Pinning Down Peace
Towards a Multi-Dimensional, Clustered Measure of Mediation Success

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Introduction

Those tasked with making peace can attest that it is extraordinarily complicated and that seemingly forward progress can quickly slip away unless peace gains are firmly secured. Adding to this difficulty is the fact that making clear connections between peacebuilding and peace writ large is almost always very difficult - if not impossible - to achieve. (See Anderson and Olson, 2003)

One may recall the now famous remark by the late Richard Holbrooke, United States Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, when he was asked whether the US was making progress in Afghanistan and how they would measure their success there. Mr. Holbrooke replied by saying that, ‘we’ll know success when we see it’. (Tiedemann, 2009, p.2) Success, it would seem, is very difficult to pin down: it is a notion that is hard to define, conceptualize and comprehend.

Mediation is defined here as a, ‘… process of conflict management, related to, but distinct from the parties’ own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an outsider (whether an individual, an organization, a group, or a state) to change their perceptions or behavior, and to do so without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law’. (Bercovitch, 2006, p.290)

Mediation is one of the most common types of conflict resolution processes employed today in a global context and plays an important role in contemporary peacemaking (Bercovitch & Jackson, 1997; Aydin & Regan, 2006). Mediation is not only one of the main tools for ending wars and global crises, but it also holds great promise as a tool for preventing these types of events from occurring in the first place. (Öberg & Möller, 2005)

Although international mediation is prevalent, there is relatively little conceptual clarity in terms of what success is in mediation. This lack of clarity is problematic for two major reasons. First, many theories of mediation try to identify the conditions under which mediators are successful, with various explanations – trust/power; neutrality/bias; mediation strategy; ripeness; spoiler-management, etc. – provided for why some mediators are more successful than others. Yet, without a clear conceptual understanding of what constitutes success, which also corresponds to the empirical reality’s complexities, we cannot convincingly solve the issue of which factors determine success. Second, mediators need to know whether their efforts were successful. Mediators and the actors that provide the mandates for mediators need to have criteria in order to evaluate mediator performance (mediation effectiveness) as well as to prove to donors that their money was well spent (mediation efficiency).

Mediation has often been judged as successful if a new agreement is reached, with ‘failure’ being reflected by the inability to reach a new agreement. (Gartner & Melin, 2009, p.565) However, this is far too simplistic and it is better to recognize that there are variations in the outcome and that these other variations can be systematically studied. (Garner & Melin, 2009, p.576)

Other ways of conceptualizing mediation success include looking for outcomes from the mediation process such as the establishment of peace institutional arrangements (Svensson, 2009), cessation of conflict (Regan, 2006; Regan, 2000; Gelpi, 1999), reaching a ceasefire
(Touval, 1982), the acceptance of mediation initiatives (Frei, 1976), and the creation of democratic governance. (Nathan, 1999) These ways of conceptualizing mediation success leave us with a broad field of different ways of measuring success. Yet, little work has been done on trying to identify commonalities and synthesize insights in previous research. In order to provide a higher degree of cumulatively in mediation research, there is therefore an urgent need to build more holistic perspectives that can bridge different insights in previous mediation research.

In this paper we argue that it is important to recognize that mediation success can and should be measured in other ways than only whether or not an agreement was reached. This study will develop and present a multi-dimensional, clustered model of mediation success. The model groups various different outcomes around four dimensions, thus recognizing that fundamentally different types of mediation success exist at different points. Utilizing the definition of conflict as a starting point, we outline the basic success dimensions as 1) parties, 2) behavior, 3) attitude and perception, and 4) issues. Utilizing these four different dimensions, this model can combine subjective as well as objective criteria of mediation success into a coherent whole.

Moreover, we argue that straightforward and linear progress towards a peace agreement as the main positive outcome of mediation is empirically actually rare, and that rather, mediation is an extraordinarily complicated, “organic”, and often difficult process full of apparent successes and set-backs. Our model of mediation success tries to capture this by identifying the negative as well as positive interactions between different dimensions of mediation success (“loops”). This better captures empirical complexities.

There are numerous examples of this roundabout way in which a peace process unfolds. For example, the 2010 Accord publication dedicated to the 2002-09 Juba peace process lists at least three distinct peace efforts that did not result in the creation of a new peace agreement prior to the fourth one that did lead to a new agreement but which was ultimately not signed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (Conciliation Resources, 2010). This naturally leads to the question of whether this was a successful effort and, if so, what about the three previous ones?

