

ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND UNETHICAL PRACTICES IN NEGOTIATION: HOW TO EXPLAIN WHAT IS UNBEARABLE?

Claude Alavoine

IPAG Business School, Nice, France

E-mail: c.alavoine@ipag.fr

Claudine Batazzi

Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis

E-mail: claudine.batazzi@unice.fr

-Abstract-

As a purely human activity used in order to solve conflicts or in a more positive way, to build projects, negotiation is a complex interaction involving participants with different visions of what is or should be a proper one. While in practice negotiation is always a mix of cooperation and competition, these two elements correspond to different approaches of the relationship and also different orientations in term of strategy, techniques, tactics and arguments employed by the negotiators with related effects and in the end leading to different outcomes. The levels of honesty, trust and therefore cooperation are influenced by many factors like the uncertainty of the situation, the objectives, stakes and interests, the level of power, the negotiator's personality and also by the orientation given from the very beginning of the relationship. Negotiation poses ethical problems on the simple fact that each party tries to get the other party to do something in its own interest; The use of a specific tactic depends on each negotiator's perception of the ethical appropriateness of it. Most of the negotiators have a tendency to complain about the unethical aspects of the tactics used by their counterparts while, at the same time, they are mostly unaware of the sources of influence of their own vision of negotiation and practices. The legitimacy of the use of deception, lies or even threats during the process has been widely discussed and remains the source of many debates. These choices can sometimes be in opposition with the negotiator's initial representation of what should be the interaction, based on his own values, beliefs that are usually expressed in society. Are people always acting in negotiation like they do in a non conflicting situation? Could the willingness to succeed justify any means? What are the reasons or the causes of their behavior in this specific situation?

In other words can unethical practices always be attributed to personal characteristics (internal causes) or also be justified by the requirements of the situation (external causes)? While reason explanations refer to intentional

behaviour, causes explanations refer to unintentional behaviour. But how could negotiators be unintentionally unethical in their practices?

Drawing on concepts from several disciplines, our first intention in this paper is to clarify the sources of influence leading negotiators to unethical practices in opposition sometimes with their vision of the relationship. Then we will examine some aspects of the attribution process enabling participants to make causal explanations about unethical practices in order to uncover new hypotheses for experimental research.

Keywords: Negotiation, ethics, attribution, bluff, threats, deception

JEL Classification: F23

1. Introduction, defining Negotiation

Negotiation is a complex interaction involving participants with different visions of what is or should be a proper one. From the vision of the relationship as a pure competition, focusing only on interests, to cooperation based on trust, the negotiators will position themselves in terms of tactics and ways or means which are, to them, appropriate in order to succeed. This positioning depends on many variables linked to the specificity of the situation, like the level of power, stakes and interests, the context and participants or even the nature of conflict. These choices can sometimes be in opposition with the negotiator's initial representation of what should be the interaction, based on his own values, beliefs that are usually expressed in society.

But are people acting in negotiation like they do in a non conflicting situation? What are the reasons of their behavior in this specific situation? Could the willingness to succeed justify any means? In other words, could unethical practices be attributed to the essence of negotiation itself, to the nature of the interaction or to the characteristics of the participants?

As with many concepts, there are different angles and ways of defining negotiation. The following definition presents three essential aspects of any negotiation: the idea of a specific process, the presence of conflicting aspects, and the finality involving the participants.

"Negotiation is a joint decision-making process through which negotiating parties accommodate their conflicting interests into a mutually acceptable settlement" (Faure, Sjöstedt, 1993).

Two or more parties with conflicting interests and a certain control and decision making on each side are trying to reach an outcome that is initially undefined through means of communication. The common need for an agreement because of an expected gain is leading the participants to a certain level of interdependency.

Negotiation is a voluntary process involving different actors with different interests or goals, different attitudes and strategies leading to a situation where people are trying to adjust these differences in order to reach an agreement. The willingness to find a solution despite the divergence regarding the decision implies that negotiators must carefully fix their objectives with certain flexibility. Each party in the relationship must cooperate to reach his or her objective and each party can block the other one from attaining his or her goal (Putnam, 1990). This interdependence sets up a mixed-motive relationship in which both parties cooperate by competing for divergent ends (Putnam, Roloff, 1992).

