

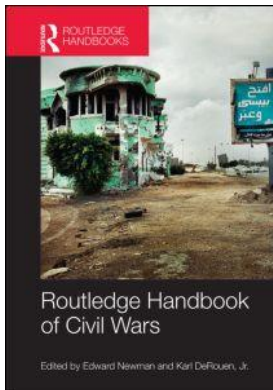
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CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CIVIL WARS

Isak Svensson

Conflict resolution has grown as an important research field in the study of civil wars. This chapter will identify the main contributions, debates and controversies in conflict resolution research. The basic question that will be addressed regards the resolution of civil wars: under what conditions are civil wars resolved? This is a pertinent question, for scholars and policy-makers alike. It is important to gain knowledge about the resolution of conflicts within states because of their frequency, and because of the negative consequences that follow in their wake, including human suffering and death, refugee flows, and economic and ecological devastation. Conflict resolution is challenging due to the unique features of civil wars. Our analytical tools therefore need to be attuned to the specifics of civil wars in order to understand how civil wars can be peacefully ended. I suggest in this chapter that the main debates can be organized into four descriptive questions of when, who, what and how. Put differently, *when* are civil wars ripe for resolution, *who* are to be included in the attempts to resolve conflicts in order for them to be successful, *what* type of arrangements and peace agreements can resolve civil wars, and *how* can third parties best contribute to the resolution of these types of intrastate armed conflicts?

This chapter is structured in the following threefold manner. First, we will discuss the terminology: the concept of conflict resolution and how to distinguish this from related, but separate, terms. This is important as a conceptual starting point for the chapter. It also helps to clarify how this chapter is distinguished from other chapters in this book. Second, the chapter will identify four basic questions of conflict resolution in civil wars – the when, who, what, and how questions – that need to be addressed in order to understand the conflict resolution process. Third, the chapter will end by outlining some potentially fruitful avenues for future research on conflict resolution in civil wars.

The concept of conflict resolution

The first discussion concerns the conceptual meaning of “conflict resolution.” What does this term entail and how is it related to other concepts utilized in the field, such as conflict management, conflict settlement and conflict transformation? Conflict resolution is related to, but analytically different from, these concepts and we will try to clarify the differences here.

There are various definitions of the concept of conflict resolution. Three important aspects of the concept need to be highlighted here: voluntariness, end of violence and agreement on the

issues. Kriesberg traces its original meaning to the 1950s when it was used to describe “mutually acceptable ways of ending conflicts” (Kriesberg 2007: 456). The key point here is the acceptance by the parties, which implies a high degree of voluntariness. In a similar vein Mitchell, in his classic work *The Structure of International Conflict*, describes conflict resolution as “a solution which is generally acceptable to parties to the conflict” (Mitchell 1981: 276). This means an agreement that the parties in conflict accept voluntarily. The voluntary nature of conflict resolution should not be misunderstood in terms of enthusiasm. Parties in conflict often feel obliged to settle their conflict against their earnest will, and conflict resolution is the second-best option (whereas the best option is victory). In fact, this is one of the main traits of the concept of ripeness, which we will discuss below. The criterion of voluntariness can be used to separate conflict resolution from conflict termination in the form of victory. Even victories are commonly settled through agreements in the form of capitulation agreements. Capitulations can also be negotiated, but capitulation agreements are basically forced on the parties, who are unable to do anything but accept them (although there might be room for negotiating the capitulation conditions). Conflict resolution thus stands for something qualitatively different: the parties resolve their conflict, not necessarily without pressure, but ultimately by their free will.

The second aspect of conflict resolution is that it represents a form of conflict termination. It is a way of ending the violent interaction between the parties. In civil wars, this implies that the parties lay down their arms; the rebel side decides to stop the armed struggle and the government side decides to terminate counter-insurgency operations. Conflict resolution implies that armed conflicts will be brought to an end (at least temporarily). Some resolutions of conflicts are more durable than others, and there is no consensus in the field on how much time of “no-war” needs to lapse before a conflict can be considered resolved. Yet, if the parties return to the battlefield, then the conflict is not considered resolved. Hence, conflict resolution essentially requires a sustainable end of violence.

The third aspect relates to the issues. Conflict resolution concerns the resolution of conflict issues, that is, it is related to the issue dimension of conflict. Conflict resolution requires that the parties come to an agreement that settles or dissolves their basic dispute. In conflict theory, the stated aspirations concerning a contested resource are called *incompatibility*. Conflict resolution is related to the incompatibility of a conflict. Wallensteen’s definition of conflict resolution centers around the dissolution of the incompatibility, since according to him conflict resolution is a “social situation where the armed conflicting parties in a (voluntary) agreement resolve to live peacefully with – and/or dissolve – their basic incompatibilities and henceforth cease to use arms against one another” (Wallensteen 2011: 50). Whereas conflict resolution is utilized by Wallensteen to describe a situation where the stated aspirations of the parties are addressed and resolved, others have more ambitious definitions of conflict resolution. Mitchell for example (1988: 277) describes conflict resolution in terms of an arrangement “towards a solution whereby neither opponent abandons any of its basic values.”

