8   Transaction Principle

'More Than a Game'

Key Theme:	Resolution
Problem Question:	How do people from different cultures find resolution to their conflicts?
Objective:	To help you understand the importance of managing intercultural tensions and resolving associated conflict

Key Concepts: Arbitration, avoidance, BATNA, compromise, collaboration, conflict, dual concern model, fixed-sum perception, flexible-sum perception, *honne*, interests, intractable conflicts, mediation, negotiation zone, *nemawashi*, polarization, reservation point, target point, transaction, zero-sum perception.

Chapter Outline

1   Introducing the Problem Question

In the previous chapter, we discussed intercultural communication as a pendulum movement kept in motion by tensions. Now we need to take a closer look at how people from different cultures maintain their vitality, i.e., how they make sure the pendulum swings in such a way that their voices are heard.

In this chapter, we take up the following Problem Question: 'How do people from different cultures find resolution to their conflicts?'

2   Approaching Conflict: Roots

In his address given at Seton Hall University on February 5, 2001, which inaugurated the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that cultural diversity is both the basis for this dialogue and the reality that makes the dialogue necessary. He expressed the hope that, through such dialogue, people from all cultures can flourish and bear fruit in every field of human endeavor. At the same time, he talked about the dark side of this dialogue, including the conflicts between the Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East and the Muslims and Christians in the Balkans. He called for an understanding of the grievances that lie at the roots of such conflict and must be addressed if the conflicts are to be resolved.

Intergroup conflict is not solely a modern cultural phenomenon. It has existed, in some degree, throughout history. The roots of intergroup conflict are very deep: there are accounts of intergroup conflict existing already in hunter–gatherer societies; it has also been documented in other social species, such as wolves and primates (McDonald et al., 2012). The roots of intergroup conflict can be explained not only from phylogenetic (relating to the evolutionary development of our species), but cultural perspectives, as well. Often, people approach their experiences, including disagreements, based on their personal interpretations and are unaware of the impact of cultural factors such as values, gender roles, and language. However, while they may be a result of personality differences, many such conflicts cannot be understood and resolved without considering cultural factors. For example, raising children is especially difficult for intercultural couples (Garcia, 2006). An interfaith couple argues about what religious faith they want to instill in their child, they clash over the worthiness of their beliefs and values, i.e., everything they identify with. Each spouse wants the child to choose his or her own religion, reinforcing his or her own identity. If the husband, for instance, disagrees with his wife's choice of religion for their child, she finds her identity (e.g., Catholic) challenged or even threatened. By the same token, the husband may want to resort to his (e.g., Jewish) identity and raise their child in that faith—the desire his wife does not share.

Since culture is shaped and held together by collective memory, its role in intercultural conflict should be especially noted (Wagoner & Brescó, 2016). It is interesting to mention that for the Romans, the goddess of memory was

Moneta, also associated with money. Similar to money, memory can be seen as the inner energy and substance of universal exchangeability behind human transactions (Kabitoglou, 1990). Intergroup conflicts can be deeply rooted in cultural memory. For instance, in a series of interviews carried out in 2011 among the militant Kurds from Turkey who had taken refuge in Iraq, it was found that for a majority of them the 12th-century Kurdish leader Saladin's recapture of Jerusalem from the Crusaders felt closer in time than more recent events, including the First World War (Ginges & Atran, 2013).

Conflicts among different cultures have occurred throughout history. In many situations, these are relatively small-scale conflicts involving competition, antagonism among rival sport teams, gangs and high school cliques (McDonald et al., 2012). For instance, there are a number of cultural differences between the U.S. Marines and Navy. The Marines are said to be very direct, while the Navy is not; sometimes, it feels like they speak different languages. While in practice and in combat they work together well, trapped together in close quarters, such as on board the USS *Boxer* for months in the middle of an ocean, they sometimes experience culture clashes such as bickering over who makes better bread and who broke the washing machine (Jones, 2019).

Some situations are more serious and involve many more people. For instance, in 1997, a conflict took place between the U.S. Occidental Petroleum and the U'wa Indians of Colombia over a field with oil resources believed to be worth billions of dollars. For centuries, the U'wa had considered themselves the guardians of their sacred ancestral homeland, having successfully defended their territory high in the Andean cloud forests from conquistadors, missionaries, and colonists. They declared that they would rather die than to allow Occidental Petroleum to drill for oil—a substance the U'wa believe to be the blood of mother Earth—on their sacred ancestral territory (Soltani, 2017). As a result, in 2002, Occidental Petroleum announced withdrawal of plans to drill for oil on U'wa lands, the rights to oil and minerals reverting to Colombia's government.

As we can see, intercultural conflict becomes much more difficult to manage when sacred values are involved. For example, most Palestinians regard a return to their former lands in what is now the State of Israel as their sacred right that cannot be given away by any authority. Most Israelis, in their turn, regard recognition of this right as an existential threat to their independence; when one pilot study was conducted, most Israelis reacted with hostility to the question 'Do you agree that there are some extreme circumstances where it would be permissible for Israel to recognize the Palestinian right of return?'; as a result of this harsh reaction, the researchers were required to drop the item from the survey (Ginges & Atran, 2013).

