International Conflict Mediation

This book examines how new empirical approaches to mediation can shed fresh light on the effectiveness of different patterns of conflict management, and offers guidelines on the process of international mediation.

International conflict mediation has become one of, if not the most prominent and important conflict resolution methods of the early twenty-first century. This book argues that traditional approaches to understanding mediation have been inadequate, and that in order to really understand how the process of international mediation works, studies need to operate within an explicit theoretical framework, adopt systematic empirical approaches and use a diversity of methods to identify critical interactions, contexts and relationships. This book captures recent important changes in the field of international conflict mediation and includes chapters by leading scholars on a variety of critical aspects of conflict management, using state-of-the-art analytical tools and up-to-date data.

This book will be of great interest to scholars of peace and conflict studies, methods in social science and of international relations in general.

Jacob Bercovitch is Professor of International Relations at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and is the author and editor of many books and numerous articles on international conflict resolution. **Scott Sigmund Gartner** is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Davis, USA.

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International Conflict Mediation

New approaches and findings

**Edited by Jacob Bercovitch and
Scott Sigmund Gartner**

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We dedicate this book to Daniella, Jeanette, Liora and Michelle.

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Acknowledgments

This book is the product of many years of work by both of us into different ways of thinking about conflict management. In its specific form, the book had its origins in a special panel we helped to set up for the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting in Washington, DC in 2005. The success of the panel encouraged us to edit a special issue of *International Interactions* on empirical approaches to mediation, and to expand on that theme with this book.

Edited books can often be a source of much distress and disagreement. We know very little about that. This book reflects a truly collaborative effort between us, working across the vast Pacific Ocean, and the contributors, gathered from all parts of the world. All the contributors are close friends or colleagues of ours with whom we have interacted at many meetings, worked on different projects, and for whom we have the greatest respect. That they all acceded to our demands for revisions, helped in reviewing chapters, made any changes asked of them and did all of it in good spirit, is a testament to their professionalism and experience. We are truly grateful to each and every one of you.

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We dedicate this book to those most in need of knowledge about effective conflict management in the world today: our young daughters.

1 New approaches, methods and findings in the study of mediation

Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner

One of the central issues in the study of the mediation of international conflicts and crises, and indeed in many other aspects of the social sciences, is how best to explain variance? Why do seemingly similar efforts produce such markedly different outcomes? The usual temptation is to fall back on idiosyncratic factors and explain observed variance with reference to personalities, unique circumstances, personal and perceptual factors and other exceptional conditions. The central argument of this book is that such efforts paint an incomplete picture of the conflict management process, and we do, in truth, have to explore variance in a much more systematic manner. If we are to understand why some patterns of conflict management work, or are effective, and others are not, we have to operate within an explicit theoretical framework, adopt systematic empirical approaches (and there is a vast array of such approaches) and use a diversity of methods to identify critical interactions, contexts and relationships. Ideally, we would pursue these multiple objectives by also employing state-of-the-art methods and techniques. This is what we propose to do in the chapters of this book.

Let us first start by looking at two major instances of international mediation that have produced different results despite many similar features. In September 1978, American President Carter invited President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel to his retreat at Camp David. Closeted there for 13 days, Carter tirelessly mediated the issues in dispute that had led to a number of costly conflicts and was largely instrumental in achieving a formal peace agreement between Israel and Egypt that has lasted almost 20 years. In July 2000, US President Clinton invited the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasir Arafat, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Barak, to Camp David to hammer out an agreement between these two bitter enemies. Despite Clinton's equally tireless work, his mediation efforts failed. Clearly the issues, personalities and international climate between the cases were quite different. However, can we go beyond a description of each case and understand how Carter's and Clinton's experiences differed systematically? Can we identify which factors and variables produced each outcome and how a change in some

variables might have led to different results? How do we, in short, under-stand the bigger picture of mediation, generate insights into the factors that account for its variance and learn how to change some of these factors so as to maximize the chances of success?

To answer these questions we want to suggest that it is possible to draw on three very different types of conflict management literatures: prescrip-tive, normative and descriptive (Bell *et al.*, 1989).

Prescriptive theories of conflict management, negotiation and media-tion explain any variance by emphasizing a set of behavioral norms that parties in conflict either follow (and hence achieve success), or fail to follow (and hence experience failure). Fisher and Ury (1981) provide us with a typical example of the prescriptive approach to conflict manage-ment. They offer some strategies of behavior, which if adopted by parties in conflict, irrespective of size, context or issues, lead to success. Failure to adopt these will lead to a bad outcome. The problems of explaining vari-ance in outcomes are thus taken care of, but in a most unconvincing fashion.

