

Introduction

Wall (1985) defines negotiations as the process of exchanging ideas between two parties. They are normally conducted so as to articulate and possibly achieve either party's objectives. Kipnis and Schmidt (1983) assert that negotiations are things that take part in our day to day lives. This can be in international relations, global businesses, sales transactions and merger agreements. The world is becoming more and more global. Consequently, it has become necessary to interact with people from completely different parts of the world. It is possible that most of the time two parties meeting at the negotiating table may have profound differences among them. This stems from the fact that cultures, objectives and situations may influence people's behaviour. There have been certain characteristics that are distinctly common among certain negotiators. This means that one can identify particular countries with particular negotiating styles.

This particular essay will focus on the characteristics prevalent among the American negotiations and the Chinese. This is because the latter parties are quite different. There have been major conflicts that have arisen from those differences. However, one must not underestimate the fact that there are in deed some similarities between these two groups. (Bazerman & Carroll, 1987)

Understanding the background for Chinese and American negotiating behaviours

Teachings from Sun Tze

Sun Tze is undoubtedly one of the most influential war strategists and authors in the Chinese traditional culture. His teachings shaped the cultural beliefs held by the natives of his homeland. In his book, the Art of War, the author stresses the fact that real prowess is depicted when an opponent uses wit to subdue his enemy rather than direct confrontation. The main message

behind his teachings was psychological manipulation. This is something that has been adopted by Chinese negotiators and businessmen. They usually engage in psychological warfare of wits where they attempt to change their adversary's state of mind through the use of intellect. Sun Tze' came up with thirty six proverbs that brought about one hundred Chinese characters. These are still features eminent when conducting negotiations with them. (Sun Bin Tze, 2001)

Agrarianism versus urbanism

In present day, most of the Chinese inhabitants live in the country side. This is deduced from the fact that close to sixty seven percent of the population is largely a labouring one. This implies that those inhabitants are largely influenced by their agrarian values. There are certain features that are necessary in order to survive in that system. First of all, there is a strong sense of loyalty among them. On top of this, the whole system is holistic rather than individualistic. There is a need for a lot of harmony and cooperation for the agricultural community to achieve success. These farmers remain true to their family hierarchies. Consequently, these values and beliefs trickle down to most members of the population. It should be noted that even those people residing in the City, were brought up in the country side and most of them still hold true to agrarian values. (Zhang and Yang, 1998)

Agrarian values take up greater precedence than business values as highlighted by some Chinese philosophers like Fung Yu-Lan. He believed that agriculture symbolised the roots while commerce symbolised the branches. Even economic and social theories were more biased towards the roots than the branch. This is the reason why merchants who mainly dealt with 'branch' issues were not held in high regard as compared to others.

In contrast, most of the US population is largely urban. Consequently, their values will depict the urban culture and beliefs. However, when one traces American culture, there is a large influence from the cowboy culture. In this sort of culture, there was a tendency to jump into issues head on. For example, cowboys were notorious for shooting suspicious characters on sight even before finding out where they were coming from or what they wanted. Consequently, this behaviour has trickled down from generation to generation. Some of the inhabitants of American cities have some of those cowboy characteristics.

In additions, it should be noted that the US political system adversely affects the way they go about their negotiations. This implies that whenever there is a certain political transition, there may be an end to political negotiations. For example, US presidential elections usually take part after a period of four years. Most presidents may have the aim of trying to leave a legacy behind when approaching the end of their term. This means that some of them will tend to push their delegates to complete their negotiations as quickly as possible before their term is over. Besides this, others who may have the hope of getting re-elected may want to appease their voters by completing certain negotiations. (Swingle, 1992)

On the other hand, some leaders may opt not to deal with contentious issues so as to gain the support of their voters in the next election period. All the above factors are related to the fact that the US is distinctly urban. Most of its voters are aware of all the nifty gritty details facing their government and their leaders. This implies that US negotiators are answerable to other indirect

parties and must therefore exercise caution in their actions. However, this also means that there is greater accountability amongst them.