In some situations, we witness the so-called '**intractable conflicts**' that persist over time, resist resolution, and involve some form of violence (physical or symbolic) between conflicting cultures. Here, there is little, if any, intercultural dialogue; instead, cultures engage in the distortion of messages, propaganda, and dehumanizing the adversary (Smith, 2014). Examples of

intractable conflicts include the enduring conflicts in Israel–Palestine and Cyprus. A study of interstate relationships in those countries between 1945 and 1995 identified 18 cases of intractable conflict that included militarized and violent force, resisting hundreds of attempts at resolution (Bercovitch, 2005). Not surprisingly, negotiating intractable conflicts receives special attention by communication scholars and practitioners (Schiff, 2018).

Most people understand conflict as a clash or disagreement, which is quite correct. Consider an intercultural couple discussing their favorite ethnic food, and one likes Thai while the other likes Mexican. This disagreement is a conflict of opinion (Thompson, 2000): they simply express different opinions as to which ethnic food is, in their opinion, better; they can argue for a while and then call the whole thing off, so to speak, going their separate ways. But, suppose they want to eat out and need to decide which restaurant to go to—Thai or Mexican. This disagreement is a different kind of conflict—a conflict of interest (Thompson, 2000). A conflict of interest requires that something be done, i.e., it requires a resolution. There is more at stake now than just opinions; neither party is interested in spending their time and money on food they do not like. Yet, both want to eat out together so they need to resolve their conflict together; in this respect, conflict is said to have a mixed-motive nature since the parties have an incentive to cooperate with each other as well as an incentive to compete (Demoulin & de Dreu, 2010). They may decide to try Thai one night and Mexican another night, or compromise on an Italian restaurant. Whatever they decide to do results in an allocation of resources, in this situation—time and money—together. In a conflict situation, resources are scarce (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001), i.e., there is not enough to go around for everyone; for instance, neither party in our situation can spend all the time and money only for oneself. In other words, the two parties need to decide how to spend these scarce resources—time and money, together. Thus, a **conflict** arises when two or more parties cannot agree on how to use the resources due to competing needs and interests and, ultimately, clash of identities.

As you remember, in Chapter 1, culture was defined as a system of symbolic resources—anything that can be drawn upon by people, when needed, in order to function successfully. Let's look at several examples of resources that lie at the basis of intercultural conflict.

In 1979, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat announced that the only issue that would prompt Egypt to declare war would be over water, directing its threats at Ethiopia where the majority of Egypt's Nile waters originate. In the 1990s, King Hussein of Jordan issued a similar declaration targeted at Israel. It is easy to see how "these examples illustrate the conflict potential of a scarce resource like freshwater" (Dinar, 2002, p. 229).

Another example is of a high school teacher in Amelia County High School, VA, U.S., who was told not to wear African headdresses after some parents complained when she wore them during Black History Month ('Teacher may not wear African hats,' 1995). The school had a policy against hats unless related to religious customs. The teacher said she would stop

wearing the headdresses but felt very strongly about how they represented her appreciation of her cultural heritage.

One more example is taken from the book entitled *Planted flags* (Braverman, 2014) that tells a story about the uses of tree landscapes in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The pine tree, usually associated with the Zionist project of afforesting the Promised Land, is contrasted with the olive tree, which for Palestinians is a symbol of their connection to the land.

A final example is focused on language: as we saw in the previous chapter, language is the main means of cultural expression and vitality. In the United States, for instance, English-speaking and Spanish-speaking cultures are in constant contact, but also in frequent conflict over language as a source of power of their 'voices' (Valdeón, 2015).

We should not, therefore, think of cultural resources only in terms of tangible supplies like water; resources have their intangible side, as well, "for example, safety, attention, affection, understanding, respect, support, self-esteem, and power" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 197). Intercultural conflicts, therefore, are never only over tangible things like freshwater, headdresses, trees, or language, but also intangible things like livelihood, appreciation of one's heritage, connection to one's land, respect, and freedom of expression. The intangible side of resources in an intercultural conflict is more hidden from view, yet it is more important—just like any root. The two sides of resources—tangible and intangible—make up a cultural identity; in the end, every conflict is a conflict of different cultural identities, i.e., everything people identify with and should figure out how to allocate when the resources are scarce. In a way, intercultural conflict is all about negotiating and allocating our very identities.

2.1   Two Sides of Conflict

Every conflict can be looked at in two ways—in a destructive light or in a constructive light. Let's look first at what happens when a conflict becomes destructive.

1.   It often intensifies a blurred perception of another culture and your own: it seems that your culture and another culture are of polar opposites.
2.   As a result of such magnified differences and minimized similarities, people become locked into their positions; such inflexibility often results in an impasse or even violence (Figure 8.1).
3.   As a result of an impasse that may escalate to a felt violation or actual physical, the relationship between people can be spoiled or completely ruined.
4.   And, as a result of ruined relationships, we come to view conflict negatively—as an emotionally draining experience charged with animosity, anger, and frustration.

Now let's look at a conflict as something constructive.

1.   A conflict can help us to become more aware of another culture and also our own. Through conflict, we get a clearer picture of the identity

and needs of people from another culture and also of our own cultural identity and needs.

2. As a result of such awareness, we are able to see and articulate our positions, interests, and needs, discovering that we share many interests with other people; this way, we overcome an impasse and avoid violence.
3. After discovering such common linkages, we manage to solve conflict and grow stronger; the relationship between us and people from another culture grows.
4. And, as a result of our strengthened relationships, we come to view conflict positively—as an emotionally stimulating and potentially rewarding experience.