Normative theories suggest how ideal, rational actors with all the information at their disposal and coherent personality structures should make decisions in complex situations (Kydd, 2003, 2005; Rauchhaus, 2006). Normative theories, best exemplified by formal models and game theoretic approaches, purport to explain the motivation and behavior of actors in conflict on the basis of some assumptions regarding rationality, information and direct causal links to any choice of strategy. Normative theories have coherence, logic and consistency, but the assumptions on which they are based clearly restrict their applicability. Actors in conflict do not behave like intelligent and sensitive parties, they do not have much information (indeed the conflict may be over lack of information), and it is hard to see how this approach, extensive though its contributions are, can be as congruent with reality as we would wish it to be.

Descriptive (though a better term for these would be empirical) theories purport to explain how and why actors behave the way they do without, in any way, trying to modify, idealize or moralize such behavior. Here, conflict behavior such as mediation or negotiation is treated as a factor that is dependent on a number of antecedent dimensions that are both observable and theoretically significant, and whose specific inter-action in a given context produces success or failure. Our main focus is with conflict management behavior in the form of mediation. We wish to suggest that observed variance in the success or effectiveness of media-tion has to do with many independent, contextual and specific dimen-sions, all of which we can observe, many of which we can evaluate, and each of which may help to explain success or failure.

Each of these three broad theories can help us gain a better under-standing of the processes involved in conflict resolution, and each is evalu-ated along different dimensions. Prescriptive theories are evaluated by

their pragmatic ability to help real actors in conflict make better choices and better decisions. Normative theories are evaluated by their internal consistency, logic and ability to explain multiple phenomena with one theoretical process. Descriptive or empirical theories are evaluated by degree of correspondence with observed reality and ability to produce generalizable conclusions (see Druckman, 2005). It is with this set of broad theories that we wish to proceed here.

For many years there was a strong tendency to study conflict management in general and mediation in particular with a prescriptive framework. Recently, there has been more work employing the normative approach. The main focus of the chapters in this book, however, is on presenting empirical studies on mediation and assessing their usefulness and relevance. In particular, we think that empirical studies can provide useful information on the place, role, performance, effectiveness and selection of mediation in international relations. We present empirical studies of the sort below, contribute to our understanding of effective mediation and to our ability to generate practical guidelines for policy-makers.

To start with, there are a number of ways to pursue empirical research on conflict management and mediation – and each has strengths and weaknesses. Some of the more prominent avenues of research are: single case studies; experimental approaches; and systematic, large-N studies. Case studies (e.g. Ott, 1972; Mitchell and Webb, 1988) offer detailed and often considerable insights into a particular conflict, but the emphasis on the uniqueness of each case clearly undermines any attempt to offer generalizations or look for broad patterns. Experimental approaches (e.g. Rubin, 1980; Carnevale and De Preu, 2005; Pruitt, 2005) provide for complete control of the environment and the ability to test hypotheses on motivation, preferences and behavior (strong internal validity). However, the extent to which it is possible to extrapolate from the simulated and fully scripted world of naïve subjects to the real world of diplomacy and policy-makers is very doubtful indeed (weak external validity). Systematic, large-scale studies purport to describe and explain real international events by using explicit criteria and definitions, a large and replicable dataset and sophisticated social science methods that help us to identify key relationships, connections and patterns that may affect mediation outcomes. Such studies have their own problems (e.g. the reliance on survey research and archival material that may not always be congruent with "reality"). However, given the need to examine social processes systematically and offer evidence and findings that can be looked at by others, we believe that the empirical approaches we present here are at the cutting-edge in the evolution of research on conflict management. Empirical approaches to mediation, whether case studies, large-N studies or formal models, generate new knowledge and confirm patterns, and by supporting conditional theoretical arguments, provide policy guidelines for more effective conflict management (Bercovitch, 2005).

Equally important, empirical approaches have been generally underutilized in the study of conflict management. Other areas of international relations embraced such approaches with greater alacrity then did scholars of conflict management. When one thinks of just how far the democratic theory ideas have evolved, and how closely we have come to formulating a basic law on democracy and external behavior in comparative government, we can only bemoan the paucity of similar efforts in the study of mediation. Hence, the chapters below attempt to redress this imbalance and show the emerging strength, vibrancy and relevance of the empirical approach for understanding conflict management in general and mediation in particular.

