ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY NEGOTIATIONS

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In classic diplomacy, negotiation was the central function of diplomacy. Indeed, the doyen of diplomatic writing of that age, Harold Nicolson, defined diplomacy as the art of negotiating agreements' that could be ratified. Today we define the core tasks of diplomacy in wider terms but in bilateral relations with problem states, the avoidance, management and resolution of conflict is the central task. As economic diplomacy moves progressively to the regulatory stage, negotiation becomes one of its central tasks.

Nicolson saw negotiation primarily as a written, rather than verbal art, but Francis Bacon observed in the 17th century that verbal negotiation gave better opportunity to convey signals, and was more suited to the early stages of negotiation.[1] Empirical evidence confirms the value of verbal negotiation, giving flexibility, and even building mutual trust. In practice, both forms are important in economic negotiations.

Conflict resolution is a subject in itself. In brief, one might note that inter-state disputes often, but not always, involve two factors: first, 'the parties to the conflict operate on sharply different definitions of the situation and neither understand or even have serious awareness of the differences'; second, they 'have sharply different estimations of each others' relevant advantages and disadvantages', since such estimates are 'intuitively derived, unsystematic and untestable'.[2] Successful negotiation hinges on addressing these fundamental elements.

Negotiation of bilateral and multilateral agreements remains one of the important external relation tasks of governments. The range of subjects covered in negotiation is infinitely wider than in the past, and involves different functional

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[1] Berridge, *Diplomacy Classics*, pp.83-4.
[2] Forward by Richard W Cottam to the book by Russell Leigh Moses *Freeing the Hostages: Re-examining US-Iranian Negotiations and Soviet policy 1979-81*, (U. of Pittsburg, Pittsburg, 1989).

agencies, all of them need to develop expertise in this area. While negotiations handled by the MFA relate mainly to 'high' diplomacy, those handled by the functional agencies generally belong to 'low' diplomacy, which in practice is much more important in many situations.[3]

Seen another way, all interstate discourse involves 'negotiation', where one side tries to persuade the other to do something it wants, or not to do something that it does not wish. Even a simple exchange of information is a potential setting for some form of future negotiation of this nature. The difference is that unlike in the definition provided by Nicolson, the end object is not always the conclusion of a formal agreement.

Multilateral diplomacy, in contrast is all about negotiation. This has remained unchanged over the years, whether at the UN at New York involving political issues, or at a permanent negotiation conclave, like Disarmament Commission at Geneva on arms control issues. We leave multilateral negotiation out here, but most of the principles of bilateral negotiation apply to it.

Objectives

In a classic definition, Fred C Ikle has pointed out that negotiation presupposes *common interests* and *issues of conflict*. The object of bilateral negotiation is to *resolve an issue that cannot be solved unilaterally*, through one's own actions. Engagement in negotiation implies a willingness to achieve a compromise, unless one is engaged in a sham.[4] The 'zone of possible agreement' is located somewhere between one's own maximum demand and the absolute minimum that one can accept in the agreement; the ZOPA of the two sides, where it coincides, indicates the range within which agreement *might* be found. A country may engage in negotiation to get full vindication of its claim, i.e. its maximum position. One side, or both, may assert this as a bargaining stance. But unless one side can coerce the

[3] These terms sketch the broad distinction between political diplomacy dealing with major issues, and diplomacy of detail and function, which is in fact the main content of contemporary work.
[4] There are exceptions to the general notion that negotiation implies willingness to achieve compromise. A country may engage in negotiation to temporize, or as a tactical device to distract attention from other plans, for example, for unilateral action.

other to accept this (unlikely in negotiation between autonomous, independent entities), getting all of one's claims accepted by the other usually involves giving in on something else — i.e. a process of 'give and take' or a tradeoff.

