

Elusive Peacemakers

A Bargaining Perspective on Mediation
in Internal Armed Conflicts

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Abstract

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This composite dissertation explores mediation in internal armed conflicts from a bargaining perspective. Four separate essays investigate why mediation occurs, why it is successful, and why peace guarantors' commitments are credible. Essay 1 examines the conditions under which mediation takes place. The study argues that whereas it is costly for governments to accept international mediation, it is a less costly intervention tool for potential third parties. This argument implies that mediation will be more likely when and where negotiated settlements are least likely to be reached, a contention that is supported by empirical tests. Essay 2 reviews the contemporary debate on what types of mediators that can disseminate information in a credible manner, and formulates a set of testable hypotheses on mediation partiality. The analysis shows that negotiated settlements are more likely if biased or interested mediators intervene, while neutral mediators are not associated with mediation success. Essay 3 elaborates on the role of biased mediators. It proposes that rebels face a commitment problem when negotiated settlements are to be reached, which government-biased mediators can mitigate. The study finds that such types of mediators outperform rebel-biased mediators in terms of helping combatants to settle the armed conflict. Essay 4 deals with the commitment problem that comes to pass between, on the one hand the primary parties, and on the other, the potential peace guarantors. The study probes the requests and promises for third-party security guarantees and suggests that the reputation of the United Nations (UN) enhances its credibility as peace guarantor compared to non-UN actors. It finds that although the UN is more restrictive with its promises, it is more likely that peacekeeping forces will be provided if the UN is one of the guarantors. In sum, utilizing unique data from two time-periods (post World War II and post Cold War), this dissertation arrives at new insights on the role of mediators in bringing about negotiated settlements of internal armed conflicts.

Keywords: mediation, third party, civil war, peace agreement, conflict resolution, negotiated settlement, bargaining, conflict termination, internal conflict

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For Kikki

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Isak Svensson

Introduction

In numerous internal armed conflicts around the globe, mediators have been brokering peace. From Guatemala to Georgia, from Mozambique to Macedonia, third parties have sought to mediate agreements that put an end to the fighting. Mediators have sometimes proven to be successful in bringing internal armed conflicts to their peaceful ends. In other cases, mediators have failed to influence the belligerents to settle their issue through negotiations and lay down their weapons. However, mediators are elusive peacemakers. We know very little about the conditions under which mediators enhance the prospect of negotiated settlements in violent internal conflicts. Many questions regarding both the occurrence of mediation and its effect, are yet to be answered. This dissertation sets out to address some of the most important questions on mediation. In particular, it taps into three debates regarding unresolved puzzles of mediation.

A first puzzle regarding mediation concerns whether mediation predominately occurs in the 'easy' or 'hard' cases of conflicts. Mediators as well as belligerents are strategic actors that can anticipate their chances for success when deciding to engage in mediation. Mediators can purposefully offer mediation, and belligerents can choose to accept it, in specific types of conflict situations. This selection will have bearing on the mediators' ability to be effective peacemakers. Hence, before we properly can evaluate the mediators' effect we therefore first and foremost need to understand the context in which mediation takes place. Mediation selection can, theoretically, cut in two different ways. When mediators intervene, they may predominately choose to go where the task of mediation is easy and the

chances for their success are high. Alternatively, mediators may enter situations where the belligerents have little incentive to settle their conflicts peacefully and the probability of being effective is therefore low. Do mediators ‘pick the cherries’ or do they go where they are needed the most?

The second puzzle focuses on partial mediation. Mediators are commonly perceived as neutral, non-partisan actors without interest in the conflict they intervene in. However, the record of the past one-and-a-half decades concerning conflict-resolution processes reveals another picture. Many of the third parties that mediate in contemporary internal armed conflicts are either not neutral towards the parties, or have interests at stake in the conflict. Numerous instances of the diplomatic interventions that aim to bring parties to the negotiation table are undertaken by parties that are partial, either in the sense of having national interests in the country afflicted by the conflict, or a history of actually supporting one of the sides in the conflict. The characteristics of the mediators are important if we are to understand the possibilities of successful mediation. Are unbiased mediators more effective than biased mediators in bringing about negotiated settlement of internal armed conflicts?

The third puzzle on the topic of mediators concerns the credibility of their commitments. Previous research has suggested that acting as guarantors of agreements is one of the most important techniques mediators or other third parties can employ in order to enhance the prospect for peace. However, third parties have incentives to neglect to deliver on their promises, since implementation of guarantees is costly. If we want to explain why this technique works, we need to know how the adversaries can be confident that the potential guarantor will enforce the agreement in the future. Why do the belligerents believe in the guarantors’ promises?

