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EXPLORING the RELEVANCE and CONTRIBUTION OF MEDIATION TO PEACE-BUILDING

Jacob Bercovitch and Ayse Kadayifci

Abstract

The paper considers the nature and characteristics of peace-building as an approach to conflict. It suggests that mediation should be seen as a particularly important aspect of peace-building efforts, and one that may be used at different phases of a conflict. The paper develops a framework for analyzing the circumstances under which mediation may contribute to peace-building. The framework lays emphasis on contextual and perceptual dimensions. The paper argues that mediation, properly utilized, can achieve not just a settlement of a conflict, but facilitate, in the longer run, a full transformation of relations. Any successful program of peace-building requires some form of mediation.

Introduction

As the Cold War system collapsed in 1991, we witnessed an increase in ethnic and religious intrastate conflicts (e.g. Indonesia, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, etc.), as well as the persistence of long-standing inter-state conflicts (e.g. India-Pakistan). Scholars in the fields of international relations and conflict resolution are faced with new and challenging questions relating to the nature of conflicts, particularly their prevention and termination. Within this context, new concepts such as ‘peace-building’, ‘conflict prevention’, ‘conflict transformation’, ‘second track diplomacy’, and ‘citizen diplomacy’ have been introduced to address these challenges and to complement more traditional conflict management mechanisms such as deterrence and coercion.

One of the emerging concepts in international peace and conflict resolution studies is “peace-building.” This term attracted attention after the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued a document titled “An Agenda for Peace” in 1992. In this document, Boutros-Ghali suggested that the responsibilities and actions of the UN and the international community should focus on four major areas of activity, including preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peace-keeping, and post-conflict peace-building. In “An Agenda for Peace”, Boutros-Ghali suggested that “preventive diplomacy” aims at preventing the escalation of conflict into violent confrontation, or preventing its spread should it arise; “peace-making” aims at bringing about a cessation of hostilities and the creation of a framework that will allow the

disputants to pursue nonviolent solutions; ‘peace-keeping’ aims to separate disputing parties and maintain a state of non-violence between them; and ‘peace-building’ purports to establish the conditions for a sustainable settlement. In this paper we would like to focus on peace building mechanisms and, in particular, the relevance of mediation in this process.

Definitions of Peace-Building

Peace-building has become one of the central themes in conflict studies, so defining it is an important first step. Based on an analysis of UN experience in conflicts in Namibia, El Salvador, and Cambodia, Doyle and Sambanis see peace-building as the fourth phase in the United Nations strategy for conflict resolution (Doyle & Sambanis 1999), following conflict prevention, peace-making and peace-keeping. According to Doyle and Sambanis, peace-building involves identifying and supporting those structures that can strengthen and solidify peace in the aftermath of peace-making and peace-keeping (Doyle & Sambanis 1999). The distinction between peace-building, peace-keeping, and peace-making was first made by Johan Galtung (1975), who emphasized conflict prevention and resolution at grass root and global levels. He is critical of so-called “elitist” peace-building efforts that take place at the official level and suggests instead that peace-building efforts are necessary at the grass roots level if the community at large is going to accept them. Bierbrauwer and van Tongeren, on the other hand, perceive peace-building as part of conflict prevention framework that takes place mostly at the official state level (Bierbrauwer & van Tongeren 2002).

Thus, peace-building may take place at the group, community, or state level. More than the signing of an agreement between officials of rival parties, it offers an approach that includes economic reconstruction that may lead to institutional transformation of society (e.g., reforming the police, the army, and the legal system, and re-building civil society). Peace-building becomes especially important in intractable conflicts, where a history of hostility and frequent eruption of violence disrupts the normal functioning of societies. Within this context peace-building can transform the war-like behaviors of communities. According to John Paul Lederach, peace-building is more than a post-conflict reconstruction; it encompasses, generates, and sustains a full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform a conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships (Lederach 1997). In that sense, peace building involves a range of activities and structures before, during, and after formal peace agreements between parties are signed.

Here we use the term ‘peace-building’ to refer to a whole host of activities and modalities of intervention designed to bring about a state of peaceful relations by conflicting parties. Peace-building is a dynamic process of resolving conflict and rebuilding societies, and it refers to mechanisms and structures that can prevent, terminate, transform, or resolve a conflict. It also refers to mechanisms and structures that can strengthen the capacity of a

society to manage change without violence. This may involve addressing the root causes of the conflict through long-term economic and social provisions as well as policies of reconciliation.

