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# **Influence and Political Processes in Cyberspace**

## **The Case of Global Virtual Teams**

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**ABSTRACT** The ways team members choose to influence each other and the political processes that take place within the team have important implications for the team's effectiveness. We present an exploratory investigation of the ways both phenomena occur in global virtual teams. Based on interviews with team members and managers, combined with existing knowledge of these processes, we present a preliminary model that includes familiarity, team centrality and task focus as variables mediating the relationship between the multicultural and virtual aspects of the teams and the use of influence and politics. Our findings also suggest that the use of hard influence tactics and political actions is milder in global virtual teams in relation to collocated teams.

**KEY WORDS** • global virtual teams • influence tactics • organizational culture • organizational politics • team effectiveness

With the onset of globalization, many organizations have increasingly found themselves dealing with a culturally diverse and geographically distant workforce. The need to synchronize multinational corporations' (MNCs) different parts while overcoming the cultural differences and geographical distances, together with the advancement of

virtual technology, have led to the creation of global virtual teams. Two important characteristics defining global virtual teams are their reliance on technology-mediated communication, used much more than face-to-face communication, and team members working and living in different countries (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). The effects

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of these two defining features on the dynamics of influence and politics in global virtual teams are the main theme of this article.

One of the greatest challenges of global virtual teams remains coordination, together with the creation and maintenance of relationships, trust and shared understandings (e.g. Gibson and Manuel, 2003; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). Working virtually requires more effort to keep a harmonized operation between individuals who are more culturally diverse than would be the case for most face-to-face teams, and at the same time are geographically distant. It is by now clear that the growing prevalence and importance of these teams requires rethinking traditional management norms and practices that touch on issues relevant to their functioning, and that we need to revise our models of managing across borders. More specifically, the group processes related to the multicultural aspects of global teams operating in virtual cyberspace need to be researched separately. It is in this context that we have investigated an unexplored aspect in the operation of global virtual teams, namely the influence tactics and political processes used when these teams attempt to complete their tasks and reach their goals.

Organizational politics and influence processes that exist within organizations have emerged in the last two decades as fields of growing value and relevance for understanding organizational dynamics and outcomes. Previous studies have examined various aspects of influence processes and political behavior in the workplace but have not yet covered the full variety of contexts these behaviors may appear in (e.g. Romm and Drory, 1988; Sussman et al., 2002; Vigoda, 2002). Thus, with only one study to date examining the effects of cultural differences in a top management team of an international joint venture on influence processes (Salk and Brannen, 2000), and one study examining the effect of politics on perform-

ance in top management teams of the subsidiaries of multinational corporations (Elron, 2000), our knowledge of the potential ways organizational influence and politics play out in MNCs has grown but does not yet encompass global virtual teams. We suggest that theories of organizational influence and politics and theories of multicultural and virtual teams are incomplete as long as the one does not consider the connotation of the other.

One of the aims of this study is to investigate the ways the multicultural nature of global virtual teams together with the main mode of interaction used by team members being technology-mediated affect the team's influence and political processes. Moreover, we investigate whether these two inherent characteristics of global virtual teams serve as an advantage, a liability, or perhaps both, in terms of these two important processes. We next define and review the four main concepts used in the study: the two defining characteristics of global virtual teams, namely cultural diversity and the use of virtual communication technologies, and the two processes that are at the center of our study, the use of influence tactics and politics.

## **Virtual Teams in a Global World: Theoretical Background**

### ***Cultural Diversity***

As corporations become more international and culturally diverse, much scholarly effort is devoted to examining the consequences of cultural differences and the meeting of cultures in organizational contexts. Cultures are the deeply ingrained patterns of values, perceptions, assumptions and norms shared by members of the same group (Schein, 1985). National culture, as an often taken-for-granted product of primary socialization, is thought to be particularly potent, and its effects on individuals are perceived to be particularly resistant to change. Most studies

on intercultural interactions conclude that such interactions tend to be especially complex. The differences in the value priorities, goal preferences and interpretive schemas held by members of different cultures have the potential to increase misunderstandings, friction, and even conflicts. Moreover, the language factor can intensify these differences. Stening (1979), in his review of literature on cross cultural interactions, reports a variety of problems such as disparities in attributions about causes and intentions of behaviors, communication gaps, stereotyping, ethnocentrism and prejudice.

In organizations there may be an added complexity as the differences in cultural values can be manifested in different attitudes towards organizational practices, such as motivational techniques and leadership styles (Erez, 1993; Erez and Earley, 1987; Hui, 1990). More specifically for teams and hence for global virtual teams, the different cultural values that members bring to the team also imply that they are likely to have different assumptions about what a good team is or what constitutes effective team processes and outcomes (Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001). These differences have implications for team cohesiveness and integration, and hence coordination and control can be more difficult to achieve in culturally diverse teams (e.g. Thomas, 1999; Watson et al., 1993). Research on international joint ventures found that the differences in the national culture of the two partners can be a major obstacle to the joint venture's success, as these differences often lead to conflicts and misunderstandings that can limit the sharing of information and learning that is crucial to the effectiveness of these organizations (e.g. Lyles and Salk, 1996; Shenkar and Zeira, 1992; Wang, Lin, Chan and Shi, 2005).

Conversely, empirical support has also been found for the advantages of cultural diversity at the team level (Cox et al., 1991; Elron, 1997; Watson et al., 1993). These studies provide evidence for an elevated

level of cognitively related aspects of process and outcomes. Higher levels of creativity, decision-making and overall performance found in culturally diverse teams are attributed to the larger pool of culturally related cognitive resources and a broader range of perspectives that improve the ability to manage the complex cultural systems found in MNCs. The passage of time, shared organizational goals, individual, group and organizational norms and mechanisms that enhance cultural integration, and the creation of emergent norms that take into account members' cultural values and differences allow heterogeneous teams to resolve potentially culturally related group process issues (DiStefano and Maznevski, 2000; Elron, 2000; Elron et al., 2003; Janssens and Brett, 1997; Salk and Brannen, 2000). In turn, the teams are able to capitalize on the diversity of their culture-related skills to substantially improve their performance, to the extent of exceeding the performance of culturally homogeneous teams (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000; Elron, 1997; Watson et al., 1993). Thus cultural diversity has the potential for both positive and negative consequences on a team's processes and performance, but its specific meaning in global virtual teams has rarely been examined. Two exceptions are a review by Maznevski, Canney Davison and Karsten (2006) and Gibson and Manuel's (2003) case study of three multicultural virtual teams. The results of their study indicate that 'the psychological dynamics that occur when multiple cultures diversity work together [virtually] makes it difficult to establish comfortable levels of risk and interdependence that facilitate trust'. Next, we describe the consequences of the virtual aspects of global virtual teams.