It may seem that we have just described two different conflict situations; however, we have simply looked at one and the same conflict situation from two different sides. You may have noticed that each destructive feature of conflict has its constructive counterpart, as if reflected in a mirror (Table 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Spirited Conflict, by Albert Pasini (1859) *Source: Widener University Art Museum Alfred O. Deshong Collection*

Table 8.1 Two sides of conflict

Conflict	
Destructive Side	*Constructive Side*
Blurred perception of another culture and your own culture	Increased awareness of another culture and your own culture
Inflexibility of positions without a productive outcome	Flexibility to look for shared intrest and a productive outcome
Ruined relationships	Strengthened relationships
Negative view of conflict	Positive view of conflict

In conflict situations, these two sides—destructive and constructive—exist together. We should not aim at eliminating conflict; in doing that, its constructive side with all its transformative potential would be eliminated. In intercultural communication, people should learn how to manage conflict, not eliminate it. In other words, people should learn how to control its destructive tendency while making the most of its constructive tendency; in this sense, managing conflict can be compared to a situation of growing pains. As in medicine, people should avoid pathological processes and promote healthy growth. Or, as in gardening, people should learn how to cultivate a plant by interacting with it and ensuring sufficient light and water.

This gentle nature of working with conflict is captured very well in the Japanese metaphor of **nemawashi** ('spadework'), which involves digging around the root of a big tree before its scheduled transplantation, enabling the tree to bear better fruit. It is important to emphasize that, in the process of *nemawashi*, we bind the roots of a tree not in order to pull it out, but to transplant it in such a way that ultimately helps its growth. In a similar manner, the practice of trimming around the roots of a conflict helps people to adjust differences and make their relationships more harmonious. For instance, many American businesspeople consider meetings "to be the appropriate place in which to persuade people or try to change their minds" (Miller, 1994, p. 224). They expect decision-making and total resolution of conflict to occur at the meeting, which contrasts with the Japanese understanding of business meetings where consensus is sought and often achieved prior to the formal meeting. The participants meet informally at work but also in bars, cafes, and other locations where they express their true feelings and desires (**honne**), argue and try to iron out differences of opinion before the formal meeting where they express the view of the majority (**tatemae**) whether they fully agree with it or not. The formal meeting itself is to bestow approval on what went on before it. This kind of pre-meeting activity does not have negative connotations in Japan; it is an attempt to reach consensus so that nobody loses face in the public formal meeting, which is quite a contrast to the typical American approach.

So, a deep understanding of an intercultural conflict requires that we first identify its roots. How we manage conflict after we identify its roots depends on our approach to conflict or what route we take.

3   Approaching Conflict: Routes

Approaches to managing an intercultural conflict may take several routes, all based on the same '**dual concern model**' (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). This model is fundamental because it provides a foundation for analyzing conflict in terms of two main concerns—for the sake of our own culture's outcomes and for the outcomes of those with a different cultural point of view. Often, this model is represented in the form of a table with two dimensions: Self (our

culture) can be shown on the vertical axis, and Other (another culture)—on the horizontal axis.

Within the space of these two dimensions, several main approaches to resolving conflict are usually isolated. Let's look at these main ways of managing intercultural conflict.

As an example, we will use the same incident at Motorola that took place in one of its branches in East Asia, mentioned in the previous chapter. Let us quickly recall the situation. One day a senior East Asian engineer had to be contacted urgently at home and was found to be living in a shack even though all the engineers had been given a $2,000 housing allowance by Motorola so that they could live adjacent to the plant. It turned out that the engineer had spent his housing allowance on putting his children through school. It is clearly a tense situation for both sides, and it can be handled in several ways.

Avoidance. The easiest thing for both sides in this situation is to do nothing. In this case, neither side is really concerned about the outcome of the incident; the East Asian engineer may think he has done nothing wrong, and Motorola may not worry over a small (for large corporations) sum of money. Yet, the funds have clearly been misallocated, emphasizing the contradictory desires of the two sides. To ignore this fact may not be the best approach because the root of the conflict is not addressed. As a result, the conflict may turn into a more explosive situation later on. For example, the same engineer may have to be contacted again in an emergency situation and be unreachable; then, the corporation may lose time, money, or even lives. Or, Motorola management may decide to confront the engineer in the instance that he keeps misusing the money; his reaction may be one of a rightful surprise or indignation since nothing has ever been said to him about past incidents. This confrontation may create bad blood between the engineer and the company or perhaps even a lawsuit. Left unattended, this small conflict may go away, but it may also turn into a much bigger one.

The avoidance to conflict can be called avoidance and revolves around not managing tensions at all. Inaction shows no concern for the outcome of the interaction by people from both cultures.

Polarization. Quite likely, the two sides in this conflict will take some action rather than avoid the tensions. Each side may be naturally concerned about the outcome of the situation for itself, showing little or no concern for the Other. For example, Motorola does not tolerate any violation of rules, no matter how small, so its resolution may be to fire the engineer on the spot. In the same vein, the engineer, because of hurt feelings or stubbornness, may decide to leave the corporation. Motorola does not seem to be concerned about losing the engineer, while the engineer does not seem to be concerned about not working for the company any longer. The two positions here are clearly at odds; in fact, they are diametrically opposed. This result is a possible loss of an employee by Motorola and a possible loss of a career by the employee.

Such a polarizing approach to conflict involves high stakes competition or even domination and elicits concern of only one culture for Self, and little or no concern for Other.