The dissertation addresses these three puzzles. The purpose of this dissertation is to use the bargaining perspective to explore why mediation occurs (Essay 1), which types of mediators that increase the likelihood of negotiated settlement (Essays 2 and 3) and why third-party security guarantees are credible (Essay 4), in internal armed conflicts. I apply a broad definition of mediation, meaning external third-party diplomatic intervention, accepted by the primary parties, aimed at mitigating or resolving conflicts. I do not include mediation efforts by secondary parties that themselves are partici-

pating in the battle, nor by actors inside the conflict.¹ The empirical domain for this exploration is internal armed conflict, where the government of a state and a non-governmental party have explicitly expressed generally incompatible positions, and engaged in violent encounters. Although these conflicts are internal in the sense that it is a rebel group within a country that is the primary contestant against the government, some of these conflicts are also internationalised in the sense of receiving direct support from outside actors.

This chapter will introduce the different essays in the dissertation. It starts by situating the research within previous mediation literature. I then describe the bargaining perspective on mediation. This is followed by a description of the content of the four different essays. The chapter ends by drawing some general conclusions from the studies.

Mediation in Internal Armed Conflicts

Mediation research is a broad area of research. Mediation has been a subject of study in quite diverse contexts, such as legal disputes (i.e. Riskin 1996), labour-management negotiations (i.e. Mumpower and Rohrbaugh 1996), community disputes (i.e. Pruitt et al. 1993), and school conflicts (Johnson et al. 1995). There are several excellent reviews and overviews that show the approaches, achievements and research agendas for the research on mediation (i.e. Pruitt and Kressel 1989; Wall and Lynn 1993; Wall et al. 2001).

In the study of armed conflicts, mediation research has emerged as an increasingly important field (i.e. Bercovitch 2002; Crocker et al. 1999; Kleiboer 1996; Zartman and Rasmussen 1997). Previous research has made substantial contributions to our understanding of the role of mediation in armed conflicts. Important conceptual distinctions have been made (i.e. Princen 1992; Rubin et al. 1994; Touval and Zartman 1985; Young 1967); clusters of independent variables that are associated with mediation success have been identified (Bercovitch 1991; Greig 2001); and practical toolboxes for the use of future mediators have been designed (Crocker et al. 2004;

¹ Primary parties in internal armed conflicts are governments and rebel groups. Secondary parties are outside actors, such as states, that support the primary parties with troops on the ground. Third parties are actors that engage in conflicts, but neither as primary nor secondary parties.

Mitchell and Banks 1999). Yet, although previous research has substantially increased our knowledge of mediation, further progress has been hindered by a lack of a clear theoretical foundation that can reveal the underlying explanations of how mediation enhances the chances for peace (Gilady and Russett 2002). Indeed, reviewing the achievements of mediation research, Kleiboer identifies a “fundamental problem: the absence of more explicitly articulated theories on international conflict and its management, of which mediation theory is a part” (Kleiboer 1996:376). She continues to state that “mediation research has produced a wealth of correlations and facts, but it has not produced convincing explanations” (Kleiboer 1996:377). Hence, mediation research generally lacks an understanding of the theoretical micro-foundations of mediation.

Traditional approaches, emerging primarily from the social-psychological research tradition, have therefore in recent years been complemented by research employing a bargaining perspective. Bargaining is a theoretical approach that seeks to explain the initiation, development, and termination of armed conflict. Recent mediation research, in a quest for convincing explanations of mediation, has tried to place mediation within this broader coherent theoretical framework (Beardsley 2005b; Kydd 2003; Rauchhaus 2006; Regan and Aydin 2005; Savun 2006). This dissertation is part of this emerging field within mediation research.

Theoretical Framework: The Bargaining Perspective

The usefulness of the bargaining perspective lies in its ability to identify the main causal mechanisms behind political violence (Fearon 1995; Powell 2002; Reiter 2003). Two mechanisms are particularly important in this regard: 1) conflicts resulting from the fact that the parties have incentives for misrepresenting information in situations of uncertainty (*information failure*), and 2) conflicts originating from the fact that the adversaries have problems in making credible commitment because of future incentives for exploitation of the other side (*commitment problem*). Using these causal mechanisms as points of departure, we can examine how mediators can help belligerents to communicate more credibly about their strength and determination. We can

also examine how mediators can help combatants to commit more credibly to peace agreements.

The bargaining perspective gives an answer to why conflicts occur, despite the fact that they are sub-optimal. As shown by Fearon (1995), given that conflicts are costly, there is always a set of possible peaceful alternatives that both sides prefer compared to fighting. In order to avoid paying the costs, the antagonists have incentives to seek alternative methods beyond the battlefield to try to sort out their differences. Hence, assuming unitary and rational actors, the bargaining perspective helps us to focus our attention on how the bargaining situation itself creates obstacles for peaceful settlement of armed conflicts (Fearon 1995; Powell 2002; Reiter 2003).² Information failures and commitment problems are situations that are created by the dynamics of the bargaining situation. Governments and rebels cannot settle their conflicts peacefully due to their inability to conduct the bargaining process in a credible manner.³ Hence, although the parties would prefer to reach solutions short of continued war, they are unable to close a deal because they are caught in strategic dilemmas that hinder effective bargaining.

