

Praise for
FRENCH NEGOTIATING BEHAVIOR

"Despite French emphasis on clarity, French behavior in international affairs remains mysterious to many Americans. Charles Cogan, armed with a formidable understanding of French culture and history, and a long experience in diplomatic and strategic affairs, elucidates the rules, practices, and complexities of French negotiating behavior and shows how they worked in a number of contemporary cases, including the handling of Iraq. It is a highly useful book, as objective and fair as it is wise."

STANLEY HOFFMANN

Center for European Studies
Harvard University

"A pathbreaking study of French diplomatic behavior providing new insights into what is often hard to comprehend and frequently misunderstood by bringing into relief its cultural and historical roots and by offering fascinating insights into France's contemporary foreign policy, notably vis-à-vis the United States and Europe."

KARL KAISER

Director of Research
German Council on Foreign Relations

"The ancient and unique place of France in international and European negotiations justifies the nuanced and erudite attention that Charles Cogan has brought to this study. Cogan knows the French well, their mentality, their qualities, and their faults. Often severe and critical, his analysis puts in its rightful place the specific conception of the state in France, a state gradually formed and defended by forty successive kings, transformed into *la Grande Nation* by the Revolution of 1789, provided with strong and lasting institutions by Napoleon, and today accepted by the citizens as the bearer of national power and legitimacy."

ALAIN PLANTEY

Member of the Institut de France
Former member of the cabinet of General de Gaulle

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French Negotiating Behavior

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*Dealing with
La Grande Nation*

CHARLES COGAN



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE PRESS
Washington, D.C.

The views expressed in this book are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace.

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE
1200 17th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-3011

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First published 2003

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standards for Information Science—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cogan, Charles.

French negotiating behavior : dealing with La grande nation / Charles Cogan.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-929223-53-6 (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 1-929223-52-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Diplomatic negotiations in international disputes. 2. Negotiation—France. 3. International relations and culture—France. 4. France—Foreign relations—1995— I. Title.

JZ6045.C64 2003
327.2'0944—dc22

2003061296

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Foreword

IN THE SUMMER OF 2000 the United States Institute of Peace first turned the spotlight of its Cross-Cultural Negotiation Project on France as a subject for analysis. One or two voices expressed surprise. “Why,” they wondered, “explore the negotiating behavior of a close and old ally? Shouldn’t we be focusing on the way that national culture affects the negotiating style of *adversaries*?” Since then, of course, we have all learned that in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world, historical allies sometimes have very different views of how present and future international challenges should be managed.

The rift between the United States and France over Iraq that developed in 2002–2003 was profound both in its scale and in its likely consequences. France and the United States have hardly become enemies, but previous assumptions about the two countries always coming together in a crisis have had to be thrown overboard. The new U.S. doctrine of preemptive attack, launched with or without UN approval, against perceived threats to U.S. interests conflicts with a longstanding French policy of maintaining cordial relations with the Arab world and of compensating for France’s relative weakness vis-à-vis U.S. power by working through multilateral institutions. The two countries are sure to find common cause on a wide range of issues in the future, but equally they also seem set to collide on some fundamental questions regarding preemption, intervention, the use of force, and the role of the United Nations and other international institutions and coalitions.

This book is, thus, remarkably timely. Like the other volumes that have emerged from the Cross-Cultural Negotiation Project, this study is motivated by a desire to make diplomatic negotiations with a given country more fruitful by enhancing awareness of the negotiating behavior characteristic of that country’s diplomats, policymakers,

and governmental institutions. Such behavior, as the various volumes demonstrate, is shaped not only by the country's political system and history but also by its political culture, a component of its wider national culture. This is not to say that culture is the most important factor in negotiating behavior. To the contrary, the most important determinants of bilateral or multilateral negotiating outcomes are the interests of the countries involved, the foreign policies of their governments, and the specific issues at stake. That said, cultural differences and the negotiating traits that arise from them can and do affect the tenor, process, and results of diplomatic interactions.

In the new, more adversarial climate that surrounds U.S.-French relations, a clearer understanding among American negotiators of the stylistic traits and characteristic approach of their French counterparts will be all the more valuable in preparing for effective negotiations, thereby, one hopes, minimizing disagreement and the possibility of conflict.

Yet, even if the recent quarrel over Iraq played out in the UN Security Council had never occurred, this study would be scarcely less valuable. The United States and France may have been allies for more than two hundred years, but they have never been the easiest of partners, and their relationship has frequently been marked by misunderstanding, and sometimes by ill feeling, on both sides. A book that promises to enhance understanding of how the French approach and conduct negotiations would surely have found a receptive audience among the administrations of such different presidents as Clinton and Reagan, Johnson and FDR, Wilson and, perhaps, Washington. Furthermore, while the issues that animate French-U.S. relations have changed significantly over the years—with the clash between U.S. readiness to exercise its unmatched power and French eagerness to restrain the American “*hyperpuissance*” being only the latest—the most notable elements of French negotiating behavior have remained remarkably constant for decades, even centuries. The assertiveness of de Gaulle and Chirac, which sometimes seems gratuitous in its willingness to challenge American leadership, can be found in the age-old tradition of French diplomacy and the overpowering centrality of the French state in French society.