This clustering of outcomes around four dimensions has a number of distinct advantages. First of all, it recognizes that success can be measured in multiple ways and it offers a way to structure these various measures into a single model. Moreover, it accounts for the nonlinear aspects of a mediation process, while still retaining some easily-identifiable benchmarks which can be used to delineate different fixed stages. Furthermore, it provides a way to measure success even if an agreement was never achieved, and by doing so it recognizes and places greater value upon these other helpful outcomes that mediation can produce.

This study is structured as follows: the first section of the paper examines the different dimensions that success can be gauged along and it begins to identify some of the clusters of success that will likely be seen in each of the dimensions. The second part of the paper further develops and presents the new model of mediation success. The paper concludes with some thoughts about the utility of the model and some suggestions for further research plus it offers a number of policy prescriptions.
Towards a New Model: Exploring Dimensions and Feedback Loops in Peace Processes

In order to develop a multi-dimensional measure of mediation success, it is first necessary to identify what the different dimensions of a peace process are, and this is accomplished by examining the different dimensions of conflict. That is, a peace process aims to resolve a conflict and if a conflict has many dimensions, then it follows that a peace process can have an impact on some or all of those conflict dimensions.

Conflict Dimensions

Because conflicts occur across and within different dimensions they are also very complex and researchers have struggled with ways to reduce this complexity into simple models that capture enough detail about the conflict that they do not gloss over the important aspects. Similarly, conflicts are also somewhat unpredictable in the sense that because they are so complex practitioners, in many cases, still do not have clear-cut protocols in place to respond to certain developments and there remains a tension the field between complexity and simplicity when discussing conflicts and possible interventions.

Conflicts have been defined in many different ways, but one of the most common definitions holds that a conflict is “perceived divergence of interest, a belief that the parties’ current aspirations are incompatible”. (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p.8) Wallensteen (2007, p.15) defines a conflict as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources”.

Conflicts are also multi-dimensional in the sense that they conceptually consist of different interacting parts. In the “classical” definition of conflicts, there are three major components, summed up in the A-B-C of conflicts: a) attitudes; b) behavior; and c) contradiction. In Wallensteen’s conceptualization, however, attitudes do not play a role, but rather the presence of parties. Moreover, the contradiction is defined in terms of incompatibility, that is, stated incompatible positions of the parties, or in other words, explicit demands for the same set of scarce resources (a territory or a government).

Combining these two definitions of conflicts generates four broad dimensions through which mediation success can be examined. We will now examine the following four dimensions of conflicts 1) Parties; 2) Behaviors; 3) Attitudes and Perceptions; and 4) Issues (both incompatibilities & contradictions).
Parties

A conflict has at least two or more parties who are in an adversarial relationship. We adopt the following definition of parties provided by Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, and Zartman (2009, p.4), ‘the term “parties in conflict” is taken here to mean individuals, groups, organizations, nations or other systems in conflict. It is an analytical construct referring to those units which initiate a conflict, pursue it, and determine its outcome’.

The ‘primary parties’ are those who are directly engaged in the adversarial relationship and their decisions or behaviour can be influenced by other ‘indirect parties’ to the conflict. (Hampson, Crocker, & Aall, 2004, p.97)

Understanding a conflict involves correctly identifying both the direct and indirect parties to the conflict. Further analysis of the parties, as outlined below, is necessary to identify their behaviors and attitudes plus the underlying reasons behind both of those aspects. Moreover, ‘the mediator should examine the groups directly involved in the conflict, including how they define themselves and whether they posses political as well as military wings’. (Smith & Smock, 2008, p.11)

Further questions to ask about the direct parties to the conflict would include questions about their internal structures and chain of command plus whether this is stable and effective, as well as questions about who the top leaders are and whether there are any internal divisions between them. (Smith & Smock, 2008, p.11-12) Lastly, questions regarding the parties’ resources should be examined as well. (Smith & Smock, 2008, p.12)

Mediation can affect the parties in numerous ways. As mentioned above, one of the first steps for mediators is to correctly identify who the conflicting parties are and then get them to the table (Smith & Smock, 2008). This is not always an easy task and the ‘talks about talks’ that often precede the formal peace talks can take months or even years.