### **Communication Technologies**

Communication technologies such as telephones and electronic mail, video conferencing, shared websites, data bases and electronic bulletin boards allow global virtual team

members to stay in touch with one another and share information. In some instances the use of virtual technologies can improve communication between people by allowing broader and more equal participation, less domination and hierarchy, and faster communication flow. However, when it comes to tasks that necessitate divergent thinking, the reaching of consensus or conflict managing, face-to-face communication fares better than electronic communication (for a review of the literature see DeSanctis and Monge, 1999). When these necessary technologies are used as the main rather than the additional communication channel between team members, the limitations of the electronic technologies increase, as they cannot provide the same richness as face-to-face interactions. Especially when engaged in synchronous communication, they can be inconvenient and time-consuming to use, potentially interfering with the effectiveness of complex knowledge sharing (Hinds and Weisband, 2003). A study on trust in virtual teams, for example, indicates that trust that was critical to the team's ability to manage decision processes could be built swiftly (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999). However, this trust was fragile, consistent with the notion that spatial dispersion potentially weakens the ties that bind team members because of lesser familiarity and organizational identification (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999).

In a study by Maznevski and Chudoba (2000), the authors suggest that a global virtual team's most effective use of communication technologies will be shaped by dimensions of the team task and context. At the same time, a rhythm of regular face-to-face meetings combined with the regular use of various virtual technologies seems to generally enhance these teams' effectiveness and functioning. In this study we will concentrate more on the 'virtuality' of the team and its consequences on influence tactics and politics, taking into account that many of the

teams also use face-to-face meetings either regularly or sporadically.

### **Influence Tactics**

In recent decades we have witnessed a rapid growth in studies that developed well-grounded models and theories of both influence (e.g. Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, 1980; Yukl and Falbe, 1990) and politics in organizations (e.g. Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). Influence is defined as the intentional attempt to affect another to feel, think or behave in a desired fashion. Our success in influencing people is one of the most important determinants of our effectiveness as members in organizations (Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Yukl and Falbe, 1990). Influence processes are important in teams as they determine factors such as how decisions are made, which strategies and policies are implemented successfully, how motivated the team members will be to achieve the team's goals, and how much cooperation and support will be a significant part of the ways members interact with each other.

There are many possible tactics of social influence, and the choice of specific tactics can depend on the social environment in which the influence attempt takes place, the characteristics and status of the individual or group we are trying to influence, the desired goal of our influence attempt, our own dispositions and personality, and the organizational culture and norms in which the influence process take place (Erez and Rim, 1982; Higgins et al., 2003; Kipnis et al., 1980; Vigoda-Gadot, 2003; Yukl and Tracey, 1992). Each of these influence tactics has its uniqueness and vivid meaning in interpersonal worklife contacts. In Table 1, we summarize these tactics as they were identified in two seminal studies (Kipnis et al., 1980; Yukl and Falbe, 1990).

**Table 1** Influence tactics

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*Rational persuasion:* Using logical arguments and facts to persuade another that a desired result will occur.

*Inspirational appeals:* Arousing enthusiasm by appealing to universal or personal values, ideals, and aspirations, or by increasing the other's self-confidence.

*Consultation:* Asking for participation in decision making or planning a change when the other's support and assistance are desired; showing willingness to modify a proposal to deal with the other's concerns and suggestions.

*Ingratiation:* Using praise, flattery, and friendly or helpful behavior to get the other in a good mood or to think favorably of the influence agent; acting humbly and making the other person feel important.

*Personal appeals:* Appealing to the other's feelings of loyalty and friendship towards the influence agent.

*Exchange:* Offering an exchange of positive benefits or asking to make a concession or personal sacrifice, indicating willingness to reciprocate at a later time, or promise a share of the benefits if the other helps accomplish a task.

*Coalition:* Using the assistance of others or noting their support to persuade the other to comply with the desired goal.

*Legitimizing:* Pointing out one's authority to make a request, or indicating it is consistent with organizational policies, rules, practices or traditions.

*Pressure:* Seeking compliance by using demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders.

*Sanctions:* Preventing or threatening to prevent benefits such as salary increases or job security.

*Upward-appeal:* Causing additional pressure to conform by invoking the influence of higher levels in the organization, such as by making a formal appeal or obtaining their informal support.

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Several previous studies done in the US indicate clearly that influence tactics differ in their outcomes (e.g. Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Yukl et al., 1996). An effective influence attempt results when the target person is committed internally to an action or a decision, is enthusiastic about it, and is likely to exercise initiative and demonstrate effort and persistence in order to carry out the request successfully. This is in contrast to mere behavioral compliance that occurs when the target person carries out the requested action but is indifferent to it and makes only the minimal necessary effort, or actually resists the request. Attitudinal commitment is especially important for complex tasks, the typical case for global virtual teams. Another indication of the success of influence tactics is the

perception of the influence agent as being effective at fulfilling his or her role. According to the studies done by Yukl et al., the most effective tactics are rational persuasion, inspirational appeals and consultation. The least effective were pressure, coalition and legitimating. Ingratiation, personal appeals and exchange were intermediate in effectiveness. A plausible explanation for the differences in the tactics' effectiveness is their level of social acceptability – while the more successful tactics are considered socially desirable forms of influence behaviors, those tactics that involve some form of manipulation or coercion are deemed less acceptable and hence less effective. An additional explanation relates to the effective tactics' essence as getting the target person to accept a

request as being highly desirable and respecting that target person at the same time, in contrast to the ineffective tactics. It is important to note that effectiveness of a tactic can also depend on the situation (e.g. pressure in a time-constrained, life-endangering situation), and that a combination of tactics can be used for achieving the same goal.

Although all influence tactics seem applicable to interactions in global virtual teams, they may not all be used in the same manner, with the same intensity, and have the same effectiveness as in face-to-face groups. For example, basing their study on social impact theory, Latane et al. (1995) suggested that the impact (defined as any effect on a target person) exerted by a source decreases with increasing distance. Thus spending time with, paying attention to, remembering, and being influenced by someone should all decline with distance. Based on Latane's view, and translating the findings dichotomously, we suggest that when employees spend their work hours in the same physical space there is a greater likelihood that they engage in higher levels of social interactions, and thus may be affected more extensively by their team members. In many ways, our study follows Latane et al.'s view that the lack of physical proximity puts its imprint on the nature and characteristics of interpersonal influence tactics in global virtual teams.

