

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The problem*

Today's international conflicts are qualitative different from traditional interstate conflicts. On the agenda are intrastate and increasingly complex conflicts, including cultural dimensions. These conflicts tend to be hard to resolve. "[O]nly 15 per cent of civil and identity conflicts end in negotiated settlements and only one-third of them last for more than five years" (Aggestam 2002:72).

The South Asia region and its "conflict potential" has evolved to be one primary point of focus on the international agenda. The threat of "global terrorists" and the "problems" in Central Asia have rendered an interest in the connecting region. Nationalistic tendencies in different shapes and struggles for liberty in different regions are present, and a co-ordinating action and cooperation among the states seems to more important than ever.<sup>1</sup> A cultural complexity in present day conflicts is found in other cases as well. One example that highlights the problem of intercultural communication is a statement of one of the mediators behind the so called Dayton agreement 1995. After several broken agreements between 1991 and 1995, a cease-fire was finally achieved in Bosnia. (Hauss 2001:171-) Holbrooke expressed himself about the Bosnia-Serbia leadership:

"...The Western mistake over the previous four years had been to treat the Serbs as rational people with whom one could argue, negotiate, compromise, and agree. In fact, they respected only force or an unambiguous and credible threat to use it." (Hauss 2001:218)

Holbrooke regard the Bosnia-Serbia leaders as irrational and himself as representing rationality. Rationality is not a completely unambiguous concept. Rather you can talk about different kinds of rationality. For example rationality can be based on purpose or of value. The first rationality concerns expected benefit from a certain action<sup>2</sup>, while the

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<sup>1</sup> These statements are developed in chapter 2.2 (with references).

<sup>2</sup> Rationality in rational decision-making is a rationality based on purpose and implies: a) different alternatives of decision is regarded, b) consequences in terms of costs/ benefits and their probability are investigated, c) the most effective alternative to reach fixed goal are chosen. (Jönsson, Elgström, Jerneck 1996:49-50)

second presumes that a value alone determine what is rational and irrational. (Gilje, Grimen 1992:256-257)

Holbrooke's expression can be seen as a narrow perception of rationality and maybe also can be said to manifest an ethnocentric attitude. Out of a rationality based on values, Holbrooke may presuppose some values while the Bosnia-Serbia leaders take other core values for granted. With a "value rationality" where no acceptance for alternative perceptions of values is present, the risk that actors, others than the Bosnia-Serbia leaders, will be described as irrational is considerable.

Out of rationality based on purpose the problem to generalize remains. Jönsson claims that in a context where "...we move to the complex variable-sum or 'mixed-motive' games... no satisfactory definition of rationality, no unequivocal rationality criterion can be given". Furthermore the idea of the actor as having knowledge to make the perfect decision is hardly the fact in the reality. (1978:382) Irrespective of how rationality is defined, and more important, the fact is that parties have had problems to communicate with each other. Difficulties in intercultural communication (for example when diplomats from USA have met with diplomats from Arab countries) and misunderstandings caused by cultural differences tend to be a common problem in international negotiation. (Jönsson 1990:38) These examples of problems in intercultural communication can be one explanation of the difficulties in achieving durable peace in international conflicts.

When the focus is on developing conflict resolution in international conflicts, intercultural communication can be seen as crucial for the possibilities to reach successive outcomes. The problem in occasions of trying to solve a dispute can be traced to different units of the communicative meeting. Holbrooke focused on the actor. Others have tried to explain the difficulties from the language itself<sup>3</sup>. One risk with a focus on the actor or a specific language as problematic is that this may be perceived as personal attacks, which furthermore can cause

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<sup>3</sup> The perception is that there are some languages where "...there is no term that is even roughly equivalent to reconciliation" (Hauss 2001:221)

defensive and aggressive reactions. To increase the possibilities to resolve international conflicts there seem to be a need for an alternative approach.

My point of departure is to focus on the setting<sup>4</sup> for communication, the framework in which the parties are expected to communicate. If the intercultural communication is governed by certain values and beliefs to fulfil some parties' expectations, other participants who cannot identify with these assumptions may not be able to communicate in a "conflict resolutionary" way. One worst-case scenario could be that these actors defend themselves and their positions, which would imply intensifying of existing conflict or conflict breakout. Focus, I argue, should be on searching a communicative setting which creates space for intercultural communication, and accordingly the possibility to start a process of conflict resolution.

## **1.2 The context and aim of this paper**

The statements above are some aspects of the problem I observe in the context of conflict resolution and intercultural communication. This complex of problems will be developed in this paper. I am at the point of departure of planning a research project. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to present some ideas of the need for further research and a feasible project plan. The aim is to focus the intercultural communicative setting in international negotiations, and how this can be an instrument to transform a state of conflict management into a process of peace building in international conflicts. The ideas all need to be further developed and discussed. This paper can hopefully perform the function of a foundation for discussion. All comments and reflections are welcomed.

