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## The Cold War and the Discipline of Negotiation

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## **I. Introduction**

The Cold War refers to the intense conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that occurred shortly after the climax of World War II. The War is regarded as a physical representation of the ideological and psychological warfare between the Eastern Bloc (Soviet Union and its allies) and the Western Bloc (United States and its allies) following the events of World War II. Experts concur that the Cold War was a war of ideology and paranoia, particularly from the perspective of the United States. Nuclear warfare was a threat that loomed but was never actualized. Contextually speaking, the Cold War is an additional conflict of historical significance in addition to the massive world wars and the later conflicts that would transpire in Vietnam, the Middle East, and several other parts of the world.

## **II. Historical Context of the War**

The Cold War was a battle of conflicting ideologies. Democratic ideals on one side clashed frequently with communist ideals. Once President Truman took office and established the Truman Doctrine, the conflict escalated in seriousness as the United States was directly confronting the Soviet Union. The Truman Doctrine asserted the policy of containment. Broadly speaking, this policy intended to decrease the power and influence of communist states. Some academics refer to the containment of communism as, "...a US policy to contain or stall Soviet communism by ideological, political, economic and military means."<sup>1</sup> This definition is significant for a few reasons. It is important to highlight that this policy was created to directly address Soviet influence. Initially, this was not the case. This policy was originally intended to address any spread of communism. Over time, the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union came to diametrically oppose one another. Therefore, a change in the policy was made to address only the spread of Soviet communism through any rational means necessary. Additionally, this highlights the power hierarchy and structure of the world following World War II. Based on the definition, it is clear that the US and the Soviet Union were the world's superpowers during the Cold War Era. Each power had a vast number of nuclear arms and a set of allies to instruct at their discretion. The importance of the policy will become clearer as the theories of negotiation are applied to the conflict.

### A. The name and the importance of the Proxy War

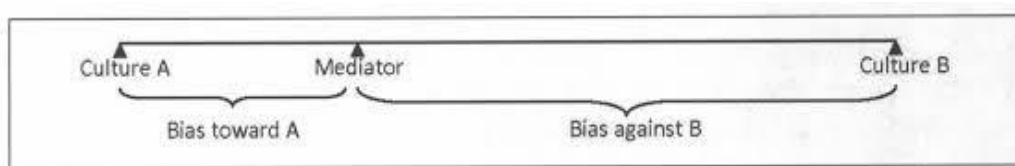
Modern readers often pondered why the conflict is referred to as the “Cold War.”

This name was identified as a suitable title due to the limited number of physical casualties or lives taken. Nuclear calamity was a possibility when the conflict was at its climax. However, a bleak future of nuclear calamity was averted, and the Cold War ended in a very anti-climactic manner. The Cold War can be difficult to categorize since it was so vastly different from other conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually, scholars determined that the conflict could be considered the first example of a large-scale proxy war. A proxy-war is, “an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country; disguised as a conflict over an internal issue of that country; and using some of that country’s manpower, resources and territory as a means for achieving preponderantly foreign goals and foreign strategies.”<sup>2</sup> This definition is appropriate for use while discussing the Cold War, but it should be noted that the definition is rather narrow in its scope as it assumes that all proxy wars are similar in nature to the Cold War.

### B. Cuba’s Introduction

In October of 1962, Cuba became involved in the Cold War. Cuba functioned as the third country in a conflict largely between the world’s two hegemonic powers. Cuba’s role was quite unique as it functioned somewhat as an unofficial biased mediator in the conflict. Kydd explains the purpose and function of a biased mediator by stating that, “Mediator bias is defined in terms of the preferences of the mediator. If the mediator's preferences are aligned with one party or the other, she is said to be biased in favor of that party”<sup>3</sup> This type of mediator is generally effective at communicating the resolve of the side for which they hold bias.

Scholars frequently depict this type of mediator with a diagram comparable to the one displayed below:



The diagram is a perfect representation of Cuba's role during the Cold War. The specific 13-day portion of the Cuban Missile Crisis that took place in October 1962 is referenced in this paper. Clearly though, the events that took place within those 13 days have implications and ramifications that are still being explored by historians to this day. Still, this diagram is helpful due to its inclusion of culture. As discussed, ideology played a critical role in the war. Ideology is the fundamental driving force of a nation's culture. If the ideologies conflict, then the cultures conflict as well which effortlessly juxtaposes those nations against one another. In the diagram above, Culture A refers to the Soviet Union and its allies and Culture B refers to the United States and its allies.

