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Peace Negotiations and Time

Deadline diplomacy in territorial disputes

Marco Pinfari

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Peace Negotiations and Time

This book discusses the role of time in peace negotiations and peace processes in the post-Cold War period, making reference to real-world negotiations and using comparative data.

Deadlines are increasingly used by mediators to spur deadlocked negotiation processes, under the assumption that fixed time limits tend to favour pragmatism. Yet little attention is typically paid to the durability of agreements concluded in these conditions, and research in experimental psychology suggests that time pressure can have a negative impact on individual and collective decision-making by reducing each side's ability to deal with complex issues, complex inter-group dynamics and inter-cultural relations.

This volume explores this lacuna in current research through a comparative model that includes 68 episodes of negotiation and then, in more detail, in relation to four case studies – the Bougainville and Casamance peace processes, and the Dayton and Camp David proximity talks. The case studies reveal that in certain conditions low time pressure can impact positively on the durability of agreements by making possible effective intra-rebel agreements before official negotiations, and that time pressure works in proximity talks only when applied to solving circumscribed deadlocks.

This book will be of much interest to students of peace processes, conflict resolution, negotiation, diplomacy and international relations in general.

Marco Pinfari is Assistant Professor of International Relations at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

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London, July 2012

Acronyms

AFP	*Agence France Presse*
AP	Associated Press
ARB	Africa Research Bulletin
BCL	Bougainville Copper Limited
BIG	Bougainville Interim Government
BRG	Bougainville Reconciliation Government
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BTG	Bougainville Transitional Government
COW	Correlates of War project
DoP	Declaration of Principles
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK
IEBL	Inter-Entity Boundary Line [Former Yugoslavia]
IFOR	NATO Implementation Force [Former Yugoslavia]
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
MAR	Minorities At Risk project
MFDC	*Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance*
MHS	mutually hurting stalemate
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
PA	Palestinian [National] Authority
PLA	Panguna Landowners Association [Bougainville]
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Forces
TMG	Truce Monitoring Group [Bougainville]
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Project
UN-IRIN	United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks
YPA	Yugoslav People's Army

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1 Introduction

Time is important in any aspect of human life, and the pressure that derives from time shortage can have substantial implications for the way we act, and for the choices we make.

If time matters in any work environment, it is arguably particularly important in negotiation. Indeed, probably no major negotiation manual neglects the role played by time pressure. Time pressure received significant coverage in some of the first comprehensive manuals for business negotiators published in the 1960s, such as those by Carl Stevens (1963) and by Walton and McKersie (1965). This emphasis is present also in the classical works of Zartman and Berman (1982), Christopher Moore (1986), Raymond Cohen (1991), Pruitt and Carnevale (1997) and also in recent manuals such as Berridge (2005) and Thompson (2005). Some – such as Walton and McKersie, and Thompson – while arguing that time pressure is part of the 'essentials of negotiation' (cf. Thompson 2005: 34–5) do not discuss the role of time pressure in detail; others, in particular Zartman and Berman, Moore, Cohen and Berridge, dedicate in-depth reflections to the various forms that time pressure could assume and to the practical lessons provided by exemplar episodes of business or diplomatic interactions, in particular in cross-cultural milieus.

In the diplomatic realm, this attention to the role that time pressure plays in conflict resolution and peace negotiations is certainly shared by many senior practitioners and politicians. For instance, former Democratic candidate to the White House John Kerry observed, in an article on the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, that 'Iraqi leaders have responded only to deadlines' and argued for a disengagement strategy modelled around a fixed schedule that would put the Iraqi government under pressure to implement measures that would make such withdrawal safe and feasible (Kerry 2006). According to Ambassador Dennis Ross, one of the key American brokers in the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations during the Clinton administration, 'the concept of a deadline is critical to making a negotiation work' (Bebchick 2002: 122). These statements are just few examples of how contemporary diplomacy sees time pressure as an important means for keeping momentum and maximizing the efficiency and

time-effectiveness of bilateral and multilateral talks, at times encouraged by the experience of diplomats in the private sector (cf. Chollet 1997: 236).

