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**CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONAL
NEGOTIATION IN PROLONGED INTERSTATE ARMED
CONFLICTS**

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Thesis Summary

This research investigates how culture plays a critical role in shaping international negotiations, particularly in the context of prolonged interstate armed conflicts. Unlike the dominant rationalist paradigm that emphasizes material interests and state behavior, this study proposes that norms, values, beliefs, and symbolic practices embedded in culture fundamentally influence how negotiations unfold and how peace agreements are formed and sustained (Avruch 2015:10–11; Lederach 1997:63–66). The motivation stems from the growing realization that many peace processes fail not because of technical shortcomings, but due to a lack of cultural sensitivity. When conflicts are rooted in identity-based grievances and collective memory, purely institutional or strategic approaches are insufficient. In such cases, culture becomes a central force in both the escalation and resolution of disputes (Sorek 2021:1–6; Galtung 1996:28).

To address this gap, the study develops an original theoretical model defining the role of culture in negotiation through three interrelated dimensions: as a blueprint that unconsciously guides behavior, as an instrument consciously employed to facilitate peacebuilding, and as a product emerging from the negotiation process. Each role corresponds to the four negotiation phases: pre-negotiation, formal negotiation, agreement, and implementation (Zartman 2001:9). This framework is applied to four comparative case studies—India–Pakistan, Israel–Palestine, Kosovo–Serbia, and Sudan–South Sudan—chosen for their geopolitical diversity and rich cultural complexity (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:25).

The primary objective is to offer a deeper understanding of how culture affects negotiations beyond language barriers or symbolic gestures. It aims to highlight how cultural values shape perceptions of legitimacy, hierarchy, compromise, and justice—elements often underestimated in traditional diplomacy. At the same time, the study seeks to build a bridge between theory and practice, demonstrating how cultural tools—like traditional rituals or grassroots diplomacy—can be intentionally mobilized to foster trust, reshape narratives, and enhance legitimacy in peace processes (Avruch et al. 1998:6; Nye 2004:11).

Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach, as recommended by Creswell and Stake, emphasizing depth and context (Creswell 2023:95; Stake 1994:237). It uses document analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA), supported by theory-driven coding based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (Hofstede 2001). These methods are applied systematically to peace agreements, UN resolutions, communiqués, and

statements from civil society and leaders. Sampling was conducted purposively across two levels—conflict cases and document types—ensuring representation of diverse cultural expressions (Rapley 2018:126–127; Fairclough 2003:3).

The research contributes to International Relations by challenging the marginalization of culture in negotiation theory and to European Studies by offering insight into how cultural dynamics influence regional peace processes. However, limitations remain. The analysis relies on secondary data, which may not fully capture informal or undocumented dynamics. It also focuses primarily on formal actors, though future research could expand to include grassroots and marginalized voices. Despite these challenges, the framework introduced here provides a new lens for integrating culture meaningfully into the study and practice of international negotiation (Caspersen 2017:45; Sriram 2008:134).

This research is structured into eight main chapters, each serving a distinct analytical and conceptual purpose. These chapters are designed to build a comprehensive understanding of how culture influences international negotiations across different phases and contexts of prolonged interstate armed conflicts (Avruch 2015:10–11; Ramsbotham et al. 2011:25). The structure of Chapter 1 – Introduction is methodically organized to establish a comprehensive foundation for the study. It begins with the Research Rationale and Motivations, explaining the study's relevance and the researcher's impetus (Lederach 1997:63–66; Sorek 2021:1–6). It proceeds with the Research Description and Objectives, delineating the scope and aims (Whetten 1989:492; Jabareen 2009:51). The Research Methodology section is subdivided into the types and methods of research, sampling strategy, materials, investigation period, and research questions—ensuring methodological clarity (Creswell 2023:95; Rapley 2018:123; Saldaña 2009:4). Subsequent sections highlight the Research Contribution to International Relations and European Studies and conclude with an outline of the Limitations, offering a transparent framework that contextualizes the study's academic and practical significance (Kamali-Chirani 2021:102; Sriram 2008:134).

Chapter 2 – Literature Review is structured to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the intersection of culture, conflict, and negotiation. It begins by discussing types and approaches to international conflict, including the cultural dimensions involved (Holsti 1996:6–10; Vasquez and Valeriano 2010; Webel and Galtung 2007:22). It then explores international negotiation through its key phases—pre-negotiation, negotiation, agreement, and implementation (Zartman 2001:9; Bercovitch and Jackson 2009:20–21). The chapter continues

with insights into international mediation practices (Galtung 1996; Lederach 1997:96–97). Lastly, it focuses on the role of culture in peace negotiations, elaborating on culture as a blueprint and instrument, the link between reconciliation and negotiation, and the roles of various leadership levels (Avruch 2015:10–11; Lederach 1997:63–66; Nye 2004:11). This structure ensures a cohesive and multidimensional analysis of culture in conflict resolution.

Chapter 3 – Case Studies Overview provides a detailed contextualization of the four primary conflicts under study: India–Pakistan, Israel–Palestine, Kosovo, and Sudan–South Sudan. Each case is introduced with its historical trajectory and major milestones of diplomatic engagement (Bose 2009a; Speier 1941; Hauter 2019). Specific peace agreements are outlined chronologically, including both bilateral and multilateral initiatives. For example, the India–Pakistan case includes the Tashkent Agreement, Shimla Agreement, and Composite Dialogue; while the Israel–Palestine conflict examines the Camp David Accords, the Oslo process, and the Road Map for Peace. The Kosovo conflict is explored through the Brussels, Washington, and Ohrid Agreements, and the Sudan–South Sudan conflict through the Addis Ababa Agreement, CPA, and Juba Peace Agreement. This chapter establishes the empirical foundation upon which the cultural analysis in subsequent chapters is based (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:25; Caspersen 2017:45).

