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Building Trust and Cross-Cultural Negotiation from the Perspective of Nixon and Chou En-Lai Negotiations

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Abstract:

This paper discusses how to effectively manage conversations and how negotiations could initiate a change in foreign policy. Also, this paper provides educational management knowledge. The author discusses the potential challenges when China and America tried to negotiate in the early 1970's between U.S. president Richard Nixon and his negotiation team and Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai and his team. This paper analyzes the approaches for how to conquer communication barriers by explaining how America and China could improve their long-term relationships. By analyzing the potential negotiation approaches of different parties, it will provide ideas for how to improve interpersonal and communication skills for individuals and guide people in building successful careers. Furthermore, this paper analyzes political-diplomatic strategies about building trust and considers how cultural factors could affect negotiation dynamics by understanding international and cross-cultural negotiations. This paper emphasizes applying negotiation and political strategies to solve conflicts, promote win-win solutions, and improve long-term relationships between different countries.

Keywords: *Cross-cultural negotiation, effective listening, negotiation skills, cultural dynamics, interpersonal management*

1. Between Nixon and Chou En-Lai

Before the U.S negotiation team came to China in the early 1970s, China and the United States did not have an open diplomatic relationship for over 20 years. At this time, China believed that Taiwan belongs to China based on their history. But America argued that Taiwan should have its independent right to control the region without China's supervision. China viewed U.S. actions in Taiwan as aggressive and believed the U.S. was meddling in China's internal affairs (Hills, Blair and Jannuzi). Kissinger and his NSC staff have prepared their own briefing drafts to Nixon, and Nixon did his homework meticulously in the week just before his trip to China (MacMillan, 2006). Kissinger insisted on discussions of mutual interest and had told Chou he hoped that the political evolution between Beijing and Taipei would be peaceful. America preferred to maintain an independent control capacity for resisting force in Taiwan. However, after the international negotiation, America eventually called for a gradual reduction of U.S. arms in the region.

Chou prepared to advance negotiations in details (Roselman, 2009). Chou En-lai tried seeking to make the best possible case to persuade the other party of the validity of his or her argument (Lewicki et al., 2016). Negotiators needed to find a feasible plan in order to "expand a pie" by finding the BATNA, which met both parties' needs by seeing the situation objectively. Ury (1993) stated, "Going to the balcony means distancing yourself from your natural impulses and emotions. You ought to go to the balcony before the negotiation even begins--in order to prepare" (pp. 37-38). Nixon and Chou estimated their BATNA and analyzed their flexibility to improve their alternatives.

The preparation work before a negotiation will directly influence the effect of communications. I have learned from this international negotiation case that before we have a meeting with people, we need to find an appropriate time to apply alternative approaches. For example, before having communication with people, prime minister Chou had to do sufficient preparations in order to gain a smooth effect from the negotiation process. For example, he provided guiding plans and established a professional negotiation team. Also, Nixon attached great importance to visiting China and meticulously prepared for the negotiations. Chou understood Chinese goals and interests very well. For example, he considered how China could influence North Vietnam to ease their conflicts with America. Chou had to factor in international influences before he made his decision. He wished to avoid escalating the debate about Taiwan issues with the U.S., and he strove to foster a long-term relationship with the U.S. (Qinping, 1999).

2. Mutual Understanding

Americans understood that their culture was different from Chinese culture. Americans had been involved in world wars and experienced the diversity of conflicts from different cultures. They stressed the importance of using high technology and asserting power. "American negotiators frequently see themselves as basically multilateral negotiators." Fisher (1980) believed that "Americans also carry a leadership role in their heads and see themselves as models of

modernity" (pp. 44-45). However, the Chinese wanted to think more about the consequences, strategic methods, and domestic harmony before negotiation (Zhang, 1992). This means that they need to know the right time to express opinions, how to talk to others, and to what extent a conversation should be controlled, which will help contribute to a win-win negotiation. For example, Chou understood the mutual interests they had with President Nixon. Also, Chou had tried to gain enough information about the other party. I have learned to think carefully about what the other party's personality and I also need to consider if financial considerations can influence the negotiation.

3. Building Trust and Behind the Table Negotiation

In diplomatic negotiations, we also need to observe others' intentions through their gestures, facial expressions, and body language in order to know peoples' emotional changes and real intentions. Instead of telling people what to do and forcing them to accept ideas, Chou rarely raised his voice in the negotiation. He always wanted to find creative ways to use proper diplomatic language to ease misunderstandings with others (Danhui, 2008). For instance, both Washington and Beijing considered the Indochina issue as important. The U.S. considered the Indochina issue as a national interest to balance their relational power in order to avoid communism spreading throughout Southeast Asia (Kissinger & Burr). China could not adequately understand the strategy of the U.S. for a time because they believed that the conflicts were driven by American imperialist designs against the new China. This dispute was not settled until Nixon visited Beijing, which made the situation better for both countries (Kissinger & Burr).

