THE POLITICAL ADVISER´S HANDBOOK

FREDRIK WESSLAU

FOLKE
BERNADOTTE
ACADEMY

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EDITOR: LINA FRÖDIN

THE FOLKE BERNADOTTE ACADEMY (FBA) is a Swedish government agency dedicated to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of international conflict and crisis management, with a particular focus on peace operations. The overall objective is to contribute to lasting peace and development. FBA functions as a platform for cooperation between Swedish agencies and organisations and their international partners. Its main areas of responsibility are:

› *Civilian personnel contribution to international peace operations*

› *Education, training, and exercises*

› *Policy, research, and development*

› *National and international cooperation and coordination*

› *Funding of civil society peace projects*

FBA has a preparedness to offer good offices for conflict resolution initiatives, such as talks between parties to a conflict. Within its mandate, it serves as a national point of contact with international organisations, including the UN, EU, AU, OSCE, and NATO.

FBA coordinates the *International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations* and is an active member of the *International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres* (IAPTC), *Europe's New Training Initiative* (ENTRi), and the *European Security and Defence College* (ESDC).

The agency is named after Count Folke Bernadotte, the first official UN mediator, and its mission reflects Sweden's commitment to international peace, security, and development.

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FOREWORD

The political adviser has a key role to play in peace operations and crisis management. Dealing effectively with conflicts and crises requires not only the ability to understand political developments but also to engage directly in the often complex politics of conflict environments. It also requires an understanding of the indispensable link between peace, security, and development.

Here the political adviser has a crucial task. In providing advice to the Head of Mission, Force Commander, or Special Representative, the political adviser can help ensure that the political strategy is underpinned by this linkage. The link between peace, security, and development is the reason why Sweden has enhanced its support for crisis management within the framework of its development assistance.

The Folke Bernadotte Academy has been at the heart of this endeavour since 2003. Through training, deployment of personnel, research, and development, the FBA has contributed to improving the effectiveness of conflict and crisis management. This Handbook is also part of this contribution. The intention is for this Handbook to be used by political advisers working for the EEAS, EUSRs, and CSDP mission, and, more broadly, serve political advisers and political affairs officers in other organisations, notably the UN, OSCE, NATO, and AU. It will also be used to complement the FBA's course for political advisers.

Sven-Eric Söder
Director General of the Folke Bernadotte Academy

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INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have witnessed a surge in international efforts to end wars, stabilise fragile states, and rebuild war-torn societies. An unprecedented number of peace operations and political missions have been deployed to deal with crises and violent conflict. Today, more than a quarter of a million military and civilian peacekeepers operate in conflict zones around the world.

These missions – from Afghanistan to Haiti to South Sudan – have not only become more numerous but have also taken on more ambitious mandates. It is particularly their political role that has become more prominent. This follows an increasing recognition that resolving conflicts and creating sustainable peace can only succeed if you deal with the underlying political issues. Violent conflicts are underpinned by politics and, ultimately, require political solutions. Missions that ignore the political dimension of conflicts become little more than temporary fixes – leading, more often than not, to a resumption of violence.

But getting the politics right is difficult. The local environments in which these missions exist are complex and fraught with risk. The international arena can be equally challenging. That is why the political affairs function has become central to peace operations and political missions. This holds true not only for political missions that are specifically mandated to carry out peacemaking activities such as mediation and facilitation, but also for peace operations with complex and multidimensional mandates.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

This handbook offers practical advice on how to carry out the core tasks of political advisers working on conflicts and crises. While the role of a political adviser can vary, there are certain tasks that are at the heart of the political affairs function. These are analysing politics and conflicts, reporting, political dialogue, public diplomacy, writing speeches, negotiating, and mediating.

This book, in offering advice on how to carry out these tasks, is geared primarily towards political advisers and political affairs officers working for the UN and EU. But much of what it contains should also be relevant for other international organisations, such as the OSCE, NATO, and AU.

Practising politics – and advising those who practice it – is very much a question of judgment. But it is also a craft. And as with all crafts, it requires certain skills and techniques. The premise of this book is that these can be learned and mastered.

This book does not propose what you should advise in different circumstances or on different issues. Nor does it cover the particular knowledge that a political adviser needs to have. There are many other books that treat relevant topics, such as decision-making within the EU or theories of conflict resolution. It is rather about the form of political advising.

The advice contained in this book is largely based on conversations and interviews with political advisers and principals – Special Representatives and Envoys, Heads of Missions, and Force Commanders. I have asked them the basic question: what has worked for you? I have also drawn from key texts and my own experiences of working as a political adviser and in political affairs for the EU, UN, and OSCE, both in the field and in headquarters. Many examples are taken from Georgia, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh, Sudan, and South Sudan since these are conflicts that I have worked on.

1 ROLE OF THE POLITICAL ADVISER

In peacekeeping, the political adviser first emerged in the context of military operations. Force commanders operating in highly politicised environments found they needed political advisers to provide counsel on the political implications of military operations, help interpret local political developments, and maintain contacts with the host government. As peacekeeping operations became more complex and took on more civilian tasks, in particular supporting peace processes, political affairs developed into a core function.

In political missions dedicated to peacemaking, political advisers have long been integral to the operation. These types of missions typically consist of a small team of political advisers or political affairs officers who provide diplomatic support to a high-level envoy.

The exact role of a political adviser can differ considerably depending on the mission. The mission's mandate and activities, its internal organisation, and – especially – the mission's political role are all decisive factors determining the political adviser's tasks. Notwithstanding these differences, there are a number of tasks that are typical of the job. Political advisers do not necessarily carry out all of these tasks all the time. But they represent the core of what the political adviser should know how to do. These core functions fall into four categories: upwards, downwards, inwards, and outwards.

CORE FUNCTIONS

UPWARDS

The upwards function involves supporting the principal by providing counsel on political and policy matters. The scope of

this advice primarily concerns the political part of the mandate but can also be broader and relate to other aspects of the mission's activities. Fields such as human rights, humanitarian assistance, and development assistance can all be deeply political. And even the most technical and administrative issues can have political significance, depending on the context.

Much of the political adviser's counsel relates to tactical issues that arise on a daily basis, such as what messages to convey in a speech or how to handle a particular meeting. But it can also concern more strategic and longer-term policy issues, such as the overall approach to dealing with a conflict or the design of a mediation process.

The adviser's portfolio, in particular for field-based missions, normally includes local politics. The adviser should have a solid understanding of the conflict as well as the country and local culture. It is also necessary to understand the larger international context, in particular the interests and stakes of regional states and other powerful actors.

The adviser needs to understand the decision-making processes at HQ and have a clear sense of the interests, positions, and sensitivities of member states and other international organisations active in the theatre.

The principal will be receiving advice from many quarters, both from within the organisation and beyond. In internal policy discussions, the adviser should act as spokesperson for the political angle in decision-making. This means scrutinising advice presented to the principal to ensure that it is sound and supportive of the larger political strategy. The political adviser should ask what the political impact of any decision will be on the parties on the ground and how it relates to the larger international context.

Being the guardian of the political angle can be vital in military operations or police missions where operational considerations often take primacy in decision-making. In such cases, political advice should aim to ensure that the operations do not cause

political problems but fit into the international community's larger political strategy.

At the same time, it can often be the task of the adviser to come up with new ideas and policy initiatives. The adviser should be constantly looking for new ways to have an impact on the conflict or crisis. This task can also include playing the devil's advocate and challenging conventional wisdom in policy discussions in order to prevent the mission from falling into staid and routine policy-making.

Another key task for the adviser is to be the principal's political antennae. The principal, especially if heading a complex operation with thousands of staff members, will often be occupied with the day-to-day management of the mission. In such circumstances, the principal often needs someone to keep an eye on political developments and advise on political issues.

This task includes ensuring that the principal stays on message. It is typically up to the political adviser to write talking points, speeches, and statements – or scrutinise these for the principal to make sure that they follow the political line.

The political antennae task requires sound political judgement and instinct, a broad network of contacts, and the ability to analyse the conflict and local political developments. It is often the task of the political adviser to be a source of information for the principal and make sense of the local and international environment. This means being able to filter out the politically relevant information from the clutter.

Finally, an essential task is to protect the back of the principal. Conflicts and crises tend to be played out in complex and politicised environments where the risk of making mistakes is high. Different actors will try to instrumentalise and manipulate the principal in pursuit of their own agendas. It is up to the political adviser to identify risks and ways to mitigate against those risks.

DOWNWARDS

The downwards function consists of contacts with the rest of the mission. This can include providing political advice to other departments in the mission and acting as a link between the principal and the rest of the mission. The latter task can be particularly important in large and complex peace operations where the Head of Mission is not able to have much direct contact with all mission members. Often there is a chief of staff who provides this link, but sometimes the political adviser carries out this function. In small political missions, such as the Offices of Special Envoys or Representatives, this function tends to be less important.

The downwards function can entail translating the principal's strategic vision into operational guidance to mission members. To carry out this task effectively, the political adviser needs to have credibility and authority within the mission; this derives not only from professionalism and integrity but also from access and proximity to the principal. If there is access, the political adviser is able to have a solid understanding of the principal's strategic vision and thoughts on specific issues.

In practical terms, the downwards function is carried out by representing the principal in internal meetings, sending guidance to staff members, and responding to requests for advice. The proper functioning of a mission requires that the cabinet is responsive to requests for guidance.

Sometimes, the political adviser is in the chain of command or has a coordination function. Usually, however, political advisers do not have management responsibilities. But even so, thanks to the proximity to the principal, the political adviser can command significant informal authority within the mission.

OUTWARDS

The third broad function – the outwards function – is to implement policy externally. This function is primarily about engaging with external interlocutors on behalf of the mission and principal. It

can also be a more operational function, for instance, supporting mediation efforts between parties or negotiating with the host government.

The political adviser typically takes part in and supports political dialogue with local and international contacts. The purpose of this engagement is primarily to convey and receive messages, share assessments, defend policies and positions, and gain information about local developments. Ultimately, the purpose of this dialogue is to have an impact.

Having an impact requires political capital, something the political adviser should know how to acquire and spend. Principals must usually work on building up political capital from the outset of their mandates. Given how fraught conflict environments tend to be, this political capital can quickly become depleted.

The outwards function requires a solid understanding of the mission's positions and policies as well as the ability to defend them. It also requires diplomatic skills and the ability to develop good working relationships without losing sight of the purpose of those relationships. This external engagement is about moving diplomatic and political processes forward and, ultimately, changing the situation on the ground.

The task of implementing policy is different from the task of providing political advice in policy deliberations. Once the policy discussion is over and a policy decision has been taken, the job of the political adviser changes from being a frank provider of counsel to a loyal defender of the agreed position. It is essential to understand the difference in these tasks and stay loyal to the decision even though you may disagree with the policy line.

In missions based in the field, relations with the host government can be particularly delicate and complicated since it is most likely a party to the conflict with vested interests and stakes. At the same time, the mission may be highly dependent on the host government for practical and political support. Relations with rebel groups or secessionist entities are often no less central and also require

political judgement and tact. The political adviser may have the task of managing these sensitive relationships.

Another essential relationship is with counterparts in international organisations and the diplomatic corps. The political adviser needs to have a broad network of contacts with international counterparts and an understanding of the relevant international architecture, including knowing how the relevant organisations operate and their decision-making processes. The often substantial international presence in conflict theatres, sometimes including several high-level principals such as in Afghanistan, makes coordination a key condition for the success of international engagement in the conflict, although it is surprisingly difficult to manage well.

The outwards function can also include advising on public diplomacy. Although larger missions tend to have press and public information sections, the political adviser should take part in determining how the mission pursues public diplomacy, because of its political importance in conflict environments. The right messaging can influence the behaviour of key actors and, by extension, have an impact on the course of events. The political adviser should be involved in providing advice on the strategic and tactical aspects of public diplomacy as well as the contents of the messages.

The political adviser, as a representative of the principal, may also take a direct role in the mission's public diplomacy and political outreach. This can entail speaking at public events, attending conferences and seminars, and speaking to the media. Increasingly, political advisers are responsible for their principal's social media outreach through tweets and blog posts.

INWARDS
The inwards function consists of managing the relationship between the mission and HQ. This is primarily a coordination task but can also involve promoting the mission's interests in HQ. This requires

the ability to navigate the often tricky internal politics of HQ and maintain an ongoing dialogue on policy issues and practical matters with the responsible desk. Feeding the bureaucratic machine with regular reporting and input to briefings can be a typical feature of this relationship.

The mission may be integrated into the line structure in HQ, which is often the case for political missions based in HQ. In such circumstances, the political adviser can be well-placed to take part in internal policy processes. This is, for instance, the case for a number of EU Special Representatives who are co-located with the European External Action Service in Brussels.

A core part of the inwards function is to advise the principal on the goings-on in HQ. Some principals may be experts on the conflict or region but not necessarily be familiar with how the bureaucracy works. This is often true for principals who have been brought in from outside the organisation. It is then up to the political adviser to explain the decision-making process, who the main power brokers are, and how to get things done in HQ.

The inwards function is crucial because the relationship between HQ and the mission can sometimes be an uneasy one. It is not uncommon for interests to diverge and perspectives to differ. The field mission typically considers that it has a much better understanding of the reality on the ground while HQ thinks that it has a better understanding of the larger, strategic context. This can easily lead to a fraught relationship. It is the task of the political adviser to defend the interests of the mission but also to facilitate communications between the mission and HQ.

The link to HQ also provides an opportunity to manage the relationship with member states, understand where they stand on various issues, and build political backing for the mission. This link can be critical in cases where member states have far-reaching influence over the mission, as is the case for EU CSDP missions. The political adviser can play an instrumental role in nurturing this relationship and building political support.

As a rule, the principal will brief member states in HQ on a regular basis. In the EU this is done primarily in the Political and Security Committee or one of its subgroups. In the UN, the Security Council is the main forum for regular reporting to member states. These briefings are a way to ensure an open channel of communication between the mission and its political masters. Member states see these briefings as opportunities to provide strategic guidance and political direction to the mission. It is also an opportunity for the principal to present assessments and policy recommendations and to set the agenda for the organisation. The political adviser will often write these briefings.

Regular political reporting to HQ and member states is another facet of this function. By providing information, analysis, and policy recommendations, the mission is able to shape the understanding of the conflict at HQ and to influence decision-making. It is also one of the main ways to keep HQ informed about developments.

GIVING ADVICE

The core task of the political adviser is to give advice. For this advice to be taken on board, the principal and political adviser must have a relationship based on trust. Without this, the principal is unlikely to take on board the advice and will look elsewhere for counsel. That is why principals often bring with them political advisers whom they know and trust when taking up their posts.

Establishing a rapport and functioning relationship takes time and effort. There is no better way for the political adviser to do this than to give consistently good advice as well as showing loyalty, integrity, and dedication. Over time, the principal will come to trust the political adviser's judgement.

Good advice, however, may not always be enough. Personal chemistry can be essential to effectively carrying out the advising function. Sometimes there is personal chemistry, but at other

times not. It is also difficult – if not impossible – to disregard the role of ego in the provision of advice. Advice is very much "owned" by the person giving the advice.

The principal's receptiveness to advice can differ tremendously. Personalities come into the play as does the principal's comfort-level in dealing with politics. Some are political animals who hardly need any political advice; others are more focused on operational aspects and less interested in politics. These are the principals who are usually most in need of political advice.

When giving advice, it is crucial to adapt to the particular style of the principal. Some principals want advice presented to them that has been agreed and consolidated beforehand by their advisers. Other principals want to hear different perspectives from their advisers before deciding on a particular course. Some prefer advice in written form while others are more comfortable with oral advice.

There are advantages and disadvantages to these different approaches, but whatever approach is adopted, it should fit the principal's style since it is, after all, the principal who takes the decision. Otherwise there is a risk that the policy-making process can become suboptimal or stuck in deadlock.

"Pitching" the advice in the right way can determine whether your advice is accepted or not. Some principals want to be presented with a clear and straightforward recommendation. Others are not as comfortable with such directness and balk if they believe that their adviser is pushing them in a certain direction. In such cases, it can be most effective to pitch the advice by developing it organically with the principal. The packaging of your advice can determine whether it will fly or not.

Access to the principal is key to having an influence on the policy-making process since without access, feeding ideas into policy deliberations can be difficult. That is why gatekeepers who control access and the flow of information to the principal can be

tremendously powerful within a mission. Holding the key to the principal's appointments calendar is tantamount to controlling the principal's time.

Disagreements between the principal and political adviser – if based on mutual respect – are a normal part of a healthy policy-making process. They mean that ideas are tested and held up to scrutiny rather than taken at face value. If there are no disagreements over policy, the political adviser may be giving advice that anticipates the principal's views. Such advice, at the end of the day, adds little value to policy-making. Or the principal takes on board everything the political adviser offers because the principal does not have a vision of his or her own. In either case, there could be an unhealthy imbalance in the relationship.

The opposite case, where the principal and the political adviser always disagree, is not satisfactory either. Constant disagreement could mean that the principal and political adviser do not share a common view of the fundamentals. It can become extremely difficult to work together effectively in such cases.

The ideal situation is when both the principal and the political adviser feel that they can be open and honest with each other, able to test ideas, disagree on issues, but ultimately feel mutual trust and respect for each other's opinions and judgement.

Sometimes, political advisers are attached to a principal to exercise a control function. This is more common in operations where staff are seconded – formally or informally – from member states rather than come from within the organisation or selected directly by the principal. These situations can easily lead to a difficult relationship between the principal and political adviser. The most constructive relationships tend to be those where the principal and political adviser choose each other.

In many cases, there will be a small team of advisers supporting the principal. This is typical of political missions headed by Special Representatives or Envoys. It is often useful in such operations to mix expertise of the conflict, culture, and country with more

general knowledge and experience of conflict work and political affairs. Also dividing up the portfolios and having a clear division of labour among the political advisers is conducive to the smooth running of the operation.

Political advisers and political affairs officers who come from the country where the mission is operating can be an invaluable asset. Thanks to their local knowledge and contacts, they can provide insights and advice in ways that international political advisers seldom can. The ability to tap into local networks and to understand local developments can be indispensible for the mission's political strategy. It can also be extremely helpful to have international political advisers who speak the local language or languages.

Team members, despite having different profiles, should be likeminded on the basic assumptions and key issues as well as share a common sense of the overall objective of the mission. Otherwise, there may be too much pull in different directions, which risks hampering the operation. This likemindedness should, however, not be so great that it leads to groupthink. Advisers who work closely together in a tightly knit team can over time come to reinforce each other's convictions and beliefs, irrespective of whether they are sound or not. Taking a self-critical approach, remaining open to external advice, and letting someone play the devil's advocate can counteract groupthink tendencies.

WHAT IS GOOD ADVICE?

Good political judgement is the foundation of good advice. Political judgement is about understanding what "works" in politics. It has more to do with intuition and common sense than with knowledge and expertise.

For advice to be sound, it has to be based on reliable, up-to-date information and a solid understanding of the situation at hand. It has to be grounded in accurate information and sound analysis. And

if this is not possible, you should be open about the uncertainties rather than making assumptions that could be wrong.

Advice should also fit into the parameters of the mission's mandate, objectives, and means, as well as the larger strategic context. The advice should be generally consistent with the principal's overall vision – unless particular circumstances warrant a major rethink of strategy. Testing ideas and consulting with stakeholders while developing the advice enables you to refine the advice, gain allies, and build internal support for the proposal.

Good advice needs to be frank. The political adviser must be able to tell the principal things that he or she does not want to hear. In some circumstances being able to tell the principal uncomfortable facts or opinions can be essential for the functioning of the mission. A principal is never well served by yes-men.

Advice should ideally propose specific action and identify who should do what. The sequence of proposed actions is often a key element in presenting advice; it should be logical and realistic. If the advice sets out different options for action, the political adviser should indicate which is the best and be ready to argue why.

Advice can take many forms: verbal, policy papers, emails, and text messages. But in its simplest form, giving good advice requires answering the following questions:

› *What is the issue requiring action?*

› *What do we want to achieve?*

› *How do we achieve it?*

› *What are our options?*

It is always useful to identify the risks involved in pursuing different options. The principal must be able to weigh these risks against the eventual gains when taking a decision. Although the political adviser is responsible for the advice internally, it is the principal who will be taking the decision and, ultimately, be held accountable externally for the consequences.

It is crucial that the principal and the adviser share the same basic understanding of the situation and the objectives. Advice is often rejected because there is disagreement on the basic assumptions. Good advice gives a clear sense of what steps should be taken to achieve certain objectives and who should take those steps.

2 POLITICAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of political analysis is not only to help us understand conflicts and crises more clearly but also to provide a basis for advice, policies, and, ultimately, action. It is through solid analysis that you can come up with solid policy. This holds true for how we approach the conflict at a strategic level and how we deal with day-to-day issues.

The basis of sound political analysis is accurate and comprehensive information. In real life, however, information is almost never accurate or comprehensive. There are misperceptions, misunderstandings, and gaps in our knowledge. These limitations are particularly acute in times of war and crisis because of difficulties in obtaining reliable information.

And even if there is reliable information, getting the analysis right can be difficult. It requires a substantial understanding of the overall context, underlying causes, motives and interests of the main actors, and the environment in which they operate.

This chapter examines some of the challenges in gathering reliable information in conflicts and how to maintain a critical approach to information. It then considers some of the challenges of political analysis, before setting out a basic conceptual framework for analysing conflicts.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The parties to the conflict constitute the central source of information. These are the politicians, officials, military leaders, and rebels who have the power to directly influence the course of events. What they say will invariably be partial and sometimes untruthful but can nevertheless represent valuable information about where they stand on various issues and how they see developments. Cultivating these contacts is important because they

can give you first-hand information about what is going on and because they are the people you will be trying to influence.

Actors who are not directly involved in the conflict but are directly affected by it constitute another principal source of information. They are often the victims of war, be they villagers who have come under attack, urban residents living under siege, or refugees displaced by fighting. These groups usually sit on a great deal of information; talking to them allows you to hear the human side of the conflict first-hand.

Beyond this, there is the population at large. The proverbial man in the street can contribute to your overall understanding of the situation and, in particular, provide insights into local narratives about the conflict. These narratives – often stories of atrocities and heroism – tend to quickly become part of the national identity.

The international community – diplomats, donors, representatives of international organisations, and NGO workers – constitute not only primary interlocutors but also a crucial source of information thanks to their often substantial presence in conflict-affected countries. UN peace operations and humanitarian agencies, such as UNHCR, are often particularly knowledgeable about developments on the ground because of their access to war zones.

National diplomats can also be well informed about the local political situation, in particular if they have good access to the local leadership. In some cases, there will be a Contact Group or Friends' Group of key member states and international organisations that have a leading role in coordinating international action on the conflict. They will often have privileged information about the diplomatic goings-on.

