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# *Editor's Note*

## Negotiation Journal

The adage that “there’s nothing new under the sun” dates back at least to Ecclesiastes, a fact that should give us pause before celebrating techniques and ideas as entirely novel. Nevertheless, the selections in this first installment of the *Journal* for 2007 offer refreshingly new perspectives on familiar negotiation issues. New insights can, indeed, illuminate old problems.

For example, Cheryl Picard and Kenneth Melchin seek to move beyond the debates in the mediation community sparked by the publication of both *The Promise of Mediation* by Robert Baruch Bush and Joseph Folger and *Narrative Mediation* by John Winslade and Gerald Monk. In their article, they describe how those books prompted them to reflect on the implicit values and techniques they and their colleagues have used as mediators; they call their approach “insight mediation.” Drawing on Canadian philosopher Bernard Lonergan’s theories about how people learn and formulate their perceptions, Picard and Melchin are especially interested in surfacing “a-ha” moments that can be both cognitive and affective. Long-time readers will see how their article nicely advances some of the ideas collected in the special *Negotiation Journal* issue on critical moments in negotiation (April 2004).

Steven Burg’s “NGOs and Ethnic Conflict” likewise clarifies the paradoxical connections between mediator power and effectiveness, a relationship that was earlier explored in an article by Michael Watkins and Kim Winters entitled “Intervenor with Interests and Power” (April 1997). Burg’s case analysis of the work of the Project on Ethnic Relations in the Balkans notes that the success of that organization as a “weak mediator” was due in part to its support from and influence with major institutional actors. Its efforts were stymied, however, once more powerful actors, such as the U.S. and EU, became directly involved.

In turn, Ilai Alon and Jeanne Brett shed light on how differing conceptions of time can affect the dynamic when people from Arabic-speaking Islamic cultures and the West negotiate with each other. Fundamentally different notions of time can prompt misunderstandings and distrust, they note, even when all participants have the best of intentions.

Finally, in an imaginative and gracefully written review, Linda Babcock examines the underlying metaphors of two important new books on negotiation, *3-D Negotiation* by David Lax and James Sebenius and *Shaping the Game* by Michael Watkins. Although they use different metaphors to do so, both books make compelling cases that “moves away from the table”

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represent the important new frontier for negotiators. Babcock argues that their ideas have important implications for negotiation theorists and teachers, as well.

The role of metaphor in negotiation has been explored extensively before, here and elsewhere. (*Negotiation Journal* has published two articles on the topic in the last two years alone; one by Thomas H. Smith in July 2005 and one by Jessica Katz Jameson, Andrea M. Bodtker, and Tricia S. Jones in April 2006.) Babcock reminds those of us who teach and write of the power of the metaphors that we use, often without much reflection. Seeing negotiation as a “game,” for example, suggests that there will be a winner and loser. It also implies a relationship in which everyone subscribes to the same set of rules, be they strict or lax.

In an executive education class recently, I polled participants on what metaphor for them best reflects how they see negotiation. The contrasts were striking. One cluster of people invoked images like “driving white knuckled in an ice-storm” or “a scorpion mating dance,” while those in a more cheerful group volunteered comparisons to “a flower” or “a playful cooperative masterpiece.” It is fair to expect that negotiators in these two camps behave quite differently.

The intriguing question is how we come to hold such metaphors — and to an awareness of how metaphors hold us. In future issues we look forward to publishing further work that sheds new light on this old question.

*Michael Wheeler*