### **Organizational Politics**

Politics in organizations is best reflected by influential activities and tactics engaged in by members to maximize their interests and goals in the workplace. However, while some definitions of workplace politics use neutral terms, others attach to it more negative connotations. Thus one definition would consider workplace politics as an elementary influential behavior of individuals directed at others to gain advantages that cannot be achieved by formal and routine procedures. Such behaviors involve various tactics (the influence tactics discussed earlier among

them) aimed at affecting such processes and outcomes as resource distribution and decision-making, as well as goal setting and goal attaining (e.g. Mayes and Allen, 1977). More disapproving definitions regard politics as behaviors conflicting with the collective organizational goals usually engaged in to influence others to meet one's self-interests and personal goals or to increase one's power base within the organization (e.g. Drory and Romm, 1988; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Ferris et al., 1996). In this study, we will lean closer to the second definition, which refers to political actions that go against the organization's goals or benefit.

Although politics in organizations is generally deemed a necessary evil, it is associated with a variety of negative actions that are harmful and dangerous from the organizational point of view (e.g. Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Elron, 2000; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Ferris and King, 1991; Mintzberg, 1983; Parker, Dipboye and Jackson, 1995; Vigoda, 2000b, 2001, 2002). Examples of acts of a political nature include concealing important information, lobbying for preferred alternatives, favoritism, taking credit for other people's contributions, and scapegoating. Studies that examined the effect of organizational politics on various work outcomes concluded that organizations rife with internal politics usually evince low performance on various scales, from attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment to self-reports of lower performance and a lesser inclination to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. In the same vein, elevated levels of stress, negligent behaviors and aggression are found (e.g. Cropanzano et al., 1997; Maslyn and Fedor, 1998; Vigoda, 2000a, b, 2002).

At the team level, the prevalence of politics has been shown to increase the level of detrimental conflicts in top management teams and to lower their performance (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Elron, 2000). Elron's (2000) findings further indicate that

higher cultural diversity in the team is related to a higher level of political behaviors, mainly in the form of coalition formation. Hence, politics processes need to be studied in global virtual teams because of their potential negative impact on team members and the team as a whole, and because of the potential ways the multicultural aspects of the team may affect it.

Next, we describe our interviews-based study done in two multinational corporations extensively using global virtual teams.

### **An Exploratory Field Study**

The main purpose of the exploratory field study is to understand the perceptions and effects of these structural conditions and dynamics – and the relationship among them – for members of virtual teams, so that more precise propositions and theory can be built.

### **Setting and Organizations**

Our research setting was based on two multinational corporations from the high-tech sector. We chose the high-tech sector because of its known intensive use of global virtual teams. We chose the same general industry to control for industry-related effects and to allow relative similarity of professions. The first organization is a large, Fortune 500 company specializing in supplying computer components such as processors and boards to the computing and communication industries. It has its headquarters based in North America,<sup>1</sup> several locations within North America, several locations within Israel and a number of subsidiaries in Europe. We will identify this company as TransTech. The second organization is a medium-sized company, the result of a merger between an Israeli organization and a North American based company. The merger has taken the form of a takeover in the past four years, with corporate headquarters based in North America and research and development based in Israel. The company has 30 support and distribution centers worldwide, including

locations in the Americas, Europe, Australia and Asia, and specializes in imaging and software technologies. This company is identified as GlobalTech. Both organizations rely heavily on global virtual teams for several of their main functions. Contacts with both organizations were made through the heads of the human resource departments.

### **Participants**

Twenty-one members of global virtual teams participated in the study, 14 from TransTech, and 7 from GlobalTech. Participants were chosen by heads of the HR departments in both organizations, responding to our request that they would belong to both global virtual and face-to-face teams, that their virtual teams would be significant to the organization, and that they would be at the managerial level. The participants represented eight different teams, with two to three members from each team. Fourteen participants were Israelis based in Israel, six were North Americans based in North America, and one was an Israeli based in the North American headquarters of his organization. All participants were low- to middle-level managers who held a variety of positions and represented a variety of departments in their organizations, including information systems, production, R&D and human resources. Two of the participants were the heads of their virtual teams. Thirteen participants were members of only one global virtual team, and the other eight were members of two such teams. Sixteen of the participants were male, and participants' ages varied between 28 and 45.

### **Teams**

The number of cultures represented in the teams ranged from 2 to 12. For most teams, team meetings took place in the form of conference calls once a week, with email and the use of a shared website being the prevalent mode of communication between the meetings. Six teams had face-to-face meetings

between one and four times a year, two teams did not meet face to face at the time of the study. The total number of members in the teams that were described in the interviews ranged from 3 to 20 individuals. The teams' main tasks were varied – two existed mostly for the exchange of information and advice, and when necessary solved together problems related to their work (e.g. a team of engineers who were responsible for similar equipment in different factories and together solved problems and dilemmas related to the use of their equipment), in others the proportion of mutual decision making was higher (e.g. the team of information system specialists who needed to decide about the purchase of an expensive information system). Two teams were responsible for the creation of actual products (e.g. a website for the company's customers worldwide). All teams consisted of people who were mostly from similar functional areas.

### **Data Sources**

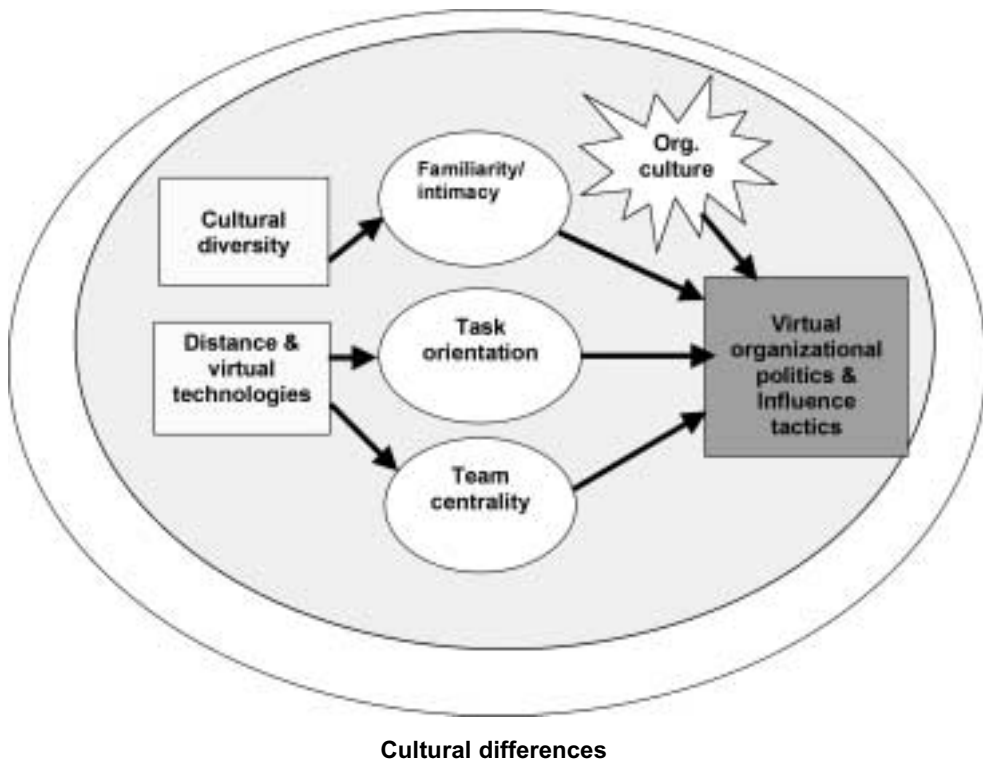
Our main data source was in-depth semi-structured interviews with all the study's participants, conducted by the first author. Members belonging to two teams were asked to concentrate on the dynamics occurring in the team that was most central to them in term of investment of time and/or significance to their work. Interviews began with background questions about the interviewee's professional experience, his or her role in the organization, and the main functions of the face-to-face team he or she belonged to. The second part of the interview included background questions on the global virtual team, such as a description of the other team members, the team's history from its creation point, main communication technologies used, length and frequency of the team's virtual meetings, main tasks and goals, and its place and status within the organization. Thus a general view of the global virtual team the interviewee belonged to emerged at the end of this part of the interview.