One crucial aspect of peace-building efforts is the recognition of the role played by various informal and local conflict resolution mechanisms and structures, (e.g., indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and second track diplomacy) and unofficial actors (e.g., local, regional and international grassroots organizations, and nongovernmental organization) in peace-building. This perception is an acknowledgement that for peace to last, it has to be sustained in various local social and cultural contexts, and that efforts at the official level (formal mediation, for example) must be supported by informal efforts such as second track diplomacy, along with local peace making efforts by various NGO's and other groups.

Characteristics of Peace-Building

The following are the main characteristics of peace-building efforts:

1. Peace-building is a non-coercive process in which the willingness and commitment of participating parties is key to its success (Galtung, 1975).
2. Peace-building is broader than other conflict management approaches as it involves long-term political, economic, and social provisions to address the root causes of a conflict (Galtung, 1975).
3. Peace-building is an interdependent effort that involves not only the official diplomats but also civilians, NGOs, and grassroots organizations. One of the guiding principles of peace-building, especially in intra-state conflicts, is to mobilize existing indigenous capacities for peace. For that reason, coordination of peace-building activities at different levels of society is of utmost importance (Heinrich 1997; Biewbrauwe & von Tongeren 2002).
4. Peace-building focuses on prevention. Ultimately, the purpose of peace-building activities is “to insure against and to prevent a relapse into a violent conflict” (Doyle & Sambanis 1999, p.5).

Outcomes and Methods

A successful peace-building effort must lead to certain outcomes. Utilizing the list developed by Search for Common Ground (2002), we suggest that a successful peace-building program may be exemplified by any one of the following desirable outcomes:

- 1) Conflict resolution that involves community-based initiatives and second track diplomacy.
- 2) Civilian participation in the policy process.
- 3) Physical security that includes demobilization, disarmament, demining, protection of the civilian population, and police and security force reform.

- 4) Environmental security that includes options such as minimal threat to resource depletion or human migration.
- 5) Economic reconstruction that includes infrastructure development, market reform, economic and financial institutions, small business and micro-enterprises, and credit assistance.
- 6) Personal security that includes human rights and the reduction of all forms of racial and communal violence.
- 7) Institutional/civil capacity building that includes government capacity building, NGO capacity building, implementation of peace accords, and dealing with probity/corruption.
- 8) Government and democratic development that includes electoral assistance, civic education and training, judicial reform and training, and media development and training.
- 9) Meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, health, and relief of suffering.
- 10) Social reconstruction that includes reintegration of refugees/combatants, social services such as health and education, peace education, and access to information.

Having identified the desirable outcomes of peace-building, we need to ask how best to devise strategies to reach these desired outcomes. A large number of activities may lead to these outcomes. For example, Search for Common Ground identified 24 operational methods for peace-building. These methods include mediation and facilitation, dialogue workshops, conflict resolution institution building and training, policy forums, joint action projects, cross-ethnic cooperation within professions, back-channel negotiations, domestic shuttle diplomacy, community organizing, court-based mediation, education in schools, storytelling forums, inter-ethnic kindergartens, reduction of stereotypes, radio programs, TV programs, children's TV programs, video-based dialogue, journalist training, cross-ethnic team reporting, publications, arts and culture, sports, and awards.

In this paper, we argue that mediation is one of the most effective peace-building strategies to produce the desired outcomes mentioned above. Mediation is flexible and adaptive, and these very features make it an effective strategy of peace-building in all phases of conflict. Mediation can be used to prevent escalation of conflict into violence (preventive diplomacy); it can be used to terminate violence (conflict management); or it can be utilized during the post-conflict phase (post-conflict reconstruction). In short, mediation can advance the cause of peace-building in a way that other strategies can not. To understand the relevance of mediation in peace-building, we have to understand its nature and the factors that influence its success.

Peace-Building and Mediation

The relationship between mediation and a successful transition from war-like behavior to more cooperative interactions is frequently mentioned, rarely defined, and widely misunderstood (Bercovitch, 1989). Intervention in conflict situations can be preemptive or reactive. As a multi-dimensional process, peace-building involves various conflict management attempts at different levels of society. These management attempts usually relate to some aspect of mediation or other forms of non-coercive intervention by a third party.