Information failures occur when parties have private information about one another's capabilities and willingness. Private information is knowledge about one's own side that the other side is unaware of, at least partially. Hence, when parties do not know on which terms the other side is ready to settle the conflict, they may end up fighting because of a misunderstanding. Uncertainty is one precondition for armed conflict, but is not sufficient as an explanation for why it occurs. The antagonists could, after all, communicate with each other, and thereby avoid costly encounters. The reason why belligerents misunderstand each other is to be found in the strategic incentives for deception. In order to reach a more favourable deal, an actor may, for instance, exaggerate its power so that the other side is persuaded to make concessions. Indeed, it is because parties have strategic incentives to misrepresent private information that such failures in the information proc-

² 'Rational' means here nothing else than being able to consistently rank preferences over possible outcomes, and act accordingly (Lake and Powell 1999).

³ Alternative answers to why belligerents do not seek a settlement short of continued warfare can also be sought by exploring the boundaries to the belligerents' rationality or the in-group dynamics of two sides in conflict (i.e. Kelman 1997; Pruitt 1995).

ess occur.⁴ Hence, information asymmetries in combination with incentives to hide, exaggerate, or play down the true level of strength and willingness, can lead to rational miscalculation and inefficient bargaining outcomes (Fearon 1995; Gartzke 1999; Werner 1999; Werner and Yuen 2003).

The commitment problem is the second strategic dilemma that may explain sub-optimal bargaining outcomes. Commitment problems arise when the incentives for cooperation are expected to change over time. Although cooperative strategies may be beneficial at the time when a settlement is about to be reached, at least one of the sides may have reason to renege on a deal in the future. The causes of war can therefore be found in the incentives for future exploitation. Adversaries cannot make credible pledges to avoid renegeing on deals when it becomes advantageous. Hence, even if the belligerents have managed to find a solution to their incompatibility, and sort out how the contested resources should be divided among themselves, a settlement to a conflict can be hindered by the fact that the solution would generate foreseeable opportunities for exploitation. Commitments to mutually beneficial compromises are therefore considered not to be trustworthy. When the side that is expected to gain strength makes a commitment, it is rendered unbelievable by the side that stands to be abused. Instead of waiting to become a victim in the future, the party on the losing side of a power-shift will therefore choose a non-cooperative strategy, resulting in an overall inefficient bargaining outcome. Thus, agreements are deemed unattainable unless there are mechanisms to guarantee future enforceability (Fearon 1998, 2004; Powell 2006; Walter 1997, 2002).

The bargaining perspective can help us to understand how, and why, mediation works. Mediators can play an essential role by substituting the information revealed on the battlefield with opportunities for non-violent communication. Thus, mediators can potentially increase the chances for peaceful settlements by bridging the gap of information asymmetries. Likewise, mediators can enhance the prospects for peace by helping the primary parties to make their commitments credible. Mediators can ease the warring factions' fear of the future by providing implicit or explicit guarantees.

⁴ Fearon (1995) identifies three such major disincentives for revealing information. Firstly, parties may have aggressive intentions, but wish to not reveal them, in order to cheat on their opponent. Secondly, they may have an image of toughness that they use as a negotiation tactic. Thirdly, they may have weaknesses, which they fear the other side will exploit if information about them is revealed.

Presenting the Essays

This section is devoted to a description of the four separate essays on mediation in internal armed conflicts. In these essays, I explore different aspects of mediators' occurrence and effect, using the commitment problem and the information failure as theoretical points of departure. Below, I will clarify the lacuna in the debates, in which the essays are situated, and put forward my theoretical claims. I will also briefly describe the data and the statistical methods used, and conclude each section with a description of some of the most important implications of the studies.

Do Mediators Go Where They Are Needed the Most?

The first puzzle – mediation selection – is the subject of Essay 1. Mediators and belligerents are strategic actors, who can anticipate the future when they decide to engage in mediation efforts. This essay explores the implications of this strategic selection. Belligerents can tie their decision to accept mediation to the probability of reaching a settlement. Likewise, mediators can take the likelihood of a settlement into consideration when they decide to launch a mediation initiative. Still, previous research has predominantly analysed why mediation occurs, and why settlement is reached, as two separate questions. However, these two decisions are linked to each other. The factors that help explain the occurrence of negotiated settlement will therefore also be causal forces behind the choices for when primary parties require, and when third parties offer, mediation. This essay analyses how the antagonists' decision to reach a settlement is interlinked with the decision by them and the intermediaries to engage in mediation.