## **1.3 Disposition**

In chapter 2 I intend to present a brief picture of the context where we are operating, i.e. a discussion about the international political system and new kinds of conflicts. In the same chapter I consider my point of departure concerning conflict resolution and conflict management, and present some approaches to conflict resolution. In chapter 3 I discuss international negotiation and the units of analysis, relevant to this paper. In chapter 4 I connect international negotiation to the concept of culture and I argue how culture can influence international negotiation. In chapter 5 the communicative perspective of

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<sup>4</sup> I will argue more thoroughly for this approach further on.

international negotiation is discussed. In the last chapter 6 the intention is to present some ideas of a project plan based on the discussions in this paper.

## **2. Background**

### ***2.1 The international political system***

The international political system has changed with the end of the so called Cold War 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union 1991. The ideological conflict between Communistic East and Capitalist, democratic West seemed to be over. The earlier bipolar balance disappeared, and left an uncertainty about how a future system would be defined. After the Second World War and above all, during the seventies, different forms of transactions over (and beyond) the frontiers of the nation-states have increased. The international system has become increasingly complex. International and trans-national communications have contributed to consequences partly beyond the borders of the countries and the authority of the governments. (Held 1997:177-) Politics, security, economy, culture, media, and environment are some topics that are brought together. New and extended cooperation among and over the state boundaries is developing.<sup>5</sup> The threat from “global terrorism” and expressions about “axis of the evil” make us reflect on the situations in many different contexts, and force us into consideration about issues like the role of UN and the future world order.

The Westphalia order, where the sovereign national-states have been the principal actors, has been prevailing since 1648. The essence has been the natural tension between states where no state had the possibility to dominate another state. (Moncayo, Vinuesa, Gutiérrez Posse 1997:31) The result is anarchy where the balance in the system is sustained through power struggles among the states. One way to create some order in the international political system is through international regimes, i.e. “rules and routines that govern behaviour around specific issues in international relations” (Zartman 2002:357).

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<sup>5</sup> Observe that this is a discussion derived from a Western perspective, where sovereign nation-states are the point of departure. The discussion need to be further developed in respect to, for example, developing states and states in a democratization process.

Hettne discusses the world order after the 11 of September 2001 and points out a decreasing capability of nation-states to manage global flows. This implies an increasing vulnerability and a new threatening picture is presented. (Hettne 2002:17) There have been discussions about how a future world order will be pictured. After the terrorist-attacks against the USA and the following scenario, the present world order seems to be evolving towards unilateralism. (Hettne 2002:27-28)

## ***2.2 New conflicts***

We observe that the nature of “international” conflicts has changed and these new conflicts are described as increasingly complex. Conflicts within states have become more rule than exception, in contrast to the earlier predominant international nature of world conflicts. (Haus 2001:21) Aspects such as language, ethnicity, and religion involved in these conflicts have resulted in difficulties to reach profound and enduring conflict resolutions, particularly with the help of methods that are designed for interstate conflicts. (Haus 2001:43) The conflicts can (at the best) get caught in a “status quo” of conflict management and the goal and process of conflict resolution<sup>6</sup> can seem far away.

The complexity is further increased by the international dimensions involved in the intra-state conflicts. International factors can affect the conflicts, and the conflicts can cause international consequences. Furthermore, the international community is more and more involved in the attempts to solve these kinds of conflicts (Haus 2001:24) (as a result of for example threat of nuclear weapon, human rights, threat of “evil action”).

Most of today’s conflicts can be characterized as “civil and identity-based disputes” and they tend to be asymmetrical. The asymmetric relation arises for example when one part is a state-actor and the other is a non-state actor. (Aggestam 2002:69) Asymmetrical conflicts are difficult to resolve and there are different reasons to this. When one part in the conflict is superior to the other, it seems to be hard to reach a state where this part is ready to compromise. The weaker part tends to use alternative means to gain power. One example is a resistance (with the foundation in ethnicity, religion, nationality etc) to accept the domination of the superior part and its attempts to set the rules for negotiation. Another way to gain

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<sup>6</sup> The notions “conflict management” and “conflict resolution” is developed in chapter 2.3.

power is to seek legitimacy for its position through an internationalizing of the conflict.

(Aggestam 2002:70-71)

If a settlement is achieved, asymmetrical conflicts still are difficult to implement. (Aggestam 2002:72) Asymmetry is one factor that may impede a deeper resolution of today's conflicts. Different ways of using power in international conflict have to be understood and managed. Aggestam has observed the importance of an improved communication to cope with the problem of asymmetry (2002:88). There are few studies in the realm of asymmetric relations and negotiation (Aggestam 2002:70), and there may be a need for further studies to elucidate this field.