To convince people successfully in a negotiation requires building trust by using emotional intelligence and logical thinking. One approach is obtaining information when the other party is distrusting and to make two or three options available at the same time to generate trust in a cooperative manner (Lewicki et al., 2016). People also need to let others feel sincere understanding. If people do not trust others first, how can they gain trust from others? In this case, Chou En-lai initiated conversations through talk about daily life with Nixon before starting serious negotiations about international affairs, which was helpful for building trust (Qinping, 1999). Chou was also good at helping his team members work together to manage the behind-the-table negotiation. Chou's negotiation teams efficiently shared information with each other and prepared to educate others, as well as helping their party address the issue which was created by the actions of other parties who are not at the table to avoid hard feelings and resentment (Docherty, 2005, p.).

During negotiation, changing ourselves to adapt to others' habits is important. For example, Chou rarely drank wine (Danhui, 2008). But when an American representative team came to China, Chou drank wine and arranged a large meeting where alcohol was served in order to create goodwill between the parties. He tried to adapt himself to the western culture, as well as introducing traditional Chinese culture to Americans (Danhui, 2008). This allows us to understand that moral cultivation, profound knowledge, and polite communication are important. For example, when Nixon wanted to discuss sensitive political issues, Chou did not respond immediately. Instead, he turned the conversation to discussions of Chinese history and poetry and invited Nixon to visit the Great Wall of China (Kirby, Ross, & Li, 2005).

High-quality listening is an important skill that can be applied in practice, particularly in encountering conflictual situations. Also, listening carefully can help negotiators build trust and understand purposes quickly. An indispensable negotiation skill is listening carefully. People should listen carefully before they talk. During the negotiation between Chou and Nixon, Chou carefully listened during conversations. Also, he would like to repeat what other people said and expressed his positive emotions to people (Danhui, 2008). Emotion is an important human factor in a negotiation. Applying emotions properly and building relations is important. In fact, parties need to focus on paying attention to control their negative feelings, such as anger and hatred, which can hurt negotiation.

3.1. Bring Out the Facts and Reasons

Chou considered interest-based negotiations as the precondition of a smooth negotiation process. The Americans and the Chinese settled on ground rules together before negotiation, such as not using Taiwan and a "Two-China policy" as a prerequisite of a negotiation between China and the U.S. (Qinping, 1999). When people talk about their positions and interests, they need to pay attention to other people's views. Negotiators must know the culture of other party and find out ways to shape others' perceptions by approaching discussions in a culturally sensitive manner (Lewicki, et al., 2016).

3.2. Mutual Respect

Katz and Lawyer (1993) indicated that emotion is perceived by the party as negative and expressed both verbally and non-verbally. In a negotiation, we need to create a collaborative conflict-management strategy and to share our feelings to help others understand ourselves better by respecting the diversity of cultural differences. For example, when Nixon met Chou En-lai, Nixon had to pay attention to details and show respect to Chou. He indicated that he was interested in learning Chinese customs. Additionally, Nixon knew that Chou had a broken arm, so he helped Chou take off his coat, which was a gesture that showed respect and concern for Chou (Danhui, 2008).

Moreover, in July 1971, Nixon showed an understanding of the Chinese culture and made a concession by limiting U.S. military involvement in Taiwan by withdrawing two thirds of the U.S. military forces there (Kissinger & Burr, 1999). Chou was sensitive to U.S. concerns over the negotiations outcome and gave encouragement to Nixon's team by speaking favorably of the prospects for a successful negotiation. Chou said to Nixon, "the resolution and approaches between our countries are long-range and promising" (Danhui, 2008). Chou's words framed the negotiations in a positive way. In this negotiation between America and China, America wanted to find a fair approach to resolving the conflicts over Taiwan and Vietnam. America indicated that the resolution of these conflicts should be made based on the long-term interests of the countries involved. America promised that they would withdraw some troops from Taiwan (Kissinger and Burr, 1999).

America's alternative would be to warn China to reduce its interference in other countries in the region. Chou En-lai implied that until reaching any agreement based on the interests for both sides, China would continue to support Vietnam (Qinping, 1999). As Chou En-lai responded to America, "Taiwan has no war there, but Vietnam has." Communications in this negotiation need shared information and "having an attractive best alternative to a negotiated agreement sufficient to give a negotiator an advantage over the other party and tell other party about it if they expect to receive its benefits" (Lewicki, et al, 2016). It was a good strategy for America to clearly present the benefits to China of a successful negotiation.

