

The Effect of Intragroup Cohesion on Negotiation Processes

Elizabeth McClintock, Ph.D.

October 2019

1. Purpose

This paper is meant to offer some insight into the following question: *What is the effect of the level of cohesion among members of one of the negotiating parties/sides on the negotiation process?* Research in both the social psychology and the negotiation/conflict resolution fields indicates that the levels of intragroup cohesion can most definitely have an effect on negotiation behavior. Some of the key dynamics which impact this phenomenon – and which will be explored in more detail below – are the principal-agent tension and most importantly, the effect of intragroup norms and the status of the representative (or negotiator) for the group on negotiations; and the level of conflict between the parties engaged in the negotiation process.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I will outline the research explaining the impact of ingroup norms on negotiator dynamics. Second, I examine the impact of the levels of intergroup conflict on ingroup cohesion. Finally, I conclude with some suggested strategies for more effectively managing the impact of intragroup cohesion (or lack thereof) on negotiation behavior and negotiated outcomes. Throughout the paper, I offer examples of how these dynamics play out in practice.

2. The Research

To better understand the phenomenon of intragroup cohesion, and its impact on intergroup relations (conflicts, negotiations, etc.), it is helpful to understand the social psychology that informs group formation. Dating back to Muzafer Sherif's exploration of the emergence of group norms (cf. 1935, 1936, 1961), social psychologists have attempted to explain how and why groups form and the subsequent impact of the group on the behavior of the individual. This research is particularly important when trying to understand issues such as if and how the level of cohesion affects the negotiating style of groups and/or the odds of reaching a deal; the ability of a group to maximize their take at the talks and the overall quality of any deal reached; the impact on negotiations, if any, of the presence of parties/groups at the table with different levels of cohesion; and finally, if one group has an advantage when there are differences in cohesion and how a party should adjust its negotiating style to leverage the other sides' lack of cohesion.

When attempting to understand the effects of intragroup cohesion on negotiations, it is particularly important to look at the role of the representative or agent engaged in the negotiation process between groups. Intergroup negotiations rarely happen with all members of the ingroup at the table. Indeed, intergroup negotiations are generally conducted by representatives or agents (Pruitt and Carnevale 1993, Babbitt 1999, Cutcher-Gershefeld and Watkins 1999, Steinel et al 2010). These agents are tasked with representing the interests of the group, not simply their own interests and motivations. Therefore, some of the most salient dynamics that can help elucidate how intragroup cohesion impacts the negotiation process can be found in the relationship of the representative to their ingroup (Klimoski 1972): the presence and strength of intragroup norms (Petersen et al 2004, Steinel et al 2010) and the status of the representative in the ingroup (Steinel et al 2010). These dynamics are influenced by the level of conflict between the ingroup and the outgroup with whom they are negotiating (Demoulin and Teixeira 2010, Pruitt and Rubin 1986).

At this stage, it must be noted that there are some significant limits of these studies. They tend to be done in a context of distributional bargaining, rather than integrative negotiation. These conditions do not allow for a clear understanding of how participants might have combined both cooperative and competitive strategies, prioritized issues, or made tradeoffs in the negotiation process. In addition, there seems to be less research done on the substantive outcomes reached by cohesive ingroups that is independent of negotiator behavior (although that lacuna is revealing in and of itself). At the same time, the research offers important insights into the dynamics affecting intragroup cohesion, providing some guidance for better understanding and analyzing negotiations conducted in this context. These dynamics are explored in more detail below.

a. The influence of the ingroup on the behavior of its negotiator

“One key factor that distinguishes intergroup negotiation from interpersonal negotiation is the fact that representatives in intergroup negotiation defend not just their own interests but also the interests of their constituent groups. Indeed, in a sense, the ‘eyes of the group are on them’ (Steinel et al 2010, 780).

Unsurprisingly, research into understanding the effect of the group on its representative reveals that the ingroup has a significant impact on its negotiation representative. However, identifying exactly how the ingroup – especially a cohesive ingroup – influences its negotiation representative and ultimately the deal reached has been more difficult to tease out. Early research demonstrated that a representative’s accommodation of the other party’s needs created tension in his own group, especially if his group was cohesive (cf. Turk and Lefcowitz 1962). This would lead to the conclusion that cohesive groups produce inflexible and positional bargainers. In another study, it has been posited that if pre-negotiation produces a firm negotiating position then that negatively impacts negotiated outcomes (cf. Druckman 1967). This aligns with anecdotal evidence, yet it did not help researchers to understand why that was so. Finally, Friedman and Jacka (1969) demonstrated that group cohesiveness impairs agreement in negotiation. Yet, none of these studies is nuanced enough to provide practical advice for negotiators.

