion. It was nice they were apologetic, but how did they not see the blatant non-verbal expression of discomfort? **For these senior leaders, it was very easy to get so caught up in their own voices that they failed to see how their words were impacting someone else.**

A study of non-verbal communication can be exhausting, but humble awareness can help us understand how someone

associated with, but this does not always mean people like us communicate the same way we do.



Active Listening and Asking

When we are taught how to communicate, we're rarely taught how to listen. As such, most of us listen to respond, not to understand. As a Federal Mediator and educator, I understand how difficult it is to be a good listener. In fact, I can teach an entire day and be far less tired than actively listening for a few hours in a mediation. Active or reflective listening is an effort to hear not only the words but, more importantly, understand the message. It requires the listener to concentrate, attempt to understand, remember, and then respond to what is being said. Active listening is difficult and takes practice. Typically, we listen just long enough to hear a few words, then our biases, emotions, and desire to

develop solutions cloud our ability to listen.

To be an **active listener**, we must fight the urge to start formulating a response before the speaker is finished. A psychological process begins to unfold, as we accept responsibility for understanding, paraphrase the message, summarize, and clarify so the speaker feels heard. By sharing back what you heard and clarifying you'll begin to build a rapport with the speaker. Good listeners are good because they accept responsibility and take an active approach.¹⁴ Listen to learn, not to answer. Listen to understand, not to judge.

Active asking goes beyond active listening. Active asking takes what is heard



and formulates questions based on the information, as opposed to asking leading questions or taking the speaker where you want them to go. Since we tend to make statements instead of asking follow-up questions, the speaker often thinks we don't care about what they have to say. By asking "clarifying" questions, based on what we just heard, the speaker not only knows we've been listening, but has a chance to share additional information.

Asking questions allows the person you're speaking to not only be heard, but begin to believe you care. By looking at the person you're communicating with as a partner in the problem-solving process, this will not only improve your awareness and understanding, but will help improve relationships.

In a Crisis & Hostage Negotiation course I attended many years ago, it was not enough to just listen to the person in a crisis, but to build trust and rapport. Trust building did not come from trite words like, "I hear you," or "I understand." There actually needed to be a psychological shift. This shift came from patience through active listening and even more importantly, through active asking. I took what the person said and turned it into questions. For example, when they said they lost their wife, kids, job, and dog, I simply shared back what I heard, (Active Listening), but then became an (Active Asker) by turning what they said into questions. "After you lost your wife, kids, job, and dog, what happened next?" This showed that I not only heard what they said, but cared enough to dig deeper into their issues. After a rapport was built, I was in a much better position to ask how we could solve this issue.

When someone has a chance to share and clarify their concerns, they may be in a better place to begin to listen and understand what you have to say.¹⁵

SUMMARY

This article was intended to generate interest in how to better communicate in diverse environments, knowing that

diversity can simply be slight differences in how people communicate. You don't have to travel around the world to apply these concepts. People in your work center may come from many different backgrounds and bring valuable diversity, but even those who are native to the United States may come from diverse environments.

It's understandable for a leader to make statements and demand something be done now, but what would it be like to be part of an organization where people spend a little more time trying to understand what matters or is important to you? How about a coworker who wants to hear your perspective before sharing theirs?

Understanding communication through the lens of worldview can help people build strong relationships. How people make sense of the world around them is developed over many years and is influenced by many distinct factors? As mentioned, where someone was raised, who raised them, what religion was or was not taught, and many other areas affect who we are. In addition to worldview, an awareness of high and low context

communication may be able to help us understand each other a little better. Remember, it may be more important to understand how your message is landing on someone, instead of simply being content you got the message delivered. Someone's non-verbal behavior may be sending a hidden message.

Finally, we looked at effective communication, moving beyond stereotypes and clarifying the art of communication as something far more important than simply the spoken word. Understanding how easy it is to get caught up in our own voice, while failing to grasp the value of active listening, can harm relationships. As we begin to understand how difficult listening really is, we can begin to improve on this elusive skill. As we move beyond active listening to active asking, our inquisitive questions not only help us better understand what someone is saying, it also helps someone know that we care.

Communication competency is not just knowing how to deliver a message, but also ensuring that the intended message was received. An ineffective communicator





may miss the value that diverse environments and people bring to the organization. Worse, the mission may get done, but often at the expense of people. Finally, as a federal mediator for more than 10 years, I see no better way of building organizational trust and rapport than simply listening to what people have to say.

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Biography

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The Sword in the SCIF : How a Black Swan Can Derail a Negotiation

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Abstract

In a previous role as a Flight Commander, responsible for overseeing 25 peer-level officers, I attempted to negotiate what I believed would be a simple matter that turned sour quickly, because I did not fully understand the opposing party's interests. He brought a sword into a confined workspace that posed a safety hazard to his coworkers and I attempted to persuade him to remove it from his work center. Negotiation seemed a better option than my Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA), but in the end, the negotiation failed and I was forced to exercise my BATNA. The negotiation failed due to too many assumptions on my part, not asking more probing questions to better understand the other sides' interests, and ultimately failing to uncover their "Black Swan," which in this case was that the member believed they needed the sword for self-defense.

Key Words

Black Swan, BATNA, Positions and Interests, Influence

Introduction

The goal of any negotiation is to get what you want.¹ The long-term outcome usually improves when both sides equally support the solution. Sometimes, what you want benefits both sides, and an agreement can be reached rather easily; other times, the only option is to push for your position at the other party's expense, and if you can't come to a negotiated agreement, implement your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA).² In a previous leadership role as a Flight Commander, I encountered a conflict in

which I attempted to negotiate an outcome in the best interest of my team. I sought out as much information as possible ahead of the negotiation, best characterized within the Trust Information Power Options (TIPO) model (explained below), to drive the conversation toward shared interests, and still failed to arrive at a negotiated agreement. Despite deliberate preparation and fact-finding beforehand, we never reached a negotiated agreement because even though I thought I had a good rapport with the other party, I failed to steer the negotiation away from positions and



failed to identify the “Black Swan”, that unpredictable piece of knowledge driving the position of the other party.³

Triggering events

As a Flight Commander overseeing 25 other peer-level officers, one of my team members approached me with a concern: Their coworker had brought a five-foot sword into their enclosed workspace within the Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) and left it leaning against his cubicle. When the owner of the sword, whom we will call Brian, returned to his desk, he inadvertently knocked the sword

over, falling in the direction of his coworker, almost causing an injury to the coworker. This event occurred two or three times before the offended party reported it to me. Rather than directly address the issue with Brian, the coworker approached me as the Flight Commander, in charge of all schoolhouse instructors, to handle the problem.

During the same day, I received a different report from another team member informing me that Brian had been using chewing tobacco while instructing in the classroom, a strictly prohibited behavior. I would later

discover there was not a similar ironclad rule restricting the sword in the workplace. I needed to intervene and attempt to correct Brian's conduct before it escalated and further eroded unit standards and/or someone got hurt.

I immediately recognized the minefields this negotiation could entail. Even though as the Flight Commander I outranked Brian positionally, we both wore the same military rank. Addressing this issue would require sensitivity and preparation. I aimed to resolve both the safety hazard created by the sword in the SCIF and the noncompliance issue of tobacco use in a classroom setting *and* hopefully convince Brian to voluntarily take the necessary steps to address these issues. Without Brian's buy-in, he could have used his influence to undermine my authority over the instructors. I wanted him to understand and agree with *why* I was asking for the changes we were about to discuss. Citing regulations and anecdotal evidence, I planned to shift the discussion away from our conflicting positions toward the assumed shared interests of maintaining standards and promoting workplace safety. Before

approaching Brian, I needed to develop a plan.

Pre-Negotiation Preparation

Preparation is the "dominant force of success" of a negotiation.⁴ To win Brian over to my side and meet my objective, I needed to gather as much knowledge as possible. First, I had to decide which problem solving approach would be most effective. To do that, I began by identifying my BATNA.⁵ In this case, my BATNA was to exercise my positional power and insist that Brian discontinue tobacco use in the classroom and remove the sword from the SCIF. The negative second and third-order effects of my BATNA (the insist method) led me to pursue a negotiated agreement.

In addition to the BATNA, I also considered the evade approach by exercising my Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (WATNA) but doing nothing would not work because of the need to preserve standards and safety concerns.⁶ Without addressing the issue, what would be the worst-case scenario? If no one confronted Brian, he would likely continue chewing tobacco



in front of students, and his sword would remain leaning against his desk, waiting to potentially slice into an unsuspecting victim. The potential negative consequences of my WATNA led me to conclude that evading the issue was also not an acceptable problem-solving approach.

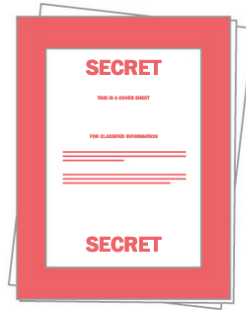
After considering both the BATNA and WATNA and appreciating both the insist and evade approaches had too many consequences, I elected to use the cooperative approach and negotiate. Doing nothing would invariably escalate the situation, and simply demanding that Brian change his conduct could erode my peer leadership. Negotiation seemed like the best way forward with the most positive outcome.

Next, I considered how to approach this negotiation with Brian. I aimed to reframe our differing positions toward the shared interests of public safety and upholding standards to protect the unit brand. I recognized that if the negotiation went wrong, the conversation could devolve into distributive bargaining, where the goals of one side conflict with the other.⁷ If the

negotiation stooped to this level, I would be forced to exercise my BATNA.

Leading up to the negotiation, I knew my positions and interests and attempted to understand his, but I failed to ask questions to verify I had correctly identified his positions and interests. In a negotiation, interest-based problem-solving can result in a far more positive outcome long-term, but it requires an understanding of “why a person wants what they want.”⁸ Positionally, I wanted the sword removed and the tobacco use to stop. I believed Brian would argue positionally to keep the sword in place and look for a loophole to continue chewing tobacco in the classroom. My interest was in maintaining a safe work environment and adhering to standards to protect the unit’s image. I thought Brian was interested in projecting machismo or manliness with the sword and looked to rebel against the rule-heavy culture of the command where we both worked, but also assumed he would share my interest in the safety of the unit.

A good negotiator will understand their own interests, consider the opposite’s interests,



Type of information

It may include basic State Department cables.

Secret includes a report from a U.S. Embassy overseas

Top secret information includes weapon designs and war plans.

