

## **Evaluating bargaining interest and negotiation style using the film Bridge of Spies**

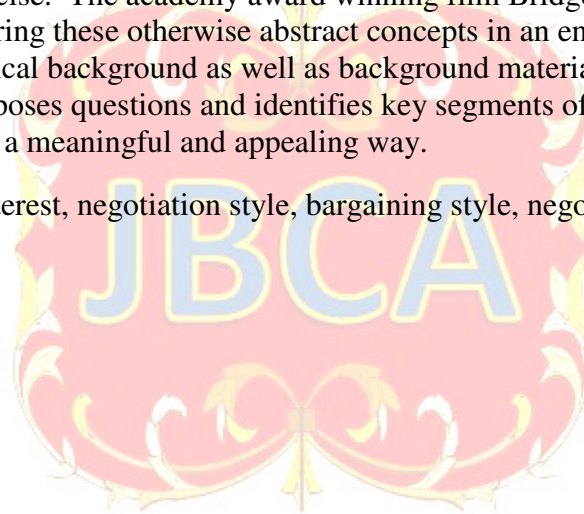
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### **ABSTRACT**

Bargaining and negotiation are topics frequently covered in a number of management and marketing courses and negotiation style and bargaining interest are topics commonly addressed. Since most students lack meaningful negotiation skills or experience, coverage of these topics is typically an abstract exercise. The academy award winning film Bridge of Spies (2015) provides an engaging way of covering these otherwise abstract concepts in an engaging and relatable way. This case provides historical background as well as background material on bargaining interest and negotiation style. It poses questions and identifies key segments of the film to help students explore these concepts in a meaningful and appealing way.

Keywords: bargaining interest, negotiation style, bargaining style, negotiation, bargaining



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## NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS

Students frequently have difficulty understanding the abstract nature of and subtleties associated with bargaining interest and different negotiation styles. At best, students may internalize definitions of these concepts, but identifying the divergent styles in practice and understanding when and how best to utilize them may be an elusive higher-order learning outcome. Addressing this difficult learning proposition and helping students to achieve deeper levels of understanding about negotiation is important because bargaining or negotiation is a topic covered in so many courses across the business curriculum (e.g., personal selling and sales management, industrial marketing, management principles, operations management, purchasing, supply chain management, etc.).

This case offers a learning modality that is not only effective but also interesting and engaging to students. The movie, *Bridge of Spies*, is an excellent mode of instruction to use to familiarize students with the multi-faceted nature of negotiation style and the central role played by bargaining interests in determining bargaining outcomes. This Academy Award winning movie (2015) directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Oscar nominated Tom Hanks, is not only a compelling and thrilling true story drawn from our nation's history, but it provides a clear and understandable portrayal of the different negotiation styles and competing bargaining interests brought to life. While watching excerpts from the movie, students will be able to identify the competing interests of the parties involved and see how understanding these interests leads to bargaining power. In addition, the movie provides fertile ground for actually seeing different negotiation styles played out in a real-life, high-stakes negotiation.

## INTRODUCTION

The role of negotiator is one of the key decisional roles played by any manager (Mintzberg, 1971) and not surprisingly, bargaining or negotiation is a topic covered in numerous management and marketing courses. Being familiar with the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics associated with different negotiation styles is a good starting point. But actually observing the subtle behavioral cues and negotiation tactics played out has the potential to take the student of negotiation to the next level in their understanding.

The movie, *Bridge of Spies*, demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of negotiation style and the interplay between competing bargaining interests. This Academy Award winning movie (2015), directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Oscar nominated Tom Hanks, is a compelling true story. Even though the specific events, clothing, and technology depicted in the film may seem from a different era, the story depicts an America grappling with many of the same challenges and anxieties that we face today. The story of Jim Donovan is our story.