On conflict management and mediation

Conflict is, without doubt, one of the most pervasive and costly of all social processes. It represents the systematic and organized employment of force and violence. Conflict's human losses represent the most salient type of political cost (Gartner, 2008; Gartner *et al.*, 2004). Conflict's adverse consequences can be particularly dangerous in the international environment where the very existence of political actors may be threatened. Hence the importance attached to conflict management. Conflict management is an attempt to do something about reducing, limiting or eliminating the level, scope and intensity of violence in conflict, and to build a structure where the need to resort to violence in future conflicts is controlled (Deutsch, 1973; Maoz, 2004). Conflict management takes on various forms. It can be unilateral, where one party simply avoids conflicts or withdraws from any emerging conflict or it can be bilateral and involve the disputants in direct or tacit negotiations. Conflict management can also be multilateral, where an outside party, organization or state intervene peacefully to help the adversaries with their conflict management efforts. While conflict can be largely a coercive interaction, conflict management is largely non-violent and incorporates a considerable degree of voluntary coordination and joint decision-making between the parties in conflict. Hence the importance scholars attach to understanding conflict management.

How then does mediation fit into the overall framework of conflict management? Many policy tools are available for parties in conflict. These include conflict prevention, conflict management (e.g. reaching a political settlement) and conflict resolution (e.g. resolving all outstanding issues in conflict). Some of these methods are enumerated in the Article 33 (1) of the United Nations Charter, and they range from avoidance of conflict to the use of force. Broadly speaking, we can group these into four different categories. These are: (1) the use of force and coercive measures; (2) judicial and legal processes; (3) formal and informal bilateral methods; and (4) various forms of non-coercive, third-party interven-

tions (these may be undertaken by a host of actors). These four ways of managing conflicts correspond roughly to power-based approaches to conflict (deterrence, sanctions), rights-based approaches (appeals to legal norms), and interests-based approaches (searching for common interests through bilateral negotiation and third-party mediation). Each approach has different features, characteristics, objectives and consequences, each entails different costs and resources, and each may be appropriate for different conflicts.

The approach we wish to focus on is third-party mediation. Mediation is by far the most common form of peaceful third-party intervention in international conflicts. It is predicated on the need to supplement conflict management, *not* to supplant the parties' own efforts. Although mediation has become an integral part of many systems (e.g. labor-management, family disputes), it is a form of conflict management that is particularly well-suited to the international environment with its numerous and diverse political actors all interacting to achieve scarce resources or influence, and where each guards its interests and autonomy jealously and accepts any outside interference in their affairs only if it is strictly necessary and explicitly circumscribed. Mediation is both voluntary and peaceful, and this makes it an attractive option for many states.

First, then, how do we frame mediation and distinguish it from other forms of peaceful interventions? There is little consensus in the literature on how mediation, or other key variables, should be defined. Scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds offer different definitions, compounding confusion and fragmentation. We want to synthesize many aspects of the mediation literature and develop a definition that will allow us to create a contextual framework of the process. Hence, we view mediation as a form of joint decision-making in conflict in which an outsider controls some aspects of the process, or indeed the outcome, but ultimate decision-making power remains with the disputants (Moore, 1986). Mediation is best seen as an extension of bilateral conflict management. It is a rational, political, though at times risky, process with anticipated costs (e.g. time spent mediating) and benefits (e.g. achieving a reputation as a successful mediator). It operates within a system of exchange and social influence whose parameters are the actors, their communication, expectations, experience, resources, interests and the situation within which they all find themselves. Mediation is a reciprocal process; it influences, and is in turn influenced by and responsive to, the context, parties, issues, history and environment of a conflict (Beardsley, forthcoming). All these aspects shape and influence the selection, process and outcome of mediation (Gartner and Bercovitch, 2006).

A satisfactory definition of mediation has to capture the broad and comprehensive features of the process and be relevant to studies of disputes, wars, and crises, such as those included in this book. Here we define mediation as a

process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own efforts, whereby the disputing parties or their representatives seek the assistance, or accept an offer of help from an individual, group, state or organization to change, affect or influence their perceptions or behavior, without resorting to physical force, or invoking the authority of the law.