Although Cuba is geographically close to the U.S, the two nations did not have a strong relationship. Relations between the two were in disarray during the Cold War. The Soviet Union was likely aware of this and sought to capitalize upon the poor relationship between the US and Cuba. We can infer that Cuba was willing to join the war despite the dangers that may have been present. Cuba and the Soviet Union's bond over their mutual adherence to communism and their equal disdain for the U.S ultimately provided adequate ammunition for their assault against the U.S and its allies. The Soviet Union's bold and swift acquisition of Cuba caused great panic and concern among citizens and officials in the U.S. Tensions dramatically increased when the Soviets installed precise nuclear missile launching centers a mere 90 miles off the coast of Florida. The threat of nuclear demolition was immediately augmented. Faced with this daunting reality, the U.S frantically scrambled to find a solution.

### **C. The Cold War Ends?**

The Cold War did not end with the Cuban Missile Crisis of the 1960s. In fact, the conflict extended another 30 years and finally culminated with the fall of the Iron Curtain in Germany in 1991. Between 1960 and the end of 1990, the World witnessed several large developments in the conflict. Most notably, the nuclear arms and space race between the U.S and the Soviet Union, the policy of "détente" or denuclearization, and the Soviet Union's controversial involvement in the Afghanistan conflict all come to mind. Clearly, the intricacies and massive history of the Cold War is too expansive for the confines of this paper.

Nonetheless, it was critical to establish historical context as it gives a clearer understanding of the conflict. In the following sections, the paper will apply concepts of negotiation to the early period of the Cold War, as that is the period that is the least complex.

### **III. The Cold War and Negotiation**

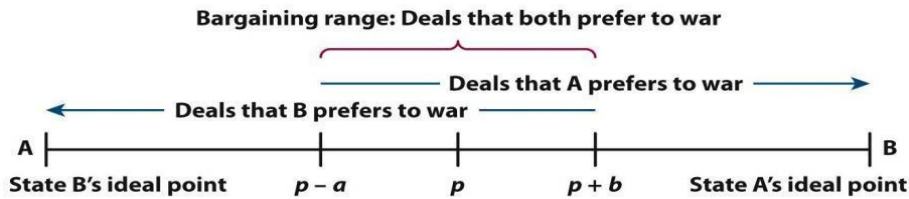
The early period of the Cold War is perfect for applying the concepts of

Negotiation. In terms of application of theory, the early period is the least complex and involves at most 2 parties. Later developments significantly increased the number of involved parties. As a result, the discipline of negotiation becomes more difficult to apply as the number of actors increases. Therefore, the focus remains on the early period. To begin, negotiation has been defined as, “a form of decision making in which two or more parties talk with another to resolve their opposing interests.”<sup>4</sup> Negotiation is generally characterized by a Give-and-Take process in which most parties prefer to negotiate in order to come to a mutually beneficial agreement as opposed to fighting openly. This inclination was generally not true for the Cold War,, but is the fundamental basis of negotiation. Additionally, experts generally concur that there are two styles of negotiation: integrative negotiation and distributive bargaining. Integrative negotiation seeks to find solutions for both sides and establish a valuable win-win scenario. Distributive bargaining seeks to finds solutions that are extremely one sided. This type of bargaining is characterized by a zero-sum scenario in which value or benefits are not shared between the two parties. There are numerous additional elements to negotiation, but a negotiation scenario cannot take place without the features discussed above.

#### **A. The Soviet Union as a Negotiation Actor**

Let’s envision a scenario with the U.S as party A and the Soviet Union as party B. Historical precedent suggests that the Soviet Union acted with a distributive bargaining approach, while the position of the U.S. is more difficult to explicitly define. Each negotiation scenario should have one seller and one buyer. For the purposes of this paper, the U.S and the Soviet Union function as equal parties who are both attempting to avoid nuclear warfare. For both parties, nuclear warfare is the last resort. It is in the best interest of both parties to reach some sort of consensus, but this does not mean that the ending consensus will be in the best interest of each individual party.