Mediation is one of the most extensively utilized conflict resolution tools. Although the underlying assumptions and values that inform the process may differ significantly from place to place, various communities with different cultural traditions have resorted to mediation in their efforts of building peace between them (Bercovitch, 1992). This cross-cultural application of mediation makes it an acceptable and familiar peace-building tool and adds to its strength as an effective mechanism to lay the foundations for peaceful relations (Bercovitch & Houston, 1993).

Despite being one of the most frequently employed conflict management mechanisms, different scholars have defined mediation differently, focusing on its various dimensions. Chris Mitchell defines mediation as any “intermediary activity... undertaken by a third party with the primary intention of achieving some compromise settlement of issues at stake between the parties, or at least ending disruptive conflict behavior” (Mitchell 1981, p. 287). Chris Moore defines it as “an extension and elaboration of the negotiation process that involves the intervention of an acceptable, impartial, and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision making power to assist contending parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement” (Moore 1986, p.6).

Mediation is a complex and dynamic interaction between mediators who have resources and an interest in the conflict or its outcome, and an interest in the protagonists or their representatives. Mediation may take place between states, within states, or between groups of states, organizations, or individuals. Mediators enter conflict to help those involved achieve a better outcome than they would be able to achieve by themselves. What mediators do, can do, or are permitted to do in their efforts to resolve a conflict may depend largely on who they are and what resources and competencies they can bring to bear. Furthermore, mediation efforts in the context of peace-building are highly dependent on who the parties are, the nature of their interaction, the context of the conflict, and what is at stake.

Much of the work on mediation identifies it merely as a reactive process in which mediators can help in the post violent phase with a cease-fire, a peace settlement, or the implementation of some dissociative arrangements. However, mediation can be utilized at other stages of the conflict. It can be initiated: before the actual fighting takes place (preventive diplomacy); at the early stages of the conflict when the casualties are still low; later in the conflict when the casualties are high, to terminate violence; or even after the

signing of an agreement to facilitate transition from war-like behavior to establishing peaceful relations and reconstruction of the social fabric of communities (post-conflict reconstruction).

Within the context of peace-building efforts, successful mediation requires not only a cessation of fighting, but also comprehensive peace-building efforts that aim at reviving a country's economy, establishing participatory systems of government and accountability of the administration, improving judicial and police systems, disarmament, and demobilization of former combatants and their sustainable social, psychological and economic rehabilitation, among others (Heinrich 1997). To understand how mediation can reach the desired outcomes of peace-building identified in this paper, we must understand the factors that influence the mediation process.

All conflicts respond differently to different conflict resolution mechanisms. A conflict resolution approach that is sensitive to the particular requirements of a conflict and aims at determining the right context, the proper strategy to be adopted, and the right timing would help us understand when mediation may be successful. We therefore propose to analyze the role mediation plays in peace-building from the perspective of a contingency approach.

Mediation is clearly affected by the context and characteristics of each conflict situation. The specific rules and strategies of each context, the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and symbols that make up an international conflict affect the mode of behavior adopted by a mediator, and to a large extent explain the success or failure of mediation. There is a contingent, reciprocal relation between the nature of conflict, the performance of mediators, and conflict outcomes. Each influences, and is in turn, influenced by, the other. Contingency approaches take into consideration these aspects of the conflict resolution process and attempt to identify factors that influence the success of mediation under particular conditions. This approach treats the outcomes of mediation efforts (be they successful or not) as dependent, or contingent, upon the context of a conflict and the manner of behavior, the process, within its environment.

Within the framework of the contingency approach, factors that influence the outcome of mediation can be divided into two main categories. The first focuses on subjective aspects of the mediation process such as motivation and behavior of the parties and the mediator, as well as the resources that third parties can bring to the process. The second category focuses on structural factors, such as the nature of the dispute, power parity, internal cohesiveness of affected communities, international and regional environments, and coordination between different initiatives. Let us examine these factors.

Factors Influencing the Success of Mediation in Peace-Building Efforts

A. Subjective Factors

A-1. Willingness, Commitment, and Motivation of the Parties and the Mediator:

For mediation to be successful in reaching the desired outcomes of peace-building, parties to a conflict must be willing, committed, and motivated to accept and engage in mediation. When disputants are not receptive to mediation or believe that they can get what they want through unilateral action, the likelihood of a successful outcome is very low. Effective mediation requires consent, high motivation, and active participation. When peace-building is seen as a continuing process to transform the societies of conflicting parties towards peaceful relationships, willingness and motivation become crucial for the sustainability of the process. Motivation in mediation can be further divided into two categories: disputant motivation and mediator motivation.