Around every war, an expert community of political analysts, academics, civil society representatives, and think-tankers emerges. They often have a broad range of contacts and are present at the grass-roots level. Organisations such as the International Crisis Group can provide insightful analysis and are often useful interlocutors. They are also usually interested in talking to you in

order to advocate for particular policies and to hear your take on what is going on.

Local and international media are key sources of information and often the first to report on developments, but should be treated with care given the risk of inaccurate and biased reporting. Local media outlets in post-conflict environments tend to be particularly politicised but can be a useful indicator of local concerns and perceptions. The main international organisations, larger embassies, and EU delegations often produce daily summaries of local news that provide regular overview of developments on the ground.

Social media are becoming increasingly valuable sources of timely information – as was made clear during the Arab Spring. Facebook and Twitter offer direct insights into the mood of the young, computer-savvy population who have access to computers, mobile phones, and the Internet. Social media can also provide invaluable information in repressive countries with strict control of the media or during times of media blackouts. For example, much of the information coming out of Syria during the first year of the uprising against Bashar Al-Assad's regime was from "citizen journalists" who used mobile phones to film attacks by Syrian forces.

Intelligence, to the extent it is available, can be useful in increasing situational awareness. Intelligence agencies are often active in conflicts that are of strategic importance to states with intelligence capabilities and that have military assets deployed. There are at least three problems associated with intelligence, however. First, the secrecy surrounding intelligence and the covert nature of intelligence-gathering makes it often too sensitive to use in diplomatic action. Second, there is a tendency to conflate secret information with important information. Everything that is secret is not necessarily important. Third, the intelligence community is a murky one with strong interests and agendas that can influence analysis.

ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY

In conflicts and crises, obtaining accurate and reliable information is particularly difficult. Information from the battlefield or from the negotiation room is often imprecise, incomplete, and contradictory. The parties will be pushing out propaganda to try to create a favourable narrative and win over as much support as possible. Even well-meaning interlocutors may be spreading inaccurate information or spinning it in a way that distorts the basic facts. In such circumstances, it is hard to make out what is true and what is not. This is a serious problem for decision-makers since poor information can easily result in poor analysis, advice, policy, and decision-making.

The problem of inaccurate information is especially tricky during acute crises. At first, sketchy information starts trickling in. Facts and rumours are blurred. As the crisis intensifies, the trickle quickly turns into a deluge of contradictory information about the sequence of events, numbers of casualties, who is involved, who is responsible, and so on. Yet it is especially during crises that accurate information is most in demand because of the pressure on decision-makers to move swiftly.

The crisis in Syria illustrates this point. The dearth of reliable information and the propaganda put out by all sides during the uprising has made it next to impossible to verify the information that came out of Syria. This made it difficult for policy-makers to assess developments and deal effectively with the crisis. The UN Supervision Mission in Syria was deployed partly to provide reliable information on developments on the ground, although its ability to do this was limited because of the violence.

In these circumstances, decision-makers tend to be particularly focused on identifying who is to blame for instigating a crisis. This is because there is a need to know who should be the subject of diplomatic and political action. Determining responsibility, however, is seldom straightforward. Immediately after an incident, each side will start blaming the other for firing the first shot.

Competing narratives quickly emerge. Even if there is agreement on the basic facts, interpretations can differ enormously. Without verifiable information, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to tell which narrative is most accurate. Often the narrative that gains most prominence becomes the accepted version of events, irrespective of its veracity.

In the end, the question of responsibility is almost never answered by finding the "smoking gun", but rather by looking at the larger context and underlying causes. There is nearly always a long and complicated history to why the first shot was fired to begin with.

In the case of the Georgia–Russia war in August 2008, for instance, the question of responsibility was so contested that the EU even sponsored an international enquiry to try to answer the question of who started the war. In setting up the enquiry, one of the main issues was whether to focus on the sequence of events in the days leading up to the start of the war or to focus on the historical context going back to the break up of the Soviet Union and even earlier.

So how do you ensure the accuracy of information? Ultimately, absolute certainty is probably impossible. But it is usually possible to become sufficiently certain by taking steps to verify accuracy and by maintaining a generally critical approach to information. It is possible in many cases to determine accuracy by crosschecking information, using multiple sources, and considering the source's reliability.

A strong indication of accuracy is if several independent and reliable sources report the same thing. A source is independent if its information does not depend on the initial source being checked. It is important to make sure that the independent source really is independent and does not rely on the same primary source in order to avoid circular reporting.

Ask yourself the following questions when confronted with new information: 1) Is it internally logical? 2) Is it consistent with other relevant information? 3) Is it confirmed by independent sources?

Positive answers to these questions are an indication of accurate information – although not in itself proof of accuracy. Being able to answer these questions adequately often requires having substantial knowledge of the subject matter.

The source's reliability is also central when evaluating information. Is the source trusted and competent? Has the source consistently provided accurate information in the past? Information from interlocutors who have a stake in the conflict, such as the parties, should be treated with extra care. It is always worthwhile asking what interest a source has in giving you particular information.

A rule of thumb is to require a higher burden of proof the more incredible the claim seems and the greater the political consequences of it being true.

ANALYSIS

It is through analysis that you come to understand the meaning of the information you have. You gain a better understanding by answering why something is as it is and how it came to be that way. The analysis can also help in trying to predict how something will turn out.

But analysis can also be highly political. It can feed into the political discourse and alter narratives. It can change perceptions and influence behaviour. In diplomacy and politics, analysis is often underpinned by some specific agenda that goes beyond the will to merely enlighten.

At a fundamental level, political analysis is subjective. It is coloured by the opinions, beliefs, and preconceptions of the person doing the analysis. It is underpinned by assumptions and value systems. When analysing, you make decisions about what topics to analyse, how to delineate them, and what aspects to emphasise. These decisions are based on judgement calls that affect the overall analysis and its conclusions.

This subjectivity, however, is also a matter of degree. A highly subjective analysis often says more about the beliefs and prejudices of the person doing the analysis than it does about the subject-matter being analysed. If the purpose is to increase understanding, the analysis needs to be grounded in fact and rigorous in the conclusions it draws. This requires integrity and intellectual honesty on behalf of the analyst.

Analysis is judged, to a large extent, by the analyst's credibility. It is next to impossible to disassociate the analysis from the analyst. The same analysis from two different analysts can be received in very different ways because of differences in the analysts' credibility. How you and your organisation are perceived will have an impact on how your analysis is received.

Analysis can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Persuasive analysis predicting certain events can cause people to behave in a way that leads to the prediction coming true. Politicians, for example, often exaggerate how well they will fare in elections in order to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is a tactical projection of confidence in order to convince voters to vote for a winner. Although this approach may be rational, the analysis is not based on a disinterested assessment of the situation but rather on a political agenda.

A related problem occurs when the analyst has direct influence over the issue being analysed. In such cases, it can become unclear whether the analysis is an honest appraisal of the situation or a reflection of what the person is intending to do. For instance, a guerrilla leader may give an assessment that there will be new clashes unless the international community puts pressure on the enemy. This could be a sincere prediction that the other side will attack unless the international community stops it, or the guerrilla leader could be threatening to continue fighting unless the international community puts more pressure on the other side.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

There are many different models of conflict analysis. The following framework considers context, actors, positions, interests, issues, and the conflict dynamic. While these categories are neither perfect nor exhaustive, they are useful for conceptualising and gaining a better understanding of a conflict.

CONTEXT

While the context is not a cause in itself, it constitutes the conditions within which the conflict exists – historical, political, economic, social, cultural, and international. Not all of theses strands will be relevant for every conflict, but most will be relevant for most conflicts.

The historical context is the conflict's main backdrop. It is impossible to understand what a conflict is about without having an understanding of the larger historical context. This goes beyond the main events of the conflict's past and includes the history of the region, country, peoples, and ethnic groups.

The differing historical narratives that underlie conflicts are notoriously tendentious and partial. They are often narratives of grievances. Each side will cling to its narrative, which typically runs completely counter to that of the other side, and use it for political ends such as justifying claims on territory, resources, and power. In the case of Kosovo, for example, hardliners on both sides tend to point to historical "facts" when making their claims over the territory. Serb hardliners present the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389 as evidence that Kosovo belongs to Serbia while the presence of ancestral Illyrian tribes in the 4th century B.C. is put forward as proof that Kosovo belongs to the Kosovo Albanians.

Understanding a conflict also requires understanding the political context in which the sides operate: the political system, the

constitutional framework, the governing institutions, the political parties, the political leaders, and so on. Often in conflicts, the domestic political discourse becomes completely absorbed by the war. As the war drags on, politicians' ability to remain in power largely becomes determined by their position towards the ongoing war effort.

In internal conflicts, the political context is often one of political disenfranchisement and oppression. One dominant group oppresses another and has access to the main resources in the country. These situations are often characterised by an unrepresentative government and poor governance. Political grievances create tensions that can lead to violent conflict between political groups. Differences of ideology and values can also play a powerful part in the overall political context.

The economic situation in a country or the economic relations between countries can create conditions conducive for conflict. High unemployment, hyperinflation, and the uneven distribution of wealth among groups within a state create an environment within which conflict can flourish. The lower a country's average national income per capita, the greater the risk of war.

Economic discrimination and disenfranchisement can lead to social unrest and political instability. Economic discrimination is typically linked to ethnic and political discrimination. The deterioration of the economic situation in a country can also be both a contributing factor and an indicator of conflict.

Disputes over natural resources, such as oil, can underpin conflicts. One of the main points of contention between Sudan and South Sudan, for instance, has been how to divide oil revenue. While most of the oil is in the South, the pipeline runs through the North.

The social context includes societal structures and relations, as well as dynamics among different social groups. There may be longstanding tensions between ethnic groups or between tribes. Or

there may be marginalised groups in the country. In heterogeneous countries and multi-ethnic societies, such as Yugoslavia and Rwanda, social marginalisation of one group by another can underpin the conflict.

The importance of the cultural context should not be underestimated. Culture can be closely linked to identity and identity politics. There may be a strong undercurrent of nationalism or a collective feeling of victimisation in a society. Narratives surrounding grievances can be integral to identity. The repression of cultural identify often stokes discontentment that can lead to open confrontation. Understanding the culture or cultures helps to clarify motives, interests, and perceptions.

The international context, and in particular the regional environment, has a crucial bearing on a conflict. Regional competition for power and networks of alliances can set the stage for war. Warring parties are often backed by different states; sometimes a civil war is a proxy for a much larger regional conflict. The wars in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have seen heavy involvement from neighbours vying for regional influence through supporting various factions. What are the interests of the neighbours? What are the alliances? Are the neighbours supporting the government or rebels? Are there ethnic groups from the warring sides living in neighbouring countries as well?

The overall geostrategic context may also be relevant. The major powers may see strong interests in the countries concerned and in the outcome of the conflict. How are the major powers involved in the conflict? How do they relate to the parties? What are their strategic objectives? Are they engaged in or supporting peace-making efforts? The war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 had, on one level, little to do with Georgia but more to do with Russia's relations with the US and the EU.

THREE TYPES OF CAUSES:

STRUCTURAL CAUSES

Structural causes are the underlying root causes of the conflict. They remain fairly constant over time and tend to be pervasive as they are often entrenched in the state structures, societal fabric, and local culture. Examples of structural causes include poverty, illegitimate government, a lack of the rule of law, political disenfranchisement or oppression, and unequal access to resources.

PROXIMATE CAUSES

Proximate or immediate causes contribute directly to the conflict. Often these causes relate to the main issues of disagreement between the parties to the conflict and can be symptomatic of the structural causes.

TRIGGERS

Triggers are key events, actions, or decisions that directly spark an escalation of the conflict. They do not in themselves explain the conflict, but they indicate why violence breaks out at a particular moment in time. These triggers can be pretexts for violence rather than being actual causes in their own right.

ACTORS

The actors are the agents directly involved in, or affected by, the conflict. They can be individuals, groups, or institutions who drive the conflict forward or who are victims of the conflict. They can also be institutions, such as the UN, that are involved in trying to resolve the conflict.

Among the actors, there are parties and non–parties to the conflict. The parties have both a stake in the conflict and a direct role in driving events forward. Power tends to be concentrated with

the main parties. Any resolution to the conflict has to include a prominent role for the parties.

While identifying the parties to inter-state conflicts is usually straightforward, it can be more complicated in internal conflicts such as civil wars or insurgencies. In the uprising against Colonel Qaddafi in Libya, for example, there were numerous small, armed opposition groups that were only loosely connected. Splits within these groups complicated efforts to identify the actual parties to the conflict.

The use of broad categories when talking about parties to a conflict – Americans, Russians, Israelis, Palestinians, and Taliban – can be useful shorthand but can also lead to oversimplification. In many cases, this shorthand risks ignoring diverging views and interests within the groups and their leaderships.

In the case of Kosovo, for example, it makes little sense to talk about "Serbs". In Serbia, there is a broad range of views on Kosovo. In Kosovo itself, the Kosovo Serbs living in the north take a different approach from the Kosovo Serbs living in the south. And within these subgroups – northern Kosovo Serbs and southern Kosovo Serbs – there are diverging opinions.

To understand a group's behaviour, it is necessary to understand its internal structure, hierarchy, cohesion, and decision-making processes. Even though the group may convey a united position externally, factions within the group can have different interests and views. It is essential to understand how these different views are translated into a common position. A political party may have a highly structured organisation and decision-making process while the positions of a tribe may be elaborated through a more organic process.

The leaders of the group have the power to take decisions that have a direct impact on the conflict. These leaders do not necessarily have to be the same as those with the official titles. Often powerful individuals behind the presidents and prime ministers can be the real decision-makers. It is also essential to understand where a

leader's legitimacy derives from and, in particular, his or her power base. Even an autocratic leader has to pander to a power base, satisfying different constituents.

A small circle of trusted and loyal individuals usually surrounds the main leader. In governments, this group is not necessarily the cabinet ministers but can be a small group of advisers. Other informal powerbrokers, such as businessmen or family members, may enjoy power through their access to and influence over the leader.

Within the leadership, views may diverge on how to approach the conflict. Some may be more pragmatic and others more hardline, but these differences are often overstated; those in power tend to follow the leader's line as it is through him or her that their status and influence derives.

Politicians tend to operate largely on the basis of domestic rather than international political considerations. The local political environment will be governed by its own rules and codes. There may be constraints that severely curtail what the leader can do in practice. Although leaders are often seen as agents driving events through their decisions and actions and having the power to change the course of events, there is a tendency to presume that the leaders have more power to influence events than they actually have. Recognising the constraints on these actors is necessary in order to understand their behaviour.

Secondary actors are not directly involved in the conflict but are affected by it as well as have an interest and stake in it. And even if they are not directly involved, they can still influence events, sometimes through considerable power over the primary actors.

Economic actors, in particular, can wield substantial power over local leaders, for example the oil companies operating in Sudan and South Sudan. Refugees and diaspora groups can also be powerful secondary actors. The Armenian diaspora is tremendously influential in Armenian politics and, by extension, over how the Armenian leadership relates to the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict.

In many conflicts, there are spoilers who set out to hinder peace-making efforts. These can be governments, armies, warlords, militias, organised criminal gangs, and ethnic entrepreneurs – often these categories overlap. What unites them is that they have an interest in continued conflict because it enables them to maintain their privileged status, often financial or political. They thrive in the chaos and lawlessness that war brings. In some cases, their interests derives from a desire to avoid being brought to justice. Identifying spoilers and understanding what drives them is vital in order to understand the conflict.

Actors beyond the borders of the country can be directly involved in the conflict. Major powers, neighbouring states, rebel groups based in neighbouring states, and regional organisations can be involved in the conflict and have significant influence over the warring parties. In inter-ethnic conflicts, it is not uncommon for ethnic groups to receive support from their kin in neighbouring states. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, Serbia supported the Bosnian Serbs while Croatia supported the Bosnian Croats.

It is crucial to understand the relationship between the various actors. This can be a complex, fluid network of ties that is impenetrable to a foreign observer. Is there a particular balance of power between different groups? What are the main alliances? Are these alliances based on shared interests or values?

POSITIONS, INTERESTS, AND ISSUES

A party's position constitutes its demands and what it considers should be the solution to the conflict. The positions of the parties indicate what the main issues and grievances are in the conflict. Positions tend to be formulated in general, aspirational language and make maximalist demands. These demands are often far apart, in particular in brutal wars where the sides see the world as a zero-sum game. Separatists may be out to secure independence for their territory, while the government is defending the state's territorial integrity.

Positions often become entrenched over time, making the conflict more difficult to resolve. Leaders often instrumentalise positions in their political rhetoric to muster support and build national consensus. To understand the conflict, it is necessary to be aware not only of the parties' positions but also of how strongly they feel about them.

Positions can come across as irrational and incomprehensible. But behind such positions there are often rational cost-benefit calculations, based on premises difficult to ascertain by outsiders. Linked to a party's positions are its goals, stated or actual. Stated goals are often maximalist, covering much more than what the party actually expects to achieve. The actual goals are those that the party considers realistic.

Interests underpin positions and goals, and constitute that which the party considers to be in its favour. Interests can be tangible or intangible, such as revenue from natural resources or a sense of security. It is crucial to understand how the party itself perceives its interests rather than what you think their interests should be.

Within a group, there may be different individual interests, many of which are inconsistent and incompatible. It is often worth trying to find out the different vested interests that hide behind the general interests of a party to the conflict. Conflict itself can create an entire new set of interests that perpetuate the conflict, for instance through war economies.

It can be useful to consider how the party sees its interests over the short term and the long term. A party may see an interest in total victory on the battlefield and the unconditional surrender of the other side. This short-term interest may clash with what it sees as its long-term interest of stable and harmonious relations with the other side. It is not uncommon for short-term and long-term interests to be contradictory.

How each party perceives the other parties, the conflict, and the main issues are keys to understanding the conflict. Conflicts

are fundamentally about different perceptions. In brutal wars, the parties often have diametrically opposed perceptions.

How a party perceives its interests helps to explain its motivations. What drives the party? What are its fears and desires? What are its grievances? A leader may be motivated by ideology and vision – or by money and power. At a basic level, people are motivated by needs such as security, well-being, and recognition. Knowing what drives a party can suggest what incentives will change its behaviour.

A party's ability to defend its interests and pursue its goals depends largely on its resources and capabilities. These means may be hard, such as military might, or soft, such as moral persuasion. Comparing the resources and capabilities of the different parties provides a sense of the balance of power between the parties.

The key issues are the main points of contention, such as the status of a territory, who controls natural resources, or who is in power. In many cases, the actors may disagree on what the key issues are or put different emphasis on different issues. Mismatches of this nature can indicate just how far apart the positions of the parties are.

CONFLICT DYNAMIC

Violent conflicts tend to be highly dynamic and fluid, but they often follow similar patterns. The patterns can be described in phases that constitute the conflict's "life cycle". A simple case begins with a situation of relative stability and peace; there is a brewing conflict that intensifies into instability and open conflict. This leads to crisis and the outbreak of violence. Following a period of violence, the situation de-escalates and the fighting ends. As tensions decrease, the conflict's intensity is lowered. And the situation returns to a state of stability and peace.

This curve-like pattern is often cyclical as wars often re-ignite. Many conflicts also tend to fluctuate between open conflict, crisis,

and war over a long period of time. The Arab-Israeli conflict is an example of such a conflict. So-called frozen conflicts, such as Western Sahara and Nagorno-Karabakh, tend to linger in a state of perpetual crisis although they, on the surface, appear stable since there is no or limited instances of violence. These conflicts, however, tend to be volatile and unstable under the surface.

Although the conflict curve is highly schematic, it can serve as a conceptual tool to help you understand where a conflict may be heading and what strategy is best suited to deal with it, such as preventive diplomacy, crisis management, containment, conflict resolution, stabilisation efforts, or peacebuilding – or a combination of these. Often, resorting to a range of different instruments in a holistic approach is necessary.

PREDICTING THE FUTURE

When analysing conflicts, it is often necessary to make predictions about the future. Policy-makers need to have a sense of what may come next in order to be proactive in their policy-making. They need to know whether a new president is likely to promote democracy or crush it; whether a border clash is an isolated event or could spark an all-out war; whether rebels may win over loyalists or not.

Our ability to make meaningful projections is severely limited. In some cases, such as elections, there may be numerical data to draw on. But usually predicting the future is very much an art. It is telling that so few predicted the fall of the Soviet Union or the Arab Spring, especially considering the number of analysts watching the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the Middle East in the 2010s.

If an actor behaves in a certain way and has done so in the past, it is likely that such behaviour will continue in the future. But current and past behaviour can be a flimsy basis for predictions, because of the shifting nature of constraints and opportunity, resources and capabilities, motivations and goals.

In attempting to predict whether violent conflict will break out, an increasingly common methodology is early warning mechanisms that rely on indicators. Such indicators can be marginalisation of groups in society, the prevalence of light weapons, high rates of unemployment among young men, and so on. They can show whether the conditions exist for a particular event, but seldom tell us when that event will occur.

A useful alternative to trying to predict the future is to set out different scenarios. For example, when analysing a negotiation, there could be three scenarios: 1) agreement is reached; 2) negotiations break down, with no agreement; 3) negotiations continue. The analysis describes the different possible scenarios, their likelihood, and their implications. It is also often warranted to assess the desirability of the different scenarios as well as identifying the worst-case and the best-case scenarios. Scenarios can help you prepare for various contingencies.

3 REPORTING

Political reporting serves the critical function of providing policy-makers with an analytical foundation for decision-making. During crises and conflicts, reporting tends to be in high demand as policy-makers are under pressure to take quick and decisive action. For this, they need to know the latest developments, be it from the battlefield, negotiation room, or presidential chancellery.

Reporting also serves to create a common narrative within the organisation and among its member states. This function should not be underestimated since a shared understanding of events helps the organisation operate in a unified and coherent way and can bring member states closer together.

The nature of political reporting is changing with the emergence of the Internet, social media, and the 24-hour news cycle. In the past, diplomatic dispatches enjoyed an exclusive role in providing the latest on developments to foreign ministries back home. Today, political reporting has to compete with a wide range of sources available to policy-makers.

International organisations have their own guidelines and procedures for reporting as well as their own reporting cultures. This chapter covers the basics of political reporting. After some general reflections on political reporting, it considers different types of reports and offers practical advice on how to write a political report.

WHAT TO REPORT ON

The mission's mandate and the focus of its activities set the basic parameters for what to report on. Within these parameters, political reporting acts as a filter that helps policy-makers make sense of political developments. These can be events that have an impact on the political process and affect the mission in some way.

For instance, an envoy mandated to mediate in a peace process will be expected to report on how the negotiations are progressing and on developments relevant to the peace process. For some missions, such as the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, reporting is part of the core mandate. In such cases, the mandate largely defines the focus of the reporting. Other missions have more scope to determine what is relevant reporting.