Later research began to address these deficits. Klimoski (1972), demonstrated that while pre-negotiation is important, it is not the determining factor of a group’s influence on negotiation. “Instead, it is the increased cohesiveness or positive affect that becomes generated under these circumstances that influences negotiator behavior” (Klimoski 1972, 378). **In other words, the very act of pre-negotiating within the ingroup creates cohesiveness – and it is that cohesiveness that is a determinant of the negotiation behavior.**

Interviews with US, Guatemalan, and Singaporean diplomats working at the United Nations support these findings (interviews conducted September 2019). These diplomats report that even in groups such as the G77, which might struggle to develop a common position, it is *the process of generating the negotiating position*, not the position itself, that reinforces internal cohesion. According to the interviewees, this is in part due to the trust that the coalition (or ingroup) members have developed over time and which extends beyond a specific negotiation position. The interviewees added that building a coalition that resembles a homogenous ingroup from such a diverse group of parties and subsequently sustains its cohesion is critical to the success of less developed countries at the United Nations. This requires enormous investments in relationships between member states and the continued maintenance of the trust that results from the

process. This in turn has a significant impact on negotiator behavior – causing the representative of the group to be more positional, with less room to maneuver.

Klimoski extended the research begun by Friedman and Jacka (1969) and showed that something more than simple ‘group cohesiveness’ governed the possibility for agreement. Importantly, “accountability” - the potential for evaluation of the negotiator’s performance by the ingroup - had the more significant impact on negotiator behavior. This effect was even more pronounced if the negotiator strongly identified with the ingroup. “Groups were in the best position to monitor and punish negotiators who didn't do a "good" job ... Not only was the group cohesive, exerting influence over its members, but the group would have an opportunity to evaluate the group member-negotiator, to be able to use this influence to reward or punish him for successful or unsuccessful negotiations” (1972, 378).

Klimoski’s work signaled a renewed focus on group norms and their importance for negotiators (1972, 1978). Steinel et al have explored the impact of intragroup dynamics on intergroup conflict and their most relevant finding (for our purposes) is that “group norms relevant to the negotiation...become an important source of influence on negotiation behavior, inviting norm-congruent negotiation behavior” (2010, 789). Critically, these findings distinguish norms from cohesion. **In other words, in a negotiation process, it is the intragroup norm (e.g. of competition or cooperation) that will more likely determine the negotiator’s behavior than the level of intragroup cohesiveness.** Therefore, if the intragroup norm is competitive, then the representative adopts a competitive stance. If the intragroup norm is cooperative, then the representative should adopt a cooperative stance, or risk the opprobrium of the group.

However, Steinel et al discovered that such norm-congruent behavior is dependent upon two things: the standing of the representative within the group – i.e. how strongly the negotiator matches the prototypical behavior of the group – and how much the representative perceives the need to ‘belong’ in the group. As can be expected, there is no question as to whether a ‘prototypical’ representative in good standing will observe the group norm – they do because they are representative of those characteristics that the group uses to differentiate itself from others. However, a representative who is on the periphery of the group – those who don’t identify as closely with the characteristics of the group – will only be affected by the intragroup norm if they feel the need to belong. “This need to belong drives their motivation to be accepted by the group, which in turn motivates norm-congruent behavior” (Steinel et al 2010, 789).

Highly collective cultures (e.g. many Asian cultures such as Japan, South Korea, and China) may experience this phenomenon with even greater impact. This is an important factor to be aware of for those representatives negotiating in these contexts. “In more collectivist cultures such as Japan, being accepted by one’s group is even more important, there is greater emphasis on cooperation within the group, and less emphasis on cooperation with the outgroup (Triandis, 2001). This suggests that in collectivistic cultures individuals with peripheral status may even be more motivated to assert their group membership. In combination with a competitive group norm, this could lead to competitive intergroup interactions” (Steinel et al 2010, 791).