I argue that while the acceptance of mediation is costly for governments in internal armed conflicts, the offering of mediation by third parties is largely a non-costly tool for the potential interveners. It is costly for the government involved in armed conflict because it implies interference in the sovereignty of the government and risks transferring legitimacy to the insurgents. For the potential interveners, on the other hand, mediation represents a less costly form of intervention, compared to the material and political costs implied in staying passive or using more coercive tools for engagements. Thus, mediators will be ready to offer services in both easy and hard cases, whereas governments will require mediation foremost when the like-

likelihood of settlement is low. Bargaining theory suggests that belligerents go to war as a way to credibly communicate private information about capability and resolve (Fearon 1995). This implies that settlement would be less likely in situations of high levels of strategic uncertainty. On the other hand, mediation should tend to occur under those conditions. Hence, mediation will be more likely when and where negotiated settlements are least likely to be reached.

Using a statistical model for simultaneous equations, both the probability of settlement and mediation are estimated. The empirical analysis, with data on civil wars between 1946 and 2003, provides support for the argument. I find that uncertainty-enhancing factors decrease the likelihood of settlement, whereas such factors tend to increase the likelihood of mediation. In particular, I find that several of the factors that affect the likelihood of settlement – intensity, incompatibility, government-sided military intervention – simultaneously have the opposite effect on the likelihood that mediation will occur. The empirical analysis also examines the role of unobserved factors in the two decisions of reaching settlement and engaging in mediation. In line with the argument of an ‘adverse’ mediation selection process – meaning that factors that increase the likelihood of mediation simultaneously decrease the likelihood of settlement – the empirical analysis shows that such unobserved factors as resolve, making governments and rebels less likely to settle, are also those factors that make the occurrence of mediation more likely to come about. Taken together, this reveals a pattern of mediation in the thorniest conflict situations.

This study has important ramifications, both theoretically and policy wise. Before we can evaluate the effect of mediation, we need to know the context in which it occurs. Previous research on mediation selection, studying interstate conflicts, has arrived at mixed results (Beardsley 2005a; Berco vitch and Jackson 1997; Gartner et al. 2004; Greig 2005). For example, Beardsley (2005a) finds that mediation in interstate conflicts is most likely to take place in situations which are conducive to successful mediation, whereas Gartner et al. (2004) find that mediators engage themselves disproportionately in tougher cases. This study contributes to the debate by using the probability of negotiated settlement in civil wars as a benchmark for evaluating whether mediation occurs in the most or least demanding cases, taking into account the interdependence between the two decisions. Whereas the question of mediation selection has predominantly been ex-

plored in interstate conflicts, this essay examines civil wars. The study shows that, rather than merely being epiphenomenal to the settlement of conflicts, mediators and belligerents purposefully select to engage themselves in mediation in the most precarious conflicts. When examining the effect of mediation in civil wars, we should take this selection process into account. If mediators increase the likelihood of peaceful settlement under those circumstances it is, indeed, remarkable.

Intermediaries, Information, and Impartiality

The second puzzle – whether partial or impartial mediators are the most successful – is explored in the second and third essay. Essay 2 examines the effect of different types of mediators in bringing about negotiated settlements in African armed conflicts. The point of departure for this essay is that mediators can help combatants to solve conflicts that originate in informational discrepancies by supplying credible information about the combatants' reservation points (Kydd 2003). This essay reviews the contemporary rationalist debate on mediators' ability to disseminate information and derives a set of hypotheses on the types of mediators that will be trustworthy. Traditionally, the main debate in mediation research has been concerned with whether neutrality or leverage is the major explanation for the ability of mediators to be productive (i.e. Touval 1975; Touval and Zartman 1985; Young 1967).⁵ A bargaining perspective suggests that, by contrast, both neutral and powerful mediators can have problems to credibly reveal critical information about the belligerents. Several suggestions as to alternative third-party characteristics that enhance mediators' credibility have been made in the bargaining literature (Crescenzi et al. 2005; Gilady and Russett 2002; Kydd 2004; Rauchhaus 2006). This study provides a first-cut empirical examination of these hypotheses using data on internal armed conflicts in Africa from 1989 to 2003.

⁵ A terminological clarification about bias is needed here: In Essay 2, I distinguish between *Biased*, *Interested*, and *Neutral* mediators, where 'interested mediators' refers to mediators who have preferences over the negotiated outcome, but have not supported one particular side, whereas 'neutral mediators' refers to mediators who are independent towards both the conflict issue and conflict parties. In Essay 3, where biased mediators are explored, I collapse *Interested* and *Neutral* into one category: *Non-biased* mediators.

I find that both interested mediators (that is, third parties who have not sided with any of the combatants, but still are not neutral towards the issue at stake) and biased mediators increase the likelihood of negotiated settlement. However, neither neutral nor powerful mediators are associated with mediation success. In addition, the empirical analysis shows that democratic mediators, as well as specialised mediators, are generally ineffective as peacemakers. Given the limitation of the data in terms of empirical scope, the results should be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, they indicate that it may be credibility, rather than power or trust, which is the main causal force behind successful mediation.