While there is no set formula for what constitutes the "political" in political reporting, it deals broadly with matters of the state, power, and authority. Conflicts and crises are in this sense core topics in political reporting. In practice, any development that is of political relevance to the mission and mandate can be the subject of a political report. This can, for example, be a meeting with a local politician, a military victory, or the outcome of a peace negotiation.

What to report on is often driven by supply and demand: the demand of HQ and the supply from the field. HQ will sometimes request reports on various topics based on its needs, but the initiative for reports usually comes from the field, as it is in a better position to judge what is worth reporting on. It is often up to you to determine what is relevant among all the clutter. A regular dialogue between the field and HQ on what reports are useful can help ensure their relevance.

While reporting tends to be sent from the field to HQ, reporting from HQ to the field is also necessary for the effective running of the operation. Knowing the latest developments at HQ, in particular deliberations by member states in fora such as in the UN Security Council or the EU Foreign Affairs Council, allows the field office to understand the positions of member states and where the political centre of gravity is. This provides the field with context and background necessary to implement policy effectively.

Political reporting should go beyond local media reports to reveal and make sense of what is happening behind the scenes. The recipients of your reports are in any case likely to be receiving local news summaries. Merely repeating these can result in bland

and inaccurate reporting. The exception is when the fact that the media are reporting on a particular topic is significant in itself, for instance, because it will have an impact on the local leadership.

Besides reporting on particular events, political reports can be more analytical in nature, dealing with a theme or considering a larger strategic question. The most famous political report of this kind was the diplomatic cable – the "Long Telegram" – written by the US diplomat, George Kennan, from Moscow on the Soviet Union in 1946. Kennan's cable – numbering some 8,000 words – set out the conceptual foundations for what would become the United States' containment policy towards the Soviet Union during much of the Cold War.

WHEN TO REPORT

The timing of a political report needs to be considered carefully. Some missions, in particular larger ones, are required to report on a regular basis, sometimes even daily. But often, reporting is events-driven. In such cases, a report should be dispatched as soon as possible after the event to ensure that it is relevant and has an impact. Political reporting competes with other sources of information; the report that reaches policy-makers first often has the greatest chance of forming perceptions and being used as the basis for further action.

Tardy reports are seldom of value as policy-makers are primarily focused on the present and have little time for historical events. While it is always possible to improve on a report, at some point the need to send it becomes more critical than perfecting it.

There is more latitude in determining when to send an analytical or thematic report since they tend not to be linked to external events or require immediate action. Even so, timing these reports well can maximise their impact on perceptions and policy. Kennan's cable was impeccably timed because policy-makers in Washington,

including President Truman, were looking for a policy to deal with what was seen as an increasingly aggressive Soviet Union. The Long Telegram provided the answer.

Pegging a thematic or analytical report to an event helps provide a relevant context and gives policy-makers a reason to read the report. Such an event could be a policy discussion at HQ or a high-level visit. Countless analytical reports have ended up unread in the in-box because the recipients did not see a compelling reason to read the report immediately.

The frequency of political reporting is usually determined by the intensity of developments on the ground, how high the issue is on the agenda, and the overall interest at HQ. But reporting too often, particularly if the subject matter is not relevant to policy-making, can quickly result in a much-reduced readership.

DISTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

Who should be reading your reports? The distribution list affects many aspects of the report, such as how much detail and background to include, how to deal with sensitive information, and how to formulate policy recommendations.

Sometimes the distribution list is set by the organisation. But often, it is up to the drafter of the report to determine the readership. A general rule is that operational necessity should determine the distribution list: the recipients of a report should be those who need to know the contents in order to carry out their tasks. This, however, is a fairly restrictive rule since there are many who may not need to know certain things but knowing these things helps them carry out their tasks.

There is often a qualitative difference in reports that are distributed to the secretariat and those that are distributed to member states. Reports that go to member states are usually more focused on factual details and less on analysis and policy

recommendations. This is because member states may have different political sensitivities and views on policy. There may also be questions about including sensitive information given the increased risk of reports leaking when sent to a wide distribution list.

A key question in deciding on the distribution list for internal reports is how high up the hierarchy the report should go. The importance of the report needs to be weighed against the risk of overburdening the hierarchy with information.

The recipients' level of knowledge should determine the level of detail and the amount of background information. Not everyone can recall the main lines of Afghanistan's 20th century history or the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka. Are the recipients primarily desk officers who spend their days engrossed in the subject matter or high-level officials who may only have a cursory notion of the substance? Both may be recipients, of course, in which case the level of detail and background should be geared to the main addressee.

The length of the distribution list has an impact on how much sensitive material you can use in the report. Many organisations have protocols for dealing with classified information based on various levels of security classification and various forms of encryption. But even so, as the spectacular leak of a quarter of a million US diplomatic cables to Wikileaks demonstrated, confidential material can find its way into the wrong hands. In some international organisations, the assumption is that reports are systematically leaked.

In general, the more sensitive the material, the tighter the distribution list should be. An old trick is to use a strict security classification as this sparks curiosity among potential readers and increases the chances of the report being read. Often it is up to the sender of the report to decide what security classification the report should have.

PURPOSE AND CREDIBILITY

Political reporting is a bureaucratic tool that can be tremendously influential on policy-making if well timed, insightful, and purposive. Before writing a report, you must decide what the purpose of the report is. It may be merely to increase understanding of an event. But it can also be to influence perceptions at a deeper level and influence policy or seek endorsement for a policy and trigger action. Keeping the purpose in mind when drafting helps focus the report.

Explicit proposals for action may be set out in the report, but the purpose of the report can also be projected more subtly by the way the topic is treated. Readers will be looking out for whether reports require some sort of action.

Credibility is paramount in political reporting. It is credibility that gives your reports weight and the ability to have an impact on policy-making. Credibility is earned from accurate, insightful, even-handed, and useful reporting. Through reporting, you build up your reputation as a credible report writer. While reporting is always coloured by the drafter, reports should remain honest and even-handed. Misconstruing facts or misrepresenting reality quickly leads to the drafter losing credibility.

Without credibility, reports are quickly dismissed as irrelevant. Accuracy is particularly important. An inaccuracy or mistake in a report often makes the reader question the veracity of the entire report. If there is one mistake in the report, what is there to say that there are not more mistakes?

Even-handedness is also essential for credibility. But being even-handed can be particularly difficult in armed conflicts where atrocities have been committed and emotions run high. When member states have direct but different interests in the outcome, even-handedness is as important as it is difficult.

RELEVANCE

The report must be relevant to the mission, its mandate, and the readership. Deciding which topic to report on depends on the particular context and needs of HQ. Reports should also not overburden recipients with irrelevant details.

ACCURACY

The information in the report must be accurate. If not, readers will be misled about what is going on, which could have an adverse affect on policy-making. It is prudent to state explicitly if some piece of information could not be verified or its accuracy is in question.

TIMELINESS

Reports need to be distributed in a timely manner. If the report is not time sensitive, it can be useful to peg the report to an internal policy discussion or a high-level visit. If time sensitive, the report should be sent as soon as possible. The more time that elapses, the less relevant the report will become.

BREVITY

Reports should be brief and to the point. Policy-makers find few things more irritating than overly long reports. These tend to be ignored. The higher up in the hierarchy, the more swamped decision-makers are with policy papers, briefings, and reports. A short report has a greater chance of being read and having an impact on policy than a long one.

CLARITY

Reports should be lucid and clear. The reader should not have to guess what the drafter is trying to say. A clear report is more forceful than a vague one. Ambiguity may have its place in diplomatic discourse but not in internal reporting, where clarity is essential.

READABILITY

The report's structure and language makes it readable. There should be a logical flow: this is what has happened, this is what it means, and this is what we should do about it. Readability also comes from crisp and forceful language. Adding colour to the report can also increase readability but should be done in moderation.

FRANKNESS

Reporting should be honest. While there may be pressure to avoid certain subjects or to take a particular angle on a subject, hiding uncomfortable truths or putting a positive spin on events can be risky. Policy-makers need to know the truth in order to take informed decisions. Frankness is also essential for your credibility.

ACTION AND POLICY

Reports should recommend a clear course of action. Reports that merely aim to inform are often ignored since policy-makers have little time to become engrossed in interesting detail and analysis but are looking for policy and action.

When reporting from the field to HQ, it is even more important to be even-handed given the risk of "going native" and becoming partial to one side. There is a natural human tendency to sympathise with those around you. Over time, this can lead to a loss of impartiality. Often there is a suspicion in HQ that staff working in the field have "gone native". This means that the onus is on field staff to demonstrate a high degree of even-handedness.

Being even-handed is not the same as being neutral. It may be evident who is at fault or to blame in a conflict. One side may be committing war crimes or other atrocities. This should be reported accurately and not papered over.

TYPES OF REPORTS

The most basic type of report presents a factual and chronological description of an event or a development, such as local elections or the launch of a new peace initiative. Unless the content speaks for itself, it can be necessary to provide context, analysis, and commentary on what has happened. The need for context can depend on the amount of knowledge the readership will have of the situation. The commentary could explain what the episode means and what the implications are. Finally, the report should, as a rule, end with policy recommendations or proposed next steps.

Often it is necessary to immediately inform decision-makers of unexpected events, in particular if they require quick action. In such cases, a flash report may be warranted. This is a short missive – sometimes only a couple of sentences – with the basic facts. Flash reports differ from regular reports in that the priority is to convey information to HQ as quickly as possible rather than to send a well-researched and rich report with elaborate policy recommendations. It can be useful to promise further reporting once more information is known.

As diplomacy is largely about relationships and dialogue, much reporting consists of accounts of meetings. These reports set out a conversation with an interlocutor such as a politician or a diplomat. The report can be structured chronologically, as the conversation unfolded, or thematically. The focus should be primarily on what the interlocutor said rather than what your side said, although it can be relevant to indicate, for the record, what specific messages were passed. It is often not necessary to relay everything that was said; rather, the report should include only the essential points and messages.

An issue report sets out updates on on-going developments. The issues covered in the report can, for instance, be those that are on the agenda in a negotiation. In the case of Sudan and South Sudan, a typical report would provide an update on the outstanding issues being negotiated between the sides: claimed and disputed border areas, sharing of oil revenue, citizenship issues, and so on.

Thematic reports cover a topic in an analytical manner: the role of the Orthodox Church in Georgian politics, the relationship between rebel groups in Darfur, or Libya's relationship with its neighbours, to give some examples. Thematic reports often require extensive background research and can be rewarding to write. There is no optimal structure for a thematic report; the structure depends largely on the subject matter. But these reports should have a logical flow and clear narrative.

A type of report that is more common in national foreign ministries than in international organisations is the "colourful" report. This is usually a report of frivolous and juicy gossip or a personal account of some extravagant experience used to convey a larger message. They contain flavour and literary flare. But overdoing these types of reports is probably not a good idea as their policy relevance is not always obvious.

ELEMENTS OF A REPORT

A report covering an event or a development normally includes the following parts: title and subject, summary, detail, analysis and comments, and next steps. There should be a logical flow from details to analysis and comments and on to the next steps. At a basic level, a report should answer the questions who, what, when, where, how, and why.

TITLE AND SUBJECT

The title may determine whether the reader continues reading the report. The title should be short and informative. Sometimes there are protocols on how to title reports. Using a witty or intriguing title can be effective but should be done with care because humour can often backfire. The classic title, written to entice, is "Trouble".

There can also be a subject-line that sets out what the report is about, for example "Visit by the SRSG to Helmand Province on 24 August 2010" or "Report on negotiation round between government and opposition in Yemen on 25 February 2012".

SUMMARY

The summary outlines the main points of the report in a few succinct sentences. It should allow the reader to determine whether to read the whole report or whether particular parts are relevant. If the report includes policy recommendations, stating this in the summary can be helpful.

DETAIL

This is the main body of the report, where the substance is set out. The classic way of writing this section is to only include facts and description while leaving all commentary and analysis for the subsequent sections. Separating the descriptive part from the analytical and prescriptive part provides a neat and clean way

of presenting information that avoids confusion about what is fact and what is opinion. It also allows readers to draw their own conclusions.

It is possible to mix description with analysis and commentary in a coherent and clear way, but this requires careful handling so that readers understand what is what. Sometimes separating fact and opinion in a clear way can be difficult. Thematic reports, issue reports, and "colourful" reports lend themselves to mixing the analytical and the descriptive.

It can be helpful to think of writing a report as telling a story that includes characters, action, and dialogue. Setting out the story in a chronological way is often easiest for the reader. Readers pay most attention to the first few paragraphs, however, so it is wise to put the most important information as high up as possible. News articles are often structured in this way.

A classic way of structuring a paragraph is to begin with a general statement that is then supported with "proof" presented in the rest of the paragraph. Another way of looking at this is to let the first sentence summarise the rest of the information in the paragraph.

Much reporting is dedicated to what people tell you. HQ is often interested in reports containing a party's views of the situation. Even though what they say may constitute opinions and analysis, it is a fact that they have said these things. This can be reported as fact in the details section. For instance, a politician may have said that he or she would never compromise in negotiations with the other side. This statement may or may not be true, but it is true that the words were uttered, which can be reported as fact.

Often, interlocutors will say things in a personal capacity or in a context that alters the meaning of what they say literally. In such circumstances, it can be necessary to add a short comment in the details section explaining this so as not to mislead readers.

How events are described and how facts are presented can have a major influence on how the report is understood. Even the

most factual descriptions can convey messages and elicit particular views. It is essential to consider the report's impact, how readers will interpret the text, and, in particular, what conclusions they may draw.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS

The analytical and commentary section provides an opportunity to explain the context and meaning of what has happened. It should flow logically from the facts set out earlier in the report and answer the question: so what?

The analysis and comments can be forward-looking, or place the events in a larger political context. It can also be a short comment, for instance a couple of sentences making a link to a related issue.

It is important to not be too categorical in your analysis or commentary since this can make a blunt impression and make your readers sceptical of everything else in the report. But too many caveats can make analysis and commentary come across as weak and uncertain.

NEXT STEPS

The final part of the report is often the most important because it proposes action. These proposals should flow naturally from the descriptive and analytical parts of the report. If a problem is identified in the analytical part, there should be a proposal for an action to address this problem.

It is often wise to present a limited number of actions to avoid overwhelming the reader. The proposed actions should be specific, for example issuing a statement, making a démarche in a foreign capital, or increasing humanitarian assistance to a vulnerable population in a war zone.

You should try to gear proposals for action to the external world. While there may be good reason for internal action, it is all too common for proposed actions to relate to the inner workings of the bureaucracy, such as holding an internal coordination meeting

or setting up a working group to consider a particular issue. Proposals for action should aim to have an impact on the outside world.

The recommendations should propose action, but it is for the decision-makers reading the report at HQ to decide whether the action should be taken. The clearest way to set out the proposed action is in the form of bullet points, each beginning with an action verb. For example:

Proposed action:

› *Issue statement by the SG condemning violence, calling for restraint, and urging parties to implement ceasefire.*

› *Carry out démarche at level of USG to underline necessity of parties implementing ceasefire without conditions.*

› *Draw up options for possible monitoring mission to oversee implementation of ceasefire.*

Proposals for action should strike a balance between realism and idealism. There is little value in making proposals that cannot be achieved. Making realistic proposals requires a solid understanding of the policy issue, the organisation's position, political sensitivities of member states, external constraints, and so on. But proposals that lack ambition risk having no impact.

Proposed actions should identify who should take the action. Policy recommendations that do not identify the lead actor are often ignored because no one feels responsibility or ownership over them.

Sometimes it is not evident what course to pursue, or several alternative actions seem attractive. In such cases, options can be set out for decision-makers to choose from. Spelling out the advantages and disadvantages of the different actions can help the decision-making process.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Writing well is not only a question of aesthetics but also of credibility and effective communication. A clear and succinct report will be taken more seriously – and is more likely to be used as the basis for action – than a poorly written one. Policy-makers who have to struggle to understand a report will quickly discard it since language and style in poorly written reports get in the way of the substance.

There are numerous books and style guides with tips on writing. Below are four basic rules to follow:

1. Write in simple, clear language. Use short words and short sentences without too many conditional clauses. Stay away from convoluted bureaucratese and ambiguity and avoid unnecessary adjectives.

2. Be direct. Favour the active voice over the passive voice and use strong, concrete verbs. Begin sentences with the agent carrying out the action. Try to present the most important information at the beginning or end of your sentences rather than in the middle.

3. Use short paragraphs. Paragraphs that are too long make the reader lose interest. Each paragraph should as a rule present one thought or make one point.

4. Avoid jargon and acronyms. The most common acronyms, such as UN or NATO, can be used since your readers should understand them, but it is often helpful to spell out all others.

Writing is fundamentally about communication. You should always make sure to be writing for the reader rather than for yourself. Clear writing reflects clarity of thought.

4 POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Diplomacy is fundamentally about relationships. For relationships to work there must be communication. This is why political dialogue is central to diplomacy. Political dialogue is the main form of interaction among states and other international actors. It is through political dialogue that we convey our positions and gain a better understanding of how others see things.

The core of political dialogue consists of messaging. Messaging is not only about what is being said but also how it is said. The what consists of the key messages – the points that your interlocutor should take away from the dialogue. The how is the way these messages are communicated. This is a question of form as well as style and approach. How messages are communicated can be more important than the substance of the messages.

For the most part, political dialogue takes the form of bilateral consultations or face-to-face meetings. But it can also consist of other forms of contact such as official correspondence, phone calls, and démarches. These contacts are often part of an ongoing and regular dialogue on particular issues at different levels. In conflicts and crises, there is usually intensive political dialogue at all levels to coordinate with international partners and to influence the parties to the conflict.

The act of dialogue itself is often political. It can empower, legitimise, and create expectations. In some case, such as dialogue with separatists, there can be political sensitivities and legal limitations on the extent to which you can have contacts.

The posture you take in political dialogue is the approach you take towards your interlocutor. This depends largely on what you want to achieve and your relationship with the other side. Posture is often a decisive part of messaging.

A complement to political dialogue is public diplomacy. In certain cases, public diplomacy can be the main form of

communication, for instance when the ability to carry out political dialogue is severely limited for some reason. Public diplomacy can be particularly effective in countries with oppressive governments or when there is no mutual trust underpinning the relationship. Public diplomacy is dealt with in the next chapter.

This chapter focuses primarily on the political messaging side of political dialogue. First, general considerations for messaging are covered. Then the chapter looks at different aspects to coming up with messages and writing talking points.

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

When crafting messages for political dialogue, it is necessary to have a clear sense of the overall political context and specific purpose of the dialogue. The political context provides the backdrop for the dialogue. The context could be, for example, a meeting with a local politician ahead of an election or regular consultation with an envoy working on the same conflict. It could be a formal meeting of a working group that is part of a structured political dialogue. The context will usually indicate what the main issues are that need to be addressed.

What is the purpose of the dialogue? The aim could be to convince the other side to take some concrete action. Or it may be to have an exchange of views and assessments of a situation. Often, the purpose of political dialogue is merely to make positions known. Even though you may not be after a particular "deliverable" or have a specific message to convey, there could still be a point to meeting for the sake of maintaining good relations. Good relations underpin much of diplomacy.

The context and purpose of the dialogue, along with your relationship with the interlocutor, should determine the posture that you take. Posture is how you approach your interlocutor and the sentiment you wish to project. An open and forthcoming

posture may be suitable for dialogue with a friendly like-minded interlocutor. But in an adversarial and hostile relationship, you may take a sharper posture in order to convey dissatisfaction.

Determining the right posture is crucial to influencing behaviour. An antagonistic posture might succeed in forcing a certain behaviour, but it can also lead to the interlocutor closing up and becoming impervious to attempts at persuasion. Often, an open posture can be more persuasive.

It is essential to understand how the other side sees the context, what it sees as its objectives, and what issues it intends to raise. In preparing for political dialogue, you should put yourself in the position of the other side and anticipate its positions and issues. This can help you fine-tune messages and possible responses.

Coordinating messages with other like-minded states and organisations is a way to ensure that the messages take the larger political context into account and are in line with the overall international effort. Coordinating messages in this way can increase their impact since the more international actors repeat the same messages, the stronger the messages become.

WHO YOU REPRESENT

Your organisation, its policies and positions, together with the mission's mandate, set the parameters of how far you can go in your messages. It is important to remain within these parameters since ultimately messaging can commit the organisation to a certain course of action. Taking that action can become an issue of the organisation's credibility.

On many issues, the messages may already have been agreed by the organisation and its member states in a so-called "Line to Take". This is often the case for controversial issues where member states have diverging opinions. How the messages are formulated often boils down to policy and politics. But even if there is no "agreed

language", the messages should reflect the policies and positions of the organisation.

Depending on the sensitivities surrounding the issue and the degree of interest from member states, there may be more or less latitude in formulating the messages. It can be necessary to consult member states, in particular those that have a special interest in the conflict or crisis, on a regular basis in order to ensure political backing for the messages.

In formulating your messages, it is essential to have a sense of how your interlocutor perceives you, your organisation, and your motives. The messages will be received through the prism of this perception. In this sense, political dialogue is like any other form of communication; it is impossible to separate what is being said from who is saying it. In this context, your credibility is crucial for how the message is received and, in particular, whether the interlocutor will be persuaded by the message or not.

YOUR INTERLOCUTOR

Understanding the other side, in particular their interests and goals, political sensitivities, and ability to manoeuvre is necessary to target the messages. This applies to the interlocutor as an individual as well as the entity he or she represents. Understanding these aspects can help you tailor the messages, come up with the most effective arguments, and determine the right level of detail.

For instance, political arguments are generally more appealing to politicians than to officials. But some politicians are more impressed by technical arguments than by political ones. Understanding the interlocutor means understanding what will persuade him or her.

In general, people want their beliefs affirmed by others and tend not to like having their core beliefs put into question. Opinions that run counter to a person's fundamental worldview are more likely to alienate than change the person's mind. In conflicts, these beliefs and worldviews are often deeply entrenched and underpinned by

emotions and bitterness. In such circumstances, it can be extremely difficult to convey convincing messages that rest on fundamentally different values from that of your interlocutor.

The reaction to the messages partly depends, as was mentioned above, on who is conveying the message. It also depends on how the message is conveyed. Presentational aspects such as style and tone can be crucial for persuasion. Often style is substance in diplomacy.

Cultural aspects can also have a profound impact on how a person reacts to a particular message. Understanding the culture and cultural codes of the other side and, in particular speaking the local language, can be an invaluable asset when conveying messages.

CRAFTING MESSAGES

In crafting messages, the political context and overall purpose of the dialogue should determine the issues that you would like to cover. Often these are the main areas of concern – the most urgent and pressing topics. Sometimes, member states may have already defined what the issues are. But often it is up to you to determine this based on strategic and tactical considerations.