Compromise. If the two sides take time to cool off, they may choose another route to resolving their tensions. Each side may realize that it cannot achieve its own goals without the other side. Motorola values the engineer as a specialist, while the engineer values the corporation as his place of employment; in the end, without this job the engineer's children's education is at risk. At the same time, Motorola managers are reluctant to let the engineer have his way with the funds; after all, the engineer has been given the money to rent a place near the plant and to be readily available when necessary. The engineer, too, may be reluctant to continue working for Motorola if forced to use the $2,000 allowance only for housing. In other words, the two sides show a moderate degree of concern for Self and Other. The two sides may meet each other halfway; hence, the decision may be reached for the engineer to spend one half of the allowance ($1,000) on housing, and the other half ($1,000) on education. The goals of both sides are not completely met; for Motorola, the goal is to have the engineer spend $2,000 (not $1,000) on housing, and for the engineer the goal is to spend $2,000 (not $1,000) on the children's education.

To compromise in the face of intercultural conflict is to seek a 50/50 split acceptable to both sides because each side gets (and does not get) the same.

Collaboration. It is common to consider compromise to be the best resolution of conflict; for instance, you may have heard such expressions as 'a compromise has been finally reached.' In everyday life, and in the political sphere, compromise is often normative. Still, another approach to conflict is possible, showing a higher concern than compromise for people from both cultures (Self and Other). In our example, the company is obviously concerned about the success of their own operation, which involves certain rules for allocating funds appropriately. At the same time, they may show an equally high level of concern for the engineer because he has put the money to good use based on local values. By the same token, the engineer is obviously concerned about the children's education, and he may be equally concerned about the successful operation of the corporation. If the two sides spend enough time discussing the situation and share openly their needs and desires, they may find a solution to the problem that satisfies their goals more fully than compromise. For example, one possible decision might be that the corporation will provide education for the engineer's children as long as the engineer promises to be readily available at all times as necessary. This may prove easier and cheaper for the corporation to do, and the engineer's motivation and loyalty may increase. The corporation's real-life decision—changing the rule and letting its engineers use the allowance for their own purposes as long as they are available and local values are implemented—fits into this approach.

This collaborative approach to intercultural conflict reflects high concern for people from both cultures.

Thus, the following four approaches to managing intercultural conflict are possible:

1. Avoidance: No concern for Self and Other.
2. Polarization: High concern for Self and low concern for Other.
3. Compromise: Moderate concern for both Self and Other.
4. Collaboration: High concern for both Self and Other.

Notice that in each of the four situations, a decision is made by people from the interacting cultures. There are situations, however, when a decision is made for the two sides by a third party. This may happen when the situation is extremely volatile, prompting the third-party involvement in the conflict. There are two main forms of conflict resolution when a third party is involved—**arbitration** and **mediation** (Brett, 2001). Arbitrators are authorized to make a decision for the parties in conflict, but not to control the process of their interaction. Mediators are authorized to control the process of interaction of the parties in conflict, but not to impose a decision upon them. Mediators encourage both parties to come to an acceptable decision on their own. Mediation proves to be especially successful for resolving conflicts in more traditional cultures. For instance, the conflicts between the Dizi and Suri people in southwest Ethiopia used to be continually resolved through elders' mediation (Tariku, 2018). It should be noted that, while mediation is pervasive in many socio-cultural contexts, it can take the form of various practices, e.g., Western-centric techniques or indigenous methodologies (Mahan & Mahuna, 2017). For this reason, "learning from the ways other cultures understand and resolve conflicts is an important part of maintaining healthy relationships in our increasingly interactive world" (Stobbe, 2015, p. 30).

In the end, people from different cultures can find the best and most lasting resolution to their conflicts when they themselves control both the process of their interaction and its outcome. The two sides come to the realization that they should communicate openly and manage conflict together. In this sense, intercultural interaction is a transaction. We usually think of transaction in a business setting; however, 'trasaction' comes from Late Latin 'transactionem', meaning 'an agreement, an accomplishment.' Any interaction that affects both sides and results in some kind of resolution is a **transaction**. During transaction, people typically try to negotiate with one another and reach mutual understanding on how to interaction with one another and conduct their affairs (Figure 8.2).

So, we should not think of transactions only as two or more parties sitting at a table and conducting rounds of formal business negotiations. Whenever we come into contact with people from other cultures, our goal is to carry interaction through and reach an understanding; this resolution affects both us and other people. The transactional nature of intercultural communication becomes especially evident when tensions intensify and lead to collisions; finding a resolution to such conflict then becomes crucial.

Figure 8.2 Example of communication as transaction *Source: Library of Congress*

4　Introducing the Transaction Principle

Let's now formulate, based on the discussion above, the eighth principle of intercultural communication—the Transaction Principle. We will isolate three parts that make up this principle. Each part dealing with intercultural communication as transaction. First, we will discuss how our perception affects the outcome of intercultural transactions; next, we will look at intercultural transactions in terms of negotiation zone; finally, we will discuss intercultural transaction as a process of moving from positions to interests and needs. We will discuss each part separately and then formulate the Transaction Principle, as a whole.

4.1　*Intercultural Transaction: Perception and Reality*

As noted earlier, perception is very important in approaching intercultural communication, and management of tensions and potential resolution of intercultural conflict depends upon how intercultural transaction is perceived.

　　There are three main patterns of perception that determine the outcome of intercultural transactions—zero-sum, fixed-sum, and flexible-sum

(Thompson, 2000). The word 'sum' here refers to the amount of value (resources) perceived to exist in the situation of intercultural interaction.