In the case of Egypt and Israel, for example, the starting point of the shuttle diplomacy phase might rightfully be considered as February 1977 when US President Jimmy Carter dispatched US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the Middle East on a trip to deliver a letter announcing that he would convene a Middle East peace conference to seek a comprehensive peace (Stein, 1999, p.189) and on April 4th, 1977 Carter held his first meeting with Sadat in Washington. (Carter, 1995, p.ix)

This phase of shuttle diplomacy, which consisted of numerous other official visits and letters and high-level meetings, went on for many more months until the formal commencement of the Camp David talks on September 4th, 1978. (Carter, 1995, p.X) So grueling was this period of shuttle diplomacy, in fact, that some have observed that, ‘the Camp David negotiations involved the president and his secretary of state, Cyrus R. Vance, to an almost unprecedented degree. The closest comparison was former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in 1974-75, also in pursuit of a Middle East accord’. (Quandt, 1986, p.360) So, in this sense, mediation can be considered successful in some cases if the mediator can even get the parties to the table.
Once the correct parties are at the table, the formal peace talks can then begin. However, it can quickly become apparent that one of the parties has an advantage over the other due to having more power (in the form of resources, knowledge, skills, etc.). Bercovitch and Houston (2000, p.178) make the case that mediators should help balance the power between the parties in order to create a fair and even playing field for the negotiations to occur. This is, in part, because one study has found that when the distribution of power between the parties is equal, mediation is more likely to be successful in terms of reaching an agreement (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991).

One example of a mediator very actively propping up one of the parties stems from Richard Holbrooke’s efforts during the Dayton peace process. That is, Holbrooke used several tactics to shift the balance of power away from the Bosnian Serbs. Three of these tactics included supporting the Croat-Muslim Federation so that they would have a stronger more unified position, supporting the NATO bombing which weakened the Serbs and allowed the Bosnian Muslims to take more territory, and meeting the Bosnian Muslims in New York prior to the Dayton talks to provide them with negotiating support and advice including an offer to access outside legal expertise (Holbrooke, 1999).

Parties can be transformed in other ways as well. For example, in some cases a party will transform from being mostly a military entity to a political party. The parties that were previously waging their conflict in Nepal predominantly through violent means appear to have taken this step towards expressing their conflict nonviolently through the political system because of the way the peace agreement was designed (International Crisis Group, 2011a).

On the other hand, this transformation from a war-fighting machine to a political party can also happen in other ways too. For example, the series of wars in Angola between the government and UNITA were finally brought to a conclusion when UNITA’s leader was assassinated in February of 2002 and UNITA later on declared itself a fully disarmed and democratic political party at which point UN sanctions against it were also dropped. (Meijer & Birmingham, 2004, p.15)

Sometimes as the peace talks progress, it will become apparent to the mediator that progress is being blocked because one or more of the parties is so torn by internal divisions that it cannot negotiate effectively. Parties suffering from these types of internal divisions and power struggles might send conflicting messages during the talks, might not be able to take decisions in a timely manner and if decisions can be reached they may not follow through on the commitments they have made. For a number of reasons then it can sometimes be useful for the mediator to consider whether building the negotiating capacity of the parties is needed. This capacity building can take many forms form training workshops to providing technical support to helping them overcome internal divisions through side negotiations or parallel processes (such as what Richard Holbrooke did with the Bosnians during the Dayton process).

In Nepal, for example, a September 2010 report from the UN Security Council noted that the peace process in the county remained stalled due to ‘profound internal fissures’ and that there
were few signs of a consensual way forward (UN, 2010, p.8). Clearly, there was a need to help
the parties bridge these internal divides so that the peace process could proceed.

In another example of building the negotiating capacity of the parties so that they can be more
effective and efficient negotiators stems from the Carter Center’s work to provide conflict
resolution and negotiation training to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army and a
mirrored training workshop for the Government of Sudan in order to help prepare the parties to
participate in the June 2002 IGAD-led peace talks (The Carter Center, 2002).

Behaviors

A party’s behaviors – what they do and do not do – are another vital aspect of conflicts to
understand in order to comprehend positive outcomes. Often, this is the most visible and tangible
aspect of the conflict as the parties’ perceptions, attitudes, and the issues that they are fighting
over cannot be seen or known unless a party decides to make this known.

Conflict behavior is a broad term that refers to a range of activities ranging from verbal threats to
direct violence that each parties does to achieve its goal when in a conflict situation (Bercovitch,

Specific violent behaviors such as waging battles or initiating attacks are what must ultimately
end for peace to have a chance to flourish and development to occur. Negative peace of this sort
is a necessary, but not sufficient, component that needs to be built into a model for mediation
success.