The intersection of the representative’s standing and desire for intragroup belongingness on norm-congruent behavior is illustrated by the behavior of Burundi’s President, Pierre Buyoya, when he began secret negotiations in 1996 with one of the main Hutu rebel groups, the CNDD, with the aim of bringing an end to Burundi’s civil war. On the one hand, observers of the process expected President Buyoya – who might have been described as a “prototypical representative” of the Hima Tutsi-led army at the time

– to adhere to the fiercely zero-sum negotiation mentality exhibited by the other Tutsi army officers (Wolpe 2011). Yet, President Buyoya came to the negotiation process with a more cooperative approach, contrary to his ingroup norm. Despite his seemingly ‘prototypical’ status, he did not exhibit the need to belong and behaved in a more constructive manner in the negotiations with the CNDD.

This behavior reveals another critical dynamic affecting cohesion and its subsequent impact on negotiation behavior: the principal-agent tension. As underscored above, most intergroup negotiations are conducted by representatives or agents. **The relative impact of intragroup cohesion on the negotiation process thus depends in part on the identity of that representative or agent.** In the case of President Buyoya, his status as a “principal” – head of State and decision-maker – and “agent” – representing his party at the negotiation process rather than sending someone else – allowed him to achieve goals in the secret negotiation with the CNDD that might have been impossible for a typical agent representing a cohesive ingroup. According to Cutcher-Gershenfeld and Watkins, “In addition to representing a mix of personal and constituent interests, representatives must also seek to align stated constituent preferences with external constraints and possibilities visible to the representative. When a representative sees a gap between what is possible to achieve in negotiations and the stated desires of constituents, she faces a core strategic choice. At one extreme, she could continue to act in a classic agent role and seek to advance the states interests articulated by those she represents while knowing full well that this may produce no agreement or a suboptimal one. At the other extreme, she will work to transform constituents’ perceptions of their interests” (1999, 29). President Buyoya was able to see and act upon these external possibilities, counting on his ability to change his ingroup’s perceptions of their own interests upon his return from the negotiation table.

In their parlance, Cutcher-Gershenfeld and Watkins would describe Buyoya’s behavior as that of a ‘visionary leader,’ noting that “to the extent that [the agent] begins to try to reshape the priorities, perceptions, and even core underlying concerns of those she represents, she is beginning to move along a continuum to a place where she is acting less like a classic agent and more like a visionary leader” (1999, 30). Building on previous research, this suggests that **whether or not an agent will become a ‘visionary leader’ is dependent upon four factors: their attachment to the ingroup; their role in the group; the nature of the evaluation of their performance by their constituents (the ingroup); and finally, their willingness to risk expulsion from the ingroup should they fail to transform their constituents’ understanding of their own interests.** President Buyoya suffered a great deal of condemnation from his constituents when he returned from the secret negotiations, including pressure from Tutsi hardliners to step down. In the end, he capitalized on his role as President and risked expulsion, to persuade his constituents that a negotiated agreement was their only path to peace (McClintock and Nahimana 2008).

An example of the negative implications of this phenomenon is the recent report of the alleged execution of North Korea’s negotiator, Kim Hyok-chol, in the aftermath of the failed US-North Korea summit in Vietnam. Reportedly, the negotiator was killed for having been “won over” by the United States during the denuclearization talks between North Korea and the US, thus embarrassing North Korea’s Supreme Leader ([NYT](#) May 30, 2019). While information about their intragroup negotiation process is scarce, North Korea’s negotiation history reveals strong internal cohesion with an emphasis on norm congruence. It also seems to suggest that North Korea views negotiations with the United States through a competitive frame, making the failure of Kim Hyok-chol even more egregious in the eyes of his colleagues, if he were seen to have suggested any level of compromise with the United States in contradiction to the dominant norm of the ingroup.

Thus, the research suggests that negotiator (or representative) behavior can be predicted more effectively through an understanding of group norms than by some measure of intragroup cohesion. More importantly, the degree of norm congruency is higher when: (1) the negotiator demonstrates behavior prototypical of the group, (2) the negotiator perceives a strong need to belong in the group and, (3) the negotiator perceives their role as an agent, strictly representing ingroup interests, than as a potentially ‘visionary leader’ with the power to shape ingroup perceptions of their interests.

b. Levels of conflict and intragroup cohesion

Another important factor that influences intragroup cohesion and by extension, its negotiating behavior, is the level of conflict present between the groups who are negotiating. According Pruitt and Rubin (1986), conflict escalation can be defined as the transformation of a conflict along a continuum of desired outcomes: beginning with a desire to do well for the group, moving to a desire to win, do better than, or beat the other side, and finally to a desire to do harm to the other. As might be expected, intragroup cohesion can reinforce this escalation process, especially as the conflict between parties becomes more pronounced.