You should begin by watching the film in its entirety to get the sweep of the story. The importance of doing this cannot be overstated due to the fact that multiple characters or parties in the film misrepresent who they are and/or what their interests might be. At the end of the film, all of the parties' interests will be much clearer.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Assess and discuss your negotiation style.
2. Using historical events depicted in the film *Bridge of Spies*, identify the ways in which attorney Jim Donovan displayed personal and professional integrity.

3. Analyze bargaining interests using the film *Bridge of Spies*.
4. Evaluate the negotiation style displayed by Jim Donovan, citing specific examples of statements and/or behaviors from the film.

## BACKGROUND

### Historical Background

Francis Gary Powers (1929-1977) was a CIA pilot that flew in the U-2 spy plane program ("U-2 Overflights, n.d.). By 1960, the Soviet Union and the United States were locked in a nuclear arms race. Tensions escalated when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev claimed that his country had developed numerous intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear payload. To compound the situation, Khrushchev rejected international inspections of Soviet nuclear assets in any form. The only means by which the U.S. could generate intelligence about Soviet nuclear capability was through espionage.

The U-2 was a state-of-the-art reconnaissance plane that flew at high altitudes, up to 70,000 feet. It was initially believed that flying at those heights would make the U-2 invisible to radar. This was an imperative because overflying the Soviet Union without permission was considered a formal act of war. In any emergency, U-2 pilots were trained to detonate their aircraft to prevent intact wreckage from falling into Soviet hands. The U-2 pilots were also encouraged to use any means necessary, including suicide, in order to prevent themselves from falling into the clutches of Soviet interrogators.

On May 1, 1960, the worst happened when a U-2 piloted by Francis Gary Powers was downed by a Soviet missile. Powers failed to detonate his aircraft but successfully parachuted to the ground where he was taken alive. Intact parts of the plane, including camera equipment, were recovered. Following his capture and interrogation, Powers was convicted of spying resulting in a sentence of three years of prison time followed by seven additional years of forced labor. But Powers didn't serve his full sentence as history and Jim Donovan would intervene in February, 1962 ("U-2 Overflights, n.d.).

### Movie Characters and Plot

The plot of *Bridge of Spies* is so interesting because it weaves together several distinct story lines that seem completely independent of one another yet end up being permanently intertwined by history. The story of Francis Gary Powers is just the tip of the iceberg.

The film begins with the depiction of the arrest of William Fisher (1903-1971) a.k.a. "Rudolf Ivanovich Abel" in New York City on June 21, 1957. "Abel" was charged with espionage against the United States. It is believed that Fisher's use of the pseudonym "Rudolf Ivanovich Abel" was actually a signal to his KGB superiors that he had been captured. Rudolf Abel was ultimately convicted of espionage and sentenced to a 45 year prison term (Biography.com Editors, 2015a).

James B. "Jim" Donovan (1916-1970), a Brooklyn insurance attorney, played by Tom Hanks, was selected for the unenviable task of defending Rudolf Abel against the charge of espionage. Jim Donovan spared Rudolf Abel from the death penalty by deftly suggesting that a jailed Soviet spy would represent a significant trade asset should the United States end up in a future negotiation with the Soviet Union where they sought the release of an American. Little

did Donovan know at that time that his words would be so prophetic and that he would be personally involved in just such a negotiation (Biography.com Editors, 2015b).

The final piece of the puzzle takes the form of Frederic Pryor (1933- ), Professor Emeritus of Economics and a Senior Research Scholar at Swarthmore College. In the early 1960's Pryor resided in Berlin, Germany in order to conduct his doctoral dissertation research on the foreign trade system of the Soviet Union. During his time in Berlin, the Berlin Wall was constructed and Pryor would end up finding himself on the wrong side of the new wall. Pryor was arrested in 1961 by the Stasi, the East German secret police, and accused of espionage. He would end up being convicted and would spend almost six months in an East German prison (Dougherty, 2015). By happenstance, Pryor's incarceration would ultimately be cut short by the strong moral character and masterful negotiation skills of Jim Donovan.