Risk level

It could “damage” national security.

Its exposure could cause “serious damage” to national security.

The exposure of these materials could cause “exceptionally grave damage” to national security.

SCIF required?

NO
 Information with this this low-level classification doesn't need to be stored or reviewed in a SCIF.

NO
 Information marked secret can be kept in a government office such as the Pentagon or the State Department, provided it is properly locked up when the office is empty.

YES
 Information marked Top Secret or SCI must remain in a SCIF or in the custody of a cleared CIA or National Security Council official.

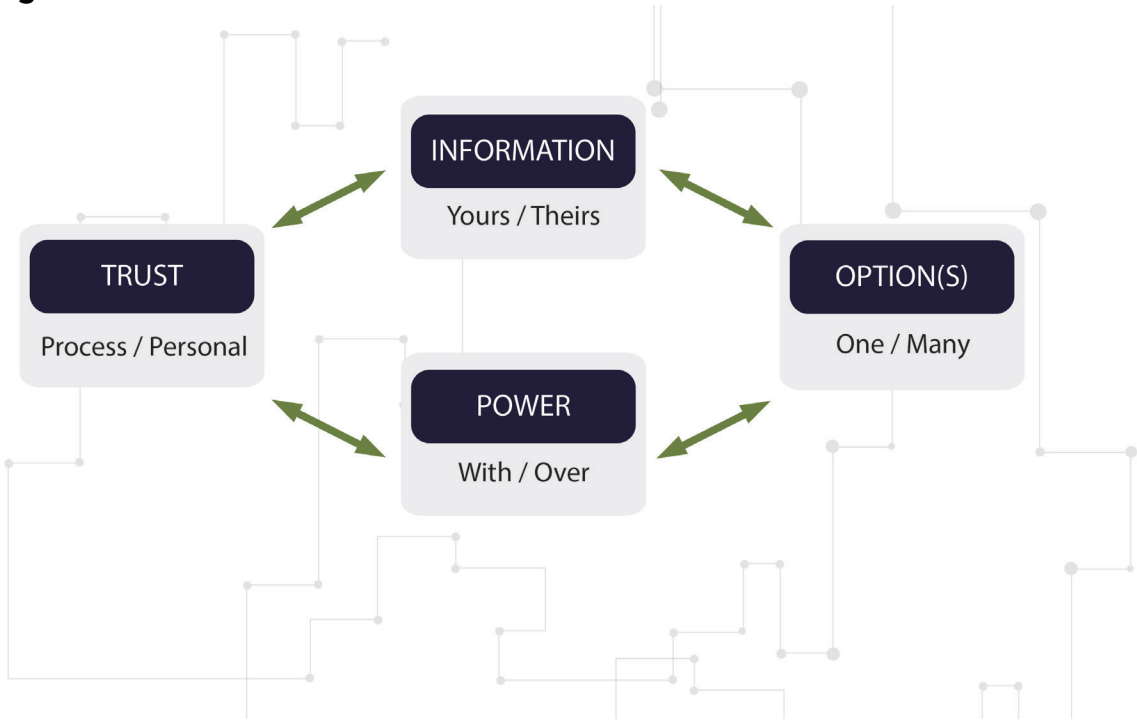
Inside the fortified rooms securing U.S. secrets, Washington Post. 26 April 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2023/scif-room-meaning-classified/>

prioritize them, and manage those interests that conflict.⁹ Unbeknownst to me at the time, I had already committed a critical error. I incorrectly assumed I understood the

motivations behind Brian’s position. Armed with what I believed were the interests of both sides, I prepared an argument to sell Brian on my position by transitioning the



Figure 1



negotiation towards to what was behind the positions (the interests).¹⁰ Simply rejecting his position would only strengthen his resolve to defy me and dig in, creating a stalemate.¹¹ I set out to avoid the stalemate by focusing on what I thought were shared interests.

In addition to considering positions, the interests behind the positions, and attempting to formulate a plan to avoid a position-based stalemate, I examined my approach from multiple lenses. In

retrospect, my planning “lenses” could be best categorized within the Trust, Information, Power, and Options (TIPO) framework (figure 1).¹²

TIPO Analysis

The first element to consider was trust, specifically the trust (or lack of trust) between Brian and myself. I had worked with Brian for only about three months leading up to the tobacco and sword incidents, but during that brief period, we had many positive interactions. However,

his conduct deviated from the norms of instructor behavior in big ways. For example, the way he shook your hand made it seem as if he was attempting to flex every muscle in his body while doing so, and he covered his work center in camouflage netting. He prided himself on his machismo image. He was clearly different from me, but his idiosyncrasies did not leave me questioning his abilities nor his resolve to perform admirably in his new role. If anything, I thought he could be someone to bring back some of the warrior spirit the schoolhouse lacked. Leading up to the conversation, I believed Brian and I trusted each other, and I thought he would trust the process if I could definitively point to regulations prohibiting his behavior. Without specific rules against his behavior, I assessed Brian would not acquiesce to my request. Based on his previous conversations with me, I knew that if I did not have hard and fast rules to remove the sword, he would consider my position a bunch of bureaucratic nonsense.

Following trust, I next analyzed the information about the situation from both his and my vantage points. First, I attempted to

verify whether both events Brian had been accused of had transpired. The sword in the SCIF was easily proven true; I saw it fall over toward the other instructor’s desk and verified it was sharp. The sword presented a safety concern. I then interviewed one of Brian’s fellow instructors, who confirmed he had used tobacco in front of students on multiple occasions. Believing my information was sound, I looked to the rules to ascertain whether these issues violated policy or simply made others uncomfortable. I found the General Officer-signed policy explicitly prohibiting any tobacco use in the presence of students. The policy prohibiting weapons in the SCIF was much more arbitrary and elusive. I contacted the SCIF manager to verify the no-weapons policy, but to my surprise, they had no issue with swords in their SCIF. Weapons were explicitly prohibited, but from their lens, military members always had knives and other sharp implements lying around their workspaces, serving as mementos from previous teams and jobs. The manager refused to support my petition to remove the sword on the grounds of a rule violation. I knew then the negotiation would become a real challenge.

Armed with my information, I considered the data Brian would present in the negotiation. I could not see any plausible defense for using tobacco in the classroom; the rules were clear. However, I assumed he would base his argument for keeping his sword on anecdotal evidence of other members within the same unit possessing sharp implements in their workspaces, which could also be characterized as weapons. Had I more closely assessed how Brian would respond to the lack of concrete rules supporting my claim that weapons were not allowed in the SCIF, I would have realized continuing the cooperative approach by negotiating was futile, but I still held to the belief I could get him to see my concern for public safety.

The next step of the TIPO model examines the power dynamic between parties, specifically the type of power in play and how it would be used. Both Brian and I held the same rank, which I recognized would likely complicate the negotiation. I had legitimate, positional power in my role as the Flight Commander and verified before the negotiation commenced that the unit commander would support my decision. However, I recognized that Brian held some

influential power within the instructor core; he could form a coalition of instructors against my leadership if the negotiation did not yield a favorable outcome from his perspective. Recognizing the clear conflict between my positional power and his influential power, I looked to avoid trying to leverage my power against him. Cooperation, not coercion, was the goal. I felt I could convince Brian to cooperate by creating a shared understanding with expert power, using my gathered knowledge on the subject matter area to steer both sides toward a specific outcome.¹³

My planning fell flat in the final step of the TIPO model: options. In the TIPO model, the options stage focuses on finding other means for solving the problem.¹⁴ Perhaps there were more than two possible outcomes; generally, the more options created between the parties, the greater the chance of an amicable resolution. When addressing his tobacco use, since the rules explicitly prohibited its use in front of students, I did not see any need to consider other options. In my preparation for the safety hazard negotiation, I only considered three possible outcomes: the sword remains

as-is; the sword remains in the workspace and is secured to the wall; or the sword is removed. A quick survey of the workspace revealed no available space to mount the sword safely to the wall. Other options were available, such as moving the sword to a different room in the building, but I never considered them before the negotiation.

Negotiation Strategy

Once I considered the positions and interests and evaluated the negotiation through the lens of the TIPO model, I attempted to put the pieces together to formulate a strategy centered around shared interests, aiming for an integrative negotiation¹⁵. Even with rules in hand, I incorrectly assumed Brian would put up far more resistance to the tobacco use issue. I hoped my expert power using irrefutable facts would convince him of the error of his behavior. Assuming Brian agreed to stop using tobacco, I then planned to use this momentum, which Cialdini referred to as the influence of commitment or agreement, to succeed on my second issue, the sword removal.¹⁶ If I could put Brian in an agreeable state with the first issue, I could potentially avoid a distributive

bargaining fight between positions on the second issue. According to Cialdini in his book *Influence*, “Once a stand [position] is taken, there is a natural tendency to behave in ways that are stubbornly consistent with the stand.”¹⁷ It was a long shot, but if I could keep the conversation on rules, I might convince him to prioritize safety and remove the sword. With the way forward fully explored and determined, it was time to negotiate.

The Negotiation

I asked Brian to come to my office to discuss both matters in private. True to my strategy, I started with the tobacco use problem. I cited the exact rule prohibiting tobacco use in front of students and asked him to stop. To my surprise, Brian immediately acknowledged his lapse in judgment, apologized, and vowed I would not hear of any further infractions of the kind. Feeling confident with how the discussion had gone thus far, I told him I needed him to remove the sword from his cubicle space in the SCIF. I reasoned it was a hazard and an unnecessary risk, thinking he would agree with me and comply. He did not. My haste in transitioning to the second





Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein and Gen. CQ Brown Jr., Pacific Air Forces Commander, met with senior Vietnamese officials in Hanoi, Vietnam, in August 2019. (U.S. Air Force photo)

subject led to me presenting the issue *positionally*, instead of leveraging shared interests, as I had planned. The distributive bargaining had begun.

Brian proceeded to defend his right to keep the sword in his workspace. As I suspected, he pointed to other sharp instruments in the vicinity of the sword, which I acknowledged, but did not request the removal of, because none of the other sharp instruments were at risk of falling and potentially hurting people. He continued to argue against my position at one point asking me point blank whether there was an actual rule I was trying to enforce or if this was yet another example of “bureaucratic bull!” I tried to reel the negotiation back toward

shared interests. I assured him that even though there was technically a rule in place prohibiting weapons in the SCIF, my primary concern was the safety and well-being of the instructor cadre. The sword threatened people’s safety, so I insisted it must go.