What would you like to achieve with each specific issue? It may be to express concern over a development or express disapproval of some action. It could also be to urge the interlocutor to do something (or refrain from doing something). For instance, a message to a party in a foundering negotiation may be to "redouble efforts to seek a negotiated solution", or that "there is no military solution to the conflict." The purpose of such messages is to put pressure on the party to try harder to reach a settlement in the negotiation.

In conflicts and crisis, there tend to be long lists of pressing issues. It is usually wise to limit the number of issues so as not to dilute the impact and overwhelm the dialogue. Conveying the

most critical message first gives it most prominence. But, if they are tough messages, unlikely to be appreciated by the other side, it can be tactically more effective to begin with the softer messages.

A common mistake is to deliver the "tough messages" without having established a working relationship with the other side. Unless you have built up credibility and a degree of trust, the other side is likely to reject tough messages. Establishing credibility can take time and diplomatic skill.

In addition to there being an overall posture, each individual issue can have its own posture. Some issues may be underpinned by strong positions, others less so. For example, the EU has a strong position on the International Criminal Court, which entails that the EU tends to be forward-leaning and supportive in its messages on ICC-related matters.

A key question in crafting messages is how specific or ambiguous to be. Being specific makes it easier for the interlocutor to understand exactly the point that is being conveyed. But a specific message can also come across as unnecessarily blunt and alienate the other side, in particular if the message does not correspond to your interlocutor's worldview. An ambiguous and vague message can come across as softer and gives the interlocutor scope to interpret the message in different ways.

Ambiguous messages can also be the result of a negotiated position. For instance, in the run-up to Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, one of the key messages from the Contact Group was that Kosovo would "not return to the pre-1999 situation". This was the maximum that could be agreed by Russia, on the one hand, and the US, UK, France, Germany, and Italy, on the other. It meant different things to the different members of the Contact Group.

When crafting messages it is essential to understand the meaning of value-laden language for the particular context. The word "compromise", for example, is widely considered to have a positive connotation, but for disadvantaged parties in many conflicts, it can

have a negative connotation. In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, for example, Azerbaijan considers "compromise" to imply giving up Nagorno-Karabakh.

Coded phrases and language are also often used for particular conflicts and crises. The phrase "all options are on the table" in relation to Iran is code for "we reserve the right to use military force," but is more ambiguous and less stark than threatening military action. It also allows for a degree of deniability against criticism of threatening to use force.

Sometimes a useful device when crafting messages is to use a pithy catchphrase. This is a short, snappy construction that describes a situation or prescribes a way forward. It captures the essence of an issue and, thanks to its eloquence, sticks in people's mind. It can often take on a life of its own, being repeated in conversation and in diplomatic cables, becoming part of the diplomatic narrative.

For example, before Kosovo's declaration of independence, the formula used when coming up with the blueprint for the International Civilian Office in Kosovo: "As lean as possible, but as robust as necessary". This became a mantra for diplomats discussing the ICO. Used sparingly, catchphrases can be a highly effective way of communicating the message.

CONDITIONALITY

Conditionality is often central to political messaging. It is one of the main ways states and other international actors try to influence each other – the carrots and sticks of international relations. How the conditionality is formulated is often a key tactical and strategic question.

There is typically a choice to be made about whether to spell out the conditionality in the positive or negative. The difference is often one of tone and posture. The following examples create different impressions: "we will downgrade diplomatic relations if you continue to violate human rights," and "we will upgrade diplomatic relations if you respect human rights." The former

chastises and threatens punishment while the latter encourages and promises reward.

The positive usually helps create a positive dynamic and contributes to an affirmative relationship. But there are cases when the negative is necessary to send a tough, unequivocal message. The risk with negative messaging is that it can come across as overly stark, alienating the other side and resulting in a loss of leverage and influence. Mixing positive and negative messages is a way to convey a balanced impression and can make it easier for the recipient to take on board the tough messages.

The extent to which you can or want to be specific in spelling out the conditionality is a key consideration. Being specific has the advantage of conveying clearly to the other side what it has to do in order for something to happen (or not happen). A specific message could, for instance, be "if you agree to a ceasefire, we will re-establish diplomatic relations."

But the disadvantage with specific conditions is that it ties your hands. Circumstances can change and the initial conditions can be overtaken by events. There can also be disagreements over whether the conditions have been met. It can therefore sometimes be prudent to craft more vague and less committal messages setting out the conditionality. For example, "if you agree to a ceasefire, we can consider steps that could lead to a normalisation of relations." This could encompass re-establishing diplomatic relations – or not, as the case may be.

Another way to set out less specific messages is to use implications or associations. For example, "a cessation of hostilities would be a step in the right direction. We look forward to conducive conditions that would allow us to re-establish diplomatic relations."

Although messages setting out broad or implicit conditionality have the advantage of leaving margin for manoeuvre, the impact can be lost on the interlocutor if they do not immediately see the advantages of meeting the conditions. It is not unwise to come up with a persuasive responsive point in case your interlocutor tries to pin you down by asking what the specific conditions are.

A device sometimes used in messaging is to present a conditionality as a factual assessment or prediction. For instance, instead of saying "we will downgrade our relations with you if you continue to violate human rights," you make the factual statement that "our relations will be damaged if you continue violating human rights." The latter is a factual statement that masks a condition. It also creates some distance between you as conveyor of the message and the decision to downgrade relations.

WRITING TALKING POINTS

Talking points contain the main messages to be conveyed in the political dialogue. They can consist of just a few key words to remind the principal what the topics are. Or the talking points can be part of an extensive briefing with detailed background and elaborate instructions for how to handle the meeting. How talking points are used depends largely on the preference of the principal. Some principals read every single word in their talking points while others use them more as inspiration or a mnemonic aide.

Different organisations have different protocols for talking points, and principals will have their particular preferences on how their talking points should be written. The following sets out a basic model of what they can look like:

SCENE SETTER

The scene setter is a short description, often not more than a paragraph, of the political context in which the encounter is taking place. The principal should gain an immediate sense of what can be expected from the meeting by reading the scene setter. Critical problems or issues should be highlighted. A flavour of the meeting should be conveyed in the scene setter; this helps the principal decide on the right posture.

OBJECTIVES

This section should set out the specific objectives of the meeting in two to three sentences. These could be to secure agreement from the other side on a particular issue or a commitment that they will do something. The objectives are the "deliverables" that should come out of the discussion. The number of objectives should be limited, in particular for high-level meetings. By aiming for too much, you run the risk of achieving nothing and diluting the meeting. Usually, three or four objectives suffice.

When determining the objectives it is often good form to be as concrete and specific as possible. There is little added value in setting the objective of "convey our position on the conflict", or "express need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict". But sometimes, of course, the purpose does not add up to much more than this.

TALKING POINTS

This is the main section. It is where the key messages and arguments are set out. Talking points tend to be organised by issues and set out as bullet points with each expressing one idea. Brevity and succinctness are key characteristics of good talking points.

Talking points often do not have to be written in complete sentences. Since they will be spoken, they can be written in telegraphic style or truncated form. The best way of drafting the talking points depends largely on who will be using them. Some principals need everything written out in full while others only need pointers. It is in either case best to write them in spoken language and in the first person since they are meant to be read aloud by the principal. Sentences and phrases should be kept short and simple.

Talking points should seek to persuade. The most basic structure is to make a claim and then back it up with proof. The claim can be a political statement making a value judgement or expressing

some sort of exhortatory language. The proof can, for example, be a description of the situation, a reference to a statistic, or an invocation to a principle. For example:

› *We are concerned about the fighting in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States. There is a risk that the violence will spread, causing instability in the region.*

› *More than half a million people have so far been affected by the fighting; more will be displaced if the fighting continues.*

› *It is essential that the sides agree to a ceasefire and return to the negotiation table.*

Talking points should try to balance the normative and descriptive. Having too much of one or the other can make them hollow or inane.

The level of detail of the talking points should be tailored to the principal's and interlocutor's level of knowledge of the substance. A principal may be reluctant to make points that he or she does not understand or can back up in case of a follow-up question.

DEFENSIVE POINTS

It can sometimes be useful to include defensive or responsive points. These are points that you do not have an interest in raising but can be used in response to issues raised by the other side. Defensive points can also include counter-arguments to arguments the other side is likely to make.

BACKGROUND

The background section should give a detailed update on the situation and on the main issues to allow the principal to quickly get up to speed. It is often useful to organise the background material to follow the issues and key messages for the meeting. Indicating clearly where the background section begins can save the principal from being added to the surprisingly long list of principals who

have read out confidential background material in the meeting or press conference.

It is also useful in the background section to include details of the latest encounter with the interlocutor, including any conclusions from that meeting. This gives the principal a useful point of reference. The background section can also include information on the counterpart such as his or her CV. This is especially useful if the counterpart is not known.

5 PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Public diplomacy can be a powerful tool in dealing with crises. It can be used to change perceptions and influence attitudes and behaviour. Effective public diplomacy can be an integral component of effective peacemaking.

While political dialogue has traditionally been carried out behind closed doors, the nature of modern conflicts and crises often makes it essential to also reach out directly to the public. Deft public diplomacy can be used to encourage certain actions, inspire confidence, and calm a situation. This can reinforce political dialogue and further the mission's political strategy.

Public diplomacy should also be a central part of the policy-making process. No matter how good a policy may be, it risks failing if not presented to the public in the right way. This means building a communication strategy around the policy: crafting the right messages and narrative, using the most effective means of communication, and choosing the most appropriate timing.

It is through public diplomacy that the mission can show presence and engagement. This can build political capital and create space for manoeuvre. In the end, taking a strategic approach to public diplomacy can greatly enhance the mission's impact.

But active public diplomacy can be a risky and difficult endeavour. It entails exposure and visibility that can alienate parties to the conflict and other stakeholders. Reaching out to a foreign population can also be difficult. Differences in language, values, and culture can be barriers to effective and credible communication. Moreover, the organisation you represent may not be seen in a favourable light. Convincing and persuading a sceptical or even hostile audience of your cause is no easy task.

Despite these difficulties, today there is little choice but to engage in public diplomacy. The news cycle and social media make it impossible to ignore the media. Demands on international

organisations to be transparent and accountable also necessitate active outreach. Public diplomacy is often both the right and prudent thing to do.

The principal is usually a high-value asset in public diplomacy. The principal may be considered by the media to be a high-level political figure who generates news. It is important to use the principal's presence in the public space in a strategic manner since a speech or interview by the principal can have a real impact on the ground. But overexposing the principal can also lessen his or her overall authority and undermine the impact of the message.

In peacekeeping operations and large political missions, there will usually be a spokesperson who is responsible for relations with the media. In small missions, however, the task of press and public affairs can fall to the political adviser. Even if there is a press and public information section, the political adviser should be involved in developing the mission's media strategy and tactics, as well as crafting public messages because of the political significance of public communication.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY DURING CRISES

In moments of crisis, few instruments are as critical as public diplomacy. In a crisis, people tend to look to existing authorities, often including the international community, for reassurance. Reassurance comes from a feeling that the authorities are taking appropriate action to deal with the crisis. While public diplomacy is no substitute for taking action, public diplomacy can be used to communicate what is being done.

Speed is vital in crises. There will be enormous hunger for information. This vacuum should be filled as soon as possible in order to convey a sense that you are in control of the situation. If nothing is said, the vacuum is likely to be filled by others who will take the initiative and set the news agenda. This can frame initial

perceptions and set the tone for the ensuing media coverage. Social media have also shortened the timelines. Without timely public diplomacy, you risk haemorrhaging political capital, credibility, and legitimacy.

Getting the public diplomacy right is crucial if the mission is in some way implicated in the crisis. An all too common situation is one in which a crisis involves the mission in a negative way, for instance peacekeepers accidently killing civilians. Local politicians quickly criticise the mission, public anger grows, and pressure mounts on the mission to react publicly. But there is uncertainty in the mission about what has actually happened, who is responsible, and what course of action should be taken. In such circumstances, the best option can be to fill the vacuum with a placeholder statement expressing condolences or regret until there is more information on which to base a decision on how to proceed. Getting out the right messages in such circumstances can be extremely difficult.

There are also situations when it can be wisest to say nothing. If the media is generally hostile, they are likely to report any message in a negative way. A hasty reaction risks feeding into the media's desire for blood and create even more pressure on the mission. In such cases, reacting to the crisis only gives the media a chance to drive the agenda. Silence can be a way to kill the news story – although this comes at risk of appearing tone-deaf and losing credibility.

RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

The media are indispensable partners in public diplomacy. It is they who carry your message to the world – or distort it. Although social media are enabling greater direct communication with the outside world, the news media still act as the main filter between you and the general public. In the end, what the media report is the public message irrespective of what your intended message

was. Maintaining a solid understanding of how the media work and good relations with them is fundamental to successful public diplomacy.

This relationship is a two-way street. The media want news, quotes, and background information from you. In a benign media environment, this can be a symbiotic and fruitful relationship for both sides. If the media are negatively inclined, however, it can be a difficult and fraught relationship in which the media are out to find new ways of criticising the mission and impervious to any attempts to convey messages through them. In such circumstances, using the media to get out the message can be a delicate task.

In a benign environment, it is easier to build up a network of trusted journalists and editors. They are often grateful for the contact and appreciate background briefings and your organisation's take on events. Explaining why a particular statement is relevant and what you would like to achieve with it can help them find a news angle and increases your chances of the media reporting your messages accurately.

There are a number of ways of getting the message out through the media: interviews, background briefings, press conferences, official statements, press releases, opinion articles and news articles. Social media, such as Twitter, blogs, and YouTube, are increasingly being used by traditional media as sources. In determining what form is most effective for a particular objective, you should decide whether to use local media, international media or both. They tend to differ in terms of professionalism, interest, and audience.

Understanding the local media environment and the media habits of the population is essential when determining what channels to use. In many countries, television is by far the most dominant medium for news. In poorer countries, however, radio is often more prevalent. In countries with low newspaper readership and poor Internet penetration, it can be most effective to focus on public events such as town-hall meetings, conferences and seminars, civil society events, and speeches.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews are opportunities to communicate key messages. International organisations tend to have policies on who is authorised to speak to the media. It may be the case that only the principal is authorised to speak on the record. But even if so, you may be involved in giving background briefings to journalists or preparing the principal for interviews.

The first step is to determine what you would like to achieve with the interview. The goal may be to put pressure on the parties before a negotiation round; the message could, for example, be that the international community expects the parties to make every effort to reach a negotiated settlement. Or the goal may be to reassure the public by stating that the mission is taking a particular action.

When crafting the message, you should consider who the target audience is and tailor the messages accordingly. It is essential, however, to keep in mind that, beyond the target audience, other parties to the conflict and international actors are also likely to receive the message. Always consider how the message will be received not only by the intended audience but by all parties and stakeholders.

Before the interview, it is useful to try to find out what story the journalist wants to do. Some journalists are willing to tell you what topics will be raised in the interview and even give you the questions in advance.

Also try to find out what sort of stories has the journalist done in the past. Is the media outlet benign or hostile to the mission? What is the journalist's reputation and background? Sometimes, it is also possible to see and approve the transcript of the interview or article before it is published.

Before discussing anything of substance with a journalist, it is crucial to agree on the ground rules and, in particular, the terms of attribution. If nothing has been agreed explicitly, the journalist can assume that everything said is on the record and can be attributed.

Anonymity should never be taken for granted. Rather the opposite is true since in journalism an identified source is given more credibility than an anonymous one.

Journalists have no legal obligation to respect an agreement on attribution. Any agreement is a gentleman's agreement that ultimately relies on the good will and honesty of the journalist. If the journalist attributes a quotation that was given off the record, he or she will probably realise that a bridge has been burnt, but you have no scope for legal redress. And even a complaint to the editor is often futile since the quotation will have already been published. While serious media outlets tend to be conscientious and professional about respecting agreements on attribution, it is ultimately up to the individual journalist to respect the agreement.

During the interview, give honest, precise, and concise answers. But it is possible to remain honest while not disclosing all information, for example confidential or sensitive information. The golden rule is to stay on message and avoid giving personal opinions. Using simple words and short sentences helps the journalist and, by extension, the audience.

There is no obligation to answer the questions posed by the journalist. Instead of answering all questions, it is often useful to take the questions as cues to convey your messages. This is a way to lead the interview rather than letting the journalist lead it. A good journalist, however, will realise that you have not answered the questions and repeat them. This can be countered by repeating the messages, rephrased if necessary. Responding "no comment" to a question is seldom a good idea since you come across as having something to hide.

Repeating the key messages increases the chances that they will make it into the article or news report. You can help the journalist by formulating the key messages in a way that you know the journalist will find quotable. If the interview is for television, formulating the messages as sound bites helps the journalist and editors use the interview for their story. The chapter on writing speeches sets out some basic principles for public messaging.

If you go beyond the key messages, try to give factual answers rather than personal opinions. If journalists press you to talk about issues that fall outside the mandate or about other actors, it is wise to steer back to the key messages. It is also best to avoid talking about internal matters such as differences of opinion within the institution or among member states.

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

Official statements and declarations are a staple of modern diplomacy. States and international organisations engage in declaratory diplomacy to convey their official positions as well as to show presence and engagement. Declaratory diplomacy is also a means to apply political pressure intended to influence behaviour.

Official statements often carry more weight than other types of public communication, such as interviews, since statements are crafted specifically to reflect policy. These statements are the closest things to an official public diplomatic discourse on the events of the day and, over time, become the historical record of the organisation's positions and policies.

The actual impact of official statements is largely a function of their media exposure. The more media attention a statement receives, the more amplified the message will be. But even if it is not reported by the media, the statement is still a public expression of policy. The parties to the conflict are likely to scrutinise statements about themselves and the conflict to detect shifts in support or expressions of disapproval, a hardening or softening of positions, coded language, and so on.

There is often a herd tendency at play in declaratory diplomacy; if one international actor issues a statement, others will follow. No one wants to be seen as not being engaged. The way to be a relevant actor in this discourse is to show that you are active, have a voice, and a position. Silence is often taken to mean that you do

not consider the issue important enough to comment upon – or that you are not engaged. Being the first to issue a statement can show leadership but is also risky since others who follow may take a different line.

Statements by international organisations tend to be either from the institution or from the member states. Statements from the institution as a rule remain within the parameters of what member states have agreed is the policy line. In certain cases, the institution may want to show leadership and be more forward-leaning than the position agreed by member states. This can happen when member states are split or the situation is particularly grave.

Statements negotiated by the member states, such as the Presidential Statements of the UN Security Council or EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Declarations, reflect the consensus position of the member states. These types of statements indicate where the states stand as a collective on particular issues of policy. The statements may reflect the lowest common denominator or may be more forward-leaning, in particular if they cover a range of issues and are the result of trade-offs between member states when negotiating the text. The process of negotiating statements can shape new policy in this way.

A key consideration when issuing a statement is to determine the right level. Who should the statement be attributed to? This can be the head of the organisation such as the UN Secretary-General or EU High Representative or it can be their spokesperson. It can also be some other representative such as the local EU ambassador. The subject matter and its importance should determine the most suitable level.

A frequent dilemma when deciding whether to resort to declaratory diplomacy and issue a statement, in particular a critical one, is whether the outcome will be counter-productive. Emphasising an issue publicly can put pressure on a party but may also make it politically difficult for the party to take the desired action since the party will look like it is taking the action under pressure.

This dilemma has particular relevance for statements criticising authoritarian governments over individual human rights cases. A critical statement can highlight the particular case but also lead the authorities to become even more entrenched and unwilling to act since acting would mean that they would be perceived as acting under international pressure.

In such cases, it can sometimes be more effective to use silent diplomacy with the authorities rather than declaratory diplomacy. The downside of silent diplomacy is that it creates the impression that nothing is being done. Sometimes it is necessary to make the point publicly in order to go on the record and to make it harder for the regime to continue violating the human rights of the individual in question.

A statement's strength is determined by the language used but also to whom the statement is attributed and how often the statement is repeated. Statements that are actually pronounced by someone rather than merely issued in writing can often have a greater impact since they provide a sound bite for television, radio, or YouTube. Statements from heads of institutions, such as the UN Secretary-General or the EU High Representative, are attributed to the head of the organisation although most of the time the statement never actually leaves their lips.

RELEVANCE

The statement should fit into the larger political context and relate to ongoing processes. This requires knowing the latest developments and, often, having a sense of where pressure needs to be exerted. Coordinating with likeminded states and organisations can help you come up with targeted and relevant language. Knowing the context also makes it easier to be concrete and specific.

TIMELINESS

A statement should be timed to have the greatest impact. A statement that is a reaction to an event should be issued as soon as possible since the news media often only quote the first couple of reactions from international actors. Sometimes, of course, the timing of statements is driven by bureaucratic processes such as the conclusions from the monthly meetings of the EU Foreign Affairs Council. At other times, the statement may be disconnected from an event; in such cases it can be useful to use a news peg to issue the statement in order to maximise the impact.

BALANCE

Given the divisive nature of conflicts, statements taken to be positive by one party are often interpreted as negative by the other. It can be difficult to ensure that messages intended for one audience do not alienate another. The parties to the conflict will scrutinise your every statement for signs of bias or imbalance. Moreover, interested states are also likely to be following your public pronouncements. In conflicts where the international community is divided, public diplomacy becomes a difficult and sensitive endeavour.

CONSISTENCY

Consistency over time and space demonstrates coherence and intentionality. Similar events require similar reactions. Reactions to similar events in different countries and conflicts should largely be of the same calibre. This is also a question of credibility since an inconsistent approach can easily lead to accusations of double standards. Parties to the conflict will closely follow statements on the conflict and often complain when they see indications of double standards or bias towards one side or the other. An inconsistent approach to one conflict can also raise questions about shifts in policy.

PROPORTIONALITY

The strength of the statement – essentially the forcefulness of the language – should be proportionate to the event. While these are ultimately political decisions guided by how serious the issue is and the organisation's policy, proportionality demonstrates consistency and contributes to your credibility. There is often an initial push to make strong statements, in particular after some shocking incident. Falling for this temptation, however, can easily lead to word inflation, which over time lessens the impact of the statements.

POLITICAL BACKING

The line taken in the statement should reflect set policy or have political backing from key member states. Sticking to "agreed language" helps ensure political support. If member states are divided, it can be tricky to find sufficiently strong language to make the statement meaningful. At times, it will be up to the head of the institution to demonstrate leadership and assert a position even if this risks alienating some member states.

WRITING A STATEMENT

Official statements tend to be formulaic in language and structure. The structure of a basic statement in a conflict environment is usually the following: expression of concern, condemnation of a party, reference to responsibility of that party to do the right thing, call on the parties to do something else, and, finally, reaffirmation of the organisation's commitment to some principle or to follow the situation closely.