In the real world negotiation between states is almost never a zero-sum game, i.e. even when a division of a finite asset takes place, such as a river-water sharing agreement, or a division of assets between two countries (as between the successor states of former Yugoslavia), beyond the division of the cake there are other intangibles, like creation of mutual trust, or an environment facilitating other cooperation. Thus, partly conceding to the other side, one may get gain for the future, a better mutual cooperative relationship.

Typically, the object is to get the other side to accept an arrangement that suits one's own side to the maximum extent that is attainable, while giving up the least of what one can concede. To put it plainly, *each side tries to get the most, and concede the least*. Thus negotiations between nations are not different from commercial negotiation, even if the grammar and the issues are different. In both, a balance has also to be found between short-term or one-shot gain, and building credibility and a long-term reputation, for future business. Ego, prestige and 'face' are also involved in both, though it may be argued that it is in exchanges between nations, especially in situations of conflict and disagreement the subjective factors are at their most acute. Sometimes countries are unable to reach an agreement even when issues can be resolved, on account of false notions of prestige. Some consciously act on the concept that a 'win–win' result is superior to unilateral gains. François de Callières observed in his 1716 classic *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes* that good negotiations produce lasting agreements when both sides are winners.

Bilateral negotiation involving sensitive political issues has one sharp difference from all other forms of negotiation — the process is complicated by the invisible presence of other stakeholders at the table, particularly the domestic opinion of the two countries. This may take the form of a passive presence, or become an active element in the negotiation via their mobilization by either side through the media and publicity. Today, the line between 'external' and 'domestic' is blurred, and negotiators have to simultaneously handle the dialogue at two levels, directly with the foreign partner and indirectly with domestic constituencies in both countries. (Robert Putnam: 'Two Level Game' theory).[5] We can find many examples of such dual level negotiations between adversaries, or covering subjects on which public opinion is sensitized, and where each side has to take into account the publics (domestic, in the partner country, and international). Every country now has to factor domestic opinion into negotiations.

Negotiation Stages

In practice countries do not follow the negotiation stages set out below, and that is often one reason that the results fall short of expectations.

a) **Pre-negotiation**: In *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* Prof. GR Berridge points out that pre-negotiation is a necessary prelude to the actual negotiation process. This is the stage where it becomes clear if both sides truly want to negotiate, or if one or both, are simply going through the motions. The utility of treating pre-negotiation as a distinct prelude is that it places focus on intention and credibility. If this stage is traversed successfully, it leads to consideration of an **agenda**, the **format** of the negotiation process, the **venue**, the **delegations** that are to represent each side and the **timing**. Initial dialogue may be via secret emissaries.

   This is also called the stage of 'negotiation about negotiations'. At the Vietnam peace talks held in Warsaw in the 1970s initially much time was spent on the shape of the negotiation table. Behind the table geometry semantics was the real issues of the status of different partners; settling this facilitated the actual dialogue. There were similar long skirmishes at the Korea Armistice talks in 1951. To minimize the value of this stage risks the process itself. Sometimes the principals may try to leap over this phase (as in the India–Pakistan talks at Agra in July 2001), hoping that personal chemistry, and momentum of direct dialogue may break a logjam; but it

[5] Initially presented as an article in an academic journal, it is also narrated in Peter B Evans, Harold L Jacobson, and Robert Putnam, eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993).

may lead to a misunderstanding of the ground rules, and breakdown.[6] Other elements:

- Exploratory dialogue clarifies conflicting interests, and may determine whether a solution satisfactory to both is attainable.
- Establishment of an agenda, usually through diplomatic channels an essential pre-condition,. There are instances where this is handled at the negotiation itself — but may result in delay and blockage.
- Preliminaries, including the identification of the venue, frequency of meetings, and other logistics.
- Issues of confidentiality and disclosure to the media — particularly important for political discussions. In the absence of agreement one should be prepared to use the media, using public opinion as indirect participants to influence the negotiations.

