

Decoding the face negotiation theory

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DECODING THE FACE NEGOTIATION THEORY The Face Negotiation Theory can be rather technical and It was introduced by Stella Ting-Toomey, a communications professor at California State University, aimed at improving communication for resolving conflicts. “ Face” is a metaphor for public self-image. “ Conflict” is “ a form of intense interpersonal and intrapersonal dissonance,” between people with opposing goals, needs, and values (Beauvais, n. d.). To better understand the theory, let us apply it to the story of the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama is a holy personage in Tibet in Western China. As a two-year old child, he was chosen by Tibetan Buddhist monks, as the reincarnation of the departed 13th spiritual leader of their people called the Dalai Lama. At age 5, he was enthroned in 1940 as the 14th Dalai Lama, and he grew up in an atmosphere of monastic holiness and scholarship. Today, the Dalai Lama is a Doctor in Buddhist Philosophy, but he is also an exiled leader because in 1950, the People’s Liberation Army of Mao Zedong annexed the land of Tibet into the territory of Mainland China. While in exile in India, the Dalai Lama has vigorously pursued the liberation of his once-independent people. Through the years, Tibetans suffered more than 200, 000 dead during the Great Leap Forward occupation of Tibet, 130, 000 refugees in exile, 6, 000 monasteries destroyed, apart from disappearances and detentions of Tibetan citizens and monks. But surprisingly after years in exile, the Dalai Lama in 2002 opened a dialogue with Beijing officials. He also relinquished the Tibetan goal of independence in favor of genuine autonomy, giving China the control of Tibetan defense and foreign policy. More recently, he expressed support to China’s entry in the United Nation, saying “ the world community has a real responsibility to bring China into the mainstream” (Time, 2008). And he points out that the whole world, including <https://assignbuster.com/decoding-the-face-negotiation-theory/>

the 6 million Tibetans in China, stands to gain from a peaceful and unified China. He stressed that that for Tibetans to think of the Chinese as enemies—and vice versa—is to say they will long be surrounded by enemies. Thus, he wants the idea of “enmities” out of his Middle Way Initiative. (Time, 2008). In Face Negotiation, there is a basic assumption, namely that the individual and the group are intertwined. And within this individual-and-group well-knit relationship, there are two cultures: One, the “me centered” or low-context culture; the Second, the “other-oriented” high-context culture (Gallagher, 1997). For Ting Toomey, Americans belong to the “me-centered” low-context culture; and some Asians are of the “other-oriented” high-context culture. Thus Americans generally desire independence seeking basic rights of space, privacy, and freedom. On the other hand, Asians desire “inclusion” through respect, approval, appreciation by others. In this sense, the Dalai Lama seems to have crossed from the low-context culture to the high-context culture. He has preferred to dialogue, and not to fight his adversary. In life, the confrontational “me centered” low-context culture is combative and may no longer serve societies effectively, given globalization and a shrunken global environment. The Dalai Lama may have found a new inner face, and practices ingeniously the art of politics. And as the threat of terror bombings and wars face our millennium, we too may also need a different “face.” As the Dalai Lama succeeded in doing, we can cross cultures and become “other-oriented” to resolve not only human conflicts, but the more menacing crisis of the ecological decay of our dying planet.

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