

The Lost Art of Negotiation in American Politics

Jordan Watson

University of Kentucky

Abstract

Keywords: Negotiation, politicians, elections, stalemate

In the topic of focus it is important to understand the importance of negotiation. Negotiation “is done by developing as many potential solutions as possible and then evaluating them to decide which one best meets everyone’s needs” (Adler, 2011,p. 400). The value of negotiation has been lost in America’s government. The nation elects officials to lead this country and make valuable policy decisions to move forward. Balancing between the two is always a struggle because every member of the government including members of the same party, disagree on how to make these decisions. Our government does not seem to know how to negotiate at all. Negotiation is defined as “sense-making that occurs between and among people as they influence one another’s perceptions and try to achieve a shared perspective”(Adler, 2011 ,p. 400).

Literature Review

In our country we find ourselves in a paradox with the modern political systems. People often find themselves lost and wandering why our politicians are always conflicting yet the differences between the two major parties are not always clear. It is so common for stalemates in the political field that people are not sure if the government is running the country or the power hungry lobbyists that influence them. Often times the congress and senate are labeled as “do nothing” because of the lack of change and progress. People elected them and put them in positions of power so the officials could bring positive leadership to this country. It is a unanimous opinion within the American public that this is due to poor communication. Sure our elected officials are very vocal but that does not mean that they can communicate effectively. The government has done more bad than good on many occasions because of the lost art of negotiation in American Politics. We often judge our elected officials based on their promises made in campaigns. They do so well at telling us about their big plans and visions for the country. But when is the last time their plans have materialized? When is the last time their dreams for this country came true? Many citizens would argue that they don't. We are still in debt, are cloths are still made in China, and we still have some the highest crime rates among developed countries. We the people understand that our politicians are not super humans, but we expect them to pull their weight and work together on policy. How do we do this? By negotiating! We are too conflicted to pass anything and I think that are politicians have forgotten how to compromise.

The problem is the elected officials. Candidates are elected because of interests held by voters and not necessarily values. The best choice for the office is rarely made. For example, in

the neoclassical theory of the firm, the argument that firms act to maximize their profits does not hold in virtue of the beliefs of any of the actors within the firm, but because in a competitive market only those firms that maximize their profits survive. It thus holds whether entrepreneurs are actually motivated by the desire to maximize profit or by an other-worldly desire for eternal salvation (Satz and Ferejohn, 1994, p. 78–9). The people’s vision is clouded by personal gain as opposed to the betterment of the nation. If individuals are, in point of fact, salvation seekers when it has been assumed that they are profit seekers, then a rational choice explanation employing such an assumption will be factually incorrect, and likely to produce false predictions over at least part of the range of phenomena to which it is applied. As we argue in the final section of the article, there are situations in which it may be necessary to test the accuracy of assumptions indirectly against empirical evidence. But because a number of explanations, only one of which is correct, may nevertheless be consistent with the same set of empirical facts, the results of such tests ought to be treated with caution. (Hampshire-Monk, 2010)

III. The failure of congress. The job of our congressmen/women is to help move legislation along until it becomes law. One of the most fundamental powers of the U.S. Congress is the power of the purse, and exercising that power is a core legislative activity (Fenno, 1966). President Clinton and a Republican Congress did not resolve their differences over fiscal year 1996 spending until half of the fiscal year had already passed, along the way incurring the shutdown of the government and much criticism (Woon, Jonathan, and Sarah Anderson, 2012). It is a constant struggle to get any sort of bill passed.

IV. A final factor that contributes to lost art of negotiation is the “20 dollar handshakes”. Behind far too many politicians seek personal gain at our expense. The main finding of our analysis that policy-making is a process of bargaining between *multiple pairs* of key actors

reflects the rich institutional setting of appropriations politics (Woon, Jonathan, and Sarah Anderson, 2012).

This travesty is so unfortunate that it even causes parties to crush its own member which leads to an even greater delay. We also find that *internal party conflict* is a cause of delay (Woon, Jonathan, and Sarah Anderson, 2012).

V. Conclusion

America will undoubtedly survive but to continue to be the strongest democracy that this world has ever seen we must find common ground. It is so crucial that the citizens truly elect the most qualified members for the job and avoid making the mistakes that the articles included have shown. The U.S.A is the greatest creation this world has ever seen so therefore its people must carry that great responsibility and put forth courage in next election season so that political power is distributed to those who have the country's best interests at heart.

References

- Hampsher-Monk, I., & Hindmoor, A. (2010). Rational Choice and Interpretive Evidence: Caught between a Rock and a Hard Place?. *Political Studies*, 58(1), 47-65. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00776.
- Political outlook. (2012). *Country Report. United States*, (4), 4-6.
- Political outlook. (2010). *Country Report. United States*, (12), 4-6
- Woon, Jonathan, and Sarah Anderson. (2012). "Political Bargaining and the Timing of Congressional Appropriations." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XXXVII: 409-36.
- Onlinelibrary.wiley.com. The Comparative Legislative Research Center of the University of Iowa.