Mediation can affect the parties’ behaviors in many different ways and it is not uncommon for a
mediator to first work towards getting a ceasefire - that is, they aim to stop the killing so that full
peace talks can occur. While some view it as risky to get a ceasefire and then proceed to full
talks after that, others see this behavioral change as an important first step towards reaching a
full resolution. In the case of the Juba peace process for example, the ceasefire in November of
2004 allowed the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) time to regroup before the next battle.
(Conciliation Resources, 2010, p.24) Mediators thus risk providing the parties more time to
prepare to wage their next battle if they push for a ceasefire agreement and it isn’t uncommon for
some parties to use a ceasefire agreement as a tool to lock in gains on the battle field or
otherwise freeze the conflict if this is to their advantage.¹

However, there have been other situations where the ceasefire provided the parties with enough
‘breathing room’ to re-focus their energies from fighting to trying to reach a new peace
agreement. One extreme example of this pattern can be seen in the Kashmir conflict because, ‘in
July 1949, India and Pakistan signed a formal [ceasefire] agreement in Karachi and began a

¹ One possible way out of this dilemma is to start with a temporary cessation of hostilities agreement only and
then gradually work towards a full ceasefire agreement (Sumbeiywo, nd, p. 5-6).
series of negotiations over the “truce agreement” and withdrawals, and the political future of Kashmir. These negotiations lasted 10 years and involved countless proposals and a series of UN appointed mediators and special representatives; all to no avail’. (Fortna, 2004, p.61) Hence, the reduction or cessation of violent behaviors can be viewed, in some cases, as a success if it helps get the parties talking to one another again regardless of whether they reach an agreement.

In a post peace agreement phase, however, mediators may aim to prevent new violence from occurring. That is, there is a crucial period after a peace agreement is signed during which many would argue the agreement is especially susceptible to failing (See Fortna, 2004 and Nilsson, 2006). While some studies have found that low levels of violence during the post-agreement phase are not inconsistent with the creation of a durable peace (Hoffman, 2009) and others remind us that violence is not switched off like tap after a peace agreement is signed. (MacGinty, 2006) there is still much to be said for preventing violence before it has the chance to unravel the peace agreement

Richard Holbrooke is one mediator who was very active during the post-agreement phase and he returned to Bosnia on numerous occasions after the Dayton agreement was signed in order to negotiate new deals aimed at curbing violent outbreaks so that the original peace agreement would have better prospects of lasting. (Holbrooke, 1999) In one instance, Holbrooke negotiated a new deal with Radovan Karadzic – a potential spoiler - that saw him step out of politics thus reducing his ability to effectively stir-up anti-Dayton sentiments amongst his followers. (Holbrooke, 1999)

Yet another behavioral aspect that mediation might focus on relates to helping the parties to transform their violent conflict behaviors into nonviolent conflict behaviors. This can be accomplished, in part, by having the parties wage their struggle for power through nonviolent mechanisms and processes. (Hoffman, 2010; Svensson and Lindgren, 2010)

That is, when the struggle for power is one of the major causes of a war, then transforming the way in which power is obtained, maintained, and exercised is essential for creating viable peace. (Dziedzic and Hawley, 2005, p.14) More specifically, Dziedzic and Hawley (2005) suggest that, ‘in the wake of state collapse and internal war, a domestic balance of power must be restored in favor of legitimate institutions of government. Violence-prone power structures must be dislodged. To accomplish, this the motivations and means for pursuing violent conflict must diminish. Peace becomes viable when the capacity of domestic institutions to resolve conflict peacefully prevails over the power of obstructionist forces.’ (p.14)

In other words, nonviolent mechanisms and processes for resolving conflict must be established, and, notably, ‘mediation can help channel the post-war struggle for power into nonviolent processes and mechanisms via ensuring that the agreement contains provisions for power-sharing or provisions for the institutionalization of mechanisms related to the control of the coercive apparatus of the state, the allocation of political power, and the limitation of economic advantage by one group within the state’. (Hoffman, 2010)

Moreover, similar to the techniques normally employed to reshape problem behaviors into more acceptable ones, mediators can use phased incentives and disincentives to reward compliance (Hoffman, 2010).
For example, the Camp David Accords had provisions built into the agreement to channel the violent struggle for power:

