

Title : The Role Of Culture And Its Influence On The Negotiation Process
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Institution : UniSZA
Category : Opinion, Competition
Topic : Politic

THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

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Role of Culture and Its Influence on Negotiation Process In International Relations

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Culture has its own influence on the negotiation process, especially in international negotiations where people from various cultures were involved. Culture is defined as the customs, ideas, and social behavior of a group of people or society (Limited, 2017.). Some people also define culture as the way of life for a group of people and the way they do things since they were born until they are grown up. Culture is a concept that is really complex, but it is the symbol of identity for every group of people living together. In the author's opinion, culture is the most important thing for every human being. The culture we live in is the identity that we inherit from our ancestors that symbolize the identity of each society (Contributor, 2009).

The benefits of having various kinds of cultures in this world are the uniqueness of every culture that helps us to understand each other better. We have a chance to understand something that was beyond our common practice. Every culture has its own style and practice, and it influences every aspect of life. Starting from what they eat, their house style, music, and way of greeting people, marriage tradition, and every other aspect in life. As culture influences one's behavior in their own life, it also influences other people that they interacted with in daily life. During interactions with mutual having the same culture, the differences would not be felt so dominant, but when interacting with people from different cultures, the culture gaps will let the person found it as something really different. In addition, the larger the cultural gaps, the larger the influence it could bring to the interactions.

Negotiation is influenced by the culture of the group negotiating. Negotiation is the dialogue between two groups aiming at reaching an agreement. In this world of globalization, negotiations are made across borders and cultures. Negotiation is something common in businesses, organizations, governments, or any parties that need an agreement or any transactions to be made. The way people negotiate their matters, and the way they manage the process, are influenced by their respective cultures. There are many roles of culture and its influence in the negotiation process that can be analyzed from their communication way, decision-making process, sensitivity towards time, and emotionalism. Their perception about an agreement, whether to put more importance towards reaching an agreement or building a relationship or their formal or informality. Many influences of cultures in all those aspects are mentioned.

The first influence of culture on the negotiation process is their communication style (“How Cultural Differences Impact Negotiations | MSU Online,” 2015). For parties from different cultures, a lot of differences can be detected, such as ways of communication and the methods of communicating with others. There are people who talk in simple and direct communication and people who use complex and indirect communication. For example, we can see the reactions to some matters by the gestures, facial expressions, and body language of Japanese people. Meanwhile, Americans have the tendency to give a clear definition and explanation about the agreements. There are disadvantages of the methods of communication as it creates friction. Sometimes during a negotiation between Japanese and Americans, Americans tend to think that the Japanese are still considering their proposals and requests because of their vague comments and unclear expression of their acceptance or rejection. When Americans thought that the Japanese are still considering the proposals, the Japanese, in fact, has actually rejected their sides. Other examples between American and Iranian can also be seen during the negotiation on the oil crisis.

Americans are direct in negotiations with clear terms for agreements meanwhile Iranians are more indirect which sometimes lead to tension between the two sides. Egypt and Israel is also another example where Israel is more direct in negotiation, saying what they want out loud and more aggressive in letting Egypt know what they want (*Negotiating*, 2004). The successful peace treaty of David Camp is the negotiation deal between Israel and Egypt. However, that kind of way used by Israel, which is more aggressive, is considered insulting in Egyptian perception. On the other side of Israel, the Egyptian way of doing negotiation is unclear, making Israelis feel that Egypt is not serious and insincere in their negotiation deals. The communication ways used by groups are influencing the process and the outcomes for the negotiations. It can lead to tensions and misconceptions because of different views from each side. Negotiators must be more alert in cultural differences to avoid tensions, misleading information, and bad relationships.

Other than communication, culture also affected how decisions are made in a negotiation. Most of the time, it depends on the structure of the groups or the team organization. There are leader-centric groups and also the group that supports consensus decision-making. This matter is always related to different group cultures. For Americans, their approach to team organizations is the supreme leader has the authority to make decisions, whereas Chinese groups value consensus decision making and teamwork. The role of the team organizations affects the decision-making period. The groups using consensus decision making take a longer time to discuss and get a conclusion from each team members, while the American is quicker to make a deal. The team organization in each culture influences the period of the negotiation process.

Other than that, the most important thing in negotiation is the negotiation goal. Some cultures will appreciate the relationship gained from the negotiation. Some people are focusing on reaching an agreement and do not care about the relationship in long-term period (*Negotiation -*

Overview, How It Works, and Top Tips, n.d.). These differences can be seen between Indian and Spanish cultures. In a research made by Jeswald W. Salacuse, written in the article ‘Negotiating: The Top Ten Ways that Culture Can Affect Your Negotiation,’ it is found that 77% of the Spanish population agreed that their goal is to achieve the contract itself while 33% of Indian executives believe that the contract is more important than the relationship. It shows that Asians valued more importance on the relationship. Thus, Asian negotiators make sure a good negotiation early in the preliminary process to maintain relations with the other sides. Reaching an agreement is important, but for Asians, the relationship needs to last longer for better compliance with the contract in the future time. The culture plays its role when the group will consider which is more important to them, resulting in the period of the process getting longer or quicker.

Besides that, power distances can be a challenge in negotiation as it affects the decision of the deal and the outcomes. In some countries, the level of power can be distinguished between one another in their own internal matters and seems not quite often exposed to outsiders. Sometimes they will send a lower-ranking officer for negotiation, just to be re-negotiated back by higher executives. This kind of culture is mostly seen in negotiations with Russia. Furthermore, the role of culture in negotiation can be analyzed by looking at their attitude in negotiation. Did they want a win-win situation or a win-lose situation? The win-win situation can mostly be seen in deals relating to Japanese negotiators. Spanish negotiators tend to favor win-lose negotiation. In the author’s opinion, culture is an essential element in negotiation. There is heavy reliance on culture in someone’s behavior. Personal behavior, beliefs, and way of life indirectly influence how they act towards other people.

In conclusion, the culture of every society plays a big role and influence in the negotiation process. Scholars might say that cultural factors are not relevant as factors as success or failure of a negotiation, but it is obvious factors that influence every aspect in the negotiation based on their behavior, attitude, team organization, ways of communications, and others. It is important for every negotiator to give concern on the differences of culture, especially in international negotiations. Every small detail that have been observed before going into the negotiation will help the negotiator to find success in the negotiation process.

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