In the main portion of our interviews, participants were asked to describe and explain various influential behaviors and political processes relevant to their virtual teams and how they compared with their experiences in face-to-face teams. Significant parts of the interview were also dedicated to the understanding of the organizations the global virtual teams were a part of, the defining characteristics of their cultures, and the forms of influence and politics prevalent in the teams' larger environment. At the end of the interview participants were asked about the ways they thought the multi-cultural aspects of the team and the use of virtual technology affected team processes.

Interview questions followed a written format that included questions relating to all parts of the interview. However, these questions were supplemented in each interview with ones that responded to the unique background information given by each interviewee, and to the specific responses regarding the influence and political processes in each team. We asked each participant for permission to tape-record the interview. All participants agreed, and all interviews were later transcribed. Interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, mostly depending on the interviewees' schedules. To have a better understanding of the two organizations we also obtained formal written materials and accessed their websites. These materials described such issues as the organizational mission of statement, valued goals, and structure and products.

### **Data Analysis**

Unlike hypothesis-testing research, inductive research lacks a generally accepted model for analyzing the data (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). In the absence of a hypothesized model, we used the following approach: the two authors and one graduate student separately read all transcribed interviews and notes. After analyzing the first four interviews, the initial interview format was



**Figure 1** The cyber political space

partially changed as a response to issues detected in the data analysis (e.g. the length of time spent on background questions being too extensive). When all interview data were collected, partly using the method described by Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, we again separately categorized the data according to the main variables of the study – inferences to the multicultural aspects of the team, the use and consequences of using virtual technologies, the influence tactics and political actions that were employed in the team, and information related to the organizations at large. We then looked at the data for repeated patterns of tentative relationships between the variables and for the interviewees' explanations of these relationships, and created initial preliminary hypotheses. We then went

back to the data to see if the relationship was confirmed in most of the interviews. One more iteration between the data and the hypotheses was conducted, including the corroboration of the initial hypotheses with the written organizational materials,

What emerged were propositions linking the two inherent characteristics of global virtual teams, namely cultural diversity and the use of virtual technology, with team influence tactics and politics. Three mediating variables that repeatedly appear in the interviews – familiarity, team centrality, and task orientation – are included in the preliminary model we offer, together with the context variable of organizational culture. The model is depicted in Figure 1 and explained in more detail next.

Before we begin the description of our findings and the resulting model, we would like to demonstrate the complexity of life in a global virtual team using the lively testimony of a Canadian interviewee from GlobalTech:

This group is made up of regional marketing managers, who actually operate also in individual countries, so we have about nine in Europe, including one in Spain, one in Italy, one in the UK, and one in Norwegian countries. We also have four in Asia Pacific, we have one in Japan, we have one in Australia, and we have two in Americas, so we have one in the USA and Canada and one for Latin America. So they are literally spread all over the world . . . We do most conference calls by phone. It usually means I'm up at five in the morning. Because if we have a conference call at six o'clock in the morning, it means it's nine o'clock in Hong Kong, it means it's ten in the morning in Boston, and two in the afternoon in Israel . . . that happens very often. The company has tried to set up video, but hasn't been fully successful actually. The technology is still a little bit clumsy, it hasn't been fully integrated, it's very easy for something to go wrong and it only worked half the time. Also, you are looking at a very small TV screen, with so many people around, the cameras are so far away, their heads are this big, you can tell when some one walks out of the room, but that's about it.

Our exploratory model and propositions regarding the ways influence and politics manifest themselves in global virtual teams relies on the combination of the findings based on the interviews with members of global virtual teams and the adjustment of existing theories and empirical knowledge on influence and politics to the reality of these teams. In general, the evidence suggests that global virtual team members' cultural differences and use of virtual technology do affect their choices of influence tactics and political processes in ways that can be beneficial to the team and contribute to its effectiveness.

The main findings of our study are that the less socially acceptable and hence less effective influence tactics are used significantly less frequently and with lesser intensi-

ties in global virtual teams than the ones used in face-to-face teams. More specifically, the most dominant influence attempts used are rationality and consultation, which are among the more socially acceptable and effective tactics with regard to getting organizational members to internally commit and work towards organizational goals (e.g. Yukl and Tracey, 1992). The use of the least acceptable tactics, such as exerting pressures, sanctions and legitimating, was indicated to be almost non-existent, and lower than in face-to-face teams. Most participants agreed, however, that ingratiation, exchange and upward appeal might be relevant 'backstage', but usually not manifested directly in overt team dynamics. Similarly, the data indicate that for most global virtual teams the use of politics is also significantly lower, its place in the life of the team less salient and the range of political actions less varied.

The findings in the interviews also indicate that the relationships between the teams' structural characteristics and the use of influence and politics are mostly mediated by the lower levels of familiarity between the team members, the team's lower centrality to its members in relation to their collocated teams, and members' high task focus when communicating.

What may be the reasons for this unique appearance of the processes of influence and politics in global virtual teams? The interviews allowed us to better understand the undertakings that led to these results, and to get a more detailed picture of the unique dynamics in the global virtual teams that were related to the themes of our investigation. Next, we discuss the study's findings in more detail using the three mediating variables as the axis of the model. The effect of cultural diversity and/or virtual technologies on the mediating variable is discussed first, followed by a discussion of ways in which the mediating variable affects influence tactics and politics. We then describe the one direct and complex relationship we found between

the use of technology-mediated communication and the unique use of influence tactics and politics. Last we portray the role organizational culture plays in determining the global virtual teams' culture and the exceptions to our model – the use of coalitions and political uses of email communication. Quotations taken from the interviews were chosen to enhance our discussion.