Zero-sum perception. According to this pattern, people see no (zero) value in interacting; each side believes that it can create value on its own, without any help from Other. Hence, any situation of intercultural interaction is perceived as zero-sum and so value in intercultural transaction is ignored.

In this case, people do not perceive any tension between one another and are not concerned about what may happen as a result of their non-interaction. It is easy to see that the zero-sum perception is at the basis of the avoidance approach to intercultural communication. Although people from different cultures seem to exist separately, their resources still can, and should, be shared. In other words, their potential can, and should, be realized for mutual benefit.

Fixed-sum perception. According to this pattern, people perceive value as fixed; sometimes, the fixed-sum perception is called "a fixed pie perception" (Lewicki et al., 1997, p. 74). Naturally, when it comes to dividing 'the pie,' anything one culture gets, the other does not; hence, people from every culture try to distribute the pie so they can have a bigger piece (more resources). The fixed-sum pattern of perception is about claiming or distributing resources.

In this case, people may perceive one another as polar opposites. According to such perception, the right way to manage tensions appears to be 'my way,' and if others do not share those views, their culture must be conquered and eliminated; otherwise, they will conquer and eliminate my own culture. It is a situation of 'either-or' mentality, leading to cultural aggression and domination. Only one winner can emerge as an outcome of this intercultural interaction—the one that claims more resources, ideally all of them. It is easy to see that the fixed-sum perception is at the basis of the polarization approach to intercultural communication. Perceiving interaction in terms of polarization is not a constructive approach to managing intercultural tensions. By destroying what we perceive to be our enemy, we deprive ourselves of the possibility to interact with the Other. In effect, we destroy ourselves; that is why cultural domination is not only destructive of other cultures, it is also self-destructive. If we completely eliminate our 'enemy,' we have no one to interact with; in a manner of speaking, we win the battle but lose the war.

Also, people from different cultures may not perceive one another as polar opposites, but neither do they perceive one another as friends who are willing to cooperate and share their resources. The outcome of intercultural transaction here is agreeing to disagree; the optimal way to reach such an agreement is by dividing all available resources in half. It is easy to see that the fixed-sum perception is also the basis of the compromise approach to intercultural communication; here, 'the sum' is distributed equally so that each culture gets (and does not get) 50% of the value. When people from two cultures split the value in half, this outcome is obviously not as destructive as the one based on polarization; after all, each culture claims half of all

available resources. However, this outcome is not completely constructive, either, because it does not really help people to fully construct their collective identity.

Flexible-sum perception. According to this pattern, the 'sum' is perceived to be flexible: any situation of intercultural communication is perceived as dynamic and subject to change. Here, the objective of intercultural transaction is not to ignore or claim value, but to create value together ('enlarge the pie') so that all people can have a bigger piece, so to speak. According to this flexible-sum view, value cannot be created unilaterally because people can create and sustain their resources only in interaction with one another.

In this case, people from different cultures are willing to cooperate and share their resources. You may wonder how this can be accomplished; with compromise, we seem to have reached the optimal outcome where the value is divided in the most acceptable fashion—50/50—and so there does not seem to be any more space for each culture to move further. But, not if we base our view of intercultural communication on the flexible-sum perception. If we view any intercultural situation as dynamic and subject to change, we can move beyond that separating line and into the space occupied by the Other. Naturally, this may be perceived by the Other as a dangerous move because we claim its resources. But, if we allow the Other to move into our space and share some of our resources, then both cultures win. They have collaborated sharing their resources, while still remaining distinct cultures with their own respective values. It is easy to see that the flexible-sum perception is at the basis of the collaboration approach to intercultural communication.

Table 8.2 presents three main patterns of perception and four outcomes based on these patterns, along with the value of intercultural transaction.

It is our perception of reality that creates the outcomes of our intercultural transactions. We may be unaware of their existence or potential (zero–sum perception), we may fight for them and squander them in the process or sit on them stingily like a dog in the manger (fixed-sum), or we may share them and grow (flexible-sum perception). It is clear that for the transaction to be successful, people from different cultures should move from avoiding one another to collaborating with one another. It is easier, of course, to ignore one another or perceive one another as enemies. It is more challenging to work out a compromise, but even then, no new knowledge of one another

Table 8.2 Patterns of perception and outcomes of intercultural transaction

Pattern of perception	Outcome of Interaction	Value
Zero–sum	Avoidance	Ignored
Fixed-sum	Polarization/compromise	Claimed/Distributed
Flexible-sum	Collaboration	Shared/Created

is generated since no real exchange of meanings takes place. Compromise should be more accurately termed 'conciliatory' because it "results in no genuine resolution and hence no new understanding at all" (Ho, 2000, p. 1065). Only with collaboration do people share their resources and create a shared space with optimal potential, while sustaining and developing their unique identities.

4.2   Intercultural Communication as Negotiation Zone

When people engage in a transaction, each side should make two important decisions. First, each side should decide what it wants to achieve; this goal is called a **target point**. And, second, each side should set a stopping point beyond which it will not go, breaking off interaction; this stopping point is called a **reservation point**. A reservation point cannot be determined without thinking of some back-up plan called BATNA (Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement), i.e., what will be done if the desired goal is not achieved.