When crafting a basic statement, you should first consider the statement's purpose. The purpose will point to what the statement's key message should be: Is it to encourage actors to take certain steps? Is it to express some sort of political judgement about an event? Is it to reaffirm a policy or commitment? Often it is a combination of objectives. The statement's operative language but also its overall impression, in particular the tonality, should support the objectives.

Who is the target of the statement? It could be a general expression of alarm over military clashes. Or it could be a balanced call for all parties in a war to show restraint and refrain from bellicose rhetoric. Usually, however, statements are targeted at one party who is considered responsible for some negative action. It is necessary to decide how far to go in identifying the party and whether to name explicitly leaders or internal entities, such as a country's armed forces, in the statement. This requires confirmed information about what has happened and a clear picture of responsibility, in particular if the statement is highly critical.

Next comes the question of how serious the matter is and how strong a posture the organisation should adopt. It may be a reaction to an attack that has killed scores of civilians in a particularly brutal way. Or it may be about a border incident that has left a handful of soldiers injured. The intensity of the statement should, as a rule, be consistent with policy and past practice in the particular conflict and in other conflicts, unless there is a compelling reason to depart from previous practice.

The key message should normally be stated clearly in the statement's first sentence. Begin with naming the entity making the statement and then state the operative phrase with qualifier, if necessary. Take, for example, the statement by the EU High Representative's spokesperson on the clashes between Sudan and South Sudan, issued on 28 March 2012:

> *The High Representative is gravely concerned about the military clashes in the border region between Sudan and South Sudan. Recent cross-border attacks and continued aerial bombing represent a dangerous escalation of an already tense situation. Further cross-border military activity could result in a wider military confrontation.*
>
> *The High Representative calls on both Sudan and South Sudan to exercise maximum restraint, cease military operations in the border area and respect the commitments they made in their 10 February Memorandum of Understanding on Non-Aggression and Cooperation.*
>
> *The High Representative urges both parties to resume negotiations on outstanding post-secession issues, proceed with the planned Summit between the Presidents of Sudan and South Sudan and make use of the forthcoming meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa to defuse tensions.*
>
> *The EU reiterates its strong commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sudan and South Sudan and to the principle of two viable states.*

It is useful to think in terms of newspaper headlines when crafting the first sentence. What would you like to see as the headline based on the statement? A Reuters story on the statement had the following headline: "EU calls for end to Sudan, South Sudan clashes".

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

Takes note of: This phrase acknowledges a fact without expressing an opinion or making a value judgement. Such neutral language is seldom used since the point of statements is nearly always to express a value judgement or make a political point. *"Take note with satisfaction"* or *"take note with regret"* express value judgements but in weak terms.

Congratulates/welcomes/commends: These positive judgements recognise an actor for a particular deed and, usually, urges it to go further in the right direction. *"To be encouraged"* is a similar form.

EXHORTATION

Appeals to/calls upon/calls for/urge: These exhortations range in strength from weak to strong. *"Appeals to"* is a weak form of exhortation while *"urges"* is stronger, connoting a sense of urgency. When exhorting action, it can also be effective to recall responsibilities or commitments of the parties as a way to put pressure on them. To *"invite"* someone to do something is a very weak exhortation.

CONCERN

Is concerned: Expressions of concern are common in statements. They often express distress over some event or development such as the outbreak of hostilities or reports of human rights violations. The purpose is to send the message that the institution is aware of what is going on and is worried about it.

An expression of concern is often an indication that stronger statements or actions may follow if the situation deteriorates. There are various qualifiers to statements expressing concern, such as "deeply", "seriously", or "gravely" concerned. *"Notes with concern"* is a weaker variation. **Being alarmed** is a useful synonym.

CENSURE

Regrets: Regret is often expressed over the death of someone or over some action. In the latter case, the implicit message is that the action should be undone or steps should be taken to rectify the damage. This is a fairly weak phrase.

Deplores: This phrase is used to express strong disapproval of an act or actor. It is common to use it in the sense of "deplore the loss of lives". The phrase can be reinforced with "strongly". The loss of life is often accompanied by expressions of sympathy or condolences.

Condemns: Condemnations express a very strong form of disapproval of an act or actor. The word can be strengthened by using "strongly" or "in the strongest possible terms". Reinforcing variations include being *"appalled"*, *"shocked"*, and *"outraged"*. These are extremely strong sentiments that should be used sparingly and only under exceptional circumstances.

COMMITMENTS

Affirms/reiterates: These are used to confirm your commitment to a position, principle, or some other norm.

After the initial key message come the secondary messages, explanations, background, and qualifications. The statement's purpose should determine to what extent secondary messages are necessary. It may be that the statement has a specific objective, requiring a succinct and pointed message. Or the purpose may be to convey a comprehensive set of messages in an omnibus statement.

In general, a statement should follow a pyramid structure with the most important messages coming at the top. Each of the following paragraphs should cover one discrete secondary message. There should not be too many messages in one statement, however. Statements that try to say too much often lose their impact since the core message is lost in the detail. These statements are known as "Christmas Tree" statements since everyone wants to hang their favourite ornaments on them.

In statements censuring actors or calling on them to take certain steps, recalling general international principles and reminding the actors of their international obligations can be a powerful device. Such an obligation can, for instance, be the obligation under the UN Charter to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states.

There may be agreed language that is repeated in all statements on a particular conflict. For example, EU statements on the crisis in Georgia always tend to end with the EU reaffirming its commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity. Using agreed language demonstrates consistency and reinforces the agreed language. On contentious issues or in cases when member states are divided, sticking to agreed language can be crucial.

It is common for statements to end with a proclamation on the organisation itself, such as reaffirming the organisation's commitment to a set of principles or processes, or stating that the organisation will continue to follow the situation.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are fundamentally changing the nature of public diplomacy. International institutions and decision-makers are increasingly using a variety of Internet-based platforms such as blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to convey their messages. This is making public diplomacy a much more dynamic undertaking, reaching new audiences.

A core feature of social media is its interactive nature. What used to be a largely one-way communication has been overtaken by a complex web of interaction driven by the Internet-using public. This online dialogue is shifting a great deal of power over the agenda to people who are plugged into social media. The ability to comment on blog entries or have a conversation on Twitter enables the public to engage and feel engaged, as well as to communicate with otherwise inaccessible principals. It can also provide a gauge of public sentiment.

Users of social media tend to be young and well-educated and not always representative of the general public of many countries. Even so, as the Arab Spring demonstrated, social media can be an effective instrument to push political change. The traditional media are also increasingly reporting information spread on social media as well as trying to establish a presence in social media spheres. Today, journalists will often tweet breaking news before they file their story.

TWITTER

Twitter is a potent medium that is quickly becoming a mainstream tool of public diplomacy. Tweeting is particularly useful for immediate commentary. A car bomb goes off in Baghdad, and minutes later there are tweets condemning the attack. Decision-makers are increasingly resorting to Twitter as a first port of call to react to events before official statements have been published. A timely and well-crafted tweet can demonstrate presence and awareness. Tweeting links is also an effective a way to promote

other forms of public diplomacy, such as statements, photos, Op-Eds, and YouTube clips.

Part of Twitter's potential lies in its ability to multiply and reinforce messages. Celebrities who tweet can be enormously influential thanks to their ability to validate messages to their followers. Take for example the advocacy film on Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army produced by the KONY2012 campaign. An integral part of the campaign's strategy included trying to spark Twitter traffic from a selected group of celebrities. Days after the film had been posted on YouTube, celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Justin Bieber tweeted about the campaign. This caused the video to go viral, and within four days the film had received 50 million hits.

But Twitter is a difficult medium to master. It can be challenging to say something meaningful in 140 characters. It is often tricky to project a convincing and credible voice with these limits. But a credible voice is essential since followers follow not only because of who someone is but also because of what they tweet. So how do you tweet effectively? Here are some pointers:

› **AUTHENTIC:** The tweets should come across as genuine. Followers must feel that the tweeter is actually writing the tweets him or herself even if this is not the case. Mixing the professional and personal can contribute to authenticity.

› **INTERESTING:** There must be a point to what is being tweeted. Dull or pointless tweets can alienate followers. Wit can be effective but it is risky because it can easily fall flat.

› **RELEVANT:** Tweets should be relevant. This requires not only being aware of the latest developments in the real world but also following the conversation on Twitter and being part of that conversation.

› **REGULAR:** There has to be a regularity to the tweets. Followers lose interest if your tweets are few and far between, because this indicates that you do not care much for the medium or your followers.

Finding your voice on Twitter is key. Even though each individual tweet is telegraphically short, the corpus of tweets together project a public Twitter persona. The economical nature of Twitter lends itself to a casual and personal style. But this must also fit the tweeter's public persona since a mismatch can create a false impression. A personal approach can create interest as well as sympathy from followers. The fact that a decision-maker missed a flight or is spending a Sunday afternoon in the sun reading a newspaper can greatly contribute to humanising and create sympathy for the person.

6 WRITING SPEECHES

Making speeches is a primary way to convey messages and communicate vision in politics. It is how you can demonstrate presence and engagement. Among the tools of public diplomacy, speeches have the benefit of associating the message with the person making the speech. This is true for domestic as well as international politics.

The principal will most likely be expected to make at least two types of speeches: internal briefings to member states and political speeches to external audiences. The mandate will, as a rule, oblige the principal to report on a regular basis to the organisation's member states, for example in the UN Security Council or the EU Political and Security Committee.

Internal briefings are opportunities to inform member states about recent developments on the ground and diplomatic arena, as well as to offer assessments and policy recommendations. Member states use briefings to state their positions and to provide strategic guidance to the principal. These briefings are a way for member states to hold the principal accountable.

Political speeches differ from briefings in that their main objective is to inspire and engage. As in domestic politics, political speeches often seek to encourage some sort of action or support for a policy. In public diplomacy, making political speeches can be an effective way of reaching out directly to the public as well as associating the speaker with the message being conveyed.

Some international organisations have dedicated speechwriters, but in missions it is often the political adviser who holds the pen. In any case, it is often wise to exercise tight control over the speech writing process. A loosely controlled process of soliciting comments and input risks making the final speech a hodgepodge of messages rather than a sharp and focused piece of oratory. A well-managed speechwriting process can ensure that the final product maintains its integrity.

In its most basic form, a speech is the interplay between the speaker, subject, and audience. Of these, the audience is the most important. It is what they take away that really matters – much more than what is actually said or who says it. Making a speech is about persuading your audience of your message. In classical rhetoric, persuasion derives from the speaker's character, the speech's emotion appeal, and its logical reasoning.

When writing a speech, it is essential to consider who will be delivering it and who will be receiving it. You need to understand the particular context in which the speech will be made and what purpose the speech should serve. The type of event, whether it is open or closed to the public, is also relevant when deciding how to deal with the subject matter.

THE SPEAKER

Who is the speaker? In oratory, it is impossible to disassociate what is being said from who is saying it. The messages will be received and assessed in light of the person making the speech, in particular the speaker's credibility and authority.

The speaker's credibility is perhaps the most salient attribute since it is one of the key factors determining how persuasive the audience will find the speech. Credibility derives from aspects such as official position, reputation, and expertise. These attributes are intrinsic to the person but, to some extent, also depend on the audience's perception of the speaker. If the speaker is unknown to the audience, a common rhetorical device is for the speaker to establish his or her credibility with the audience at the outset. This can be done by referring to one's status or knowledge of the subject.

The speech's style and tone should match the speaker's authority. A mismatch can create a pathetic impression that undermines the effectiveness of the speech and the impact of the message. Someone with great authority who gives a prosaic and banal speech risks disappointing the audience while someone without much authority who gives a grandiose speech risks coming across as pretentious.

The speaker's rhetorical skills and style as an orator need to be taken into account when writing the speech. A speech should play to the speaker's strengths and compensate for weaknesses. A naturally eloquent speaker benefits from an eloquent speech while a less eloquent speaker may benefit from a more plain speech. A mismatch often rings false.

The way a speech is written – bullet points, key words and phrases, or flowing text – should also reinforce the speaker's strengths as an orator. Many find it particularly difficult to come across as engaging when reading a flowing text. In the end, a speech must be tailored to the person who will deliver it.

THE AUDIENCE

Who is in the audience? What the audience takes away from the speech is key to the whole exercise as it is the members of the audience who have to be won over by the speech. Understanding the audience allows you to craft the right messages, fine-tune arguments, polish tone and style, and determine the appropriate level of detail. It is useful to consider what will appeal to the audience at an emotional level.

The audience's attitude to the speaker is particularly important for determining the speech's posture. Is the audience friendly, antagonistic, or neutral towards the speaker? Or perhaps it is a mixed audience? Different messages and arguments are needed depending on the audience's attitude.

Understanding the audience also means having a sense of their familiarity with the subject matter. A speech for a group of academic specialists on a particular conflict will be very different from one for a general public. An audience will be quickly alienated if a speech assumes too much knowledge or it contains too much detailed background information.

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

What is the political context in which the speech is being made? What are the current issues on the agenda? How does the audience relate to these issues? The political context provides the backdrop for the speech.

What do you want the speech to achieve? The purpose of a briefing may be only to inform the audience of the latest developments. A political speech, on the other hand, may aim to garner backing for a new policy or inspire some action.

What is the speech about? The subject matter could be self-evident because of the political context, such as an assessment of the situation on the ground with policy recommendations on the way forward. Or it could be the main challenges to resolving a conflict or crisis. But deciding on the topic and how to deal with it is often both a tactical and strategic question that relates to the overall political strategy and mandate of the mission. It can be an equally delicate task to determine how to delineate the speech, in particular what topics to avoid.

TYPE OF EVENT

Is the speaking event open or closed to the public? Open events, such as seminars organised by research institutes or talks at universities, provide an opportunity to present the official line and convey messages to the general public. In open fora, it is judicious to stick to the official line and avoid talking about subjects outside the mandate, internal policy deliberations, or divisions among member states. It is often the case that media and representatives of the conflict parties are present at open events and may report on what is being said.

Diplomatic fora tend to be closed events, with some notable exceptions, such as open meetings of the UN Security Council. Statements made in the OSCE Permanent Council are sometimes

distributed in hardcopy to journalists even though the actual discussion is closed. There is a key difference between diplomatic fora of states belonging to your organisation and fora in which the states are not members of your organisation. The latter can require the same approach as for public events, depending on who these states are. In either case, you need to have a clear understanding of where the main member states stand and what their sensitivities are when crafting messages.

Briefings to the member states of your organisation should ideally be an opportunity for a frank policy discussion. Indeed, the mission's mandate may be to propose policy recommendations and coordinate member states with a view to ensuring coherence. Member states of your own organisation also have particular political sensitivities, sometimes relating to the substance but at times related to other issues. Having a good understanding of the political parameters helps you determine what the principal can say and should stay clear of.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The technical aspects of the event should not be neglected as they can affect the speech's impact. Is the principal the only speaker or one of several speakers on the same topic? If the latter, it is essential to know whom the other speakers are and have an idea of what they will talk about or at least how they will approach the topic. This will allow you to calibrate the principal's speech with the other speeches. Coordinating speeches by representatives of the same organisation helps ensure a coherent impression.

When there are several speakers, it is often worthwhile trying to obtain a good speaking slot. Usually the first or last speaker has the greatest impact on the audience. The first speaker has the opportunity to set the tone and highlight the key questions for the subsequent speakers. Setting out the themes and defining the

parameters for the discussion can frame the debate. The last speaker is in a good position to set the stage for the discussion that follows. A speaker with a middle slot runs the risk of the being drowned out by the other speakers.

There may also be an allotted length of time for the speech. If not, try to keep the speech short. Only the exceptional occasion allows for a speech longer than 15 minutes. People have limited attention spans.

Not all messages have to be conveyed in the actual speech. There may be a discussion or question-and-answer session after the speech that can be an even better opportunity to convey messages than in the speech. It is worth considering whether there are member states or, if an open event, journalists who would be willing to ask a pre-cooked question.

MESSAGING

Key messages are the essential ideas you would like to convey in the speech. They are what the audience should take away from the speech and the sound bite that the media should report. The key messages constitute the speech's backbone around which everything else is built. The chapter on political dialogue explores messaging in more detail.

When crafting key messages, the starting point should be your objectives. What do you want the recipient to think or do as a result of the message? Often the aim of the key message is to inform about policies and positions or to influence behaviour and perceptions in some way. The purpose could, for instance, be to encourage a conflict party to make a particular concession in a peace negotiation or a warring faction to respect the laws of war. Or it could be to convince member states to adopt a particular policy.

Once the purpose has been established, the next question is how to phrase the key messages so that they will achieve the objectives.

SIMPLICITY AND BREVITY

A short, simple message is easier to understand and register than a complicated one. Diplomatic nuances and subtleties are often not compatible with the need for simplicity. Simple, brief messages are also more likely to be reported accurately by journalists, who need to simplify complicated ideas.

CREDIBILITY

Credibility derives from the message itself and the person giving it. The audience will judge the message largely based on their perception of the person giving it. Who does he or she represent? What is his or her track record? The message must correspond to reality – or in any case to what the recipient perceives to be reality. If not, the credibility of the message and the messenger are quickly put into question. Honesty and balance are crucial for effective messaging.

VISUALISATION

Words that create a visual image make a stronger impression than conceptual and abstract language. Concrete images are easier to relate to and inherently more engaging. Everyone can visualise a bird in a tree but not notions such as justice or fairness. Visualisation is difficult in diplomacy given the reliance on ideas and bureaucratic jargon.

HUMANISE

Messages should touch the audience on a human level and evoke basic human emotions. Telling stories about individuals and their lives can do this. Such stories could serve as examples

to illustrate the message. For instance, a story of a displaced woman who has returned to her destroyed home and fought to rebuild her life despite hopeless conditions can convey messages about the challenges that returning refugees face and what needs to be done about them.

BE ASPIRATIONAL

The message, especially in a political speech, should provide a vision. The audience needs to be able to believe in its forward-looking, inspirational direction. The slogans used in Barack Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 – "Change we can believe in" and "Yes we can" – are examples of powerful aspirational messaging.

REPETITION

Repeating the same message reinforces it. Repetition signals the message's importance and strengthens the association be-tween the person giving the message and the message itself. Repetition can also have a multiplier effect if others repeat the same message.

CONTEXTUALISATION AND RELEVANCE

The audience should feel that the message is directly relevant for their lives. If not, they will not see a reason to listen. The message also needs to be framed in a context that provides a larger meaning.

This requires a solid understanding of the audience and, in particular, how they will react to the message. Some audiences are receptive to forceful, clear language that may alienate other audiences. The audience's reaction is partly determined by the relationship between the speaker and the audience. Messages between friends will be different from messages between adversaries.

The key messages should be limited in number or the impact risks being lost. Presenting the message early on in the speech and repeating it several times throughout the speech helps the listeners understand what the speech is about.

When developing public messages it is essential to keep in mind that the media will be the gatekeeper between you and the public, determining which messages come through, distorting or misrepresenting them, and deciding what the angle should be.

PARTS OF A SPEECH

Each speech should be tailored to its particular occasion. The subject matter, language, and level of detail must suit the circumstances, audience, and speaker. But many speeches tend to follow a similar structure. What follows are suggestions for how to deal with the main parts of a speech: introduction, main body, and conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The first few lines are vitally important, as they will largely determine whether the audience listens to the rest of the speech with a positive and open attitude. This is not only a question of which words are uttered but also of conveying the right sort of energy. Using humour or telling an anecdote are classic ways of establishing rapport with the audience at the outset.

The introduction is also what the audience tends to remember from the speech, so it is critical to capture the audience's attention from the start and then convey the core message quickly. An introduction should typically do the following:

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUDIENCE AND THANK THE ORGANISERS.** This shows respect for the audience and organisers as well as making an immediate connection between the speaker and the audience. Each person in the room should feel that the speaker is speaking directly to him or her.

2. **MENTION THE DATE OF PREVIOUS APPEARANCE.** If the speech is a regular briefing, mentioning the date of the most recent presentation provides a temporal frame, highlights continuity, and indicates continued commitment to the forum. It also places the speech in a particular context.

3. **UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EVENT.** Explain briefly why the event is important. This shows respect for the forum and reassures the audience that being there to listen to the speaker is worth the effort.

4. **GIVE CONTEXT.** Set the scene by briefly explaining the context. The occasion for the speech may be an update on a crisis or a briefing before an important event. But the significance of the context should also not be exaggerated. References to "historic moments" are often incorrect.

5. **STATE KEY MESSAGE.** State the overall key message clearly in the introduction. This helps the audience follow the rest of the speech. Repeating the key message reinforces its importance. It is often effective to formulate the main message as a catchphrase.

It can be effective to state clearly in the introduction what the rest of the speech will say. This prepares the audience for what will follow, helping them understand what they should be listening for.

MAIN BODY

The main body of the speech sets out the primary substance and the arguments, develops the key messages, and explains the positions. It is where the logical proof and emotional appeal is elaborated.

There are many ways of structuring the main body. But regardless of structure, the main body should have a logical flow, with a natural progression in the arguments.

The most appropriate structure is often the simplest one. When writing the speech, breaking it down into smaller parts can make the writing process easier. Often the purpose of the speech and the key messages will determine what structure to use. Here are some typical ways to structure the main body:

› **PROBLEM-SOLUTION.** The first part identifies and explains the problem. This is followed by a second part that proposes a solution. For instance, the first part could deal with renewed fighting between two parties and the second part elaborate on what can be done to stop the fighting. The advantage of this type of speech is its clear and simple structure as well as its suitability for conflict-related subject matters since they tend to be characterised by problems.

› **CHRONOLOGICAL STRUCTURE.** This structure contains three temporal parts: past, present, and future. The first part describes what has happened, for instance an account of the most recent crises. The speech then goes on to describe the current situation. The third part considers what will happen next and may recommend what should be done about it. This is a useful structure for briefings to member states.

› **FACT, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATION.** The first part describes the situation and sets out the facts, the second part analyses those facts, and the final part makes recommendations based on the facts and analysis. There has to be a logical flow between each section, with the facts supporting the analysis and the analysis supporting the recommendations.

› **ISSUES SPEECH.** The speech has a simple thematic structure, covering one issue at a time, such as security, the political situation, or the economy. The issues are usually dealt with in order of importance. The key messages are integrated into each section. Recommendations can be also be woven into the sections or come at the end.

It is useful to clearly divide the main body into sections and state when moving from one section to another. This not only helps the audience follow the speech but also makes it easier for you to write it. Numbering each section can also be useful since it helps the audience understand when a new topic is introduced. People have a tendency to write down points if they are numbered.

The final part of the main body may be prescriptive, in particular if the speech is a briefing to member states. It could include specific policy recommendations or set out the way forward. These prescriptions should flow logically from what has been presented in the previous sections. The mandate, political landscape, and authority of the principal will often determine how precise the policy recommendations can be.