<div align="right">(Bercovitch, 1992: 8)</div>

This may be a broad definition indeed and it may encompass a wide range of activities, but we believe such a definition captures the dynamics of mediation as it changes forms and features, and encapsulates the various approaches and methodologies presented in this book. Given such a broad definition, some of the questions to which we seek answers include: how mediators initiate mediation and what considerations influence this process; how mediators behave in mediation; what types of mediators are best suited to certain disputes; which mediation strategies are more useful; how mediators relate to and interact with disputants; and how the context of a conflict affects their behavior?

In many respects mediation is as old as conflict itself. The practice of settling conflicts through a third party has a rich history in all cultures (Gulliver, 1979). In international relations, mediation is likely to be used in some, though by no means all, conflicts. It is particularly useful when a conflict has gone on for some time, when the efforts of the parties involved have reached an impasse, when neither party is prepared to countenance further costs or escalation of the dispute and when both parties are ready to engage in direct or indirect dialogue, and are prepared to accept some form of external help and surrender some control over the process of conflict management. In the current international environment mediation plays an increasingly important role, and it behooves us to have a better appreciation of it.

The book is organized so as to reflect our broad approach to mediation, highlight the dimensions that influence it, and showcase how different empirical approaches can provide us with insightful and often policy-relevant findings. The framework of the book is meant to suggest that mediation is more than just a matter of choice (rational or otherwise) between two or more parties and a mediator. It is also a framework that we believe can fruitfully join theories and measurements, methods and new findings. We see mediation as a problem-solving approach that is shaped and affected by the interaction of different dimensions. It is affected by the range of possible or available mediation strategies, by who the mediators are (e.g. personal and organizational attributes), by context, setting and nature of a dispute (e.g. intrastate or interstate, intractable or short-term), and of course, the nature of the environment in which the dispute takes place (e.g. a structured, well-regulated environment, or an unstructured environment). These dimensions help to construct the form and

content of mediation in any situation. They may well explain why a competitive process where parties may be committed to more conflict has been transformed into a cooperative process where the goal is to achieve some degree of mutual and acceptable consensus. What we are saying here is that if we are to understand the circumstances under which mediation occurs, how it unfolds and how, in particular, we can say something meaningful and relevant about both its effectiveness and variance in its success rate, then we have to be fully cognizant of the dimensions that affect the process and determine its rate of variance. That is precisely what we are doing here with the subsequent chapters.

The chapters

The studies in this book reflect our thinking about the importance of examining conflict management systematically, and in particular, why it is critical to undertake new, large-N studies of mediation. The authors methodically examine some of the most critical conflict management questions and attempt to address a number of vital lacunas in the dispute resolution literature. In the organization of the book, the chapters build from the micro (mediation strategy) to the macro (the global environment), creating a multi-layered approach to conflict management that addresses such topics as mediation actions, mediator type, conflict management outcome, dispute characteristics and the conflict management environment.

Rather than summarize each chapter here, we focus instead first on their key theoretical contributions and then, more briefly, we address what they offer in terms of empirical and methodological advances.

We begin with the recognition that mediators are not just bystanders – they are themselves actors in the conflict management enterprise. Are mediators' actions effective? In Chapter 2, we (Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner) find that powerful international mediators (e.g. large states, the UN) who utilize active, intrusive resolution strategies and can marshal significant resources and leverage in support of their efforts are more effective at managing intense conflicts, while lower profile mediators using a more passive strategy and utilizing fewer resources do better at managing less challenging and intractable conflicts. This seems to hold true across a variety of contexts and issue types.

In Chapter 3, Derrick V. Frazier and William J. Dixon explore the effect of variation in mediation strategy and actions on conflict management outcomes. They contrast the effects of militarized interventions (e.g. peacekeeping troops) with conflict management efforts (e.g. mediation) on ending conflicts. The authors find that all conflict management efforts have a positive impact on dispute resolution, but that military intervention and third-party mediation by international and regional organizations are the most effective.

There is tremendous variation in mediator type. How does the mediator's identity influence the negotiations and result of conflict management? The authors explore two important lines of research here. Mediators are neither uniform nor homogeneous. One might be close to one or both of the disputants, or have little past history with any of the dispute's participants. These relationships greatly affect perceptions of mediator bias, which in turn profoundly affects the credibility of the information the mediators provide the disputants. In Chapter 4, Zeev Maoz and Lesley G. Terris show just how important bias and credibility are for conflict management. They find that perceptions of credibility affect both the likelihood of a mediator choosing to be involved in a dispute and their probable effectiveness in resolving the conflict.

