



## Negotiating with Terrorists: The Hostage Case

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**Abstract.** This article provides an overview of hostage negotiations, drawing upon historical cases and analyzing them from the perspective of negotiation theory. Various situational factors are studied, including the parties involved, hostage taker motivations and profiles, negotiator objectives and what is considered to be negotiable, the issue of legitimacy, and the negotiation context. The article also analyzes the dynamics of the negotiation process, addressing the different phases, hostage attitudes, information gathering, and the role of the media and public opinion. The intercultural and psychological dimensions of hostage negotiation are also addressed. The final section of the article considers end-game scenarios, and assessing the negotiation outcome of such complex and uncertain processes.

**Keywords:** negotiation, terrorists, hostages, kidnapping, power, ideology, political militants, legitimacy, culture, uncertainty, high stakes, hostage-barricade incidents, fishbowl theory, psychotic behavior, Stockholm syndrome, cognition, values, ethics, “chicken” paradigm.

Originally, the word “hostage” comes from the Latin *hospes* that means “hospitality”. Obviously, the concept has evolved a great deal in meaning and substance. Historically, the practice dates back to high antiquity, as exemplified in its practice in ancient Egypt, Persia, the Middle East, Greece and the Roman Empire. It was even then present as a clause in treaties. The first “hostages” were most often prominent people handed over to adversaries in order to guarantee fulfillment of commitments such as the exchange of prisoners or evacuation of territories. It was also a way to ensure that allies would remain as such. “Diplomatic hostages” were often members of royal families and were treated as persons of distinction. The practice of hostage-taking became illegal in the 18th century. At the same time, a much more sordid practice continued to occur and is still in use: abduction for the purpose of obtaining political advantage. Since 1949, the Geneva Conventions strictly forbid hostage-taking as contrary to human rights. Usually, the practice is considered a criminal

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offense and severely punished. Some countries, such as Colombia, have even outlawed any contact with hostage-takers.

Today, it remains a common practice on a great variety of occasions. Hostage-taking can be defined as the detention of individuals whose release is conditional on the realization of certain conditions determined by their captors. Thus, the hostage is the guarantor of a trade-off; he is a currency of exchange. This illegal control is a *fait accompli* on the freedom of the hostages and threatens their lives. This situation created by the hostage-takers is meant to strengthen their bargaining position.

Hostage-taking is part of a broader action, that of random terror which is meant to create or to perpetuate a power situation (Arendt 1962). This is typically a weapon of the weak. It is also a way of substituting violence for the rule of law. By doing so, the hostage-taker challenges the prevailing legal authority, weakens it, and discredits it. Acting in this fashion, hostage-takers knowingly and dramatically are ready to transgress the first taboo of our societies by committing murder.

Several hostage-taking situations can be distinguished: skyjacking, hostage-barricade incidents such as attacks on embassies, and kidnapping (Hayes 2002). According to the definition adopted by the European Union in 2001, hostage-taking falls into the category of terrorist offenses and includes activities such as extortion, seizure of aircraft, kidnapping for the purpose of seriously intimidating a population, and attempts to alter or destroy the political, economic, or social structure of a country. Even if negotiating to free hostages deals more with the symptoms of the problem than with its cause, in the short term, legal authorities are bound to act to save human lives. Negotiation is one among the various tools that can be used even if terrorists are among the least likely negotiators. Research has already shed light on some aspects of this highly uncertain and complex activity (Baldwin 1976; Faure 1988, 2002; Hayes 2002; Miller 1980; Waugh 1982).

For several decades, hostage-taking has been a widespread activity. Drawing from experience, a number of technical manuals has been published for the purpose of providing advice on specific negotiation skills and methods that should be used in particular circumstances (McMains and Mullins 2001; Lanceley 1999; Davidson 2002; Thomson 2001; MacWillson 1992; Bolz and Hershey 1980; Clutterbuck 1987; Cooper 1981; Poland and McCrystle 1999; Adang and Giebels 1999). These guides are often written by police negotiators. They cover topics such as barricaded subjects incidents, high-risk suicide attempts, jail riots, violence in the workplace, stress management, verbal tactics in crisis communication, dealing with emotionally disturbed people, selecting the negotiation team, intelligence gathering, sniper operations, assaults, media relations, and post-traumatic debriefing.

Falling short of providing a real structure for action, these guidelines refer to basic principles drawn from experience that should be followed by any negotiator dealing with hostage-takers. Among the main elements emphasized are the need to avoid engaging in verbal conflict, to actively listen, to avoid deadlines, to give nothing away while appearing to make trade-offs, to understand that lies and deception are acceptable in such critical matters, to gain time, to distract the captors from the hostages, to reassure hostage-takers that the site will not be assaulted, to minimize the seriousness of the crime, not to use the word "hostage", not to suggest exchanging oneself for hostages, and not to expose oneself physically.

### Objectives

The purpose of this article is to offer an overview of negotiation concerning hostage-taking from an analytical perspective drawn from negotiation theory. The point is to present insights on this type of negotiation and in doing so test the relevance of concepts and models.

The work is structured according to the rationale of the negotiator. Various background components of the hostage negotiation are surveyed and studied. Among these elements are the parties involved, the hostage-takers' motivations and profiles, the negotiators' objectives and what is considered to be "negotiable", the legitimacy issue, and the context. The second section deals with the negotiation process, addressing the different phases of negotiation, the attitudes of the hostages, information gathering, and the role of the media and public opinion. A third section focuses on two other essential dimensions of the negotiation, namely, the intercultural aspects and the psychological dimension. A final section deals with the end-game scenarios and assessment of the outcome of this complex and uncertain form of negotiation.

Each of these themes is dealt with and illustrated with examples. In addition to the existing scientific literature in this domain, the content of this article is based on interviews with practitioners and on the personal observations of the author.

