

**SEYYED ABBAS ARAGHCHI, THE POWER OF NEGOTIATION:
PRINCIPLES AND RULES OF POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC
NEGOTIATIONS [Մեյեդ Աբբաս Արաղչի, Բանակցության ուժը.
քաղաքական և դիվանագիտական բանակցությունների
սկզբունքներն ու կանոնները]. YEREVAN, 2025, 193 P.**

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The book by Dr. Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs and an experienced diplomat, has been published in Armenian in Yerevan. Dedicated to the principles and techniques of the art of negotiation, the book draws on nearly three decades of the author's diplomatic experience. In this respect, it effectively combines theoretical knowledge with practical expertise, which significantly enhances its value. This book will be of interest not only to a wide readership but also, in my view, serve as a genuine textbook for students of diplomacy and can be regarded as a practical guide for novice diplomats, with particular attention to the specific features of the Eastern school of diplomacy. Another notable strength of the work lies in the author's ability to present highly complex issues of diplomacy and geopolitics in a remarkably accessible manner, at times drawing on parallels and examples from everyday life. This approach makes the subject matter more comprehensible, while the illustrative analogies further enhance clarity.

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As an orientalist familiar with the characteristics of Eastern diplomacy, I must note that, in my view, the Iranian style of negotiation is distinguished by its deliberate pace, and in that they do not rush. Iranian diplomats conduct negotiations calmly and without haste, guided by the consciousness of representing a state with millennia of history. Consequently, they tend to perceive criteria and time on a much broader scale—not in terms of the years granted to an individual by the Almighty, but in terms of centuries and millennia that define the continuity of the state.

Dr. Araghchi compares diplomacy to a market, specifically the Iranian market and its rules.¹ For us as orientalists, this analogy is particularly comprehensible, since by the very nature of our discipline, we often study “Eastern markets,” a term-metaphor for the distinctive features and variations of Eastern diplomacy. One may argue that within the broader “Eastern market” of diplomacy, there exist a variety of sub-markets (e.g., Iranian, Arab, Turkish, etc.), where states trade with each other, engage in exchanges in which the “goods” are national interests, problem-solving, and related matters. As Abbas Araghchi aptly observes: “In this ‘trading’ process, the goal of each negotiator is to achieve maximum gain at the minimum cost. In other words, the negotiator’s goal is to ‘maximize what is received’ and ‘minimize what is given’.”²

The most important rule and mandatory condition of the Eastern market is bargaining, which has essentially been elevated to an institutional level. Guided by this logic, the skilled Iranian diplomat Dr. Araghchi explains one of the characteristics of Iranian diplomacy and negotiation style:

*“The Iranian negotiation style is generally known in the world as the ‘market style,’ which means continuous and tireless bargaining. This method is a process of interaction that requires great patience and time. It requires a lot of time and energy, and he who gets tired and bored quickly will lose. The market has its own unique culture, and only a person who has lived in that culture for years or, as a person connected to the market says, ‘has breathed the air of the market’, can participate and compete in it.”*³

¹ The book has also been published in English by Success Publications SAR in 2025, and in Persian by Entesharat E'telaat (transliterated from Persian), Tehran, 2025.

² Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation: Principles and Rules of Political and Diplomatic Negotiations* [Բանակցության ուժը. քաղաքական և դիվանագիտական բանակցությունների սկզբունքներն ու կանոնները]. Yerevan, 2025, 24.

³ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 183.

The author's figurative account of the principles of diplomatic bargaining is particularly noteworthy. He emphasizes, in addition, the importance of recognizing the appropriate moment and timing, as well as maintaining a proper sense of proportion:

*"The main principle of bargaining is practice: repetition, repetition, and repetition—combined with steadfastness and persistence. Insisting on positions and repeating demands is a necessity that must be done each time with different rhetoric and reasoning. Experienced people connected to the market talk and provide arguments, telling examples and stories so much that the other side of the deal, as they say, 'gets numb' and gives its consent. At the same time, correctly assessing the moment to reach an agreement is also an art. Sometimes, insisting too much leads to the loss of an achievable advantage. It is important to know how much to stretch the rope of negotiations so that it does not break and the essence of the deal is not lost. You have to know where it is possible to add smaller advantages to the main results and where you have to sacrifice them to achieve bigger results. Time management is also very important. Sometimes being patient is good and increases the results obtained, but when you are selling ice under the sun's rays, too much bargaining is itself a loss."*⁴