One of the key aspects of negotiation is the presence of both conflicting and cooperative aspects. The negotiators have to find the right balance between these two aspects in order to attain a mutually acceptable solution. Negotiation can be understood as a competition where opposition is quasi-permanent and each participant seen as an opponent or enemy in a conflicting context but also as a process in which negotiators are not only concerned with their own objectives but are interested in the other party's interests and aspirations too. As shown by Lax and Sebenius (1986), any negotiation includes both "value creating" (integrative) and "value claiming" (distributive) features.

Since negotiators in the process are evolving from competition to cooperation and reverse, they reveal in the interaction the relative power that they have over the acceptance from the other party of options or decisions. But the power position is never definitely fixed as one of the characteristics of negotiation is to make it shift during the course of the arguments used.

The levels of honesty, trust and therefore cooperation are influenced not only by the uncertainty of the situation, the objectives, interests or stakes but also by the orientation given from the very beginning of the relationship depending on the estimated power of each participant. There are thus three main driving forces in negotiation: trust, power and stakes combined with interests.

Trust which can be considered as a tendency to believe that your counterpart will satisfy and respect your expectations, is usually based on mutual perceptions exposed during the interaction but also on previous experiences and history of relationship. But while we all recognize the importance of the concept

in any negotiation it is not only a difficult one to define but also a difficult one to exercise. Making recommendations or learning about how to establish trust in the negotiation process is a difficult task due to the number of variables which can be considered. The idea of trust is based on certain vulnerability. Trusting people means that you expect that they will act in a good manner, accordingly to your interests, without any complete control or guarantee over it. To Rousseau & al. (1998), trust is "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another". This definition highlights two fundamental aspects which are the notion of risk and the interdependence. Because these two aspects are necessary conditions, variations in these factors before and during the relationship will alter the level and form of trust between the participants (Rousseau & al., 1998).

Basically, as explained by Rousseau & al. (1998), trust can be considered in three different ways: as an independent variable (cause), a dependent variable (effect), or an interaction variable (condition).

Interests are considered by Lax and Sebenius (1986) as the element that can measure negotiation. According to them, it is the raw material of negotiations and can take many forms including tangible but also intangible elements. Although negotiators focus on their interests and must take into consideration the other party's interests they have a very narrow conception of it. Lax and Sebenius make a clear distinction between intrinsic and instrumental interests leading to three misunderstood aspects of negotiation: interests in the process, the relationships and in principles.

Intrinsic interests are independent of any subsequent deals while instrumental interests are influential on following deals or outcomes. The first ones are objective and can be mostly quantified on a short term basis while the other ones are more long-term oriented and can be totally subjective. Leroux (1992) talks about instrumental or fundamental stakes; the visible, material, tangible part (instrumental) made up mostly of economical aspects is sometimes less important than the invisible one (fundamental) which refers to notions like self-esteem, status or reputation.

The participants count on resources that they possess which are of interest to their opponent, but they have different expectations regarding the interests provided by these resources. As a result, because stakes and interests are unequally evaluated and can have immediate or lasting effects, the negotiators are confronted to a balance of power that reveals mainly during the process, placing the interaction as

the most difficult phase to manage and leading sometimes to an escalation of conflict.

Power is also a very vague concept as it seems more interesting to investigate the sources of power than its effects. Moreover, the principle of any negotiation is to change the balance of power in order to reach an agreement.

For Dupont (1996), the level or degree of dependency has an obvious effect on the asymmetry of power in the sense that the more an actor is dependent to his or her opponent, the weaker is its negotiation strength. But this dependency has to be considered on two different aspects; the existence and potential of alternatives but also the importance of interests, stakes, objectives or expectations. Dupont (1996) separates personal factors like skills or credibility from "objectives" factors like the latitude of choice, the capacity to sanction or the importance of the opponent.

Deutsch (1973) emphasises the specificities of each situation. The power of an actor in a given situation (contingency approach) can be evaluated as the "degree that he can satisfy the purposes that he is attempting to fulfil". Therefore power depends also on the relationship rather than purely on the resources of each participant. The characteristics of the situation as well as the characteristics of the participants determine the balance or the asymmetry of power.

