



PRESENCE AND LOBBYING

CHAPTER A7

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Introduction

Previously in Chapter A6, we discussed the concept of “relevance” in council to get recognised more in speeches. In this chapter, we will introduce a new concept known as a presence. There is a certain overlap between these two concepts, but we strike a clear distinction between relevance and presence through influence and power.

What does this mean? A delegate that is relevant is important in the discussion due to their individual stakes at it. A delegate that has a large presence is important in the discussion due to their ability to sway the council’s opinion and their control over certain delegate votes. For example, North Korea is a nation that is relevant in regards to the discussion of the denuclearisation of the DPRK, but they do not necessarily have a large presence that can sway public opinion their way.

This chapter will explore how you can improve your presence in the council - specifically through lobbying.

Finding Allies

Everyone gets anxious and nervous when they first enter their council regardless of conference experience. Most of the people in the council will be people you don’t know, and you will have to work with them for the next few days. Deciding who you work with is important, so be strategic about it.

Similar Stances

At the bare minimum, you should seek out those who have the same ideas as you. If you are in a THIMUN council, this should be fairly clear from the opening speeches. You could perhaps even go one step further and research the stances of the delegates in your council to identify potential allies.

The definition of similar stances is rather vague - and it is meant to be that way. The question becomes - how similar are you willing to go. Recall back to the A5 Stances where we explored the concept of the Overton Window. To what extent do you think is a reasonable level of acceptance for your country? A greater level of acceptance will definitely allow you to make more allies, but it results in the draft resolution being much weaker due to various compromises being made to make it acceptable.

An alternate strategy that is more often seen in HMUN councils is to look for “acceptable policies”. Whenever a delegate proposes a policy, they are hoping for the policy to be implemented in the draft resolution. If you already have an existing bloc, it might be strategic to



enlist this delegate into your bloc by discussing how you would implement their policy into your draft resolution. They might not share a similar stance - but they will be more inclined to work with you if their policy can be materialised.

Ideally, you should aim to create a bloc that is between 30%-50% of the council. This ensures that you can hold a reasonable amount of control over the council, whilst still not needing to compromise too much in order to accommodate the range of views.

Regional Allies

We won't go too in depth regarding this since this has already been explored in Chapter A5. But seeking out regional allies is always strategic due to existing trade and foreign relations.

Real Life Friends

If you are participating with your school delegation, or you are a seasoned delegate and know the circuit, you might meet a few familiar faces in your council. Like most things in life, too much and too little is bad for you. In this scenario, you should stick with your friends within reason. If they share similar stances with you, there is no reason to work with them from the get go. Being able to start off as a group is much better than beginning alone.

But working with your friends is by no means sufficient. It merely acts as a pedestal to allow you to find other delegates to work with more easily. Do not force an alliance with your friends for the sake of it. If you find yourself against each other - then debate against each other.

The person sitting next to you

This is it. You are extremely introverted, you have found nobody to talk to, you have no idea where you have to go. This is fine. Chances are - the person next to you is the best ally you can have. Strike up a conversation with them whenever you can, and start simple small talk. Ask questions like - which topic are you going to do? What resolution are you going to support?

They might not have the same stance as you - but at the bare minimum, you have someone that you can talk to in your council, which will in turn help you slowly network to the other delegates.

Fishing Strategies

If you are naturally extroverted and comfortable around people, this should not be a problem for you. But for those who are uncomfortable with meeting new people, there are some things that you can do that will make it less awkward for you.



Pre-Lobbying

This refers to the times when formal debate is still ongoing. During this time, lobbying has already begun. It is important during this time to start to form relationships with other delegates, and it tends to be easier during this time too.

Sending Notes

The best way to form relationships with other delegates is to send notes to them. This could range from discussions or compliments about their speech to a personal compliment. Pass them a sticky note or text them on social media. Ideally, you should send notes to every delegate who gave an interesting speech.

Work Initiatives

For delegates you have identified that are important in the council and you would want to build a stronger relationship with them, it is ideal for you to create initiatives to work with them. This does not necessarily have to be a whole draft resolution. It could be things like “Hey I’d like to work with you to start a working paper about the idea you just presented” or “we should write in an amendment together to change this clause”.

Similarly, if they already have an ongoing initiative, don’t shy away from asking them to allow you to join in. Give your opinion on their policies and what you would suggest to improve it. Most delegates are always open to greater collaboration, since it also gains them more presence but also helps them secure another vote for their document.

Lobbying

This is the most intimidating moment. But there are ways around it.

Familiar Faces

Go to the delegates that you have contacted earlier on through note-passing. If you did not do so, go find your friends and try to network with them. And if you have no friends in the council, talk to the delegate that sits next to you. Always lean towards the familiar faces when you first start lobbying - and as you get to know more people, you can start to branch out to the more strategic allies.

Have an Objective

Chances are - the council is roaming around like headless chickens and the delegates in the council are desperate for someone to lead the lost herd. The best way for you to start lobbying is to have an objective - and it applies for every scenario throughout the conference. Are you trying to just talk about the issue and have a brainstorm session? Are you looking to write a working paper? Are you trying to flesh out a draft resolution?



When you have an objective in mind, you can start roping in delegates to work with you. Tell them your objective and see if they are interested in joining. If this is the beginning of the council, do not be afraid to only have 4-5 delegates in your bloc. As groups start to form, some blocs might merge together due to similar ideas.