We argued back and forth for over an hour. Since we were deadlocked in our respective positions, the negotiation was going nowhere. We had arrived at a stalemate: Brian ignored my interest in public safety, and I simply attacked the merits of his position. There would be no successful negotiated agreement so reluctantly, I exercised my BATNA. I demanded he remove the sword by the end of the day. It is a weapon and must go. Brian responded

by saying, “It’s a tool.” I repeated my stance on it being a weapon, to which he stated matter-of-factly, “The sword is a tool; *I’m* the weapon!” At that point, I ended the discussion by telling him again to take the sword out of the building by the end of the duty day. I aimed to have the sword removed *and* Brian’s buy-in to the decision, but only achieved the sword’s removal.

The Outcome

Despite extensive preparation and fact-finding efforts, the negotiation failed because I went straight for positions as opposed to asking questions to understand his interests. The conversation started off promising, with Brian agreeing to stop using tobacco in the workplace, but the second issue devolved into a stalemate that pushed me to exercise my BATNA. Even though I can point to several different places that soured the negotiation, one piece of the puzzle stands out. I missed something I did not even realize I had missed. In his book *Never Split the Difference*, former FBI negotiator Chris Voss states there are “pieces of knowledge that sit outside our regular expectations and cannot be predicted.”¹⁸ He calls these critical pieces of

information, the *unknown* unknowns, “Black Swans.”¹⁹ I missed a black swan.

Leading up to the negotiation, I believed I had accounted for the key pieces of information for both sides of the argument, but in hindsight, I completely missed Brian’s real interest in keeping the sword in the SCIF. In his comment to me where he proclaimed, “he was the weapon,” what he was actually telling me was he needed to be prepared for an existential threat in the workplace; the sword was his chosen “tool” to combat the threat. While his belief that a life-threatening altercation could be considered outlandish, or at the very least, highly unlikely, he believed it was possible and this *belief* is what mattered. In hindsight, I should have paid closer attention to the clues in front of me, like the military netting at his workspace and how he shook my hand, to help reveal his black swan of having a survivalist mentality. To me, he wanted the sword to assert some kind of hypermasculinity, but to him, he needed his tool of self-defense. At no point did it ever occur to me that he looked to the sword as a way to defend himself. To him, I was taking away his means of self-defense.



With the argument now properly framed from Brian's perspective, I now see the negotiation never had a chance to succeed because Brian would never willingly part with his only means of self-defense.

Reflections

Looking back on the case of the sword in the SCIF, there are a few key takeaways for what went wrong with the negotiation. First, during the preparation for the negotiation, I did not identify other options to removing the sword from the building. The sword could have been relocated to another room in the building, or Brian could have engineered a means of safely storing it in or near his workplace. My desire for the sword's removal overrode my willingness to consider other logical alternatives. Additionally, during the negotiation, I deviated from focusing on interests. In haste to resolve the conflict, I drove the conversation toward distributive bargaining by leading with my position, causing a stalemate. Even if Brian had been in an agreeable state after admitting fault for using tobacco, my approach put him on the defensive. However, the strongest force fighting against a positive solution was the

piece of information I never even thought to consider: the Black Swan. At all times, Brian believed he needed a tool to defend himself; Brian was literally on the defensive the entire time he was in the workplace. He viewed my directive to remove the sword as an assault on his means of self-defense and defended himself against the assault accordingly. Without an explicitly stated rule backed by the SCIF manager, Brian would never willingly remove the sword.

Unfortunately, this story does not have a happy ending. My relationship with Brian worsened following the sword in the SCIF incident, and any existing trust between us evaporated. Callous interactions and conflict characterized the remainder of our time working together. I rightly predicted he would attempt to use his influence to form a coalition against me. Unfortunately, his efforts backfired and cost him the respect of most of his peers. Eventually, his actions pushed me to remove him from the leadership position to which I appointed him. Had I worked to understand his interest before the negotiation and started the conversation based on interests, perhaps our working relationship would

have continued, and he would have remained in his leadership position. I will never know how a more positive outcome could have improved our relationship, but looking toward future negotiation efforts, I know I will make every attempt to unveil the Black Swans by asking questions to better understand the interests behind positions, because the *unknown* unknowns make all the difference.

Notes

I wish to thank Major Karianne Moody and Major Katrina Cheesman for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. All errors found therein are my own.



Biography

Major Lane Kemp is a student in Air Command and Staff College. He is an experienced Cyber Warfare Officer who has previously held multiple leadership roles including Director of Operations and Flight Commander. In his 12 years of leadership experience, he has routinely encountered workplace negotiations; he is currently working on asking better questions to achieve better outcomes.

Endnotes

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A Story is a Good Start : *Civil Discourse and Strategic Communication*

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Abstract

This article explores storytelling, listening, rhetoric, and reading novels as tools strategic leaders can use to enhance communication skills in support of civil discourse. Productive communication can begin with a story creating connections immediately between participants in any conversation. Connection can be improved with practiced attentive listening. Learning how rhetoric describes communicative acts, and then applying those strategies, heightens the possibility of continued connection to and communication with others. And finally, reading fiction from other countries can improve the kind of knowledge strategic leaders need to work in a joint, multipolar world in which many voices can and should be heard. And yet, the world stage is smaller than it used to be. Alliances matter more than sheer might in the current international world order. Making thoughtful and purposeful human connection is part of the business of strategic leaders. US strategic leaders can no longer rely on unipolar power to bring partners to them, they must reach out to connect. This article provides several pathways to making human connections in service of civil discourse in support of strategic communication.

Key Words

Strategic Communication, Rhetoric, Listening, Fiction, Storytelling

I am starting this article with a story, a story that provides an example; it is a way to connect to the audience; it provides common ground. This story is about a moment in American history when civil discourse failed, and violence erupted in our capitol (22 May 1856—not 6 Jan 2020). After the story, I will write about practicing civil discourse and three choices you can make to become a stronger strategic

communicator and leader: listening more attentively, actively pursuing knowledge of rhetoric, and reading novels. My definition of civil discourse is a foundation for my suggestions in this article: Civil discourse is conversation between people holding opposing views that is intentionally productive and constructive, that fosters understanding, that is embodied by respect and open mindedness, and that must

always begin with attentive listening. A story is a good place to start—it enhances the connection between author, content, and reader, setting the stage for considering why improving civil discourse should be part of every leader’s goals.

The Story: Violence in The Senate Chamber

In the mid-1850s United States of America, uncivil discourse was rampant among many living in the North and the South—in times of great civil strife this is not unexpected. The US Congress was struggling with dire threats to the relatively young country. Abolitionists and pro-slavery agitators were active. There was talk of secession. Tempers were running high. Speeches were inflammatory. Violence was the answer for many, especially in the late 1850s in Kansas. In 1854 Congress had passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act which did not explicitly designate these as free or slave territories.

Between the passage of that Act and the start of the Civil War, Kansas was a place of particular violence and guerilla warfare as pro- and anti-slavery factions

fought for control. Election tampering, skirmishes, and outright murder caused this trouble in the West to be referred to as “Bleeding Kansas.”¹ An abolitionist Republican, Senator Charles Sumner from Massachusetts, gave a speech in the Senate over two days on 19 and 20 May 1856, titled “The Crime Against Kansas” in which he called out multiple congressional colleagues over whether Kansas should have legal slavery or not and whether those who interfered should be held accountable. Sumner had been preparing the speech for months before he finally gave it—he even had it printed (112 pages).²

Specifically, Sumner uncivilly wrote about perpetrators in this “crime,” saying, “The political credit of men who uphold the Usurpation [referring to the pro-slavery violence in Kansas] droops even more than stocks; and the People are turning from all those whom the Assassins and Thugs have derived their disgraceful immunity.”³ However, Sumner was more blatantly critical of Senator Andrew Butler from South Carolina, not present for the speech. He said Butler had taken “a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who, though





https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/nmah_325684

ugly to others, is always lovely to him; though polluted in the sight of the world, is chaste in his sight;—I mean, the harlot, Slavery.”⁴

On 22 May 1856, after the Senate adjourned, Preston Brooks, a House Representative from South Carolina, and relative of Andrew Butler, caned Charles Sumner until he was unconscious.

The Senate investigation report set the scene for the caning:

[W]hile Mr. Sumner was sitting at his desk in the Senate Chamber, [Brooks did] assault him with considerable violence, striking him numerous blows on and about the head with a walking stick, which cut his head and disabled him.... The cause of this assault was certain language used by Mr. Sumner in debate on the Monday and Tuesday preceding, which Mr. Brooks considered libellous [sic] of the State of South Carolina, and slanderous of his near kinsman, Mr. Butler, a senator from that State.⁵

One witness said, “All the while [through the caning], Senator Sumner was holding his hands above his head, and turning and tottering, until he sank gradually on the floor near Senator Collamer’s desk, in a bleeding and apparently exhausted condition.”⁶

Brooks was arrested and fined but served no time. He resigned from the House, went home to let his constituents “vote” on his actions, and was quickly reelected and returned to Congress by the end of the summer.

Sumner took three years to recover, working “only intermittently,” before returning to the Senate where he would serve for 15 more years fighting for human and civil rights.⁷ In the meantime, the US, “suffering from the breakdown of reasoned discourse that this event symbolized, tumbled onward to the catastrophe of the civil war.”⁸

The danger of failed civil discourse is that it can cement polarization. Both Sumner and Brooks became icons to their factions— Sumner, a martyr; Brooks, a hero. Within just a few years of this horrific incident, the US was in utter chaos. Millions of lives

would feel the pain of this uncivil Civil War. Millions went to war; over one million would become casualties; hundreds of thousands of soldiers would be dead from battle; many would be wounded in action⁹; and there might have been as many as 50,000 civilians who died as a result of the US Civil War.¹⁰

Today, turn on any screen to see tragedies unfolding as horrific as the US Civil War— around the world, every day. Failed civil discourse can cause and maintain bitter divides, partisan and polarized politics, a tendency to autocracy, is at the core of failed diplomacy, the rise of terrorism, and ultimately, failed civil discourse can lead to war. When civil discourse fails, old wounds, perhaps even ones thought healed, will rip open anew and cause peoples to lash out at one another. When civil discourse fails, a divide is made or deepened, and over time, without civil discourse, divisions may only be exacerbated. When civil discourse fails, humans have a hard time coming back from that, indeed, they can be broken from lack of civil discourse, literally and emotionally.¹¹ Sumner ultimately tried to pass a Civil Rights Act (posthumously), but another Civil

Rights act wasn't passed until 1964.