Let's take an example of a typical of intercultural transaction. Suppose you go to a market in Tunisia and see a man selling beautiful Berber jewelry that incorporates silver and amber in complicated forms. He wants 25 dinar for each piece of his jewelry (a target point); in his mind, however, he is willing to go as low as 10 dinar (a reservation point). The seller sets this reservation point based on its BATNA, which might be an option to sell his merchandise wholesale later in the day. You, on the other hand, want to buy one piece of jewelry from him for 5 dinar (a target point) but are willing to go as high as 15 dinar (a resistance point). You will not pay more than 15 dinar because of your own BATNA; for instance, you might have seen a similar piece elsewhere for about the same price. So, you start bargaining with the man. Does the intercultural transaction between you as a buyer and the man as a seller have potential for being successful? Yes. This potential exists in the form of a **negotiation zone**, also known as a bargaining range, settlement range, or zone of potential agreement (Lewicki et al., 1997; Wilbaut, 2012). Think of this zone as "an open space—a contact zone, if you will—a space where speakers have to negotiate their differences in order for communication to work" (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 129). In more technical terms, a negotiation zone is the spread between the reservation points; in our example, this spread is 5 dinar—the difference between 10 and 15 dinar. A negotiation zone is the overlapping range in the middle; herein lies the potential for a productive intercultural resolution. It is within this zone that you and the man should carry out your transaction, trying to find a resolution (Figure 8.3).

In real-life situations, of course, it is difficult to determine one's target and resistance points with mathematical precision. As you remember, intercultural conflict can be conceptualized as a disagreement over resource allocations, and resources are not always as tangible as a manufactured product with a price tag. However, even such intangible resources as reputation,
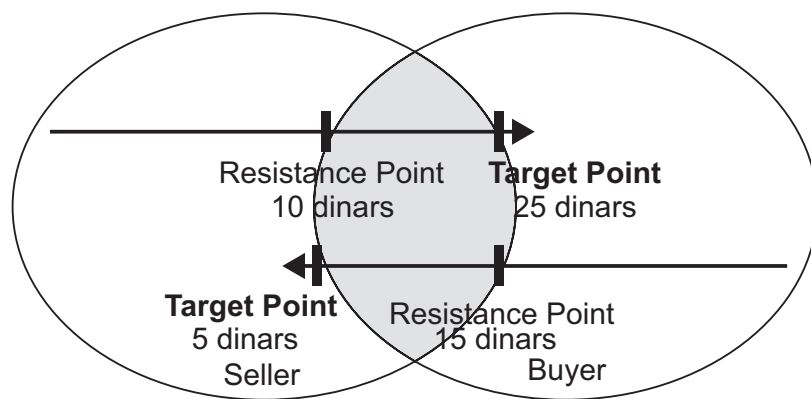
Figure 8.3 Negotiation zone *Source: Author*

power, or affection need to be evaluated and represented in the form of target and reservation points. Unless people do their homework, they may never figure out if a negotiation zone exists and what this zone is. Or, on the contrary, people may think that there is no negotiation zone in a certain situation when, in fact, it does exist and they are simply unable to find it. By failing to identify a negotiation zone, people miss their opportunity to benefit from its potential. For example, in the summer of 1990, the cultures of Quebec and the Mohawk tribe clashed over extending a golf course into the land which the Mohawk felt was sacred (Friesen, 1991). The Mohawk wanted to talk about their sovereignty, land claims, and preservation of natural resources. The Quebec officials perceived the Mohawk tribe as warriors and criminals. In the end, the Mohawk tribe erected barricades that the Quebec police took down. The golf course was not to be extended, but the tensions had not been resolved because no negotiation zone had ever been found or created by the conflicting sides.

Overall, if a negotiation zone is perceived as non-existent or small, then potential for a constructive intercultural resolution is also non-existent or small. Let's see how a negotiation zone can be created or expanded in order to facilitate intercultural transactions.

4.3   Back to the Future: From Positions to Interests

Intercultural transaction involves at least two collective identities in contact. In concrete situations, cultural identities are manifested in the form of specific resources, tangible or intangible, and each resource may become an issue in a conflict. Therefore, the main issues (resources) in conflict need to be identified; for example, in the Motorola case, discussed earlier, the main issues are the amount of money, education for the engineer's children, and availability of the engineer.

People from different cultures take a stance on a certain issue, expressing a certain position, which can be traced to the vision of the world that each

culture develops, as discussed in Chapter 4. Often, positions that people from different cultures take in a conflict situation appear in complete opposition; as a result, no negotiation zone seems to exist and reaching a resolution seems impossible. Focusing only on positions often leads to an impasse in intercultural transactions or even physical violence. It is crucial, therefore, to look beyond positions and identify interests of all parties involved in an intercultural conflict.

As you remember from Chapter 6, interests involve underlying needs and desires that motivate people to take a certain position. Identifying interests is more difficult than identifying positions, and yet, it is the best way to make sure that constructive linkages are created, common ground is found, and a productive resolution worked out. Instead of looking only at their positions that often appear completely divergent, people should look for shared interests and make decisions on that basis. For instance, in India the conflict between Sikhs and Hindus had been escalating for a long time (Fisher et al., 1994). Their positions appeared in opposition: Sikhs wanted independence and more access to water resources in the region where most live in North-western India, while Hindus wanted India to be unified and allocate water resources from Sikh regions to the rest of the country. In spite of these different positions, however, important shared interests have been found. First, both sides wanted economic prosperity for Punjab; second, both sides wanted reduction of ethnic fighting; and, third, both sides wanted Sikhs to regain confidence in the Indian government.