South Asia is a region with experiences from both interstate and intrastate conflicts. This region has received international interest after the 11 of September<sup>7</sup>. The instability in the region, with its connections to Central Asia, is seen as a security threat. There are different tendencies in the conflicts in South Asia, where some are defined as regionalized while others are internationalized. (Hettne 2002:47) Hettne describes the pattern of conflict in this region as "pathological". The causes to the conflicts are regarded as misunderstandings or based on the images of "the other". (Hettne 2002:32-33)

The dispute over Kashmir contains a power struggle between India and Pakistan as well as the status of Kashmir itself. Within Kashmir there are different national identities and the Kashmiri people can be seen out of different angles, depending on which future may be at hand. The Muslims in Kashmir can be seen as a minority of India, a majority of Pakistan, or as part of a global Islamic identity. Additionally, there are Kashmiri identities, such as the ethno-national "Kashmiriyat", which connects to demands for an independently Kashmir. The danger of escalating conflicts between Pakistan and India still remains, and the internal tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India may result in serious consequences. (Hettne 2002:41-43) Other conflict areas in the region are Nepal, where the Maoists are refused legitimacy, which probably not will facilitate dialogue and a resolution. Sri Lanka and the conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese seemed to be an exception, and a solution developing.

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<sup>7</sup> Notice that the Kashmir region and the tensions between India and Pakistan with the threat of nuclear weapon, has been an international concern even before the 11 of September 2001.

(Hettne 2002:44) Nevertheless, the tensions have increased and it is insecure how the future will be formed.

Traditionally, the regional great power India has opposed an international intervention in the region, while other states have sought to establish international contacts as an instrument against Indian hegemony. (Hettne 2002:34) This is in accordance to earlier discussed character of asymmetrical conflicts.

The traditional way to handle conflicts by military means does not seem to be convenient. On the contrary, these can result contra productive. (Hettne 2002:46) Culture, security and durable social progress are intertwined and the new conflicts in the global society have a lot to do with identity and culture. (Hettne 2002:50) Hettne emphasizes the importance of handling the tense relations among the states in the South Asia region. To manage the conflicts and insecurities in the area regional cooperation may be necessary. (Hettne 2002:45)

### ***2.3 Conflict management vs. conflict resolution in international conflicts***

International actors can be seen interacting on a continuum where war and conflict is one pole, and peace and cooperation the other. To decrease the degree of conflict and war and increase the degree of peace and cooperation, different means are at hand. These can be divided into two fundamental concepts, conflict management and conflict resolution.

Conflict management deals with external pressure in the shape of threat and military instruments of power. The goal is to reach cease-fire and to get the parties to end the use of military means, and to get them to adopt other instruments. Conflict resolution is a deeper process where the aim is to build peace. (Karlsson 1994:105) Attempts can be focused on finding the essence of reason to the conflict and try to bridge incompatibilities as the parties perceive them. Conflict resolution implies a fundamental change of the relation between the parties. The conflict ends and structures of peace are created. (Karlsson 1994:116-117) Accordingly, conflict management is about attaining a state, while in conflict resolution we deal with a process of deeper peace-building. Although, conflict management and conflict resolution can be seen as two different phases in a process of transforming war to peace.

The discussion about conflict management and conflict resolution can be further elucidated through a discussion about the peace notion manifested by Galtung. He divides the notion peace into negative and positive peace<sup>8</sup>. Conflict management and negative peace have points of contact. The peace is negative when it is described as absence of war and when the parties end their use of military means. The conflict remains, but cease-fire prevails. (Karlsson 1994:22-) The positive peace has points of contact with conflict resolution. The aim of this peace is to create positive relations among individuals and groups and to create non-discrimination relations among states. Peace is regarded as a continuing process in contrast to the notion of negative peace that can be regarded as a state. The positive peace goes beyond the management of direct violence. The intention is to reduce institutional violence such as imperialism, colonialism, racial oppression and contempt for women, and to create positive peace structures. These structures are characterized by a voluntary attitude, and no part can be forced into a positive peace. This peace is founded on normative principles such as justice, equality, freedom, integration etc. To create a positive peace we need institutional transformations and changes in perceptions and concepts. (Karlsson 1994:27-)

In this paper, efforts towards conflict resolution and possibilities to implement peace agreements are regarded as something worth aiming at. That is to say, it is good but not completely satisfactory to manage international conflicts. The aim is to (through a focusing on the intercultural communicative setting in international negotiation as an instrument) seek to transform a state of conflict management into a process of positive and durable peace.

