

# The Effects of Anger and Anger Regulation on Negotiation

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Negotiation is a means of resolving social and economic conflict, which sometimes evokes negative emotions. Recent theoretical approaches acknowledge the consequences that emotions and mood can have on negotiations (Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, & Valley, 2000; Forgas & Tan, this volume; Shapiro, 2002; Morris & Keltner, 2000). This review focuses on the role that anger plays in negotiations. Anger is important to regulate because it can lead to an escalation of conflict (Allred et al., 1997). We first explore why anger regulation is important despite the sometimes positive effects of expressing anger during negotiation. Next we examine the effectiveness of different emotion regulation strategies such as reappraisal, rumination, and distraction and discuss how these can be applied to the negotiation context. We then present the results from two experiments using emotion regulation to explore what impact these anger regulation strategies have on self-reported emotion and on aggressive behavior in negotiations.

*Expressing Anger Is a Limited But at Times Effective Strategy*

Whether a negotiator simply expresses or experiences anger can result in very different negotiation outcomes. Anger can be examined from an intrapersonal perspective (i.e., felt anger) or an interpersonal perspective (i.e., the effects anger expression on others; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Generally, intrapersonal anger in negotiations is thought to result in poorer negotiation outcomes than interpersonal anger (Van Kleef et al., 2008). For example, intrapersonal anger can produce stalemates, conflict, and economically irrational behavior (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Allred et al., 1997; Liu, 2009). By contrast, expressing anger can result in financial gain by encouraging opponents to make concessions. For example, a salesperson may be likely to give in to an angry customer demanding a discount in order to avoid further escalation of conflict and minimize disruption to other customers.

Despite these sometimes positive benefits, strategically using anger to obtain demands is a limited short-term strategy. For example, anger can negatively impact relationship quality and make people less willing to negotiate again in the future (Allred et al., 1997). Over time negotiating counterparts may habituate to anger expressions and they may no longer be effective (Tiedens, 2001). For example, an angry outburst may be effective the first time; however, the second time one tries this strategy, the other negotiator may resist their demands. Furthermore, over time an angry negotiator may develop an argumentative reputation which could negatively influence subsequent negotiations. Therefore, expressing anger is doubtful as an effective long-term strategy and may only be effective in single instances of negotiation. Moreover, even during one-time negotiations among strangers, research suggests that expressing anger requires very specific conditions to be effective. These variables include how, when, who, and where the anger is expressed. To quote Aristotle “*Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way - that is not easy.*”

#### *How Anger is Expressed*

Anger can be expressed in a number of different ways. Gibson, Schweitzer, Callister, and Gray (2009) examined which characteristics are needed for expressing anger to result in constructive negotiation outcomes in organizational settings. Anger episodes from a variety of organizations were analyzed and the consequences of these episodes were examined by analyzing the respondent’s perceived impact of the episode on outcomes at the individual and organizational level. The authors also examined the effect of anger expression on the relationship between the parties involved in the event. Positive outcomes were more likely if the anger episodes were low in intensity, expressed verbally rather than physically, and displayed in

organizations where expressing anger is considered the norm. However, expressing low intensity anger is difficult, requires control, and if displayed incorrectly may result in conflict escalation or stalemate (Gibson et al., 2009). Therefore, both how anger is expressed and the context in which it is expressed are important determinants of its effectiveness.

### *When Anger is Expressed*

The effectiveness of expressing anger may also depend on when in the negotiation anger is expressed (e.g., at the beginning of the negotiation, during the positioning phase, during problem solving, or at the end of the negotiation; Morris & Keltner, 2000). The positioning stage is when one or both negotiators express their negotiation stance to their partner; for example, what points they would be willing to concede and refuse to compromise. Anger expressed during the positioning stage may result in gaining an upper hand through coercive pressure. Anger expressed during the bargaining stage may signal dissatisfaction with the offer and encourage their counterpart to offer a more satisfactory offer. However, negative effects may occur when anger is expressed during other stages. For example, anger expressed during the initial stages of the negotiation may produce a stalemate or unwillingness to negotiate in the first place.