That is, the withdrawal of troops from the Sinai Peninsula and other disputed territories meant that the use of violence to control that territory would be less likely. The provision of third party guarantees further reinforced this. The CBMs contained in the agreement meant that the parties could use these mechanisms prior to using violence should a dispute arise. These CBMs were further reinforced by the clauses in the agreement which aimed at normalizing relationships between the parties. This meant diplomatic channels could be used to resolve any future conflicts. (Hoffman, 2009, p.172)

It is important to bear in mind that often the signing of a peace agreement does not actually bring about a durable, high-quality peace. Rather, it is not uncommon that violence continues to occur in a post-peace accord society, creating a situation of ‘no war, no peace’. (Mac Ginty, 2006, p.3) Thus, having a new peace agreement signed does not always equate with an improvement in the conditions on the ground.

**Attitudes and Perceptions**

As noted above, a party’s behaviors can provide important clues about the party’s attitudes toward the conflict issues. Moreover, ‘conflict is a social phenomenon that is generated and supported by a number of psychological factors. Of these, attitude formation is undoubtedly the most important’. (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, & Zartman, 2009, p.8) Attitudes define the parties’ evaluative and response tendencies in social situations and are relatively enduring. (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, & Zartman, 2009, p.8)

Perception, on the other hand, refers to the process by which individuals receive and extract information about their environment and, as such, perception is central to attitude formation. (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, and Zartman, 2009, p.8) As Smith and Smock (2008) note, the perceptions and misperceptions of the parties themselves, towards their antagonists, about the conflict thus far, and towards the process of negotiating with their adversaries will be central to their willingness to engage in mediation. (p.10)

Bercovitch (2002) takes the stance that, as difficult as it is to do, some combination of both subjective and objective criteria (such as the speed at which an agreement was reached, the
reduction of hostilities between the parties) are required in order to gauge whether a mediation effort has been successful. (p.16-18) Subjective criteria, on the other hand, “…refer to the parties’, or the mediator’s, perception that the goals of mediation had been achieved, or that a desired change had taken place”. (Bercovitch, 2002, p.17)

Parties, not surprisingly, often have already well-formed attitudes about mediation. In some cases these attitudes are due to their previous experience in other mediation processes that have collapsed or they may bring pre-conceived notions to the process based on the mediator’s history and background.

Some hold that an important aim of mediation is to transform how the parties view one another in order to foster a qualitative transformation of human interaction (Bush & Folger, 2005, p.9) and so one of the main goals of the process should be to clarify misperceptions in order to improve the relations between the parties. Also, Moore (2003) notes that, ‘in addition to addressing substantive issues, mediation may also establish or strengthen relationships of trust and respect between the parties or terminate relationships in a manner that minimizes emotional costs and psychological harm.’(p.15)

A mediator can use a number of tactics to help shift the parties’ attitudes and perceptions. For example, Moore (2003) states the following:

Several types of action are available to parties and mediators seeking to modify the way parties are perceived. The disputants or mediator can (1) demonstrate that parties share similar attitudes toward an object, event, idea, or third person; (2) encourage association between parties to create an opportunity to reveal undisclosed commonalities; and (3) encourage a party to associate with (or disassociate from) objects, ideas, or people that his or her opposite likes (or dislikes). (p.184)

As Jimmy Carter explains in his own words he would constantly remind Sadat and Begin that peace was in their best interest, ‘I decided to focus again on my central point: the differences between the two nations were minuscule compared to the enormous advantages to each of a treaty of peace. I constantly reminded the two leaders of this, and called both of them on the phone to get them to renew their support for the dying [Camp David] effort’ (Carter, 1995, p.418).

Moreover, when one or more of the parties openly expresses their dissatisfaction with the process or the agreement this should not be taken lightly by the mediator as it can signal their intent to spoil peace. In Angola, for example, UNITA’s leader reluctantly signed the peace agreement and then later did not honor it and this behavior served as a ‘red flag’ that the peace was at risk of collapsing (Hofman, 2009). This same dynamic also occurred in the Juba peace
process when Joseph Kony was very reluctant to come out of the bush in order to add his signature to the Final Peace Agreement (FPA).