As the reader will discover, author Charles Cogan emphasizes continuity in this broad-ranging and incisive portrait of French diplo-

mats and leaders at the negotiating table. Some facets of the French approach, Cogan argues, can be traced back centuries. For instance, the days of French military conquest under Louis XIV and Napoleon gave rise to an enduring sense of national grandeur and a tendency to impose harsh peace terms on a defeated adversary; the influence of Descartes and the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment fostered an abiding preoccupation with justifying policy positions in the framework of Cartesian logic; and the French Revolution instilled a sense of France as a shining exemplar of republican values, the selfless purveyor of a universally applicable model of a fair and just society.

Other traits, explains the author, are of more recent vintage. For instance, the sorry experience of French diplomatic “tailism” in the 1930s engendered a determination thereafter in Paris to pilot a more independent, less entangling course; de Gaulle’s intransigent assertion of French pride and global relevance after France’s humiliating occupation by the Nazis has bequeathed to French negotiators a reputation for tenacious nationalism and arrogance; and concern to save Europe from both another world war and from domination by one or another superpower has promoted a readiness to work within multilateral frameworks, the most recent example, of course, being the European Union and the United Nations (where French power is magnified by its veto in the Security Council).

Continuity with the past is by no means the whole story, however, as Cogan makes clear. French negotiators still exhibit a penchant for delivering lengthy, brilliantly argued opening presentations, for aggressively reiterating their government’s position throughout the middle game, and for disdaining any agreement that might compromise French principles or long-term interests. In each of these phases of the negotiating process, however, some change has become evident in recent years, and will likely become more marked in the next decade or two. Globalization is broadening the international purview of French diplomats, diminishing their resistance to the use of English, and encouraging them to display greater pragmatism. As a consequence, French negotiators are becoming less wedded to their opening positions, more inclined to show flexibility in the middle phase of a negotiation, and more likely to come to a final agreement.

Cogan’s interest in both the past and the future evolution of

French negotiating behavior, his ability to speak both to scholars seeking more detailed analysis and to negotiators focused on practical advice, and his use both of previous academic studies and of numerous interviews with highly placed diplomats and policymakers resonate perfectly with the broader aims of the Institute's Cross-Cultural Negotiation Project. Mandated by Congress to support research into the means by which international conflicts can be managed or resolved peacefully, the Institute has always sought not only to speak both to the policymaking and the scholarly communities, but also to promote the exchange of ideas and perspectives between those groups. Thus, for example, previous publications resulting from the Cross-Cultural Negotiation Project have included wide-ranging studies on the impact of culture on international communication, as well as country-specific studies. The latter category includes Dick Smyser's *How Germans Negotiate*, Scott Snyder's *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior*, Jerry Schechter's *Russian Negotiating Behavior*, my own *Chinese Negotiating Behavior*, and *Case Studies in Japanese Negotiating Behavior* by Michael Blaker, Paul Giarra, and Ezra Vogel. The former includes Kevin Avruch's *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, Chas Freeman's *Arts of Power: Statecraft and Diplomacy*, and Raymond Cohen's *Negotiating across Cultures: International Communication in an Interdependent World*. Together with a number of shorter reports—one of which, *U.S. Negotiating Behavior*, turns the spotlight on ourselves—this body of work offers both scholars and practitioners a uniquely broad-ranging and unusually penetrating understanding of the dynamic relationship between culture and negotiation.

Extensively researched, engaging, and candid, Charles Cogan's *French Negotiating Behavior* is an excellent addition to this series. It will surely enhance understanding of how the French approach and conduct diplomatic negotiations. It should stimulate consideration of the difficulties, as well as the advantages, of negotiating between allies. And, at this delicate stage in U.S.-French relations, it may do a service to both countries by suggesting how to make their negotiating encounters more productive if not always more pleasant.

RICHARD H. SOLOMON, PRESIDENT
UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

Preface

THIS BOOK IS THE SIXTH IN A SERIES of studies about national negotiating styles published by the United States Institute of Peace Press. The series is part of the Institute's cross-cultural negotiation program, which examines the impact of culture on diplomatic and other negotiations. The congressionally mandated mission of the Institute is to strengthen the U.S. capacity to promote the peaceful resolution of international conflict. The cross-cultural negotiation project is premised on the belief that a richer understanding of the behavior of negotiating counterparts is likely to make diplomatic encounters more productive for everyone involved.