All speeches make particular claims. These claims can be prescriptive or descriptive, such as "we need to do more to stabilise the situation in Kandahar," or "the number of refugees leaving Southern Kordofan is increasing." Claims need to be backed up with facts, logical arguments, or an emotional appeal, depending on the circumstances and audience.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is critical because it creates the final impression that the audience is left with and sets the tone for the ensuing discussion or debate. It is useful to do the following in the conclusion:

1. **REPEAT THE KEY MESSAGES.** Reiterate the messages to make sure that there is no doubt about what they are. If there are specific policy recommendations, it could also be useful to repeat them in a sentence or two.

2. **ENLARGE THE CONTEXT.** This can be done in a temporal or spatial sense. For instance, in a speech on the EU's policy in Georgia, the conclusion could touch upon the EU's policy towards its eastern neighbourhood and relations with Russia, or look ahead to where EU–Georgia relations may be in a five years. Enlarging the context is more suitable for political speeches than for internal briefings.

3. **TIE UP THE SPEECH.** Ending the speech by repeating a phrase or an idea from the introduction is a highly effective rhetorical device, especially if a concrete image or anecdote is used, as this is easy for the audience to connect to. This sends a signal to the audience that the speech is finished.

It can be helpful to read the first draft of the speech out loud to gain a sense of its flow and its length. Strong language is often amplified when spoken; hearing the speech puts you in the shoes of the audience.

When the first draft is ready, the speaker should have the opportunity to edit and refine it. This is necessary to make sure that the speaker takes ownership over the speech. This makes for a more genuine and forceful presentation; a speech that the speaker does not own risks coming across as phoney.

It can be useful to share the final draft as a courtesy, for example by giving embargoed copies to the media if it is a public event or to interested member states. Interpreters often appreciate receiving advance copies so that they can prepare.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The language and style appropriate to the speech depend on the occasion, context, audience, and speaker. A speech to a group of university students will have a very different style from a ceremonial speech at a police medal parade. But there are some general tips to keep in mind.

Use short, succinct sentences. The same goes for words – keep them simple. Even the most attentive listener will have a hard time understanding long, complicated sentences with multisyllabic words and series of dependent clauses. Nothing alienates an audience more than long words, long sentences, and long speeches.

Use lively, forceful language. Try to use concrete rather than abstract nouns as much as possible. Even briefings to member

states benefit from avoiding bureaucratic language and jargon. Descriptive language creates images in the listener's mind. This tends to be more appealing to listen to and leaves a more lasting impression than abstract language.

Strike a balance between emotive and neutral language. Speeches tend to err on the side of exaggeration since emotive words are weaker when written than when spoken. Understatements are often more powerful than exaggerations.

Humour can be effective in the right circumstances but should be used sparingly. Humour also depends on the personality of the speaker. If the speaker can be funny, it may be wisest to let him or her rely on his or her own wit rather than trying to make your speech funny.

Be conscious of value-laden language, connotations, and implications. For example, describing a situation as a "problem" can elicit a negative response because no one likes problems. Instead, diplomats often talk of "issues", which is a more neutral word. Another example is to talk of "events" to describe occurrences such as riots and violent clashes. These euphemisms are often used to avoid causing offence or making a value judgement that someone may feel compelled to react to.

In conflicts over territory and between ethnic groups, place-names can have many layers of value-laden meaning. In Kosovo, for example, many towns have names in both Serbian and Albanian. Using one or the other can be interpreted as acceptance of one side or the other having a better claim on the place. The UN has tried to avoid this by using both names for every town, for example Peja/Pec.

The most important thing to remember when writing a speech is to write the way you speak. Our spoken language is different from our written language. We speak in shorter sentences with fewer clauses. Often we use fragments and single words rather than complete sentences. A speech should be written to be spoken – not to be read.

7 NEGOTIATION

Negotiation is a core function of diplomacy. It is a primary means by which states and other international parties interact with each other, pursue their interests, and advance their positions. Simply put, to negotiate is to engage in dialogue with the aim of achieving an agreement that is acceptable to you and your interlocutor.

While negotiating is at a fundamental level about furthering your interests, it is also about maintaining relationships. This puts limits on how far we are willing go in trying to convince others of our positions and to further our agenda. This constraining factor is particularly important in harnessing power in international relations.

Negotiation has a particular salience in international organisations. In one sense international organisations are little more than structured, permanent negotiations among their member states. What used to be ad hoc interaction between states has to a large extent been replaced by multilateral institutions governed by rules and procedures within which negotiations take place, such as the UN Security Council and NATO's North Atlantic Council.

Negotiation is a broad activity. It can range from the quotidian, such as agreeing on the programme of a high-level visit with a protocol officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the elevated, such as negotiating a new international treaty on disarmament in a multilateral conference. The political adviser will invariably be engaged in negotiation in one form or another. It is not uncommon for the political adviser to support the principal as chief negotiator in negotiations.

This chapter sets out two approaches, positional and principled negotiations, then elaborates on some essential negotiation concepts. It concludes with the typical stages of a formal negotiation.

POSITIONAL AND PRINCIPLED NEGOTIATIONS

Positional negotiation is based on positions and power. You and the other side present your respective positions and make concessions until a compromise is found – or not, as the case may be. The negotiation is seen as a zero-sum game where gain for the other side entails a loss for you and vice versa. As the bargaining goes on, positions tend to become more entrenched and closely associated with the egos of the negotiators. Relationships are of little importance.

In contrast, principled negotiation, developed by the Harvard Negotiation Project, is based on interests and objective criteria rather than positions and power. It uses a rules-based methodology and emphasises the importance of maintaining relationships. A principled negotiation focuses on coming up with options for mutual gain in order to secure a win-win result. The negotiation is seen as a joint endeavour to create common value. Focus is on the interests of the sides rather than their positions. In a principled negotiation, you and the other side see both an interest in the substance of what is being negotiated and in your continued relationship.

The people in the negotiation should be kept separate from the problem since relationships and personalities tend to become entangled with the issues being negotiated. While there may be disagreements over the substance, this should not affect how you relate to the individuals with whom you are negotiating. The negotiation is seen as a joint endeavour to find a fair agreement advantageous to all sides.

Objective criteria are central to a principled negotiation. An agreement based on independent principles rather than the result of a contest will be more fair. Each issue is handled as a joint search for objective criteria.

The principled approach to negotiation is appealing but, as it is built around maintaining relationships, it has limited usefulness

if the other side is not interested in a continued relationship with you. There may also be instances when win-win outcomes are simply not possible. In such cases, it is difficult to avoid positional bargaining even though this might not result in the best outcome for you and the other side.

OBJECTIVES

Before entering any negotiation, you have to determine what your objectives are. This holds true for all negotiations, from haggling over the price of a carpet in a souk to arguing over the operative language of a Security Council resolution. Knowing what you want to achieve allows you not only to develop a negotiation strategy and decide what tactics to use but also to carry out the negotiation and know when to stop negotiating.

The objectives can be determined by asking what your underlying interests are. These can relate to basic needs and concerns or be more tactical in nature. Or it may be the case that the objectives are already given as part of the negotiation mandate. For instance, when the EEAS negotiates partnership agreements with third countries, the EU member states first agree on the overall objectives for the negotiation.

Some objectives will be more important than others, and some will be more urgent than others. It can be useful to divide them into short-term and long-term objectives. The short-term objectives could be limited to a particular negotiation round or a series of rounds. Long-term objectives may pertain to the entire negotiation or even objectives to be achieved beyond the negotiations.

For instance, in a humanitarian negotiation, your long-term objective could be the safe return of all refugees to their homes. The short-term objective could be to secure a commitment from the other side to the principle of the right of return.

Ranking objectives in order of importance provides a sense of what to prioritise during the negotiation. A clear ordering also

makes it easier to take decisions when one objective has to be sacrificed for another in a compromise.

Your objectives may go beyond the issues on the table in the negotiation. The objectives could be, for example, maintaining good relations with your counterpart or fuelling the public perception of you as the more reasonable party and having the moral high ground. Sometimes, the public perception of your engagement in the negotiation can be more important than reaching an agreement.

In addition to defining your objectives, it can be helpful to define what success means in the negotiation. This is not necessarily the same as achieving the objectives. It may be unlikely that all the objectives will be achieved; the other party is likely to have incompatible objectives. You may have to sacrifice some of your objectives in order to reach a compromise with the other side.

The definition of success can be elaborated by coming up with best-case and worst-case scenarios and determining at what point between these extremes success has been achieved. If all your objectives are achieved, they may have been too modest. Having a clear sense of what success means also provides a benchmark for determining progress during the negotiation.

It is useful to revisit your objectives regularly during the negotiation to assess whether they are still valid and realistic. A shifting political landscape or gains in certain areas may require you to revise your objectives, but you should not lose sight of your core interests.

RED LINES

"Red lines" are the issues on which you cannot compromise. While some objectives can be traded as part of a bargain or compromise, red lines cannot be crossed. Because they pertain to your fundamental interests and values, they are more important than any benefit that an agreement could bring. Identifying your red lines prevents you from making unacceptable concessions.

But it also makes an agreed outcome less likely since they prevent flexibility and inhibit creative thinking.

Red lines are often found in separatist conflicts. Separatists will typically never accept anything less than independence while the metropolitan state will never accept relinquishing sovereignty over the territory. In such cases, red lines tend to be mutually exclusive and stand in direct contradiction with each other. This zero-sum game limits the possibility for compromise and creative options that are mutually beneficial.

Sometimes the prospect of a red line being breached can be reason enough to refuse to negotiate. If you believe that by negotiating, you risk having to pay some unacceptable price, it may be better to refuse or agree to negotiate only under certain conditions.

BEST ALTERNATIVE TO A NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT

The best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) is the situation you are left with if the negotiation does not result in an agreement. The BATNA determines the relative strength of your negotiation position and is the benchmark against which you should measure any proposal made by the other side. How does it compare to what you will have if you reject the offer? Which is more attractive?

Take the following example. You have been offered a new job and are negotiating your salary. The BATNA in this case is your current job. This is the standard against which you should measure the job offer. If you are unemployed, out of money, and desperately need work, your BATNA is a weak one. If you have a decent job and make good money, you have a strong BATNA.

The BATNA determines the strength of your position. A weak BATNA means a weak negotiation position. A strong BATNA means a strong position and the possibility to be tough in negotiating

since you have little to lose if there is no agreement. You keep your current position and salary if you turn down the offer or the potential employer cannot meet your demand. Indeed, if you consider your BATNA to be very strong you may have no interest in going into a negotiation to begin with. A weak BATNA on the other hand means you have much to lose and cannot afford to be too tough.

Your BATNA is independent of the strength of the other side's position but rather depends on how attractive your various options are. In a negotiation, it is not the party with the most divisions that is the strongest but rather the one who has the most attractive alternative if there is no agreement.

In determining your BATNA, you should be forward-looking and consider your best alternative when the negotiation is anticipated to end. This also requires remaining open to changing circumstances. Your BATNA could improve over time, for example, you may be expecting your salary to rise at some point. Or your BATNA may weaken, for example if your contract is time-limited and will end at a certain point.

Unforeseen events can change the BATNA. A dramatic example of this occurred in December 2004, when the tsunami in the Indian Ocean had a devastating effect on living conditions in Aceh, substantially worsening the separatist movement's BATNA and pushing it towards a negotiated settlement.

The BATNA should take into account the fact that failure can be costly, particularly if you are blamed. Active public diplomacy can offset this. You should always keep in mind the evolving narrative of who is seen as more constructive and reasonable in the negotiations. If the negotiations collapse, you want to make sure the other side is blamed for causing the breakdown.

A way to improve your hand is to improve your BATNA outside the negotiations. This can be done by increasing the number of options available to you or increasing the attractiveness of the options. For example, by continuing to build settlements in

the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel strengthens its BATNA vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

It may serve your interests to communicate your BATNA, particularly if it is strong, as this could influence the behaviour of the other party in your favour. The other side is likely to be assessing how you value your options, including the option of leaving the negotiations for your BATNA. This assessment plays into the other side's calculation of how likely you would be to accept their offer.

Take the example above concerning a job offer. If you already have a good job and salary, indicating that you have a strong BATNA lets your potential employer know that they have to give you an offer that is more attractive if you are to seriously consider it.

If you have a weak BATNA, you are probably better off not revealing this since this information strengthens the hand of the other side. If your potential employer finds out you are unemployed, you may be offered a low salary on the assumption that you would be satisfied with this since your alternative is no salary. That is why projecting confidence can be tactically useful in negotiations. It signals a strong BATNA to the other side.

It is also necessary to understand the other side's BATNA. If the potential employer has other good candidates in mind, they may have a strong BATNA and you could lose if you take too tough a stance.

NEGOTIATION PROCESS

A formal negotiation between two parties can be divided into typical phases. These phases are not perfect categories. In practice, they can blend into each other or run in parallel. The section draws on both the positional and principled approach to negotiations.

A political adviser's function in such negotiations is often to support the principal or be part of the negotiation team. This support can, for instance, consist of drafting the negotiation strategy,

advising on tactics, or providing secretariat functions during the actual negotiations. It can also entail leading part of a negotiation, such as the pre-negotiations or a sector in a complex negotiation.

PREPARATIONS

During the preparatory phase – perhaps the most important part of the negotiations – the strategy and approach are determined. Decisions taken during the preparations can be decisive for the negotiation's outcome. A rule of thumb is to spend the same amount of time on preparations as you expect to spend in the actual negotiation.

If the negotiations are taking place between teams, the chief negotiator should use the preparatory phase to assemble a team with the right expertise and decide on the division of labour within the team. It is useful to have a team with particular knowledge of the issues and experience of negotiation strategies and tactics.

This phase should be used to come up with a negotiation strategy that sets out what you want to achieve and how you intend to achieve it. A strategy can include the following elements:

› **ISSUES:** These are the topics on which you and the other side disagree. You may have a different view from the other side on what the issues are or their relative importance. The other side may want to raise issues that you have no interest in raising because you are satisfied with the status quo.

› **OBJECTIVES AND RED LINES:** It is useful to rank your objectives in order of relative importance and divide them into short-term and long-term objectives. Objectives that go beyond the immediate issues on the table should also be included.

› **INTERESTS:** Identifying your interests creates a better understanding within the team of the purpose of the negotiation and contributes to a common vision.

› **POSITIONS:** These are your explicit stances on the issues. It is useful to have defensive positions on issues that you expect the other side to raise.

› **OPTIONS FOR MUTUAL GAIN:** Under each issue, list options that would satisfy your interests and objectives as well as the interests of the other side. These options can be used to find win-win outcomes. The more options, the greater the chance of an agreed outcome.

› **BATNA:** Your best alternative to a negotiated agreement. The BATNA should anticipate future circumstances. It can also be useful to indicate options for strengthening your BATNA.

› **STYLE AND TACTICS:** Your posture towards the other side in the negotiation, and the tactics that may be most effective.

› **PUBLIC RELATIONS:** The communication strategy for the negotiations.

› **OTHER PARTY OR PARTIES:** The objectives, red lines, interests, positions, and BATNA of the other side (or what you assess them to be). It can also be useful to describe their mind-set, perception of the negotiation, and constraints.

› **TECHNICAL INFORMATION:** Information on the venue, date, time, future rounds, agenda, logistics, and security.

While the strategy should be kept confidential, there is a balance to be struck between confidentiality and public diplomacy. Negotiations, especially high-level talks on political issues, can generate enormous public interest. The public's view of the negotiation can have an impact on your scope for manoeuvre and ultimately the course of the negotiations. Public statements tend to be scrutinised by the other side and can influence its behaviour in the negotiation. Public diplomacy and the strategic handling of information can be used to further your interests in the negotiation by, for instance, putting pressure on the other side and managing the expectations of your constituency.

You need to understand the other side's mind-set, fears, interests, and perceptions. Since disagreements can be underpinned by different perceptions, it is imperative to understand how the opposing side perceives the situation. Understanding the other side's interests can open the way to agreement since it is often by focusing on interests rather than positions that agreement is found.

Several positions and possible solutions can often be construed from a party's interests. It is interests rather than positions that motivate and drive people. By asking yourself why the other side has a particular position you may be able to see the interests behind the position. For instance, separatists whose position is independence are often motivated by a strong interest in security. They see independence – rightly or wrongly – as being the only way to gain security.

Developing mutually beneficial options that might satisfy you and the other side makes agreement easier to reach. You have an interest in making it as easy as possible for the other side to agree to your proposals. By coming up with different win-win options you increase the likelihood that the negotiation will result in an outcome agreeable to all sides. Focus on areas of common interest but also on areas where interests diverge since it is often here that creative packages can be elaborated.

During the preparatory phase, you should consider whether you have an interest in third party mediation. There can be advantages to mediation if the positions are far apart and there is little mutual trust or if the negotiation is complex and needs to be managed by someone both sides trust. If you are the stronger party, however, a third party mediator may not necessarily be in your interest.

PRE-NEGOTIATIONS

The primary purpose of pre-negotiations is to come to an agreement on modalities for the substantive negotiations. While many of the issues to be resolved during the pre-negotiation may seem technical, such as deciding the venue and agenda, they can be

politically important and decisive for the actual negotiation. Because of this, discussions on technical issues during pre-negotiations can easily become proxy negotiations on substantive ones, in particular if general principles of the negotiation are discussed.

The pre-negotiations provide a chance to meet the other side – sometimes for the first time. This can be an opportunity to try to understand the other side's intentions, positions and goals, its commitment to the process, and whether it is negotiating in good faith. These first meetings can also be occasions to build trust and set the stage for the rest of the process.

When positions are far apart and there is little mutual confidence, pre-negotiations can be fraught and difficult. They can break down because of disagreements over the agenda, venue, or rules of the game. Because of the importance of these first encounters and the risks involved, chief negotiators often delegate the pre-negotiations to deputies such as the political adviser.

Agreeing on the agenda is likely to be a central part of the pre-negotiations. The agenda is important because it can be used to define and, by extension, legitimise the issues. The agenda items, their order, and the language used to describe them can all have substantial significance. You generally have an interest in giving most prominence to your issues on the agenda and trying to minimise the scope for discussing issues you do not wish to address.

The format for the negotiations – the number of negotiators and status of the parties – is typically agreed in the pre-negotiation. Parity in numbers is the general principle followed because asymmetry can provide practical and psychological advantages to the side with the larger delegation.

The format can also be highly political since it can entail legitimisation and implicit recognition of the status of a party. Negotiating through a proxy rather than direct face-to-face negotiations is often an alternative. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, for instance, the sides have on different occasions insisted on proxy talks. You should consider the political implications of meeting the other side face-to-face.

In general, being the host of the negotiations provides an advantage since you have more familiarity and control over aspects such as media access, security, and resources. Because of this, venues are often neutral in terms of geography or symbolism. Negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan following the South's independence, for instance, have taken place in Addis Ababa.

The venue can also alternate between the sides to balance the advantage. While hosting the negotiations is generally an advantage, there can be a point to accepting an offer to negotiate on the home turf of the other side since this sends a positive signal about your intentions, strength, and confidence.

Perhaps the most critical topic to agree upon is the procedures for the negotiation, in particular the procedure to conclude an agreement. The "rules of the game" provide the negotiations with a normative framework within which the parties interact. Having a clear understanding of the procedures and how they both constrain and offer opportunities is essential to achieving your objectives.

The rules of the game should, as far as is possible, support your negotiation strategy. If you have several important issues, the principle "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" can be to your advantage. If, however, you only have one major issue while the other side has many, it may be in your interest to go for an issue-by-issue approach in which your issue is agreed first before moving on to the others.

The advantage of "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" is that it can create a positive momentum in the negotiation. If you get stuck on one particular issue, the negotiations can still continue by moving on to other issues. The drawback is that there is no agreement until everything is agreed, which makes it possible to block the entire agreement.

Confidentiality is usually necessary to ensure that you and the other side can discuss issues with relative openness and do not have to be continually scrutinised by your respective constituency.

If confidentiality is in question, you may end up talking to your respective constituencies in the negotiation rather than to each other.

You should also seek agreement during the pre-negotiations on the status of any documents coming out of the negotiation. This does not only include formal agreements but also secondary documentation such as minutes, meeting conclusion, and public statement. Are they jointly agreed? Or does the secretariat or mediator have the final say over the contents of these documents?

They can be crucial to pushing the negotiation in a particular direction and towards a particular outcome. These documents can become the final agreement and come to constitute the official history of the negotiation. You have an interest in ensuring that you have control over the official record, in particular should the negotiation break down.

SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS

At the outset of the actual negotiations, you have an interest in projecting confidence, as this suggests a strong BATNA. But you also have an interest in building trust, as these early encounters can be crucial for establishing a rapport with your counterparts and ensuring that they believe you are negotiating in good faith. Without a minimum of mutual trust and confidence, chances of a negotiated outcome are slim. Explicitly acknowledging the interests and emotions of the other side shows respect and builds trust. Courteous and polite behaviour also go a long way to establishing respect.

Understanding the mind-set of the other side on the day of the negotiation enables you to adjust your approach accordingly. How does your counterpart see the overall negotiation and the specific negotiation session? Recent incidents or statements may have influenced the other side's attitude and posture. Addressing these before moving on to the substantial discussions can clear the air and create a more conducive environment for the negotiations.

Formal negotiations typically begin with the sides making opening statements to present their positions. This is an opportunity to recall the issues, frame the discussion, and define the parameters for the negotiations. The words you use to describe the issues can set a conceptual framework for the process. The agreed procedures can be recalled in order to ensure that they become part of the official record and to avoid any future disagreement. Once the opening statements have been made, the parties are normally invited to respond with a reaction.

The advantage of being the first to make the opening statement is that it allows you to frame the discussion and that it puts the other side on the defensive. The disadvantage is that you are presenting your position without having had the benefit of listening to the other side and adjusting the statement accordingly. Letting the other side go first enables you to gain a better understanding of their positions and their approach to the negotiations.

In text-based negotiations, the parties go through a prepared draft text, such as a statement or treaty, usually prepared by a secretariat or mediator. The draft can also have been prepared by one of the parties, although this can raise questions of whether it is sufficiently balanced to serve effectively as the basis for a negotiation. As a rule you have an interest in providing the texts upon which the negotiation are based.

You and the other side typically go through the draft text line by line from beginning to end. The meaning of each line is discussed and agreed, or alternative language is proposed. If there is no agreement on specific language, the text may be put in hard brackets to be revisited later. When going back over the language in hard brackets, circumstances may have changed or bargains may have been struck over other issues that allow the initially contentious text to be agreed.