When evaluating the impact of conflict on intragroup cohesion (and vice versa, as these dynamics are self-reinforcing), several elements must be taken into consideration. Three of the most critical of these factors include group polarization, ‘runaway norms’ and contentious group goals (Pruitt and Rubin 1986). During a conflict, these elements all contribute to what might be termed negative intragroup cohesion. For example, the ingroup can become increasingly polarized from the others with whom it is negotiating due to group think (when I listen to you and you agree with me, that validates and thus hardens my view) and due to competition among ingroup members to hold a view that is at least as extreme as most of the group (which can become a perverse status issue – I gain status if I am seen to be defending our views more strongly than you are).

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the emergence of ‘runaway’ norms that support contentious approaches to dealing with the conflict. “...Negative attitudes, distrust, zero sum thinking, a reluctance to communicate with the other party – can become the subject of norms. When this happens, they gain more strength and stability than they would have if they belonged to a single individual or to a set of individuals who did not share a common group membership. Hence, escalation [of conflict] becomes likely” (Pruitt and Rubin 1986, 106). Spurred by this emergent set of ‘runaway’ intragroup norms, contentious group goals (e.g. destroying the ‘other’) begin to dominate approaches to negotiation and conflict resolution. These dynamics result in more positional bargaining, rather than integrative negotiation solutions. **In such a context, intragroup cohesiveness contributes to “militant [behavior] in contentious conflict” (Pruitt and Rubin 1986, 106), which in turn contributes to escalation, because contentious conflict has been shown to enhance group cohesion through the enforced conformity to intragroup norms.** More militant leaders emerge if the conflict involves heavy contention, as those who do that best will “reinforce and augment the group’s commitment to extreme tactics” (Pruitt and Rubin 1986, 107). In such a context, **the probability of a negotiated solution declines as the risks of conflict escalation increase.**

The ongoing negotiations between the United Auto Workers union (UAW) and General Motors (GM) provide an illustration of these conflict dynamics. Until the strike was called by the UAW on September 16, 2019, the parties were on the more integrative end of the negotiation spectrum – seeking to do well for themselves while embracing the need to work with the other side. However, the moment the strike was

called – and each day the strike has continued – the conflict has escalated, solidifying the ingroup, and pushing the parties toward more contentious approaches to managing the process. The UAW membership becomes both more cohesive and more entrenched with each passing day, leaving little room for more than trading concessions. While this approach might yield a deal for the UAW in the short term, over the long term, trust between the parties is destroyed, leaving no opportunity for parties to optimize the deal, the costs of the conflict will be difficult to recoup (especially for the average UAW member), and the future negotiations will be impacted by the long shadow of the current, highly contentious process.

3. Strategies and Recommendations

The social psychology and social conflict research provide us with several explanations for how intragroup cohesion effects the negotiation process. The research – and evidence from the field – also offer several strategies for more effectively managing the impact of intragroup cohesion in the context of negotiations.

a. Recommendation #1: Seek to understand the dominant intragroup norm(s) and the role of the negotiator representing the ingroup

Steinel et al (2010) explore the issue of representation and norm congruent behavior. In addition to facilitating our understanding of these dynamics, their research seems to provide clues for both the analyst and the negotiator on dealing with intragroup cohesion. “...Our findings demonstrate that people show their belongingness to the group not necessarily by behaving competitively, but rather by behaving consistently with the group norm. In intergroup negotiation, therefore, group norms are a crucial predictor of representative behavior.” (Steinel et al 2010, 790). **When confronted with a representative of a seemingly cohesive ingroup, seek first to understand the dominant group norm with respect to negotiation and then determine whether and how the negotiator will conform to the norms of the ingroup. Armed with that information, you will have an indication as to how the representative will behave in the negotiation process.** This in turn will provide more information as to the zone of possible agreement between the parties, as the agent who is adhering to a competitive intragroup norm and has a desire to belong to that ingroup is more likely to adopt a positional stance when defending the interests of the ingroup.