Diplomacy is often understood as an arena that precedes or follows armed conflict and war; in other words, the battlefield is frequently preceded or succeeded by the diplomatic struggle. Accordingly, Araghchi compares diplomats to warriors, drawing parallels between the roles of warriors and diplomats: "In the history of countries, both the brave warriors who fought heroic wars to defend their motherland and the people who, with their wise efforts, tried to eliminate the danger of war or, in the case of war and conflicts, found ways to end them, have been recorded."⁵ The author presents the organic link between war and negotiations as follows: "However, it must be remembered that war and negotiation are two sides of the same coin, and that is why negotiation is sometimes described as 'war by peaceful means'."⁶

In the context of negotiations and diplomacy more broadly, Araghchi rightly underscores the special importance of the negotiator, emphasizing their personal qualities and skills: "The personal abilities, skills, and talent of a negotiator become

⁴ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 185.

⁵ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 17.

⁶ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 30.

influential when they can use the components of national power to achieve national goals... The power that cannot ensure the security or interests of the country, no matter how great, can no longer be considered power, or in other words, it exists but is ineffective.”⁷

It is noteworthy that Araghchi essentially advances the idea that refraining from negotiation can itself constitute diplomacy, provided that circumstances warrant it and when, after weighing both options, it becomes clear that not negotiating will cause less harm to one’s country than entering into negotiations. In the event of a negotiating stalemate, it is preferable to suspend the talks with the intention of resuming them later under conditions that are more favorable. The Iranian diplomat formulates it as follows:

*“In the absence of a balance of power, the political unit that is weak should not enter into negotiations, and if it is forced to do so, it should take special measures to get rid of the other side’s superiority. If the agreement is formed on the basis of an imbalance of power, that agreement cannot last long, and eventually, one of the parties, usually the country that suffered a defeat within the framework of that agreement, will take action to violate it or reach a more just agreement, which will endanger the future of peace and cooperation between the actors... Therefore, although the cessation of negotiations is not considered good news, it is still better than announcing defeat.”*⁸

An important element in achieving a favorable outcome through the advantage of power is the concept formulated as the ‘golden bridge.’ The construction of this ‘bridge’ is crucial for both the stronger or victorious party and the weaker party alike. Drawing on his interactions, Araghchi highlights the Chinese equivalent of the ‘golden bridge,’ which further elaborates and enriches the discussion of the concept:

“Creating a golden bridge or an opportunity to return for the weak side is one of the most important points that must be paid attention to in the negotiation process, especially by the country that has gained a significant advantage. Any political unit that wins in a negotiation process must provide a way for the defeated side to withdraw and retreat from its positions. The meaning of a way out and a return is that the party making concessions must be able to find a justification for

⁷ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 71, 89-90.

⁸ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 119, 170.

*this step or not feel that this step will cause irreversible political damage or that its reputation will be tarnished. History is full of examples where a victorious country humiliated the defeated country or did not create the conditions for a golden bridge for its return, and this in itself caused more destructive wars and even greater damage to the victorious side... "I once heard from Chinese diplomats, who usually make proverbs or quotes from Confucius and other Chinese sages, that if you want someone to come down from the roof, provide him with a ladder; do not ask him to jump down and get hurt; he will not do that."*⁹

A separate and important area is the 'body language' of a diplomat: "During negotiations, speech also includes body language. Body language is very important, and sometimes it can convey concepts that oral speech cannot. The movements of a negotiator's body can easily reveal their fear and lack of self-confidence, regardless of their desire... The use of speech techniques and body language during negotiations is the most important tool for a diplomat, but the message is not conveyed only by words, but also by the tone of speech and voice."¹⁰

Dr. Araghchi also highlights and draws the readers' attention to another key concept in diplomacy and the art of negotiation: the 'poker face': "A diplomat's face should not convey any mood, and the other side should not be able to get any feeling from it. The face of a skilled diplomat is inscrutable, and it is impossible to catch any emotion from it. The ability to control the expression of emotions on the face is not easy and requires continuous work and practice." The special characteristics of a diplomat's self-control also include managing anger, or purposefully getting angry: "There is a well-known saying that 'a diplomat never gets angry unless they have decided to get angry'."¹¹

To summarize, the book by Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation: Principles and Rules of Political and Diplomatic Negotiations*, has the potential to become required reading in university programs that offer courses on diplomacy and international relations. The author of the foreword, Iran's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, notes: "I hope his valuable work will be a worthy step for students and future figures in the field of foreign policy to get acquainted with the methods and precondi-

⁹ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 119, 146-147.

¹⁰ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 132-133.

¹¹ Araghchi, *The Power of Negotiation*, 134-35.

tions of diplomacy and a new deliberation for these important necessities of foreign policy.”

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.