A key strategic consideration is whether to approach the negotiation from the general or the specific. Beginning with the

general entails trying at first to seek agreement on principles. These tend to be broad and vague so that they accommodate the positions of all parties. Once there is agreement on such a framework, negotiations move on to specific provisions consistent with the principles or formula.

This top-down approach – beginning with the general and moving on to the particular – is often used if positions are entrenched and far apart. It allows for constructive ambiguity to paper over the core differences. The problem with this approach is that the ambiguity can be so great that the principles lose real meaning. If there eventually is agreement at the general level, problems can begin when trying to reach agreement on the specific. As the old adage goes, "the devil is in the details."

Another strategic consideration is whether to begin with the most contentious issues or the least contentious ones. You may have an interest in securing early agreement on the easy issues in order to improve the environment for dealing with the more difficult issues. Agreement on some issues adds pressure to come to agreement on other issues, in particular if the principle that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" is followed.

It is crucial to know when to pause a negotiation. It may be in your interest to have a discussion with the other party that is off the record to resolve a particular issue. Or you may have to consult with your political masters on how far you can go on a particular issue. A break in the negotiations can often provide an opportunity for informal consultations to move a process forward.

Events outside the negotiation can have a direct impact on the negotiations. Circumstances can change and influence interests and positions. It is essential to coordinate closely with allies outside the negotiation room and have an open channel of communication, to influence events and to follow what the other side is up to outside the negotiation room and how this factors into their negotiation strategy.

AGREEMENT

A negotiated agreement is not worth much if not implemented. The mechanisms for implementing the agreement and the consequences of non-compliance can be decisive for whether an agreement is implemented or not. But the negotiation process itself can also be paramount: An agreement is less likely to be implemented if a party does not consider the process that led to it as fair. Your negotiation strategy and tactics play directly into procedural fairness and can therefore affect the implementation of an eventual agreement.

Your relationship with the other side can also influence whether the agreement is implemented or not. If the other side sees no interest in a relationship with you beyond the agreement, the side has less of an incentive to implement the agreement. If the negotiation is part of a long-standing relationship that is likely to lead to future negotiations and agreements, implementation becomes significant for the sake of future credibility. In such a case, both you and the other side have an interest in carrying out the negotiation in such a way as to maintain the relationship.

REFER TO A HIGHER AUTHORITY
You can add external legitimacy to your position by referring to a person, a normative framework (for instance, international law), a previous agreement, or an expert opinion whose authority the other side recognises. Referring to an authority belonging to the other side can be particularly powerful. Ways to counter this tactic include denying that the higher authority is relevant in this particular case, making the case for why the purported authority is not actually an authority, or referring to another competing authority who supports your view.

ENLARGE THE CONTEXT
Enlarging the context by bringing new items to the table can make it easier to reach agreement. New items create more variables to play with and more scope for bargains and compromises. This tactic can be particularly effective in positional negotiations when there is deadlock over an issue. A key consideration is when to introduce new items. It can be wise to not play all your cards too early.

SPECIFIC FACTS OR STATISTICS
A well-placed fact or statistic can provide strong support to an argument. It also puts the onus on the other side to prove the fact or statistic wrong, which can be difficult during the course of the negotiation. One way to deflect this tactic is to argue that the particular fact or statistic is not relevant for this particular case or present another fact or statistic that counters the initial one.

POINT TO PRECEDENTS
It can be effective to argue the merits of a case by invoking consistency with past practice. Pointing to precedence is persuasive since consistency is generally considered a virtue

and the burden of proof tends to be on those who wish to depart from previous practice. This argument can be countered by arguing that the case in question is so different from previous ones that they do not represent precedents.

THE OUTRAGEOUS BID
In positional bargaining, you can present a position that is extreme in anticipation that the final agreement will fall somewhere between this extreme position and the other side's position. This approach can damage your credibility, however, since making an outrageous bid can come across as unreasonable. To counter an outrageous bid, you can openly dismiss it as outrageous or present an equally outrageous bid.

CLAIM NO MANDATE
Stating that you have no mandate to negotiate certain items is a way to protect yourself against being drawn into negotiating red lines or discussing issues where difficult concessions may be necessary. The risk with this tactic is that the other party may demand that you are replaced with someone who has the mandate to negotiate.

REFUSE TO ENGAGE
By not accepting or commenting on a proposal from the other party, you avoid letting the other side's proposal become the basis for the negotiation. This can be effective if the proposal sets a low bar, and it would be of greater benefit to present your own proposal as a basis for negotiations. Arguing that you do not yet have the necessary instructions or authority is a way to not engage. Over time, the proposal may be overtaken by events, or new competing proposals may be tabled. It is also possible to demand that the party presenting the proposal make concessions as a condition for engaging.

PAINT YOURSELF INTO A CORNER

By stating publicly that you will never make concession X, you lock yourself into a position since changing the position would entail paying a high price and a loss of face. This puts pressure on the other side to accept your red line as a fait accompli. This tactic is often seen before negotiation rounds when chief negotiators make statements to the media. One way to counter this tactic is to try to ignore it. Another is to appeal to the other party to show leadership by making the difficult concession that he or she promised not to make.

OFFER FACE-SAVERS

The corollary to painting yourself into a corner is to make sure that your demands have a face-saving dimension to them. After all, you have an interest in helping the other side make difficult decisions that are in your favour. Frame the issue so that the other party can make a concession without appearing to have made a concession. If you take a forceful approach and paint your opponent into a corner, this only risks entrenching positions.

DOOR AJAR

After a protracted stalemate, indicate that you may be willing to make a concession. This could trigger the other side to move its position closer to you in order for you to move. Once they have done so, you close the door, go back to your entrenched position, and reap the benefit of the other side having moved closer to you. One way to neutralise this tactic is to also withdraw the concession, if possible, and return to the earlier position.

RED HERRING

Exaggerate the importance you attach to an issue or a demand so that you can use it as a bargaining chip later on without too much cost. The way to counter this is to have a solid understanding of the other side's interests and objectives.

IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOURS

Irrational or awkward behaviour in a negotiation can throw the other side off balance, making it hard to assess your objectives and interests. And then displaying rational behaviour also tends to be rewarded. This tactic does little to foster long-term relationships or to build your reputation as a serious interlocutor. A related tactic is to act inconsistently with what the other side expects of you.

THREATEN TO LEAVE TABLE

Threaten to leave the negotiation unless the other side fulfils some condition. This tactic can be effective if you have a relatively strong BATNA and can afford to go through with the threat and end the negotiation. If you are bluffing and your BATNA is weak, however, this can be a risky move since you are jeopardising the negotiation. The ultimatum, if pressed too hard, can also be detrimental to your relationship with the other party. To counter this, gain a solid understanding of the other side's BATNA so that you can tell whether the threat is a bluff or not.

GOOD COP/BAD COP ROUTINE

This classic routine entails you acting as the good cop and your negotiating partner as the bad cop or vice versa. The good cop is friendly and sympathetic to the other party while the bad cop is hostile and tough. The bad cop makes harsh demands while the good cop apologises for the behaviour of the bad cop and pleads with the other side to make a concession to please the bad cop.

8 MEDIATION

Mediation is one of the main methods of conflict resolution and peacemaking. Over the past twenty years, more wars have ended through mediation than in the preceding two hundred years. This is thanks to a more enabling international environment and a growing recognition that mediation is a relatively inexpensive and effective instrument of diplomacy. Mediation is today central to facilitating political processes in conflict environments.

Mediation is a structured process in which a third party assists the parties in a conflict to reach an agreement through negotiation and dialogue. The mediator coaches the process along and may propose solutions but does not have the authority to impose a settlement. While the degree of acceptance by the parties can vary – and can also be the result of external pressure – mediation ultimately relies on the acceptance of the parties of the mediator and the final settlement.

The attraction of mediation lies to a large degree in its voluntary nature. This distinguishes it from other ways of dealing with conflicts, such as military intervention, diplomatic coercion, or international arbitration – although mediation is often carried out as part of a larger international involvement.

It is the task of the mediator to create space for the parties so that they can build mutual trust and confidence, better understand each other's positions and interests, and, ultimately, find common ground on which to base a settlement. The mediator engages directly with the parties to try to clarify the key issues, as well as design and lead the mediation process.

The United Nations has played a leading mediation role in armed conflicts, in particular through UN Secretaries-General, Special Representatives, and Special Envoys with mediation and "good offices" mandates. Recently the trend has been for regional or sub-regional organisations, such as the European Union and

African Union, to lead mediation efforts. NGOs have also become more active in this field.

Mediation is often used at different levels of the overall peacemaking effort. In Kosovo and Sudan, for example, UN Special Envoys were appointed to mediate between the parties at a high political level. These efforts ran parallel to the peacekeeping operations, which also carried out political facilitation and mediation at various levels on the ground between local political parties, armed groups, or communities.

International mediation efforts can be complex undertakings led by a principal in the role of chief mediator and supported by a team often comprised of political advisers with particular experience and expertise in mediation. The complexity of conflicts, and the need for comprehensive settlements often require broad expertise on technical issues, such as power-sharing, constitutional issues, or security arrangements. Or it can be on mediation process, such as mediation design or public diplomacy.

This chapter sets out some of the core concepts of mediation and outlines the mediation process. It is imperative for a political adviser to understand the concepts and process in order to be able to advise and support the principal who typically is the one to carry out the mediation.

IMPARTIALITY AND NEUTRALITY

Mediation is often associated with impartiality and neutrality. These seemingly simple principles are hard to define and yet harder to live by. In practice, mediators are nearly never completely impartial or neutral. In fact, they often have a stake and interest in the conflict and are more aligned with one side than another.

Also, in pushing for an agreement, the mediator may inevitably be compromising his or her neutrality and impartiality since negotiated agreements are seldom completely balanced and seldom

favour all parties equally. A negotiated settlement may, at any point in time, be more favourable to one party than another.

Moreover, mediators mandated by international organisations should represent the principles, norms, and decisions of the organisation. These can be partial, making neutrality impossible. For instance, UN mediators should subscribe to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, which tend to favour territorial integrity over secessionism.

It can also be difficult for mediators to be neutral when mediating in conflicts in which one side has committed atrocities. UN mediators, for instance, may not be associated with agreements that provide amnesties for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

A model used in some conflicts is for the mediation to be carried out by a group of individuals, states, or organisations. This balances out agendas and interests, which helps ensure that the parties engage in the process. In Kosovo in 2007, for example, a "troika" comprising representatives from the United States, Russia, and the EU mediated between Belgrade and Pristina. The troika's composition ensured that the parties participated in the process.

Although impartiality is difficult to achieve, the mediator must always walk a fine line. If the mediator leans too much in favour of one side, the other party is likely to feel alienated. Mediation efforts have collapsed because one party has considered the mediator biased. For example, during the Libya crisis in 2011, the Transitional National Council rejected efforts by the AU to mediate because it considered the AU partial to Colonel Muammar Qaddafi.

At the same time, the parties can have an incentive in questioning the mediator's impartiality and neutrality. By accusing the mediator of being partial, a party can put pressure on the mediator to be more favourable to its cause. A partial mediator will often be considered fair and balanced by the favoured party.

At the end of the day, a party to a conflict does not agree to a mediator because he or she is considered neutral or impartial but

rather because the party sees the mediator as being able to further its interests in a negotiation. But this also requires the mediator to demonstrate that he or she can serve their interests to some extent.

For the mediator, the difficulty lies in convincing different parties with opposing – sometimes diametrically opposed – positions that mediation is in their respective interest. The mediator has to tread carefully in order to maintain credibility with both sides and ensure that they consider the mediator's approach a fair one. Being regarded as a credible and honest broker may in the end be more important than notions of neutrality and impartiality.

MANDATE AND CREDIBILITY

The mandate to mediate must come from the parties themselves. If they do not accept the mediator's role, there is often little the mediator can do to change this. International pressure may be helpful, but a mediator will have a difficult task if a party has been forced into accepting the mediation.

A strong and clear mandate from the international community can provide external legitimacy and leave the mediator less exposed to the whims of the parties. A mandate from the UN Security Council or the UN Secretary-General makes it more difficult for the parties to put pressure on the mediator and question his or her role.

But an international mandate can also complicate a mediation effort because the international entity providing the mandate may be perceived as biased by one of the parties. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, the UN is regarded by Israel as pro-Palestinian, limiting the UN's ability to mediate.

A mandate from a regional organisation, such as the League of Arab States or the African Union, can have the advantage of providing regional legitimacy and credibility, although members of the regional organisation can have direct interests in the conflict. Colonel Qaddafi's support for the AU made it difficult for the AU

to act as a credible mediator between loyalists and rebels during the crisis in 2011.

The mediator must manage relations with the states who have a stake in the conflict, as alienating them can damage the mediator's international support and legitimacy. This is something that parties to the conflict are often quick to exploit in their favour. The mediator therefore needs to be acutely aware of the particular concerns and interests of the main international stakeholders, particularly those who wield substantial power.

In some cases, several mediators with overlapping mandates have tried to mediate in the same conflict. In Sudan, for example, there have at times been several mediators representing different states and international organisations. This uncoordinated international approach has allowed the parties to play the different mediators off one another, with detrimental results for the overall effort to secure peace and for the credibility of the international community.

The mediator's credibility derives not only from the mandate and mandating organisation, but also from the mediator's reputation. In certain high-profile conflicts, former presidents such as Martti Ahtisaari and Thabo Mbeki have been brought in to mediate because of their credibility and authority, as well as their access to the highest political levels.

Credibility is largely a question of perception, however. Unless the mediator is regarded by the parties as credible and trustworthy, the personal stature of the mediator does not account for much. The handling of the mediation process can quickly build or deplete credibility. Demonstrating integrity, honesty, fairness, and predictability contributes to fostering credibility.

The mediator's background can also be relevant for his or her credibility. It is widely assumed – often incorrectly – that nationality and ethnicity determine where individuals stand on various issues. A mediator from a disinterested country can have an advantage in being seen as impartial.

MEDIATION CONTEXT

It is essential to understand how the mediation effort fits into the larger international effort to deal with a particular conflict. This effort can include a wide range of other instruments, such as peacekeeping, sanctions, humanitarian assistance, development aid, and political dialogue.

During the Syria crisis, for example, the mediation efforts by the first Joint Special Envoy, Kofi Annan, to bring an end to the violence and promote a peaceful solution were carried out in parallel with a range of other international actions such as political pressure, economic and diplomatic sanctions, and the deployment of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria.

When these international efforts pull in different directions, mediation stands little chance of succeeding. The split in the Security Council over Syria, for example, hampered Kofi Annan's ability to mediate and prompted him to resign in August 2012.

Although mediation is a voluntary process, it also tends to require pressure on the parties to move the process forward, especially when they do not see strong enough incentives to reach a settlement. But the mediator's ability to apply pressure may be limited. A mediator with a mandate from an international organisation seldom has any real leverage on his or her own except for being guarantor of the process and moral persuasion. In such circumstances, trying to exert pressure on the parties can undermine the mediator's credibility because the parties can call the mediator's bluff. Instead, mediators often tend to seek support from those who wield real power.

An example of how a mediation effort can link up with a larger international effort to force parties to come to an agreement is the case of the post–secession negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan. Following a sharp deterioration of relations, the AU adopted in April 2012 a roadmap for the parties to stop fighting and resolve their differences. The roadmap, subsequently endorsed

by the UN Security Council, gave the parties three months to reach an agreement on their outstanding issues. If they did not comply or manage to reach an agreement, the roadmap threatened the option of sanctions and an imposed settlement. The roadmap was effective in putting pressure on the parties to end hostilities and return to the negotiation table.

In some situations, the mediator does wield real power. In the Camp David negotiations in the United States between Israel and Egypt in 1978, President Jimmy Carter mediated between the sides while having considerable political and financial leverage over the parties. In the end, the agreement was underwritten by billions of dollars of US assistance to both countries.

The EU's mediation efforts in the Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood offer another example of a mediator with power. The EU's leverage stems primarily from the desire of the countries in this region to become EU members. EU mediators are seen as being able to influence the countries' prospects for membership and access to development assistance.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Peace negotiations can create considerable public interest, particularly in the countries concerned. Negotiations can play into local politics and, in turn, have an impact on the behaviour of the negotiators. Active public diplomacy by the mediator can bolster the mediation process, but this has to be done with care because portraying the process, developments, or agreements in particular ways can antagonise the parties. In rare cases, such as the negotiations between Israel and the PLO in 1993 that resulted in the Oslo Accords, negotiations were carried out in complete secrecy.

Public diplomacy can be used to create public expectations and put pressure on the parties to reach a settlement. It can inject a sense of momentum and urgency, encourage a certain direction, and create public support for the process and eventual agreement.

Ignoring the media is often risky, because it allows others to fill the vacuum with rumours and disinformation.

For the parties, the negotiation can be partly – or largely – a public relations exercise. They generally have an interest in coming across as reasonable and fair while presenting the other side as difficult and maximalist. This creates pressure on the other side to be more forthcoming. There may, on the other hand, be tactical considerations, such as domestic political pressure, for coming across as intransigent and tough. While there can be clear benefits to using the media, the mediator should try to reach an agreement with the parties at the outset on how to handle the media. Often the mediator will be in charge of contacts with the media.

LARGER CONTEXT

The course of a negotiation is often determined outside the negotiation room. The parties may see the negotiation as one arena of many where the conflict is played out – and often not the most important one. The parties can take steps in the battlefield or in diplomatic fora to strengthen their hands or undermine the position of the other side.

An example is the announcement by Khartoum in late 2011 during a negotiation session between Sudan and South Sudan that Khartoum would not allow oil from South Sudan to be exported from Port Sudan until an agreement was reached on oil. The move was intended to put pressure on South Sudan to be more forthcoming in the negotiations, but the effect was to undermine the already low levels of trust and confidence between the sides. A few weeks later, Juba announced that it was shutting down its oil production as a reaction to Khartoum's announcement. These unilateral steps had a direct negative impact on the course of the negotiations.

The mediator needs to be aware of what is going on outside the negotiation room, how this is affecting the parties, and their efforts to manipulate external events to alter the course of the

negotiation. The mediator should also be looking for opportunities to influence events outside the negotiations in order to move the process forward. Coordinating with influential international actors can be useful in this respect.

WHEN TO MEDIATE

It is critical to know when to mediate and when not to mediate. This is not an easy decision. The fact that most mediation efforts end in failure should be a sobering consideration. Research suggests that half of all wars that end with a negotiated settlement start again within five years. These conflicts are twice as likely to restart as conflicts that ended in military victory by one side.

Timing is key. In mediation literature, experts talk of conflicts being "ripe" for mediation when each party considers that the cost of continued fighting is greater than the cost of negotiating. Parties typically turn to negotiation when there is no prospect for a military solution.

The parties also need to recognise that they are interdependent and that each can only improve its situation by reaching an agreement with the other. There must be more to gain from cooperating than from severing ties, which is in any case often not possible.

Another condition for successful mediation is that the parties negotiate in good faith, although good faith is difficult to determine. Agreeing to mediation could be a tactical move to buy time to prepare for the next military offensive. In such situations, mediation efforts can become directly detrimental to finding peace since they provide the party negotiating in bad faith with a fig leaf to hide behind. In the end, if a party is not sincere about negotiating, there is little a mediator can do.

If the societies in question are not willing to accept a negotiated settlement, it can be difficult for political leaders to sign an

agreement. In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, for example, the populations of Armenia and Azerbaijan show little readiness to accept the types of compromises necessary for a settlement to the conflict.

It is also difficult for mediation to succeed if there is complacency on the part of the international community or if key international actors are against the mediation. Ensuring international support requires constant attention to counter conflict-fatigue and to prevent interest shifting to other issues featuring on the international agenda.

In some cases, mediation is seen as a way to contain or manage a conflict rather than actually resolving it. The positions of the parties may be too entrenched, there may not be enough political will to deal with the underlying causes, or the involvement and interests of certain powers makes the prospects for a resolution dim.

Mediation in such circumstances becomes a way to manage the conflict and, in the best case, prevent a return to violence. Mediation efforts in the Arab-Israel conflict have probably fallen into this category during certain periods.

Even if a mediation effort does not result in an agreement, the process may still be useful in moving the conflict closer towards a resolution. In the case of Kosovo, the Rambouillet negotiations, the Ahtisaari process, and troika-led talks never resulted in the parties agreeing on Kosovo's status but were still decisive moments in the overall effort of dealing with the conflict.

For conflicts that are not ripe for mediation, it may be more effective to pursue other avenues, for example coercive measures such as economic sanctions and visa bans or positive incentives such as political recognition or development assistance. Other forms of conflict resolution activities, such as confidence-building measures, might also be more effective tools. These types of measures can eventually create better conditions for mediation to succeed.

MEDIATION PROCESS

There are many variations of mediation. It can take place between two parties over a single issue or between a range of parties on a host of issues. The parties can be negotiating directly with each other or indirectly in proximity talks, with the mediator shuttling between them. The substance of the negotiations can relate to highly political issues or be more technical in nature. This section sets out the usual stages of a mediation process between two parties.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT

Before beginning mediation, it is crucial to have a solid understanding of the historical and cultural context, the causes, the parties, and the key issues. A conceptual framework for conflict analysis is set out in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Identifying the root causes is particularly important because the sustainability of an agreement to a large extent depends on whether it addresses the root causes. Agreements that fail often do so because they address only the symptoms of the conflict. Sometimes, however, dealing with the symptoms is the best that can be achieved at a particular moment in time.

Identifying the parties to the conflict is vital. In most conflicts, it is evident who the parties are. In other cases, however, this may not be as clear-cut. In Darfur, for instance, mediators have struggled with which of the many armed movements and splinter factions should be considered parties to the conflict.

Recognising an actor as a party can also be a sensitive issue because being a conflict party can have legal and political implications. The title bestows a certain status that non-state actors may see as attractive because it enhances their legitimacy. For state actors, on the other hand, it can have implications seen as undesirable.

Russia, for example, denies being a party to the conflict with Georgia because it wants to characterise itself as a peace enforcer

intervening in a local dispute between Georgians, on the one hand, and Abkhaz and South Ossetians on the other. In contrast, Georgia wants to make sure that Russia is recognised as a party to the conflict in order to emphasise the conflict's inter-state dimension and underline Russia's legal and political responsibilities.

Understanding the parties' authority to speak for their constituencies, their internal cohesiveness, their relative strength in the negotiations, and the scope of their mandate is necessary in order to assess how they will act in the negotiation and, crucially, how far they will be able to go in making concessions.

It is also necessary to understand why the parties have agreed to negotiate with the assistance of a mediator. Is it because of a mutually hurting stalemate? Bad faith, tactical calculations, or political pressure from the international community may well explain the decision to negotiate.