Regardless of bargaining or negotiation approach, each party should begin with establishing their target point, BATNA (Best Alternative to The Negotiated Agreement), interests, starting point, and resistance point. These points are features of a diagram called the bargaining range, which is a critical part of negotiation theory. The bargaining range, such as the one displayed below, is common in the discipline of negotiation:



Interests refer to the goals of a party and directly influence the target point of the given party. BATNA represents the best alternative if a party is not content with the agreement that was reached. Starting points pertain to the opening statements of each party, the target point is inferred and becomes clearer over time, and the resistance point is only known to each party and is strictly confidential. The point that arguably causes the most contention and discourse is the resistance point, which is generally the most significant point of all. Since this point is difficult to discern, it is extremely challenging to ascertain how far a party will go before they can no longer proceed. Negotiation theorists assert that, “the spread between the resistance points, called the bargaining range, settlement range or zone of potential agreement, is particularly important. In this area, the actual bargaining takes place, because anything outside these points will be summarily rejected by one of the two negotiators.”<sup>5</sup> In the context of the Cold War, the Soviet Union’s target point consists of a few simple objectives: supremacy as the world’s premier hegemonic power and a complete reversal of power on the international stage. Truthfully, the target point of the Soviet Union is rather idealistic and lofty. The Soviet Union was strong militarily and economically but did not have the appropriate resources to maintain the growth. History reveals that in the long-run, the Soviet Union suffered terribly for its actions during the Cold War which ultimately led to its fall and disintegration in the 1990s.

The BATNA or Best Alternative to The Negotiated Agreement would be if the U.S. conceded on all fronts or if the U.S accepted most of the Soviet Union’s demands. Surprisingly, the target point and the interests of the Soviet Union are virtually identical. The only additional interest would be avoiding nuclear warfare since this is a mutually disastrous outcome. From the perspective of the Soviet Union, the West is composed of countries that are solely focused on imperial expansion and are exclusively concerned with the spread of democracy, capitalism, and other central western values such as individualism and freedom of thought. The Soviet Union’s starting point or opening statement in the conflict will consist of reasoning about why the West is perceived to be so troublesome. The statement will give context as to why the Soviet Union is behaving the way it is and justify its actions. The statement could be something comparable to the following, “We, the Soviet Union, are tired of the West’s carefree nature and plan

to pursue action immediately. We are prepared to deploy our military and use any military means necessary, outside of nuclear warfare. We are not interested in negotiating our cause and believe that we are 100% in the right. We are simply here today as we must adhere to protocol and must give a brief opening statement. Thank you all for your time.” This statement displays the distributive personality of the Soviet Union as Negotiation actor. The statement leaves little room for negotiation or compromise.

Lastly, the Soviet Union must determine their resistance point, or how far they are willing to negotiate until the breaking point has been reached so to speak. This point, while unknown to the opposing party, is extremely self-explanatory and obvious to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union should withdraw in the event of nuclear warfare and if the United States demands something completely unreasonable. For instance, if the United States proceeds to demand that the Soviets relinquish their stronghold over Berlin and other states in Europe, they should not accept this condition under any circumstance. This would be completely harmful to their objectives and would prohibit them from usurping the U.S as the world’s hegemonic power. Clearly, negotiation theory is quite complex despite its simple surface. However, it is not difficult to apply such theory to the Cold War, which demonstrates the discipline’s practical application.

## **B. The U.S as a Negotiation Actor**

As discussed above, the style of the U.S is complicated. The U.S is mostly an integrative negotiator who attempts to settle conflicts in a just and unbiased manner. Irrespective of this statement, the U.S. does not always maintain their neutrality, as evidenced by the Cold War. The U.S is generally integrative or amicable but makes several assumptions regarding the intentions and interests of the Soviet Union. The U.S is convinced that the Soviet Union is dangerous and that the influence of Soviet thought and ideology should be halted at any cost necessary.