According to Deutsch (1973), some elements of power derive from the situation or the context instead of being only attributes of each actor. As he suggests there is a clear distinction between the *environmental power*, the *relationship power* and the *personal power*.

Boulding (1999), considering that power is the ability to get what we want, divides it in three major categories from the point of view of its consequences: *destructive power*, *productive power* and *integrative power*. The last one has a destructive and productive aspect depending on the relationship and its origin.

2. Unethical Practices

As negotiation was described previously there are no doubts that the necessity to consider someone else interests and objectives while at the same time preserving and defending your own interests and objectives implies many difficult choices regarding the ways and means used in order to succeed. As explained by Cohen (2010), negotiation is a human encounter that poses ethical problems on the simple fact that each party tries to get the other party to do something in its own interest. Furthermore, as there is no definition of business on which all can agree, it is difficult to concur on what are business ethics and ethical practices (Lewis,

1985). People differ in their vision of ethical and unethical behaviours even within homogenous cultures depending on their age, experience, education level or even gender mainly because of differences in personal subjective values (Barnett and Karson, 1987).

Many of the searches made in that field come to the conclusion that most of the unethical practices are linked to the nature of information that is exchanged during the process and how this information is transferred. Information is an important source of power in negotiation. To Lewicki and Robinson (1998), negotiation is primarily a process of exchanging and communicating information in a persuasive manner. Therefore, the opportunities for unethical conduct are some of a dishonest communication. In that sense, deception, bluff and lies and finally threats are tools that come naturally and logically to negotiators in order to manipulate favourably the balance of power.

A) Lying, deceiving or bluffing?

To Lewicki (1983), the primary purpose of lying in negotiation is to increase the liar's power over its opponent by using false or misleading information. These lies can take many forms from which bluffing and deceiving play an important part.

Since Carr's paper (1968) on bluffing and the analogy between negotiation and poker, the question of the legitimacy of the use of deception has been widely discussed and remains the source of many debates. For many authors, deception is a component of bargaining which can advantage the deceiver or protect him. To Carr, bluffing or deception must be regarded as a strategy in a game where business ethics must not be confused with private life ethics.

To Allhoff (2003), bluffing is morally acceptable in negotiation because both participants endorse this practice and also because in the bargaining process there is no other reasonable procedure. Bluffing, if not one of the fundamental elements of negotiation is however considered as the essence of bargaining. This vision is based on the idea of role-differentiated morality. In that case, certain roles make acts permissible that would otherwise be impermissible.

As explained by Varelius (2006), if bluffing is similar to lying and deception it should be considered as morally condemnable. More than this, the legitimacy of bluffing as a totally endorsed practice by negotiators, a part of the game, might reveal false in situations where the adjustment between the parties doesn't require it.

Provis (2000) argues that we are in negotiations "subject to the same ethical constraints as we are in other social interaction". To him, the use of bluffing and deception is not necessary for self-defence and these practices do not guarantee a redistribution of power between the participants or compensation to the lack of specific skills or resources.

Olekalns and Smith (2009) show that the usual models of ethical decision making are based on both characteristics of the individuals and context. In considering the interaction between the negotiators, they introduce a third element which is the adaptation to the other party. Deception, in that sense, can be initiated or elicited. Therefore, they tested the use of deception depending on several variables: the perceived trustworthiness of the other party, the level and mutuality of dependency, and high positive or negative affect.

Further searches regarding the exchange of specific information in the negotiation process in regards to cultural differences should also concentrate on how cultural values influence the level of intangible stakes and therefore lead to the use of threats.

B) Threatening

Threats can be considered in three different approaches: decision making, communication and commitment.

In the first case, the most important task is to evaluate the costs and results of the use of threats with their probabilities for both sides in the negotiation. Participants will then decide on the use and the force of threats depending to their expectations and the consequences of using it.

The second approach considers the interpersonal relation and specially the exchange of arguments. Watzlawic (1976) describes three conditions for the use of any threat:

The threat must be adequately serious, plausible in order to be taken into account by the other party. Then it must reach the target, must be understood by the other party. Finally, the receiver must be able to comply.