Pryor denies that he was involved in espionage in any way. He claims that he was in East Berlin on the day he was arrested in order to attend a speech by the then head of the Communist Party, Walter Ulbricht, then to deliver a copy of his recently completed dissertation to an East German professor with whom he had worked, and finally to visit the sister of a close friend that had been out of contact due to a communications ban between East and West Germany. Unbeknownst to Pryor, the friend's sister had recently escaped to West Berlin and Pryor was swept up by the Stasi as an accomplice in her escape (Dougherty, 2015).

The crux of the film, *Bridge of Spies*, concerns the negotiations conducted by Jim Donovan for the release of Francis Gary Powers, held by the Russians/Soviet Union, in an exchange for convicted spy Rudolf Abel. As a consequence of the man Jim Donovan was, he would contemporaneously learn of the student Frederic Pryor, who was being held by the East Germans/German Democratic Republic, and take it upon himself to include Frederic Pryor as part of his negotiations in the Rudolf Abel/Francis Gary Powers exchange (Biography.com Editors, 2015b). Truth really is stranger than fiction sometimes and Jim Donovan's keen ability to divine the true interests of all the parties involved, in combination with his enviable negotiation skills, would influence an outcome that was beneficial to all sides but particularly to Francis Gary Powers and Frederic Pryor.

## **Bargaining Interest**

Bargaining interest refers to the unspoken motivation or rationale behind any negotiation position. Knowing the other party's interests can significantly shift the balance of power in a negotiation. As a consequence, in preparing for a negotiation, identifying the interests of the other party is a critical first step (Monczka et al., 2016).

Bargaining interests are foundational as they provide the very motivation to negotiate. Being able to understand the other party's bargaining interests provides insights into their priorities. Negotiating power is gained through an understanding of the things that the other party must have versus other issues on which their interests are less and they correspondingly have more room for compromise (Monczka et al., 2016).

## **Negotiation Style**

Another factor that significantly impacts bargaining outcomes is negotiation style. Negotiation style refers to the attitudinal and behavioral inclinations of a negotiator as evidenced by behavioral tendencies such as a willingness to compromise, the ability to separate issues,

remaining open-minded and willing to explore new options, maintaining good rapport and managing tension, and knowing their limits and avoiding too much compromise (Volkema & Bergmann, 1995).

Negotiator attitudinal and behavioral inclination can be categorized into one of two basic orientations, distributive bargaining versus mutual gain bargaining. Distributive bargaining behavior treats negotiation as a zero-sum game where the interests of one party can only be served by sacrificing the interests of the other party. Assertiveness refers to the tendency of a negotiator to engage in distributive bargaining behavior emphasizing a focus exclusively on their own outcomes, with little or no consideration for the interests of the other party.

In stark contrast, mutual gain bargaining behavior approaches negotiation based on a fundamental premise that respects the interests of both parties. Cooperativeness refers to the tendency of a negotiator to engage in mutual gain bargaining behaviors such as demonstrating respect for the other party's interests, building trust, and communicating openly in an attempt to identify a win-win solution that serves the interests of both parties (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

Considering the dominance or prevalence of assertiveness versus cooperativeness in a negotiator's attitudes and behaviors provides for the identification of a specific negotiation style of which there are five:

1. Competing: high in assertiveness but low in cooperativeness
2. Avoiding: low in both assertiveness and cooperativeness
3. Collaborating: high in both assertiveness and cooperativeness
4. Accommodating: low in assertiveness but high in cooperativeness.
5. Compromising: moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness.