### *Who Expresses Anger*

Whether anger is an effective strategy for claiming value also depends on who expresses the anger and their bargaining position. The moderating effects of gender, status, and the number of alternative offers have been investigated in this regard. Individuals in a high power position (operationalized as the number of available alternatives) are more likely to gain from expressing anger when they are paired with a low power opponent who possesses limited alternatives (Friedman et al., 2004; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef & Côté, 2007). For example, participants with few or many clients to choose from read vignettes and rated how much they

would concede to a client that expressed anger or did not express anger. Whereas participants with good alternatives conceded similar amounts to non-angry and angry clients, when participants had poor alternatives they were more likely to concede to an angry client than a non-angry client (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006).

Similarly, Van Kleef and Côté (2007) observed that when participants had few alternatives to choose from and their fictitious opponent expressed anger using written statements such as “*This offer makes me really angry. I expect a better offer*”, participants demanded less from angry opponents than a non-emotional negotiator. Participants tend to concede more to angry opponents because the expressed anger is thought to signal that opponents have higher demands (Van Kleef et al., 2004; Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008).

Expressing anger can also be used to exert an illusion of power and competence. In a series of experiments, Tiedens (2001) illustrated that anger expressions influence the extent to which people confer or bestow status to others. Co-workers who rated their colleagues as highly likely to display anger also tended to confer these colleagues with higher status (i.e., higher salaries and greater likelihood of promotion). However, additional research reveals that the association between anger and status is different for men and women (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). In contrast to an angry professional man, professional women who expressed anger were conferred lower status regardless of their occupational status (CEO or assistant trainee). Women who expressed anger were allocated lower wages, status, and perceived as less competent than unemotional women or angry men. In addition, the extent to which women were conferred lower status depended on whether the anger was attributed as due to internal characteristics (e.g. personality) or external characteristics (e.g. the situation). When external attributions were

provided for expressions of anger in professional women they were awarded higher status than women without an external attribution but not higher status than non-emotional women.

Therefore, the advantages associated with expressing anger do not extend to everyone and the effectiveness of expressing anger is constrained by variables including gender and power.

### *Where Anger is Expressed*

The effectiveness of expressing anger also depends on where it is expressed. Display rules dictate how acceptable expressing anger in the workplace is and organizational culture partially determines which emotions are considered desirable to display (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Gibson, et al., 2009). For example, in customer service-based occupations such as airlines, telephone services, and healthcare, expressing anger is discouraged (Morris, & Feldman, 1996; Barsade & Gibson, 2007), suggesting that individuals in these occupations are typically effective at regulating anger displays. By contrast, some occupations encourage the expression of anger (e.g., ice hockey player, lobbyist, opposition politician, radio shock jock). Thus, organizational norms for expressing anger can determine whether expressing anger has beneficial or detrimental consequences (Gibson et al., 2009). Collectively, the limitations associated with expressing anger illustrate that expressing anger to create gains is constrained by numerous boundary conditions, suggesting that more often than not expressing anger is likely to be ineffective or even detrimental in a many contexts.

### *How Can Anger be Regulated?*

Studies examining the expression of anger have typically investigated the phenomenon from the perspective of the receiver rather than examining the bidirectional effects of the sender and receiver on anger experience. Computer simulations of negotiations are often used to examine these variables, which manipulate anger through the use of written comments which are

used to communicate anger to the participant during the deal-making stages of the negotiation (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008). Although many of these studies illustrate that expressing anger results in better individual negotiation outcomes it does not take into consideration the impact that expressing anger may have on the sender. For example, the peripheral feedback effect (also known as the facial feedback hypothesis) suggests that expressing emotions can lead to experiencing those emotions (Laird, 1984). If expressing anger results in experiencing anger, then the impact of expressing anger may have the same detrimental consequences associated with studies of intrapersonal anger in negotiations. Experiencing anger may interfere in negotiations because anger can lead to greater competitiveness and desire for retaliation (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Allred et al., 1997). Negotiators who seek retaliation tend to be narrow-minded and more focused on their own interests whilst being less aware of alternative solutions or joint gains (Liu, 2009; see also Kruglanski, this volume).