In the last approach, according to Schelling (1966), threats reveal the commitment of the negotiator. The more the threat needs the actor to be committed in order to execute it the more it is going to be credible. The use of threats is a way to force the other participant to deliver useful information regarding his position of power and options. The power of commitment as exposed by Schelling (1966) can be revealed by the kind of threats used by the negotiator.

Schelling (1966) distinguishes two types of threats: compelling ones which require a specific action to avoid punishment or deterrent threats which tend to prevent the target from doing something. Sinaceur and Neale (2005) bringing the question of the effectiveness of threats in negotiations consider two dimensions: the degree of implicitness and the timing (the time when the threat is expressed).

For most actors in negotiation, threats are considered as a possibility linked to a specific interaction and as a tactic of pressure that brings effects. Threats and promises can be considered quite similar in the sense that they are both conditional and two sides of a same reality: forcing a decision. But depending on how things are formulated, a positive impact will follow the use of a promise while a negative one will be the consequence of a threat.

Threats have a tendency to increase the conflict on an individual basis and when they don't produce the immediate expected effect, they initiate counter measures and damage significantly the level of trust in the relationship.

3. Perceptions, visions, and practices

A study made by Lewicki and Robinson (1998) demonstrates that the use of a specific tactic depends on each negotiator's perception of the ethical appropriateness of it. This perception differs depending on personal characteristics like age, gender, nationality, ethnic origin but also the personal conception of negotiation as a competitive or cooperative process. This multiplicity of factors makes each ethical choice specific to a situation. Individuals will vary their practices and orientation depending on situational contingencies (Volkema, 1997). The "best" ethical action is not based on pre-existing values but upon the specifics of the action choice (Barnett and Karson, 1987). As explained by Barnett and Karson, there is a difference between what people say they would do with what they do. This lack of consistency forces to consider an ethical relativism in people's actions with an impossibility to be predictive.

Nevertheless, in the difficult decision making process regarding which ways and means will be best or the most appropriate and guarantee success, individuals refer unconsciously to norms and practices learned within the group they belong to. As shown in figure n°1 in what we call a "world of interpretation", the sources of influence of a negotiator's choice in terms of practices and tactics are numerous.

Still the confrontation between these practices and the initial vision ("world of representation") of how to manage conflict through negotiation can reveal sometimes many contradictions. Within all the factors influencing the vision of

what is negotiation and the ways to perform it, many that can be considered either as internal (characteristics of the person) or external (the context) will contribute to shape the negotiator's perception of the situation and the evaluation of the relationship.

The choice of unethical practices even if leading to more conflict and poor results is often justified by the uncertainty of the situation and the moves or ways of the other party.

Yet, it places the negotiator in a difficult position in regards to his set of beliefs and values unless it is based on a total absence of morality. But the "world of representation" as we display it in the following figure is the one that we share with other members of the groups we belong to. Considering that negotiation is the only situation with its own rules where people can be different from any other social activities might be wrong.

But how to interpret correctly your counterpart practices and moves?

As expressed by Jönsson (1991), negotiators are facing a constant problem of interpreting signals and drawing assumptions about their counterpart. In order to do so they search for causes and motives. Therefore, attribution theory which purpose is to examine the perceived causes of other persons' behaviour but also the reactions to this behaviour is particularly relevant to the study of negotiation.