Conflicts can be functional, i.e. they contribute to change and development. This positive aspect of conflicts cannot be taken advantage of through managing, repressive methods. Long-term solutions of international conflicts call for something more than conflict management and situations where one or many of the parties perceive that they are losing and are forced to a "solution" (zero-sum solution). These kinds of solutions risk a return to conflict. In conflict resolution and durable peace the ambition is to achieve a solution where

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<sup>8</sup> The expressions "negative" and "positive" can be criticized for valuing in terms of "right and wrong", or "good or bad". Negative peace can seem to be something bad in itself, while positive peace can seem to be good - apart from any context. Here the thought is primarily to, with the help of these notions, illustrate the difference between conflict management and conflict resolution. Whether the positive or negative peace is convenient is a question of context, where the interactions are on the continuum of war and peace.



all parties can see themselves as winners (win-win solution). The emphasis is then to consider how to transform a state of conflict management into a process of conflict resolution and durable peace in international conflicts.

In bargaining processes where the aim is to transform a state of war to peace, relations need to be reconstructed. Enemy images need to be changed and relations of trust have to be created. To create durable peace, agreements have to be more than resolutions in principle. There must be a possibility to implement the agreements and to continue a constructive way of relate to each other. (Jönsson and Aggestam 1997:783-784)

Zartman considers conflict as change in “structures and relations”, which implies a need for a reform of the structure. He connects structure to the concept of regime, i.e. “rules and routines that govern behaviour around a specific issue in international relations”. Regimes can be seen as reflections of the structure of power, but they also adjust these power structures. To be able to resolve conflicts we have to observe the prevailing “power-relations among the parties”. If the purpose is to create durable, durable peace there is a need to be conscious about current regimes and their connection to the type of conflict we are dealing with. The use of negotiation as a mean to manage conflict can be seen as a “smaller regime” in which the creation of rules can direct the conflict towards conflict resolution. (Zartman 2002:356-358)

#### **2.4 Some approaches to conflict resolution**

There are different approaches in theories in International Politics in the realm of conflict resolution and negotiation. Burton (and his assumptions about world society) represents one approach which emphasizes the possibilities to reach durable peace. The premise is viewing conflicts as functional and based on misunderstandings. (Burton 1972:55-) The effort is to investigate the “real” behaviour and perceptions of the others. (Burton 1972:155) Out of universal values such as security, the parties can identify with each other and understand the misunderstandings. (Burton 1972:135) The main problem according to this approach is to find methods, techniques or structures where the parties can cooperate. Burton assumes that the will to resolve conflicts is related to the utilized method. (Burton 1969:118)

The ideas of Burton are adopted and developed by Kelman. Kelman has worked in “identity group conflicts”<sup>9</sup> with problem solving workshop methods. These are realized in informal settings where the parties are unofficial representatives and the situation is private and confidential. The intention has been to create an atmosphere where discussions can be free and open. These methods have proven successfully as means to develop new ideas of win-win solutions, steps of mutual assurance and a non-threatening language among the parties. The purposes of these workshops are to change the perceptions of enemy images, and to promote a change in the formal decision process through the participants. (Kelman 1997:214) The primary goal of the workshops is to get the parties to the negotiation table. However, Kelman has experiences from attempts of transforming success in pre-negotiations into official negotiations. He expresses “...the overlap between the official and unofficial processes...created some ambiguities and role conflicts”. (Kelman 1997:215) The informal setting has advantages over the formal in the possibilities to establish relationships of peace. The challenging question is then how to transform the informal results into formal settings and decision-making (in this paper described as transforming a state of conflict management into a process of peace building, through the instrument intercultural communicative setting).

I notice that some ideas from the social constructivism of Alexander Wendt<sup>10</sup> may help to develop the thinking. His approach can elucidate and emphasize a structural perspective and the opportunity for profound changes of identifications that may be useful to have in mind.

According Wendt the interactions among parties produce and reproduce concepts of their selves and of others. This set in motion a continuing process of identities and interests. There is a possibility to achieve structural changes, i.e. power structures can transform into social structures of mutual security, cooperation etc. (Wendt 1999:36-7) The social structure<sup>11</sup> influences the actors and their interactions, but the actors reproduce and produce the structure over time. If the experiences of earlier interactions are characterized of threat and egoistic identification, the actors tend to reproduce a social structure of power struggle and conflict. On the other hand, the actors can choose to interact in a new way. If they seek to create confidence and trust they can form solidarity and cooperation. (Wendt 1998:421) The social

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<sup>9</sup> In Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Rwanda-Burundi, former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union.

<sup>10</sup> Observe that Wendt is focused on the international political system, where he sees the states as the only actors.