If the goal is failed civil discourse, then humans are excelling. It is easy to do: do not listen to anyone with a differing opinion, interrupt other speakers, always push to get one opinion heard, use inflammatory language, personally call out and insult individuals in prominent positions, berate others, be narrow minded, and remain uninformed or informed by limited/one-sided sources.

Do You Want to Avoid Failed Civil Discourse?

The goal of any leader, but especially senior leaders, should be to excel at civil discourse. To improve skill in civil discourse, leaders can do three things to become better at civil discourse (and therefore, also better at strategic communication): listen attentively, learn more about rhetoric, read a novel. Strategic communication is knowing what message needs to be heard by whom and when they need to hear it. Civil discourse in support of strategic communication should be part of a senior leader's repertoire. Civil discourse is about listening, about having an open mind. It

is about being thoughtful, about finding common ground for a starting point (although being a successful practitioner of civil discourse does not guarantee agreement between humans, parties, or countries). Though the outcome of any human interaction might not be perfect agreement, civil discourse is often the best way to begin.

Practicing civil discourse can be beneficial for every leader. Here are three ways to improve:

- 1) *Be an attentive listener (with an open mind);*
- 2) *Be a thoughtful speaker (know how you are communicating);*
- 3) *Be empathetic (seek common ground).*

That is it. Listening helps nurture empathy. Being a thoughtful speaker helps in communicating productively. Trying to seek common ground supports being an attentive listener. Practiced together, all three foster and support improvement in all three.

Be an Attentive Listener (with an Open Mind)

Listening to support civil discourse must go beyond hearing words; listening must be intentional. Listening includes noting what the speaker is saying, as well as how it is being said. An attentive listener must give a speaker undivided attention. This includes one's whole physical and mental positioning, the way a listener looks at the speaker, the way the listener sits, the sounds a listener makes, how a listener breathes.

Listening as part of civil discourse should be listening to learn, to repeat, to ask questions. Asking questions is always a good move. There is no need to exhibit anger or take it personally or shout or call names, questions can be reasonably asked until the opponent's argument falls apart or starts to make sense to the listener. It might be *the listener's* argument that falls apart—but no matter what, if one is paying attention, really listening, then important information will be gleaned about the other side. That might lead to common ground where conversations can really get civil.

Characteristics of a great listener¹²:

- *Make and keep eye contact* (even online—look at that green light like it is the eyes of the other person). Do not shift your eyes around to look at anything else. Blink as needed, but do not look away. If face-to-face, do not look at a watch or phone. Make the speaker think they are the only one who matters. Be attentive by actually being present both physically and mentally. Nod occasionally so the speaker knows that connection is a high priority. But that kind of quiet attention is not enough.
- *Listen to understand*—Make a mental list of any questions necessary for clarity. If parties have agreed that it is okay to take notes, take notes, but only as a last resort—notes can derail the notetaker, bifurcating the listener's attention between the speaker and writing. As needed, practice listening and remembering. Listen to a TED Talk online (sometimes 20 minutes) and then try to write down the main points or craft questions. Do it more than once. Do not try this on your



phone. Do not open another device.

Commit to listening to the whole talk.

Listening to understand what a speaker is saying takes practice. It is learning to summarize on the fly. Civil discourse dictates a listener hold responses while the speakers are trying to fully express their views (they could stumble, so exercise patience). Attentive listening does not happen when you are thinking about what to say next. Stop thinking about what to say next, and really hear what is being said before speaking.

- *Listen and look for clues indicating stress.* Is the speaker tense in their seat, eyes are blinking rapidly, hands are shaking, if they are drinking a lot of water or exhibit other signs of dry mouth, or occasionally their voice squeaks a bit, or their face is sweaty or flushed—they are very likely nervous or angry, and at the least, experiencing some stress. Keep the focus on the speaker and breathe deeply to remain calm and to cultivate an atmosphere of peace any speaker might wish for—as a willing listener, you should strive for being patient, breathing steadily,

keeping eye contact, and releasing your own obvious tension. Offer a calm demeanor to the speaker, and you might get that back in response when you speak. It costs nothing to be patient with a stressed speaker and shows good faith.

- *A listening face is an open face.* Look in a mirror for many minutes—really stare at your face. Do you naturally frown when you concentrate? Is that necessary? There is no need to grin when you are listening, but when you are making great eye contact, also think about what the rest of your face is doing. A slight upturning of lips shows that a listener is open to what a speaker is saying, indicating at the very least that the listener is paying attention. Use the mirror to understand what happens to your face under various circumstances. Video record yourself while you are listening to something. Get feedback from others. Make adjustments. Practice making your face relaxed. Try taking a deep breath and see what your face looks like after that. Your job as a great listener is to ensure



the speaker knows your willingness is real.

- *Listening takes a relaxed body.* If your shoulders are up near your ears, the speaker will sense your tension. Take deep breaths as you listen. Routinely, fill up your whole lungs as you are listening to anything—practice while watching a speech or tv show or movie. Consciously breathe to relax your body. Then use breathing to help you find a calm place that translates to the speaker. What is the most comfortable way for you to sit? Do not fidget; do not let your legs jump up and down in a frenzy—it will shake the rest of you. Do not sigh like you are exhausted by listening. Do not lean way back or too far forward. Do not wiggle around in your seat. Remain quietly seated with terrific posture. Slouch at home, not during civil discourse. Leave your hands lightly folded in your lap or with one draped on the arm of a chair or place both hands lightly on the table. Practice how you sit—find what is most comfortable and know how you look while you are doing it. Take pictures to see which way you look most attentive

and relaxed. Make sure you wear clothes that look smashing, fit correctly, and do not bunch up in strange ways when you are sitting, standing, and talking. Think open face, relaxed body. You must develop your civil discourse persona. With a calm face and relaxed body, the speaker will be more likely listen to you when it is your turn to speak.

- *Use prompts to get more in-depth information.* When the conversation allows you to interject, first get more information: “please tell me more about...” or “could you please elaborate about that first item?” By encouraging more, you are sharing with the speaker that you are not only listening but actually interested in understanding. Acknowledging what the speaker has said and asking for more information is deeply civil. Most people will react positively to an interested listener.
- *Ask questions that are open-ended so that an answer is not just “yes” or “no”;* here is an example: “what kind of action are you hoping to see after we talk?”



or “what is the best possible outcome for you?” (This is directly connected to *listening to understand*—so is the next bullet point.)

- *Start the empathy engine* with phrases like: “I know this topic is of great importance to you, thank you for sharing...” or “I understand this is very difficult for you...” or “I am so sorry you are feeling...” or “I am glad we are trying to find solutions together...” or “I know this situation is disruptive, but together we can figure out what could be done to help us both.” Use empathy to connect on a human level with the opponent. Express that empathy with phrases that directly address the speaker’s text or needs. Empathy can be hard; there will be a section later about building your empathy.

Some more things to avoid:

- *Do not jump to conclusions.* Wait to judge the content until you are sure you have ALL the content. Do not hurriedly judge the attitude of the speaker until you have a sense of their condition—nervous, shy, angry, livid, calm. This

might take a bit of back-and-forth but waiting to make pronouncements about what is happening is always a fine idea. Give yourself a minute to process before jumping in.

- *Do not interrupt the speaker* until there is a natural break, or the speaker asks for a response. Then be ready to acknowledge what the speaker said, “I heard this...” “I think you said this...” or “Am I right to understand this...?” This requires practice especially for those who are used to leading from the front—but ensuring your timing is right for response is will keep your responses on track and civil.
- *Do not share your negative opinions* about the person with whom you are talking. Senator Sumner got personal, and while that can get the attention of audience or get a team ready to play football, using personal affront will likely lead to a failure in civil discourse. Furthermore, your preconceived or biased opinions about whether your speaker is right or wrong also have no place in civil discourse—it is not about



Civil discourse is communication in which you actively try to learn and understand the underlying concerns of your speaker, THEN you can articulate your side of the issue to discover *together* a solution or understanding. Civil discourse includes the possibility of learning that what the other person is saying might have merit. However, if your opponent's position is wrong, you should say so at some point, and why, when conveying *your* position—but personal insults, no matter how passionate you might be about a topic, are rarely productive.

Be a Thoughtful Speaker (Know How You are Communicating)

Even if you become the best listener, if you are not a thoughtful speaker, unaware of how you are communicating, you could veer easily from civil to uncivil discourse—that is a clear strategic communication fail. Learning a bit about rhetoric will help you craft your own writing, and it will also serve as a tool to help you analyze what the other speaker is doing. By spending

time reflecting on how communication happens (the art of rhetoric), you create the opportunity to act thoughtfully rather than just reacting. An understanding of rhetoric helps you control what you do, how you act, and allows you the time to set up a reasonable response to a speaker.

The term “rhetoric” has a bad reputation. In politics, when we think politicians are full of baloney—we might say, “that is just a bunch of rhetoric,” equating rhetoric with malarkey or lies—or we might say rhetoric is a “lot of hot air.” This is one way the term has been used, but this usage is limited.

Rhetoric is more than that connotation; it is an academic discipline taught at universities and schools around the world, for thousands of years, which emphasizes articulate and persuasive writing and speaking. One could devote years to studying its history and all the observations and theories about rhetoric published over the last 3,000 years. But even knowing just a bit about rhetoric is worth the effort in today's world where writing and speaking are on multiple screens as well as in person—all the time.



Rhetoric is all about learning *how* humans communicate. Ancient thinkers like Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian (and many before and after them) observed how humans spoke and noted the successful techniques, naming them for purposes of teaching, posterity, and replication. Rhetoric is the art of understanding what we are doing when we are communicating (speaking or writing).

I am only going to write about a small part of rhetoric—just a few of Aristotle’s concepts of rhetoric. These concepts can help you analyze the rhetorical situation (especially if you are trying to be civil with someone who holds opposing views) and help you think clearly about any rhetorical situation. I will include a few books and websites if you are interested in going beyond this short introduction.

First, ask these questions about any communicative act:

- Who is the creator of the text (the speaker or the writer)?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the text (and its purpose)?

These three are often referred to as the

rhetorical triangle (see Figure 1), because in each communicative act, there is a person communicating, the person receiving the communication, and the text involved.