Morality in Chinese and American systems

The Chinese culture is such that most of the members of the population have a deep sense of morality. This is derived from instructions given by one of their most influential leaders some 2000 years ago. He was called Confucius. This leader gave guidelines on how relationships within society can be conducted so as to maintain harmony and enhance peace. He asserted that there should be loyalty and obedience by subordinates for their rulers. This meant that wives had to be subordinate to their husbands, children to their parents and younger brothers to their older ones. What one can deduce from this sort of arrangement is the fact that there was a strong emphasis on hierarchy. Confucius believed that in order for society to function effectively, there was a need to have hierarchy within social relationships.

Back in the year 1865, there was a Chinese man and wife who happened to break the rules of hierarchy and they suffered severely for it. This man was called Cheng. His wife had a disagreement with her mother in law and ended up beating her. However, this act stirred up huge emotions and distaste among members of society. Because of that, those members of society attacked both husband and wife. They removed their skin and even burnt their bones to ashes. This story is still being told today to bring out the importance of obeying authority and maintaining hierarchical systems. Although this is a story that occurred centuries ago, it helps westerners understand why there is a strong respect for authority in the Chinese population and even in the negotiating table. (Sun Bin, 2001)

Another aspect of the Chinese culture is the fact that they are concerned with finding 'the way'. The latter term simply means finding middle ground. Ancient Chinese philosophers laid out two distinctive forces; Yin and Yang. Yin was considered a dark force while yang was and captive and light force. The philosophers believed that the two parts are considered as one and one cannot succeed in dividing them. This implies that in life one must always try and search for a middle ground called 'the way'. This mentality has persisted in modern society and this is why most Chinese negotiators and residents always try to look for a middle ground. This is the reason why most Chinese negotiators will be concerned with the process of negotiation rather than the final outcome. Their negotiations will rotate back and forth and there will be lots of haggling. They believe that there should be not short cut in the process because 'the way' is the most important for them.

On the other hand, Americans strongly believe in sticking to the truth. They do not have respect for the process of achieving their goals. Instead, most of them focus on the end. It is indeed common to find that some American negotiators will get angry when they realise that the truth is not getting adhered to. This is in deep contrast to the Chinese who believe that there should be more emphasis on the way and they rely on haggling to achieve the latter. Americans normally approach the negotiating table with preset ideas; these are normally things that they believe is true. Consequently, very little progress can be achieved when they feel that whatever they are negotiating is far from the truth.

This American belief stems from their history. The US has a large part its nineteenth century characterised by industrial relations. At that time, there was conflict between the importance of capital and labour. Consequently, Industrial relations arose as a professional solution for dealing with conflicts between labour and capital. This was the reason why industrial conflicts started being called industrial dispute was to take the heat out of it. This attitude deeply prevails in the negotiating behaviour of the nation. The US negotiators normally regard or treat international negotiations as business deals. This is the reason why most of them will not apply their passions or emotions during the process of negotiations. Their words will be precise and their agreement re normally water tight. The belief in facts and truth is heavily related to industrial relations especially because it was part of their history. (Wheeler et al, 1989)

Chinese versus American writings

American children learn about letters and numbers at very early ages. They know that there is a need to bring together different letters so as to complete sentences. However, Chinese children learn all about symbols and pictures at a tender age. This is because the nature of the Chinese language is such that words are represented by symbols and pictures. Therefore, the Chinese tend to look at the bigger picture. Actually, research conducted by a professor in psychology called Michael Harris Bond between Chinese and US children found that American children were very good at identifying specific details while Chinese children were good at seeing the overall picture. This holistic tendency is quite common in the negotiating table. The Chinese rarely focus on minute details while the Americans do. All this is because of the pictographic nature of the Chinese language.