Together, the literature reviewed above suggests that regulating anger during negotiations might prove efficacious. Previous recommendations for reducing anger have included strategies such as removing oneself from the conflict or venting anger (Fisher & Ury, 1991). However, avoiding or leaving the situation may be impractical and does nothing to resolve the issue. Methods such as venting anger tend to increase rather than decrease aggression (Bushman, 2002; Bushman, Baumeister, & Strack, 1999; Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005). Instead, there are a number of emotion regulation strategies that are available and these differ in terms of their effectiveness. Emotion regulation can be defined as *“the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express*

*these emotions*” (Gross, 1998b, p. 275). There are two general classes of emotion regulation strategies: antecedent-focused and response-focused.

Cognitive reappraisal is a widely studied example of an antecedent-focused strategy. Reappraisal involves interpreting an anger-eliciting event by adopting a neutral or objective perspective in order to reduce the emotional impact of the event (Ray et al., 2008). For example, instead of fixating on what went wrong in a negotiation, reappraisal may involve focusing on future changes that can be made to improve subsequent negotiations. As reappraisal is effortful and involves cognitive change reappraisal has also been labeled a “deep acting strategy” (Grandey, 2000). Reappraisal works best when it is applied before the full onset of the emotional response (Gross, 1998a) and should therefore be most effective when engaged in prior to negotiation.

One response-focused strategy that has been investigated within the context of anger is rumination. Rumination involves focusing on one’s emotions and feelings without constructive problem solving (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). For instance, this may include dwelling on the inflexibility of one’s negotiation partner and their reluctance to yield in a negotiation rather than focusing on alternative ways of creating value. Rumination also maintains anger and increases aggression (Bushman, Bonacci, Pedersen, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). There are several different types of rumination. Analytical rumination involves thinking about why an anger provocation occurred and the consequences of this event (Wimalaweera & Moulds, 2008). Experiential rumination is a type of processing that focuses on current and concrete experiences, for example, how you currently feel (Watkins & Teasdale, 2008).

Other examples of response-focused strategies include faking and suppressing emotions. These strategies tend not to produce cognitive change, but instead focus on masking felt emotions (Grandey, 2000). Using a call center simulation with a hostile customer, Goldberg and Grandey (2007) found that more errors occurred when placing orders when response-focused strategies were used than when antecedent-focused strategies were used. Emotion regulation not only influences how we experience emotions but can also negatively impact job performance. Response-focused strategies such as rumination tend to be less effective in reducing anger and aggressive behavior because they are often associated with the depletion of self-regulatory resources whereas antecedent-focused strategies such as reappraisal tend not to result in depletion when initiated prior to the full emotional response (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Denson, 2009).

In emotion regulation studies, mental distraction is often used as a control condition. However, distraction can be conceptualized as an emotion regulation strategy in its own right. Instead of focusing on feelings, distraction involves drawing attention to neutral or positive stimuli unrelated to the anger-inducing event (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Distraction is more effective than rumination in reducing anger and aggression (Bushman, 2002; Bushman et al., 2005; Denson, White, & Warburton, 2009; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). For instance, Rusting and Nolen-Hoeksema (1998) experimentally manipulated rumination and distraction and found that in comparison to rumination, distraction decreased anger (experiment 3) or had no impact on self-reported anger (experiment 1). Furthermore, participants who engaged in distraction wrote less angry stories in contrast to participants in the rumination condition.

There are a number of additional variables that influence what emotion regulation strategy is used. For example, how stress is appraised can impact whether one engages in

adaptive or maladaptive emotion regulation strategies (Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004). Grandey et al. (2004) examined how call center employees appraised angry customers and what emotion regulation strategies individuals used. Employees recalled a recent event in which a customer was aggressive, rated the level of stress and the emotion regulation strategy they used. Venting or surface acting strategies were more likely to be used when employees appraised the customer as threatening. Engaging in cognitive reframing or deep acting strategies such as perspective-taking was more likely when the customer was interpreted as not threatening (see Galinsky, Gilin, & Maddux, this volume). Another factor which influences the type emotion regulation strategy used is the level of control individuals possess within their occupation (Grandey et al., 2004).