For example, prior to making headway in the Aceh process, the mediator, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, was confronted with a virtually nonexistent zone of possible agreement because the representatives of the two parties, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian Government, refused to risk their standing within their respective ingroups and give up their positions. The GAM wanted independence and the Indonesian Government wanted to protect Indonesia from territorial dissolution at all costs, facing stiff resistance to any softening of their stance from the Indonesian military. Neither party was ready to negotiate the compromises necessary for a peaceful end to the conflict (Sebenius and Green, 2010). Their competitive intragroup norms effectively stymied the process of negotiations.

In order to move the process forward, Ahtisaari first had to better understand each party, their respective representatives and negotiating positions. He then set out provisions that effectively shaped two things: (1) the intragroup norms with respect to negotiation and (2) the conditions under which the representatives could negotiate. First, a competitive norm was no longer acceptable – the parties had to agree that their

negotiators would come to the table prepared to engage in integrative negotiation talks. And second, Ahtisaari insisted that the representatives at the table have the power to make binding commitments, changing the nature of their relationship to their ingroup (Sebenius and Green, 2010). This combination of provisions forced the parties to re-evaluate their alternatives to the negotiation, changing their perceptions of their need for a deal, as the no deal path seemed increasingly unlikely to satisfy the core interests of each group (Fisher, Ury and Patton 2011, Pruitt and Rubin 1986).

If, upon analysis, the ingroup representative seems to be willing to risk censure from their ingroup despite the presence of a strong intragroup norm of competition, then the other negotiator's task shifts. In this case, the other negotiator (or third parties) can help to create the conditions that support the representative's desire to change their own ingroup's perception of their interests. A 'visionary leader' cannot operate in a vacuum. Burundi's President Buyoya was willing to risk condemnation as a result of participating in an integrative negotiation process; but the lifting of sanctions by the regional leaders/mediator (which had been imposed earlier in the civil war) had a significant impact on the context, contributing to Buyoya's ability to change the perceptions of his ingroup vis à vis their interests.

b. Recommendation #2: Change the structure of the negotiation process

In some ways, a cohesive party has an advantage at the negotiation table. Intragroup cohesion can facilitate negotiations in the sense that the principal-agent tension is reduced. Such groups generally have a clearer understanding of their alternatives to negotiated agreement and a willingness introduce their Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (or BATNA) into the negotiation process to influence the behavior of the other party, as the Rwandan Patriotic Front did at various time during Arusha negotiation process in 1992-93 (cf. Fisher, Ury and Patton, 2011). In addition, the existence of norm congruence between the representative and the ingroup suggests that commitments made on behalf of the ingroup can generally be trusted by the other negotiators (assuming they are negotiating in good faith).

However, a cohesive ingroup's perception of the "rightness" of their position is reinforced by some of the social psychological processes described above. This can result in more positional negotiations, often leading to suboptimal substantive outcomes and potentially conflict escalation. This dynamic is borne out by both research (cf. Friedman and Jacka 1969) and practice. For example, the Palipehutu FNL – the last rebel group to join Burundi's peace process in 2009 and by far the most cohesive of the parties to the conflict – refused to consider negotiations with the Tutsi-led Army, which not only prolonged the conflict, it eventually caused them to be ostracized by both the international community and the other parties to the peace process. As a result, they were able to shape neither the negotiations nor the resulting Arusha Accords, leading to a sub-optimal agreement from their perspective and the satisfaction of very few of their core interests.

In these circumstances, a second strategy that negotiators can employ when faced with a cohesive ingroup (with a competitive negotiation intragroup norm) is to change the structure of the negotiation process. Lax and Sebenius describe this as the 'third dimension' or the set-up of the negotiation process – what happens away from the table – in their three-dimensional (3D) framework. Specifically, set-up requires "acting to ensure that the right parties have been involved, in the right sequence, to deal with the right issues, that engage the right set of interests, at the right table or tables, at the right time, under the right expectations, facing the right consequences of walking away if there is no deal." (Lax and Sebenius 2006, 12). In other

words, the negotiator seeks to set the stage for successful a negotiation, understanding that "a bad setup makes tactics at the table more or less irrelevant" (Lax and Sebenius 2006, 13).

The central tool of the ‘third dimension’ is the stakeholder map: a map that describes all relevant parties (both at the table and those who might be impacted by the negotiation process), their decision making structures, their respective interests, the nature of their relationships with one another, and the strength of their preferences vis à vis the issues to negotiate. The map is not static, rather it evolves as the negotiation process moves forward and can be used at any point in the process. This makes it an especially effective tool for a negotiator dealing with a (seemingly) cohesive party on the other side of the table.