Sometimes intermediaries, or 'track two' or 'track three'[7] contact, helps in the pre-negotiation stage, if either side is reluctant to start the process, or if there are complexities blocking even the start of formal discussion. We may treat these as pre-negotiation confidence building measures. The subsequent stages are: preparation, negotiation, and finally, follow-up.[8]

b) **Preparation.** This is a crucial stage, often underrated. The establishment of an internal consensus is one key to smooth implementation. Example: the traditional Japanese 'ringi' system of internal consensus building is slow and rigid, involving officials at various levels representing diverse agencies. But the merit is that once an agreement is reached it can be implemented instantly, as all parties are already on board. In a top-down

[6] This particular summit meeting will provides rich material for the analyst, especially as major elements of the process were played out in public view, when Pakistan used the sizable presence of 24-hour Indian and foreign news channels to play out the Two Level Game, and the Indian side found itself unprepared. The inside story of what transpired has not been disclosed. The talks resumed in 2004 on a clean slate.

[7] Track two refers to non-official dialogue, which generally reports to the home officials and may even be part-funded by them, discreetly. 'Track three' refers to contacts that take place virtually in defiance of the home administration, and may resemble 'citizen diplomacy'.

[8] Some analysts distinguish between only three stages, telescoping the first two into a single stage of pre-negotiation. It is preferable to separate from pre-negotiation the stage of preparation, since this is primarily an internal process to be carried out by each side, and usually precedes event the pre-negotiation, though there are also situations where the two take place concurrently.

process, or in one where the decision is not consensus-based, an agreement or decision can be blocked or undermined from within the system. Other elements:

- An objective analysis of one's own strength, direct and indirect.
- What are the aims and limits of the other side? What are its likely style, tactics and arguments? Is there a hidden agenda? The collection of all external information relevant to the negotiation, including other exemplars, information on the individuals involved and anything else relevant from the perspective of giving information on the other side.
- Analyze how the other side perceives one's own style, and the cross-cultural factors involved.
- Mobilization of all internal information relevant to the task, alternatives, options, and fallback positions.
- Internal consultations with the stakeholders, generation of a consensus and setting out of a shared goal. Identification of 'BATNA' — the 'best alternative to a negotiated solution'. This would provide the irreducible minimum threshold that would not be crossed, since in that case the negotiated solution would be worse than the one that could be applied without negotiations.[9]
- The BATNA of the other side, its' irreducible goal, hard to gauge, is vital. A solution satisfactory to both is possible only if there is a settlement range between the resistance points of the two sides.
- If one side appears more eager for the agreement, it may lead the other to extract some form of payment for entering into negotiation.
- Formation of the full negotiation team, identification of the leader, internal dialogue within the delegation, and political clearance for all major issues.

c) **Negotiation.** This can be a straightforward process, or may be drawn out over many sessions and even years. It includes the formal sessions of

[9] Another way is to look at the bottom line of each side, which defines the 'zone of possible agreement' (ZOPA), assuming that this can be gauged (Saner, *The Expert Negotiator*).

bilateral negotiation and the informal exchanges that may supplement it. All too often, breakthrough comes in the latter, via social functions and one-on-one meetings. The former provide opportunity for informal sounding of ideas and floating of trial balloons, in a manner that does not commit anyone and has 'deniability'. (Example: after the Geneva talks of the 1950s Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai said that the most constructive breakthroughs of the discussions occurred during the social functions.) The ideal format is flexible, taking into account the practical convenience of each side, e.g. the needs for internal consultations and approval. Where issues are complex, or even with technical issues, it is useful to have agreed minutes, or some kind of an interim document, even of a non-binding character, to serve as a dialogue benchmark, to avoid repetitive discussions. The main sub-stages are:

- The 'initial' stage when the opening statements are made, calls for perceptive listening to hear the hidden message. The dialogue at this point may appear ritualistic, but it sets the process in operation.
- The 'exploration' stage when tentative sounding is carried out, often in varied settings. Hidden signals and non-verbal communication is important.
- The 'formula' stage where the broad approaches or themes are covered. It is essential to agree on these before moving forward.
- The 'details' stage where the fine print is elaborated and agreed. Sometimes this becomes the battleground for the major decisions. Or there may be no clear distinction between these two stages.
- The 'packaging' stage where the fine print and all the details are tied together. The closer the agreement appears, the greater the sensitivity and the need for caution. Where feasible, the implementation process should be built into the agreement.