Still, such emphasis on time pressure is often based on a remarkably poor analytical background. Most authors arguing for the importance of time pressure in negotiation imply that its impact is generally beneficial. Some practitioners and politicians, including Senator Kerry in the above-mentioned article, seem to rely only on anecdotic evidence or on the commonsensical perception that 'necessity is the mother of invention' (Sunshine 1990: 185) – that, under the pressure of time and events, people increase their inventiveness, efficiency and productiveness. These intuitions are also substantiated, to some degree, by more rigorous scientific research. A structured bulk of hypotheses inquiring the range of positive effects that time pressure may exert on negotiation was laid down by Carl Stevens in his 1963 manual *Strategy and Collective Bargaining Negotiation.* Stevens' hypotheses, as elaborated by Pruitt and Latané Drews (1969: 45), suggest that time pressure tends to produce a 'softer approach to negotiation', which would involve a lower level of demands, large concessions and less bluffing.

Commonsense, however, would also suggest that time pressure is a 'double-edged sword' (Iklé 1964: 72) which operates within a complex array of trade-offs. In negotiation, not only do some forms of time pressure fail to be considered credible enough to influence the behaviour of the target actor, but many run the risk of backfiring by forcing potentially fruitful interactive processes to failure or by drastically reducing the quality of the output. With time, social psychology developed a series of arguments that circumstantiated or denied altogether the validity of Stevens' hypotheses. In particular, these works point at the negative impact of time pressure on the flexibility of the negotiators' options (Carnevale, O'Connor and McCusker 1993: 124–5), on the prospects for problem-solving behaviour and integrative results from the negotiation (Yukl *et al.* 1976), and on the cognitive coordinates of interpersonal and inter-cultural interactions (Wright 1974).

This book, in its wholeness, aims at critically reviewing these debates and at testing some crucial hypotheses on the impact of time pressure on peace negotiations. Before entering into these debates, this introductory chapter provides some basic information on the main concepts that will be used throughout the research and on its methodological assumptions. More specifically, the following paragraphs will provide a working definition of 'time pressure'; will then discuss the reasons for – and implications of – analysing the role of time pressure specifically in peace negotiations; and will finally introduce the main methodological features of the comparative and case-study sections. The chapter will then conclude with a brief outline of the main contents of each of the following chapters, of their main arguments and of their conclusions.

1.1 The explanatory variable: time, time pressure and deadlines

What do we mean exactly by 'time pressure', and how does such concept relate to debates on the role deadlines play in human interactions?

A first definition of time pressure has been suggested by Smith *et al.* in their seminal article 'Matching and Mismatching' (1982). The authors make clear at the beginning of their analysis that 'time pressure is here defined as closeness to a deadline that, if reached, ends the negotiation without agreement' (Smith *et al.* 1982: 876). In this context, deadlines are seen as the core element of the definition, as a crucial limit that sets in motion the dynamics of time pressure. 'Deadlines' are defined by Christopher Moore (1986: 239) as 'limits that delineate the period of time in which an agreement must be reached'. The idea of 'limit' is inherent in the etymology itself of the term, which was originally used with reference to the physical perimeter around a prison whose crossing would have resulted in the shooting of the prisoner (cf. Sunshine 1990: 185). The idea of 'closeness' to a deadline as a factor which unleashes time pressure also reflects the traditional understanding of negotiation processes as divided into 'phases', as suggested by Carl Stevens in the early 1960s. In his analysis of the negotiation environment, Stevens argued that the 'early' phase of negotiation, when toughness is the norm, is clearly different from a 'late' phase when the parties tend to show an increased willingness of reaching an agreement (Stevens 1963, in Pruitt and Latané Drews 1969).

However, while extremely plain and close to the commonsensical approach to time pressure, this definition suffers from many oversimplifications and can hardly constitute the basis for a robust analysis of the role that time pressure plays in negotiation. It suffers from an extremely spatialized approach to time, as the impact of time schedules on human behaviour on the basis of objective 'closeness' to a deadline – which is clearly at odds with much of contemporary philosophy and social science. A Bergsonian approach to time and *durée* would not, to be true, concede much to pure subjectivism either (cf. Fraser 1968: 23–5); what Bergson would argue for is a form of individual 'dynamism' in which past, present and future overlap in the conscience of the decision-maker in relation to a specific decision to take, or act to perform.

Many other crucial elements for defining time pressure in human interactions are also not taken into consideration in this definition. What does an analysis of time pressure have to say on the potential changes in the distribution of the outcomes between the negotiators that can result from exercising such pressure? How many, and which types of actors are to be included in such analysis? And how would it be possible to approach the cognitive, psychological and strategic dynamics that underlie time pressure and directly generate the observable results associated with it?

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