There are two ways in particular that the stakeholder map can be used to manage negotiation dynamics impacted by intragroup cohesion. First, **the map facilitates understanding of the decision-making processes and authority within groups.** In a strongly cohesive group, this is critical as it can provide guidance as to who should be the target of influence. The representative? The ‘leader’? A cabal of ingroup members? When the largest rebel group in the Burundi conflict, the CNDD-FDD, was finally persuaded to come to the negotiation table, progress was slow and talks seemed to be constantly on the verge of breaking down. An analysis of the stakeholder map revealed that decisions were not being made by their publicly recognized leader – at least they were not being made by him alone. Instead, a group of five or six generals were the true decision makers. Until the interests of the generals were teased out and proposals floated to meet those interests, intragroup cohesion seemed an impenetrable barrier to achieving a result in the negotiations.

Second, a well-researched stakeholder map can reveal parties with whom a coalition might be possible in order to put pressure on a cohesive ingroup and influence their negotiation behavior. As the landscape of the negotiation is expanded, new opportunities for influence present themselves. With an understanding of where the ingroup is located on the stakeholder map, their interests, and the other stakeholders with whom they have deferential or influential relationships, the negotiator can begin to build allies to advance their cause. Stedman (1997) describes this as identifying the “locus” of the concerned party within the negotiation process. With a greater number of parties in view, an effective negotiator can develop a coalition, shifting the locus of the negotiations, changing the other party’s(ies’) perceptions of their interests and the attractiveness of their BATNA. For example, when George Mitchell arrived in Northern Ireland, a cursory review of the parties resulted in a stakeholder map that included the large groupings of Republicans and the Unionists. Yet, it soon became clear to Mitchell that within each party there were sub-groups more (or less) interested in finding a deal. Mitchell revised his stakeholder map and began to build a coalition of these sub-groups, marginalizing potential spoilers as he shifted the locus of the negotiation process away from “Republican and Unionists” and towards a more nuanced reflection of a set of parties with whom a path to peace could be imagined.

Another way in which the structure of the negotiation might be changed is by **adding a third party** As Klimoski underscores, “...Perhaps there should be a greater reliance on third-party agents (cf., Pruitt & Johnson, 1970; Walton, 1967; Walton, Button, & Cafferty, 1969) in mediating, or more likely arbitrating intergroup disputes. Then, negotiators could be treated as the partisan advocates that group pressures cause them to be. Thus, the strength of their case would rest more on the data they could muster and present to a (presumably) neutral third party than on the magnitude of emotion that could be maintained. Concessions made in this context would relieve negotiators any sense of personal weakness, i.e., perhaps "mediation provides the negotiator a face-saving device whereby he can retreat without feeling he has capitulated"

(Pruitt & Johnson, 1970, 246)” (1972, 379-380). Finnish mediator Ahtisaari’s presence as a third party in the Aceh negotiations effectively restructured the process between the GAM and the Indonesian Government, allowing both parties to move from a positional bargaining stance to a more integrated approach to the negotiations.

Finally, **Klimoski suggests that designing a negotiation process which limits the role of the ingroup could facilitate the work of the negotiators, perhaps leading to more integrative outcomes.** “At the level of the group and its representative, other changes might serve to reduce pressures stemming from the group. For example, there is some evidence that limiting the role of the group in the actual negotiations, from pre-negotiation discussion to the observation of negotiations, will reduce the pressure on representatives (McKersie, Perry, & Walton, 1965)...[and potentially] create a milieu more conducive to agreement” (1972, 380). For example, in Burundi’s Arusha Peace Process, the mediator, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, limited the number of representatives that any given party could send to the negotiation table. At first, this greatly facilitated the development of the outlines of a more integrated solution, as there were fewer internal conflicts that had to be overcome within each party. However, it also had negative repercussions when the CNDD fragmented as a result of having their key constituents excluded from the talks. The military wing split from the party, complaining that their interests were not being satisfied by the process. This led to more violence and ultimately prolonged the war.