In the real world, the point where many negotiations on major political issues fail is if either party does not, or cannot, recognize that the process has entered a 'final' or 'endgame' stage, where the very last set of concessions should be offered. Without such tacit agreement on final concessions, neither side has the will to put on the table its full set of concessions, for fear that the other side may simply pocket those and then demand more. This is a crucial responsibility of the political leadership that drives the process for each side. The 16th century Italian diplomat-historian Guicciardini advanced the notion of the 'ripe moment' for negotiation, not only that acting at an inappropriate time would waste resources, but it would actually be counter-productive.

Some believe that the December 1999 Camp David talks failed, because neither Israel nor the Palestinians could trust the other not to use the 'final' concessions as a basis for fresh demands. Others blame the US for trying to play 'honest broker' with both, while remaining the unquestioning supporter of Israel. Put another way, it is only through the creation of mutual trust that the process can move to a point where each side understands that the time is ripe for a final push and the last concession. A good example where this worked thought painstaking effort, is the 1998Anglo-Irish Good Friday Accord. [1]

d) **Follow-up.** In the euphoria of successful negotiation follow-up might be overlooked. Agreements may be self-enforcing; or need a enforcement mechanism. An asymmetrical agreement — giving larger advantage to one side — leads to such problems, if the other side finds a way to back-out.

- A full assessment of the implications of the agreement, and its consequence on other relationships and issues. Careful identification of the necessary follow-up, immediate and over time.
- Communication of the results to the stakeholders and to the public at large, creating optimal conditions for implementation.
- Starting actual implementation, keeping in view all the parameters.
- Detailing the negotiation experience 'learning', incorporating this into the 'institutional memory'. Often this is overlooked.

Not all problems are amenable to negotiation. It is the task of statesmen to determine the optimal time for starting the process. The commencement of negotiation depends on objective and subjective conditions, and it becomes the task of diplomacy to create the external conditions that would be conducive to the launch of the process, including outreach to public opinion in the foreign country. Success hinges on finding the 'ripe moment'.

The Harvard Method: 'Principled Negotiation'

After a 30-year study, the Harvard 'Project on Negotiation' which remains current [google it, to access its rich resources of case studies and other data], Professors Fisher and Ury[10] identified a novel approach to negotiation, applying to both commercial enterprises and to negotiation between countries, which they defined as 'principled negotiation' (PN). This was contrasted with what they called 'positional bargaining' (PB) that frequently leads to blockage and impasse, because countries proceed from set positions and the negotiation becomes a battle of wills. We can all think of situations that we recall that fit into this 'positional' template, which is of course unproductive in almost all situations.

Offered as a superior alternative, PN operates through 4 major elements.

A. People. 'Separate the people from the problem'. This means:

- Perceptions: put oneself in the shoes of the other side; discuss perceptions; act in a manner that challenges the perceptions of the other side; make proposals that are consistent with the values of the other side but not their perceptions.
- Emotions: recognize emotions and treat them as legitimate; don't react to emotional outbursts; use symbolic gestures.
- Conversation: listen attentively and ask questions; speak to be understood; speak about own self and not the behavior of the other side.

B. Interests. 'Behind adversarial positions there lie interests that may be common. To satisfy interests usually several options are available.' Example:

[10] Roger Fisher, and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreements Without Giving In*, (Hutchinson, London, 1981).

at the 1978 Egypt–Israel Camp David talks, Egypt sought sovereignty over Sinai, Israel wanted security; the reconciliation came in de-militarizing much of Sinai; try and think of an analogy that may apply in a business situation familiar to you.