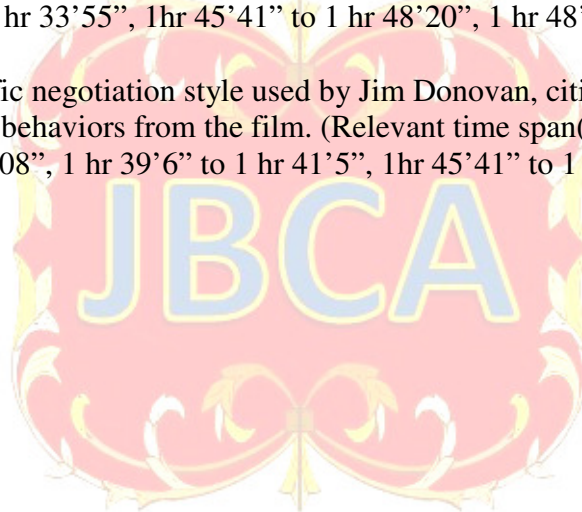
Figure 1 (Appendix A) displays the relationship between these five negotiating styles and the competing dimensions of assertiveness versus cooperativeness. Being aware of one's preference for assertiveness versus cooperativeness and dominant negotiation style is an important personal, professional insight. XXX and XXX (2005) provide additional discussion of these concepts along with a negotiation style self-assessment, scoring key, and norming data to help you profile your dominant negotiation style ([http://www.cengage.com/resource\\_uploads/downloads/0538481986\\_365415.docx](http://www.cengage.com/resource_uploads/downloads/0538481986_365415.docx)).

## QUESTIONS

After completing the negotiation style self-assessment and viewing the film *Bridge of Spies*, answer the following questions. Relevant time spans from the film have been provided for each question to help you focus on relevant content.

1. Based on the results of the negotiation style self-assessment: a) characterize your preference for assertiveness (i.e., low, moderate to low, moderate to high, or high) versus cooperativeness, and b) identify your dominant negotiation style. Do you agree with this assessment and why or why not?