### Background Components

#### *The Parties Involved*

A hostage-taking situation is a complex setting that includes many stakeholders. The major and most visible parties to the negotiation are – besides the

*Other Stakeholders  
(states, etc. . . .)*

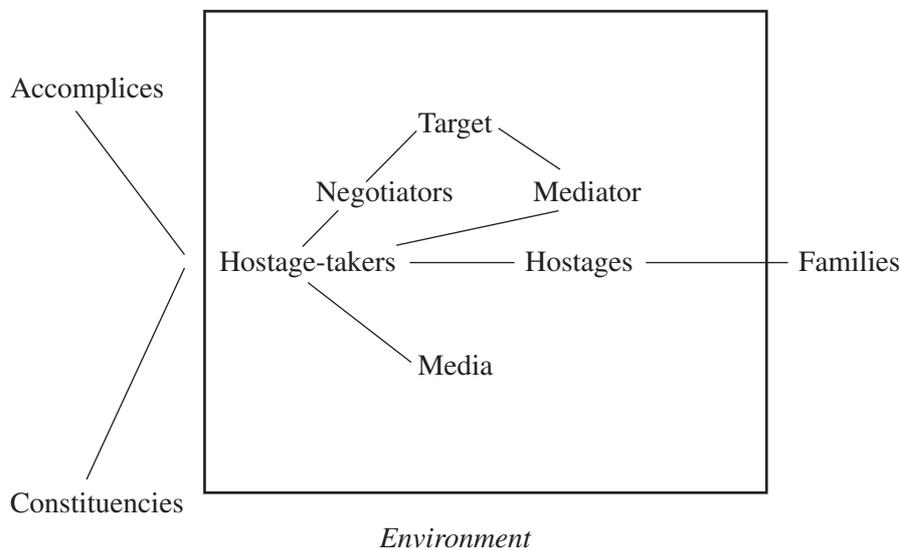


Figure 1.

hostages who sometimes play an active as well as a passive role in the drama – the hostage-takers and the entity that is the target of the whole operation. Hostages may be prominent personalities, children of famous people, political figures, or a group of unknown people such as airplane passengers including crew and pilot, clients and staff of a bank, train passengers, children at school or in a school bus, or diplomats and guests in an embassy.

Hostage-takers can be political militants, but also may be people suffering from psychological problems or simply bank robbers who are trying to escape from the site of their crime. The target of the whole operation of hostage-taking may be a government, a company, or a wealthy individual – basically, whoever is in possession of a resource coveted by the hostage-takers.

There may be other actors involved in the situation, such as public opinion, the government of the country where the incident is taking place, or the hostages’ families. Hostage-takers may have constituencies such as political groups. Figure 1 depicts a general model of the overall hostage situation.

If we consider the negotiation process itself, we have to include the negotiators, whose task it is to directly interact with the hostage-takers. They may be police officers, government representatives, and special units that may include psychologists or prominent people who are asked to intervene as mediators.

The overall logic of the system relies on the threat principle. The hostage-

takers are people who appropriate the lives of other people by violent means and intend to make use of these lives as a currency of exchange. They create this situation to be able to issue a credible threat. The point is to be able to seriously harm the hostages if the target does not comply. Harming the captives may consist in protracting their captivity – sometimes for years – in crippling them, in letting them die of illness and care deprivation, or simply in killing them.

As underlined by Faure (2002), a hostage-taking situation has very specific attributes:

- Dramatic stakes to manage: namely, human lives;
- Positions on both sides of an abyssal gap reflecting the extremely conflicting values of the parties;
- The impossibility of officially recognizing the hostage-taker as a legitimate counterpart;
- Trust as a mechanism that normally has no place in such a setting and cannot be established and implemented during the negotiation process;
- The safety of the negotiators themselves when they work within a hostile context; and,
- Third-party intervention from, for example, the media or the families of the hostages.

These various elements make it extremely difficult to conceive of negotiation as a win-win game. The formal structure of the problem is much more adequately described with a concave curve representing the zone of possible agreements rather than the usual convex curve setting the stage for a Pareto optimal result. Thus, it becomes very unlikely that a situation in which everyone's needs are met will be constructed.

#### *Hostage-Takers' Motivation and Profile*

Three types of hostage-takers can be distinguished, each one corresponding to a different set of motivations. The three prototypes are the criminal, the political militant, and the mentally ill person (Pearce 1977; Stratton 1978; Goldaber 1979). *The criminal*, who is often called a gangster, a felon, or an extortionist, is mainly motivated by money. A bank robber who finds the police waiting for him at the entrance of the building and who takes hostages to negotiate safe conduct belongs to this category. In fact, most often the gangster neither wants to be caught nor face a murder charge. His margin for maneuver is thus rather narrow. The hostages are meant to provide an alternate means of escape. This situation involves the risk of escalation from a simple armed robbery to murder, but if the hostage-taker behaves rationally, he will not resort to that extreme option.

Kidnapping with the intention of seeking ransom belongs to the same category. This type of criminal tends to view his action as a kind of business transaction. Someone will have to pay for the hostage's right to continue living.

There are also mixed types of hostage-takers whose public discourse is based on religious or separatist arguments, yet who in fact do no more than extort financial resources from governments. In this domain of kidnapping for ransom, the Abu Sayyaf Group, a Muslim radical organization operating in the southern islands of the Philippines, is a typical example of a group resorting to terror for financial profit. Since April 2000, this group has carried out a series of hostage-taking activities, mostly aimed at foreigners, with fruitful results. Aboard speedboats, the Abu Sayyaf Group attacked a tourist resort in Malaysia and kidnapped 21 foreigners. In July of the same year, this group seized three French journalists. Later in the year, all prisoners were released after a ransom payment of US \$10–25 million, allegedly from European governments funneled through the Libyan government. In May 2001, the terrorist group kidnapped three Americans and 17 Filipinos from a tourist resort in the Philippines. Several of them were murdered while the others were freed after a year of detention at the price of a ransom of US \$1 million per person. The same group went on in the following years to kidnap a number of Filipinos, releasing some after more ransom was paid and executing others.

*The political militant* is most often motivated by power, influence, fame, political recognition, political trade-offs such as the freeing of prisoners of his own group, or the acquisition of resources for his cause. What is typical of actions taken by political militants is their collective and planned nature. The collective aspect does not only include the coordinated action of several highly committed people, but also the existence of a sponsoring group and a situation that dramatically modifies the power relations between parties. Evidence of long and careful preparation, detailed planning, calculated expectations, and the use of standard operating procedures which have stood the test of time leave very little room for spontaneous moves and unforeseen events. Such a reality and observed behavior differ considerably from the scenarios offered in movies and television programs in which the terrorists are often portrayed as neurotics or psychopaths whose behavior is hardly predictable.

As observed by Miller (1980), such terrorists can be clients of a United Nations member state and use terrorism as an extension of diplomacy. In quite a few cases, political militants are willing to die if their demands are not met, even if they are not basically suicidal. In this category, one must include "freelance revolutionaries" who seek political outcomes but are not backed by any established organization (Baldwin 1976).

Defined as "ideologues", political militants are akin to "religious terrorists", the most unlikely negotiators since extremist ideologies tend to obscure the

ability to compromise (Hayes 2002). The hostage-taker who is a political militant may be portrayed as a popular hero or a sort of Robin Hood figure (Oettgen and Spinazzola 1987). He considers himself as a representative of victims seeking justice. He thus believes he is justified to use any means that helps him achieve what he considers to be righteous ends. He has the option of turning a defeat into a victory and thus projecting a new identity for the group he represents. If he succeeds in taking hostages, he will be seen by his followers as having ultimately triumphed. If he fails, he will be remembered for his sacrifice. In both cases he will end up as a hero, a symbol, or a role model for the group.

