Negotiation Education
An Institutional Approach

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You sensed the tremendous potential for the upcoming exercise. Your infantry brigade’s request for rotary wing support would have enhanced readiness for both your brigade and the aviation brigade. Yet, your fellow operations officer and you talked past each other and could not agree. All he or she kept repeating were concerns about cost and limited flight hours. Couldn’t they understand the implications for the brigade’s readiness? As you reflect on the encounter, you have a nagging feeling that you could have done more before the meeting to position your unit for a better outcome.

Cooperation should have been easy, especially given the operation’s strategic significance. The ambassadors had already agreed. As the plans officer, you simply needed to finalize the manning requirements and mission parameters of this combined joint task force (CJTF) with the other NATO plans officers. Instead, squabbling ensued. Why couldn’t those countries play on the same team with the details? On the long flight home, you feel like a few representatives from other countries had such strong positions. It almost seemed like they believed themselves better off without this CJTF. You had taken all the engagements classes the Army offered, but you still felt ill-equipped.

When U.S. Army leaders think “negotiation,” they reflexively think “key leader engagement.” Such engagements typically consist of cross-cultural interactions between tactical military leaders and civilians during stability operations. This reflex has diminished the effectiveness of the Army’s institutional negotiation training. Neither of the vignettes above involve engagements in Iraq or Afghanistan—the theaters where the concept of key leader engagements took hold—yet both provide examples of negotiation. Neither of the officers are tactical, company-grade leaders. The officers in both scenarios could have benefited to a great degree from well-executed, foundational negotiation instruction as part of their professional military education (PME).

The initial surge in interest surrounding negotiation within the Army arose from the counterinsurgency and stability operations of the mid-2000s. Deployed military leaders cited continual difficulties during their interactions with local civilians, and operations suffered as a result. The institutional Army, academia, and the private sector responded to bridge the capability gap. The numerous articles published in the late 2000s and early 2010s, some of which we will cite throughout this article, attest to this. We also lived these very challenges. However, the solutions in these works address a narrowly defined problem: the interpersonal challenges faced by tactical military leaders engaging civilian nationals in a cross-cultural setting.

More challenging to overcome is the perception that negotiation and military actions are mutually exclusive. Military operations, whether a forcible entry or combined exercises, can shape negotiations away from the table. Further, even if the United States undertakes a forcible entry operation, it may better position itself at the negotiating table in a subsequent round. Or, an action in one area of operations may help strengthen a “no-deal” alternative in another. This relationship is foundational to theories of international relations and to the conduct of foreign policy. Most importantly, both our adversaries and allies understand this interplay whether we acknowledge it or not.

We advocate rethinking the problem and broadening the scope. Leader engagement shortcomings were a symptom of a more fundamental problem: the inability to solve complex problems, especially ones that may require cooperative solutions. Similar calls for enhanced adaptability, critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving echo this assessment. Further, U.S. Army doctrine has recently incorporated an updated set of tools, notably design thinking through the Army design methodology (ADM), to deal with complexity. To broaden the scope, the revised approach must also include two important aspects that the current approach neglects: “away from the table” moves and international negotiation.

Negotiation education is a solution to address this underlying problem at all leadership levels. Many professional graduate degrees—business, law, and
public policy, for example—mandate in-depth negotiation training in their core curriculum. Yet, fewer than thirty-four Army field grade officers in any cohort year group—less than 1 percent—will receive such training by the time they serve a twenty-year career. Instructors do their best with the time allotted, but the majority of Army field grade officers may receive three to four hours of minimal exposure. Regrettably, this binary approach—trained or untrained—has hindered the acquisition of a skill set highly applicable to addressing current national security challenges.

In this article, we will review the negotiation theory and propose a more robust negotiation progression that builds throughout an officer’s PME core curriculum. The U.S. Army’s negotiation training is rooted in Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, Army Leadership. However, that text provides limited guidance for how the Army should structure a negotiation education program. The current program is not well nested within the rest of the Army’s leadership development paradigm.