So, in every transaction, people from different cultures should move from battling over positions "to collaborative focus on shared and underlying interests (each side's needs, concerns, hopes, and fears that lay beneath their positions" (Rothman & Olson, 2001, p. 294). As people move from positions to identifying common interests, they work toward an acceptable resolution when each side is able to reach its goals. It is necessary to go back to the root of conflict; however, this backward movement is the only way to move forward toward a successful resolution.

5   The Transaction Principle Defined

Let's give a concise formulation of Transaction Principle, based on the above discussion of its three parts.

First, our perception ultimately determines the outcome of all intercultural transaction. We saw how three main patterns of perception lead to four different outcomes. For their interactions to be successful, people from different cultures should move from avoiding one another to collaborating and sharing their resources so that they can reach the most constructive resolution in solving their tensions.

Second, intercultural transactions take place within a special zone known as the bargaining range or zone of potential agreement; in this zone lies the potential for a productive intercultural resolution. Such a zone should be expanded to its optimal potential for all interacting parties.

Third, every intercultural situation is manifested in the form of specific resources, tangible or intangible, and each resource may become an issue in a conflict. People take a stance on each issue, expressing a certain position. Positions may appear in complete opposition, and no negotiation zone may appear to exist. It is important to identify interests that motivate people to take a certain position. By moving from positions to identifying shared interests, a mutually acceptable resolution is more likely to be reached.

In a nutshell, the Transaction Principle can be formulated as follows:

> *Intercultural communication is a process whereby people from different groups move within a negotiation zone from positions to interests in search of a resolution acceptable to all interacting cultures.*

6   Case Study: 'The Wall of Death:' A Conflict between Japanese and Western Cultures

This case study is based on the article entitled 'Intercultural conflict: A case study' (Hall & Noguchi, 1993). As usual, it is recommended that you read the article in its entirety; below, you find a summary of the article.

Be ready to identify and then discuss the following topics:

1.   What are the issues in this conflict?
2.   What are the positions and interests of the two conflicting sides?
3.   How successful is the resolution of the intercultural transaction?

In the spring of 1978, the fishermen of Iki island in Japan invited Japanese TV reporters to cover the story of killing dolphins by drift-net fishing. The fishermen's catch, on the decline, had been attributed to an increasing dolphin presence. The Japanese fishermen hoped that media coverage would bring them assistance in their battle; however, the coverage reached around the world and, instead of sympathy, the fishermen's practice was met with outrage in many Western cultures and especially the United States. The authors of the article note that they chose the gloss 'Western' because a number of Western cultures had a reaction similar to that of the United States.

Following the media coverage of more than one thousand dead dolphins, Western conservationists came to Japan to discuss the problem. They tried to explain to the fishermen that dolphins were not responsible for the declining catch, but they failed to change the Iki fishermen's attitude. In 1982, the issue was partially resolved by a seeming compromise, i.e., the Japanese fishermen promised to stop capturing and killing dolphins en masse, while the Western conservationists promised not to come to the island again in order to free dolphins. However, this compromise had not completely resolved the conflict, and drift-net fishing practices continued. By the end of 1991, a variety of wildlife including many dolphins had died in a string of nets that stretched for miles; *Time* magazine described it as the 'Wall of Death.' Disagreements continued, revealing a clash of cultural worlds.

The authors of the article discuss in detail how the Western symbol 'dolphin' and its Japanese equivalent 'iruka,' while referring to the same mammal, evoke different cultural interpretations. In the Japanese culture dolphin ('iruka') is perceived as either food or an evil creature of the sea. Today, few Japanese still eat dolphin, and the dolphins killed by the Iki fishermen were not killed for human consumption. However, dolphins are widely used as fertilizer or pig food. Since dolphins are known to gobble up large quantities of fish, Japanese fishermen perceive them as direct competitors. Dolphins are viewed as enemies or 'gangsters' threatening the livelihood of the fishermen who make their living by fishing. The term 'iruka' evokes such associations in Japan as 'evil,' 'damage,' and 'threat.' Those who fight against such evil creatures are seen as heroic warriors. Naturally, when Western conservationists tried to convince the Japanese fishermen to stop killing dolphins, their arguments failed, and they were perceived by the fishermen as lacking compassion and support. The fishermen tried to accommodate the Western conservationists who came to Japan, but became frustrated and uncooperative because of the conservationists' bossy attitude and lack of recognition of the seriousness of the fishermen's plight.

In Western cultures, dolphins are perceived as highly intelligent and friendly mammals. A special bond is perceived to exist between humans and dolphins as evidenced by tales of rescue and dolphins' seeming efforts to communicate with humans. This way, humans identify with dolphins, and this affinity explains why the Western conservationists were shocked by the slaughter. The Western conservationists tried to talk to the Japanese fishermen and convince them that their own practices were more to blame for the problem than the dolphins, but they were not very successful. Those Western conservationists who freed hundreds of dolphins under cover of night were perceived by their cultures as heroes.

Finally, Japan's prime minister announced that its fishermen would stop using drift-net fishing practices by the end of 1992. In making that announcement, the Japanese side gave no indication of ever having been in the wrong. The Western conservationists were happy with this resolution, while the Japanese fishermen did not find it particularly satisfying. The authors of the article quote one of the fishermen saying that their future was 'pitch black.'

Now let's see how this case study can be an illustration of the Transaction Principle of intercultural communication.

1. What are the issues in this conflict?

    As noted earlier, in concrete situations, cultural identities are manifested in the form of specific resources—tangible and intangible—and each resource may become an issue in a conflict.