*The mentally ill individual* includes those who may be classified as psychopaths, paranoid-schizophrenics, maniacs, or suicidal persons, and is motivated by releasing anxiety or satisfying some perverse need. Often defined as "insane", his most erratic behavior makes him an extremely difficult case to deal with (Baldwin 1976).

Considering the three profiles, uncertainty about the real objectives of the hostage-takers is a major variable in the management of this type of negotiation. These objectives can be extremely diverse. They may be political, psychological, symbolic, social-emotional, or simply monetary in nature. The search for a specific tangible compensation is among the most common goals of a hostage-taker. The sought compensation may be money, but also may be evasion from legal punishment, freedom for accomplices, release of political prisoners, weapons, or medicine. Sometimes, the objective may be more difficult to decipher as in cases demanding public exposure and publicity, ending one's life with external assistance (that of the police, for instance), constructing a new identity, taking revenge in a lose-lose rationale, or playing out an apocalyptic scenario.

#### *The Negotiators' Objectives and What is "Negotiable"*

The negotiators' purpose is to free hostages. Negotiators thus manage two conflicting constraints: securing the freedom of the hostages and deterring other terrorists from taking more hostages. There is no way to free hostages without giving something to the hostage-takers. If there is a gain and no negative consequences, hostage-takers will learn that their action is worthwhile and may make more attempts of the same kind. On the one hand, if concessions and exchanges are conceded, deterrence is not effective. Thus, the counter-threat of a possible police or army intervention may introduce a new balance into the overall system. On the other hand, if the target remains inflexible, the hostages may be killed and the responsibility of the massacre consequently may be borne by the authorities as much as by the hostage-takers.

Defining the real objectives of the hostage-takers is a crucial step because this information will govern the actions to be taken. In complex cases, the French for instance have specialized teams of intervention (the RAID for the police or the GIGN for the army) that have developed computer programs to analyze the psychological profile of the hostage-taker. Based on a limited amount of verbal exchanges, it becomes possible to detect, for example, if the individual is a paranoid psychopath or a melancholic, and thus select an appropriate mode of argumentation and intervention.

A considerable range of issues can be explored during the negotiation process. The hostages are not only a currency of exchange but also a shield against any physical intervention from the police, army, or specialized units. The hostage-takers manage a kind of "hostage capital". Although official authorities normally deny it, there are many things that are traded off in the course of this type of negotiation including not only safe conduct for the hostage-takers, release of jailed terrorists, money, and weapons (Faure 1988), but also recognition, reputation, and the furnishing of political symbols (Miller 1980). There are some limits to the trade-offs. Normally, face-saving is part of the final deal as no open capitulation could be accepted on either side. In order for this to be possible, no hostage should be killed, no negotiator murdered, and no hostage-taker executed.

#### *The Legitimacy Issue*

Prior to entering the negotiation process, the issue of bestowing legitimacy on the negotiating counterpart as a consequence of the negotiation itself may be raised. This is an especially delicate, embarrassing, and thorny point for governments. Formally, no government recognizes a terrorist group, an extortionist, or a hostage-taker as a legitimate counterpart. One should not deal with the devil without the risk of losing one's soul. In addition, there is a widely acknowledged principle that consists of stipulating that one does not negotiate under threat. In doing so, one can jeopardize reputation or future effectiveness.

Though these principles are clear, reality intervenes with an insurmountable priority: the onus to save lives. This moral duty of intervening has been formalized by a UN resolution (March 1987), which not only categorically condemns all hostage-taking irregardless of the motivation but which also asks governments to take all necessary measures to put an immediate end to confinement of victims. In practice, governments often intervene directly or through a third party. There is a moral legitimacy in "interacting" with the hostage-takers, if not in negotiating with them. This double language can be applied to a great variety of issues. Usually no concessions are made officially and the final deal is not made publicly because often the country involved has

to make concessions that, if known, would create problems for it with other countries or with its own public opinion (Faure 1988). Here, more than in any other situation, the iceberg principle, which consists of disclosing only a small portion of the information known, applies. If one considers again, for instance, the actions of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines, no government has acknowledged having paid a ransom to obtain the freedom for its own nationals. For its own part, the Filipino government strictly opposes payment of ransom for hostages.

The legitimacy issue refers to a broader domain, that of values. There is very little in common between hostage-takers who appropriate the lives of innocent people and representatives of legitimate organizations whose action is carried out according to the law. This characteristic will have obvious consequences for the negotiation process. The empathy process by which one side stands in the shoes of the other and tries to understand (if not to share) their views can hardly operate. The moral gap created by the hostage-taking act is an element that structures the negotiation in terms of relational incompatibility and raises a major obstacle to the implementation of a mechanism for exchange and concessions. Thus, the negotiation concession-convergence model is a necessary tool, but extremely difficult to set up.

The moral disqualification of the counterpart on both sides may authorize behaviors that would otherwise not be present in a negotiation, such as lying, playing tricks, manipulating, or using deceptive devices. A number of people highly familiar with this type of negotiation, such as heads of police, considers that hostage-takers should be promised everything and delivered nothing (Miller 1980). Thus, not only the ends, but the "quality" of the counterpart, may morally justify lying and cheating. However, if the negotiation unfolds in several stages, or if the police will have to deal with identical cases later, the question of this tactic's credibility is raised. If there is not a minimum of credibility among parties, no serious and effective negotiation can be carried out in the future.

### *The Context*

One of the most significant factors in understanding negotiations with terrorists is context. Hostage-takers may act in a friendly context or in a hostile context. Negotiators who have to deal with them usually adopt totally different strategies and sometimes even very different goals. In the case of a context friendly to the terrorists, the pressure is on the intervening negotiators to free the hostages because they have very narrow room for maneuver and do not control the negotiation environment. They can be subjected to harassment, attrition, threats, or other coercive tactics. They can even be made to fear for

their own lives. There are cases that end tragically for negotiators when they are not protected or when the other side does not care about possible punishment. As soon as one side has absolutely nothing to lose, it becomes extremely difficult to maintain a reasonable power balance in the negotiation process.