This essay identifies, on the basis of these findings, some important fields for further study. In particular, it shows the fruitfulness of Rauchhaus' (2006) distinction between two types of non-biased mediators: mediators that are concerned only with avoiding war, and mediators that have interests in the conflict. Future research would benefit from implementing this analytical distinction between different forms of impartiality. Moreover, the dynamics of how mediators gain information should be explicitly incorporated in the analysis. Future research should therefore preferably relax the assumption inherent in most bargaining models on mediation, that mediators possess asymmetric information vis-à-vis the belligerents. Moreover, the essay discusses the problem of measuring the effect of mediation that do not include the cumulative aspects of mediation. It identifies the need to incorporate the belligerents' bargaining positions in the analysis, in order to assess how mediators may gradually affect the positions of the parties towards a convergence that opens up the possibility of a bargaining range.

This essay yields vital policy-insights. It shows that mediators can positively affect the likelihood of antagonists to reach a deal. Contextual factors that measure the type and nature of the conflict cannot explain the whole variation in the likelihood of settlement. Taking contextual factors into account, mediators can still play a significant role in enhancing the prospect for peace. Furthermore, this essay suggests that a 'division of labour' between potential mediators may be needed. Although neutral mediators can be important in other phases of the peace process, it is primarily interested and biased intermediaries that increase the likelihood that settlement will be reached.

Bargaining, Bias, and Peace Brokers

Exploring the puzzle of mediation partiality, Essay 3 examines the role biased mediators can play in getting combatants to reach negotiated settlements. The study distinguishes between government-biased and rebel-biased mediators. I argue that government-biased mediators can address one of the underlying problems that preclude belligerents from reaching a negotiated settlement: the rebels' problem to credibly commit to non-exploitive behaviour once a settlement has been reached. Rebel groups gain resources in the process of reaching negotiated settlements. In particular, rebels increase their legitimacy by dealing with the highest official representatives of the state. Moreover, they gain time for recruiting new cadres, regrouping their forces, and rebuilding the military machinery. Rebels also gain access to official structures that further institutionalise their position and increase their ability to mobilise. Since disarmament – a process which may generate a predominately government-sided commitment problem – is not commonly implemented simultaneously to the reaching of a negotiated settlement, it is foremost the rebel-side that faces commitment problems at the time of reaching a settlement. Previous scholars have noted that biased third parties can help civil war combatants overcome commitment problems, by serving as guarantors for the weakening side (Fearon 1998; Schmidt 2005; Walter 2002). Building on the earlier work, I suggest that by accepting government-biased mediators, the rebels send a costly signal of conciliatory intent and thereby commit to peace in a trustworthy manner.

The implication of the argument is put to test, employing unique data on mediator types and their stance in all intrastate armed conflict between 1989 and 2003. Since mediators can be biased towards some rebel groups but not others, the data-structure is dyadic. An intrastate dyad is a pair of a government and a rebel group. The empirical findings provide substantial support for my argument. Whereas mediators on the side of the government have a positive effect on negotiated settlements, rebel-biased mediators have no significant effect. Diagnosing the risk of a selection effect, I find no evidence indicating that this difference in outcome can be traced back to a difference in the patterns of intervention. Government-biased and rebel-biased mediators do not seem to intervene under different circumstances. This essay makes a contribution to our understanding of the commitment problem in the context of civil war and the role that biased mediators can play in solving this problem. In addition, it makes a case for why explana-

tions that focus on the mediator's leverage cannot account for the empirical findings reported in this essay.

Two important implications of the study can be mentioned. Firstly, this study contributes to the debate on whether biased or non-biased third parties are the most effective peacemakers (i.e. Kydd 2003; Rauchhaus 2006; Schmidt 2005). My contribution to this discussion is to put forward the distinction between government-biased and rebel-biased mediators, and explore the conditions under which these types of biased mediators may be effective peace brokers. Secondly, this study also connects to, and taps into, the broader debate on third-party military intervention. Whereas previous scholars have explored how, and why, third-party intervention affects conflict termination, it has paid little attention to the fact that intervening countries sometimes transform themselves from warmongers into peace brokers. Put differently, interveners sometimes change their strategy from supporting one side militarily to instead become biased mediators. Hence, by specifying the process by which some conflicts are brought to an end, this study gives a better representation of the dynamics of third-party intervention.