To address this oversight, we recommend a four-level progression from joint problem solving to international negotiation as officers advance from the Basic Officer Leaders Course to the War College. We aim these recommendations at the proponent for Army leadership and education, the Combined Arms Center. While our findings focus on Army officers, the recommendations are generalizable to uniformed and civilian leaders across services.

A Case for Negotiation in Education

For the past several years, negotiation has resided in the realm of “training,” although it should return to the realm of “education.” The Army University–Army Learning Strategy (ALS) correctly differentiated the

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(Table by Nick Tallant)
expectations for leaders, and the War College’s Strategic Leadership Primer further echoed the importance of negotiation as a leader competency. At its fullest potential, negotiation education fosters the problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, and adaptability valued in Army leaders. Table 1 (page 83) demonstrates the applicability of the negotiation discipline. Rethinking negotiation education thus supports the ALS’s “learning leaders” line of effort.

Theoretical Roots of the Current Model
The U.S. Army’s leadership doctrine provides an initial foundation for negotiation education. The academic basis for the four key negotiation terms is found in doctrine:

- Joint problem solving approach
- Principled negotiation
- Interest-based negotiation
- Alternatives to negotiated agreement

The emphasis in doctrine should match the educational emphasis.

The joint problem solving approach. Scholars and practitioners describe negotiation as a “joint problem solving approach.” This characterization is widely used in academic literature and is specified in Army doctrine on negotiation.

The term “problem solving” emphasizes the upside of negotiation. An outcome can, in fact, be mutually beneficial to all parties, known as “creating value.” Negotiation offers options and payoffs not available to noncooperative decision-makers. Parties can communicate and share information to varying degrees throughout the process, offering opportunities for creativity in generating alternatives. Many call this view of negotiation “win-win,” emphasizing the joint gains possible.

Alternatively, the view of negotiation as “win-lose” emphasizes the fixed nature of certain aspects. At some stage, one party’s value implies less for another party. This behavior is known as “claiming value.” Select aspects of a negotiation may be distributive in nature, which characterizes the practice of bargaining. Thus, the tension between creating and claiming value has been called the “Negotiator’s Dilemma.” Actions to claim value may undermine efforts to create value.

At a higher level, academics place negotiation—specifically the field of “negotiation analysis”—along the spectrum of decision-making approaches. This spectrum extends from “decision analysis” (individual decision-making) to “game theory” (interactive and noncooperative decisions) to “negotiations analysis” (joint, interactive, and cooperative decisions). Game theoretic actions enable parties to communicate, but their decisions remain their own. Only negotiation enables parties to coalesce around a joint decision that an individual party could not achieve on its own. Military strategists and senior Army leaders move routinely between the fields, consciously or otherwise. Thus, the distinction is worth highlighting.

Principled and interest-based negotiation. The concept of “principled negotiation” addresses the tension between creating and claiming value. This approach was originally described in Getting to Yes, perhaps the most widely cited and read book on the topic of negotiation since its 1981 release. We use this text as the basis for reviewing the academic literature given its accessibility and foundational status within the field. Scholars have further developed and adapted aspects of Fisher and Ury’s original approach; yet, they acknowledge its key position within the field. Similar to joint problem solving, principled negotiation is also specified in Army doctrine references regarding negotiation.

The term “principled negotiation” does not deal with moral principles but rather describes the trade-off many feel between a “soft” or “hard” approach to a negotiation. The authors emphasize the false choice of these fictitious approaches. They instead prescribe a four-part approach: people, interests, options, and criteria.

Their first prescription, “separate the people from the problem,” has dominated much of the Army’s approach to negotiation to date. Notably, Fisher, Ury, and Patton, in their 2011 edition, include Fisher and Shapiro’s five “core concerns” (autonomy, appreciation, affiliation, role, and status) and Stone, Patton, and Heen’s work on identity and human factors. Inattention to interests highlighted in these works drives negative emotions that surface during negotiation. The bulk of the Army’s institutional instruction cites these three works collectively.