Only a few studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of reappraisal as an anger regulation strategy (Mauss, Cook, Cheng, & Gross, 2007; Ray, Wilhelm, & Gross 2008; Denson, Moulds, & Grisham, 2009). Mauss et al. (2007) examined whether individual differences in reappraisal were related to self-reported anger and cardiovascular responses. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003) was used to classify high and low reappraisers. Participants were provoked using a backward counting task with false feedback. High reappraisers displayed more adaptive cardiovascular responses and less self-reported anger in contrast to low reappraisers. However, this experiment relied on pre-existing differences in reappraisal and could not determine if generally inducing reappraisal would be associated with the same benefits or whether reappraisal training would be effective for individuals who tend not to naturally reappraise.

By contrast, Ray et al. (2008) induced reappraisal and rumination by using guided instructions. For example, when participants in the reappraisal condition recalled an angry

episode they were instructed to think about the event as if they were an objective observer. Reappraisal was associated with less anger and decreased physiological responding in comparison to rumination (Ray et al., 2008). Collectively these results illustrate the benefits of reappraisal in comparison to other emotion regulation strategies.

Denson et al. (2009) examined the effectiveness of different anger regulation strategies in response to recalling an angry memory. Participants were allocated to one of four conditions: cognitive reappraisal, analytical rumination, distraction and a no-instruction control condition in which they wrote about an anger-inducing autobiographical event for 20 minutes. As predicted, rumination was associated with maintenance of self-reported anger, whereas the other conditions decreased anger. Reappraisal was the most effective of the four strategies for reducing anger among individuals high in anger-related traits. To further examine the cognitive processes underlying the emotion regulation strategies, a quantitative content analysis of the written responses from the writing task were analyzed using the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count program (Pennebaker, Chung, Ireland, Gonzales, & Booth, 2007). Participants who reappraised used increased future tense and positive words, whereas participants in the rumination condition used increased past tense and greater negative emotion words. These results converge with other studies examining anger regulation (Mauss et al., 2007; Ray et al., 2008).

#### *Neural Evidence for Emotion Regulation During Negotiation*

There is evidence to suggest that anger regulation may be especially beneficial in situations where accepting a poor offer is objectively better than rejecting a poor offer. However, accepting a poor offer is particularly difficult to do when angry as anger produces a desire to punish unfair negotiation partners (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996). Pillutla and Murnighan (1996) found that the rejection of low offers in an economic bargaining game was not strictly due

to unfairness of the offer but rather the insulting connotations associated with accepting the poor offer such as the threat to participants' self-worth. Effective anger regulation might help reduce the negative emotional experience and behavioral consequences associated with experiencing anger when negotiating. To our knowledge emotion regulation strategies have not yet been systematically investigated within the context of negotiations.

Evidence for the economic benefit of regulating anger comes from two recent functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies using the Ultimatum Game (Sanfey et al., 2003; Tabibnia, Satpute, & Lieberman, 2008). In the Ultimatum Game, one player chooses how to divide a monetary amount (typically \$10) between themselves and another player. The second player chooses whether to accept or reject the offer. If the offer is accepted, the money is divided between the two participants. However, if the proposal is rejected then both participants receive nothing (Güth, Schmittberger, & Schwarze, 1982). Therefore, the latter player has the possibility of punishing their opponent for choosing to divide the money unfairly but at the same time suffers a cost. This type of behavior is known as *altruistic punishment* because one chooses to punish at a personal cost (Fehr & Gächter, 2002). In the context of the Ultimatum Game, it is more economically rational to accept an offer regardless of how low the offer is. This is because accepting a small amount is objectively better than rejecting the offer and receiving nothing.