Often one side sees more of an interest in negotiating than the other. Agreeing to negotiate can be seen as a concession or a sign of weakness. But it can also be a way for groups, in particular secessionists and rebels, to gain recognition and legitimisation, as well as to internationalise the conflict, which is often in the interest of the weaker party. This is why governments fighting rebels are often reluctant to accept international mediation. Indonesia, for example, was reluctant to allow UN mediation in the Aceh conflict because Jakarta did not want to internationalise the conflict as had occurred in East Timor.

One party may lack the knowledge and experience necessary to negotiate. In many conflicts, particularly civil wars, there is an asymmetry between the sides in terms of capacity. The government side may have a capable and effective administration that is well-trained in negotiations while the rebel side may have no experience of formal negotiations whatsoever. In such cases, it can be to everyone's advantage, including the stronger party, to enhance the capacity of the weaker side. A weak party can often resort to intransigence as a tactic for fear of losing out to a stronger opponent.

It is essential to have an understanding of what the key issues are and how the parties perceive these issues. These are often the primary grievances of the parties, such as disputes over territory or resources, the right of refugees to return to their homeland, or the marginalisation of certain groups. Since they can be general and abstract, it can be necessary to reconceptualise and break them down into concrete components. The right of return, for example, could be broken down into security arrangements for returning refugees, reconstruction of homes, land–dispute mechanisms, and so on. These components provide the tangible material for the negotiations rather than convoluted notions that often stand in direct contradiction with each other.

Different parties typically focus on different grievances. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, Israel is primarily concerned with security while the Palestinians focus on the issue of territory. Even when the parties are fighting over the same issue, it is often the case that they define the issue differently. The mediator needs to understand the grievances and issues that are at the heart of the conflict.

Conflicts can be highly dynamic and fast-moving. Victories on the battlefield or changes in the political landscape can shift the balance of power or lead to new parties appearing and old ones disappearing. It is critical to keep abreast of developments throughout the mediation.

PREPARATIONS

The preparatory meetings with the parties should aim to establish a working relationship, build mutual trust, consolidate support for the process and the mediator's role, and increase understanding of the parties and where they stand. This contributes to the design of the mediation process, which can have a direct impact on the outcome and its legitimacy. A mediation process considered unfair or lacking local ownership risks failing because the final agreement may be perceived as illegitimate.

If a party is not ready for face-to-face negotiations, because it does not want to legitimise the other party or believes that direct contact would be politically costly, it may be necessary to begin with proximity talks or carry out shuttle diplomacy until circumstances allow for direct talks. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, for instance, the different sides have on different occasions refused direct talks. In such cases, parties will often put conditions on entering into direct negotiations, such as a halt to hostilities or withdrawal of troops by the other side. The mediator may well have to enter into substantive negotiations during the preparatory phase.

Spending time with the parties allows the mediator to get to know them and to understand their motivations. This requires the ability to empathise and be culturally sensitive, without becoming partial to one side. The mediator should also be ready for confrontation as it is not uncommon for parties to try to test the strength of the mediator to determine his or her "strike power". These initial contacts are often the beginning of a delicate relationship that requires constant managing.

In these preparatory contacts, public diplomacy can help to create a conducive public environment for the talks. But media exposure at an early stage can also force the parties to take hard positions in order to demonstrate to their constituencies that they will be tough in the negotiations. Keeping these exploratory meetings out of the public eye gives the parties more room for manoeuvre later in the negotiations. This may not be possible, however, if the conflict is high on the international agenda.

The mediation environment should allow the parties to speak frankly and to openly explore different options in a confidential setting. The parties will have to make difficult compromises that they will need to sell to their constituencies. If details of the deliberations become known before a final settlement, the parties could come under pressure to step away from the proposal. Before the Dayton negotiations on Bosnia, Richard Holbrooke secured agreement of the parties that they would have no contact with the

media during the negotiations. The venue – the Wright–Patterson Air Force Base – was also chosen because it allowed the mediators to control access to media.

During these initial meetings, the mediator should clarify his or her role and explain the mediation process, including the structure of the process, format of the negotiations, timeframes, and frequency of meetings – to the extent all of this is known. This helps to create a sense of predictability and assurance for the parties, as well as realistic expectations.

The label you give to a negotiation can be sensitive because of the political implications. A "mediation" or "negotiation" suggests a certain parity among the parties, while "talks" or "discussions" imply informality and avoid conferring status on the participants. That is why the mediation led by the EU, OSCE, and UN between Russia, Georgia, and the separatist entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are called "Geneva International Discussions" and the talks between Serbia and Kosovo in 2011 and 2012 were called "EU-facilitated technical dialogue".

This initial contact is also about understanding the parties' positions, interests, BATNAs and red lines. It will help the mediator gain a better sense of whether the parties deeply care about the issues or whether they are using them for tactical advantage to trade during the negotiations.

The ground rules should be agreed during this initial stage. These ground rules can cover everything from principles, such as "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed," to more practical arrangements, such as how to deal with confidentiality and how to handle the media.

The status of meeting records, such as minutes, meeting conclusions, and outcomes, should be agreed since these can come to constitute the final agreement. If it is unlikely that the parties will jointly agree to conclusions, for example because one party does not recognise the signing authority of the other, the mediator may choose to present the chairman's conclusions as

indicative agreements. This was the approach taken by the EU in the mediation between Serbia and Kosovo on technical issues. Such an approach, however, exposes the mediator to criticism from the parties of being partial. Nevertheless, if possible, maintaining some sort of record of the meeting can help avoid disagreements later in the negotiations about what was said and agreed.

It can also be useful to identify other key actors who should be involved in the process, but this is often something the parties themselves want to decide. Other key actors could include groups affected by the conflict or with influence over the conflict, such as refugees or diaspora groups. It can be prudent to devise a mechanism to consult them from the outset so that they feel part of the process and of any settlement.

Spoilers, on the other hand, should generally not be brought to the negotiation table because they see an interest in continued fighting and in opposing conflict resolution efforts. From the outset, you should identify the spoilers and develop strategies for dealing with them. At times, consulting with them will suffice but, at other times, this may not be possible. The Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa, for example, is widely taken to be unable and unwilling to enter into serious negotiations. If dealing with spoilers is essential to secure peace, mediation may not be the most effective instrument.

It is crucial during the preparatory stage to continuously engage with HQ, member states, and other international actors involved in resolving the conflict in order to generate and maintain political support for the mediation effort. It is also necessary to coordinate with other international players. There may be a Contact Group or Group of Friends that will play a key coordination role and whose support for the mediation can be decisive.

MEDIATION STRATEGY

The preparation phase is an opportunity to design the mediation strategy, which should set out strategic objectives, design of the

mediation process, possible outcomes and support mechanisms for their implementation, modes and needs of engagement, coordination with other actors, and so on. To draw up a strategy, the mediator needs to have a sense of where the mediation may lead and its outcome. But the strategy should be flexible and evolve as circumstances change.

The simplest approach is to negotiate one issue at a time. If negotiations get stuck on an issue, the mediator can propose to move on to other issues and return to the contentious issue later. Agreement on other issues may create the possibility of a package deal, or the other issues can be linked to the difficult one.

At the end of the negotiation, a draft agreement with the agreed points can be presented to the parties for endorsement. This approach can be effective if positions are not far apart, and the prospect for overall agreement is high. In complex negotiations covering numerous issues, negotiations on the various issues often run in parallel, for example, in different working groups.

Beginning with the easiest issues, such as humanitarian or technical items, is a common approach if the positions are far apart and entrenched. This can build confidence between the parties, preparing the ground for agreement on more difficult issues. But even the most apparently non-political issue can be considered by one party to be political, or a party may link a non-political issue to a political one.

In the top-down approach, the mediator first tries to obtain agreement on broad principles before the negotiations move on to tackle particular issues. This is the approach taken by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs mediating in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They have tried to gain agreement from Armenia and Azerbaijan on basic principles to resolve the conflict: non-use of force, respect for territorial integrity, and respect for self-determination. Once there is agreement on the basic principles, the mediation can move on to a detailed peace agreement.

The top-down approach provides a degree of predictability, which can reassure parties who may otherwise fear where the negotiations will lead. The drawback is that ambiguous language often has to be used to secure the agreement of all parties. Once you move from the general and vague to the specific and concrete, the differences between the parties become evident.

The "single document approach" consists of the mediator presenting a comprehensive draft agreement covering all issues in a balanced way. This then serves as the basis for negotiations between the parties. The advantage of this approach is that the parties are presented with a clear indication of what an agreement on all issues could look like, instead of going through one issue after another without having a sense of the global agreement.

Another option is for the mediator to ask the parties to present what they would consider a fair and acceptable draft agreement. This forces the parties to think outside the framework of their own positions and think about what could actually be acceptable to the other side and what could be implementable. Although the parties will invariably present proposals that are in their favour, the process can produce documents that the mediator can use as a basis for a draft agreement.

If there is no or little scope for agreement, one available strategy is to draw the parties into a structured process. Confidence-building measures, such as joint information gathering, can be powerful ways of building mutual trust and a common understanding of the situation. The mediator can push for a joint assessment or fact-finding team to be established to gather information on a particular topic. The topic need not be directly relevant to the negotiation; the more uncontroversial the topic, the greater the chance that the parties will agree and come to a common understanding. Negotiation sessions can then be built around presentations by the joint team of its findings.

OPENING SESSION

The opening session should aim to create a feeling of confidence in the process and the mediator. It may be impossible to create a sense of mutual trust between the parties at this early stage, particularly if it is the first time they have met face-to-face. The opening session provides an opportunity for the parties to gauge each other.

The mediator should outline the process and clarify procedural issues that may have come up during preparatory meetings, as well as reaffirming his or her role and any red lines that the mediator may have. The parties should be reminded that the mediation is a voluntary process, which the mediator can break off should the agreed ground rules be violated. Responsibility for the continuation of the process should be clearly placed on the parties.

It is important for the mediator to instil a sense of momentum by setting the pace from the outset. This can create expectations on the parties that they have to deliver. Momentum can be introduced by agreeing on the frequency of meetings, setting out topics to be discussed at each meeting, and what the parties have to do ahead of each meeting.

STATEMENT OF POSITIONS

At the start of the negotiations, the parties typically give statements of their positions. The mediator and the team should try to identify the key issues from the statements made. The positions should already be familiar from the preparations and initial contacts, but there may be new information in the statements. The opening statements should also be used to determine how strongly the parties feel about particular issues. Body language can be essential in deciphering what really matters to the parties.

A common mediation technique is for the mediator to repeat the position after each statement using his or her own words. By paraphrasing, the mediator reformulates the positions using constructive, positive language and focuses on possible areas of commonality. It can also be helpful to use some of the same

words used by the parties to show that the mediator has heard and internalised what the party has said.

After the statements, it can be useful for the mediator to ask the parties open-ended questions focusing on issues where there is most potential for agreement. This can show the parties that there is scope for a settlement.

DEFINING THE ISSUES AND GENERATING SOLUTIONS

After the statement of positions, the mediator's task is to identify and define the issues and the main sticking points. This is usually done between negotiation rounds or in the margins. When identifying the issues, it can be necessary to consult with the parties bilaterally to test ideas, solicit more information on positions, and refine the list of issues. It can also be an opportunity to prod the parties on possible solutions. Much of the substantive work of a mediation is done between the formal negotiation sessions or in the margins of the sessions.

A major challenge in identifying the core issues is to do it in such a way so that the parties can accept them as actually being the core issues. The parties are likely to focus on different issues, frame the conflict in different ways, and emphasise their aspirations in terms of grand demands, such as "independence" or "autonomy". The mediator's art is to reframe the conflict, break down the grand demands into concrete issues, and find language that captures the real issues while at the same time being acceptable to the parties. Focusing on concrete issues can also open up the possibility of finding common ground between the parties. It is crucial to be seen as balanced when defining the issues.

Once the core issues have been identified, the next step is to generate solutions. The mediator should test possible solutions with the parties, propose trade-offs and innovative ideas, and tweak language in a search for common ground. In many cases, what would amount to a fair and workable solution is obvious to the mediator. The challenge is rather the process to convince the

parties to agree to it. That is why the process is essential, in many cases more so than the substance of the final settlement.

A key tactical question is the extent to which the mediator should propose solutions or let the parties do it. By proposing solutions, the mediator takes on "ownership" for the mediation and its outcome. By letting the parties do this, the mediator takes on more of a facilitation role and shifts the responsibility onto the parties. The risk of a hands–off approach is that the parties do not manage to come up with solutions together.

Generating several possible options instead of only one for each issue increases the chances of the parties reaching an agreement. By presenting only one option, you risk the process being blocked if one party does not accept the option. Presenting numerous options can be a tactically smart way to engage them in a discussion on solutions. It also opens up for the possibility of mixing possible options.

If the sides are far apart, the best that can be achieved is sometimes to get the parties to "agree to disagree". This is an explicit agreement by the parties that they disagree on the issues at hand. While this may not seem like much, it can be possible to extract some agreement on principles, such as a commitment to refrain from the use of force, or even substantive issues in an agree–to-disagree framework. It can also provide the basis for future settlements.

SUSTAINABILITY OF AGREEMENTS

It is often said that a settlement is only as good as its implementation. A central paradox of mediation is that the easier an agreement is to reach, the harder it can be to implement. Agreement is easier to achieve when the language is vague and ambiguous because this allows for the parties' different positions to be accommodated. But once implementation begins, differences are often exposed. And the sustainability of the agreement is tested.

The Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, for instance, have been criticised for being too ambiguous. The ambiguity allowed for an agreement to be signed, but it eventually fell apart. It also created unrealistic expectations within the populations about the prospect for real peace.

But at the same time, agreements based on "constructive" or "strategic" ambiguity may be necessary when the alternative is no agreement. It can be a way to reach an imperfect agreement that can serve as a stepping stone towards future agreements that are less ambiguous.

Ceasefire and peace agreements often include provisions setting up verification mechanisms and arrangements to support implementation. Ceasefire verification mechanisms are typically mandated to deal with particular issues that arise on the ground, and build confidence. International actors can be guarantors or witnesses to the mechanisms in order to provide legitimacy and reassurance to the sides. Sometimes, international stakeholders chair the mechanisms, as is the case in Georgia where the EU, UN, and OSCE chair the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Arrangements for implementation are often built into peace agreements. These arrangements are used to monitor compliance or more directly support implementation through stabilisation and reconstruction efforts. Peace agreements can be supported by substantial peacekeeping operations.

CONCLUSION

This handbook has provided advice on how to carry out the core tasks of a political adviser working with conflicts and crises. Ultimately, the purpose of this work is to have an impact. But this is not easy. The complexity of conflicts and crises makes it difficult for international efforts to deal adequately with crises, prevent and resolve conflicts, and bring long-lasting peace and development.

Factors largely beyond the control of the international community tend to be the strongest drivers of whether there will be war or peace. The old adage that all politics is local also holds true during war. Local leaders – like leaders everywhere – tend to act out of domestic considerations rather than because of what the international community does or says. In the end, if the parties are not serious about making peace, the prospects for international efforts to succeed are slim.

Often the best we can hope for is to have a marginal impact. Above all, it is imperative to make sure that the involvement does more good than harm. By intervening in a conflict, you become an actor in that conflict. Your presence changes the parties' calculations and can alter the conflict dynamics. There is also always a risk of being instrumentalised and sucked into the conflict as a party.

Despite these risks, international efforts have become more successful in dealing with violent conflicts and crises over the past two decades. Evidence suggests that the surge of international activism is increasing the likelihood that wars will end in peace agreements and that these agreements will last.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In writing this book, I have consulted texts on different aspects of what a political adviser needs to know. Since this handbook is not an academic or theoretical work, I have not used direct citations. Instead I indicate below, for each chapter, the texts I have found most useful.

INTRODUCTION
The staggering increase in peace operations and political missions dealing with violent conflict is set out in reports such as the "Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2012" and "Review of Political Missions 2011" published by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University. They cover not only UN peace operations but also those of other organisations such as the AU and OSCE. This handbook relies on the distinction used in these reports between peace operations and political missions. When "mission" is used, it is meant in a broad sense to include both peace operations and political missions.

1. ROLE OF THE POLITICAL ADVISER
This chapter is mostly based on interviews with current or former political advisers and principals as there is little literature on the role of advisers per se. The chapter on political affairs in "Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations" (UN, 2003) describes the political affairs function but gives little practical advice.

An eloquent exposé on political judgement is Isaiah Berlin's "On Political Judgement" published in the New York Review of Books, October 1996. The book "Groupthink or Deadlock: When Do Leaders Learn from Their Advisers?" by P.A. Kowert (SUNY Press, 2002) gives a fascinating historical account of how US presidents used their advisers in different ways with varying degrees of success.

Useful books on the workings of diplomacy and the civil service are "Diplomacy: Theory and Practice" by G.R. Berrige (Palgrave MacMillan, 4th ed. 2010), which covers many of the typical functions of inter-state diplomacy, and "How to be a Civil Servant" by M. Stanley (Politico's, 2nd ed. 2000), an entertaining guide to being a good bureaucrat, or at least a good British bureaucrat.

2. POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Numerous think-tanks and foundations have published on conflict analysis. I have drawn heavily from the excellent overview of conflict analysis produced by the US Institute for Peace. It can be found on the USIP website: www.usip. org/files/file/chapter_2__266.pdf. The UK Department for International Development has also developed a simple and useful methodology called Strategic Conflict Assessment. The guidance note can be found here: www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflictassessmentguidance.pdf.

The results of the international enquiry on the Georgia–Russia War can be found on www.ceiig.ch. It is a fascinating and thorough analysis of the war.

A useful exposé on the conflict cycle is set out in "Conflict, Conflict Prevention, Conflict Management, and Beyond: a conceptual exploration" by N. Swanström and M. Weissmann (Central Asia–Caucasus Institute, 2005). The paper can be found on the institute's website: www.isdp.eu.

3. REPORTING

International organisations and national diplomatic services have their own internal guidelines on reporting. For an overview of political analysis and political reporting from a US diplomat's perspective, I recommend "The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats" by R. F. Smith (Potomac Press, 2011). The trove of leaked State Department cables on Wikileaks provides some excellent examples of political reporting. George Kennan's Long Telegram can be found online in the Truman Library (www.trumanlibrary.org).

Unless your organisation has its own style guide, using one from the main news outlets, such as The Economist or the BBC, can be extremely helpful. A condensed version of The Economist's style guide can be found online: www.economist.com/styleguide/introduction. The classic essay defending a clear and lucid style in political writing is "Politics and the English Language" written by George Orwell in 1945.

4. POLITICAL DIALOGUE
Little reference material seems to be available on political dialogue. This chapter is based largely on conversations with other practitioners.

5. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
There are plenty of books on public diplomacy, media studies, and outreach. USIP has published a useful pamphlet with practical advice, "Managing Public Information in a Mediation Process". It can be found on the USIP website.

The statement on Sudan and South Sudan by the High Representative's spokesperson is published here: www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129279.pdf

How the KONY2012 video went viral was covered in numerous news articles, for example this one: www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-news-blog/2012/mar/09/kony-2012-how-video-spread. While social media were essential to spreading the video, the criticism of the video as being misleading and inaccurate spread just as quickly through social media. This shows how much potential social media has to get your message out but also the risks involved.

6. WRITING SPEECHES
The perennial classic in rhetoric is Aristotle's "The Art of Rhetoric", which sets out simple but brilliant categories for oratory. A useful website on rhetoric, which includes Aristotle's categories, is http://rhetoric.byu.edu/.

"Words that Work" by F. Luntz (Hyperion, 2007) is a fascinating account by a Republican pollster of how to use effective political messaging in the United States. While the book is intended for an American audience, it contains many insights relevant for conveying messages in an international environment. The principles of public messaging draw largely from this book.

7. NEGOTIATION

Among the abundance of books on negotiation, two books on the principled approach stand out: "Getting to Yes: Negotiating an Agreement without Giving In" by R. Fisher, W. Ury, and B. Patton of Harvard University (Random House, 2nd ed. 1999) and the "Harvard Business Essentials Guide to Negotiation" (Harvard Business School Press, 2003). Part of Berrige's "Diplomacy" also covers diplomatic negotiations.

For a look at practical aspects of negotiations, the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) and Baker & McKenzie have jointly produced "The International Negotiations Handbook". It can be found on the Baker & McKenzie website. PILPG have also produced several useful handbooks on peace processes and post–conflict stabilisation.

8. MEDIATION

A superb text on UN peacemaking and mediation is "The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation" by Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed (Center on International Cooperation, NYU 2008). The UN Peacemaker website (http://peacemaker.unlb.org) has many useful guidance notes and background briefs, including the pre-negotiation checklist of what a mediator has to think about during a mediation.

The International Peace Institute (IPI) has published several papers on the UN and mediation. An excellent overview of the main trends in armed conflict since the Cold War is "Global Political Violence: Explaining the Post-Cold War Decline" by A. Mack (IPA, 2007).

Several institutes dedicated to mediation have produced useful handbooks, guides and articles, including Swisspeace and USIP. The handbook on mediation produced by USIP as part of its "Peacemaker's Toolkit" series is excellent (www.usip.org/files/file/managing_mediation_process.pdf).

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue has also produced a series of publications on mediation and dialogue, such as mediating ceasefires: www.hdcentre.org/projects/strengthening-practice/issues/tools-mediation.

A comprehensive work that mixes theory and practice is "The Go-Between: Jan Eliasson and the Styles of Mediation" by I. Svensson and P. Wallensteen (USIP, 2010). This book is based on Eliasson's experience as a mediator.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PSC	Political and Security Committee
SG	Secretary-General
SRSG	Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNSE	United Nations Special Envoy

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Fredrik Wesslau works as a Political Adviser for the EU counter-piracy mission, EUCAP Nestor, off the Horn of Africa. Prior to this, he was Political Adviser to the European Union Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan and to the EUSR for the South Caucasus. Before joining the EU, he spent several years in Kosovo where he held the positions of Special Adviser to the SRSG, Head of the Strategic Policy Unit in UNMIK, and Political Officer in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. Fredrik began his career as a journalist, writing mainly for the International Herald Tribune. He was educated in Lund, London, Paris, and New York.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS to resolve armed conflicts and crises have become more ambitious in recent years. Today, more than a quarter of a million military and civilian personnel are deployed in peace operations and political missions around the world.

THESE MISSIONS HAVE become increasingly involved in the political dimension of conflicts. Tasks such as providing good offices, mediating between conflict parties, supporting peace negotiations, and facilitating political processes are often essential to resolving conflicts and creating sustainable peace. That is why the political affairs function is central to today's missions.

THE POLITICAL ADVISER'S HANDBOOK is a practical guide for political advisers and political affairs officers working with conflicts and crisis management. It includes concrete advice on how to carry out the core tasks of political affairs: analysing politics and conflicts, writing reports, political dialogue, public diplomacy, writing speeches, negotiating, and mediating.

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