Much of the literature cited in other Department of Defense (DOD) negotiation instruction addresses varying elements of this interpersonal aspect, such as the role
of emotion or culture during a negotiation. Academia has contributed volumes to address the impact of negotiators themselves. Scholars David Lax and Jim Sebenius further enshrined the everyday approach to negotiation in their 1986 book *The Manager as Negotiator*.

Academic research on persuasion and influence further supports face-to-face interactions with the exploration of useful techniques. Army doctrine includes specific reference to the practice of each as they relate to negotiation.

While Army leaders may use such interpersonal prescriptions routinely as part of one-on-one interactions, we believe this focus most applicable to situations faced by direct leaders (as defined in ADRP 6-22), such as a platoon leader. Organizational and strategic leaders may find themselves involved in complex, multiparty negotiations where these prescriptions remain important but have limited utility.

Fisher and Ury’s second point, “focus on interests, not positions,” is equally prominent in Army doctrine. Negotiating specific positions leads to inefficient positional bargaining. Academic literature and Army doctrine encourage negotiators to explore the underlying interests motivating a particular position. Understanding why a party advocates a position may unlock creative options for the negotiator to satisfy the interest of both parties. This concept is foundational for “interest-based negotiation” as opposed to positional negotiation or positional bargaining.

The third prescription, “invent options for mutual gain” emphasizes the joint problem solving or “win-win” approach to negotiation. Assumptions of negotiation as a “fixed pie” leads to value-claiming tactics. However, creativity and collaboration allow for value creation to occur in which each party is better off than at the outset. The Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP), ADM, and military decision-making process frameworks are well suited for generating alternatives and stimulating creative thinking.

**Alternatives to negotiated agreement.** Evaluation of mutual-gain options requires an understanding of the “alternatives to negotiated agreement.” Fisher and Ury pioneered the term “best alternative to a negotiated agreement” (BATNA) as the point from which to compare a negotiation’s outcome. Other scholars prefer nonjargon variants, such as “no-deal option” or “walk-away option.”

Army doctrine also incorporates this specific concept. Closely linked to this concept is power at the negotiating table. For military practitioners, decision-making tools such as prespecified evaluation criteria assist in evaluating negotiated options against a no-deal option. Similarly, scholars discuss protecting—or not inadvertently weakening—one’s BATNA.

Military doctrinal concepts of centers of gravity, critical capabilities, and critical vulnerabilities mirror the BATNA idea.

Lastly, the final point, “insist on using objective criteria,” addresses how to resolve tensions that lead to positional bargaining. The authors suggest “fair standards” or “fair procedures” to reconcile these. Scholars have delved into both concepts in great depth. Scholar Howard Raiffa exhaustively examined competing fairness standards and their interplay in a negotiation. Other academics have studied concerns of “procedural justice” in conflict resolution. Cumulatively, these objective criteria support the legitimacy of a final agreement as well as the negotiation itself.

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negotiation scholarship and became the foundation for scholarship to date. Introduced by Bruce Patton, the “seven elements” framework (interests, legitimacy, relationships, alternatives, options, commitments, communication) drew upon concepts introduced by Fisher and Ury. Current Army institutional instruction and doctrine incorporate this method into their established products.

Away from the table. While many conceive of negotiations as activities “at the table,” the moves “away from the table” can have an equal bearing on the outcome at the table. Scholars Lax and Sebenius introduced this “three-dimensional” approach (tactics, deal design, setup) in their 2006 book 3-D Negotiation. They broadly classify activities at the table as “tactics” and those away from the table as “setups.” This distinction was unique to scholarship in the field.