The U.S also makes assumptions regarding the intentions of the Soviet Union. The implication was that the Soviet Union only entered the conflict to initiate nuclear warfare. The Soviets simply want to be heard and are tired of how the West treats them based on differences in cultural tendencies, economic philosophy, and society ideals. Furthermore, the U.S is extremely biased toward its own side and allies and neglects to account for how the opposing party might feel. In theory, the U.S is integrative in their approach but fails to be as accommodating and understating as they claim to be.

Regarding the starting point in the negotiation, the opening statement would be somewhat analogous to that of the Soviet Union. The statement would closely resemble the following: “We, the United States, would like to issue a statement regarding our intentions in the Soviet Union conflict. We are dedicated to halting Soviet influence and aggression. We are willing to make concessions and compromises if the Soviet Union is willing to cooperate. If no agreement can be reached, we are willing to pursue other means of persuasion. Thank you for your time.” It is important to point out how this possible statement integrates characteristics of both integrative and distributive styles. On one hand, the United States is willing to make concessions and reached a consensus that would be amicable for both sides. Conversely, if this cannot be reached, the United States is also willing to pursue more aggressive means which may include military deployment and other legitimate forms of deterrence or persuasion. Finally, concerning the Resistance point of the U.S, nuclear warfare is most likely the extent to which how far the U.S is willing to go. Anything past this point is unacceptable and out of alignment with its goals and interests.

For the U.S., their target point and interests are essentially the antithesis of those posed by the Soviet Union. The U.S. target point consists of a few major objectives: retain an honest reputation on the international stage, maintain as the world’s supreme hegemonic power, halt the advance of Soviet influence, and avoid nuclear warfare no matter the cost. Regarding the BATNA or the Best Alternative to The Negotiated Agreement, there is an option that is noteworthy. For the U.S, the best alternative is to follow through on their original statement. In their opening statement, the U.S. promised that they would confront the Soviet Union through other means if necessary. This does not necessarily solely refer to nuclear or any type of warfare. This could refer to economic sanctions, naming-and-shaming on the international stage, or the distribution of propaganda.

This concept is based on Satori’s honest reputation theory. Satori asserts that, “A Reputation for Honesty is what matters most when assessing international relations. This forces nations to be consistent with ways of communication and transparent with their motives”<sup>6</sup> This statement is certainly applicable to the U.S. perspective during the Cold War. As discussed above, one of the United States’ primary goals was to maintain its position as the world’s supreme hegemonic power. By backing down and refusing to directly confront the Soviet Union, the reputation of the U.S. will suffer greatly. Therefore, theory dictates that some sort of follow-up action is the best alternative to a negotiated deal that the U.S is not comfortable with. By following up with a sanction or a piece of impactful propaganda, this will allow the U.S. to uphold its reputation and continue to assert itself on the International stage.



#### IV. **Further Analysis of the Cold War**

Further analysis of dynamics in the Cold War indicates that additional elements of Negotiation theory are applicable. These elements include the importance of power and the importance of perception, cognition, and emotion in negotiation. The negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States are characterized by a subtle power imbalance. It is evident that the United States asserts itself as the more powerful nation, while the Soviet Union is constantly trying to disprove this idea and present themselves as the United States' equal. There are several divergent sources of power in negotiation theory. Theorists concur that there are informational, personal, positional, relational, and contextual sources of power. Contextual sources of power are the most relevant to this paper and include BATNAs, the influence of culture, agents, constituencies, and external audiences. Constituencies and agents most likely refer to the body of voters who elect officials or more broadly could refer to the domestic audience of a nation.

Meanwhile, the importance of BATNAs has already been broached above. In the context of negotiation, culture is defined as a, "system of basic assumptions, norms, and/or common values that individuals in a group or organization share about how to interact with each other, work together, deal with the external environment, and move the organization into the future"<sup>7</sup> All of these factors influence whether the United States or the Soviet Union hold power. Given the context of the conflict, it appears that the United States holds most of the power in the negotiation scenario. This can be explained by the democratic world order in place across the globe and the generally favorable reputation of democratic nations on the International stage. This implies that there is an implicit bias against the Soviet Union, which causes the state to be mostly reactionary and passive in how it communicates.