Strategies used to change the structure of the negotiation process should be undertaken with care. If the negotiator or mediator can influence the ingroup’s perceptions of their interests, particularly regarding how the process will help them reach their goals, then restructuring the negotiations can yield more integrative – and hopefully more sustainable – deals. However, if the process of restructuring serves to increase antagonism between the parties, then the likelihood of conflict escalation grows, threatening both the parties and their interests, creating potential spoilers, and reducing the chance of a deal.

c. Recommendation #3: Leveraging the dynamics in negotiations with a non-cohesive party

The research presented above addresses issues that might emerge when negotiating with a cohesive ingroup. The third recommendation speaks to the circumstances in which the ingroup lacks cohesion. There are both advantages and disadvantages to negotiating with a non-cohesive party. The key is to mitigate the disadvantages and more effectively leverage the advantages.

One of the greatest disadvantages of a non-cohesive group is their inability to internally agree to the set of interests that they hope to satisfy through the negotiation process. This indecision often leads to unfulfilled promises and incomplete implementation of agreements. Weak cohesion can also lead to the emergence of militant leaders and eventually the fragmenting of parties, especially in cases of conflict escalation (Pruitt and Rubin 1986). Frustrated that their leaders are not adequately defending their interests, militant leaders may choose more extreme tactics, breaking up non-cohesive groups, as happened in Burundi, when the military wing of the CNDD (the CNDD-FDD) split off to form its own, more radical party. This prolonged the war for at least three more years.

On the other hand, **non-cohesive parties can offer opportunities for influence, allowing effective negotiators to shape how the non-cohesive party perceives its interests and ultimately the agreement.** The stakeholder map is a useful tool for dealing with these challenges. The map can offer the negotiator or mediator a bird’s eye view of how to build and manage a coalition with non-cohesive parties.

Such a coalition must satisfy both the individual interests of the representative of the non-cohesive group – ensuring that they remain committed to the coalition and to the deal-making process – and satisfy the group’s interests with an agreement that is more attractive than their alternative. As mentioned above, the map also provides guidance for spoiler management, should the fragmenting of a non-cohesive group threaten the negotiation process.

Salih and Gray (2017) offer additional strategies to mediators for managing non-cohesive groups in a way that yields more effective conflict resolution processes. **One of their most important pieces of advice is to insist that conflict analyses (and stakeholder maps) remain dynamic tools of assessing cohesion.** Group cohesion can evolve and shift over time, resulting in new spoilers to the process or potentially revealing new allies. The conflict assessment must evolve as the group’s cohesion changes or risks providing outdated and potentially damaging guidance to the mediator.

Another relevant recommendation from Salih and Gray (2017) is to **verify institutional positions.** If an individual’s ability to represent the group cannot be verified, it throws into question the party’s commitment to the agreement. Salih and Gray suggest encouraging public statements from entire organizations, rather than from individual representatives, in order to cement a group’s commitment to specific policies and courses of action during the negotiation process or rotating negotiation teams to ensure buy-in of all factions of the group (2017, 3).

4. Conclusion

As anticipated, intragroup cohesion has an important impact on intergroup negotiations. Understanding how to manage intragroup cohesion rests largely on the interface with the ingroup’s representative and a comprehension of the intragroup norm(s). Interestingly, the research suggests that negotiator (or representative) behavior can be predicted more effectively through an understanding of group norms than by some measure of intragroup cohesion. More importantly, the degree of norm congruency is higher when: (1) the negotiator demonstrates behavior prototypical of the group, (2) the negotiator perceives a strong need to belong in the group and, (3) the negotiator perceives their role as an agent, strictly representing ingroup interests, than as a potentially ‘visionary leader’ with the power to shape ingroup perceptions of their interests. Understanding the role of norm congruency within the ingroup provides the negotiator on the other side of the table with some clues as to how to advance their interests when dealing with a cohesive party.

Research has also shown that conflict escalation can entrench intragroup cohesion, making the ingroup more positional in its demands at the negotiation table. This in turn reduces the possibilities for an integrated solution, negatively impacting the quality of the deal. Although, admittedly, less research has been done about the impact of intragroup cohesion on negotiated outcomes outside of the business context (cf. Backhaus et al 2008). Anecdotal evidence does seem to suggest that cohesive parties using a positional bargaining approach in an international conflict context yields less optimal and less sustainable agreements.

In order to effectively manage the impact of intragroup cohesion on the negotiation process, a negotiator (or mediator) has a number of strategies available to them. First and foremost, understand the dominant group norm with respect to negotiation and then determine whether and how the negotiator will conform

to the norms of the ingroup. With this information, the negotiator can make strategic choices about influencing the ingroup, their representative and/or the conditions in which the negotiation is taking place. The ability of the negotiator (or mediator) to change the ingroup's perceptions of its own interests vis à vis the negotiation is one of the most powerful tools they have available to them.