Treatment of foreigners

The Chinese are quite wary of foreigners. They tend to distrust any party that seems to be foreign. This came from the fact that China was characterised by long periods of attack and war from foreign nationals. The country has witnessed a lot of changes in empires because of foreign interference. Besides this, it has also had some civil wars stemming from problems that were caused by foreigners. All these factors have led the Chinese to have sort of suspicion for foreign nationals. (Zhang and Yang, 1998)

In contrast, Americans have a somewhat similar perspective towards foreign nationals. Actually, Americans have been regarded as anti-internationalists. This stems from a number of factors. First of all, the US constitution is such that foreign agreements must receive consent from parliament. This implies that their leaders cannot just rush into negotiations on their own. In the past, this same congress has been known to oppose foreign policies and agreements. Such an attitude has impeded some of their negotiations. Some of the international agreements that the US has ignored include; landmines, permanent war crime tribunals and global warming. All these decisions have been undermined due to the fact that the negotiators are impeded by their congress

Characteristic differences between the Chinese and American negotiators' values**Personal connections**

The Chinese place a lot of emphasis on personal connections. They consider human capital as the most useful resource. (Lee & Lo, 1988) Even their decisions will be centred on their relationships with their friends, associates and even their relatives. On the other hand, the

American negotiating style ignores personal connections. Most Americans place more emphasis on the following resources;

- information
- institutions
- networking

In relation with this, we can also say that the American negotiating style places more emphasis on honesty and fair play. The international community realises that American really value honesty more than anything else. This means that personal connections will not come into play during negotiations. The American negotiating style is also quite technical. This implies that they place a lot of importance in laying out three particular aspects. The first being identification of the problem. The second is the process of solving the problem and the last is the solution. Because there is a lot of technicality; collection of data, intense consultations and preparations by Americans, very little room is left to accommodate some of the emotional aspects that usually come with negotiations. Personalities and personal connections will not be included anywhere in these preparations. Americans consider negotiations as linear process with certain stages that indicate the level of success of the negotiation. We can therefore conclude that the American negotiating style is such that for every problem there is a solution.

Endurance and relentlessness

There is a Chinese phrase that denotes this belief. It is called 'Chiku Nailao'. The Chinese believe that work should not just be characterised by diligence. They believe that this should be topped up by endurance. Therefore, the Chinese will be seen to endure more problems or

challenges in the negotiating table than their American counterparts. The Chinese believe that endurance is the honourable thing to do. (Swingle, 1992)

However, Americans place a lot of emphasis on talent. They believe that the leading factor to success is the application and use of talent. Therefore, they will choose decisions that involve less work and more talent. Americans believe in working smart and not just working hard. Their work ethic is not as deeply rooted as it is in the Chinese population. They believe that money can be made where intellect and talent is applied rather than where there is simply hard work. The two different perspectives are likely to bring in differences during negotiations because the Chinese will choose issues that are more centred towards work ethic while the Americans will choose decisions centred on talent. On top of this, Americans are also known to be very impatient in their dealings. This is a fact that most countries of the world are aware about. They realise that Americans require answers and solutions as soon as possible. This may either be detrimental to the US as a country when the members of the opposite camp decide to take advantage of them. However, it can also be advantageous because some countries might speed up negotiations to suit this attribute. Besides this, American negotiators rarely listen to what their counterparts have to say. Most of them usually focus on what they had set out to achieve. Lack of development of listening skills has caused a lot of problems for American negotiators because other negotiators may think that they are simply not interested in other people's perspectives.

Social Capital and saving face

Because the Chinese have a deep respect for their counterparts and homing capital in general, then they are really concerned about saving face. This means that they would be deeply offended by negotiators who would out rightly embarrass them. If something like that was to occur during negotiations, then the efforts will be sabotaged. It does not matter whether the person who made them lose face did it intentionally or not. To them, all that counts is that they maintain their composure. This also implies that the Chinese might avoid airing out some of their view points if they feel that this would cause some form of embarrassment to their counterparts in the negotiating table. Consequently, the Chinese are deeply concerned with maintaining their reputations so as to have strong social standing. This also means that they would hate to spoil their image in society. The Chinese phrase for this is 'Mianzi' (Rubin & Brown, 1975)

In contrast, Americans are not as concerned about social standing as the Chinese. They speak out their mind even when this might cause a lot of embarrassment to their counterparts. They feel that all facts must be aired out before agreements can be reached. They are mostly concerned with speaking the truth even when this involves telling it like it is. Social capital does not take as much precedence among Americans as it does among the Chinese. This is the reason why it is quite difficult to find an American negotiator making very long speeches prior to actual negotiations. They do not like involving flowery speeches or deep and profound ideologies within their negotiations. Americans are interested in dealing with issues as quickly as possible and exchanging pleasantries is only considered as a waste of their time. This means that these negotiators are quite practical in nature.