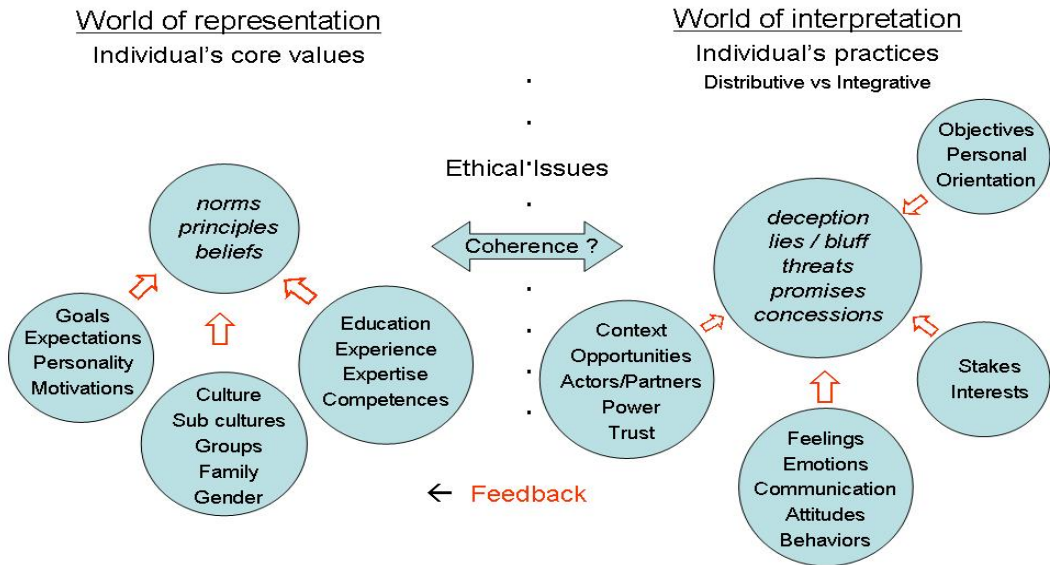


Figure n°1

4. Attribution theory

Since the publication of Heider's book (1958) many theories have developed regarding how people make causal explanations and interpret events related to ours or other's behaviors. According to Heider, we generally explain a specific behavior in two manners: it can be attributed to the person or to the situation (the environment of the person).

Criticism came from Malle (1999), showing that since Heider (1958) and even more with Kelley (1967), there is confusion between intentional and unintentional behaviour. Heider (1958) associated person attributions (the cause of a specific behaviour comes from the person) with intentional behaviour and situation attributions (the cause can be explained by the situation) with unintentional behaviour. For Malle (1999), the distinction between personal and impersonal causality was promising in terms of intentionality. To him, there is a difference between reasons and causes: Reason explanations refer to intentional behaviour while causes explanations refer to unintentional behaviour. Buss (1978) already made a conceptual critique about the use of the terms "cause" or "reason".

To him, causes are that which brings about a change and reasons are that for which a change is brought about. He also distinguishes a behaviour that happens to a person to a behaviour done by a person.

In negotiation, regarding unethical practices and tactics, it might be difficult to believe to unintentional behaviours. From the strategy conceived before the encounter to the tactics used during the process that serves different techniques more or less competitive, it is difficult to consider that the manipulation of information could be totally by accident and unfortunate.

Still if we formulate the question: "How could negotiators be unintentionally unethical in their practices?", we understand that it might depend on the interpretation made by their counterpart based on their own experience, norms or beliefs. For example, as described by Gopalan and Thomson (2003), cultural differences can cause perceptual differences about ethical or unethical behaviours. According to them, these differences are due to differing attributions made about the cause of behaviour.

Malle and Knobe (1997) examined which conditions need to be fulfilled in order to consider a person's behaviour as intentional. They come to the conclusion that five conditions have to be satisfied:

1) The person must have a *desire* for an outcome and 2) *beliefs* about a behaviour leading to that outcome. 3) A resulting *intention* to perform that behaviour, 4) the *skill* to perform that behaviour and 5) the *awareness* of fulfilling the intention while performing the behaviour.

All these conditions are present in negotiation where people expect an outcome (1) and understand that preparation and strategy are important in order to attain it (2), they know that they will have to enter the process personally (3) based on their experience, competence and capacity to convince (4) and will be actors and observers of this process (5).

To Kelley (1967), attributions decisions regarding behaviour are the result of three main types of information that are collected by the observer:

The first is consensus information, or information on how other people in the same situation and with the same stimulus behave. High Consensus means that a specific behaviour is common in this situation, while an uncommon behaviour in the same situation is considered as Low Consensus information.

The second is Distinctiveness information, or how the individual responds to different stimuli. A behavior is compared to other and dissimilar situations. If the

same behaviour occurs in different situations the Distinctiveness is considered as Low while an isolated behaviour linked to a specific situation will be considered as High Distinctiveness. The behaviour is then attributed to the context instead of personal characteristics.

The third is Consistency information, or how frequent the individual's behavior can be observed with similar stimulus but varied situations. High Consistency means that through time a similar or identical behaviour will occur in similar environmental conditions.