- Identify interests: what are the basic concerns of the other side? What are the consequences, for the other side, of not doing what you seek? Realize that each has multiple interests.
- Talk about interests: the other may not know what you want; make own interests come alive; put the problem before the answer.

C. Options. 'In trying to share the pie, one is operating only in a single dimension.' There should be a creative search for options.

- Obstacles: premature judgment hinders imagination; assuming a fixed pie means looking for a single answer; solving the other side's problem is part of one's own problem; brainstorming can be used (this is very similar to the well-known de Bono thinking methods).
- Shared interests: they often lie latent; taking care of the interests of the other side makes it easier for them to do what one wants; opportunities have to be developed.

D. Criteria. 'Looking to criteria may offer solutions.'

- Prepare in advance: standards that are fair and legitimate; also fair procedures.
- Method: frame each issue as a joint search for criteria; reason and be open to reason; yield to principle, not pressure.

PN is clearly superior to PB. The challenge is to creatively apply these methods in real life situations and to develop procedures, approaches and styles that are based on one's needs.

Practical Advice

Raymond Saner distinguishes between 'distributive' bargaining and 'integrative' bargaining, where there are several issues are negotiated as a package, with trade-offs enlarging the size of the pie, creating new values; 'the optimum solution can be chosen from a great variety of alternatives'.[11] It produces a no loser outcome.

Ambassador Tommy Koh, a Singapore doyen, sums up his practical experience in eight guidelines: 1. Treat each negotiation as special and different, needing intense effort at preparation. 2. Build a cohesive and happy team, especially when the members belong to different organizations. 3. Master your own brief, and that of the opposing side, as best as possible. 4. Know how and when to use foreign advisers, treating them as full members of one's own team. 5. Build a common basis of facts, to narrow the gap; when the facts are in dispute, using a third party can help. 6. Exercise emotional intelligence, to win the trust of the opposite team; dinner diplomacy helps in bonding; never make the negotiation opponent lose face. 7. Cultivate cultural intelligence, realizing that we all live in our cultural box; understand the cultural box of the opponent.[12] 8. Think win-win; solutions must address the fundamental interests of both sides.[13]

Cultural Characteristics

International negotiation is intercultural by its very nature. We need to understand the rudiments of culture theory, insofar as it applies to negotiation. Ethnicity is part of this, but culture involves more than ethnic origin, especially in these days when people are very mobile, and within a country one encounters more diversity than ever before. Thus, if one encounters an American of Chinese or Korean origin, it pays to know if that individual is a first-generation citizen of the US or of the third generation — in the latter case the dominant cultural element will be American, not Chinese or Korean.

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[11] Saner, *The Expert Negotiator*, p. 84.
[12] The author also believes that foreign ministries should pay more attention to historians and cultural anthropologists.
[13] Koh and Lin, eds, *The Little Red Dot* (Singapore, World Scientific, 2005), pp. 200-5.

Lewis Classification

Richard D Lewis (*When Cultures Collide: Managing Successfully Across Cultures*) divides cultural characteristics in three broad types, arguing that different nations and peoples exhibit these traits in varying blends. The categories are 'linear-active', 'multi-active' and 'reactive'. I find the last term reflecting inadvertent cultural bias, and prefer instead the word 'autonomous'. Some countries, identified as exemplars, exhibit the most extreme symptoms of these three types.