<sup>11</sup> A social structure contains shared knowledge, material resources and practice. (Wendt 1996:49)

structure depends of how the actors identify (primarily in relation to their security). (Wendt 1996:47) In an extremely negative identification the other is regarded as something banned, an object to manipulate. A positive identification is symbolized by an emotional interdependence between the other and the self, with feelings of solidarity, community, loyalty and collective interests. (Wendt 1998:418-419)

In this realm conflict can be seen as a social structure, which can prevail over time. However this social structure also may change into a structure characterized by conflict resolution. The question is then how to create positive interactions where the parties can identify with each other in a positive way, i.e. in a “conflict resolutionary” way?

Wendt see some causal mechanisms at a system level (international political system) that effect the constructions and reconstructions of identities. One of these is the “rhetorical practice”. The aim of this mechanism is to create solidarity, but it is also possible to use this practice to manipulate. (Wendt 1996:57-58) The rhetorical practice constitutes a great part of the international acting, for example when Iran talks about USA as “the big Satan”, or Bush talks about Iran, Iraq and North Korea as “an axis of evil”, or when European statesmen meet to discuss European identity.

The question is now how to create a rhetorical practice, i.e. communication among the parties that may facilitate a positive identification and with that possibilities for transforming conflict into conflict resolution and durable peace? I argue that international regimes may be of importance here. The international negotiation can be seen as a “smaller regime”, which through the creation of norms and rules can direct the conflict towards conflict resolution.

The regime concept<sup>12</sup> is defined by Krasner as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations”. Principles and norms are the foundation of the regime, which specify its character. Principles are “theoretical statements about how the world works”, such as liberal principles. Norms identify “general standards of behaviour”, and according to the liberal principle the norm would be deregulations. Rules often “reconcile conflicts which may

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<sup>12</sup> Institutions as constituted of norms and rules are regarded, by Wendt, as “shared mental models”. (Wendt 1999:96)

exist between the principles and the norms”, and may take the form of regulation of exceptions from the principle. Decision-making procedures “identify specific prescriptions for behaviour”. (Little 2001:303)

### **3. International negotiation**

International negotiation has been the civilized way, the non-violent method, for states to resolve disputes, and as such an alternative to threat or use of military means. The tendencies of an increasing complexity in the international political system<sup>13</sup> imply consequences for the international negotiation. Faure claims that these tendencies will result in a greater importance for negotiation and culture in the international context. (2002:393) Kremenyuk also emphasizes the complex environment, and considers international negotiation as increasingly important. He argues that the traditional approaches need to be developed to make successful agreements possible in today’s world. (2002:481)

#### ***3.1 The unit of analysis***

International negotiations may find expression in different ways, but Faure and Sjöstedt claim that all negotiations include: structure, actors, strategy, process and outcome. (1993:7-8) I will here put attention to my focal point of unit in this paper, the structure.

The “actor” concerns the perceptions of the actors - of the negotiation and of other actors, and different acting of the actors. The “process” relates to the communication among the negotiators. The “strategy” is about the actors’ plans to achieve their goals. The “outcome” concerns the agreement, which may offer distinct possibilities to be implemented. (Faure and Sjöstedt 1993:9-12)

The “structure” of the negotiation is decided by: number of involved parties and their interrelation, how many issues, the distribution of power between parties, the organizational setting, degree of transparency for non-participants etc. The structure impacts the other units of the negotiation and the influence may be strong, although it may be hard to specify in an

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter 2.1 and 2.2

analysis. (Faure and Sjöstedt 1993:9-10) The structure is, in other words, the “contextual or situational factors” that affect the other units. They may also be named “negotiation setting”, “conditions” and “negotiation milieu”. (Jönsson 1978:383) Jönsson distinguishes between “intra-negotiatory and extra-negotiatory situational factors”. The first is related to the organization of the negotiation (number of parties, degree of secrecy, agenda, degree of information, time), while the second is related to factors in the international politics or in the domestic politics (relations between the parties and relations within the parties). (Jönsson 1978:383-386)

Zartman emphasizes the importance of the structure and regards it as “highly influential” on the other units in the negotiation. Power<sup>14</sup> is an essential element in a structural approach, and therefore the discussion about asymmetry contra symmetry. If there exists a structural equality (when the parties feel equal and consider the situation as fair), the chances for a positive-sum outcome increases. That is to say, the parties do not have to defend their positions and struggle to gain equilibrium. An effort towards symmetry is the key to successful negotiation. (Zartman 2002:71-74)

International regimes are one way to create order in the international political system. Just as international negotiation can be seen as a “small regime”, so can the structure of the negotiation be viewed as a “smaller” regime. The structure contains rules and routines that govern the units in the negotiation. Regimes reflect **and** regulate structures of power (Zartman 2002:356). That is to say, through rules and routines there is a possibility to regulate asymmetry in the negotiation setting.