Guaranteeing Peace

The third puzzle – the credibility of commitments – is explored in the fourth and last essay. The focus here is on guarantees, which is one of the most prominent techniques mediators and other third parties can utilise if they seek to enhance the prospect for peace. Previous research has shown that third-party security guarantees drastically increase the likelihood of durable negotiated settlement of internal armed conflicts (i.e. Fortna 2004; Hartzell et al. 2001; Walter 2002). Less attention has been paid to the conditions under which guarantees occur. In particular, previous research has not separated, and analysed the relationship between, promises for guarantees and whether third-party guarantors followed through on their promises. However, if we want to explain how parties escape commitment problems, we need to know how the adversaries can be confident that the potential guarantor will follow through on their promises in the future. Given that implementation of guarantees is costly, the guarantors have incentives to neglect to deliver on their promises. How can the adversaries be confident that the potential guarantor will honour the agreement in the future?

I argue that the UN has a reputational incentive to be honest and therefore will be more credible than non-UN peace guarantors in commitments to safeguard peace agreements. Examining internal armed conflicts from 1989 to 2003, this project collects and utilizes unique data: primary parties' requests for guarantees, and third parties' promises to guarantee peace agreements. I develop and test four hypotheses. First, when the UN is the guarantor, rather than other third parties, it should be more likely that peacekeeping forces are provided after a promise to guarantee peace has been made. Second, I expect that the belligerents should request the UN to be peace guarantor more frequently than they should request other third parties to play that role. Third, following the argument that the UN is bound to its promises, the UN should be more restrictive in making them. Fourth, following the same logic, the UN should be more selective where it chooses to provide its promises, compared to other guarantors. In particular, the UN should restrict itself to conflict situations where its reputation will be enhanced the most. These hypotheses receive significant support in the empirical analysis.

This study has several implications, important for contemporary scholarly debates, as well as in policy circles. It contributes to the debate about the comparative advantages of UN versus non-UN peace-supporting interventions (i.e. Bellamy and Williams 2005; Diehl 1993; Heldt 2004). Whereas an emerging literature has utilised quantitative approaches in order to explore the difference between UN and non-UN peacekeeping operations, it has left out promises and requests from the analysis. Incorporating the strategic behaviour of third parties in the analysis will increase our understanding of the process through which peacekeeping operations are put in place. Moreover, this essay taps into the ongoing debate on which actors within the international system that are best suited to manage peace. Although I do not examine the effect of guarantees here, this study nevertheless suggests that the UN has, through its reputation, a comparative advantage that may be difficult for other actors to mimic. The UN should therefore carefully protect its reputation as a peace guarantor, since its reputation may affect the ability to be credible in internal armed conflict.

Conclusions

How internal armed conflicts can be brought to their end through peaceful means, is a challenge for both scholars and policy-makers. Conflicts fought between governments and rebel groups cause loss of human lives and economic resources, and decrease the security inside as well as outside the areas of conflict. Given these negative consequences, it is pivotal to find out how violence can be terminated, and disputed issues resolved. This dissertation explores the role that mediators play in this regard. Mediation is crucial to study, since it holds a potential of bringing about peace in armed conflicts. Still, we know too little about it. The causes and consequences of mediation remain fields that have not been given appropriate attention in previous quantitatively oriented research. I will now draw out the four most important implications of this research, which may also inspire future exploration.

The Fruitfulness of the Bargaining Perspective

The four essays in this dissertation have in common that they share a bargaining perspective when examining different aspects of mediation. How does the bargaining approach contribute to the study of mediation? The bargaining perspective puts an emphasis on the bargaining situation itself, an area that has rarely been connected to mediation. Conceptualising the causal dynamics in armed conflict as a bargaining problem, the attention of mediation research can be zoomed in on the critical, determining factors behind the decisions to continue or settle an internal armed conflict. In particular, it focuses attention on the strategic dilemmas of information failure and credible commitment, which may hinder actors from reaching peaceful settlements of armed conflicts. By exploring how mediators address the underlying bargaining problems that prevent disputants from settling their conflict peacefully, we may come to understand how mediation works. If the principal bargaining problem behind the antagonists' decision to continue a costly war is the inability to be credible – in communication and commitments – mediators will be effective if they can increase the antagonists' ability to make believable commitments and communicate in a trustworthy manner. The bargaining perspective can help to prioritise among the many explanatory factors that have been identified in previous mediation research. A great deal of what has been studied in previous me-

diation research does not directly affect the antagonists' ability to overcome their information asymmetries and commitment problems, and is therefore of less theoretical importance. On the other hand, factors that have played only a marginal role in previous mediation research can be crucial, since they may affect this bargaining process. Put differently, when focusing on the causal links between why wars occur and how mediation helps combatants to avert armed conflicts, we are provided with lenses through which we can perceive previous mediation research in a new light.