**Issues**

Another characteristic of a conflict concerns the conflict issues. Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991) state that, ‘issues in a conflict refer to the underlying causes of a dispute. They may not always be clear. There may also be more than one issue involved, and parties themselves may not agree on what constitutes a disputed issue.’ (p.14)

Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (2004) also state that the issues form the shape or structure of the conflict, and that, ‘the issues tell us not only what drives the conflict but also what needs to be settled for the conflict to cease.’ (p.99)

To this effect, Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (2004) state that the issues are a reflection of the parties’ underlying interests and therefore they often become the basis for the discussions of any possible settlement. (p.99-100) Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (2004) assert that creating a new peace agreement involves identifying and working with overlapping interests. (p.100)

Therefore, ‘the starting place, for the mediator, is to develop with the parties an agreed-upon definition of what the conflict is about, what needs to be settled, and what will appear on the endgame negotiating agenda. This requires achieving explicit or tacit agreement on which issues belong in the settlement (and, by implication, which do not)’ (italics in original). (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2004, p.155)

As described above, a key step in mediation is to design a peace agreement that settles the conflict issues. This can often be a very difficult process and even having the parties come to a joint understanding about what the conflict is really about and what issues would need to appear in the final agreement can be a long and arduous task. For example, it took most of the first three days of the Camp David process just to come up with an agreed-upon list of all of the issues that would need to be resolved. (Carter, 1995, p.363) The remaining ten days of the Camp David talks would be spent discussing ways to resolve the issues and how to package these resolutions into a new peace agreement.

Often, it may take several rounds of collapsed agreements in order to ‘get it right’ before the final agreement that does last is reached. For example, Guus Meijer (2004) notes that in the case of Angola:

> Previous peace efforts also had an impact on the final conclusion of the war. That it was possible to reach a ceasefire and complete peace package so quickly after the
elimination of Savimbi, was certainly due in part to the fact that the parties could fall back on a series of failed agreements. Many of the issues had thus been addressed and worked out in detail on previous occasions and as a matter of fact, the _Luena Memorandum_ is formally a mere supplement to the _Lusaka Protocol_, which in itself was based on the _Bicesse Accords._ (p.8)

A number of important examples of ways that mediation can thus be considered successful are described in the above passage including the fact that new peace agreements are not always a case of “reinventing the wheel” and they can evolve over time from previous failed agreements. However, it is also important to note that sometimes reaching multiple collapsed agreements really should be better considered as a ‘red flag’ than an indicator of mediation success. The peace process in Nepal, for example:

…has been characterized by a series of political agreements between the parties, many of which have still to be implemented. New agreements have been signed which have repeated commitments or undertakings of previous agreements and now these in turn have often remained unimplemented. This process reflects both a continuing distrust between the parties as well as a genuine difficulty in finding a way forward on some hitherto intractable problems. (UN Nepal, 2008, p.4)

**Feedback Loops**

As stated earlier, conflicts rarely progress in a straightforward and linear manner. Rather, they tend to move forward, freeze or stagnate, and then suddenly start up again. But, what accounts for these changing dynamics? We postulate that the reason for the changing directions that a conflict can take is related to feedback loops.

Consider, for example, how a small, but negative event like the accidental or intentional discharge of firearm near a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) has the potential to trigger a much larger, new escalation of the conflict because counter-shots are fired in response, as was the concern created by the recent exchange of gunfire between North and South Korea at the Korean DMZ. (Jong-woo & Park, 2010) Moreover, as recently as 2011 there were renewed fears that Armenia
and Azerbaijan might see a return to war over Nagorno-Karabakh because of a growing arms race, escalating front-line clashes resulting in about 30 deaths per year, vitriolic war rhetoric and a virtual breakdown in peace talks. (International Crisis Group, 2011b)

On the other hand, seemingly small events also have the potential to create a much larger positive impact. In fact, entire bodies of research are dedicated to the topic of conciliatory gestures like having one of the conflicting parties provide an apology. Moreover, Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) – those mechanisms that regulate and increase the transparency of military activities prone to produce friction among adversaries (Fortna, 2004, p.27) – are in a way an attempt to institutionalize this behavior. That is, the logic behind CBMs holds that an (re)escalation of the conflict can be avoided if trust between the parties can be increased, and with enough time there may even be some ‘normalization’ of the relationship between the parties as trust grows. Positive outcomes thus grow incrementally over time.

For example, there are some who hold that the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s unprecedented move to visit the Israeli Knesset in November, 1977 was instrumental in changing the dynamics, for the better, between Egypt and Israel and that because of this gesture it made the peace talks between these two countries somewhat easier.³

Thus, there can be both positive and negative feedback loops occurring within a peace process. When we also consider the different dimensions then at least two general situations are possible:

1- positive reactions in which progress in one dimension leads to progress in another or alternatively
2- negative reactions in which progress in one dimension leads to set backs in another.