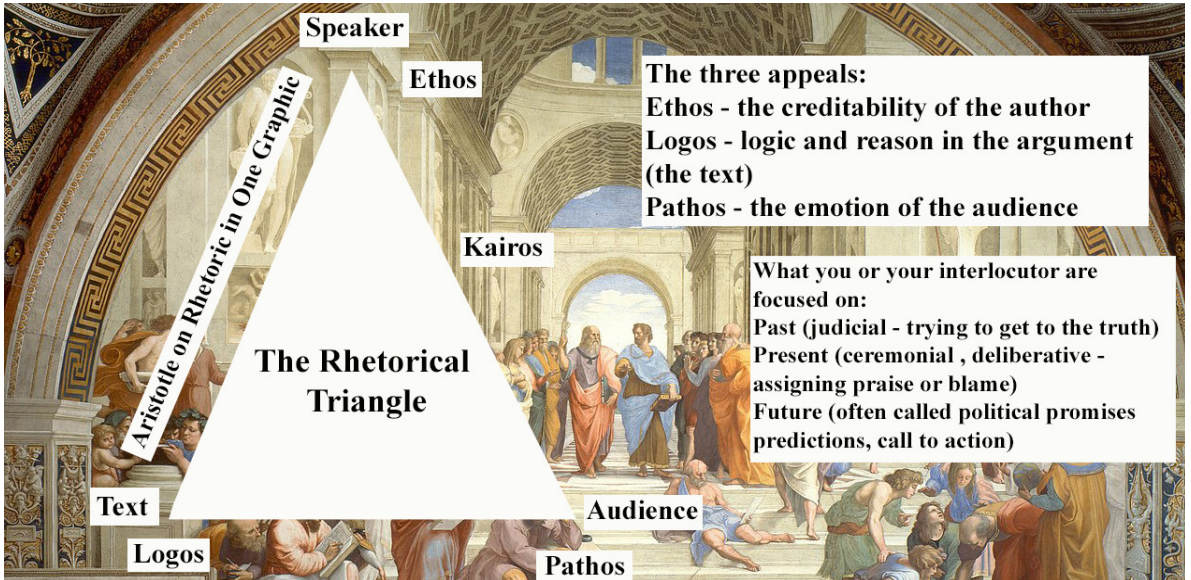
But timing matters, too—communication happens at a specific time:

- Kairos—is all about getting the timing right.

If you have ever approached someone to talk or request their attention at the *wrong* time, you know that this matters in civil discourse. Always think about the right time to communicate.

Answering these three questions (and considering timing) helps you get ready for practicing civil discourse. Are you the person speaking or the person who wrote the speech? Spend some time thinking about *why* you are doing what you are doing—the purpose of your text, and then who the audience is. Charles Sumner certainly did this as he prepared for months working on “The Crime Against Kansas”—but even with preparation, using inflammatory language can yield unexpected and undesired results.

Figure 1



Key ideas of Aristotelian Rhetoric superimposed on "The School of Athens" by Raphael (1509-1511) ¹³
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%22The_School_of_Athens%22_by_Raffaello_Sanzio_da_Urbino.jpg

Connecting to these questions of who is involved—the interlocutors,¹⁴ what the text is (and timing—kairos), are Aristotle’s three kinds of appeals that speakers use (writers, too):

- Ethos—the credibility of the author
- Logos—logic and reason in the argument (the text)
- Pathos—the emotions of the audience

How does your opponent appeal to the audience: through his or her authority, experience, expertise, through logic and reason, or by playing to emotions? What appeals do you use when you are practicing

civil discourse?¹⁵

Aristotle also breaks down the context for communication, or the focus of the speech/text, to figure out the objective for a communicative act:

- Past—often called judicial or forensic—this is about getting to the truth of something that happened.
- Present—often called ceremonial or epideictic—this is about right now, assigning praise or blame or celebrating.
- Future¹⁶—often called political or



legislative, because it promises or predicts, or is a call to action.

Ask yourself about your desired outcomes, and then try to discern what the other speaker wishes regarding outcomes. Are you trying to find the truth, to commemorate, or to call someone to action? Not only will learning more about the above basics of rhetoric help you understand where you are coming from and why, you will also be on high alert to hearing what your interlocutors might be doing and understanding their purpose(s).

Additionally, “figures of speech”¹⁷ is a vital aspect of rhetoric to aid in crafting high-impact and memorable text. Using figures of speech to put words in an order that makes an impression on the speaker or reader is a powerful reason to learn more about this fascinating field of communication.

These are three figures of speech used in famous speeches, anaphora, chiasmus, and metaphor:

- *Anaphora*—is starting multiple sentences in a row with the same

phrasing. Winston Churchill uses anaphora in this famous speech from 1940: “We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”¹⁸

- *Chiasmus*—is using phrases or concepts that are repeated but in reverse order. In his inaugural address, John F. Kennedy says: “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”¹⁹ Kennedy used chiasmus more than once in this speech (chiasmus is a memorable figure of speech): “Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.” Chiasmus is not just for political speeches. This is a famous phrase: “when the going gets tough, the tough get going”? It is not just a Billy Ocean song, it is a saying that is used by many and appears to have origins in American football.²⁰ Additional familiar usages come from advertising, literature, and Dr. Seuss: 1) “I’m stuck on Band-Aid, and Band-Aid’s stuck on me”; 2) “All for one, and one



for all” (*Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas); and 3) “I mean what I said, and I said what I meant” (*Horton Hatches the Egg* by Dr. Seuss).²¹

- *Metaphor*—is using a word or phrase applied to an action or person (or thing). It gives a nuanced meaning rather than a literal meaning. For example, if you said this about a runner, “he’s a gazelle on the track,” you do not mean he’s transformed into a gazelle. But rather, the man’s running calls to mind the grace and spring of a running gazelle. Of a lovely, kind-hearted human, one might say, they have a “heart of gold.” Their heart is not literally made of gold, but gold *is* precious as *they* are precious. In his first inaugural address, Bill Clinton uses metaphor to evoke new beginnings associated with the season of Spring: “You have cast your votes in historic numbers. And you have changed the face of the Congress, the Presidency, and the political process itself. Yes, you, my fellow American have forced the *spring*. Now, we must do the work the *season* demands.”²²

There are dozens of figures of speech available to the student of rhetoric. Learning more about rhetoric is one answer to avoiding the dangers of failed civil discourse. Rhetoric is about persuasion, but it is more than that. It is about understanding what is happening during communication to do it more successfully, to learn the language of how people communicate, to understand how YOU tend to communicate. Pay attention to how you *have* communicated. Practice how to do it differently with intention. Read speeches. Watch speeches about speaking. Watch talks about storytelling. How can you get better at communication? Pay close attention to what you hear, what you see, and how humans successfully communicate. Watch and listen to how you communicate by recording yourself, then apply new techniques as needed. Rhetoric supplies flexible options for responding to any situation. It can be a foundation for thoughtful and successful civil discourse as it gives you knowledge of what is happening in a communication act, what is needed for civil discourse, and allows you to respond calmly and with purpose.



Reading²³ about rhetoric in the ancient texts can be complex and time-consuming. I recommend several books that are modern and would be worth adding to any leadership library:

- *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion* (4th ed.) by Jay Heinrichs
- *Winning Minds: Secrets from the Language of Leadership* by Simon Lancaster
- *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (4th ed.) by Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors
- *Words Like Loaded Pistols: The Power of Rhetoric from the Iron Age to the Information Age* by Sam Leith

I also recommend these websites with additional information (and a few ancient texts—if you are so inclined):

- *American Rhetoric*: <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/>
- *The Forest of Rhetoric, Silva Rhetoricae*: <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>
- *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

Aristotle and Cicero (information about two of my favorite ancient rhetoricians):

- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/>
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cicero/>

- *Quintillian's Institutio Oratorio* (from the University of Chicago—the third of my favorite ancient rhetoricians):
 - https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html

Be Empathetic (Seek Common Ground)

Finding common ground comes from understanding the ground your opponent occupies and your own ground—and where they overlap—it's about finding things in common or that you can agree upon even if you do not agree about much else. Using the word “ground” does ground this argument in the history of war, often fought on the ground. Common ground is a metaphor for peace seeking as well as a literal battlefield shared by opponents.

Finding something in common with your opponent, often an enemy, can be emotionally difficult. But humans need

empathy to handle a range of emotions. More than anything, empathy requires curiosity, a willingness and desire to know another person or other people.

Having empathy for others who hold opposing views is work. For those on opposite sides of an issue, conversation can be informed and twisted by history, anger, frustration, inequality, injustice, misinformation, and deep unconscious bias. To get past all that, to become empathetic, to understand and feel what someone else feels, seems impossible. And yet, it is not.

Empathy is the part of civil discourse where you try to connect to another human, where you try to understand what they are *feeling*, where you try to become sensitive to someone else's perspective. And yes, listening and rhetoric help in the process of engaging in civil discourse, but being empathetic is more than just good listening or paying attention to how you communicate. It is compassion on top of everything else and a willingness to see from a different point of view.

That old saying about “walking in someone

else's shoes” is not about doing it literally, but you *can* read your way into understanding someone else's viewpoint.²⁴

Where is your opponent²⁵ from? Find a novel²⁶ about that place, culture, country, tribe. If you need to know about Russia, you should read the stories that Russians value, that they have published, and what they have banned.²⁷ For instance, seek out this book: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn if you want insight into Stalinist Russia. Or read *Fathers and Sons* (1862) by Ivan Turgenev. Or jump ahead to future-set fiction (2028— not that far in the future now) to explore a more recently published work by Vladimir Sorokin, *Day of the Oprichnik* (2006).