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the methodological framework underpinning this research. The study adopts a qualitative approach through a comparative case study strategy, enabling an in-depth analysis of how culture influences international negotiations in four protracted conflicts: India–Pakistan, Israel–Palestine, Kosovo, and Sudan–South Sudan. This approach is chosen because the phenomenon under investigation—the role of culture—is highly contextual and inseparable from the historical and socio-political backgrounds of each case (Creswell & Creswell 2023:169; Stake 1994:237). The research strategy is rooted in an interpretivist epistemology, focusing on how cultural meanings are constructed and deployed within official documents and public discourse (Rapley 2018:126–127). The core analytical tools are document analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA), following Fairclough’s notion that language shapes social realities and power relations (Fairclough 2003:3). Data sources include peace agreements, UN resolutions, diplomatic communiqués, speeches by world leaders, and civil society reports. Sampling is conducted purposively at two levels. First, the conflict cases are selected to reflect geographical and cultural diversity. Second, the documents analyzed span both formal sources (e.g., the Comprehensive Peace Agreement or the Oslo Accords) and informal sources (e.g., local communiqués or reports by Search for

Common Ground) (Seawright and Gerring 2008). The period of investigation encompasses the full cycle of negotiation processes—from pre-negotiation to implementation—in order to capture the cultural dynamics throughout. By combining theory-driven coding based on Hofstede’s framework and a discourse-oriented approach, the research ensures both analytical consistency and interpretive depth. This methodological design supports the study’s central objective: to uncover the role of culture as a blueprint, an instrument, and a product within international negotiation processes.

Chapter 5 delves into how cultural dimensions unconsciously shape the behavior of negotiators in prolonged interstate conflicts. Drawing from Hofstede’s cultural framework, the chapter systematically analyzes four key dimensions—power distance, individualism–collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation—as underlying “blueprints” that guide perceptions of legitimacy, hierarchy, risk-taking, and time horizons during negotiations (Hofstede 2001; Hofstede 2010). It cross-references these theoretical indices with empirical data from the four case studies: India–Pakistan, Israel–Palestine, Kosovo, and Sudan–South Sudan. Through this comparative analysis, the chapter reveals how deeply embedded cultural norms influence patterns of trust-building, decision-making, and negotiation style—often without the actors’ conscious awareness. For instance, high power distance may reinforce top-down decision-making, while strong uncertainty avoidance could lead to rigid procedural preferences or demands for guarantees. These implicit cultural factors affect both the substance and the process of peace talks. The chapter also explores the alignment—or dissonance—between general cultural indices and observed behaviors within negotiation texts and actor discourse (Avruch 2015:10–11; Lederach 1997:63). Overall, this chapter offers a nuanced understanding of how invisible cultural scripts condition the conduct of diplomacy and shape the outcomes of peace processes.

Chapter 6 – Culture as an Instrument in Negotiation analyzes how actors consciously deploy cultural elements as tools for peacebuilding. This includes the use of traditional practices—such as Kanun and Besa in Kosovo, Sulha and Musalaha in Palestine, and Judiya in Sudan—(Lederach 1997:54; Ramsbotham et al. 2011:16–18), as well as cultural diplomacy examples like the Delhi–Lahore Peace Bus and Bollywood diplomacy (Kamali-Chirani 2021; Nye 2004:11). The chapter investigates the role of top, middle, and grassroots leadership in fostering cultural reconciliation and sustaining peace dialogues (Schneider 2006; Avruch et al. 1998:6). Here, culture is treated not as a static background, but as a dynamic platform and catalyst for negotiation (Lederach 2005; Nye 2004:11). It demonstrates how cultural practices

can be instrumentalized for confidence-building, narrative reframing, and symbolic healing—especially when formal diplomatic tracks are stalled or ineffective (Search for Common Ground 2023; Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2024).

Chapter 7 – Culture as a Product of Negotiations examines how negotiations themselves give rise to new cultural norms, particularly the norm of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Drawing on the Kosovo case as the genesis of R2P, the chapter traces its emergence across the negotiation phases and its diffusion into global diplomatic discourse (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; Zartman 2001:9). R2P is analyzed as an “espoused value” (Schein, in Avruch 2015:12) and a form of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1991), embedded in the institutional practices of the United Nations and regional organizations (UN General Assembly 2021; UNSC 1973). The chapter further investigates how R2P has been integrated, resisted, or adapted in the contexts of Sudan–South Sudan, Israel–Palestine, and Kashmir (Kamali-Chirani 2021:102; Sriram 2008:134). It also evaluates how collective expectations and moral pressures shape negotiation dynamics, illustrating the performative power of international norms as cultural outcomes of peace processes (Ban Ki-moon 2009; Kofi Annan 2000).

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research synthesizes the key findings and outlines the contribution of the research to both theoretical and practical dimensions of International Relations and Peace Studies. It emphasizes that culture must be understood as a multi-functional variable—operating simultaneously as a blueprint, instrument, and product—influencing all stages of international negotiations (Avruch 2015:11; Lederach 1997:65). The chapter reflects critically on the limitations of the study, particularly the challenges of measuring culture empirically and the constraints of secondary data (Saldaña 2009:4; Rapley 2018:127). It concludes by proposing future research directions, including the integration of quantitative measures of cultural change, deeper engagement with grassroots actors, and the application of this framework to other types of conflicts (e.g., intrastate or identity-based conflicts) (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:25; Caspersen 2017:45).

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