My approach is primarily to focus on the structure. My assumption is that the structure conditions and may involve consequences for the other units (actors and their strategies, character of communication and of the outcome) in the negotiation. The idea is that the structure may facilitate or impede interactions that promote conflict resolution. “Structure” and its possible influences will be further discussed in the next chapter about culture and international negotiation.

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<sup>14</sup> Power is here regarded as issue-relevant. That is to say that a Realistic view of power is not accepted. In some cases, the possession of capability (as for example military power) cannot explain the outcome in international negotiation. (Zartman 2002:74)

#### **4. Culture and international negotiation**

In the context of the tendencies in the international political system today, with a growing interdependence and complexity, there are different assumptions about the role of national cultures. One thought is that national cultures will be transcended by new relationships, while another reflection is that culture, in different ways, will have an increasingly influence on people. Conflicts are supposed to escalate in this international context, and negotiations are supposed to be the useful instrument to handle them. One universal rational approach to explain actions in international negotiation has, in several cases, proven unsatisfying. Rather, "...some negotiators may appear to act in a nonunderstandable way...they may do the opposite of what might seem to be in their own interest". (Faure 2001:392-393) Faure emphasizes that negotiators are human beings, who are conditioned by culture, and he declares that culture has an impact on negotiation. (2001:393) Culture is the foundation for the tendency to bring different expectations into the negotiation with people from other cultures. (Faure and Rubin 193:225)

Faure and Sjöstedt have suggested some ideas of how to analyse "culture and negotiation". Their focus is on how culture affects the separate units (i.e. structure, actor, strategy, process and outcome) in the negotiation, and the extent to which culture can have an influence. (1993:2) One assumption that may be used is that culture "shapes how people think, communicate, and behave...and therefore how they negotiate" (Salacuse 1993:199). Culture conditions behaviour and may impede negotiation (misunderstanding is the result of confronting of different cultures), as well as it may facilitate negotiation (when the parties discovers bridges between their cultures). (Faure and Sjöstedt 1993:8)

##### ***4.1 The impact of culture***

Culture is not the only explanation of negotiation outcome, or even the most important factor. Rather "...any reasonable explanation of what happens in international negotiation must include the cultural aspects of the negotiation relationship." (Faure and Rubin 1993:212) Some critic that is directed against the studies of culture's influence on negotiation is the tendency to explain failure [as the "way out" when no other factor can contribute to an

understanding or explanation]. Zartman claims that there is a need for explanation of success rather than failure, because success is rarely achieved. (1993:17)

The extent to which culture have an impact depends on factors such as the level of conflict (the cultural affect increases when the level of conflict rises), power symmetry (power asymmetry tends to decrease the effect of culture), historical memory, structure (a strong structure decreases the impact of culture).<sup>15</sup> (Faure and Rubin 1993:211-216)

Multilateral negotiations tend to be more common than bilateral negotiations, which may contribute to the development of a more universal “negotiation culture”. In these negotiations the negative impact of national cultures tends to decrease, compared to bilateral negotiations. This should imply an optimistic view of future international conflicts. Nevertheless, the question is if national cultures will be replaced by different regional or group-cultures. Furthermore, within the more professional “negotiation culture” subcultures are found, representing different kinds of professional cultures. (Lang 1993:45) The challenge of culture remains, maybe in an even more complex picture than before.

#### ***4.2 Typology***

In the discussion of the influence of culture on the units of the negotiation, the analysis concerns how different actors have distinct perceptions of for example what is a good outcome, what is the best or “normal” strategy etc. One approach is to analyse how different cultures imply distinct kinds of styles of negotiation. Some suggestions of typologies of negotiation styles have been developed.

For example a distinction is made between high-context and low-context cultures. High-context cultures are characterized by an implicit and social way of communication (ex. China), while the communication in a low-context culture is more direct and explicit (ex. Scandinavia, Germany). (Jönsson 1990:38) Another kind of distinction is made about levels of culture, such as national, sub-national, professional and family cultures. (Faure and Sjöstedt, 1993:5) A sophisticated and systematic analysis of national cultures is realized by

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<sup>15</sup> Observe that the impact of culture not automatically can be understood as positive in the realm of creating durable peace. For example, power asymmetry and structure can decrease the impact of culture, but at the same time (if perceived as unequal and unfair) impede conflict resolution and durable peace.

Hofstede. He distinguishes four dimensions of culture: “power distance between actors” (the acceptance of unequal power distribution), “individualism vs. collectivism”, “uncertainty avoidance” (acceptance of uncertainty) and “masculinity vs. femininity” (self-assertion vs. unpretentiousness). (Faure and Sjöstedt, 1993:7 and Hofstede 1991) These are just examples of ways to categorize culture, and do not represent a mapping of this field. I choose to not develop these categories in this paper, although this may be of concern later on.