Actions—or “moves”—away from the table can “change the game.” Further, Lax and Sebenius deepened the understanding of negotiating parties and their interests at the table as well as “barriers” to agreement. By dealing only with the given parties and interests, negotiators may be disadvantaged from the outset. Taking deliberate action away from the table to include a full (and advantageous) set of parties and interests could change the game. This concept is currently not included in either the Army or other DOD doctrine on the topic.

In an example of an “away from the table” activity, Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, supreme allied commander Europe, engages Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, chairman of the NATO Military Committee, during the third session of the North Atlantic Council 12 July 2018 at the Brussels Summit in NATO headquarters, Brussels. Scaparrotti attended the summit to provide military guidance to the North Atlantic Council and to meet with military and political leadership from throughout the Alliance. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Cody H. Ramirez, U.S. Air Force/NATO)
offer highly applicable methods for understanding the full set of parties and interests. Taking deliberate, strategic actions to improve a negotiating outcome also nests well with the military’s operational concepts of “lines of operation” and “lines of effort.” Lax and Sebenius’s inclusion of backward mapping speaks to the natural similarities. Army leaders would quickly absorb the intuition of the “away from the table” approach.

**International negotiation.** The characteristics of international negotiation, such as diplomatic and peace negotiations, differ from other forms. Negotiation literature supports a wide array of business and legal interactions, but the subfield of international negotiation is distinct. The field can be closely linked with the “conflict resolution” discipline. Scholar Victor Kremenyuk compiled an authoritative review of the international negotiations field. Contributions from academics, such as Bill Zartman’s “hurting stalemate” and “ripeness,” have exposed the link between negotiation and military operations.

While this specialty has been and remains the domain of diplomats, understanding the field can provide great insight for organizational and strategic Army leaders. The negotiation concepts described above and contained in Army doctrine still remain foundational. However, the practical link between international negotiation and deterrence or coercive diplomacy demonstrates the importance of the domain to military leaders and diplomats alike.

**Implementing the Negotiation Progression**

In the previous section, we identified four negotiation theories applicable to military negotiation. In the developmental framework proposed below, these approaches toward negotiation build on each other as an officer’s responsibility increases. In total, this progression offers over forty hours of instructor contact time, which is on par with negotiation instruction offered by elite institutions. With each officer grounded in negotiation theory, more senior officers could shape conditions to ensure success by subordinates as they negotiate within the Army or externally. For each level in an officer’s PME (see table 2), we highlight the key concept to be taught, propose key developmental experiences, and identify significant texts.

**Basic Officer Leaders Course (Primary PME).** As junior leaders in the Army, lieutenants plan and execute training and operations within their units and with multinational partners when deployed.
Introducing joint problem solving to lieutenants will encourage them to approach planning and execution with a “win-win” mindset necessary to build consensus. Between 2013 and 2015, the Infantry Basic Officer Leaders Course (IBOLC) trained new infantry lieutenants on joint problem solving using the aforementioned Getting to Yes. However, IBOLC dropped negotiation when it removed stability operations from the program of instruction.

Dropping negotiation from IBOLC was a mistake. In his 2007 Strategic Studies Institute monograph, Capt. David Tressler interviewed fourteen officers and found that a “disproportionate number of lower-level leaders” conducted negotiations. The officers explained their poor negotiations performances in Iraq with statements like “I wasn’t somebody who was experienced in negotiation. I’m a soldier.” Low-level leaders cannot rely on positional authority to force change but must act within the bureaucracy to accomplish objectives on behalf of their commanders. Articles in branch magazines reiterate this point: low-level leaders were caught off-guard by the need to negotiate in their roles as platoon leaders and redoubled their efforts to improve their skills outside of formal Army training.