A.1.(i) Disputant Motivation in Peace Building

From the perspective of a mediator, a number of features can indicate the parties' genuine interest in the process. If both parties request mediation, the chance that mediation will be successful is higher than when only one party requests mediation (Bercovitch 1984; Hiltrop 1989). Third parties also have important roles to play.

Adversaries in conflict have a number of motives for desiring mediation: (a) mediation may actually help them reduce the risks of an escalating conflict and get them closer to a settlement; (b) each party may embrace mediation in the expectation that the mediator will actually nudge or influence the other party; (c) both parties may see mediation as a public expression of their commitment to an international norm of peaceful conflict management; (d) they may want an outsider to take much of the blame should their efforts fail; or (e) they may desire mediation because a mediator can be used to monitor, verify, and guarantee any eventual agreement. One way or another, parties in conflict have pretty compelling reasons for accepting, initiating, or desiring mediation.

A 1 (ii). Mediator Motivation in Peace Building

Traditional approaches to mediation assume that parties to a conflict and the mediator share one compelling reason for initiating mediation: a desire to reduce, abate, or resolve a conflict. This shared humanitarian interest may be genuine in only a few instances of mediation, but normally even this interest intertwines with other, less altruistic, motivations. Different mediators have different interests in a mediation outcome. When the mediator is an unofficial individual (e.g., President Carter in North Korea in 1994), the motives for initiating mediation may include a desire to: (a) be instrumental in changing the course of a long-standing or escalating conflict; (b) gain access to major political leaders and open channels of communication; (c)

put into practice a set of ideas on conflict management; and (d) spread one's own ideas and thus enhance personal stature and professional status. The presence of one or more of these motives (which may be conscious or unconscious) in an opportune situation provides a very strong rationale for an individual to initiate unofficial mediation.

Where a mediator is an official representative of a government or an organization, as is often the case, another set of motives may prevail. Such persons may wish to initiate mediation because: (a) they have a clear mandate to intervene in disputes (e.g., the charters of the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity [now the Africa Union], and the Organization of American States each contain an explicit clause mandating that their members seek mediation in regional disputes); (b) they may want to do something about a conflict whose continuance could adversely affect their own political interests; (c) they may be directly requested by one or both parties to mediate; (d) they may wish to preserve intact a structure of which they are a part (e.g., the frequent mediation attempts by the United States in disputes between Greece and Turkey, two valued NATO member-states); or (e) they may see mediation as a way of extending and enhancing their own influence by becoming indispensable to the parties in conflict or by gaining the gratitude (and presumably the political goodwill) of one or both protagonists (e.g., the frequent efforts by the United States to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict).

A.2. Mediator Strategies and Behavior: Considerable attention has been devoted to mediation strategies and behavior, since scholars see these aspects as the most useful criteria for evaluating the success of mediation. Mediator activities were organized conceptually to describe mediator behavior in terms of various preordained roles and tactics (Gulliver 1979; Laue 1990; Mitchell 1993; Rubin 1981; Stulberg 1981, 1982) or phases (Folber & Taylor 1984; Mitchell 1981; Moore 1986). In an exhaustive review of the literature, Wall (1981) identified more than a hundred specific mediation functions and behaviors. All these forms of behavior arise from negotiators' concerns about being unable to reach an agreement, and their stated purpose is to change, modify, settle, or resolve a conflict. Enacting these behaviors constitutes the "heart" of mediation.

The most useful taxonomy of mediator behavior that can be applied to international mediation analysis is based on the identification of three strategies along a continuum ranging from low to high intervention (Bercovitch 2000). These are communication-facilitation, procedural, and directive strategies (see Bercovitch 1992, 2000; Bercovitch & Wells 1993, Bercovitch et al. 1991). These strategies are based on assumptions derived from Sheppard's (1984) taxonomy of mediator behavior that focuses on the content, process and procedure of conflict management.