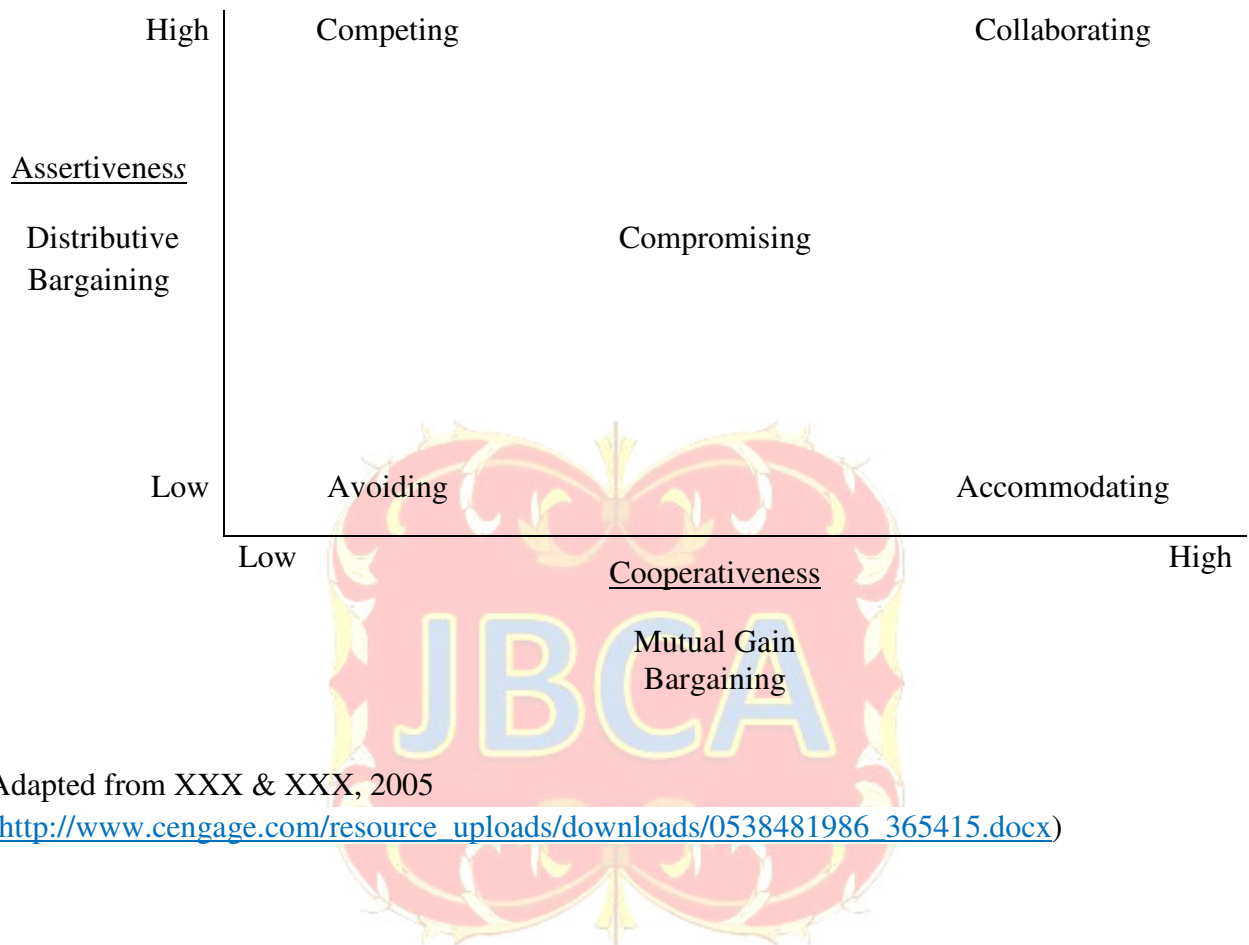
2. Identify the ways in which attorney Jim Donovan displayed personal and professional integrity by providing evidence from the film in the form of direct quotes or specific behaviors he engaged in. (Relevant time span(s): N/A – Jim Donovan’s character is on display throughout the entire film.)
3. Use the film *Bridge of Spies* to analyze the bargaining interests of the following characters or parties:
  - a. East Germans/GDR/Wolfgang Vogel (Relevant time span(s): 1 hr 29’15” to 1 hr 33’55”, 1 hr 39’6” to 1 hr 41’5”, 1 hr 48’21” to 1 hr 53’30”)
  - b. Russians/USSR/Ivan Shishkin (Relevant time span(s): 1hr 23’54” to 1 hr 29’08”)
  - c. Americans/US/CIA (Relevant time span(s): 42’40” to 46’50”, 1hr 23’54” to 1 hr 29’08”, 1 hr 29’15” to 1 hr 33’55”, 1hr 45’41” to 1 hr 48’20”)
  - d. Jim Donovan (Relevant time span(s): 42’40” to 46’50”, 1hr 23’54” to 1 hr 29’08”, 1 hr 29’15” to 1 hr 33’55”, 1hr 45’41” to 1 hr 48’20”, 1 hr 48’21” to 1 hr 53’30”)
4. Identify the specific negotiation style used by Jim Donovan, citing examples of direct quotes or specific behaviors from the film. (Relevant time span(s): 42’40” to 46’50”, 1hr 23’54” to 1 hr 29’08”, 1 hr 39’6” to 1 hr 41’5”, 1hr 45’41” to 1 hr 48’20”, 1 hr 48’21” to 1 hr 53’30”)



Footnote: The teaching note for this case is available from (contact information to be provided pending editorial review).

**APPENDIX A:**

Figure 1



Adapted from XXX & XXX, 2005

([http://www.cengage.com/resource\\_uploads/downloads/0538481986\\_365415.docx](http://www.cengage.com/resource_uploads/downloads/0538481986_365415.docx))

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**Evaluating bargaining interest and negotiation style  
 using the film Bridge of Spies: Teaching Note**

**QUESTIONS**

After completing the negotiation style self-assessment and viewing the film Bridge of Spies, answer the following questions. Relevant time spans from the film have been provided for each question to help you focus on relevant content.