We recommend that BOLC teach joint problem solving to new lieutenants to equip them with the skills and mindset necessary to succeed as leaders in their formations and during contingency operations. To that end, we suggest the addition of the following events to BOLC with a total contact time of twelve hours:

- an overview of negotiation theory, including distributive and joint problem-solving methods, with an introduction to cross-cultural considerations based on Getting to Yes or Graphical Training Aid (GTA) 21-03-12;
- a practical exercise focused on battalion-level range training with enablers; and
- a case study of tactical-level negotiation with multinational partners or civilians in a deployed environment, tailored by branch.

Captains Career Course (Primary PME). In both garrison and combat environments, company commanders and staff officers often negotiate without guidance from higher commanders due to “geographical dispersion, changing tactical and strategic situations, and volatile environments.” Building on their initial training from BOLC, officers at the Captains Career Course (CCC) should learn how to integrate assessments of counterparty interests into their intra-Army negotiations and when deployed. Interest-based negotiation dovetails with the emphasis at CCC on mission analysis and course of action development. During mission analysis, officers develop a robust understanding of battlefield actors and plans for influencing them. While captains cannot negotiate with an enemy tank battalion, they should understand how outputs from the military decision-making process could include assessments of the local civilians or military forces’ interests for planned negotiations.

We recommend that CCC prepare new captains for their roles by teaching them to assess the interests of key stakeholders before negotiating. To that end, we suggest the following additions to CCC with a total contact time of twelve hours:

- a review of distributive and joint problem-solving negotiation theory;
- instruction on assessing interests with and without cross-cultural considerations drawing from Getting to Yes, GTA 21-03-12, and The Manager as Negotiator;
- a practical exercise focused on understanding interests before negotiating; and
- a case study where students can assess interests and develop a negotiation strategy for a real-world negotiation.

Command and General Staff College (Intermediate PME). The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) aims to produce majors who are capable of shaping the joint operating environment. To support that goal, we propose CGSC refine its current negotiation curriculum to focus on “away from the table” moves. Building on joint problem solving and interest-based negotiation strategies recommended for more junior officers, this approach challenges officers to design campaigns to shape broader negotiations. Setting conditions for negotiations requires a deep understanding of the operational environment and the levers that influence stakeholders. Whether bringing a militia leader to the table on a wide area security operation, pulling together a multinational task force for
combined arms maneuver, or wrangling enablers for a brigade-level combined arms exercise, field-grade leaders have sufficient perspective and influence to shape conditions and preferences before agreeing to terms. We recommend new majors prepare by reinforcing previous negotiation training and add the following events, while emphasizing “away from the table” moves, over twenty hours:

- a review of distributive, joint problem solving, and interest-based negotiation theory;
- instruction on interest assessment and plan development based on 3-D Negotiation;
- a practical exercise where students design a series of “away from the table” moves that influence the set-up of a cross-cultural negotiation;
- a case study where students assess the “away from the table” moves in a historical military campaign supporting a negotiation, such as the 1995 Dayton Accords;
- preparation of officers to negotiate within the DOD (both Army interdepartmental and joint), U.S. interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment; and
- training to assess negotiation concepts during JOPP exercises, especially within staff negotiations.


War College (Senior PME). The concept of military force as one tool in an international negotiation aligns with the War College’s goal of developing strategic leaders for the Army, the joint force, and the Nation. In his 2016 Strategic Studies Institute Letort Paper, Professor Thomas Galvin argued the Army’s senior leaders could no longer view problems in isolation but must negotiate routinely to break deadlock. In addition to the types of negotiations that senior officers studied earlier in PME, they would benefit from a deeper understanding of the role of force in international negotiation.

With greater interagency and intergovernmental responsibilities, the War College graduates negotiate constantly with partners to achieve national objectives.
The Joint Advanced Warfighting School’s Operational Art and Campaigning Primer describes heads of military organizations negotiating agreements with other government agencies and even nongovernmental organizations. The same text describes negotiated conflict resolutions as springing from two sources: military success and military potential. Deep understanding of the role of these forces in diplomacy is critical for senior military leaders entrusted to use force to set conditions for successful diplomacy.