The debate on information and mediation can be seen as an example of this. The provision of information, has been identified by previous research as one of several functions that a third-party mediator may assist with in the context of conflict (Bercovitch et al. 1991; Touval and Zartman 1985). The dissemination of information as a mediation technique is therefore not new to mediation scholars. What is new, however, is the emphasis on information as distinct from other third-party functions, an understanding of the type of information that is needed, and the role of information in bringing armed conflicts to their end. Indeed, Gilady and Russett suggest that "a bargaining approach offers a new analytical framework to the study of war, and the basis for a new reading of the peacemaking literature" (Gilady and Russett 2002:395). The essays here illustrate how such a reading may generate novel research questions and fresh answers to old questions. The bargaining perspective is a theoretical approach that is under development, and as such, currently carries many pitfalls, limitations and, in particular, many simplifications. Yet, one conclusion from the essays in this dissertation is that the bargaining perspective has the ability to be fruitfully applied to the research on mediation.

Internal Armed Conflicts are Different from Interstate Conflicts

Bargaining theory is a unified framework that can be applied to conflicts at the international level, as well as to conflicts within states. Internal armed conflicts can therefore be analysed using the same conceptual frameworks as in the study of interstate conflicts (Werner et al. 2003). Rational bargaining problems have the same social structure, and remedies for those problems found at one level, have applications to conflicts at different levels. That said, however, applying the bargaining theories on internal armed conflicts, confronts us with some distinct problems in the empirical applica-

tions. Bargaining theorists need to pay attention to the particular setting represented by internal armed conflicts. Two of the essays particularly deal with the peculiarities of civil conflicts. Firstly, since the two sides in internal armed conflicts are qualitatively different to each other, the bargaining situation is different from the interstate level. In particular, rebels can face another sort of commitment problem than governments on the path to peace. I suggest in Essay 3 that negotiated settlements are turning points where some of the resources that have been vested in the government are transferred to the rebel side. Confronting this power-transition, the rebels will have problems to credibly commit to withhold from future exploitation of the resources reached through a negotiated settlement. Anticipating this, the government will generally refrain from settling the conflict through negotiations unless there is a government-biased mediator that can compensate for this asymmetry. Hence, although the commitment problem is applicable to intrastate armed conflicts, governments and rebels, being inherently different sorts of entities, can have unique sorts of commitment problem.

A second difference between interstate and intrastate conflicts is that, unlike in interstate conflicts, acceptance of mediation is costly in conflicts fought between rebel groups and governments. As discussed in Essay 1, the sovereignty that government will seek to uphold will make them less bent on accepting outsiders in the negotiation process unless such involvement is deemed necessary. Some recent work on mediation in interstate conflicts has shown that mediation tends to occur under conditions where it is most likely to be successful (Beardsley 2005a; Greig 2005). On the contrary, conflicts on the intrastate level seem to follow another pattern: mediation is applied under conditions where the combatants have little incentive to settle the conflict. Hence, this project illustrates that although the bargaining perspective is a fruitful theoretical approach for the study of mediation, we also need to incorporate the particular context of internal armed conflicts into the theoretical analysis.

Measuring Strategic Behaviour

Another implication of this dissertation has to do with the basis for our ability to empirically assess our theoretical conjectures. Given that the bargaining theories predict a strategic behaviour where misrepresentation,

bluffing and exaggeration play a central role, we need data that can capture such bargaining behaviour.⁶ Yet, our understanding of strategic bargaining is limited due to the poor quality of our data. Although our theories predict a strategic behaviour of the belligerents, the data is commonly not suited for exploring such behaviour. Some of the essays in this dissertation have made efforts to collect novel data that can enhance our understanding of mediation, which deserve to be analysed to a greater extent by future research. Two data-oriented contributions can be identified. Firstly, using the data from Uppsala Conflict Data Base (UCDB) as my point of departure, I have designed the first dyadic dataset on mediation and third-party characteristics in internal armed conflicts, which is used in Essay 2 and 3. As mentioned above, a dyad in an internal armed conflict is a pair consisting of a government of a state and one rebel group. The dyadic data structure is superior to other levels of analysis, such as state-level or conflict-level, since it better reflects the strategic nature of our theories. For instance, bargaining theory may model the commitment problem that a rebel group faces when trying to reach a peace deal. However, in many of the armed conflicts, there are several rebel groups that are bargaining with the government, each of them having separate decision-making bodies (Nilsson 2006). Using state or conflict as level of analysis would conflate the theoretical expectation of a dyadic relationship, and is therefore less appropriate.

The second data-oriented contribution is to include the promises of third parties and the requests of the belligerents (Essay 4). Current data on third-party security guarantees do not separate those guarantees that were promised from cases where the guarantors did not follow through on their promises. However, if the bargaining process is our theoretical starting-point, we should expect that the third parties have incentives to renege on earlier promises. These efforts are avenues for data-collection well worth continuing along for future research. One conclusion arrived at is therefore that we need to include the bargaining process, consisting of, for instance, requests, promises, and threats, in order to better capture the strategic decision-making process of primary as well as third parties.

⁶ Some work according to these lines has been done on interstate level, see Greig (2005).

Contributions to Mediation Literature: Bias, Power and Selection

This dissertation contributes to several debates within mediation research. Three such contributions to the mediation literature can be identified: the debate on 1) mediation bias, 2) power-based leverage and 3) selection of mediators.

