



G20: How to negotiate successfully?

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Mr. Schraner, the heads of states and governments of the G20 countries are meeting in Hamburg this week. Facing different nationalities, different cultural backgrounds, and very different interests: how can negotiations succeed?

You are emphasizing the differences, however, there are many commonalities, too: the fight against terrorism or the global economic alignment, for example. The great challenges can only be addressed collectively. In addition, I wouldn't over-emphasize on cultural differences. The people who are sitting at the conference table all think internationally and are experienced in international negotiating. The will for common grounds will therefore lead to results, despite all differences.

At the moment, however, the differences seem to prevail: in the question of Syria, in the relationship between Europe and the US, and in the German-Turkish relations. How could common grounds be reached, then?

By isolating issues, first. You start with topics where great commonalities are existent. For example, it is everybody's understanding that IS needs to be fought. From these commonalities, you will then go back to the critical issues – for example Syria – and you will try to find a solution there. Conflicts have always been around, for all of the history of mankind. Since the establishment of this huge summit, there have always been huge conflicts; let me just mention the financial crisis...

In such a constellation, it will however not be possible to reach more than just the least common denominator.

Well, the question is always: what does the public expect? The public of course wants a concrete result. The public wants to see Trump fall on his knees and admit: the termination of the climate agreement was a big mistake. And they want to see Mrs. Merkel come and say: Syria got saved. We won't see that of course. Those summits are merely in place to facilitate many conversations - official ones and unofficial ones. It should therefore be expected that the common understanding will be better after the summit than before the summit. At those summits, it is also much about personal sensitivities. It will happen that someone says: Hey, you know that guy, could you please try to talk to him one-on-one and get him back in our direction.

At the G7 summit in Italy a few weeks ago, the new US president Donald Trump did not let himself be moved in the direction of the others. Does his strategy of confrontation work?

If you split a negotiation in phases, then he has been successful so far. Phase 1 was the total hustle – when he said: I will quit everything. He got elected on that claim. Phase 2 was the statement: I'm ready to negotiate. We can see that observing the Paris climate convention: He said, he would cancel the agreement, in order to re-negotiate. That is generally his style of negotiating: He will engage in real action and then offer re-negotiation. From my point of view, we've just entered phase 3: Should he deliver results in the upcoming weeks and months, then his negotiation style would have been proven successful.

That is a style of negotiating that is especially present in business but seems rather bewildering to diplomats. And then there are his often-rude manners. Will Trump be able to make progress that way?

Trump knows that America is still one of the world's largest economic powers. And the largest military power, with an immense weight in global politics. It means that the others will not get anywhere without Trump. His progress can be seen in that it is now understood by everybody that 'America First' is his negotiation goal.

Chancellor Merkel has clearly positioned herself against Trump's decision to leave the Paris Climate Convention. She has furthermore stated her support for free trade, as opposed to Trump. Was this a smart move, from a negotiation perspective?

From my perspective, Trump not only likes Merkel's style of criticism, he even finds it necessary. Negotiator types such as Trump, they want to sense their counterparts. They want to see conflict. They want to reach that seemingly hopeless stage in a negotiation where they will then present a solution. What they don't want is that constant evasion and maneuvering in negotiations. They want to sit with you at the table, they want to tell you what they want – and then we'll start!

[Matthias Schraner](#), 53 years old

- Negotiation expert
- Was trained by the German police and the FBI for tough negotiations. With his institute, he serves as an advisor to the UN, global corporations, and political parties in complicated negotiations.
- Used to work as a hostage negotiator with the police
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