    In this case, the tangible resource is obvious; it is the dolphins. However, another issue, equally important, is found in the intangible resources—symbolic meanings associated with the dolphin (in the West) and the 'iruka' (in Japan).

In the Japanese culture, the 'iruka' is viewed as an evil creature threatening the livelihood of the fishermen who make their living by fishing. Those people who fight against such evil creatures are seen as heroic warriors. In Western cultures, the dolphin is perceived as a highly intelligent and friendly mammal. Therefore, people feel strongly about protecting the dolphin's special status. In short, there are (at least) two main issues in this conflict: dealing with the mammals and dealing with the people's perceptions of the dolphin and the iruka, including their self-perception in relation to those mammals. It is impossible to ignore both these issues while trying to resolve this situation.

2.   What are the positions and interests of the two conflicting sides?

The positions of the two conflicting sides are clear, i.e., the Japanese fishermen want to continue catching and killing dolphins while the Western conservationists want to put an end to such fishing practices. Identifying interests is more difficult; as you remember, interests are the underlying needs and desires that motivate people to take certain positions. In this case, the Japanese fishermen's actions are driven by their desire to protect their livelihood because they make their living by fishing. Hence, their main interests are grounded in physiological and safety needs. The Western conservationists' actions are driven by a more complex desire to protect their special bond with dolphins; in a way, by defending dolphins' rights, the Western conservationists defend their own identity. To kill such a mammal is to kill a friend, giving up some of the values that make up one's cultural identity. Their main interests, therefore, are grounded in self-realization needs.

From the Japanese fishermen's perspective, the Western conservationists failed to understand their interests as they displayed a bossy attitude and lack of recognition of the seriousness of the fishermen's plight. From the Western conservationists' perspective, the Japanese fishermen failed to understand their interests as they continued to blame the dolphins for the problem. The two sides did not really move from positions to interests, which affected the resolution of this intercultural transaction.

3.   How successful is the resolution of the intercultural transaction?

The first time (in 1982) the conflict was partially resolved by a compromise: the Japanese fishermen promised to stop capturing and killing dolphins en masse, and the Western conservationists promised not to come to the island again in order to free dolphins. However, the tensions continued, and ten years later Japan's prime minister announced that its fishermen would stop using drift-net fishing practices. The Western conservationists were happy with this resolution, but the Japanese fishermen did not find it particularly satisfying; as one of the fishermen put it, their future was pitch black. This resolution fits the polarization

approach—a lopsided solution that is not very stable because one side (Japanese) is less happy with the outcome and is more likely to try and change it.

What is most important, the transaction was not very successful because no genuine communication as an exchange of different points of views between the two sides took place. The two sides failed to see the conflict through each other's eyes and change. For example, the Japanese side gave no indication of ever having been in the wrong. By the same token, the Western conservationists did not change their bossy attitude and failed to show recognition of the seriousness of the fishermen's plight.

It is clear that the Japanese fishermen wanted to kill the dolphins not because of some cruel intentions but for self-protection. Similarly, it is clear that the Western conservationists wanted to save the dolphins not at the expense of the fishermen's lives, but because of their special bond with the mammals. Saving lives (both human and mammals') could have become a foundation of shared interests. Had such (or perhaps some other) shared interests been identified, and had the two sides been willing to change, a more productive resolution could have been worked out.

7   Side Trips

7.1   *Spain and Catalonia in Conflict*

One of today's ethnopolitical conflicts is between Spain and Catalonia (Viladot, 2017). Catalans want to be recognized as a self-governed nation. Their group awareness of cohesion is strong, and the group solidarity facing the Spanish state is enhanced by their own language—Catalan. For many Catalans, the Spanish state has not been sensitive to the demands they consider fair and legitimate, its communicative strategies being mostly silence and a strong normative enforcement. Besides, many Catalans see the Spanish state trying to counteract the expansion of the Catalan language and weaken the sense of Catalan cultural identity. Dialogue and direct contacts between the Catalan group and the Spanish government have been very few, while group boundaries are strictly enforced. While the conflict has so far taken place in a context of peace, with no atrocities or human suffering, the relationship between Spain and Catalonia is characterized by the situation in which their identities are extremely divergent. At the same time, both parties cannot escape from the necessity for a resolution of this conflict.

** Can you identify the main approach by both cultures to resolving their tensions? Can you think of how the parties could use another, more productive, approach?

7.2 Conflict over a Beauty Pageant

When India's 'garden city'—Bangalore—was chosen as a site for the Miss World beauty pageant, the plan was labeled as a merchandising device for the decadent cultural imperialism of the West (see Bearak, 1996). The conflict over the beauty pageant turned into a fight over India's soul. According to Hinduism, a woman's beauty must be natural and not affected by cosmetics; also, opposition to the swimsuit contest was very strong. In addition, farmers in India were afraid that a wave of big agricultural interests may force them from their land. Many people in India felt that the country had become a dumping ground for the West's rejects, and the Miss World beauty pageant was perceived as fitting the bill.

> ** Can you identify the main resources involved in this intercultural conflict?

7.3 Managing Intractable Conflict

In his article, Jonathan Powell (2015), a former senior British diplomat, argues that the West must negotiate with the so-called Islamic State and that this is not an alternative to fighting. At the same time, in his article, H. A. Hellyer (2016), a senior non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East and an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, writes that ISIS cannot be negotiated with.

> ** What is your opinion on managing this intractable conflict?

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