The problem with these categorizations is how to place the actors into the categories. The same actor may belong to a national, sub-national and professional culture at the same time and these cultures may be characterized in different ways. In some contexts subcultures can be of greater importance than national cultures. There is a need for further research to identify “culturally homogeneous geographical areas” and their influence of negotiation styles (Faure and Rubin 1993:221).

The styles of communication may affect the communication among the parties. Inter-cultural differences, as manifested in different styles of communication, may affect the effectiveness of the communication and therefore the negotiation. I argue that the differences are not the problem; rather how different actors (with distinct cultures) are given the opportunity to interact, (later developed as intercultural communication).

#### ***4.3 Structure***

The structural approach to negotiation emphasizes that culture may legitimize some situational powers. Culture can be seen as a part of the structure. In this way, culture may come to expression through “a code of conduct”, where rules about for example secret or open negotiation is preferable. The culture in the structure can also be seen as “organizational culture”. International institutions such as the United Nations are practising different organizational cultures, which results in different ways of approaching issues. (Faure and Sjöstedt 1993: 9-10)

Structural constraints in form of common norms and superior goals have shown to be of greater importance than parties’ cultural heterogeneity. In other words, structural constraints seems to neutralize the negative effects of culture in international negotiations: “...culture’s effects on international negotiation are least prominent when structural factors are strong, and



culture exerts its most powerful effects when structural factors are in remission". (Faure and Rubin 1993:216) Zartman observes a developing "homogenized cosmopolitan culture" where multilateral organizations such as United Nations are important promoters (a professional culture of negotiation). The same author sees the need for a suspension of cultural differences to be able to reach negotiated agreements. (Zartman 1993:19)

There are some problems with this approach. Negotiators are representatives that have to balance on the edge between the interests of their group, and to interact and develop agreements with other representatives. The problem with "rising above" ones own culture is that persons they represent will perceive these negotiators "as not attached to their common culture", and the negotiator can be accused for not representing the people (Salacuse 1993:208). The challenge is then to consider the own culture and at the same time try to bridge other cultures.

Furthermore, cultural differences have proven be a great obstacle in negotiations where one party "...fears that the other side will seek to impose its culture or to use it to dominate". In asymmetrical cases, the weaker part may look at the other culture as a weapon which can threat its interests. (Salacuse 1993:202) The threat can be perceived as directed against the weaker part's culture, and the fear for a forcible change of its ethnic group may rule the situation. When the dominant culture is perceived as a threatening weapon, the reaction from the weaker part is defensive. The weaker part uses then "...its own culture as a fortress to protect itself from a cultural onslaught". (Salacuses 1993:203) The negotiators cannot accept to contradict its own culture, and with that deny the own identity. (Faure and Rubin 1993:226) This interaction of threat and defence results in a contradictory game.

Cohen brings out the importance of cultural sensitivity and of a self-awareness of unconsciously patterns. To reach constructive agreements in negotiation the negotiators need to know the others' cultures, history, language etc. A development of a universal "cure-all" seems impossible. (Cohen 1993:36)

I call attention once more to the significance of power structures in international negotiations in general, and in the structure of the negotiation in particular. Structure may facilitate negotiation, and (here more interesting) the possibility to achieve durable conflict resolution.

Two polar approaches can be distinguished concerning how to manage culture in international negotiation. The structure should be framed in order to recognize a universal culture or to promote a relativistic standpoint.

The risk with a universal standpoint is an ethnocentric communicative setting, with consequences for the possibilities for some parts to interact, and therefore for the possibilities to establish durable peace. The problem I see with a relativistic approach is that it does not say much. How can we better understand and predict the inter-cultural negotiation? I argue that we need to be able to theorize the cultural variation, i.e. find patterns of possible interactions and their consequences. One prospect would be to intend to bridge these two diametrical approaches. In other words, create a negotiation setting that may contribute to a universal code of conduct, in which some universal and common characteristics are found and where cultural variation is possible.

### ***5. Culture and communicative perspective***

Negotiation<sup>16</sup> can be regarded as a "...subclass[es] of social communication" (Jönsson 2002:270)

The communicative aspect of negotiation has not received much attention in studies of negotiation. Although, communication is always present and plays an important role in international negotiations, (Jönsson 1990:1-5) few systematic analyses have been developed with the focus on communication in international bargaining. (Jönsson 1990:9)

Traditionally, social communication has been studied as a process where "...one person affects the behaviour or state of mind of another" (Jönsson 1990:12). The effort is then on explaining failure in the communication (as successive communication is the normal), and one typical expression in this approach is: "It's hard to get that idea across to him"<sup>17</sup>. (Jönsson 1990:13) An alternative approach is to consider communication out of a social constructive perspective. In this way communication is regarded as social interaction, where

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<sup>16</sup> Jönsson discusses the difference between formal negotiation and informal bargaining. In informal bargaining the parties do not need to pay attention to reputation or positions, and this facilitates improvised attempts to discuss tensed issues. (Jönsson 1990:3)

<sup>17</sup> This approach may be connected to the expression of Holbrooke (see chapter 1.1).

the interaction produces meaning. In this approach misunderstanding is normally occurring and communication needs some effort to be successful. In international negotiation the traditional (non-constructive) way of regarding communication has been dominating.

