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EXAMPLES OF INDIRECT NEGOTIATION

In some conflicts direct communication between the parties is either impossible or is more likely to enflame than to resolve tensions. Hostile interactions or the simple repetition of demands can harden negotiating positions and lend support to a perception of the conflict's intractability. Indirect negotiation, or shuttle diplomacy, can provide a useful alternative in which a third party mediator meets separately with each party to the conflict and serves to convey information, propose compromise solutions, and build trust. Indirect negotiation can be distinguished both from direct, face-to-face negotiation and from the use of proxies or patrons as a method to pressure one party when recognition is politically or legally precluded. Shuttle diplomacy was a hallmark of Kissinger's tenure as Secretary of State and was used to bring about a cease-fire in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Within the community of conflict resolution professionals, indirect negotiation is generally seen as a first step leading eventually to direct negotiations, but when used in isolation has a decidedly mixed track record for fully resolving disputes. Indirect negotiation depends fundamentally on the ability of the mediator to develop a trusted relationship with both parties, since this relationship supplants that between the parties. Critical to success are secrecy during the negotiation period; joint public statements at the conclusion of negotiations; and clear and convincing mechanisms to verify implementation.

Selected Examples:

☐ Yom Kippur War (1973-1975). After flying back and forth between Middle Eastern capitals, Kissinger created the "American Plan," the central feature of which was to separate the negotiated ceasefire from additional long-term problems, in addition to minimizing Russia's involvement in the process. The process was made possible by modern communication technologies and air transportation.

☐ Camp David Accords (1978). After three days of initial direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt proved tense, President Carter concluded there was little chance of a viable settlement. Instead he chose to serve as a go-between, drafting and presenting a single document and working individually with Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin to revise it over the course of two-week negotiations.

☐ El Salvador (1989-1992). The Peruvian UN diplomat Alvaro de Soto led negotiations to end a 12-year civil war between the government of El Salvador and FMLN rebels. Initially the parties did not meet face to face, but over time direct negotiations were held at progressively more senior levels on both sides. El Salvadorian President Alfredo Cristiani appeared in person at the signing ceremony in January 1992 and gained praise for shaking hands with rebel commanders.

☐ Cuban Missile Crisis (1962). At the height of the crisis, ABC News reporter John A. Scali carried a critical message from KGB Colonel Aleksandr Fomin to U.S. officials that Russia was prepared to explore a diplomatic solution. This opened the way for productive negotiations between Nikita Krushchev and President Kennedy.