Below are more authors if you are interested in Russia. I have only listed one novel per author, but there are many more (authors and novels—long and short). If you do not know much about Russia, I suggest an approach where you find out all you can about a book before you read it. Learn about the author. Was the book banned? Was it a bestseller? An award winner? Look at maps of where the story takes place, so



you can have a visual understanding of the location (not all of us are deeply familiar with Russian geographic history—but it is a big deal to current Russian leader, Vladimir Putin—look for recent maps *and* historical maps²⁸). Look for brief summaries to find books of interest to you. Try reading a bit or listening to a snippet of a book first. Or listen to the whole thing through Audible (subscription or paid) or via Librivox (these are free public domain audiobooks, read by volunteers). Listening helps you understand how names of people and locations are pronounced, so reading print text later is much easier. Local libraries have access to extensive audio books—check locally, read globally. Expand what you know, how you listen, and how you see the world. Pick one and go:

- Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin* (1823-1830, 1837²⁹)
- Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time* (1839)
- Nikolai Gogol, *The Government Inspector* (1835)
- Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (1873-1877)
- Nikolay Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?* (1862-1863)

- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1878-1880)

Too old for you?³⁰ Try these:

- Vladimir Nabokov, *The Gift* (1938)
- Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (1945-1955)
- Chingiz Aitmatov, *Scaffold* (1986)
- Ludmila Ulitskaya, *The Big Green Tent* (2011)
- Guzel Yakhina, *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes* (2015)
- Dmitry Bykov, *June* (2017)

Reading literature may lead to expanding how you view the world. However, one novel can never explain all there is to know about the land of its creation, but still, reading is an empathetic journey taken one book at a time, one story at a time. All the novels I mention here can speak to any reader at any time in any place because these are stories about humans by humans facing human problems and failing or succeeding to solve those problems. A novel can take you out of your own head and help you see as others see.



If you eschew fiction or are just not interested in reading it, you may be missing out on an opportunity to gain strategic empathy—a deeper and more global empathy.³¹ Try reading fiction from a competitor’s country or from an allied or a partner nation. Not only will you learn something, but those you hope to engage with in civil discourse, might be impressed with you for taking time to read a novel that tells a story from their country or about their home. If you took the time to dig into their perspective, to try to see from a different angle, your effort may be seen as respectful, interested, or open to connection. By delving into a variety of literature, you can also enhance and add to your storytelling tool kit. Talking about a story you’ve read is a good place to start a conversation, to begin civil discourse. If the end goal of civil discourse is to engage meaningfully with another to discover solutions beneficial to both, starting with a connection via story is

a sound option.

Reading fiction is just another answer to “how can I be better at civil discourse?” Empathy is a side effect of reading fiction (it is being studied by neuroscientists today—scanning brains while subjects read fiction, after fiction reading, and more³²). Empathy is key to openness. You can develop more empathy from reading, by metaphorically walking in another person’s shoes. Where else can humans do this so intimately? So intensely? It is through reading (or listening to) a book when the words become you. Words enter your eyes, or ears, and the story becomes part of you, part of your world, what you know. Shared story binds humans.

Pick a place to start. Read widely. Read to feel what others feel. Read to find common ground. Be cautious though. One book will not give you everything needed to

understand a culture, people, race, religion, country, but exploring the perspective of others can begin with reading the fiction others value. It is a measure of respect when you take time to read a book of a country you are visiting, just as it is a sign of respect to learn phrases of greeting and thanks. It is a gesture of willingness to learn, to communicate.

Civil Discourse is Part of Strategic Communication, Part of Strategic Leadership

To become adept at civil discourse, practice listening, learn more about rhetoric, and read fiction.³³ Of course, strategic communication is so much more than civil discourse, but without civil discourse, communication can be one-sided, and chaos can reign (remember Sumner and Brooks—definitely failed civil discourse, unless civil war was their goal). Becoming a strategic leader, working on a world stage, developing international relations with allies and partners, creating strategic internal and external communication plans, all the while studying competitors and enemies, must include learning about civil discourse. Leaders seeking life-long education may

find inspiration in studying listening, rhetoric, and story.

Successful communication often starts with a story, to make a connection—such as the choice I made at the start of this article³⁴ because I wanted to create common ground with my readers. I started with a story of failed discourse between leaders. I needed to show how *not* to engage in civil discourse in order to suggest reasonable options for success. Listening, rhetoric, and story/fiction are a vital part of creating a human connection so that all aspects of a communicative act may help all parties grow and move forward *together*. Without civil discourse, if the only reaction to opposition or difference is to raise a cane and strike, humans have no hope. Practicing civil discourse is hope—it is the foundation for a future with less unintentional conflict, perhaps with more collaborative progress.

Endnotes

¹ “Bleeding Kansas,” American Battlefield Trust, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/bleeding-kansas>.

² To be upfront about what I think about Sumner’s speech, it and his caning did not cause the Civil War. However, I am not arguing that Sumner did not know what he was doing when he gave this speech. He did. He prepared for months; he conducted extensive research and cited witness accounts and newspaper articles about what was happening in the West. He cited historical records, the founding principles of democracy, and more. He was highly educated and a successful speaker. He chose to name names and incite tempers, which he seemed to believe was merited to counter the violence and crimes in Kansas, from which he took the title of his speech. He even published his speech knowing that he needed to be bold and pointed—that both supporters and opponents needed to see all 112 pages. But this fails as civil discourse on two counts: it is not a speech about seeking common ground, listening to the other side, nor does it seek productive back and forth of sharing ideas—and he is uncivil to his colleagues. Of course, Preston Brooks was exceedingly uncivil in return (criminal, really), but the worst (or best) of inflammatory uncivil discourse and the circumstances that foster it, can push humans to a breaking point. For Sumner, the speech inflamed tempers and discouraged civil discourse, but it did solidify the convictions of his allies in the support for abolition of slavery as well as its opponents.

³ Hon. Charles Sumner, “The Crime Against Kansas: The Apologies for the Crime, The True Remedy.” (Cleveland: John P. Jewett & Company; New York: Jewett, Proctor, & Worthington, 1856), 92. Sumner, *Crime Against Kansas*, 92.

⁴ Sumner, “Crime Against Kansas,” 9.

⁵ James Pearce, Senate of the United States, “Sumner Investigation,” No. 191 Rep. Com., Washington, DC: GPO, 1856. 1.

⁶ Jos. H. Nicholson in “Sumner Investigation,” 5.

⁷ Senate Historical Office, “Charles Sumner: After the Caning,” May 4, 2020, accessed November 1, 2023, <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/senate-stories/charles-sumner-after-the-caning.htm>.

⁸ Senate Historical Office, “The Caning of Charles Sumner,” accessed November 1, 2023, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/The_Caning_of_Senator_Charles_Sumner.htm.

⁹ National Park Service, “Civil War Facts,” <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/facts.htm#:~:text=The%20642%2C427%20total%20Union%20casualties,275%2C174%20wounded%20in%20action> accessed September 4, 2023.

¹⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, “Death and Dying,” *National Park Service Civil War Era National Cemeteries: Honoring Those Who Served*, https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/death.html#:~:text=The%20distinguished%20Civil%20War%20historian,Volga%20in%20World%20War%20II, accessed September 4, 2023.



¹¹ Do you know of anyone still dissatisfied with the outcome of our Civil War, or as some still refer to it, the war of Northern Aggression? What's happening in Gaza right now? How about in the Ukraine?

¹² Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman, "What Great Listeners Actually Do," Harvard Business Review, July 14, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/07/what-great-listeners-actually-do>, accessed September 20, 2023. This article includes additional ways of thinking about key characteristics of attentive listening practice.

¹³ For more information visit: The Joy of Museums Virtual Tours for the full painting and a list of all the figures represented, "The School of Athens" by Raphael, <https://joyofmuseums.com/museums/europe/italy-museums/rome-museums/vatican-museums/the-school-of-athens/>, accessed Aug 25, 2023. In Figure 1, the image is from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael_School_of_Athens.jpg, accessed Nov 8, 2023. At the center, an older Plato is speaking to Aristotle. Socrates is the one sprawled casually below them on the steps.

¹⁴ Interlocutor is from the Latin meaning interrupted speech—the term is often used to describe participants in dialogues such as those of Socrates, written by Plato.

¹⁵ Advertising agencies and copy writers use the appeals all the time, not just political speech writers. You can learn a lot about the appeals by watching video advertisements. Check out any collection of Super Bowl commercials to see all three of these appeals play out over and over again. Make it a game you play with family—who can spot the different appeals? Is the appeal emotional (playing on your emotions—heartfelt content or humor)? Is it an appeal to authority (a celebrity endorsement or athlete)? Or is it an appeal to logos (it is logical to get and use the product being advertised—because it works the best or is the coolest)? See here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gxCE5CDmU0>, and here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gbx-HvymI-o>. Have fun.

¹⁶ I prefer to think of these as past, present, and future for the focus of speech or text (or a combination of these as needed). I only have so much room in my brain for details—and past-present-future fits in with what I know about time and life already. I can look up the other names for these contexts of rhetoric anytime I want to remember the ancient words.

¹⁷ This website by Jay Heinrichs is a delight and a great place to learn more about figures of speech: <http://inpraiseofargument.squarespace.com/>.

¹⁸ Winston Churchill, "We Shall Fight on the Beaches," delivered June, 4, 1940 to Parliament, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches.html>. This site also has an audio recording worth a listen.

¹⁹ Here is a text of the address: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-john-f-kennedys-inaugural-address> and here is a video recording: <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/inaugural-address>. And by the way, he uses anaphora extensively in this address, too.

²⁰ This phrase is more accurately called an *antimetabole*—which is a kind of chiasmus. This is often attributed to Knute Rockne (1888-1931)—famous football player and coach at Notre Dame University.