In Chapter 5, Burcu Savun thoroughly examines the role of mediator bias and information. Applying bargaining theory, she identifies the conditions under which information facilitates cooperation among the disputants. Savun shows that providing information can be an effective mediation strategy if used by mediators who have relevant information about the disputants.

Recently, one type of mediator has played an especially large role in global dispute resolution – the United Nations. Many anticipate that the importance of the UN will continue to grow. Chapter 6 by Isak Svensson and Chapter 7 by Michelle Benson and Nil S. Satana identify the importance of the UN as a mediator, both in terms of special characteristics and influence. Svensson examines arguments about requested, promised and supplied guarantees in peace agreements, with data on internal armed conflicts after the end of the Cold War. In particular, he shows that the UN has a higher level of credibility than non-UN mediators and that this credibility has a significant impact on the dynamics of civil war termination.

Benson and Satana in Chapter 7 examine the influence of UN Security Council resolutions on conflict management. They find that the likelihood of UN resolutions is not driven by the power or position of any state or group of states in the Security Council. They argue that it is critical not only to examine UN peacekeeping actions, but also conflict management resolutions that do not involve peacekeeping, in order to paint a complete picture of the role of the UN in dispute resolution.

Moving beyond the mediator to a larger context, three chapters examine how dispute and crisis characteristics influence conflict management. In Chapter 8, J. Michael Greig and Paul F. Diehl identify the characteristics that influence the effectiveness of conflict management. They argue that factors such as the cost of the conflict, diplomatic exit strategies and the dynamics of rivalry all influence the initiation of mediation. Mediation is offered and accepted only in certain conflicts; Greig and Diehl take us a long way toward understanding the pre-conditions of mediation.

Chapter 9, by David Quinn, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Kathleen Smarick and Victor Asal, examines crises and the role that disputants' relative power plays in affecting outcomes. Surprising perhaps to some, but nicely

predicted by the authors, power – despite being frequently identified as central to variation in the mediation process – has little independent effect on conflict management, but rather acts indirectly through mediator identity and strategy to resolve crises.

Just as all disputes are not the same, neither are all states. In Chapter 10 David Carment, Yiagadeesen Samy and Souleima El Achkar examine the influence of failed and fragile states on conflict management. Comparing the performance of directive or manipulative techniques in protracted conflict situations, relative to "softer" approaches such as facilitation, which may be part of a more integrative strategy; they find that the sequence of actions matter. They suggest viewing mediation effectiveness as the cessation of violence and the initiation of the process whereby adversaries address mutual grievances and the underlying causes of hostility.

Conflict management occurs within a historical context that can influence its nature and effectiveness. In Chapter 11 Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, Kelly M. Kadera and Mark J.C. Crescenzi explore the influence of the global community, and in particular its democraticness, on third-party conflict management. They argue that a strong democratic community facilitates the likelihood and effectiveness of third-party dispute resolution and that these third-party mediators are especially likely to be democracies or international institutions. While many examine the demand for mediation services, these authors analyze the supply of mediation. They find that a significant part of the influence of the democratic community operates through its propagation of democratic societal norms of dispute resolution.

In Chapter 12 James A. Wall, Tsungting Chung, Daniel Druckman and Wan Yan apply empirical methods in a small sample of cases to study the influence of different cultural contexts on conflict management. The difficulties of formal comparisons of distinct types of conflicts are overcome here through rigorous tests. Philippine mediators – because of differences in the power of mediation and legal systems as well as cultural norms – are more assertive than their Taiwanese counterparts. Thus, for example, Philippine mediators can dictate concessions, request forgiveness and criticize disputants more often than Taiwanese mediators. In contrast, Taiwanese conflict managers utilize more passive approaches, such as giving advice, calling for empathy and citing laws more frequently than the Philippine mediators.

Finally, Chapter 13 by Deborah J. Gerner, Philip A. Schrodt and Ömür Yilmaz introduces a new dataset – called Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO). CAMEO is especially well suited for pursing the two central themes of this book: (1) the importance of large-N statistical analysis for analyzing conflict management; and (2) the usefulness of pursuing multiple levels of analysis, from the micro to the macro, when examining dispute resolution. By providing and discussing the CAMEO data, the authors greatly facilitate future explorations of conflict management

that build on, and hopefully will move beyond, many of the findings reported in these chapters.