The choice of any form of mediation behavior or strategy is rarely random. Rather, it is influenced by factors peculiar to the conflict and internal to the

mediator. Mediators try to vary their behavior to reflect the conflict at hand. In low-intensity conflicts, for instance, communication strategies may be more effective; high-intensity conflicts may call for more active, manipulative strategies. Time pressure, mediator rank, and previous relations between the parties all may determine the choice of a strategy. To be effective, mediation strategies and behavior must be truly congruent with the nature of a conflict and the objectives and interests of a mediator. Although the parties are key factors in conflict management, Bercovitch finds the mediation environment to be the strongest indicator of mediation behavior, followed by the nature of the actual mediation event (Bercovitch 2000).

Whichever strategy mediators use, their underlying objectives in any conflict are to change: (a) the physical environment of conflict management (e.g., by maintaining secrecy, or imposing time limits, as President Carter did at Camp David); (b) the perception of what is at stake (e.g., by structuring an agenda and/or identifying and packaging new issues); and (c) the parties' motivation to reach a peaceful outcome by, for example, using subtle pressure. Any international conflict presents opportunities for some form of mediation and peace-building. To be effective, however, mediation and the broader process of peace-building must reflect the reality of the conflict and the resources of the parties involved. In the context of peace-building efforts, mediator strategies and behavior must take into consideration other conflict resolution initiatives and activities at different levels of society. Coordinating of these different efforts and establishing a dialogue with other actors (i.e. NGOs and other local actors) becomes crucial. To that extent international mediation is truly a contingent and reciprocal political activity.

A.3. History of Enmity Between Rivals: When heavy losses had been experienced during previous conflict behavior, lessons may be drawn by each state regarding the efficacy of coercion as a way of dealing with conflict. If coercive methods were successful in achieving basic objectives in the past, there is good reason to believe that decision makers may find it an attractive option in their present conflict. This will have a major negative impact on mediation and peace-building. If, on the other hand, mediation takes place within a context of two states or actors who traditionally have dealt with their conflicts non-coercively, it seems self-evident to suggest that the chances of a successful mediation would be that much higher.

Deutsch claims that states involved in a negative interdependence, as states in an enduring conflict typically are, tend to use coercion to manage their conflicts (Deutsch 1973, 1994). Leng demonstrated empirically that states in repeated conflicts develop a power orientation and use increasingly more coercive methods for dealing with their conflict in each successive flare up (Leng 1983). Neither the attitudes nor the conflict management behavior of such actors in conflict are likely to change much. Mediation in this kind of context can have little impact, with peace-building efforts hampered by enormous obstacles.

Based on their data, Bercovitch and Houston suggest that the history of enmity between conflicting parties can be evaluated under three categories: the number of disputes with other parties, parties' previous relationships, and the level of hostility (use of force, threat of force, war) (Bercovitch and Houston 1996). Findings from their research suggest that history of hostility and use of force have a negative impact on conflict management efforts, and under these circumstances mediation is less likely to be successful. Thus, mediation in the context of peace-building efforts must take the history of hostility into account, address grievances, and suggest ways to move forward. To have any chance of success, mediation must be complemented by initiatives (e.g., dialogue groups, interethnic and interfaith groups, healing workshops, problem solving workshops, and so on) that aim to overcome the burden of history and establish peaceful relations.

A.4. Timing: One of the most important aspects of mediation in the context of peace-building is the timing of the mediation effort. If initiated at the right or ripe time, mediation attempts have a greater chance of success. For that reason, determining the right time for mediation in conflict situations has triggered intense and arduous study. Northedge and Donelan stated that mediation attempts can be successful “when there exists a concatenation of circumstances already tending toward an improvement of the situation” (Northedge & Donelan 1971, p. 308). Zartman, on the other hand, suggested that a distinct moment of ripeness could be assessed according to the dynamics of a conflict, specifically its combination of plateaus, precipices, deadlocks, and deadlines (Zartman 1985). This argument is supported by Touval (1982), Edmead (1971), Kriesberg and Thorson (1991), while others such as Ott (1972), Pruitt (1981), Rubin (1981), and Moore (1986) suggested that mediation will be more successful if it is initiated well into a conflict, when costs have become intolerable and both parties accept that they may lose too much by continuing their dispute.

When we talk about the duration of the conflict we refer to the period after the dispute has been transformed into violent conflict and open hostilities have started. However, ripe moments in conflicts do not necessarily correspond to a linear conception of time, but are rather linked to the number of fatalities and the belief that the continuation of violence will lead nowhere but deadlock. Ripeness is thus “associated with conditions where parties realize that their attempts to solve the problem and pursue their goals alone are unlikely to succeed at an unacceptable cost” (Zartman 1985, p. 219). This situation, which is long term and characterized with no prospect of escape through escalation of the conflict, has been referred to as “mutually hurting stalemate” (Zartman 1985, p. 216).

