The phenomenon of conflict is one of the distinctive features of human interaction and world politics - interaction among nations - is no exception. Conflict, being discord, is meaningful only when it is resolved, creating some sort of harmony. As Kenneth Boulding points out, it is the process of conflict towards some sort of resolution which gives it meaning. Settling disputes through deployment of physical power leading to conquest is no longer a rational solution in the thermonuclear setting of modern world politics. Some sort of reconciliation and compromise is, therefore, sought for by conflicting parties through the process of negotiation at a green table by means of argument, discussion, debate, mediation, arbitration etc.

The conflict over Austria, involving the Big Four during the decade immediately after the Second World War, is one of those rare cases which were resolved through the process of negotiation. In this process each party agreed to settle for something less than its ideal position rather than to continue the conflict. Although certain fundamental negotiating strategies and tactics of the Big Four could be identified in every negotiation
situation, the Austrian model unfolds certain distinctive features peculiar to itself. Besides the crucial decision of the Big Four to take a trial step towards détente on a significant geographical location in Europe, "Felix Austria" (excellence of Austrian diplomacy) stands out clearly projected in this context.

A few difficulties experienced during this study are: the nonavailability of the original minutes of most of the international conferences on the Austrian State Treaty, and the reluctance of the statesmen involved in these negotiations to talk about them. The available data on the subject, however, have been fully explored to evolve the pattern of negotiations on Austria.

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