1. Based on the results of the negotiation style self-assessment: a) characterize your preference for assertiveness (i.e., low, moderate to low, moderate to high, or high) versus cooperativeness, and b) identify your dominant negotiation style. Do you agree with this assessment and why or why not?
2. Identify the ways in which attorney Jim Donovan displayed personal and professional integrity by providing evidence from the film in the form of direct quotes or specific behaviors he engaged in. (Relevant time span(s): N/A – Jim Donovan’s character is on display throughout the entire film.)
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**INSTRUCTOR ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

The following table provides an annotated timeline of the film and indicates whether the scene/sequence involves an illustration of bargaining interest and/or negotiation style as well as a synopsis of the scene and a detailed discussion of concepts illustrated in each scene. The table is followed by a figure that provides a summary of each party’s interests in the negotiation.

**Annotated Timeline**

Relevant Time Span	Question 3. Bargaining Interest (Party)	Question 4. Jim Donovan Negotiation Style	Synopsis/Discussion
From: 42'40" To: 46'50"	X  (Americans /US)  (Jim Donovan)	X	<p><u>Synopsis</u> Jim Donovan pays a visit to Judge Byers' (presiding judge in the espionage trial of Rudolf Abel) home to make an appeal to save his client's life.</p> <p><u>Bargaining Interest</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Judge Byers represents the American/US interest in this scene. He initially believes that executing Abel is in the best national security interest of the US.</li> <li>2. Jim Donovan's bargaining interest is clear – he wants to save his client's life. To do that, he crafts an argument by which sparing Abel's life actually serves the US national interest.</li> </ol> <p><u>Negotiation Style</u> This scene provides the first clear evidence of Jim Donovan's Collaborating negotiation style. In his conversation with Judge Byers, Jim Donovan suggests that saving Rudolph Abel's life is in the strategic interest of the US. Donovan argues that Rudolph Abel, if alive, may prove instrumental in an exchange if an American is captured by the Soviets at some point in the future. It is clearly a win/win solution for both sides, protecting not only his client's interest but also the US national interest. Negotiators that use the Collaborating style frequently propose novel, win/win solutions as a means to create agreement.</p>
From: 1hr.23'54" To: 1hr.29'08"	X  (Americans /US)  (Russians/ USSR)	X	<p><u>Synopsis</u> Jim Donovan travels to East Berlin to meet with attorney Wolfgang Vogel (alleged attorney for Abel's family) to negotiate an exchange of Rudolph Abel for Francis Gary Powers on behalf of the US government. Instead, he meets with Ivan Shishkin, who introduces himself as the Second Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, but later turns out to be the head of the KGB for Western Europe. The negotiation</p>