Bercovitch and Houston find that most mediation efforts are undertaken approximately 36 months after the violence erupts. However, their data also suggest that mediation efforts have a 75 percent chance of success if it takes place during the fourth and sixth weeks of the fighting (Bercovitch and

Houston 1996). As stated earlier, however, mediation can be undertaken at all phases of a conflict. The ripe moments in conflicts provide “windows of opportunity”, usually short-term instances in which signing an agreement such as the Oslo Accords is considered sufficient. However, sustaining the window of opportunity is also crucial for peace-building efforts to be successful in the long run. For that to happen, mediators should closely monitor developments on the ground that can undermine the implementation of the agreements such as activities of opposition groups, and develop strategies to keep the ‘window of opportunity’ open by supporting actors and activities working toward building peace.

B. Structural Factors

B.1. Identity of the Mediator and Resources Available: Parties to a conflict and mediators may invest considerable personnel, time, and resources to mediation. Given the inevitability and omnipresence of conflict, a limited range of widely accepted procedures for dealing with it, and the unwelcome reality of the scope of its potential destructiveness, it is hardly surprising that so many actors, each adopting different strategies and tactics, are keen to mediate and undertake peacemaking activities.

Mediators can range from individuals, states, regional or international organizations. Individuals who are not government officials or political incumbents can carry out individual mediations. Although individual mediation exhibits greater variety and experimentation than other forms of mediation, it essentially consists of only two kinds: formal and informal. Informal mediation refers to the efforts of mediators who have a long-standing experience with, and a deep commitment to, international conflict resolution (e.g., Carter in North Korea in 1994) or to the efforts of knowledgeable scholars whose background, attitudes, and professional experience give them the opportunity to engage in mediation with real conflict parties (Burton, 1968; Doob, 1971; and Kelman, 1992). Such individuals approach a conflict as private citizens, not as official representatives. They utilize their academic competence, credibility, and experience to facilitate communications, gain a better understanding of the conflict, and work toward its resolution.

Formal mediation, on the other hand, takes place when a political incumbent, a government representative, or a high-level decision maker acts in an individual capacity to mediate a conflict between the official representatives of other states (e.g., Dennis Ross in his role as the State Department’s Special Middle East Coordinator, and Richard Holbrooke in Bosnia). Though formal mediation is less susceptible to the impact of personality, its loss of flexibility is more than matched by its immediacy of access to influential decision makers. As such, formal mediation is often indistinguishable from diplomatic intercourse; its range of roles is more limited than that of informal mediation but its impact on outcomes is more direct.

Institutions and organizations may also serve as mediators. Three kinds of organizations play an important role in the area of peacemaking and conflict resolution: regional, international, and transnational. Regional and international organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (now African Union), and the United Nations represent ensembles of states that have signified their intention to fulfill the obligations—including those of formal mediation—of membership as set forth in a formal treaty. Transnational organizations (e.g., Amnesty International) represent individuals from different countries who have similar knowledge, skills, or interests, and who meet on a regular basis to promote their common interests through various means, including informal mediation. In recent years, we have witnessed a proliferation in the mediation of institutions and organizations such as the UN or the European Union (EU). These organizations have also become, in the modern international system, very active participants in the processes of mediation, peace-making, and peace-building.

Mediation by states can be distinguished along the lines of small states and large states. Each claims legitimacy and authority on the basis of different attributes. Small states such as Algeria, Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria (Slim, 1992) have facilitated a disproportionate number of international mediations. Their size and presumed lack of clout make them appear non-threatening and ideally positioned to carry out mediations between adversaries. Small states usually wait for an invitation to mediate. When they do intervene, their efforts tend to be confined to regional conflicts, and their strategies tend to be mostly low-profile strategies of dialogue and communication. This is where small states can be most useful in mediation efforts.