- ²¹ Andrew Dlugan, “How to Write Memorable Speech Lines,” *Six Minutes*, Nov 25, 2012, accessed November 12, 2023: <https://sixminutes.dlugan.com/chiasmus/>.
- ²² The emphasis is mine. All presidential inaugural addresses may be found at <https://www.govinfo.gov/features/presidential-inaugural-addresses>. President Bill Clinton’s first inaugural address can be downloaded from here: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1993-pt1/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1993-pt1-4-2.pdf>
- ²³ Just as you would spend time listening to speeches to become a better listener, you can also watch speeches to learn about rhetoric, observing how a speech is put together rather than the content. TED: Ideas Worth Spreading hosts thousands of recorded speeches and performances: <https://www.ted.com>. They curate a Public Speaking playlist which includes many talks relevant to communication/rhetoric.
- ²⁴ Much has been written about emotional intelligence—managing our own emotions and understanding the emotions of others. Empathy is one of the key factors. This is a rabbit hole well worth exploring. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/emotional-intelligence>
- ²⁵ This works for allies and partners as well. Reading novels from other countries, cultures, can change the way you see the world, the map, others, differences.
- ²⁶ I read novels rather than poetry when I want to gain empathy. Poetry, especially in translation, can be oddly and delightfully challenging. If I want to really dig into a culture/people, I will get into a novel. It is a modern genre that mostly translates across time and cultures. Sometimes the easy choice is a fine choice. In the case of the novel, for me, it is an easy choice. This is especially a good choice for those who do not read poetry on a regular basis.
- ²⁷ Every book on this list of Russian fiction, I would argue, is valued by the world, not just Russians.
- ²⁸ Go find some maps. Library of Congress has a lot of maps: <https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/>.
- ²⁹ When you see multiple year ranges for older books, often that is because they were released as parts or published serially. Later, these books were often printed in one volume—this is especially true for the modern reader. Most of these books have been edited and annotated by modern scholars then published by Oxford or Penguin. Some dates reflect the original publication date and then a definitive text or English translation.
- ³⁰ If you want to go deep in a fun way, Kir Bulychev has written more than 50 books in the series about young adult Alisa Selenzheva (1965-2003). These science fiction books are for children, but so are the Harry Potter books—read by and enjoyed by many adults. Kir Bulychev is the pseudonym of Dr. Igor Vsevolodovich Mozheiko (1934-2003), a historian, critic, translator, and script writer. He is worth exploring if you have any interest in science fiction as well as Russia.
- ³¹ Several authors have written about strategic empathy. Allison Abbe defines it this way: “[S]tepping into the minds of others, strategic empathy may be essential to understanding the interests of, the motivations of, and the constraints on adversaries. Effective anticipation of and response to adversary actions requires a clear understanding of often ambiguous motives and intentions” in “Understanding the Adversary: Strategic Empathy and Perspective Taking in National Security,” *Parameters* 53, no. 2 (2023), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3221. Also



see *A Sense of the Enemy* by Zachary Shore (2014): “Strategic empathy is the skill of stepping out of our own heads and into the minds of others. It is what allows us to pinpoint what truly drives and constrains the other side” (excerpt at <https://www.zacharyshore.com/a-sense-of-the-enemy.html>).

³² Reading novels from around the world (from allies and partner countries as well as those from peer competitors) to enhance strategic empathy is my focus for a series of forthcoming articles and a book, tentatively titled *Operation Human Soul*. Initial work in neuroscience and literary studies is promising for supporting this notion. Research in 2012 done at Stanford observed fMRI images while subjects read a Jane Austen novel, suggesting that reading provides more than pleasure—it actually enhances cognitive flexibility. In 2013, David Kidd and Emmanuele Castano further set the stage for linking human emotional growth via reading fiction: “Reading Literary Fiction Can Improve Theory of Mind,” *Science*. 3 Oct 2013, Vol 342, Issue 6156 pp 377-380. More research is ongoing from Princeton’s Social Neuroscience Lab: <https://psnlab.princeton.edu/publications>. Recently, Dr. Raymond Mar, suggested in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol 27, No. 4, 2018, that “[T]he more one practices empathy (e.g., by relating to fictional characters), the more perspectives one can absorb while not feeling that one’s own is threatened. ‘The foundation of empathy has to be a willingness to listen to other peoples’ experiences and to believe they’re valid,’ Mar said. ‘You don’t have to deny your own experience to accept someone else’s’”—in Ashley Abramson, “Cultivating Empathy,” American Psychological Association, November 1, 2021, Vol 52, No. 8, p. 444, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/11/feature-cultivating-empathy>, accessed Oct 6, 2023.

³³ For more information about civil discourse, visit: The National Institute for Civil Discourse: <https://nicd.arizona.edu/>

³⁴ I first heard the story of Charles Sumner in a novel I read years and years ago. I researched the event and use the story frequently in my classical rhetoric course at the Air War College. When trying to engage in civil discourse, I frequently tap into my storehouse of story to share with various audiences I speak with around the world. I’m never sorry to be able to start a communication event with a story—that’s why you will see many speakers doing it as well as those leading meetings or trying to inspire others. That’s why you see teachers telling stories to help connect to their students and to connect their students to the content of the course. Story works as a core connection tool for all leaders.



Biography

Dr. Elizabeth D. Woodworth is an Associate Professor of Strategic Communication at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base. Dr. Woodworth has been a teacher for over 30 years at the K-12, university, and graduate school levels. She has worked in US educational publishing as a writer, editor, and executive. She also taught internationally in China and Ecuador as well as teaching study-abroad courses. She designed, founded, and implemented a master’s degree program in teaching writing at Auburn University at Montgomery and established the writing center at the Air War College. She served for several years as Director of Research and Electives at the Air War College until recently. She is currently in the Department of Leadership and Warfighting where she teaches classical rhetoric for the modern warfighter, creative thinking, regional security studies, and directs a public speaking outreach team of students and faculty, The General Henry “Hap” Arnold Executive Leadership Series. She has published scholarship in writing studies, Victorian literature, higher education, public relations, and professional military education. Dr. Woodworth has also published creative nonfiction, poetry, and short stories.



Negotiating Up : *Lessons Learned from Negotiations with Senior Leaders during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

**LT COL APOLONIO JOHN C PULGAR
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Abstract

Leadership in the military service is structured, stringent and hierarchical. Negotiating with the Senior leaders during one of the worlds worst crisis situations has proven to be crucial when time is of the essence and organizational success and personnel safety are priorities. A field-grade officer outlines the challenges, strategies and negotiation skills to bridge the gap between the top brass and the lower echelon of the organization to produce optimal output that is most beneficial to the personnel, the community and the nation.

Key Words

Negotiating Up, COVID-19, Positions and Interests, Negotiation Preparation

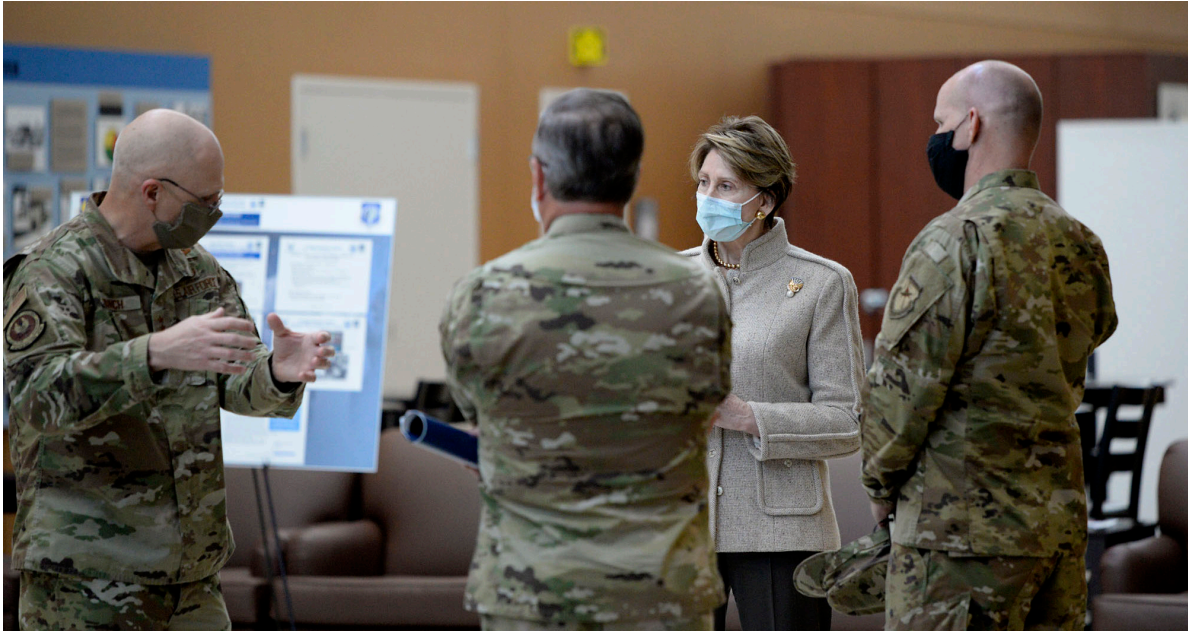
The COVID-19 pandemic sent government institutions into crisis its leaders have never experienced. The responsibility of enabling humanitarian assistance and preventing the spread of the virus was added to the already full plates of uniformed personnel.

In executing the mission, personnel management and troop mobilization presented enormous challenges to Field Grade Officers, with ensuring the safety of personnel and manpower efficiency more difficult because of the crisis. The goals of Senior leaders focused on overall mission accomplishment conflicted with the needs of individual unit's field

operations. Negotiations between the higher headquarters and the field-level units had to take place to address management problems that would hamper organizational success and compromise personnel safety.

Situation and Background

In March 2020, COVID-19 affected the whole world. This viral illness stopped almost all commercial and logistical operations. Busy streets in urban cities turned into ghost towns. The economies of different nations dropped to record lows with no influx in trade, commerce, and employment. People suffered, families were



Secretary of the Air Force Barbara M. Barrett listens to Gen. Arnold W. Bunch Jr., commander of Air Force Materiel Command, during a mission brief regarding AFMC and its response to COVID-19 at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, April 21, 2020. Barrett met with Air Force personnel and toured several facilities at the installation, including the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine Epidemiology Laboratory, which is responsible for analyzing a majority of the Air Force's COVID-19 tests. (U.S. Air Force photo by Ty Greenlees)

starving, and individuals became mentally and physically restless and weary. What made COVID-19 even more dreadful was that there was no cure for combatting the hazardous virus and no end in sight.

The world entered a pandemic period where no one could predict when the normal way of living would return. Even health experts and state leaders did not comprehend how to handle this once in a generation pandemic. The whole world was helpless,

but humanity would not accept being defeated by this pandemic. We had to rise and find ways to address this worldwide threat to our generation and the future.

The mission of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is to secure the safety of society. Working in conjunction with the health sector and Local Government Units (LGUs), they formed the front line for controlling the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus. Soldiers and health



volunteers became national heroes during that time, leading the way in preventing the spread of the virus. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) crafted specific preventive measures to bring back the essential operations of society.

The national task force prohibited civilians from leaving their homes to prevent further exposure to the virus. Conversely, national leadership directed military personnel to report to their respective units to implement nationwide safety measures and health protocols. That was where I started to play a big part as a field-grade officer in a service support unit of a major air base in the Philippines. Me and my team were responsible for crafting a feasible work schedule and protocols that were responsive and fit for all the personnel of my unit.