The flagship book in this series was *Chinese Negotiating Behavior*, written by Richard Solomon, the president of the Institute and the animator of the cross-cultural negotiation program. The Institute has since published books on four other countries: Jerrold Schecter's study of Russia, Scott Snyder's analysis of North Korea, Richard Smyser's examination of Germany, and a study of Japan written by Michael Blaker, Paul Giarra, and Ezra Vogel.¹ The Institute has also published works with a broader, non-country-specific perspective on the role of culture in negotiations.²

Although the subject of French diplomacy has attracted considerable attention since the heated confrontation over Iraq in the United Nations Security Council in 2002–03, interest in a book on France goes back to July 2000, when the Institute organized a colloquium from which emerged a short report on French negotiating style.³ Now, as then, the central intention of this study is to examine how French culture writ large affects the way that the French behave in their

relations with foreign countries, and in particular the way that they interact with their foreign interlocutors. This book focuses first and foremost on how French-U.S. negotiations are conducted, but it also includes observations on how other foreign interlocutors view French negotiators and on how the French see themselves.

This work examines a wide spectrum of issues as well as interlocutors. Although the emphasis is on French civil servants as negotiators, the book also considers French military officers and French businesspeople, with an eye to discerning both their differences and their similarities. There are, of course, significant variations in the ways that different French individuals approach and conduct negotiations—one need only think of such odd couples as Charles de Gaulle and François Mitterrand or Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin to appreciate that holders of the same office can behave in quite distinct fashions. Nonetheless, as the following chapters seek to demonstrate, and as U.S. and other negotiators are ready to attest, there is an identifiable French style. The various elements of that style may be mixed in different proportions in different individuals, but one can still recognize the overall *mélange* as being distinctly French.

In approaching this work, I have read widely in French history and particularly in French history as it relates to culture, including what is probably the most monumental undertaking of recent decades, the 4,752-page history of France through memory, *Les lieux de mémoire*, edited by Pierre Nora. Other works that examine the intersection of French culture and history are listed in the bibliography at the end of this book. I have also consulted a considerable amount of the literature on negotiations in general, and these works too are listed in the bibliography. A great deal of literature in French looks at the substance of negotiations and the decision-making structures that dictate French approaches to both bilateral relations and relations within the framework of the European Union. However, relatively little work has been done to date in French on the *process* of negotiations.

Because this study is primarily focused on French negotiating behavior since the end of the Cold War, few primary sources are available. Accordingly, I have relied to some degree on secondary material and to a larger extent on in-depth interviews, some of them with U.S.

and French officials and academics but some with representatives from France's major counterparts in Europe, Germany and Great Britain. As far as international institutions are concerned, my interviews centered on the European Union and NATO. Wherever possible, I have identified the interviewees in the body of the text or in endnotes: in some cases, however, interviewees have understandably preferred to remain anonymous. I am extremely thankful to all my interviewees for their frank and insightful opinions and for the rich conversations I enjoyed with them in the United States and Europe.

I am especially grateful to Alain Lempereur for his advice, particularly on chapters 4 and 7, and for the materials he provided me from the course on negotiation that he teaches at the *École Nationale d'Administration*, the leading French training school for civil servants. I am also indebted to Nicolas Tenzer for making available to me a study, sponsored by the French government, on the organization of French European and international policy.⁴ I am also grateful to Max Johnson of NATO, to former White House official Bruce Riedel, and to Roderick Abbott of the European Commission for commenting on the three case studies in chapter 5. Additionally, I wish to thank four people who were invaluable in helping me arrange interviews with a wide variety of negotiators: Stéphane Chmielewsky, French consul general in Boston at the time, provided many services for me and was particularly helpful in arranging interviews with French diplomats in Paris, Brussels, Washington, and Ottawa; Christian Hauswedell, then German consul general in Boston, helped set up interviews in Germany; Ambassador Beth Jones, assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, arranged introductions for me with U.S. and European diplomats in the United States and in Europe; and Max Johnson, legal adviser at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), arranged for me a series of interviews there. I would also like to add a special word of gratitude to Professor Stanley Hoffmann, my guru and friend over the past dozen years at Harvard and the *ne plus ultra* of U.S. experts on France. Finally, I am greatly indebted to my editor, Nigel Quinney, without whose suggestions this book would not have been so well realized.

French Negotiating Behavior



Marianne, French symbol of liberty and republican pride. In this representation from 2000, Marianne is modeled on the actress Laetitia Casta, who was elected by the mayors of France from among five candidates. *Photograph by Laurent FAU, reprinted with permission of Dexia Crédit Local de France, Association des Maires de France.*