Finally, the negotiator can change the structure of the negotiation process to successfully deal with a cohesive ingroup. This can be done by more effectively setting the table: using a stakeholder map to identify spoilers or potential allies, and shifting the locus of the negotiation to capitalize on new parties and coalitions. The structure can also be changed by adding a third party or restricting the role played by other ingroup members in the process. Critically, any stakeholder map or conflict analysis used by negotiators to understand the players and plan their negotiation strategy must be revisited and updated regularly. As group cohesion can shift over time, the analysis is only as good as its ability to reflect the reality of the intragroup dynamics.

Bibliography and Suggested Resources

- Babbitt, E.F., “Challenges for International Diplomatic Agents.” In Mnookin & Susskind, (eds.) *Negotiating on Behalf of Others*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999, pp. 135-150.
- Backhaus, Klaus and Jenny Van Doorn and Robert Wilken. “The Impact of Team Characteristics on the Course and Outcome of Intergroup Price Negotiations.” *The Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing* 2008, Vol 15 (4): 365-396.
- Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J. E. and Watkins, M. “Toward a Theory of Representation in Negotiation.” In Mnookin & Susskind (eds.), *Negotiating on Behalf of Others*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999, pp.23-51.
- Demoulin, Stéphanie and Cátia P. Teixeira. “Social categorization in interpersonal negotiation: How social structural factors shape negotiations.” *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 2010, Vol 13(6): 765-777.
- Fisher, Roger and William Ury with Bruce Patton. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. 1991 (Second Edition).
- Friedman, Myles I. and M. Elizabeth Jacka. “The Negative Effect of Group Cohesiveness on Intergroup Negotiation.” *Journal of Social Issues* 1969, Vol 25 (1): 181-194.
- Klimoski, Richard. “Simulation Methodologies in Experimental Research on Negotiations by Representatives.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 1978, Vol 22 (1): 61-77.
- Klimoski, Richard. “The Effects of Intragroup Forces on Intergroup Conflict Resolution.” *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 1972, (8): 363-383.
- Lax, David A. and James K. Sebenius. *3D Negotiation: Powerful Tools to Change the Game in Your Most Important Deals*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006.
- McClintock, Elizabeth and Terence Nahimana. “Managing the Tensions between Inclusionary and Exclusionary Processes: Building Peace in Burundi.” *International Negotiation* 2008, Vol 13 (1): 73-91.
- Mnookin, Robert H., Scott R. Peppet, and Andrew S. Tulumello. "The Tension between Principals and Agents." In *Beyond Winning: Negotiating to Create Value in Deals and Disputes*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 69-92.
- Petersen, Lars-Eric et al. “The Effects of Intragroup Interaction and Cohesion on Intergroup Bias.” *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 2004, Vol 7(2): 107-118.
- Pruitt, D. G. and P. J. Carnevale. *Negotiation in Social Conflict*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1993.

- Pruitt, Dean G. and Jeffrey Z. Rubin. *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986.
- Pruitt, Dean G. and Douglas F. Johnson. "Mediation as an Aid to Face Saving in Negotiation." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1970, Vol 14 (3): 239-246.
- Putnam, Robert D. "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games." *International Organization* 1988, Vol 42 (3): 427-60.
- Salih, Cale and Stephen Gray. "Group Cohesion and Peace Processes." *PeaceBrief 230*, United States Institute of Peace, September 2017.
- Sebenius, James K. with Alex Green. "Everything or Nothing: Martti Ahtisaari and the Aceh Negotiations Case Study (A)" Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School, 2010
- Sherif, Muzafer et al. *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment*. Norman: University Book Exchange, 1961.
- Sherif, Muzafer. *The Psychology of Social Norms*. New York: Harper, 1936.
- Sherif, Muzafer. "A study of some social factors in perception." *Archives of Psychology* 1935, 187: 1-60.
- Stedman, Stephen John. "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes." *International Security* 1997, Vol 22 (2): 5-53.
- Steinel, Wolfgang et al. "How intragroup dynamics affect behavior in intergroup conflict: The role of group norms, prototypicality, and need to belong." *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 2010, Vol 13 (6): 779-794.
- Wolpe, Howard. "Making Peace After Genocide: Anatomy of the Burundi Process." *Peaceworks*, United States Institute of Peace, 2011.