B.2. The Internal Characteristics of the States Involved: The internal characteristics of the actors involved affect the peace building activities significantly. The internal characteristics of parties refer to structural properties of states and how these affect their predisposition to engage in coercive or non-coercive forms of conflict management. The nature of the political system has attracted the most attention recently (Maoz & Russett 1992; Ember, Ember & Russett 1992; Dixon 1993). Democratic states are more inclined to use peaceful methods of conflict management (because of internal cultural and political norms, liberal experience or electoral constraints) unless their direct security interests are threatened, whereas non-democratic states are more likely to utilize coercive methods of management. Mediation between two democratic actors is therefore more likely to be effective than mediation between other kinds of polities. Much of peace-building and mediation takes place in regions where democracy is not the norm. This is a major complicating factor.

Another factor that may have major influence on mediation in the context of peace-building is the internal coherence of each party. A mediator's job is

hardly likely to prove easier if the incumbent government of one of the adversaries is experiencing an insurgency, rebellion, or other serious internal threat. Mediation has a better chance of success when adversaries are recognized as the legitimate spokesmen for their parties. Disunity or lack of cohesion within a state make it difficult for both the adversaries as well as the mediator to engage in meaningful forms of conflict settlement because a state's representatives lack power or authority to make decisions or concessions. Failures of many conflict management attempts in Lebanon, Cyprus, Angola, and Somalia illustrate this point only too well. The more clearly identifiable and united the parties are, the higher the chances of successful mediation and peace-building (Modelski 1964; Burton 1968).

B.3. The Nature of the Dispute: There is a general agreement in the literature that "the success or failure of mediation is largely determined by the nature of the dispute" (Ott 1972, p.597). The importance that adversaries attach to the issues in dispute will naturally affect the choices of conflict management modes and the chances of a successful mediation. When vital interests are affected (for example, issues of sovereignty or territorial integrity), intermediaries will be unlikely to have much impact on the dispute.

The nature of a conflict or the characteristics of its issues are clearly crucial in determining how it can be managed (Diehl 1992). Certain issues such as beliefs, core values, and territorial integrity have a high saliency, and are apt to encourage decision makers to accept higher levels of costs. This makes it much more difficult to manage such conflicts through traditional diplomatic methods (Snyder & Diesing 1977). Conflicts over salient issues are likely to be long lasting and to entail the use of coercive methods as a way of reaching an outcome. Other aspects such as the number of issues in a conflict, the rigidity with which they are perceived, whether they relate to tangible interests (e.g., conflicts over resources) or intangible ones (e.g., conflicts over values) may also affect both the duration and the method of termination (Deutsch 1994). In their analysis, Bercovitch et al found that 76.1 percent of these conflicts involve tangible issues such as territory and resources (Bercovitch et al, 1991).

The literature also links the effectiveness of mediation to the nature of the issues in dispute. Ott sees the "absence of vital national security interests, particularly questions of territorial control" as a necessary precondition for successful mediation (Ott 1972, p.616). Randle contends that "should a dispute affect vital security interests of the parties, no amount of mediation by a third party is likely to prevent the outbreak of hostilities" (Randle 1973, p.49). Lall argues that "it is one of the principles of international negotiation that when territory is at stake, the party in possession tends to resist third party involvement" (Lall 1966, p.100). They all indicate that the parties' perceptions of the issues are a key factor in determining whether or not to accept a mediation initiative and whether or not it will have much success.

When rivals are divided across religious or ethnic lines, it becomes much harder to resolve the conflict and initiate a peace-building process, as these issues touch on the identities of the parties. When that is the case, mediators should make an effort to address these issues and redefine the conflict as a ‘positive-sum’ rather than a ‘zero-sum’. Incorporating traditional and religious leaders, and widening the sphere of peace-building activities become particularly important in these types of conflicts.

One of the important factors related to the nature of a conflict is the amount of fatalities involved. The number of fatalities in conflicts has a direct effect on the mediation attempts. Bercovitch et. al found that when fatalities in a conflict are less than 500 people mediation efforts are more likely to be successful (32.4 percent) (Bercovitch et. al 1991). When fatalities are between 5001 and 10000, the success rate was 14.4 percent. This finding lends support to the “hurting stalemate” argument.

B.4. Power Capabilities: Power capabilities of states can be linked to different conflict management behaviors. A conflict between two equally strong countries may be prolonged, for example, because both have the material and human resources to carry on and the willingness to tolerate high costs. These contextual factors directly affect a party’s disposition to engage in different forms of conflict management, and the manner in which a conflict will terminate.