American representative Kissinger found another best alternative to attract China. He told Chou that America was willing to suggest restoring legitimate Chinese seats in the United Nations (Qinping, 1999). Chou En-lai understood the American position and indicated that restoring legitimate Chinese seats in the United Nations was not a big concern to China. However, China did think it was an important factor for exchanging interests. Instead of making a decision immediately, China showed deliberation before they made a decision. This showed understanding to America that China hoped they could have good cooperation with America (Qinping, 1999).

4. Seeking Common Ground and Remaining Different

"Culture is a group-level phenomenon. That means that a defined group of people shares beliefs, values, and behavioral expectations...Cross-culture comparisons are made by finding the important norms and values that distinguish one culture from another and then understanding how these differences will influence international negotiation" (Lewicki, et al, 2016). Kissinger used admiring language to express his ideas towards China, Lewicki, et al (2016) indicate that, "considerable work has used dimensions of culture values to compare and contrast how negotiations occur in different countries...examining the effect of culture on the psychological states of negotiators include how it affects judgment bias"(p. 261). In order to build trust and maintain good relations with China, Kissinger praised Chinese historical achievements, and he showed sympathy for the Chinese victims of foreign oppressions (Zhang, 1992).

Both parties made small concessions in order to smooth the process of negotiation of the larger issues. Positive feelings will lead to good outcomes of negotiations. "Negotiators who show positive emotions generate positive consequences for negotiations, and they tend to be more flexible and build trust among the parties"(Lewicki, et al, 2016). I learned that conciliatory language can help people convince others. Chou En-lai emphasized that the Taiwan issue was a major factor and can be an obstacle for negotiation. He found the root problem and implied to the U.S. that they did not need to withdraw troops immediately. Instead, the U.S. could take time to gradually reduce their military presence. What I have noticed in the negotiations between America and China is that Chou did not arouse the suspicions of the American negotiators by taking a hard stance on the issue of Taiwan. If we always try to get more, we might get less. Long-term thinking and reasonable approaches will help us achieve our goal. Also, keeping the tone of negotiations moderate is important. I learned that I need to focus on making rational suggestions and controlling my own and other's emotions. For example, negotiators may intentionally manipulate emotion in order to get the other side to adopt certain belief or take certain actions...Effective negotiators are able to adjust their messages to adapt to what they perceive as the other party's emotional state"(Lewicki, et al, 2016).

4.1. Balance Power in a Negotiation

America in the 1970s was an advanced country with a good international reputation and influence. Compared to America, China did not have the same level of economic development and international prestige. China tried to "expand their pie" and sought cooperation with different countries. China tried to gain a more powerful position by soliciting alliances with other countries who would support the legitimacy of the Chinese position. An important negotiation skill related to this case study is that "coalitions will ease the differences in strength and give the weaker party the strength to maintain their reputation and get a good bargaining in a negotiation. (Martinovshy, 2015).

Additionally, how to achieve a win-win negotiation might need a long-term plan. In this case, China and America had several behind table and face-to-face meetings. These meetings settled smaller issues that might have held back the negotiations and provided a track record of success in reaching agreement that carried forward into the main negotiation. Looking back at this case study, I can see the how the ability to bridge cultural differences while focusing on strategic goals was key to the negotiation. Emotional intelligence and cultural understanding promoted the pursuit of mutual interests and helped foster a long-term relationship. In cross-cultural negotiations, the cooperation between countries should focus on long-term political and military strategies by gaining trust instead of increasing mutual suspicions. Negotiators need to think of how to coordinate the immediate interests and long-term interests by considering the immediate and future gains. For example, in 1972, China began to establish formal diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom, Australia, Rwanda, Cyprus, Jamaica, Greece, and Japan (Zhang, 1992). All these contributions related to Chou En-lai's diplomatic strategy and long-term considerations to make China stronger and build her international prestige.

5. Conclusion

Understanding the differences between western and eastern cultures is important for building trust among different cultures. Applying communication skills such as reflective listening, using open-ended questions, and showing respect for each other are essential in international negotiation (Hocker and Wilmot, 2014). In complex international negotiations, people should focus on remaining flexible through efficient sharing of information. Strengthening information exchanges and maximizing visibility to other parties will help people to be able to steer the deal in an advantageous direction (Lewicki, et al, 2016). According to these negotiation strategies, it will assist in maintaining a

trusting environment and in maximizing the prospects for success. Also, mutual understanding in the initiate cooperation can be an alternative way for people to reach reconciliation in a negotiation.

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