### **Familiarity**

One of the consequences of cultural differences between team members – hence the differences in cultural norms, codes of behavior, and communication patterns reported by most of our interviewees – was the perception of limited familiarity. In other words, the difficulty in understanding the codes of another culture and the accompanying feeling of uncertainty increase the barriers to achieving high levels of intimacy. The differences in levels of understanding English, the language spoken in all teams, adds one more layer of impediments. These findings are in accordance with previous well-established findings in the field of intercultural communication (e.g. Ting-Toomey, 1999), are repeated throughout the interviews, and are well represented by the following excerpt from an Israeli team member interview:

I think it is a matter of associations. When I say something to someone from my own culture immediately, we have a hundred common words and associations that I don't need to explain. When I say the same thing to someone from a different culture it takes a lot more effort.

The consequences of physical distance and the use of virtual technologies go in a direction similar to that of cultural diversity. In a study on product development teams, Hinds and Weisband (2003) report that team members who are distant from each other are less likely to share information freely and to pay attention to information from others when compared with collocated teams. All our interviewees indicated, in agreement

with the repeated general finding of previous studies (e.g. Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000), that there is less familiarity and intimacy and more misunderstandings in teams because when not seeing each other while engaged in a phone conversation or in email sessions, people miss valuable information in the others' reactions, as indicated by the following quote:

You only have the voice, you cannot see the body language . . . someone says something and it is not clear how to interpret it – was it a joke, was it cynical, was it meant seriously?

At a deeper level, not sharing the presence of others on a day-to-day basis causes team members to miss familiarity that can be based on multiple dimensions, such as the sharing of knowledge on the informal aspects of work or people's private lives. An Israeli HR manager from TransTech reports:

at the social level of course I will create deeper relationships with those who are in the cubicles next to me. There is a closeness at the personal level, and also a better mutual understanding of the work environment.

***Familiarity's consequences*** In our study, a brighter side of limited familiarity emerged: more socially acceptable and effective influence tactics and milder or less political actions. The results of the lesser familiarity are expressed by an Israeli participant:

There is something more mild working in virtual teams . . . since we are talking about multicultural groups there is a diversity in the levels of spoken or written English among the team members. Although we understand each other pretty well we sometimes do not express ourselves the same way as we do in Hebrew. We also sometimes do not get the bottom line or the accurate meaning between the lines as expressed by the other unless we got to know him or her personally and can relate the words to their face and personality. We therefore feel more limited with how strongly we can come on about things . . . pressure the others in the team to do things our way.

Interpreting this interviewee's words,

when cultural and language differences do not allow us to know the other well we will have less of a tendency to use the less socially acceptable influence tactics. This correlates with the notion that when our knowledge of the other is limited, our tendencies to choose not to respond automatically, to inhibit undesirable responses and to edit responses increase, partly in order to avoid mistakes and risk social sanctions (see Logan, 1989). Operating in the same direction, the lower familiarity decreases the power base for team members to influence each other, so more selective effort is needed to get members' commitment to the task (see also the part about task centrality), by using the more effective tactics. An example is given by the Israeli manager of the remote access engineering group from TransTech:

You have to use a lot of sensitivity on the one hand and rationality on the other, as so it's easy to say this one wrong word that will completely upset him because you don't really know each other well.

In other words, when we are only partially familiar with the other, even more so when he or she is from another culture, it is harder to identify the responses and sanctions to our actions. As organizational politics tends to be both ambiguous and complex, learning the nature of the target person or team at whom you aim political activities is almost a necessary precondition. In support of this notion, studies have shown that while electronic mail is more effective in increasing the range, amount and velocity of information (McKenney et al., 1992), face-to-face communication is more effective in circumstances where levels of ambiguity and uncertainty are high, and in socially sensitive and intellectually challenging situations (Nohria and Eccles, 1992). Since influence and political behavior are clearly defined among the most sensitive, ambiguous and illusive organizational processes, they will be implemented more intensely by face-to-face meetings

rather than by virtual conferencing. One participant in the study described these differences:

One of the most salient characteristics of political behavior inside or outside organizations is that it takes place in inner rooms, in hidden corners, and no one actually knows that it is there. You can't actually see it but you eventually witness its results. You must be very careful in becoming engaged in such influential behaviors; therefore, virtual teams are a bad place to start practicing organizational politics. You can't see the people, you can't evaluate their power and secret weapons, and you have much less control over the entire process compared with face-to-face teams that are just nearby you. It is much more difficult to read and understand the political map when people are distributed all over the world.

The notion that people change their use of influence tactics according to the context in which they operate is in accordance with the finding that managers whose teams became self-managed began using softer influence tactics (Douglas and Gardner, 2004).

This finding may go against many people's experiences and reports of the freedom felt when using the internet. Indeed people do potentially become less careful when using virtual technologies, more so when they are anonymous, but this is more relevant when they are in non-work settings (see for example Ben-Ze'ev's book (2004), titled *Love Online: Emotions on the Internet*).

An interesting additional finding, although not directly related to the level of politics used in multicultural teams, relates to findings reported in earlier studies (Drory and Romm, 1988; Vigoda, 2001; Yukl et al., 2003), suggesting that individuals from different cultures are likely to perceive both influence tactics and political actions in organizations somewhat differently in terms of their effectiveness/severity, as well as to react to them with different intensities. Thus what is seen as a negative political act or influence tactic by one member of the group can seem neutral to another, and the results of such

differences in perceptions can be anywhere from misunderstandings to severe negative emotions and dysfunctioning, as influence and politics are especially sensitive processes. Such an incident was described by an Israeli member of an Israeli–Canadian team, discussing the Canadian view of what can be considered political:

Daniel was very Israeli, so from his side he knew that if he wants to speak on a conference call it's ok to interrupt somebody else in the middle of speaking. But Canadians don't interrupt in the middle, they wait for the other person to finish speaking . . . so the Canadian team members asked to get him out of the team, and I had to convince them that he is a positive person and that he really wants to be on this team but that he needs to learn the rules.

On the other side of the ocean, Israeli perceptions of Canadians can lead to similar but opposite misperceptions of what are political behaviors in the team:

I know who is more political and who is less political [among the Canadian members]. Q: how do you identify that? A: you see that a person is never direct.

These descriptions of misunderstandings and misperceptions strongly connect to the findings of Shamir and Melnik (2002), who conclude that Israelis and North Americans differ significantly on the cultural dimension of 'expressive boundaries', which refers to boundaries between people's thoughts and feelings and their overt behavior. North Americans were characterized as more controlled and restrained, while Israelis were characterized as disclosing their opinions and evaluations more openly and expressing their emotions more freely, and these differences are a cause of communication difficulties.