In the case of hostage-takers operating in a hostile environment such as a hostage-barricade situation, the “fishbowl theory” applies (Baldwin 1976). The means available to the hostage-takers are much more limited. They face a much higher risk and usually put much more pressure on the hostages. Hijackers, for instance, and those who seize hostages in bank vaults or embassies, are bargaining in a fishbowl with an adversary who is outside and “can change the water in the bowl” anytime he likes. The hostage-takers’ answer to this unfavorable situation is, when possible, to move to a more welcoming environment. This is typical of hostage-taking in airplanes and leads the terrorists to bring the airplane to an accomplice country where the context can be reversed (Faure 1988). This was the case when a TWA flight was hijacked en route to Rome from Athens by two Lebanese Hezbollah terrorists and forced to fly to Beirut where 15 more terrorists got on board. Of the 145 passengers, 32 male Americans were kept as hostages for 17 days. Passengers with Jewish names were taken to secret sites in the Shiite part of Lebanon and ultimately rescued by a US delta force unit.

Another fishbowl case was the takeover of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979 by a religious group of more than a thousand men denouncing the misdeeds of the Saudi royal family. Fifty thousand people were held hostage at first, soon reduced to 170, a significant but far more manageable number. A siege was organized and the Saudi King obtained a *fatwa* to launch an assault on the premises of the holy shrine. The storming of the site proved so costly in lives that, after several unsuccessful attempts, the governor of Mecca requested the intervention of a French specialized unit, the GIGN. Members of this unit were quickly “converted” to Islam so as not to infringe upon Muslim law. They used various techniques such as flooding the basement of the mosque and then trying to electrocute those who were still alive. At the end, gas was used to neutralize the survivors. Altogether, an estimated 4000 people lost their lives during the two-week battle. 63 rebels were captured alive. Examples were made of them, with their public beheading at different locations around the Kingdom.

Commitment and capabilities are basic conditions that govern the entire negotiation process. On the hostage-taker’s side, there are a wide range of commitments: determination to obtain some objective, to have all demands met, to kill, or to die. Determination is only credible and effective if the corresponding threat can be implemented, which raises the question of the capabilities of the hostage-takers and the resources they have at their disposal. Do

they have enough means, weapons, men, external support, know-how, and information to conduct their action effectively?

The 1979 hostage case at the US Embassy in Teheran demonstrates the essential role played by a highly favorable context to the captors. Iranian militants attacked the US Embassy and took 90 hostages. 54 of these prisoners remained in captivity for 444 days. The 500 militants, often described as “students”, and the Iranian government were total accomplices. All negotiation attempts were fruitless. A rescue mission was launched and aborted after heavy casualties. The hostages were only released after a protracted negotiation made easier by Algerian mediation, the death of the former Shah, and the invasion of Iran by the Iraqi army. It was a case in which no fishbowl rationale could be applied, hostage-taker determination was extremely high, resources were fully available to them, and the risk level was nil.

### The Negotiation Process

#### *The Three Phases*

Attempts to obtain the release of hostages through bargaining is a process which occurs under conditions of high conflict and which may have dramatic consequences. Life and death are the stakes behind the interaction and risk-taking is a major dimension in the actors' behavior. In addition, a psychological component – the level of stress to which parties to the situation are exposed – also comes into play because the lives of captives, captors, and negotiators are at risk. Thus, this type of negotiation exhibits a set of characteristics that opens up an extremely wide range of possible consequences.

Zartman's three-phase model of 1) pre-negotiation, 2) formula, and 3) details can be applied with much relevance to this type of negotiation. The *pre-negotiation* phase consists of accepting the idea of negotiation. It is the basic assumption on which the hostage-taker strategy is devised. On the side of the authorities, officially there cannot be any negotiation with illegitimate counterparts, but in fact “contacts” are established. To this end, it can be quite necessary to set up a direct communication system such as a phone line and organize a way to supply the captives and their captors with food and daily necessities through an intermediary third party. If such contacts were not established, the authorities in charge would be regarded by public opinion and by the hostages' families as indifferent to the fate of the victims or incapable of action. This is why authorities most often act with discretion about the content of the exchanges, but at the same time, are interested in appearing active.

Establishing the *formula for agreement* is particularly difficult to manage

because negotiators are confronted with outrageous demands from the hostage-takers. This is due not only to the economic or political cost of meeting those demands but because such demands often infringe on national laws and international conventions. The demand may be, for instance, to ask for the release of hundreds of political prisoners jailed in a third country, to obtain highly sophisticated weapons, to receive amounts of money equivalent to the annual budget of a small country, to get access to world television networks to issue proclamations, to ask for political figures to replace the hostages, to require the resignation of a government, to compel a country's government to criticize itself publicly, or to insist on official recognition from the UN or even for a seat in that body.

This kind of situation represents a very conflictual interaction. Often, tough tactics such as threats and *faits accomplis* are used to make one's determination more credible and put more pressure on the other party. The hostage-takers live under the permanent threat of being stormed in an assault by an intervention team, whereas the authorities fear the execution of captives. The goal for the authorities is to lower the level of the captors' expectations by mobilizing harassment and fatigue tactics, and information manipulation.

One of the most effective tools in speeding the search for a formula of agreement is applying the most feared threat that underlies the hostage situation – killing one or several hostages. Several incidents in the Middle East offer illustrations of this tactic.

Timing is an extremely important factor in the negotiation because it structures the process and drastically influences behaviors. Thus, Miller (1980) points out that "time is an expandable commodity; life is not". Unless captors keep their hostages in a friendly environment, time usually works to the advantage of the authorities. This is why issuing imperative deadlines is part of the panoply of constraints raised by the hostage-takers who thus aim to impose their own tempo onto the discussions.

Baldwin (1976) observed that as the situation evolves, fatigue becomes an increasingly important variable. Rationality and motivation are likely to change on the hostage-takers' side. With fatigue, the overarching formula offered by the authorities may begin to appear more acceptable to the captors. There also may be a shift in priorities as the situation decomposes. This can happen, for instance, because of an unexpected intervention, for example, on the part of a religious leader respected by the captors or the parents of the hostage-taker if he is acting alone. This is why captors tend to seek to maintain their anonymity, whereas the authorities strive to discover their true identity in order to multiply the means of pressure.

However, time does not always play against the captors, especially if they are operating in a friendly context. In fact, with the passage of time, public

opinion expects positive results, commiserates with the hostages, and may accuse the authorities of being incapable of resolving the situation. If one considers the overall situation, its evolution over time may lead the hostage-takers to experience the Damocles complex. The captors realize that they have somehow been turned into prisoners. The experience of confinement in a bank or an airplane, for instance, may increasingly modify their perception of the problem. This reframing may lead them to abandon their hopes for an outcome within minutes or hours. In a protracted situation, the context may come to bear heavily upon the hostage-takers, playing an essential role in ongoing negotiations.