From these three sources of information observers make attribution decisions on the individual's behavior as either internal or external. Kelley's major prediction is that the combination of high consensus, distinctiveness and consistency leads to external attribution.

Kelley (1973) extended this vision of internal (the person) or external (the environment) causes with a model of attribution distinguishing two types of environmental causes: stimulus and circumstance. According to Kelley (1973), the responsibility for one's actions is attributed to internal or external causes depending upon whether or not the individual behaves differently in diverse situations (distinctiveness) and whether or not others behave similarly in this situation (consensus). People attribute an individual's deviant behaviour to external conditions or causes if this individual behaves "appropriately" in other situations and if other people are behaving or would behave in the same way under the same conditions.

Based on Kelley and Mc Arthur's work, Figure n°2 shows the combinations leading to the three possible causal explanations:

CONSENSUS		DISTINCTIVENESS		CONSISTENCY		CAUSAL EXPLANATION
	Low		Low	High		→ Person
High		High		High		→ Stimulus
	Low	High			Low	→ Situation

Figure n°2

The conclusions brought by Kelley (1967, 1973) and Mc Arthur (1972) lead to several questions regarding the interpretation of unethical practices in negotiation and new hypothesis for research.

Bluffing: A High Consensus and High Distinctiveness kind of behaviour?

If we consider bluffing as an inevitable and predictable part of the communication process, then the attributional information related to this practice will be classified as High Consensus. It is expected that the negotiators will act the same way and use the same tactics in order to protect their interests and the balance of power.

But it probably doesn't imply that most of the negotiators will carry on bluffing in everyday's situations, especially if these situations don't reveal a high level of stakes, a very conflicting issue or a promising outcome. Therefore, we could consider that bluffing will be interpreted as a High Distinctiveness kind of information in the attribution process.

With a High Consistency?

As we have seen, how negotiators manipulate information can determine their chances to succeed. Why would negotiators decide to totally be honest in this process when they know that their counterpart is probably deceiving them on many aspects of the negotiation?

In similar situations, negotiators will have a tendency to use the same methods, tactics especially if it proved to be successful.

The first problem with this kind of information is to consider single negotiations on a short term basis (one shot) or a long term relationship based on several and frequent negotiations.

A good history of relations produces more trust even if each negotiation (encounter) must be considered a new one in terms of objectives, context, stakes and power. A single negotiation confronts participants with only little information about their positions and objectives and has more chances to be oriented as a competition.

The interpretation of the other party's practice will be different depending on the existing or non existing history of relations.

The second problem about bluffing is that a good bluff should go unnoticed by the other party.

While any negotiator is aware that his counterpart will never totally and honestly reveal all the information about his objectives, interests or flexibility, the proportion of bluff is sometimes difficult to evaluate. What is an authentic, genuine or legitimate piece of information cannot always be appreciated during the process.

High Consistency would mean that negotiators are facing the same dilemmas about the level of honesty, trust or cooperation based on the information they exchange and as a result they consider that bluffing is an ever reproduced activity in the same situation that is negotiation.

Bluffing, due to internal or external causes?

High Distinctiveness, High Consistency and High Consensus will easily lead to conclude that the interpretation made by a negotiator on the use of bluff by his counterpart will be attributed to the stimulus (the interests, stakes or objectives) and not the situation (the interaction) or the individual (personality).

The uncertainty of the outcome confronted to the objectives and stakes might create a stimulus that forces people who usually don't lie to reveal a new nature in the process. But then, the distinction between the situation and the stimulus is subtle.

Negotiators who consider that bluffing is part of the game (high consensus), can interpret their counterpart attempts to be deceived as indications of a high level of stakes or an unfavorable balance of power. If they believe that bluffing is condemnable (low consensus) they can attribute the cause to the situation (object, conflict of interest, context) especially if they have no information related to previous negotiations with their counterpart (low consistency)

Threatening: A situation of High Distinctiveness and Low Consensus?