Some initial work at applying systems thinking to peace processes has been done (See Ropers, 2008 and Körp, Ropers and Giessmann, 2011) and this proves to be a promising new direction for future research. However, when we apply the concept of negative and positive feedback loops to the four specific conflict dimensions then the following dynamics can occur:

a. Negative loops: From Behaviour to Issues (decreasing the incentives to settle)

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³ It is important to note that some researchers also hold that the reputation between Egypt and Israel was already warming up at this point anyway and so this conciliatory gesture on Egypt’s part actually did little else to improve the relation between the two countries at that time.
b. Positive loops: From Behaviour to Attitudes (increasing the trust of the other side, confidence building procedures)

c. Negative loops: From Issues to Parties (settlement between parties may hinder transformation *within* parties or settlement between parties may create spoilers, fractions, etc)
The Model

Based on the key lessons identified in the previous section, a new model for measuring mediation success is presented here.
Conclusions

While it is clear that the field needs to find new ways to begin to think about mediation success, it is important to keep in mind that the model presented here is only a first attempt at offering a new way to measure success. Consequently, there is ample room for adjustments and adaptations to be made to the model. For example, we envision the model being re-packaged in a simpler, more user-friendly manner for practitioners and policymakers. Nevertheless, we hope that this paper will help bring this important topic back to the forefront of the discussion on international mediation and that additional follow-up research will be done on this topic.

Notwithstanding the above limitations of the model, we believe that a number of policy prescriptions can still be derived from the above discussion leading up to the model.

First, donors need to recognize that the absence of ‘typical’ signs of forward progress does not necessarily mean that mediation is not making a positive difference in a conflict. Some of the positive outcomes of mediation, as discussed earlier in this paper, are not obvious ones and some of them are a little less tangible – and thus more difficult to measure - than the existence - or not - of a new peace agreement.

Second, governments that are involved in mediation efforts or are supporting peace processes may want to reconsider their goals and motivations. That is, the aim of mediation does not always have to be reaching a new peace agreement as the final outcome. Rather, there are other worthy goals that can be aimed for with a mediation process. For example, as this article argued, if the goal of a neighboring state is to bring greater stability to a regional conflict then that government might consider urging the parties to accept a temporary cessation of hostilities in order to later on work towards a permanent ceasefire. Thus, the process would (at least initially) solely focus on achieving the cessation of hostilities to create a temporary stability. Working towards this more limited and refined definition of success would also ensure that limited resources are directed towards realistic outcomes.

Third, mediators should build into their processes new ways to measure their success utilizing all or parts of the model as it is presented here. Part of this will involve the creation of baseline measures but the other important point to recognize is that due to the feedback loops, even small steps forward can be amplified while negative feedback loops that might indicate that the process is collapsing can sometimes also be reversed by small measures aimed at building trust or confidence between the parties.

Moreover, just as the advice for governments urged them to think more broadly in terms of their goals for a mediation process, mediators might also want to look at developing sub-goals that are just as important as reaching a full agreement. Having these sub-goals well-articulated ahead of time can be important to proving to donors and other observers that progress is being made.
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About the Authors

Evan A. Hoffman, PhD

Dr. Evan Hoffman is the Executive Director of the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN) and an Associate Faculty member with the School of Peace and Conflict Management at Royal Roads University.

Dr. Hoffman holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Canterbury (New Zealand). His doctoral research focused on the question of why mediation sometimes produces a durable peace and this research culminated in the creation of a new model for durable peace. Dr. Hoffman also completed a Master's degree in Post-war Recovery Studies at the University of York, UK in 2001 and an undergraduate degree in psychology at Carleton University, Ottawa in 1999. In 2001 he earned a Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) from CIIAN.

Dr. Hoffman was one of the first people at the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) at the University of York to study trauma created by violent conflict and the methods of individual and community trauma healing in a post-war context. His initial examination of the subject began on a field study in Sri Lanka. His research then took him to Bosnia for field study and data collection. The results of this research are documented in his Master's thesis entitled "Creating the Space to Heal: Principles of War-Induced Trauma-Recovery, with Case Studies in Bosnia-Herzegovina".