Lengthening the duration of the negotiation may also introduce a reversal effect between the position of culprit and victim. The authorities become reprehensible for not having dealt with the problem with the necessary effectiveness and rapidity. This phenomenon is accentuated if the hostages are ordinary citizens with whom common people can identify.

In a negotiation, the security point denotes the minimum gains that a party has determined acceptable. The existing gap between the goals of a negotiator and his security point plays an essential role in the management of the negotiation process. If a hostage-taker is truly ready to die for his cause, it means that his goals and security points are identical. There is no more room for maneuver for the other side. An effective technique for the terrorist can be to make the authorities believe that his goal and his security point are the same. Conversely, the negotiator will try to make the hostage-taker believe that exile is a better option than death because he will thus still have leverage to serve his cause.

The *details phase* is still highly competitive and often the process moves to the edge of the abyss. Parties to the conflict, especially political militants, are caught in a lose-lose game in which the only satisfaction becomes that of inflicting more suffering or casualties on the other side. Within such a situation, hidden or overt violence prevails at the negotiation table. Such means are not the most suitable for reaching an agreement or even limited forms of cooperation.

Tricks of all sorts are used; cheating is the most common currency, and deep distrust remains throughout the process. Negotiators apply the reciprocity principle with the "salami" tactic to reach their goals. Anything given to the hostage-takers must receive compensation, even water, food and other commodities such as light and electricity. The trade-off may be a hostage if there are many of them, or the sending of a messenger or a doctor.

This phase of fine-tuning concessions is an ambivalent moment in negotiations because everyone believes he has done the most difficult part of the task and true hope for a solution has appeared. At the same time, the obstacles have not been really overcome because each side will try to compensate quantitatively for what it has conceded in the previous phase. Like the authorities,

terrorist groups have closely studied the negotiation techniques used by these authorities and have a precise plan to control the ultimate phase. This stage unfolds under the threat of dirty tricks, even if none are really implemented, which makes this phase extremely antagonistic. The prevailing suspicion of ill intent, especially on the side of the captors is the unspoken rule, for the word of the other is deemed questionable. In such a case, negotiation cannot be defined as a process of gradual reduction of uncertainty, because uncertainty will remain until the very last moment.

### *The Attitude of the Hostages*

Most of the captives fall into the category of “passive hostages”, which means people who do not have the possibility of exerting any important personal initiative with regard to their own situation. The hostages come to realize that their position was created against their own will and that they have become a financial or political stake. They experience the hostage condition as an overwhelming unfairness being done to them. They do not control their movements or their own lives. Their destiny will be played out for them. Beyond being simple prisoners, they are suspended dead people at the captors’ mercy. As such, they have two basic reactions: either they prostrate themselves or they try to act. Thus, some hostages manage, at great risk, to escape from their place of detention. There are cases of hostages with strong enough personalities or sufficient charisma to directly influence some of their captors (Miller 1980). When the head of the hostage-takers realizes this, he has to remove them. Basic precautions are often taken by captors so that they do not show themselves to the hostages unless wearing a hood and they forbid all verbal exchange and visual contact. Sometimes hostages are kept tied up, isolated or in quasi-darkness.

Some hostages establish relations with their captors and may even come to espouse their cause. The psychological process is known as the “Stockholm syndrome” (Wilson and Smith 1999; Wilson 2002). Dependent, humiliated, cut off from the outside world, and overcome by feelings of abandonment and psychological weakness, the hostage may begin to identify with the captor. This is the outcome of a mental process in which hostage and jailer develop a sense of mutual attachment. With the passing of time and the suspension of contact with the outside world, both find themselves locked in a common fate. Each one needs the other to achieve freedom and satisfaction of demands. Deprived of power, the hostage identifies with the captor and feels that both have similar interests. The authorities outside are thus perceived as the enemy who imposes obstacles to the release of captives. If something dramatic happens, these authorities are considered responsible.

This psychological process was first observed in Stockholm in the case of a failed bank robbery that resulted in hostage-taking. Several of the hostages ended up identifying with the criminals and a woman even initiated sexual relations with her jailer. These attitudes were not a submissive response to normal feelings of fear but were produced by a kind of intimacy that developed during the captivity phase during which both parties shared the same difficult situation in the same physical space under conditions of high stress. Thus, an emotional bond was created. Patricia Hearst, the daughter of a press tycoon, provided a spectacular illustration of the Stockholm syndrome. First, she was kidnapped and held for ransom. Later, she joined the cause of the captors, lived with one of the men, and helped the gang to attack banks at gunpoint.

Another expression of this hostage identification syndrome was observed in the hostage-taking at the residence of the Japanese ambassador in Lima, Peru in 1996 by a Marxist-Leninist commando. Labeled the "Lima Syndrome", it describes a gradual identification of some of the captors with the hostages throughout the days, weeks or months of detention. As a consequence, their original hostility softened. The unity of the terrorist group was thus challenged.

The Stockholm syndrome may lead the hostages to adopt an antagonistic attitude toward the authorities, such as refusal to cooperate in a rescue attempt (Ochberg 1980), providing inaccurate information about the hostage-takers and the siege site if they are released during the negotiation process, or afterwards, refusing to testify against their captors. However, the Stockholm syndrome can also offer possibilities for positive reciprocal feelings that may prevent hostage-takers from killing their hostages. An illustration can be found in the South Moluccan hijacking of a train in the Netherlands in 1975. A passenger was chosen for execution if the authorities did not meet a deadline. Before being killed, this hostage asked his captor to deliver an oral farewell message to his family. The content of the message was so moving that the terrorists changed their mind and did not kill him (Ochberg 1978).

The Stockholm syndrome has been most often explained as a phenomenon of identification with the captor. Another explanation considers the syndrome as a regression process. The hostage regresses to a state of extreme dependence on the captor and develops a strong sense of gratitude toward those controlling his life (Strentz 1979; Ochberg 1980). Indebtedness may thus play an important role, especially when the gap between what is expected or dreaded by the captive and what really happens to him is significant. In 1513, Machiavelli provided an explanation of the phenomenon by pointing out that when men receive good instead of the expected evil, they feel more indebted to their benefactor (Lanceley 1999).

*Information Gathering*

Whatever the degree of antagonism, a hostage negotiation requires a communication system, some kind of interaction, a minimum attempt to “understand”, and information collection. If the positions of the parties on fundamental aspects are in extreme conflict, it may be advisable to appear more cooperative than one’s actual position. The point is to avoid throwing oil on the fire. Importantly, by bridging the divide in communication, the negotiator can encourage the hostage-takers to reveal themselves. This may yield useful data on the hostage-takers themselves, their objectives, means, strategy, and sources of external support.