As we have seen previously the use of threats in negotiation depends on many conditions which prevent it from being a regular and common practice. Therefore, this practice or tactic will probably initiate a lot of questions about the motivations or causes of its use. The most important attributional information related to this can be Distinctiveness with a ranking that is High due to the fact that threatening might be considered as an isolated act, a last attempt in order to force the decision or to modify the balance of power.

But as negotiation can also be considered as a solving problem process based on finding appropriate solutions for building projects, many negotiators will be reluctant to use this strong and dangerous tool. In that sense, threats could be considered as a Low Consensus piece of information.

With a High or Low Consistency?

Here comes the same problem as with bluffing. If a negotiator successfully uses threats in negotiation, there are many chances that he will reproduce the same tactic (high consistency). But in the case of a long term relationship with several

negotiations, why would a negotiator use systematically threats in order to force the decision. Moreover, a negotiator that was submitted to a threat and finally accepted a deal will probably be reluctant to negotiate again with the same counterpart.

Threatening, due to internal or external causes?

A combination of High Distinctiveness, Low Consistency and Low Consensus would call for an attribution to the situation (circumstances). The causal explanation would be that negotiators use threats when they are themselves in a situation that forces them to do so. The high level of competition or the lack of cooperation between the participants implies that power (commitment) should be revealed and exerted.

But if they consider this tactic as very productive and reproduce its use through several identical situations (high consistency), then the combination of High Distinctiveness and High Consistency would reveal a causal explanation that is a stimulus even if the consensus is low.

In consequence, how to interpret the use of a threat?

It might reveal a difficult situation with the necessity to force a decision or a very favourable position in terms of power with a high level of stakes which enables the negotiator to use a coercive measure in order to maximize his interests.

In all cases it is interesting to see that the attribution would never be to the individual itself, a low level of Distinctiveness being difficult to consider; Threatening would then become a way of life!

5. Concluding remarks

Even when they consider that negotiation is a situation where being amoral and using practices usually classified as unethical are permitted, negotiators can still be confronted to a counterpart that is pushing the limit of what is tolerable to them.

Participants bring to the table of negotiation more than strategies and tactics in response to a specific situation with clear goals and objectives. They also enter the process with norms, values and beliefs that can differ from the other party but will influence their perception of the situation. The confrontation between these values and the practices that they feel they should use or the ones used by their counterpart, is sometimes adding to the common negotiator's dilemmas.

What could be considered as an "ethical negotiation"?

A proposed answer would be: When participants are willing to find a fair solution with honesty by exchanging information in a moral and social acceptable manner without abusing their power.

The vision of what is negotiation and what are the rules is based on each participant perception. Negotiators evolve in a world of meanings shaped by context and culture and in a very constructivist approach these meanings are elaborated in action, when the negotiators interpret the reality they are facing.

But in this attempt to interpret their counterpart's actions they position themselves as "amateur" scientists (Heider, 1958) using "naïve" or "common sense" psychology based on a distinction between internal and external causes in order to understand these actions.

Why would negotiators want to determine the causal structure of their counterparts' practices and behaviours? Probably because beyond these practices and the negotiation process there is an outcome that will be appreciated in terms of failure or success. For negotiators, this motivation can sometimes justify many unethical practices even if they don't realize the negative implications of their actions.

Bibliography

Allhoff F., 2003, "Business bluffing reconsidered", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 45, n° 4, pp.283–289.

Barnett J.H., Karson M.J., 1987, "Personal values and business decisions: An exploratory investigation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 6, n° 5, pp.371–382.

Boulding Kenneth, 1999, "The nature of power", in Lewicki Roy J., Saunders David M., Minton John W., *Negotiation: readings, exercises and cases*, Mc Graw Hill, 3rd edition, pp.180-192.

Buss A.R., 1978, "Causes and reasons in attribution theory: A conceptual critique", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 36, n° 11, pp.1311-1321.

Carr A. Z., 1968, "Is business bluffing ethical?", *Harvard Business Review*, 46, Jan-Feb, pp.143-153.

Cohen T. R., 2010, "Moral emotions and unethical bargaining: The differential effects of empathy and perspective taking in deterring deceitful negotiation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 94, n° 4, pp.569-579.