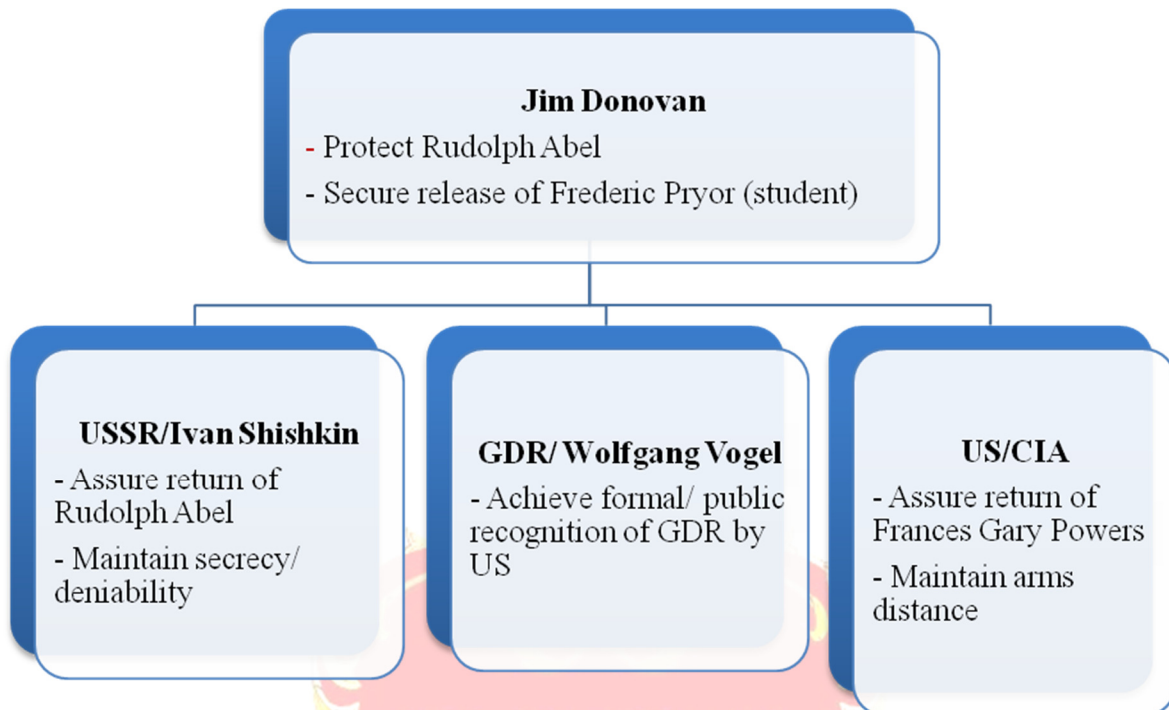
	<p>(Jim Donovan)</p>	<p>ends unsuccessfully as we are becoming aware that there is subterfuge going on involving multiple parties with competing interests at play.</p> <p><u>Bargaining Interest</u>                  At this point in the plot, there appear to be three parties with interests at play, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Americans/US: The interest here is to secure the return of spy pilot Francis Gary Powers. But by virtue of the fact that the negotiation is being conducted by Jim Donovan, it is clear that the US government wishes to maintain an arm’s length distance from the negotiation.</li> <li>2. Russians/USSR: The interest here, presented by Ivan Shishkin, is two-fold. The primary interest is to assure the return of spy Rudolph Abel, but the secondary related interest is to make sure that the exchange is not acknowledged or characterized as a direct exchange, spy for spy.</li> <li>3. Jim Donovan: Donovan’s primary interest is to facilitate an exchange of his client, Rudolph Abel, for Francis Gary Powers. Donovan also divulges a personal interest in securing the return of student Frederic Pryor.</li> </ol> <p><u>Negotiation Style</u>                  Jim Donovan’s Collaborating negotiation style is in evidence as he suggests to Shishkin that it would actually be in the Soviet’s best interest to make the exchange. He elaborates that if the exchange is not made, Abel may decide to talk in order to curry favor with his American captors. More troubling, future Soviet spies would have an incentive to talk, if captured, if they know that the USSR will refuse any exchange, ever. Donovan also introduces a mutual personal interest with Shishkin when he says: “Negotiate with me or the next mistake our countries make could be the last one.”</p> <p>A final hallmark of the Collaborating style evidenced in this scene is Donovan’s reliance on both assertive and cooperative behaviors. Throughout this phase of negotiation, Donovan exhibits cooperative behavior in his offering of a win/win solution while at the same time being very assertive in his rejection of Shishkin’s aggressive tactics and one-sided proposal.</p>
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Relevant Time Span	Question 3. Bargaining Interest (Party)	Question 4. Jim Donovan Negotiation Style	Synopsis/Discussion
From: 1hr. 29'15"  To: 1hr. 33'55"	X  (East Germans/GDR)  (Jim Donovan)  (Americans /US)		<p><u>Synopsis</u></p> <p>The initial scene in this time sequence involves Jim Donovan's first meeting with attorney Wolfgang Vogel who introduces himself as a "good friend" of the Attorney General of the GDR and who potentially has the power to release student Frederic Pryor on behalf of the East Germans/GDR in exchange for Rudolf Abel.</p> <p>The second scene in the sequence depicts a debriefing of Jim Donovan by his CIA handlers immediately following Donovan's meeting with Wolfgang Vogel. The interplay between the bargaining interests of all four parties comes into focus in these two scenes. Most importantly, Jim Donovan finally becomes aware of the competing interests between the East Germans/GDR and the Russians/USSR, as well as the conflicts between his own interests and those of his CIA handlers. This awareness will be central to Jim Donovan formulating the bargaining tactics that he will use to ultimately reach a successful bargaining outcome.</p> <p><u>Bargaining Interest</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. East Germans/GDR: Attorney Wolfgang Vogel represents the interests of the East Germans/GDR in being formally recognized as a legitimate state by the US government. Vogel says "Your country refuses to acknowledge the German Democratic Republic, they prefer to make up stories that the GDR doesn't exist." Vogel proposes the exchange of spy Rudolf Abel for student Frederic Pryor as a vehicle for the formal recognition that they desire.</li> </ol> <p>From the outset of the scene, Vogel expresses his irritation with the Russians due to their refusal to host him at the Russian embassy. As stated previously, the Russian/USSR interest is to avoid any appearance of a direct exchange of Rudolf Abel for Francis Gary Powers. The Russians</p>