I was the Deputy Group Commander of the Air Base Group. Our unit oversaw all base support services, including the safety and security of all tenants and organic flying units inside the base. After three weeks of total lockdown, directives for work

schedules and mission orders from higher headquarters started to be disseminated and cascaded to the lower units. However, in the absence of interaction among the staff, these work schedules and operational orders were not fit for the set-up and safety of our unit personnel, considering their families and residential locations. As the Deputy Commander, seeing that the new directive would endanger our troops' safety and readiness posture, I engaged with the senior leadership in the higher headquarters. I negotiated with leadership a better work schedule arrangement that would prevent our personnel from extended exposure to high-risk areas during deployments and for personnel posted in offices and the operations center to maintain a skeletal manning structure to ensure the unit's daily operations in the height of the pandemic period.

At my level, presenting the proposed work schedule and personnel rotation while incorporating our unit's safety and health protocols to senior leadership was not an easy task. This negotiation process happened when the creation of a formal task force was still underway, which was

in charge of determining the organizational management of personnel and operations together with effective health protocols.

Seeking an audience of a senior officer about critical issues is expected in the military environment, but in my country, we usually submit to the decisions of our senior leaders instantaneously. Using Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions tool, this tendency can be attributed to a high level of power-distance where my culture gives great deference to those in authority.¹ I thought of just following the directives from the command and not negotiating what I deemed more beneficial for the organization, but I followed my internal ethical voice which told me I had to do the right thing. The responsibility of being the link in the chain of command and bridging the frontlines to the senior leaders made me more determined to push, propose, and negotiate for the betterment of the organization as it performs its mandated task for the safety of the local populace.

Positions and Interests

As a negotiation term, a position is defined as “what you want.” It should meet some

standard of reason and be accepted as reasonable by the opposition or other party.² On the other hand, an interest is one or more underlying reasons “why you want what you want or need.”³

In this case, the position of my senior leaders was to activate support units to perform non-traditional tasks, particularly disease mitigation and population control missions. They required 50-75% unit manning capacity to perform round-the-clock enforcement of curfews and quarantine orders in the locality in support of the local police. In addition, the remaining personnel of our unit were also directed to perform similar tasks inside the air base. On our side, our position was that we could not perform the task as directed without integrating other tenant unit personnel to assist in completing the mission. Committing a bulk (50-75%) of our personnel would diminish our reserve force if an infection occurred within the tasked groups. My position may have sounded simple, but any spread of infection could have paralyzed an entire force, resulting in unit ineffectiveness and mission failure during the critical pandemic period.



Regarding our interests, both parties rationally aspired to stay relevant, dependable, and reliable to the civilian populace in this crisis as a large military installation in the local area. In this situation, both parties strived to meet the expectations of the public and, thus, had congruent interests in accomplishing the same mission.

Pre-Negotiation Preparation

As the saying goes, “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” Preparation is essential to any negotiation process.⁴ To influence senior officers in their views and decisions, staff officers should have the pertinent data or documents to back up staff recommendations. In this situation where our senior leaders in the air base were fixated on immediately completing the bigger picture task directed by the national government, they failed to recognize the small and intricate issues and concerns of the units below them. Before engaging my senior leaders, I defined the pressing issue of personnel management (manning and rotation schedules) and the effects of the command directives if they were implemented in our unit.

At the beginning of the negotiation my higher command asked several questions about why we disagreed with the work schedule stipulated in the command directive. As I anticipated being asked these questions, I came to the meeting prepared. I compiled essential details and reasons from our senior NCOs through our group sergeant major and our group commander. I also brought official documents and tasking orders from the Local Government Task Group, which directly utilized military personnel for humanitarian assistance and disaster response efforts.

Being prepared, doing the research, and coming to the negotiating table with pertinent information in hand sets a negotiator up for success. In my case, I garnered a full understanding of the disposition of troops, the health and safety protocols, and Standard Operating Procedures and brought them with me to the negotiating table. This helped answer multiple questions from the senior leaders I was trying to influence away from their position which I considered not feasible for the organization. Presenting trusted information to the other party potentially

increases influence to achieve your position.⁵ However, too much information exchange could lead to unfavorable negotiation outcomes.⁶ Offering the right amount of relevant and accurate information led to a better negotiation process. Being prepared with the details defending my position made my negotiation with the senior leadership more manageable.

Another factor that I considered was my relationship with the senior officers with whom I engaged. These leaders consisted of one major general and colonels whom I had already worked with before. Knowing that I had developed an excellent personal and working relationship with these senior officers gave me the confidence to negotiate at their level. Regarding relationships, collaborative-integrative negotiation seeks a long-term focus wherein parties expect to work together in the future.⁷ In the Air Force, officers often get promoted and assigned to different units after only two or three years. Still, often we get to work with the same bosses and commanders that we had in the past, just at a higher level of command. Developed relationships tend to increase

trust which can be capitalized upon in times of disagreement and conflict. In this military negotiation, personal trust helped improve option building and, ultimately, the negotiation outcome.⁸

Challenges Encountered in the Negotiation Process

In a crisis, time is of the essence, making situational awareness and effective communication even more critical to the success of the organization. As a field-grade officer, being the Deputy Group Commander of an Air Base Service Support Group, I have witnessed how a biological crisis could suddenly disrupt normal unit operations. But we could not let anything, including COVID-19 hamper our Air Force flight operations. My group also had to maintain the functionality of the base services in support of the Air Forces' mission. No one in my unit was trained to adapt to a situation like COVID-19. The greatest challenge for me was to gain situational awareness and communicate actions to my superiors and subordinates from within my staff and across other units' officers within the whole organization of the armed forces and the national and local



government. Negotiation across levels of command is an enduring process, and especially important in times of crisis.

Meeting and negotiating with senior leaders that significantly outranked me was tough, but I aimed to reach an agreement that supported my unit. The legitimate or positional power that higher ranking officers have can always turn the negotiating table in their favor. However, my position as the Deputy Commander of my unit also gives me legitimate and expert power on how my team and I could best perform our jobs and the best way to manage our personnel and operations schedule. Leveraging this positional power helped me influence my senior leaders to accommodate our position as a service support unit, having to manage our personnel.⁹

Another effective part of the communication process was active listening. Hearing out their position and knowing their interest is challenging for a subordinate officer as a negotiator. Being afraid of facing high-ranking officers in such a situation is normal. But leadership is not the enemy, the conflict or misguided perception is the

adversary.¹⁰ On the other hand, in a crisis, racing against time can lead negotiators to rush the process and do impulsive things that are against their best interest. Taking the time to listen while being the expert in that management position in your unit allows you to make reasonable concessions and arrive at a favorable agreement with senior leaders.

Lessons Learned and Takeaways

My lessons learned, and significant takeaways from this negotiation experience are the following:

- 1) *Know all the details of your position. Senior leaders sometimes ask for minuscule information during your conversation. If you can answer their queries, they are more likely to agree with your proposal.*
- 2) *You should always have a secondary or an alternate position when some of your proposals seem non-negotiable to the higher headquarters (ex. Matters on Finance and budget limitations).*
- 3) *Defend your interests and the interests of your unit. The personnel's welfare, safety, and morale should be considered in making/selling your position.*
- 4) *Do not be intimidated by the rank you are*

negotiating with. You have a responsibility in your designation, and as long as you act in that capacity (Expert and Legitimate Power) with respect for your superiors, you're doing the right thing.

5) Ask calibrated questions that could lead the other party to your goals. This allows the other party to examine and articulate what they want and why and hopefully how you both can achieve your goals. This increases the creativity of the negotiation, pushing towards a win-win solution.¹¹

6) Never be silent if you know that what is in your heart is the right thing to do for your men and for your mission; not for yourself but for your unit.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis called for a unique experience for me as an Air Force field grade officer. I have considered the importance of the safety and morale of the people and our unit's mandated tasks, missions, and functions. In the military, we tend to obey first and speak up later, which may still be true for some military organizations. However, with all the uncertainties in our current operating environment, leaders should speak their

minds when personnel safety and mission accomplishment are to be compromised. The chain of command is sometimes so disconnected that the top brass does not have a clear understanding of the effects of their guidance given to the lower echelon. Leaders across the top and bottom of the organization have this distinct responsibility of bridging that gap, which prevents the optimal output and productivity of the whole organization. This gap is where the importance of learning negotiation skills for the military leader comes in. This negotiation process that I have experienced, and all the lessons learned amid a crisis serves as a clear example of a problem-solving approach leading to total organizational cooperation, collaboration, and mission accomplishment.

Notes

I thank the instructors of the Department of the AFNC for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. All errors found therein are my own.



Biography

LTC Apolonio John C Pulgar PAF is currently an International Officer Student at Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), Air University, Maxwell AFB. He was the Deputy Group Commander off a major operating air base in the Philippines before he went to ACSC. He is a rated officer who has flown the UH-1H/D helicopter flying various types of missions such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response heli-lift operations to tactical combat missions in support to the internal security operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. LTC Pulgar is a flight examiner in his flown type of aircraft. He has been designated in various staff and command positions throughout his military career both in administrative and tactical units.

Endnotes

¹'Country Comparison Tool,' accessed November 29, 2023, <http://hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool>.

²Stefan Eisen, *Practical Guide to Negotiating in the Military*, 3rd Edition (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: AU Press; Curtis E. Lemay Center for Doctrine Development and Education, 2019). p.36

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⁴Roy j. Lewicki, Bruce Barry, and David M. Saunders, *Essentials of Negotiation*, 4th ed (Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2007). P.98

⁵Stefan Eisen, *Practical Guide to Negotiating in the Military*, 3rd Edition (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: AU Press; Curtis E. Lemay Center for Doctrine Development and Education, 2019). p.36

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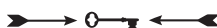
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⁹Roy j. Lewicki, Bruce Barry, and David M. Saunders, *Essentials of Negotiation*, 4th ed (Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2007). P.135-147

¹⁰Christopher A. Voss and Tahl Raz, *Never Split the Difference: Negotiating as If Your Life Depended on It*, First edition (New York, NY: Harper Business, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2016). P.242

¹¹Ibid., p.243



CALL FOR PAPERS



The Air Force Negotiation Center is now accepting submissions for the June issue of the JMCT. The perspective theme for the issue is Influence and Persuasion. Even so, we invite you to submit works related to topics involving conflict transformation, conflict management, dispute resolution, negotiations, facilitation, and mediation as we look to include these areas.

The summer issue of the Journal of Military Conflict Transformation will continue to provide analytic tools for those interested in resolving conflicts at work, home, or in the community. Papers submitted for this issue should address influence and persuasion in relation to conflict transformation. Papers must be submitted not later than 17 May 2024.

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