Information gathering is the role of the police and specialized services at both the national and international levels. It includes on-site observation made with the help of optical probes, high-sensitivity microphones, bugs, and micro-lasers able to register conversations held a street away. Telephone exchanges and other conversations are normally tapped and analyzed to identify significant elements such as intonations, hesitations, slips, etc.

Knowing the adversary enables negotiators to drill a hole in the shell behind which the hostage-taker protects himself psychologically, as well as practically. To see the captors or to take pictures of them may lead to their identification and thus greater leverage, especially in the case of kidnapping or hostage-barricade situations, such as a bank robbery gone wrong. If the hostage-taker realizes that he has been spotted and identified, his spirits and demands may lower considerably.

The 1975 Spaghetti House case is one in which the collection of personal information played a crucial role. Three armed robbers bungled a raid and held seven hostages in a London restaurant for six days. Sensitive microphones were put in appropriate places, a great deal of information was collected, and the identity of the captors was discovered. At the end, the gangsters simply surrendered.

*The Media and the Public Opinion*

The purpose of the media is to inform the public about events happening in the world. The media often displays a special interest for hostage-taking because its dramatic and spectacular dimension generates much public attention. The hostage-takers are aware of this and strive to take advantage of this fact. They often resort to the media as an amplifier of their claims and a megaphone for their propaganda. Thus, the leader of the Palestinian Peoples’ Liberation Front stated that in dramatic circumstances such as hostage-taking, it is more useful to keep one Jewish prisoner alive than to kill one hundred in a classic battle.

The media, especially the television, may gradually transform the hostage-taker from a mediocre unknown, an anonymous person among the crowd, into a hot-headed star in the limelight whose words and actions are heard all over the world. A quasi-symbiotic relation may thus be established between hostage-takers and the media, each one providing something essential to the other.

When a journalist identifies himself with the hostages, the public may feel involved in the drama. Public opinion may play a non-negligible role in the strategy adopted by negotiators. In the 1976 case of the hijacking and landing of the Air France airplane in Entebbe, Israeli public opinion was opposed to a military solution until the terrorists raised their demands, thereby casting doubt on the possibility of reaching a negotiated agreement. It was only from this new situation that the Israeli authorities were able to implement their policy of firmness. The militants from the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine, embarking in Athens, hijacked the plane to Benghazi where all non-Israeli passengers were released. The hijackers then went to Entebbe. The Israeli government sent two airplanes of paratroopers who managed within 90 minutes to kill all the captors, destroy 11 Ugandan military planes, and release all the hostages.

Sometimes the media plays a direct role in the hostage-taking situation by intervening among the protagonists. Thus, in New York, in a case in which negotiation had led to an agreement including the release of the hostages and the surrender of the terrorist, a reporter almost derailed the entire operation. He managed to reach the captor by telephone and interviewed him on the reasons behind his conduct. The immediate effect was to reactivate the grievances of the captor who then questioned the agreement.

The intervention of the media may also lead to death. A Lufthansa flight was hijacked to Mogadishu, Somalia in October 1977. During the detention of the airplane, the pilot managed to surreptitiously send critical information about the terrorists to the control tower. A journalist came to know about it and reported what the pilot was describing to a radio channel. One of the hostage-takers on board was listening to that channel and had no difficulty guessing where the leak was coming from. The terrorist killed the pilot. As a basic principle, authorities in charge of the hostage situation try their utmost to keep the media away from the negotiation scene. This strategy is not easy to maintain as hostage families and captors tend to seek more leverage on the negotiation process by resorting to the media.

## Dimensions of the Negotiation

### *The Cultural Issue*

When the negotiation brings together protagonists from different countries, the cultural dimension may play an important part (Faure 2002). The gap between North and South, as well as the role of major political actors may, on one hand, function as a trigger for hostage-taking activities and, on the other hand, serve as an obstacle to dialogue in the negotiation. Existing stereotypes often tend to widen the gap and entrench the antagonism. Furthermore, the terrorist group as a social unit may have developed a culture of its own which in many ways is incompatible with any national or global culture. It may have been established as a defense mechanism to shield the group and justify its actions, and it may negate dialogue and communication. Thus, a siege mentality may develop (Faure and Rubin 1993).

At stake are conflicting sets of values on which attitudes are based and behaviors justified. Very often, identity problems arise on the terrorist side. Any counteroffer from the authorities can be perceived as an attempt to checkmate the global project of the terrorist group, challenging its values, its *raison d'être*, and its identity. Opportunities for communicating are reduced and channels that have been established for the purpose of helping the negotiation process are simply used as means of conducting verbal warfare.

Negotiation to free hostages juxtaposes two groups who also belong to different organizational cultures. The culture of the legal authorities dealing with the situation is based on official legitimacy, the group's institutional position, and the laws in force. The hostage-takers' culture is rooted in shared values that have been adopted by the members of their group and produce specific representations of the world. Huge discrepancies may exist and bear on the negotiation. Not least of these is the definition given by each party to the overall situation. The authorities face a criminal case, abduction, which is a totally unacceptable action that must be punished accordingly. For the hostage-takers, the situation represents a courageous and just initiative.

The actors in the situation are also perceived in highly contrasting ways. The negotiators define themselves as representatives of the only legitimate authority embodying the values of society, whereas for the terrorists, the official negotiators are just agents of a repressive power. For the negotiators, the hostage-takers are viewed as criminals and terrorists, whereas the hostage-takers define themselves as freedom fighters. Thus, culprits and victims are two sides of the same coin. The hostages themselves are also conceived differently by each side – innocent hostages by some and guests by the other.

The nature of the demands reveals the same conflicting perceptions. For one

group, the act is mere extortion. For the other group, it is a compensation mechanism, an action undertaken in order to be recognized. The ethical dimension also exhibits considerable discrepancies. In the view of the legal authorities, terrorists' methods discredit their aims. For the terrorists, the impossibility of reaching a substantial outcome through normal channels justifies their means.

A disjunction in values can also be observed when considering the main variables in hostage-taking. Legitimacy, law, justice, violence, and death are interpreted in radically incompatible ways. The legitimacy of the authorities is denied and at best viewed as serving the interests of a small number of influential people. The law of one group is defined by the other as a repressive apparatus. What is justice for some is viewed as the very expression of unfairness by others. The condemnation of violence by some is considered ideological manipulation by others. Death is viewed as a failure for some but a crowning achievement for others. This set of disjunctive perceptions makes communication in the negotiation setting extremely difficult.

#### *The Psychological Variable*

In a wide range of hostage negotiation cases, including those involving political militants and mentally ill people, the psychological dimension plays a major role and clearly distinguishes hostage situations from other types of negotiations. This dimension considerably increases the level of complexity of the negotiator's task because, like the ideological dimension, it tends to break the basic rationale that governs most negotiations.