			<p>simply do not care about the interest of the East Germans/GDR in being formally recognized – it conflicts with their interest in secrecy – and this is their motivation for refusing to host Wolfgang Vogel.</p> <p>2. Jim Donovan: This scene makes it clear that Jim Donovan has an interest in securing the release of student Frederic Pryor, in addition to his formal interest in arranging for the return of Francis Gary Powers. Donovan begins the meeting, in response to a question from Wolfgang Vogel, by saying, “I am still trying to grasp each party’s ... interests in the proceedings.” While Jim Donovan may be confused at the beginning of the meeting, he has clarity by the end.</p> <p>Vogel’s expression of frustration with the Russians is a key point in the plot because it tips Jim Donovan off that the interests of the East Germans/GDR diverge from the interests of the Russians/USSR. Jim Donovan understands that he has to simultaneously satisfy the East Germans/GDR AND the Russians/USSR in his negotiations because the East Germans/GDR have Frederic Pryor and the Russians/USSR have Francis Gary Powers. Jim Donovan is clearly interested in securing the return of BOTH.</p> <p>3. Americans/US: As if Jim Donovan’s negotiation task is not complex enough already, the CIA agents representing the American/US interest will multiply the complexity in the second scene. The lead CIA agent makes it clear that the primary American/US interest is to secure the return of spy pilot Francis Gary Powers.</p> <p>In a rather callous display of indifference for the welfare of student Frederic Pryor, the lead CIA agent says “Stick with the Russians. It’s Powers for Abel.” Jim Donovan bristles at the suggestion that the exchange will only be for “our guy.” Donovan retorts “Our Guys? Two Guys.” The tension in the scene is palpable as it is dawning on Jim Donovan that his personal interest in saving Frederic Pryor is in conflict with the agenda being pursued by the CIA. Jim Donovan realizes he is in fact negotiating with three competing parties.</p>
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Relevant Time Span	Question 3. Bargaining Interest (Party)	Question 4. Jim Donovan Negotiation Style	Synopsis/Discussion
From: 1hr. 39'6"  To: 1hr. 41'5"	X  (East Germans/ GDR)	X	While Vogel makes his interest explicit, the arrangement does not satisfy Vogel. The GDR wants to be seen as dealing with another sovereign power, an equal power, in a very public manner. Ivan wants the exchange to be done in a quiet, non-public manner. So Donovan needs to come up with one transaction that satisfies both parties.
From: 1hr. 45'41"  To: 1hr. 48'20"	X  (Americans /US)  (Jim Donovan)	X	Donovan's interest
From: 1hr. 48'21"  To: 1hr.53'30"	X  (East Germans/ GDR)  (Jim Donovan)	X	Send a message to the attorney general of the GDR, Harald Att. Donovan states, that there is no deal for Able unless we get both men, powers and pryor. If there is no deal, then Att has to tell the Soviets that they are not getting Abel back. Abel thinks he is going home. If he does not, then his behavior may change. "And who will be responsible for that?"

Graphical Summary of Bargaining Interests



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