The conflict also gives credence to the techniques that were recommend when dealing with those who are more powerful. Techniques recommended by negotiation experts include making the other party smaller, refraining from all-or-nothing or inflexible deals, building one's case through the acquisition of vital information, and building one's power by creating coalitions with other low power players. These techniques are visible and clearly employed by the Soviet Union especially when the coalition between the Soviet Union and Cuba and the nation's adversarial stance towards the U.S is considered. These are also all effective ways in which the Soviet Union could have bridged the power gap and begin to demand that the United States view them as equals. Power dynamics and power hierarchies are common components of negotiation scenarios; therefore, a party should do whatever they can to shift the dynamic and hierarchy in their

favor.

### A. Perception and Emotion in the Cold War

Despite their being detailed research regarding the importance of perception, cognition, and emotion, only perception and emotion have implications in the Cold War. Perception is defined as, “the process by which individuals connect to their environment...In negotiation, the goal is to perceive and interpret with accuracy what the other party is saying and meaning. Doing so also depends on other parties’ perceptions of the situation as well as on the perceiver’s own behavioral dispositions.”<sup>8</sup> Based on this definition, the conclusion can be drawn that the Soviet Union and the United States both failed with respect to perception. Both parties failed to put aside their own biases and opinions and instead chose to assume the worst regarding the intentions and meanings of the other party. This phenomenon is known as perceptual distortion and is a commonplace occurrence in negotiations. Perceptual distortion is, “the perceiver’s own needs, desires, motivations, and personal experiences that may create a predisposition about the other party. This is cause for concern when it leads to biases and errors in perception and subsequent communication.”<sup>9</sup> Common perceptual distortions include stereotyping and halo effects. Clearly, there is candid evidence of stereotyping on both sides in the Cold War and an example of halo effects regarding communism in Soviet society. The U.S made a general assumption that all Soviet citizens and officials were radical communists bent on disrupting the western international world order and instituting a new era of international politics. Perhaps many Soviets were not extreme and this assumption was based solely on limited information that may or may not have been correct.

Moreover, emotions and moods are the final critical element that can influence negotiation situations. There is a critical distinction between emotions and moods, as seen in the following excerpt, “Mood states are more diffuse, less intense, and more enduring than emotion states, which tend to be more intense and directed at more specific targets. Emotions play important roles at various stages of negotiation interaction”<sup>10</sup> It is evident that emotions and moods can deeply influence the proceedings of a negotiation situation. Researchers have arrived at a few conclusions that have connections with the Cold War: Negotiations create both positive and negative emotions, positive emotions have positive consequences, negative emotions have negative consequences, and emotions can be used strategically as negotiation gambits.

All these conclusions suggest that emotions are extremely flexible and function dynamically. In the context of the Cold War, emotion theory showcases how one's attitude and mental state can either build or demolish relations. Additionally, by manipulating one's emotions and switching between insincere and genuine displays, this allows a party to wage psychological warfare on the opposing party. This is illustrated in the nuclear arms race between the Soviets and the United States. Both sides manipulated the other to provoke fear and give off the impression that both sides were angry and unstable. This was done to force one side to concede and break down, thereby giving the other side a distinct advantage. Still, Americans continued their ideological struggle against communism, while the Soviets responded in kind with threats against America's credibility and honesty. In the end, it is indisputable that emotions were at an all-time high and that both sides were not acting consistently with reason or logic.

## **V. Conclusion**

Negotiation theory certainly illuminates a significant amount of context regarding the behavior and actions of both parties during the Cold War conflict. The Cold War era substantiates negotiation theory and gives the discipline extensive practical application outside of its abstract conceptualizations. The Cold War, especially in the early stages, is a textbook example of a negotiation scenario. Negotiation truly begins only when both parties identify and define their interests, various points of the bargaining range, BATNAs, and goals. There is clear evidence of the influence of power dynamics, power hierarchies, perceptual bias and distortion, and emotion manipulation in the interactions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Often, there is a perception that theory is too complex and idealistic to have any substantial application in the real world. However, the analysis and evidence provided refutes such a statement and should provide encouragement to those who are interested in the discipline of negotiation. Going forward, it would be advantageous to the future of foreign policy if diplomats, ambassadors, policy strategists and the like were more well-versed in the art of negotiation. If this ideal becomes reality, perhaps the next world crisis can truly be averted.