Lewis asserts that countries exhibit these three characteristics in varying degrees. Those with the most acute Linear-Active traits are the Germans, the Austrians and the Swiss, while arch-examples of the Multi-Active type are Italians, Latin Americans, Arabs, Africans, Indians and Pakistanis. The Japanese, and to a lesser degree the Chinese, are said by Lewis to be typical of the Reactive kind.[14]

LINEAR ACTIVE	**MULTI-ACTIVE**	**REACTIVE (or 'autonomous')**
Introvert	extrovert	Introvert
Quiet, speaks to the point	talkative	silent, good listener
likes privacy	gregarious	says little
Plans ahead methodically	plans grand design, impatient with detail	looks at general principle, masters detail
does one thing at a time	several things at once	Reacts
works fixed hours, appointments need notice	works any hours, will receive at short notice	flexible, much prefers systematic method
dominated by timetable & schedules	timetable unpredictable	reacts to partner's timetable
compartmentalizes projects	lets one project influence another	sees whole picture
job-oriented	people-oriented	people-oriented
dislikes losing face	makes excuses	must not lose face
rarely interrupts	interrupts frequently	does not interrupt
separates personal & professional	interweaves personal & professional	connects social & professional
limited body language	unrestricted body language	subtle body language

[14] Again, this is an inadequate distinction, because the cultural mindsets encountered in Japan are much more akin to an island nation that had only the remotest historical contact with the outside world, until the 17th century. China is different, even while it exhibits its 'Middle Kingdom' complex of a relatively autonomous culture that traditionally absorbed the foreign invaders and made them Chinese. Korea, sandwiched between China and Japan has its own specificities that a student of East Asia has to master.

mastery over procedures, 'devil is in the detail' mindset	excellent at human relations, cross-cultural skills	keen understanding of systems, looks to the grand scene
easily upset over the unexpected	handles 'chaos' well	accommodates the unexpected
principle more important than context	will bend principle to context	seeks to harmonize principle to context

Abridged and modified from *When Cultures Collide,* p. 41, fig. 7.

Some find the Lewis method over-simplified. Other disadvantages:

- Not everyone from a particular culture exhibits the attributed traits.
- It can lead one to erroneous assumptions, if used as a rigid guide.
- Such 'country stereotypes' ignores national sub-groups, i.e. difference along ethnic, religious or linguistic sub-categories.

Dutch expert Geert Hofstede whose best work is known by its sub-title, *Software of the Mind* identifies five dominant cultural characteristics.[15] These are:

i. **Power Distance**: A factor of differentiation is the extent to which a society is dominated by internal 'classes' or other categories, or in contrast has a flat internal structure. The hierarchy orientation in African or Asian society is high, with exceptions. Hofstede notes that large power distance countries are also ones where levels of corruption are high, though he does not identify a causal element.

ii. **Handling of uncertainty**: Some cultures tolerate uncertainty better than others. Others find uncertainty as disturbing their set order (typical of 'linear actives'). Germans call Indians 'good at chaos management'!

iii. **Individualist of collective**: This is a straightforward element, easy to discern; Japan is highly collectivist, China much less so.

iv. **Masculine or Feminine**: This looks at the dominant characteristics. For instance, a culture where compassion and emotional feelings dominate is seen as 'feminine'. Some question the relevance of this criterion.

[15] The Hofstede study started with data collected from IBM subsidiary companies around the world, with much more research carried out subsequently. Prof. Hofstede was the keynote speaker at Diplo's Annual Conference at Malta in February 2004. Details on that conference are at www.diplomacy.edu

v. **Gratification cycle**: Some cultures focus on instant result, while others favor the long term. Another way of looking at this is the short or long-term orientation. A culture that places high value on children's education exemplifies the latter.

A pioneering observer of intercultural communication was the US scholar Edward T Hall, author of *The Silent Language* (1959), *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) and *Beyond Culture* (1976). He developed these concepts:

A. **Chronemics** (how time affects communication): Monochromic societies see time as fixed and divisible into clear segments, in linear fashion; they are dominated by punctuality, and high time consciousness. Usually, they are also rigid over rules and regulations. Polychromic: Such societies view time in a cyclic manner, and do not practice rigid punctuality. They also generally place greater stock in human relations than in rules.