Dr. Hoffman was then an intern with the Delegation of the European Commission (EC) in the Republic of Sudan. The focus of the internship was on the EC-funded Sudan Landmine Information and Response Initiative (SLIRI) - a landmine marking and removal project. During this time he had the unique opportunity to work with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Rae McGrath. Additionally, during this same period he assisted the Carter Center in the design and delivery of a week-long peacebuilding training workshop which was held in Nairobi for members of the Governments of Sudan (GOS) and Uganda (GOU) and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) as part of the efforts to implement the Nairobi Agreement.

From 2004-2009 Dr. Hoffman was an 'Analyst and Policy Advisor' for CIIAN's International Peace and Prosperity Project (IPPP) in Guinea-Bissau. The IPPP was a political violence prevention project testing the application of lessons learned and best practices to develop a model for fragile, failing, and failed states.

Dr. Hoffman has published numerous articles on the themes of conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, and mediation and he has provided consulting services to the Carter Center, the UN, the EU, the Ottawa Police Service, St. Lawrence College (Cornwall), the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice, and others on these topics.
Isak Svensson, PhD

Isak Svensson’s main field of research is international mediation in civil wars in which he has an extensive publication record and an established international recognition. His research on international mediation in civil wars has particularly focused on the issue of neutrality and bias of mediators. More recently, he has also expanded his research into two other thematic research areas: religious dimensions of armed conflicts as well as dynamics and outcomes of unarmed conflicts.

His research is published in high-ranking journals (such as *Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Peace Research, and International Interactions*).

He has also co-authored a book (together with Peter Wallensteen), *The Go-Between*, which examines the process of mediation. This book has been praised:

“*book belongs on the desk of any practitioner, scholar, or student who is serious about international conflict management*” Chester A. Crocker, James R. Schlesinger Professor of Strategy Studies, Georgetown University.

“*... this book is a must read for any serious student or practitioner of international mediation. It is chock full of insights and wisdom that are drawn from a careful analysis of the deft diplomatic hand of its main protagonists*” Fen Osler Hampson, Director at The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University.

“*remarkable book.... The focus on one mediator and his significant work, indeed, his life achievements across numerous cases, functions, and types of conflict, is an excellent way to derive lessons*” Anthony Wanis-St.John, American University and the author of "Back Channel Negotiation: Secrecy in Middle East Peacemaking"

His second field of research is religious dimensions of armed conflicts, with the book “Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars”, coming out at University of Queensland Press (Australia), late 2012.

Isak Svensson has been the Director of Research at *The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies* (NCPCS), University of Otago, New Zealand (2010-2012).
About CIIAN and the NCPACS

The Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN)

CIIAN is dedicated to the prevention and resolution of destructive conflict and to building sustainable peace at local, national, and international levels.

Our Commitment

We believe that reducing violence, achieving stability and building sustainable peace can only be attained through the sound engagement of the people and institutions in conflict. We are committed to building relationships and partnerships with appropriate leaders and organizations as a route to real change. We use and develop state of the art, empirically tested methods of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. And we are committed to transferring knowledge and competencies to those with whom we work.

Achieving Our Mission

CIIAN achieves its Mission and fulfills its Commitment through four programs: International Program; Domestic Program; Violence Prevention Early Response Unit; and Special Programs.

All of CIIAN's professionals are theory-informed practitioners. Experienced as facilitators, trainers, mediators, researchers and peacebuilding consultants, their services draw upon lessons learned and best practices to design customized interventions and training programs.

A Brief History

Founded in 1992, CIIAN was built upon the notions of peace, social justice, and principled dispute resolution based in negotiation. CIIAN soon became one of the leading ADR organizations, gaining a solid reputation for effective programming and training. Our growing reputation resulted in international recognition and by the mid-1990's we were invited to partner with organizations, especially in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. Recent years have seen CIIAN continue to offer dispute resolution programming through local organizations in a number of conflict zones, including Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Columbia, Haiti, Lebanon, Macedonia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Crimea. We are now recognized as a leader in violence prevention, using a catalytic approach that balances security and development.
The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (NCPACS)

NCPACS is New Zealand’s first Centre to combine global cross-disciplinary expertise on the issues of development, peace-building and conflict transformation.

We:

- offer postgraduate programs at Masters and PhD level
- conduct high-level research on the causes of violent conflict and conditions for sustainable peace
- provide training, evaluation expertise, and expert advice to government and non-governmental organisations engaged in peace-building and humanitarian intervention.

The NCPACS is a theory, research and practice centre located within the Division of Humanities, University of Otago.
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