### **Task Focus**

A repeated theme that came up in the interviews was the difficulties involved in the use of electronic communication, especially when several team members participate simultane-

ously online. These difficulties are related to the different time zones, the time it takes to create written information, and the relative lack of control over the meeting because of not being able to rely on cues aside from voice in phone calls or written messages in case of emails. All these can contribute to feelings of inefficiency and frustration if meetings are not managed effectively. As an Israeli TransTech interviewee indicated:

In a virtual team you cannot talk when somebody else does [in Israel the custom of intercepting in the middle of another person speaking is quite prevalent], both for technical reasons and because this is not acceptable by all other cultures. This makes the conference call more effective, because everybody has to listen. In a face to face meeting even if you didn't persuade others in the meeting you can keep on trying in the corridor. In a virtual team it means you have to talk on the phone again, and we usually don't have the energy to do that.

The aspect of timing can also be crucial. A Canadian working in the Western part of Canada told us:

Sixty percent of all my meetings and contacts are with people who are not here, so it's with Israel, it's with Brussels, it's with Hong Kong, it's with Boston. I deal with conference calls with them on a very regular basis, as well as with traveling. I usually have to set up a time line because if we have a conference call that encompasses all of them, it usually means I'm up at five in the morning. Because if we have a conference call at six o'clock in the morning, it means it's already nine o'clock at night in Hong Kong, it means it's ten in the morning in Boston, and two in the afternoon in Israel. In addition, if it were only Israel on the line, my morning regular working hours would still be their evening, and many times they have to talk from home. So we all want to keep it short and focused.

In general, people find the conference calls a necessary evil, that have to be kept as short as possible, and dedicated only to important issues:

It's my role as a manager not to let people whose tendency is to be too detail oriented or to resist every suggestion raised in the teams

dominate the conversation. It *has* to be a professional meeting, otherwise people very quickly start doing things in parallel or put the conversation on 'mute' – when you can see your colleagues walking in the corridor with a tired expression and earphones on you know they are engaged in a lengthy conference call. So usually people will comment if somebody overdoes it. One such comment is enough most of the times.

**Consequences of task focus** One of the consequences of task focus, and a way to reach higher effectiveness, is that virtual teams leave less space and time for the informal social aspects of a team's existence. Since political behaviors rely heavily on informal communication and transactions among individuals, global virtual teams simply allow less political behavior also from this perspective:

Virtual teams are task oriented. You do not have enough chances to read and understand politics, if it is there at all. In fact, I don't feel that I actually have enough opportunities to be exposed to such activities in my virtual team: we don't have that much time left for politics, we need to work.

### **Team Centrality**

For most of our participants, the virtual teams they belonged to were less central to their organizational identity and performance than the roles they filled in their local organizations, despite their acknowledging that objectively at least some of their virtual tasks were no less important than their local ones, if not more so. The lower centrality is a result of several aspects of virtual teams:

- 1 Virtual team tasks were usually less demanding than the tasks of the face-to-face teams the interviewees belonged to. That meant in practice that team members spend most of their time interacting on a daily basis with their local environment. They will usually spend a smaller part of their working day immersed in the happenings of the virtual team (Klein and Barrett, 2001).

- 2 Most participants' careers were not dependent on formal performance evaluations or reviews from the virtual team leader.
- 3 As indicated earlier, people we meet in person are more salient to us than those we interact with virtually. Not being able to be engaged in full social contact as is the case in face-to-face connections tends to lower the importance we put on our virtual contacts and to reduce the attention we pay to their messages (Hinds and Weisband, 2003).

As one information technology manager from GlobalTech framed it when describing the situation created after the merger:

People are worried about their jobs. A part of that manifests itself in people wanting to have a bunch of different roles, so in case one is let go, they're totally at a 160% and then if 40% gets cut, they're still over a hundred percent which definitely doesn't make sense because at a 160% how do you do all your work? The first thing they don't attend to is their global tasks. I think the commitment level, involvement, and just the understanding of what we're trying to achieve, is less deep.

A similar description, although in milder forms, came up in many of our interviewees' descriptions of their team members and their own commitment to their global virtual team's tasks.

**Consequences of team centrality** As lower centrality means less emotional involvement, the consequence is less engagement in efforts to influence others, and politics becomes less attractive – previous studies indicate that politics flourishes where important resources are involved (Ferris et al., 1996). This tendency is enhanced by the fact that for seven of the eight teams formal performance appraisals were given only by the managers of the collocated teams, which decreased the competition between group members and the need to engage in upwards impression management:

I think that face-to-face teams may face more internal politics than virtual groups. Whenever the direct supervisor provides a term review, politics will increase. In my team, for example, I do not provide the reviews. Instead, I am one of many others who give feedbacks, and it's the direct manager that presents the integrated feedback materials to the employee. The only thing left for me is to do a lot convincing and rationalizing when I need my team's commitment, and they engage in similar tactics with me.

***The direct relationship: Technology-mediated communication and influence***

The consequence of the lack of physical closeness that necessitates the use of technology-mediated communication is the lower intensity and lesser variety of influence tactics, especially those that rely more heavily on the added touch of interpersonal connectedness. One of many examples is described by the Israeli leader of the information technology training team in TransTech:

In face-to-face teams you have more opportunity to have those late at night one on one discussions, or, you know, just drop by . . . you can influence somebody a second time, and sometimes you don't even know you're doing it, which may influence some of the decisions made later. . . . People rely a lot more on those personal connections as you discuss things . . . but in the virtual team decisions are being made virtually, then you don't have the same opportunity, because you don't have one on one, for one thing.

In the words of another interviewee:

I think that for people who influence by their personal power, by their personality, then there is a lot more influence they can exert in a face to face meeting.

***An exception to the model: Coalitions and political uses of electronic mail***

An important exception to our general conclusion is the relatively natural use of coalitions – replicating in part Elron's (2000) findings. In some of the teams, people from the same geographical location tended to form coalitions

by discussing issues relevant to the whole group outside the team's formal meetings. An Israeli engineer from TransTech reports:

You can feel the connection between the teams that are in the US. If someone from a factory needs help, in one hour of flight somebody from another plant will come to his aid. If we need help, it's a trans-atlantic flight. . . . You sometimes feel in the Chat [the expression used for the team phone calls] that they have reached a decision without you, that you have been out of the picture.

However, our interviewee adds as a response to further inquiry:

It's just easier for them to talk in their own hours. It's a matter of convenience rather than power issues. I actually let this happen, and request to be involved only in the final stages of the decisions. In a way it's more convenient for me too.

More political uses of coalitions were reported in the organization that went through a complex merger. As an e-business specialist said about the goings on in the North American corporate headquarters:

There's a lot that goes on here, a lot of power dynamics related to the merger that goes on because people sit next to each other, because people drop by into people's offices, because people go for lunch together . . . there's a lot of that kind of stuff that if you're in Israel and removed from corporate headquarters you miss out on the important decisions.