(Jönsson 1990:13-14) I chose to use the constructive way of thinking and argue that there is a need to further develop ideas of instruments that may facilitate intercultural communication.

Culture can be defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another’. With this definition misunderstandings in communication are caused by differences in programming. That implies the importance of culture in communication, i.e. cultural differences involve difficulties to communicate.

(Jönsson 1990:29) However, although culture conditions and structures actors and their negotiation style, but it is not a static object. Rather it is produced, reproduced and changed in the meeting with reality and different kinds of cultures, which is verified through case-studies where culture has been subject to evolution. (Faure and Rubin 1993:214)

There is a need for systematic studies in intercultural communication. There have been some major works in this area (Hall and Hofstede), but these works are not focused on international negotiation. Further, in intercultural communication the focus is not on differences between cultures. Rather the relations among the cultures are the interesting issue. (Faure and Rubin 1993:220) We may ask to which extent each culture, respectively the combination of cultures (respectively a “universal culture”) may take up space in the communication? We may also ask how the character of the intercultural communication affects the other units in the negotiation, such as outcome.

I argue that there is a need to study and develop the communicative setting, i.e. here regarded as structure for communication, which may facilitate intercultural communication. The key is to create a communicative setting that may contribute to a universal code of conduct, in which some universal and common characteristics are found and where cultural variation is possible. Observe that the structure in the international negotiation is “transformed” to structure for the communication – the communicative setting.

## **6. The project**

### ***6.1 Possible stages of the investigation***

1. Study of arrangements (structure/situation of international negotiation), focusing the arrangers (and/or possibly negotiators' perception of the arrangements, which would imply two different units of analysis)
2. Categorization of types of arrangements
3. Cultural dimensions in the arrangements are analysed (with the help of cultural theory)
3. Connections of the arrangement and its cultural dimensions to the outcome of conflicts (if durable peace are achieved or not in the different arrangements)
4. Hypotheses about intercultural communication in different communicative settings in international negotiations during processes of conflict resolution are formed.

A contribution could hopefully be to develop hypotheses about how cultures intercommunicate in different settings, i.e. how culture variables may relate to each other. In a longer perspective these kinds of studies could offer possibilities to predict the outcome of the negotiations (“given these parties and this communicative setting the outcome may...” etc). In an even longer perspective there might be possible to develop different kinds of communicative settings according to the parties involved (a communicative setting that may a) have some universal and more permanent characteristics, b) involve flexibility where cultural variation may take place). That is not to say that cultures will remain the same during the negotiations. Rather, with different communicative settings (according to the parties involved) there would be possible to achieve “the same” outcome – an effective communication to facilitate durable peace.

The ideas about universal characteristics vs. cultural variation need to be developed and connected to the regime concept. With other words, I may investigate which of the regime elements that could be regarded as universalistic vs. relativistic. A possible model for this would be:

	Principles	Norms	Rules	Decision-making
Universalistic characteristics				
Culture variation				

Figure 1. Frame for analysis of regime elements

In which elements are there a possibility to develop “universal and common characteristics” and where may culture variation take place? There would also be of interest to investigate in which direction it would be advantageously to act. I.e. with the aim to frame an intercultural communicative setting in international negotiations (to be able to transform a state of conflict management into a process of peace building), in which level of abstraction may it be advantageously to start (principles are the most abstract, while decision-making is found on a lower level of abstraction)?

**6.2 Possible empirical material and methods**

Although the concept of culture is important to understand negotiations-processes, it is rather easy to see the problems when it comes to empirical studies. I have to regard and demarcate cases in order to fit into my assumptions. Cases should be chosen to be able to investigate possibilities to develop durable peace from a state of conflict management (where I could choose conflicts that can be regarded as “failures” and/or cases regarded as “successes”). Conflicts should also be chosen where cultural differences seem to be at hand (and take into account whether the power relations are characterized as asymmetrical or symmetrical). Conflicts in the South Asia region may, according to developed ideas in this paper, in be highly interesting as cases in this project. Although there may be need to chose comparable cases in other regions.

The use of methods must be determined by the access to empirical material. Possible methods could be: archival research (descriptions of and/or experiences from negotiations-settings); interviews (the arrangers or maybe negotiators’ or mediators descriptions or experiences from negotiations-settings); field study (my own observations and experiences, participant observation).

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