Sanfey et al. (2003) and Tabibnia et al. (2008) illustrate that receiving unfair offers such as \$1 and \$2 (out of a possible \$10) is associated with increased activity in the anterior insula, a region implicated in negative emotional experiences including anger and rumination (Denson, Pedersen, Ronquillo, & Nandy, 2009). Accepting unfair offers requires the ability to regulate negative emotions. The ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (VLPFC) has been implicated in emotion regulation (Lieberman, 2007). Accordingly, accepting more unfair offers was associated with

increased activity in the right VLPFC and decreased activity in the anterior insula. Similarly, adults with damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) which is associated with emotion regulation and social functioning are more likely to reject unfair offers in the Ultimatum Game than matched controls without VMPFC damage (Koenigs & Tranel, 2007). These findings converge on the notion that emotion regulation is important in promoting rational thinking and the avoidance of aggressive retaliation during bargaining.

### *Emotion Regulation in Negotiations*

Fabiansson and Denson (2010) examined whether regulating anger using reappraisal would not only decrease self-reported anger but also improve negotiation performance. Participants in the reappraisal condition were told prior to the speech task that their partner was in a bit of a bad mood, and that if they do appear to be in a bad mood, not to take it personally. This timing was important as theoretically reappraisal should occur before the full onset of an emotional response in order to change the experience of the emotion (Gross, 1998a). Indeed, late reappraisal is more effortful than early reappraisal and late reappraisal was less effective in reducing a sad mood induced by a film than late distraction (Sheppes & Meiran, 2007).

Participants engaged in a speech task called “unilink” with a confederate via webcam and spoke about personal topics such as their life goals. Following this, participants were provoked with insulting feedback stating that their speech was of poor quality for a university student and that listening to their speech was a waste of time. Participants were led to believe that this was sent from their speech partner. Following this, participants reappraised, ruminated or engaged in distraction for 20-minutes. Participants who reappraised were given the following instructions: “Describe your experience of the unilink task in a way that makes you adopt a neutral attitude”. Participants in the rumination condition were asked to “Write about the feelings you have about

the other people you have encountered in the study”. Instructions in the distraction condition consisted of emotionally neutral items similar to Rusting and Nolen-Hoeksema (1998; e.g., “Write about the layout of the aisles at your local supermarket”).

Following the emotion regulation induction, participants played the Ultimatum Game with three bogus participants. These negotiation counterparts consisted of the provocative participant from prior speech task and two other participants not previously encountered. First, participants proposed an offer to all three counterparts prior to beginning the game. Second, participants played the role of the responder and received multiple offers from these participants. Half of the offers were fair (e.g. \$5, \$4) and the other half were unfair (e.g. \$1, \$2). Participants decided whether to accept or reject these offers. On each trial participants saw a picture of their counterpart (as in Sanfey et al., 2003). The two players not encountered before and the insulting opponent gave exactly the same offers in random orders so that these could be compared. Next participants rated their mood at the beginning of the study, post feedback, during the writing and negotiation task, and at the conclusion of the experiment. Participants also rated their opponents on a variety of negotiation-relevant traits (e.g., trustworthy, competitive).

As expected, there were no significant differences in self-reported anger at baseline between the three conditions. Manipulation checks showed that participants in the rumination condition felt emotional more often and more strongly during the writing task than participants in the other conditions. In addition, participants in the reappraisal condition reported reflecting more on the positive features of the speech task and thinking about it from an objective perspective in comparison to the remaining conditions.

Importantly, reappraisal was associated with the most adaptive emotional response. Early reappraisal was used in this experiment and the results showed that participants who reappraised

were less impacted by the initial insult and sustained lower levels of anger throughout the experiment. Specifically, following the insulting feedback, all conditions reported increased anger; however, reappraisal was associated with the smallest increase in anger. During the writing task, both reappraisal and distraction were associated with a decrease in anger. Interestingly, during the negotiation task, participants in the distraction condition reported increased anger to a level equivalent to those in the rumination condition. Reappraisal was associated with less anger in comparison to the distraction and rumination conditions during the negotiation phase. Similarly, at the conclusion of the experiment, reappraisal was associated with significantly less anger in comparison to the distraction and rumination conditions.