Firstly, the essays in this dissertation add some pieces to the puzzle of whether third parties should be biased, or not. The general conclusion to be drawn from the studies here is that we must avoid oversimplified generalisations. Biased, but also interested and neutral third parties can all be important, but under different circumstances. In particular, we need to distinguish which technique that is employed by the third parties. Three findings in this dissertation contribute, in one way or another, to this debate. The most interesting finding in Essay 2 is in this regard that interested mediators increase the chances for settlement. Examining the role of biased mediators, Essay 3 shows that government-biased mediators outperform rebel-biased mediators in bringing about negotiated settlements. In Essay 4, I find that one particular type of neutral third party – the UN – can play an important role in the guarantee-giving process, and seems to be more credible than non-UN guarantors. These findings illustrate that biased, interested and neutral mediators, by performing different functions, can facilitate the process towards peace. Hence, different types of mediators and third parties may affect the chances for peace through different causal processes.

Further research needs to distinguish not only between types of techniques, but also between the conflict phases. As Mitchell (1993) points out, the multiple tasks of peacemaking in internal armed conflicts should be pursued by different actors. Hence, the analysis here suggests that whereas non-biased mediators as well as biased mediators may increase the chances for negotiations (Essay 3), government-biased and interested mediators may be particularly important types of mediators in bringing the belligerents to a settlement (Essay 2 and 3). The UN, as a neutral mediator with high reputation costs, can be a crucial player in the implementation of a peace accord (Essay 4).

The second debate that this dissertation taps into, is the discussion about third-party power. The bargaining perspective both incorporates and challenges conventional wisdom on the conditions for mediation success. In particular, it re-interprets the role of power in mediation. Examining African intrastate conflicts, Essay 2 shows that great powers are associated with a

decreased chance for negotiated settlement. In Essay 3, the lack of positive effect of great-power mediation is replicated in global data. I suggest that this empirical evidence speaks against one of the mainstream explanations for mediation success, which suggests that a mediator's leverage over the belligerents is the determining factor in international mediation (i.e. Touval 1975; Touval 1992). Furthermore, we would expect from the previous reasoning that the UN, which lacks a traditional power-basis, would be a non-credible guarantor. However, this does not agree with the empirical evidence presented in Essay 4. The UN, in contrast to such expectations, is more likely to live up to its promises than non-UN actors. Taken together, these arguments and findings indicate that explanations focusing on the power of third parties may not be sufficient if we want to understand the intervention and success of mediation in internal armed conflicts. Although the aim of the dissertation has not been to try to falsify power-based explanations, the findings here, as well as several other works on bargaining and mediation, put the traditional emphasis on power-based leverage in question (i.e. Rauchhaus 2006; Savun 2006).

The third input that this dissertation can make to the mediation literature is the role of selection. In Essay 1, I find evidence of an adverse mediation selection process: mediators intervene in circumstances where the reaching of settlement is difficult. Yet, Essay 3 finds no evidence that different types of biased mediators intervene under different kinds of conditions. Hence, government-biased mediation does not seem to occur in less difficult circumstances than rebel-biased mediation. In Essay 4, the promised guarantee from the UN or non-UN actors is the dependent variable. Here we can see that there is, indeed, a selection between different types of guarantors: the UN intervenes in circumstances when the world's attention to a conflict is at its highest levels, and where the chances for success look promising, whereas non-UN guarantors show no such empirical pattern. Taken together, these essays demonstrate the need to take into account the selection of mediators.

However, when we examine the question of mediation selection, we also need to pay attention to the variation in the political costs associated with different forms of intervention. The costs of intervention affect the pattern of engagement. In particular, mediation is a low-cost strategy and mediators may reap political benefits for their involvement in peacemaking (Essay 1). The implication is that although mediators surely take their chance for suc-

cess into consideration, such considerations do not necessarily hinder them from engaging in conflicts where the likelihood of settlement is low. On the other hand, Essay 4 suggests that guaranteeing peace is a costly intervention for those third parties that are bound to their promises. Subsequently, the UN will guarantee peace under conditions where the likelihood of success is high. As these essays suggest, the political costs for intervention may vary across types of intervention. This is an arena worthy of further exploration. Going deeper into the supply-side of mediation, we can become better equipped to understand the costs for different kinds of third-party engagements.

By Way of Conclusion

To conclude, mediators have the prospects to bring internal armed conflicts to an end. This is the basic rationale for why they should gain our attention. The essays in this dissertation have identified some of the conditions under which mediators can fulfil this potential. Mediators can be successful when helping the combatants to send trustworthy messages to the other side and to make credible commitments about future behaviour. The bargaining perspective represents an emerging and important debate that has started to explore the contributions and problems of mediation. This dissertation should be read as four contributions to this on-going debate.

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