Most American negotiators are usually lawyers. In these law schools most Americans are taught to focus on winning. They are told that there are no two ways to go about business. They believe that one can only come out with two results from negotiations. Yet the Chinese normally focus on consensus building. This acts as a serious impediment to their success in negotiations because they believe in the all-or-nothing law. This principle is also applied when an agreement has been reached. Americans believe when an agreement has been reached, it is the final issue and all details must be adhered to. They do not believe in renegotiations and reconsidering one of the decisions made earlier. (Swingle, 1992)

Thrift

The Chinese have undergone a lot of economic and political instability in the past. This means that they had to practice a serious saving culture so as to minimise chances of losing their money. They knew that they had to have a contingency plan for the future in case there was another crisis. This behaviour has continued until present day. The Chinese have a deep saving culture. This behaviour has been carried forward into their negotiating styles as most of them tend to make decisions that will result in savings. Therefore the most important factor that takes precedence in most of their negotiations is based on price. This is the reason why most Chinese negotiators will be seen haggling and engaging in long periods of bargaining because price takes a lot of priorities. It is also common to find that Chinese negotiators rarely make sacrifices when they feel that their price is not right. They may eventually yield to the requirement but after much reluctance. (Kachelmeier and Shehata, 1992)

Americans on the other hand lay all they have on the table. Most of them usually state their case and leave little room to manoeuvre. This is in contrast to the Chinese because they usually list their offers leaving a lot of room for negotiations and concessions.

Holistic tendencies

The Chinese negotiation style is such that they deal with all issues at ago. The look at things in a holistic way and most of the time they may be found addressing one issue and on the other hand jumping to another issue without warning. This is in sharp contrast to the Americans. Americans tend to deal with smaller aspects of the negotiations at a time. They break complex issues into smaller parts and deal with each of them as they are. For example, in a business negotiation, an American can deal with;

- warranty
- delivery
- quantity
- price (Sun Bin, 2001)

All these will be addressed in a sequence. The American negotiators may get frustrated by the Chinese because they feel as though the Chinese may not be solving any problem by jumping from one issue to another. Because Americans have legalistic inclinations, then chances are that they will focus more on details and fine print within agreements and negotiations. Americans are usually focused on tasks at hand and not on general principles. They care less about general

principles governing the way matters are handled and instead focus most of their attention on details.

Harmony between persons

Most business relationships among the Chinese are guided by the fact that they have a strong preference for the pleasant treatment of their counterparts. This implies that the Chinese will be seen smiling with their opponents. They are usually quite friendly to other members of the negotiating table. They usually value even tempers more than the opposite. Even when Chinese negotiators may be unhappy with certain decisions or proposals, they may not depict this very openly to their opponents because it part of their culture to remain even tempered.(Rosen, 1999)

However, Americans have been known to be rather short tempered. They display their emotions quite openly and will not smile when they feel unhappy about certain decisions made by the parties at hand. The Americans place less emphasis of maintenance of harmony among members of the negotiating table as they tell it like it is. Some people have claimed that the American negotiating style rather arrogant. This implies that Americans may want to impose their will upon certain members of the negotiating table. They perceive themselves as superior and believe that their decisions are right. Maintenance of harmony is not something that takes precedence.

But it must be noted that American negotiators are also friendly. This is because they have a casual nature. Most Americans have a good sense of humour. This can be instrumental at the negotiating table because it assists in the process of breaking the ice. Sometimes there may be

too much tension during negotiations and this may impede the negotiation process. In light of this, we can say that both the Americans and the Chinese are friendly. (Wall, 1985)

Importance of social status

The Chinese have a deep respect for social status. They believe that authority has a very important part to play in society and must not be undermined. Consequently, Chinese negotiators usually behave in a very formal manner. They would like to know who are the senior members of the negotiation table and will respect their authority. As it has been stated in the earlier parts of the essay, this belief comes from historical backgrounds.