These findings illustrate the effectiveness of reappraisal and distraction for reducing anger within a negotiation context. Furthermore, our results suggest that distraction might serve as a “quick fix” for reducing anger, but its effects do not last. Once the negotiation began, participants in the distraction condition became angry again. This is presumably because distraction does not facilitate effective processing of the anger-inducing event as reappraisal is presumed to do. Presumably, participants in the reappraisal and rumination conditions thought about their speech task opponent and the provocation during the writing task in adaptive and maladaptive manners, respectively. By contrast, participants in the distraction condition were asked to think about topics entirely unrelated to the speech task. Thus, when participants in the distraction condition encountered their speech counterpart again in the negotiation task, this may have reminded them of the initial provocation and thereby resulted in an increased sense of anger at seeing their counterpart’s picture.

Participants proposed offers before playing the role of the responder. As expected, participants who reappraised proposed more generous offers to the person that insulted them than

either the rumination or distraction conditions. The rumination condition proposed offers that were in between the reappraisal and distraction conditions. When participants played the role of the responder the emotion regulation strategy that participants engaged in did not significantly influence the number of offers accepted. As can be expected, participants proposed fairer offers and accepted a greater number of offers from the two opponents not encountered before regardless of emotion regulation condition. This is not surprising given that these two opponents did not insult the participant previously. For the positive negotiation relevant traits (e.g., cooperative), participants in the distraction condition rated their speech task opponent more negatively than both the rumination and reappraisal conditions. Collectively these findings suggest which forms of emotion regulation may be most beneficial in negotiations; however, the effect of different emotion regulation strategies on the number of offers accepted remains less clear.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Research suggests that expressing anger as a negotiation strategy has limited effectiveness. The primary purpose of this chapter was to present emotion regulation strategies as a means to manage the detrimental effects of anger on negotiation outcomes. Specifically, work by ourselves and others suggests that the application of reappraisal to negotiation settings might prove useful in reducing anger, aggressive behavior, and conflict in negotiations. The first two studies we conducted converged with prior work in that reappraisal was associated with decreased anger relative to rumination or distraction (Fabiansson & Denson, 2010; Mauss et al., 2007; Ray et al., 2008).

Although these studies illustrated that reappraisal is effective in reducing experienced anger, further research is necessary to investigate the ability of reappraisal to curb retaliatory

negotiation behavior. For example, we found that different forms of emotion regulation influenced how much participants proposed, however, participants accepted a similar number of offers regardless of the emotion regulation strategy they engaged in (Fabiansson & Denson, 2010). Applying emotion regulation strategies such as reappraisal does have benefits; however, the full extent of these strategies in improving negotiation behavior remains to be further investigated. Reappraisal is an effortful emotion regulation strategy and may be difficult to use for individuals who do not naturally tend to reappraise. It might be possible to train negotiators in effective reappraisal over several sessions. Such training could make reappraisal less effortful and may be particularly beneficial for individuals who tend to use other emotion regulation strategies. By improving the ability to reappraise, this may not only change self-reported emotion but also influence negotiation behavior.

Another way in which reappraisal may influence negotiation behavior is by using involved negotiation tasks similar to that commonly encountered in real life. For instance, in the Ultimatum Game it is clear what is considered an unfair and fair offer and participants can automatically choose whether to accept or reject offers based on fairness rather than allowing for emotion regulation strategies to influence their decision-making. Using more effortful negotiation tasks such as negotiation scenarios that require problem solving may be more amenable to emotion regulation strategies. Using problems that are more abstract and less concrete may mean that participants are less likely to simply apply a fairness-based decision rule when negotiating. Future research might also further investigate the psychological mechanisms responsible for anger's adverse effects in negotiation settings. Topics discussed in this volume such as close-mindedness and lack of perspective-taking ability suggest promising avenues to explore (see Galinsky et al., this volume; Kruglanski, this volume).

The ability to effectively regulate emotions in negotiations has several important practical implications. Regulating anger is important for health. Anger is associated with decreased well-being and problems including hypertension (Diamond, 1982). Regulating anger can reduce conflict and prevent aggression and may reduce workplace violence. Effectively regulating anger can help improve relationships between negotiators and facilitate future negotiations and may reduce the likelihood of stalemates.

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