Headless Chicken

There are two possibilities here. First - you are in a bloc and some delegates have not found a group. In this scenario, it is mutually beneficial for you to ask them to join your bloc. You will obtain an extra delegate to assist in your objective, and they have a group to feel comfortable in. A lot of experienced delegates tend to overlook the necessity of working with newer delegates, and you can exploit this by ensuring you band up with the newer delegates.

Second - you are the headless chicken. You have not found the courage to get up and speak to others for the past 15 minutes and blocs are starting to form, but you are still isolated in your seat. Do not worry - everyone appreciates an extra vote. Go around and ask each bloc what they are doing and join the one you feel most comfortable with. It is best that you join the smaller blocs at this time, so you will not be sidelined in the larger group.

Speak to the Chair

Worst case scenario - you could not muster the courage to talk to any delegates. Talk to your chairs. Tell them about your stance and you are unsure which bloc you should go to. Chairs will always help you find your group if you feel out of place, and they can help you feel included.

Asserting your Dominance

You have found a bloc to work with. But there is a struggle on how to ensure you gain more presence in the council and within your bloc. Here are a few methods.

Participate in discussions

Talk to the delegates in your bloc about what you believe - challenge their ideas and add your opinions. Participating in discussions ensures that you can constantly remain relevant within your bloc, and it automatically translates to you leading discussions.

Inclusion

Sometimes blocs can get slightly suffocating, especially when there are 15 delegates gathered around trying to input their ideas. If you notice delegates being unable to speak up and are being sidelined, you should attempt to include them, or start a separate conversation within the bloc.



If you are being sidelined, a simple method to regain agency is through finding a topic that is not being discussed and start a conversation about it at another side. There are always other delegates that are being pushed out of the conversation, and starting a new one is the easiest way to include them.

Be the representative

The problem with most MUN-ers when it comes to lobbying is that they tend to stay within their own bubble, and not engage with other blocs. We often tunnel-vision and believe that we are trying to be better than the other bloc, rather than collaboratively working towards a solution. But even if it is the former scenario, there are benefits of negotiating with opposing blocs.

First, it is always good to have an idea of what is mutually agreed upon. The earlier you identify the non-controversial arguments, the less focus you have to put onto them. You are seeking to identify what separates you from the other bloc. What is the disagreement that resulted in the separation of the blocs? You do not need to share the draft resolution document with the opposition, but it is worth running through the ideas you have with others.

Second, being the individual who speaks to the other blocs will make you the person they want to engage with the most. This means that when formal debate comes around, delegates will look to debate against you, since you were the one who first opposed their ideas. This makes you a valuable asset to your own bloc, as you control how your bloc is perceived by the others.

Write

In Chapter A8, you will learn how to effectively write draft resolutions. Writing policies always reflect an initiative to take action, and tends to be an easy way to garner attention within the bloc. Policies also give something tangible for people to discuss and change, which will lead to more fruitful discussions. It also allows you to put the ideas you want down, which forces discussion within the bloc, since people feel bad deleting ideas that aren't theirs, even when they disagree with it.

But the same applies to working with other people. Ensure that they get the opportunity to write clauses with you. The benefit of having delegates write clauses is that it gives them a "stake" in the resolution. Delegates are more likely to put more effort into defending the draft resolution when they have had the opportunity to participate in it - especially when their ideas are written in words.



Meta-Lobbying Strategies

If there is ever a time to use meta strategies, it is during lobbying. There are a few ideas that you can consider while lobbying in different situations. Below will cover a few.

Dealing with an Alpha Delegate

This would require a decent individual evaluation of the council, and is quite associated with meta-munning. If you are the vocal delegate that is already leading the council, this should not apply to you. But sometimes in more advanced councils, you will end up with delegates that clearly outclass you in speeches and knowledge. At this point, you need to strategize.

Going against them

Going against an alpha delegate directly puts you in a stressful situation, but it is also the best way to learn in Model UN. You would only want to go against them if you are certain that you will be the main delegate in the opposition bloc. The reason why you would do this is to show that you are able to be “on-par” with their level, and it forces you to do better.

Remember that opposition does not necessarily mean polar opposites. You just have to find a deal-breaking clause in their draft resolution and establish a new bloc to go against it. Majority of your ideas are allowed to overlap - but you will need a clear distinction between you and the others.

Working alongside them

The clear benefit of working alongside the strongest delegate in the council is that you will be winning most of the arguments and passing most of your amendments in the council. The bloc that you are part of will be the largest bloc in the council. The reason why you would consider working alongside a stronger delegate is that you stand little to no chance against them being the opposition, or you cannot find a sufficient distinction that allows the formation of another bloc.

In this scenario, it is important to fragment the bloc. This is different from sabotage. Fragmenting the bloc means that you set different priorities within the blocs. For example, you could be leading a section on the draft resolution on humanitarian aid, whilst the other delegates are focusing on long term solutions. By setting different priorities, you can claim responsibility for parts of the resolution, giving you much more presence.

Loner Nations

There will be times that you were meant to be alone. The famous examples are North Korea in a council. You will struggle to find a bloc to work with, since your council has a unique foreign policy that tends to be disliked by other nations. In this situation, you always want to work with the “weaker” bloc in the nation.



The reason why weaker blocs are more strategic for nations like North Korea is because they can better lead smaller and weaker blocs. It also serves as a legitimate reason to oppose the main bloc. The goal is not to implement the extreme ideas that your nation has - but to merely poke holes in the other bloc's resolution, which would be aligned with your bloc's goal.