The psychological profile of hostage-takers may include tendencies towards megalomaniac attitudes, paranoid behavior, or suicidal actions. Terrorist groups may sense an overwhelming sense of power and self-image by making outrageous demands directly of a government. Paranoid attitudes result from a Manichean vision of the world, with good and evil caught in a fight to the death. This can leave no room for compromise, because it would betray the terrorist's mission. Suicidal conduct is implemented with either the idea of accomplishing an altruistic sacrifice or playing out the great "end scenario". The altruistic sacrifice demonstrates an extremely strong identification of the member with his group or a pathological weakening of the personality. Orchestrating the "end scenario" is a way to implement, on a small scale, the end of the world prophecy.

Devaluation of the victims may be used to reduce the seriousness of the act of murder if the hostages are to be killed. Bewildering as these beliefs may be, they are spread and maintained by individuals and groups to feed contempt and create a differentiated image of other, providing easy excuses for the worst acts.

## The Final Stage

### *The End Scenarios*

After a few hours, days, weeks, or even months, the negotiation comes to a final stage. Two scenarios can result: a settlement is found or no agreement is reached. When a settlement has been found, it includes the release of the hostages as well as various concessions to the captors. The most common concessions in the case of a hostage-barricade situation or kidnapping are the provision of a sum of money, safe conduct, and/or the promise of a fair trial. If the hostage-taking has political overtones, trade-offs may include money, weapons, medicine, safe passage, asylum for the hostage-takers, the freedom of political prisoners, and access to media networks by the hostage-takers to make public proclamations.

An interesting mechanism of the negotiation process – the sowing of differences to produce an internal division within the hostage-taker group – can facilitate agreement. The unity of the group is weakened and sometimes destroyed by the fact that some offers made by the authorities appear acceptable to some group members but not to others. Another similar trigger for agreement is to convince the captors that the authorities have reached their extreme upper limits of conceivable concessions.

As underlined by Baldwin (1976), it is essential to offer an exit to the hostage-takers, and to time this offer at the right moment. This tactical maneuver combined with efforts to reduce the range of options and lower the level of expectations of each hostage-taker may be quite effective.

When a settlement has been found, there are still two types of endings. The terms of the agreement can be implemented faithfully or they may be abandoned. The non-implementation of the agreement by the captors may for instance lead to the murder of the hostages, as was the case with Aldo Moro, a former Italian prime minister, by the Red Brigades. Kidnapping cases also offer examples of a number of murders at the end of negotiations or during the period of detention. One reason for defection may be that the hostage-takers seek to suppress information that may be used to track them down later.

The authorities may also defect from the agreement, resorting to armed intervention. In this case, negotiation was only a means to soften the hostage-takers. The aim was to collect information on the hostage-takers, their weapons, their degree of preparation, their attitudes, the particulars of the place of confinement, and their possible external allies. Negotiators maintained continuous communication with the terrorists, depriving them of sleep and exhausting them in order to reduce their ability to analyze new events and lower their level of vigilance.

When hostage-taking is perceived as an act of war, the response of authorities is likely to be in a similar vein. This position is reflected in Israeli policy, which clearly prioritizes deterrence and long-term views. An example of this is the 1974 case when children at a school in Maalot, Israel were taken hostage by a Palestinian group. Three Arabs from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine attacked the school, killing the guard and several children. The assault, led by an elite brigade, resulted in a tragic outcome not only for those hostage-takers who were killed but also for the 21 children.

The 1975 Savoy Hotel incident in Tel Aviv was the scene of another dramatic ending. Eight PLO gunmen landed by sea in Tel Aviv. They took dozens of hostages at the Savoy Hotel. The same day, security forces stormed the site but were unable to avoid bloodshed. Eight hostages were killed and 11 wounded. Three Israeli soldiers were also killed. At the end, the terrorists retreated to a room and blew themselves up.

The case of the Lufthansa flight hijacked to Mogadishu in 1977 ended with a more positive outcome. None of the 82 passengers were hurt during the storming of the airplane. By contrast, the case of a Moscow theater where over 700 people were held hostage by Chechen commandos in October 2002 resulted in a massacre (see Dolnik and Pilch, this issue). A group of 40 heavily armed Chechen militants, some with explosives strapped to their bodies, took control of the theater, threatening to kill the hostages if the Russian government did not meet their demand to end the war in Chechnya. After three days, the Russian Special Forces pumped sleeping gas into the main hall and stormed the building. At least 90 hostages were killed during the assault, some of them due to the gas used to neutralize the captors.

Among hostage-barricade situations resolved by military intervention is the highly successful case of the revolutionary group that occupied the residence of the Japanese ambassador to Lima, Peru in December 1996 for over four months. Fourteen rebels from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement took 700 hostages during a traditional celebration. They kept 74 of these prisoners during the whole duration of the detention. The government rejected their demand for the release of 300 prisoners, a change in the government economic policy, and a ransom ("war tax"). The storming of the residence, which was well planned and well executed, resulted in the deaths of all the rebels and only one hostage.

When the act of hostage-taking is committed by a small number of abductors, assault is a frequent solution. Due to the surprise effect and fatigue, the intervening group is often able to kill the hostage-takers. This not only puts an end to the hostage situation but also deters other potential hostage-takers from engaging in the same activity. This type of action is reminiscent of a popular movie, "Dog Day Afternoon". The film was based on a real case in a

New York bank where the gangsters asked for an airplane, but were subsequently “neutralized” (one was killed and the other arrested) on the tarmac of the airstrip.

A last category is the absence of any agreement. Two scenarios may be observed: either the hostage-takers, exhausted and demotivated, give themselves up and release the hostages; or these hostage-takers, infuriated by the absence of a result, kill the hostages and try to escape. Cases of no agreement are mostly found in situations of hostage-barricade and kidnapping, when demands from the captors are exorbitant or when the authorities consider that they can solve the problem through exhaustion instead of concessions. A final reason for hostage-takers to concede is when the publicity their cause has received is in itself considered a sufficient outcome. This was the case in 1981 when an Armenian commando occupied the Turkish Embassy.

#### *Assessing the Outcome*

It is extremely difficult to evaluate the “success” of a negotiation concerning hostages. Given the drama which accompanies a hostage crisis, a well-managed negotiation is positive not only for the hostages but for the negotiators themselves. As underlined by consultants in this domain, it develops confidence, self-esteem, and makes one less apprehensive with regard to the prospect of facing similar cases in the future.