The effects of some contextual factors on the origin, character and evolution of a conflict have been documented quite extensively (Stoll, 1993). A number of propositions linking the duration, intensity, fatalities, and issue prominence to effective mediations (Bercovitch 1989; Bercovitch & Langley 1993) received considerable theoretical and empirical support. Other studies linked the parties’ internal characteristics (Gregory 1994) or power capabilities between them to different forms of conflict management by third parties.

Bercovitch et al suggest that 46 percent of conflicts take place when there is low power disparity between the parties (Bercovitch et al, 1991). Most mediation efforts take place when the parties have different levels of power. The success rate of mediation was lowest (4.3 percent) between two countries with high levels of power disparity, while in mediation that takes place between two large powers indicates a mediation success rate of 50 percent. Power disparity is an important factor that affects both the process and outcome of mediation. When there is a power disparity between conflicting parties, it becomes important to create a balance between the disputants, at least in the mediation process. Furthermore, empowering the weaker party through strengthening its civil society is crucial to the peace-building process (Bercovitch & Wells, 1993).

C. Coordination Between Different Initiatives and Different Actors

One of the significant characteristics of peace-building is that it is an interdependent process in which various conflict management mechanisms and various actors can be involved. In addition to official and nonofficial mediation efforts, conflict resolution scholars recognize that establish a sustainable cooperation and peaceful relations between rival communities, there is a need to work within and across communities. This requires a ‘multi-track’ approach to ending violent conflict, especially in intractable conflicts. These tracks include, but are not limited to: a) governmental peace making through diplomacy; b) non-governmental peace-making through conflict resolution; c) business peace-making through commerce; d) private citizen peace-making through personal involvement; e) research, training and education for peace-making through learning; f) activist peace-making through advocacy; g) religious peace making through faith in action; h) funded peace-making through resource provision; and, j) communication and media peace-making through information (Diamond & McDonald 1996; Merkel, 1994).

What is evident in these works is the recognition and utilization of local structures that can contribute to peace-building. Thus, developing familiarity with cultural and local structures and actors become an important aspect of peace-building efforts. External actors such as non-local NGOs and human rights groups, humanitarian aid agencies, regional non-governmental structures, international humanitarian and development agencies, research institutes and voluntary associations, government actors, and the UN should work with various local actors and structures. These local structures and actors may include traditional authoritative personalities such as elders or religious leaders; associations, women’s groups, youth groups, local NGOs, and human rights organizations; local institutions such as religious communities, the courts, the police force; or local governmental structures such as district and regional councils, executive officers (Heinrich 1997). All this will make peace-building more inclusive and thus more likely to succeed.

This approach suggests that mediation must not be seen solely as a short-term, isolated event, but as one of the dimensions of peace-building efforts in general. Integrating peace-building efforts at different levels of the society is crucial for it to be successful. For that reason, establishing a sustainable dialogue between different groups and coordinating conflict resolution and peace-building efforts is of the utmost importance. This requires mediators to follow developments concerning peace-building efforts at different levels of the society and to incorporate these developments into its process.

Conclusion

Often the talk about conflict management through negotiation or mediation focuses on one isolated instance only. We study that instance and draw

lessons from it. In reality, conflict management should be thought of much more as a seamless process in which various actors play different parts, and the whole experience coheres into one whole process. The importance of peace-building is that it forces us to think in terms of multiple efforts of conflict management and to take a longer term perspective. Thinking about peace-building means thinking about structural changes, not de-escalation or violence abatement only. Peace-building connotes a more generic, longer term approach designed to undo a cycle of violence, not just break its pattern.

In this paper we have argued that a number of measures may be undertaken to implement a program of peace-building. These measures include intervention, humanitarian assistance, truth commissions, economic restructuring, multi-track diplomacy and many other forms. One of the most important of these measures is mediation, which is central to peace-building. Mediation may be undertaken at any phase of a conflict, and it can be used to undo the damage of violence or as a precursor to a more sustained dialogue. It can help to institutionalize a more cooperative pattern of interaction and be instrumental in developing more democratic institutions. Many of us normally see mediation only as a process that brings about a ceasefire or a political agreement, but mediation is part and parcel of a more holistic peace-building approach.

We should see mediation as a broad process that supplements other processes of conflict management. Rather than treat each process in isolation, we should look at them within the overall framework of peace-building. To do so, we need to understand how mediation works, the factors that influence it, and how best to utilize it. Once we appreciate these issues, we can see how crucial mediation is to the viability of any peace-building program. In the current international environment there could be few more urgent tasks.

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