An interesting and relevant phenomenon related to the virtual aspects of the teams, is the easier use of control over the dissemination and blocking of information, most salient in the electronic mail media. This finding is discussed by Romm and Pliskin (1997), who suggest that virtual organizational politics is becoming more and more widespread in modern organizations as a deliberate and purposeful behavior. The study suggests four features of emails as particularly relevant to their political potency: high speed, the ease of reaching large groups

of people, the ability to store and even change received messages, and the control over to whom and where the message is sent.

Typical examples of these uses are given by an Israeli belonging to a team of HR specialists working together on a standardized global career development project in Trans-Tech:

you can always ignore emails, at least for a while, if it's a complex or uncomfortable topic or someone you don't feel like connecting with . . . there is a certain element about emails you can't find in other media – the issue of Forward and Reply. There is political work related to who wrote what to whom. Who for example got out the first email with a good idea . . . or if someone doesn't do his part of the task, people will CC his or her manager, and he sees that his manager sees the email. Or you write something polite to the whole group. This way you can pressure people. . . . Another use is to show the good work I have done, or to give public credit to someone else's good job. There are a lot of calculations and a lot of sensitivity around the email issue. There is something about writing things down that can be used in a lot of ways, and your 'signature' is always on it.

In sum, the use of email causes people to engage more in active political acts and at the same to become more cautious about the ways they communicate and influence others. It should be noted, however, that the active use of electronic politics was still reported to be less prevalent in global virtual teams relative to its use in collocated teams.

### **A Context Variable: Organizational Culture**

The organizational cultures directly affected the various ways influence and politics played out in the global virtual teams arena. Although not an explanation of the differences between global and local teams, as culture affects both kinds of teams in similar ways, it is important to realize its effects on the functioning of our teams.

Organizational teams create unique team

cultures, but the organizational culture the teams are embedded in is an important external source of influence on team norms and practices (e.g. Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001; Sagiv and Elron, 2006). Empirical evidence indicates that organizational culture affects perceptions about behavioral norms held by organizational members (Gundry and Rousseau, 1994). It may affect the behavior of team members through its direct impact on the team culture and through its impact on the beliefs, norms and values that the individual members bring with them into the team. Strong organizational cultures are those in which a relatively strong consensus exists regarding dominant values and norms, and where the same values are manifested at all levels of the organization (Schein, 1985). The strength of the culture is related to the level of influence an organization has on its teams' practices. In our interviews we found that the two organizational cultures our virtual teams had resided in were strong and articulated, matching in more than one respect Kunda's (1992) notions of 'engineering culture' described in his seminal book on a high-tech company.

Both organizations are knowledge-based high-tech organizations, and there is high esteem in both for rationality in all their processes and in the behaviors people display:

There is something called company Trans-Tech values. These are the organization's values – you have to talk quietly, to not have emotional outbursts, to not interrupt somebody in the middle, to come to meetings on time . . . you will never hear people shouting at each other . . . when I enter the building the culture is very different than the outside world.

This rationality is then translated into the virtual teams' processes:

you have eight people in the group and if two are arguing between them [in a phone meeting] for over two minutes you simply stop it and tell them to take it off-line to sort their disagreements and find a solution . . . the rest of

the group doesn't need to waste time and be part of this . . . and we live in a kind of organizational culture that accepts and encourages these norms.

The two cultures also had explicit rules norms regarding the use of influence and politics. For example, the written rules of GlobalTech relate to several aspects discussed in this study. Some of these rules are presented below:

- We will sustain an environment in which the individual can have an impact without fighting bureaucracy. We consider ourselves members of teams rather than hierarchies.
- We will be open and communicate within the organization everything that is practical to communicate (except for HR, legally restricted material and highly sensitive information).
- All stakeholders (customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers) should be treated with integrity, respect, openness and fairness, in order to be retained and to be happy.
- We will treat everyone equally and impartially and commit everyone to being judged on merit and contribution only.
- We believe people are most effective and satisfied when self-managed and we will provide the tools, training and environment for this to occur. We strive to always act with integrity and fairness.
- Central to the company's principles is the belief that we should not tolerate politics. By politics we mean:
  1. Misrepresentation: Willfully misrepresenting or not disclosing information in an effort to make someone believe something that is untrue.
  2. Selfishness: Putting one's own interests before those of the company or other people. This includes taking credit for other people's ideas or actions.

3. Positional behavior: Acting inconsistently with people of different stature in the organization. This might include being rude, abrupt or dictatorial to 'subordinates' while being polite and respectful to peers/'superiors'. Evaluating an idea according to its author rather than its content is political.

According to most interviewees, these rules and norms are generally practiced in everyday life, and there are formal and informal sanctions when deviations occur:

Anybody who's found to be political when it comes to decision making is called pretty fast here, and there are precautions to prevent political behaviors. Being political for example is making decisions outside of the formal decisions making process, and making decisions that are not backed up by our economic principles. In general, it means making a decision because it benefits you, or it benefits your friend or your team but it does not benefit the company. And anybody can call on a political act . . . most of the time, if you call someone on that sort of behavior it stops very quickly.

It is the norms of effectiveness and rationality in both TransTech and GlobalTech that are perhaps responsible for our finding that teams that met more frequently face to face did not experience a rise in their levels of politics as they mostly experienced positive processes that remained that way after coming back to their respective countries. A typical meeting of regional managers in GlobalTech was described in this fashion:

The idea is that by having consensus we have everybody actually work to achieve the goal, there's not a single person at the top driving down the decisions . . . so actually doing it this way everybody feels good with the decisions because they feel positive about the interaction, we come up with way better ideas, you rarely miss anything because you have so many people putting input . . . what we usually do in the face to face is we break up everybody and see how three or four people work on each issue, you actually focus people on a very specific initiative or very specific task. Then we

have the groups actually switching, and everybody just kind of rotates the next one, so then you have a fresh set of eyes who will change it around and tweak it, and then by the end of that you actually have half the people work on actually half the processes, but you've had two different sets of eyes look at them so you actually get a very structured process and super easy to do . . . 22 people reaching a decision at the end of the day. Regardless of whether you're Israeli, whether you're French, whether you're Chinese – you have to use the same decision making process. We all base our decision making on the economic principles. It's been very eye opening, it's very enjoyable, it's very interesting, I couldn't imagine it any other way now.

## Conclusions and Implications

Our initial goal was to enhance understanding of how influence and politics operate in the context of global virtual teams. The most significant finding of our study is that influence tactics and political processes in these teams are more restrained and mild than in face-to-face groups, taking on a more rational form. According to numerous studies on organizational politics and influence, this aspect of team processes serves as an advantage in terms of the completion and quality of team tasks and products and members' attitudes towards the team and the organization.