American negotiators behave in the opposite way. They are quite casual in their arrangements. It is quite a common feature to find a very senior person in the American negotiating team requesting to be addressed by their first name. Americans mostly focus on achieving the objectives of their negotiations rather than dealing with hierarchy. Actually, they prefer breaking down all the hierarchical barriers to negotiations. They are usually casual in their manner of speech and their transactions.

Besides this, US negotiators are usually granted more authority than Chinese negotiators by their head office. This mostly stems from the fact that most US negotiating delegations are larger than others in the world. This is because they will come with experts on matters to be dealt with in the particular negotiation. This implies that they do not have to consult with higher authorities; most of these experts know all there needs to be known about matters to be discussed. We can therefore say that the American negotiating style is flexible. They delegate their duties and trust

their representatives. Higher authorities are consulted during are opportunities. The headquarters normally trust who they choose to represent them because a lot of care was taken before they were chosen. (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983)

However, there is a point when the American negotiating style can appear to resemble the Chinese one. This is normally because Americans are known to cooperate and coordinate with various departments and authorities within the negotiating teams. Some of the authorities that the Americana coordinate with include;

- conference secretariats
- press
- other delegations
- private sector
- non governmental organisations

Americans realise that they must respect the leader of their delegation. This implies that they realise that they should hold similar view points to crucial matters within their meetings. We can therefore say that they also respect authority in their own way.

Use of intermediaries

The Chinese have a serious distrust for the foreigner. This is the reason why most of them, usually require an intermediary in order to come to some sort of understanding with the foreigners. They need to identify with members of the opposite team in order to be effective in the achievement of their objectives. If a member of the other party in the negotiating table does

not come with intermediary, then chances of succeeding in that agreement are almost nil. The Chinese phrase for an intermediary is 'Zhongjian Ren'.

The Americans are quite different from the Chinese in this regard. Americans usually trust foreigners. This normally changes when the foreigners have given them a reason not to trust them. Americans will therefore not require an intermediary. They actually prefer reducing protocol or parties present during negotiations down to the minimum. This highlights fundamental differences between the two parties. Most of the time, American interested in negotiations will be found bending to the Chinese rule and bringing intermediaries. (Lee & Lo, 1988)

Besides this, Americans are usually associated with a tendency to take greater risks. This implies that most of them give suggestions about issues being discussed in negotiation teams. The American negotiating style is such that they spearhead the conferences and deals. This is because of their creativity and application of intellect. This risk taking behaviour is something that is synonymous to the country. This is something that other groups respect and realise.

Adequate preparations

Because the Chinese have holistic tendencies within their negotiations, then chances are that they might not put in a lot of focus on dealing with all the earlier preparations necessary to continue with the negotiations. On the Other hand, Americans carry the day when it comes to this matter. The latter usually start even months before actual negotiations start. They examine all angles involved in the matter. They even anticipate questions that the other party in the negotiating table

might ask them and then come up with answers for this. Some of the things that the American team can cover include;

- background documentation
- briefing books
- position papers (Bian and Keller, 1999)

Normally the American delegations appear in negotiations after involving many executive branches who may have dealt with the subject before or those who have some form of interest in the topic at hand. Consequently, most of their negotiations have better chances of succeeding because a lot of efforts have been put into the process. The positive outcomes are an indication of these adequate preparations.

Conclusion

The Chinese are mostly people centred; they are holistic in nature and spend a lot of time dealing with formalities and pleasantries. This forms the core of their negotiating style. On the other hand, Americans have been known to be quite casual in their mannerisms as they have a sense of humour. However, they treat their negotiations as business transactions and go out of their way to prepare adequately before holding conferences. They are quite focused on details and have been identified with their win or lose stance. Most of them treat negotiations in a highly legalistic way because most negotiators are lawyers. If these differences are known before and minimised or improved, then negotiations between the two groups can be successful. (Rubin & Brown, 1975)

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