

## **Lax and Sebenius: Thinking Coalitionally**

Negotiation analysis has concentrated mainly on the bilateral case. L&S talk about the need to focus on multilateral negotiations as well, especially coalitional alignments and realignments.

**Classical coalitional dynamics** has not explicitly studied the processes as well as the outcomes associated with the tactics arising in multilateral rather than bilateral settings but has focused on classes of coalitional dynamics—such as the efforts of two competing groups to recruit an uncommitted third party into their coalition. L&S emphasize **natural coalitions** which consist of parties—regardless of nominal sides—who have powerful shared interests and as a unit can extract significant value from others without much risk of being split. E.g. the negotiations between Chrysler and the UK government. Chrysler threatened, in response to a low offer by the govt., to liquidate its plants in key electoral districts. Union pressure thus forced the govt.'s hand to pay a handsome sum to Chrysler. This could have been avoided if the govt. had realized there was a natural coalition b/w the workers and the govt. i.e. the money saved by paying a low purchase price could have been used to the workers benefit. However, the govt. did not take advantage of this and lost out.

There are 3 tactical possibilities for interpreting coalitional dynamics:

Party arithmetic—where purposive action on behalf of the parties can change the structure of the existing situation and, therefore, the outcomes. i.e. adding or subtracting parties.

Process opportunism—tactics that depend on understanding more complex structural or process restrictions such as who can talk directly with whom, how information is transmitted, which parties must approve the actions of others, who may speak for whom etc.

strategic sequencing—the sequence of approach can play an important role in influencing negotiated outcomes. E.g. when numerous players are involved, it becomes important who should be approached first and on what basis etc.

Tactics are intended to favorably affect the zone of possible agreement in 3 ways—1) improving one's alternative to negotiated agreement or worsening that of other coalitions 2) realizing joint gains 3) credibly committing to advantageous positions within the perceived zone of agreement.