B. **High & Low Context**: Low context cultures regard rules and values as absolutes, as criteria that apply in all situations. In their communications what is explicit *is* the message, with few hidden overtones. In high context communication the message is either in the context or internalized in the person, with little in the explicit part of the message. Such cultures see issues in flexible fashion and make allowance for the context and subjective factors. Octavio Paz observes that societies whose religions are prophet-based, (or are ruled by 'the book') reflect low context. Religions that are not based on a single doctrine or prophet tend to produce high-context cultures. Low context cultures (e.g. European) also see time in monochromic fashion, and vice versa.

C. **Proxemics** (how space affects communication): Hall distinguishes between intimate, personal, social and public settings, in the distance that people maintain in different situations. Analyzing this in relation to different cultures is a way of identifying our own 'out-of-awareness' patterns.

These are important categories, offering insights that most of us can apply.

<u>National Styles</u>

Understanding national stereotypes can help in understanding the other side, and in preparing for the negotiation. But one must treat with caution theoretical concepts covering 'country styles of negotiation', as well as empirical accounts of actual experience of different negotiation partners. Such analysis offers indicative data that always needs to be tested in the field; it cannot as setting out immutable rules that provide all answers.

With these caveats, it is useful to try and identify and familiarize oneself with the conventional wisdom regarding the negotiating style of the foreign partner. There are excellent studies covering many countries around the world, based on practical examples, many taking into account the cultural ethos of the country and its historical heritage. This is particularly true of countries that possess distinctive cultural styles, rather dissimilar from one's own.

Other Issues

Culture analysis does not produce a magic formula, but it helps to understand people who belong to different cultures.

As Indians we should first understand our own cultural traits, and how others perceive us. While there exist many regional and other variations in our country, some common elements are: we are a *high-context* culture, very much of the *multi-active* kind; we show great *power distance*, which also makes us very *status conscious*, and that in turn means that we are prone to flattery where others seem to recognize or endorse our status; we love to argue, and tend to speak too much and *listen too little* and frequently interrupt others; team-work is not our strong point; we are not ruled by the clock, but we *value human relationships*.

Because we speak English, see lots of American films and TV, we tend to think that we understand the US and Europe, but in reality we have a very superficial understanding of any of these countries, except those that have studied or lived for long periods abroad. Very few educated Indians speak foreign languages, thought that is now beginning to change. Frequent short-term international travel only produces an illusion of familiarity. We need much deeper cultural understanding of foreign countries.[16] Intercultural training deserves a more prominent place in our training.

Some points:

a) Culture classification (Lewis) and analysis (Hofstede) is useful as shorthand; it describes main characteristics, without saying that every person in that culture will show those characteristics. One must build up one's own reference base, using theory as a guide to one's own assessment.
b) One should first objectively understand one's own culture, looking to the source of different traits, plus comparative strengths and weaknesses. This helps one to see how others see oneself.
c) Mastering a foreign culture does not mean that one should adopt its' style, or abandon one's own. The aim is to reduce the distance from the 'other' (in the sociological sense of a cultural entity treated, deliberately or unconsciously, as a counterpoint), and for insight
d) No one can master knowledge of all cultural styles, or of even of the countries in a particular region. The key is the attitude of mind with which we approach diversity; an objective analysis of foreign traits helps to accept differences, and develop understanding.
e) One professional hazard for those implanted in foreign lands (diplomats, businessmen, journalists or others), is an 'us' and 'them' mindset. It becomes acute in situations of adverse bilateral relationships, crisis, or at places where negatives dominate.
f) Learning a foreign language helps imbibe that culture, naturally. This is one more reason for international businessmen to develop language skills.
g) At negotiations, having someone who speaks the partner's language is of enormous value. Even if one has mastered the foreign language

[16] This is one of the major conclusions of the book Ulrich, Karl, Chaudhry, RS, and Rana, Kishan S, *Managing Corporate Culture* (Macmillan, New Delhi, 2000).

exceptionally well, it is wise to negotiate in one's primary language. Using a foreign language one's personality usually undergoes a subtle shift, and it is better to be true to oneself.

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