Deutsch Morton, 1973, *The resolution of conflicts*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Dupont C., 1996, "A model of the negotiation process with different strategies", in Ghauri P., Usunier J.C. (Eds), *International Business Negotiations*, Pergamon / Elsevier Science, pp.39-67.

Faure G-O., Sjöstedt G., 1993, "Culture and negotiation: An introduction" in G-O. Faure, J. Z. Rubin (Ed.), *Culture and Negotiation*, Sage Publications, pp.1-13.

Gopalan S., Thomson N., 2003, "National cultures, information search behaviors and the attribution process of cross-national managers: A conceptual framework", *Teaching Business Ethics*, vol.7, pp.313-328.

Heider F, 1958, *The psychology of interpersonal relations*, New York: Wiley.

Jönsson C., 1991, "Cognitive theory", in V. A. Kremenyuk (ed.), *International Negotiation: Analysis, Approaches, Issues*, Jossey Bass Publishers, San Francisco, pp. 229-243.

Kelley, H. H., 1967, "Attribution theory in social psychology" in D. Levin (Ed), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, vol.15, pp.192-240.

Kelley, H. H., 1973, "The processes of causal attribution". *American psychologist*, vol.28, n°.2, pp.107-128.

Lax David A., Sebenius James K., 1986, *The manager as negotiator*, New York: Free Press.

Leroux Maxime, 1992, *Les dimensions cachées de la négociation*, Paris, Insep Editions.

Lewicki R. J., 1983, "Lying and deception: A behavioral model" in M.H. Bazerman and R. J. Lewicki (Eds), *Negotiating in organizations*, Sage Publications.

Lewicki R. J., Robinson R. J., 1998, "Ethical and unethical bargaining tactics: An empirical study", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 17, n°.6, pp.665-682.

Lewis P.V., 1985, "Defining business ethics: Like nailing Jello to a wall", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 4, n°.5, pp.377-384.

Malle B. F., 1999. "How people explain behavior: A new theoretical framework", *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 3, n°.1, pp.23-48.

Malle B. F., Knobe J., 1997, "The folk concept of intentionality", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol.33, pp.101-121.

Malle B. F., Knobe J., Nelson S. E., 2007, "Actor-Observer asymmetries in explanations of behavior: New answers to an old question", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 93, n°.4, pp.491-514.

McArthur L.A., 1972, "The how and what of why: Some determinants and consequences of causal attribution", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 22, n°.2, pp.171-193.

Olekalns M., Smith P. L., 2009, "Mutually dependent: power, trust, affect and the use of deception in negotiation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 85, n°.3, pp.347–365.

Orvis B.R., Cunningham J.D, Kelley H.H. 1975. "A closer examination of causal inference: The roles of consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency information". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 32, n°.4, pp.605-616.

Putnam L. L., 1990, "Reframing integrative and distributive bargaining: A process perspective", in R. J. Lewicki, B. H. Sheppard, M.H. Bazerman (eds.), *Research on negotiation in organizations*, JAI series annual, Greenwich CT: JAI.

Putnam L. L., Roloff M. E., 1992, *Communication and Negotiation*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park. CA.

Provis C., 2000, "Ethics, deception and labor negotiation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 28, n°.2, pp.145-158.

Rousseau Denise M., Sitkin Sim B., Burt Ronald S., Camerer Colin, (1998), "Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust", *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 23, No 3, pp. 393–404.

Rivers C., Lytle A. L., 2007, "Lying, cheating foreigners!! Negotiation ethics across cultures", *International Negotiation*, vol. 12, n° .1, pp.1-28.

Schelling T. C., 1966, *Arms and Influence*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

Smithey Fulmer I., Barry B., Long D. A, 2009, "Lying and smiling: Informational and emotional deception in negotiation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 65, n°.2, pp.691-709.

Varelius J., 2006, "Allhoff on business bluffing", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 65, n°.2, pp.163-171.

Volkema R., 1997, "Perceptual differences in appropriateness and likelihood of use of negotiation behaviours: A cross-cultural analysis", *The International Executive*, vol. 39, n°3, pp.335-350.

Watzlawick P., 1976, *How real is real? Communication, Disinformation, Confusion*, New-York: Random House.

Weiner B., 1985, "An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion", *Psychological Review*, vol.92, n°4,