We recommend the War College prepare the Army’s senior leaders to better employ military force in support of national objectives by adding the following events to reinforce previous negotiation training and ground them in international negotiations theory over twelve hours:

- a review of previous instruction on negotiation;
- instruction on the theories of international negotiation and conflict resolution from International Negotiation: Analysis, Approaches, Issues;
- a practical exercise where students negotiate a memorandum of agreement between a multinational task force and the Department of State or plan military operations to support a negotiation;
- preparation of officers to negotiate within the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (including Army interdepartmental) environment; and
- integration of international negotiations concepts into case studies and exercises throughout the War College.

Conclusion

Negotiating never precludes military actions. The two are inextricably linked and work in tandem. Should hard work at the table fail, we exercise military alternatives to deter or coerce. Yet, we do so only to get back to the table in a stronger negotiating position for the next round. Carl von Clausewitz’s oft-quoted “politics by other means” only holds if we remain mindful of where the “other means” are headed.

In this article, we described a developmental framework for Army officers based upon our review of the field of negotiation analysis. The first section examined the current approach, emphasizing joint problem solving—the foundational concept—and interest-based negotiation. The second section proposed a revised approach that included two additional competencies: “away from the table” moves and international negotiation. The third section outlined the framework with learning objectives, key exercises, and the basic texts.

Negotiation education is a prudent investment for the Army. If implemented, the recommended negotiation progression will enable leaders to more efficiently and effectively devise “win-win” solutions within the Army and with key partners. “Away from the table” moves planned by field grade officers will shape the conditions for successfully negotiating everything from the structure of an Army training exercise to multinational staff responsibilities. Simultaneously, senior leaders will direct military force toward a negotiated diplomatic solution, whether in this round or the next.

The Army’s current approach to negotiations is fragmented and discontinuous. Negotiation training could be improved without significant training opportunity costs by harmonizing the Army’s existing programs. Specialty units like the Judge Advocate General and Acquisitions Corps also train negotiators but focus only on niche applications. Cadets at West Point take four hours in their third-year leadership course but then are not exposed to negotiations again until they take a similar four hours as CGSC students. The Special Warfare Center and School trains students on cross-cultural negotiations but neglects interests as a consideration. These programs all train negotiations in the Army. Yet, they do not regularly communicate with one another, share best practices, or research unique considerations for military negotiation. Future research should study how the Army, other services, and other government agencies train in negotiations and offer suggestions for how the Army could best manage this program.

Notes


5. The Command and General Staff College's negotiation elective seats thirty-four students per year. This is the only in-depth negotiation elective offered in the first twenty years of a typical officer's career.
9. Based upon word associations in ADRP 6–22, *Army Leadership*. The table includes all variants of the stated word.
11. ADRP 6–22, *Army Leadership*. Specific references for each term follow: joint problem-solving approach (para. 10–11), principled negotiation (para. 6–64), alternatives to a negotiated agreement (para. 6–64), and interest-based negotiation (para. 6–64 by derivative).
12. Ibid., para. 10–11.
18. ADRP 6–22, *Army Leadership*, para. 6–64.
22. Lax and Sebenius, *The Manager as Negotiator*.
25. Ibid.
27. ADRP 6–22, *Army Leadership*, para. 6–64.
33. Lax and Sebenius, *3-D Negotiation*. The section following this note paraphrases key concepts from this work.
35. JP 5–0, *Joint Operation Planning*, chap. 3.
40. The Army University–Army Learning Strategy, 10.
41. All schools within the Program on Negotiation consortium (Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Tufts University) offer foundational negotiation courses of approximately this length. This also equates to the approximate length of the negotiation electives offered at the Army War College and the Command and General Staff College.
42. ADRP 6–22, *Army Leadership*, para 2–24. The levels approximate to the level of military schooling.
43. Paul Cheval, email interview with Zachary Griffiths, 15 August 2017.


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50. Ibid., 263.