One of the strengths of the chapters in this book is that, combined, they show the vast data resources and methods available for exploring conflict management issues (for a systematic comparison of datasets see Gartner and Melin, forthcoming). Many of the datasets analyzed here are new, newly revised or represent critical contributions by the data collectors. In addition to CAMEO, discussed in Chapter 13, datasets used here include (but are not restricted to), International Conflict Management (ICM) (Bercovitch and Gartner, and Savun); Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) and Correlates of War (Greig and Diehl); a new dataset on UN Security Council resolutions (Benson and Satana); the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) dataset (Mitchell *et al.*); a new dataset on Intermediary Dispute Behavior (Frazier and Dixon); a new dataset that combines the ICM and MID data (Maoz and Terris); the Uppsala Conflict Data Base (Svensson); and the International Crisis Behavior dataset (Quinn *et al.* and Carment *et al.*). In another dataset Wall *et al.* conduct over 100 interviews on community mediation in the Philippines and Taiwan. Most of the analyses include sophisticated combinations (merging) of multiple datasets. For example, Svensson integrates the Uppsala Conflict data with figures on peacekeeping operations drawn from both Heldt and Wallensteen (2004) and the SIPRI study on multilateral peace operations.

Methods used in the chapters of this book include multinomial logit, logistic regression, logit with splines to correct for the binary time-series cross-sectional data and formal modeling. A number of the chapters employ multiple methods – making their arguments especially compelling. For example, Maoz and Terris tie game theoretic and statistical investigation of a large number of cases together. Many of the chapters provide highly rigorous tests and critical theoretical extensions of concepts discussed in case studies. For example, Greig and Diehl analyze the prescriptive notions of "ripeness" and "stalemate" to a rigorous large-N analysis.

Taken together these studies suggest that:

1   Conflict management matters and can make a difference to the course and dynamics of a conflict. In particular, who mediates, conflict management strategy and conflict characteristics all influence conflict management processes and outcomes.
2   Mediation works effectively. However we may look at it, mediation is a helpful and often satisfying procedure that consistently shows a positive effect on conflict resolution.
3   Methods other than mediation (such as peacekeeping or other forms of intervention) may be more effective under particular conditions.
4   The level of analysis is critical. Mediators at different levels of analysis (individual, state, IGO) behave differently, are suited to different conflicts and have varied effects on the process and outcome of a conflict.

In particular, the UN increasingly represents a critical actor in inter-national conflict management.

5   The environment in which mediation and conflict management occur is critical.

6   It is essential that we continue to develop better and more complete databases on conflict management.

The chapters here also show that unit of observation matters. For example, looking across the studies, some factors seem to lead to contra-dictory results until the variation in the unit of the analysis is taken into account. For example, mediation signals a particular kind of dispute, a challenging conflict that is unlikely to end in a full agreement, while mediated militarized interstate disputes and mediated crises are more likely to end in such an agreement. The differences are that some look at the conflict management effort as the unit of analysis (Bercovitch and Gartner, and Savun), while others examine the crisis (Quinn *et al.* and Carment *et al.*) or the militarized dispute (Frazier and Dixon).

Future issues and concerns

Where do we go from here? Unlike the study of interstate conflict, with its explosion of research within the democratic peace framework, conflict management studies continue to reinvent the wheel, often starting with different definitions and talking past each other. This book attempts to address some of those concerns by raising serious fundamental questions about international mediation and approaching these from a systematic empirical perspective. We begin this journey with a strong conviction that mediation should be studied within an explicit theoretical framework, and that it is a social process that, like other social processes, is susceptible to different empirical analyses. We believe it is possible, indeed desirable, to define, explore, test and work with different datasets to refine our under-standing of mediation. Others can explore further the results, and the arguments can be subjected to different tests. This is how we can provide new insights and discard conventional ideas. It is only by working in this empirical fashion that we can build up knowledge and ensure that know-ledge is policy-relevant.

Still, there is much to do. The whole nexus of dynamics, relationships, contexts and outcomes in mediation is quite problematic. We need to know more about this nexus, and the forces that shape its outcomes. We need to appreciate that much about mediation is truly contingent; it is a relationship of reciprocal influence, it works under some circumstances, but not others. It works well at times, but fails to do so on other occasions. By detailing the circumstances where it works, the empirical approach lends itself to practical applications. Other approaches expect us to take too much on trust.