Hayes (2002), referring to Sandler and Scott, as well as Atkinson, Sandler, and Tschirhart, defines “negotiated success” for the hostage-takers as the “achievement of *some, but not all*, of the terrorist groups’ demands”. The problem is that the measurement of “success” should not be in terms of the demands made. Any set of demands will always include a tactical dimension (that is, ask more to obtain less or insist on one issue to extract more on another). Thus, “success” should be measured in terms of the real, not the stated objectives of the hostage-takers. Unfortunately, we usually cannot have precise knowledge of these real demands and must work from assumptions, which make any conclusion questionable.

From the perspective of the authorities, a negotiation may be considered “successful” if it has led to the release of the hostages, the catching of the hostage-takers, and no other trade-off. This result is not the most common. Looking at quantitative criteria, should the size of a ransom paid to hostage-takers be considered in assessing success? On a qualitative level, can we consider as a “success” the Vienna negotiation with an Arab commando that resulted in the closure of a refugee center for Russian Jews from the USSR in return for the release of hostages?

Storming the place of detention also raises problems because it is difficult

to find criteria for assessing the outcome. Statistical studies made at the Rand Corporation (Miller 1980) show that more hostages have been killed during assaults than killed by terrorists during their captivity. This, however, does not mean that it was not opportune to resort to that type of action when taking into account the context and the possible course of events.

The 1972 Munich Olympic Massacre is probably the most significant example in terrorist history of a complete failure. Eight Palestinians from the Black September group broke into the Olympic Village, killed two Israeli and took nine more athletes hostage. Later, the German police intervened with sharpshooters on an airbase. They had believed that there were only five hostage-takers. The assault turned into a total disaster with the death of all the Israeli hostages and one police officer. Only five terrorists were killed. The others were taken prisoners and later released as currency of exchange in another hostage-taking operation.

On the hostage-takers' side, there is a failure if no compensation of any kind has been given, if the hostages have been released, and if the captors have been caught or killed. A typical example is the Manila Coup, which occurred in the Philippines in 2003. Three hundred soldiers from the armed forces seized a shopping mall in the middle of the capital, taking 60 foreign nationals as hostages and setting up booby-traps and explosives all around the building. All hostages were released before nightfall and the rogue soldiers eventually surrendered. No shot was fired in this hostage-barricade situation. The rebels demanded that President Arroyo step down, accusing her of corruption and of sponsoring terrorism by selling weapons to Muslim separatists and communist guerrillas. The threat of an all-out attack by the loyal Armed Forces surrounding the mutineers was enough to convince them to give up their project. None of their demands were taken into account and they were destined to be court-martialed. The firm, but restrained attitude of the President, authorizing use of reasonable force to dislodge the group, proved to be a credible threat. However, the hostage-takers may have achieved one of their goals, if they sought to draw international media attention to the current situation in their country.

Still, on the hostage-takers' side, a typical case illustrating success over time is evident in a series of kidnappings carried out by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) group. FARC has organized 27 kidnapping operations within the past decade. Missionaries and US businesspeople were among the main targets. Some were exchanged for ransom and some have been executed. A former Colombian senator and presidential candidate, Ingrid Betancourt, was also kidnapped after she entered territory under FARC control. As a French-Colombian dual citizen, Paris made a failed attempt to exchange her for "humanitarian support" to the captors.

Kidnappings which occur in carefully chosen places can yield quite a high

return for hostage-takers. Thirty-one European tourists visiting the Algerian part of the Sahara “vanished” at the beginning of 2003. The Algerian government identified the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC), an Islamist group, as the organization behind the kidnappings. After five months of discussions, new developments, and unexpected events including the death of one hostage by sunstroke, the 14 remaining captives (mostly German) were freed in the north of Mali 1200 km from the place where they had been kidnapped. Reportedly, a ransom of Euro 4.5 million was paid to the captors by the Malian government. This amount is supposed to be reimbursed with development aid. The German government denies having paid anything.

All the hostages had been carefully “selected” to be German-speaking people, under the assumption that they would be citizens of countries that would be easier to negotiate with than the United States. A former payment of a considerable amount to the Islamist Group Abu Sayyaf in another kidnapping case may have played an important role in the choice of the victims. Two major concerns may have guided the action of the hostage-takers: obtaining a large amount of money and ensuring a safe way out. This second factor explains why the situation ended in a third country, Mali. With regard to these two criteria, the hostage-takers of the GSPC have arguably had a complete success. However, in the mid-term, they may have contracted some debts with those who facilitated their operation.

### Conclusion

Unfortunately for mankind, negotiation with terrorists is an expanding activity. Considering the number and variety of hostage-taking situations, the wide range of rationales used to support them, and their occurrence in all geographic regions, research into hostage-taking negotiation is a fascinating area.

There is a wide diversity of rationales at work motivating this activity. For groups that want to achieve a great deal with few means, transgressing basic universal values is an ongoing temptation. Generating distress, terror or panic is a powerful way to increase one’s leverage and create a new situation. Terrorism is the word most commonly used to describe this action, but in reality it is just a situation in which an unethical tool is used for what the perpetrators believe to be ethical ends.

Negotiating with hostage-takers, given its ideological and psychological aspects, is one of the most unusual and most difficult engagements. The dramatic issues at stake make it a uniquely uncomfortable job. One of the major difficulties arises from what are often absolutely incompatible goals and values espoused by the parties. The negotiation must manage this paradox. The

situation makes it impossible to forget about values, but at the same time, it seems to be necessary to set values aside if one wants to progress.

Considering the structure of hostage-taking negotiations, the dominant paradigm is of a shifting nature – either a prisoner’s dilemma or a chicken game. When the negotiation starts, the hostage-takers base their actions on the prisoner’s dilemma paradigm because they expect a transaction and assume that there can be room for cooperation. The first impulse of the authorities is to turn down the idea of any common ground or cooperation with the captors and thus operate from a chicken paradigm, where there is no room for cooperation. Then, as time passes, psychological attrition, frustration, and the exacerbation of tensions cause the situation to change. The hostage-takers, out of spite or desperation, come to operate along the rationale of the chicken paradigm. The authorities, as circumstances require, may gradually reframe their approach to the problem. Thus, a paradigm shift may take place and create conditions for a catastrophic outcome; if win-win formulas are very thin in terms of content, the lose-lose formulas lie in wait for the negotiator at each turn of the negotiation process. The complexity of the task comes from the multi-dimensional aspect of this type of negotiation. One has to orchestrate several instruments at the same time because of the number of factors in play.

Terrorism is no more than a tool, even if it is a traumatic one, and hostage-taking is a tactical device. The root problem has to be resolved and fundamental issues have to be addressed. Ultimately, hostage-taking is a symptomatic expression of the agenda of leaders who rank above the actual hostage-takers. Thus, negotiators may need to engage these higher level decision makers as well.

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