We argue that team members choose a set of influence tactics to match the unique nature of a global virtual team. The overall result of our work was a model that serves as an initial explanation of this phenomenon. The model, unraveled through the use of in-depth interviews, describes the links between the two inherent characteristics of global virtual teams to the lower levels of team politics by using the three mediating variables of familiarity, task focus, team centrality and the context variable of organizational culture.

Previous research has clearly indicated that less socially desirable influence tactics result in lesser commitment and task-related effort (e.g. Yukl and Falbe, 1990). In the same vein, higher levels of politics are related

to lower quality decisions and lower team performance (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Elron, 2000), the results of politics being time- and energy-consuming and information-restricting, as well as creating communication barriers and patterns of inflexibility. Our conclusion then is that the much-discussed difficulties associated with the multicultural and virtual aspects of global virtual teams can be at least partly be offset by the advantages of a relatively politics-free or politics-neutral environment. Moreover, global virtual teams, especially those that do meet face-to-face occasionally, potentially bring with them 'just the right amount' of familiarity, team centrality and task orientation in terms of the ways influence and politics are manifested.

The relationships between the model's variables may be more complex than we described. For example, relationships between the three mediating variables need to be further examined. It is highly possible that levels of familiarity may affect team centrality and vice versa – when members become more familiar with each other the centrality of the team to each of the members will also increase, and higher centrality of the team will in turn cause people to engage in knowing their partners better. The relationship between the use of virtual technologies and the cultural diversity also needs further exploring. DiStefano and Maznevski (2000) note that team members with different cultural values tend to prefer different norms of participating in teams.

Our study has several limitations. First, the number of interviewees was limited to the testimonies of 21 team members belonging to only two organizations. Moreover, teams were represented by only two or three members, and hence their views could not be corroborated by others. This limits the predictive power of our findings and leaves much work for future studies. In the same vein, we interviewed representatives of only two cultures, both considered western and

developed. Perceptions and views of team members from other cultures need to be part of future research. Questionnaire data are necessary to make a better separation between the effects of the different variables of the model, and a more accurate comparison is needed with face-to-face multicultural teams on the one hand, and culturally homogeneous virtual teams on the other. A multi-method longitudinal study, including observations of the teams and their actual communication, could benefit this field of research most notably.

Influence at the individual level was not investigated in this study. However, team leaders or managers obviously have a special impact on the culture of their team (e.g. Douglas and Gardner, 2004; Kets de Vries and Millar, 1986), and a special focus on the leaders or facilitators of global virtual teams is necessary for a more accurate understanding of the teams' dynamics. Some team members may influence more than others the evolution of various norms and practices in the team. More specifically, members' influence may be related to the status of the organizational location the member belongs to (e.g. headquarters vs. subsidiary) on the one hand, and to members' personality traits on the other. In future research, it may be worthwhile to explore these aspects of team membership. Moreover, the relationship between individual team members' cultural intelligence (e.g. Earley, 2002; Thomas, 2006) and the use of influence tactics is another area worth exploring.

Although this study is exploratory and theory-building in nature, initial practical implications may be derived from our results. Most importantly, the common perception that global virtual teams are a 'necessary evil' used mainly to deal with global tasks or for financial reasons does not take into account the advantages of the more rational influence and political processes that these teams have the potential for. Managers and initiators of global virtual teams may want to relate more

strongly and explicitly to these advantages, thus perhaps experiencing more positive attitudes towards the task of managing such teams, and conveying these attitudes to the members of these teams.

Similarly, as the lack of very close familiarity and intimacy helps the more efficient and socially acceptable influence tactics thrive and prevents the political games, it seems that keeping a low number of face-to-face meetings may be sufficient. Although it differs between teams and tasks, perhaps one to three meetings a year would be enough to keep team members from complete and problematic anonymity on the one hand, while keeping politics low on the other. It is worthwhile, however, to take into consideration the specific cross cultural differences that may exist in the teams in relation to influence and politics as these may be magnified by misunderstandings, as was the case in the emotional expressivity differences between Israelis and North Americans. Moreover, we need not only to inquire about each culture separately, but also about one culture in relation to the other culture (Shamir and Melnick, 2002). The effects of the level of cultural diversity also need to be examined.

Our findings indicate there is a significant influence of the organization's political culture on the team norms and practices. When an unusual high intensity of detrimental political activities occurs in a global virtual team, it is essential to check the organizational culture and events related to the activity of the global team for signs of similar activity in parallel to understanding the dynamics of the specific team.

Our exploratory study and proposed model may contribute to creating better conditions for effective virtual teams in the future. We suggest that the meaning and effect of politics and influence in the emerging field of global virtual teams deserve more scholarly attention and elaboration. The basic assumption is that virtual teams as distinct and unconventional work units may

redefine the boundaries of organizational politics and explore new horizons for the study of power relations so far not investigated.

## Note

- 1 Due to possible problems related to the disclosure of the organizations' identity, we include both Canada and the US when using the term 'North America', taking into account that the cultures of the two countries are distinct, despite some similarities.

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## Résumé

### **Influence et processus politiques dans le cyberspace: le cas des équipes mondiales virtuelles (Efrat Elron et Eran Vigoda-Gadot)**

Les moyens choisis par les membres d'une équipe pour s'influencer les uns les autres et influencer sur les processus politiques qui opèrent au sein de l'équipe ont d'importantes implications sur l'efficacité de celle-ci. Dans cet article, nous présentons une investigation exploratoire à partir d'entretiens avec les membres d'équipe et les cadres dirigeants, associés aux connaissances actuelles sur ces procédés, ainsi qu'un modèle préliminaire intégrant la familiarité, la centralité de l'équipe et la conscience de la tâche comme variables médiatrices de la relation entre les aspects multiculturels et virtuels des équipes et le l'usage de l'influence et de la politique. Nos conclusions laissent également penser que l'usage de tactiques d'influence et d'actions politiques fortes est moindre au sein des équipes mondiales virtuelles qu'au sein des équipes pluridisciplinaires.

## 摘要

网络空间的影响和政治过程  
全球虚拟团队的案例

Efrat Elron and Eran Vigoda-Gadot

团队成员互相影响的方式及团队内的政治过程对团队绩效有重要意义。本文对两种现象在全球虚拟团队中存在的方式做了探索性研究，基于和团队成员及经理之间的访谈，并结合关于这些过程的现有知识，本文提出了一个包括熟悉性，团队向心性任务集中性三个变量来调节团队跨文化和虚拟方面与运用影响力和政治之间关系的初步模型。研究结果也表明全球虚拟团队使用强硬影响策略和政治行为要比实际的团队要温和些。