We need to disaggregate the complexity of mediation experiences and learn cause and effect conditions. One of the best ways of approaching a contingent problem is the systematic, empirical approach of the sort adopted in this book. We cannot just assume that mediation takes place because there is a willing mediator somewhere and a conflict to be mediated. Numerous conditions have to be met before mediation happens. We want to know something about these antecedent conditions. We need to know how mediators acquire and use credibility, how it influences the chances of mediation. We need to know how different actors use different resources, and whether there are optimal strategies to deal with different kinds of conflict. We also need to investigate further the relationship between regional membership and the resort to mediation. Is mediation a more likely response to a conflict when it occurs within a certain group of likeminded states, or is it more likely to be discarded in favor of negotiation? Similarly, what are the roles and effectiveness of conflict management by regional organizations?

We need to think about the role of different aspects not usually included in mediation studies. For example, with the exception of one chapter in this volume (Maoz and Terris), economic data receive little attention. How do economic issues and resources influence the conflict management process? Do they have any effect on the acceptance and performance of mediation? The roles of dispute and conflict management time are not well understood and one can see this clearly as one statistical method under-represented here is hazard analyses.

The relationship between potential mediators and conflicts that encourage or allow mediation is still not well defined. We know in this situation that selection plays a role, but how precisely that happens in the real world is something that we need to come back to. We know a lot about *what* but not much about *what effects*. The strategic interaction of threats and other strong-arm influences attempted with the more traditional, more diplomatic, efforts remains elusive. Which mediators use which strategies or resources in which conflicts and with what effects is one of the basic questions we need to address in future studies.

There are numerous issues to be studied. As with any other field of human endeavor, the more we understand some aspects of a process, the more new questions we seem to pose. Nevertheless, we think it is important when studying mediation to look beyond the specific case study with its unique features. The chapters of this book exemplify our belief and provide encouraging results both about the effectiveness of conflict management, mediation in particular, and the efficacy of using large-N statistical approaches for examining conflict management issues. Neither of these conclusions should be taken lightly. In practice, mediation's popularity as a way of dealing with conflict grows each year, as does its applicability to different realms. Yet, mediation research is a comparatively new area of scholarly study that for too long has been poorly understood, an area where

descriptions and exhortations far outnumber any attempts at theory build-
ing and hypothesis testing. For many years most studies on mediation were
descriptions of single historical cases where any attempt to sketch patterns
was viewed with immense skepticism, or they were of the prescriptive kind
where a single, pre-ordained strategy was postulated as the most effective in
all conflict situations (e.g. Burton, 1969; Kelman, 1979). The prevalent
agnosticism toward any form of general analysis is best exemplified by the
comments made by one of the most experienced labor mediators, William
Simkin, who notes that "the variables [in mediation] are so many that it
would be an exercise in futility to attempt to describe typical mediator
behavior with respect to sequence, timing or the use or non-use of the
various functions theoretically available" (Simkin, 1971: 118). The mystery
and presumed uniqueness of mediation acted, for far too long, like some-
thing of a ghost that haunted the empirical study of conflict resolution.

Neither the single case descriptions nor the prescriptive approaches
are able to offer reliable and replicable theoretical explanations for how
mediation works, which disputes are most amenable to mediation, which
strategies are most effective, or which international mediators are best
adapted to deal with which conflicts. Conversely, the studies presented
here address patterns and cannot speak to the specific details of individual
cases. However, we cannot advance the study of mediation by predicating
it on the idea that mediation is unique, divine or prescriptive. Conflict
management efforts can, and indeed should, be studied systematically,
just like other social processes, with research that focuses on the full range
– from micro to macro – of mediation topics. Mediation's start, conduct
and results form patterns that can be analyzed and identified. It is best
viewed and understood as one strategy in the broader context of conflict
management strategies, where parties are free to choose the strategy they
believe will best serve their interests. Once we locate mediation within the
overall process of conflict management, we understand that what media-
tors do, are permitted to do, or what they can do, is not too dissimilar to
what the parties themselves do, or can do. Whether mediation succeeds or
fails depends on many factors, but it is precisely these factors that we need
to identify, study and evaluate. To do otherwise would be to mistake
wishful thinking for reality. There is much to be done, more exciting
avenues to explore and more potential significant findings to unravel. We
hope the chapters of this book spur our colleagues to go on and achieve
an even better understanding of the process of mediation.

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