The issue dimension can also help to clarify how conflict resolution is related to the concept of *conflict management*. The two concepts are important to separate analytically. Miall *et al.* (1999: 21) define conflict management as “the limitation, mitigation and containment of violent conflict.” In line with this, Wallensteen states that conflict management “typically focuses on the armed aspect of the conflict: bringing the fighting to an end, limiting the spread of the conflict and, thus, containing it” (2011: 53). On a similar line, Pruitt and Kim see conflict management as an agreement where the “parties work out ways of deescalating and avoiding future escalation” (2004: 190). Hence, conflict management is about the behavioral aspects of the conflict – minimizing the intensity, violence, spread, escalation and violent conflict – but not about resolving the issues at stake.

The concept of *conflict settlement* is sometimes used interchangeably with conflict resolution, and at other times used to describe a less ambitious agreement on the issues. Pruitt and Kim (2004: 190–191) distinguish conflict settlement and conflict resolution in terms of the number of issues that are settled: a conflict settlement deals “with enough of the issues that the parties are willing to give up their escalated struggle” whereas conflict resolution is an agreement “in which most or all of the issues are cleared up.” For Miall *et al.* (1999), the difference between them is not in the number of issues, but rather the depths of the issues that make the difference: conflict settlement is merely an agreed ending of the conflict, but conflict resolution, “implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed, and resolved.” For Mitchell (1981: 275–276), conflict settlement means “reaching a compromise solution,” whereas conflict resolution is a more integrative solution (a “win-win” solution); third parties involved in conflict resolution processes attempt to “assist adversaries towards a solution whereby neither of the opponents abandons any of its basic values, even though some sacrifice of intermediate goals may be called for.” Hence, if conflict resolution and conflict settlement is separated (which is not always the case in the field), then conflict resolution is utilized to describe agreements between antagonists, which is of significantly higher quality in terms of their breadth and/or depth, compared to conflict settlement arrangements.

Lastly, the concept of *conflict transformation* is a term utilized more frequently by policy-makers and in particular in the NGO sphere, than in academic circles. Partly this is because it is used in a way that is difficult to pin down to an exact definition. The difficulty in operationalizing this concept has also implied that, particularly in systematic comparative research approaches to conflict resolution, this concept is largely absent from the discussion. According to Miall *et al.* (1999) conflict transformation aims “to transform unjust social relationships [...] and implies a deep transformation in the parties and their relationships and in the situation that created the conflict.” Hence, it is possible to see conflict resolution as the middle category between the more limited concept of conflict management, and the broader term conflict transformation. Conflict management is “only” about the behavior of the parties, and does not concern how the issue of the conflict has been dealt with. Conflict transformation, on the other hand, is a broader concept, it requires the transformation of actors and structures in conflict, and represents perhaps a more dynamic approach to conflict – the emphasis is not on resolving conflicts but rather to change the means of pursuing them (from violent to non-violent).

When: ripe for conflict resolution

One of the main debates in conflict resolution is that of timing. When – or put differently, under what conditions – should conflict resolution interventions be undertaken? An important insight of conflict resolution research is that this varies across the cycle of the conflict. Not all times are suitable for trying to negotiate a resolution to the conflict. In fact, the parties’ openness to consider a resolution is quite rare and when this moment of opportunity occurs, it is crucial for the outside world – in particular, for would-be mediators – to recognize the moment and seize it. Such moments of opportunities have been described in terms of “ripeness” (Zartman 1985, 2000). The concept of ripeness consists of two main components: a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) and the existence of mutually enticing opportunities (MEO) (Ohlson 1998). A stalemate – that is, when parties’ unilateral efforts to reach their aspirations on the battlefield are not working any longer – is mutually hurting for the parties when both sides perceive the current situation as costly and unsustainable. They have an incentive to try to change the situation, which might not be possible to achieve by intensifying battlefield efforts (usually by the other side’s counter-measures). If both sides, at the same time, have found themselves in this particular kind of situation, then they are more likely to be open to reconsider their strategies and to be

willing to consider resolution attempts.¹ However, they also need to believe that it would be meaningful to engage in negotiations with the other side. There has to be a perception of a “way out.” That is the second aspect of a ripe situation. There have to be some possibilities and opportunities for the parties, some positive gains that can be reached at the negotiation table.

One controversy in the research on conflict resolution refers to the *balance* between MEO and MHS. Is the push or the pull factor the more important driving force behind peace initiatives? Could a sufficient amount of resources help to convince the parties to resolve their conflict without having to go through the increasing cost of conflict, with the cost of conflict that such an escalation implies? We can think of this in terms of positive and negative incentives, or sticks and carrots. Whereas the idea of ripeness has gained a general, although not complete, acceptance by conflict resolution scholars, the question of how the carrots and sticks are related to each other, and the extent to which they work in combination in the context of conflict resolution processes, is far from settled.

There have been some conceptual misunderstandings in the discussion about ripeness. One of the most important is the misconception that initiated negotiations can be seen as a sign of ripeness. A common impression is that if negotiations have started, it is because the conflict is ripe for a solution. Yet, that is not how ripeness was originally conceptualized. Of course, there are situations where parties may engage in negotiations, not because they have sincere interests in getting to a negotiated settlement, but because of secondary motives, such as the wish to have lull in the fighting in order to regroup and rearm, or because they want to improve their relationship to an outside party. Put differently, there might be devious objectives behind parties' involvement in such attempts to resolve conflicts, such as international mediation efforts (Richmond 1998; Beardsley 2009). Ripeness describes a necessary condition for conflict resolution, but not a sufficient one. The ripe moment needs to be capitalized on in a correct way – otherwise the moment may float by without actions that lead to a negotiated settlement. Ripeness describes the onset phase, the start-up of negotiations, rather than successful conclusions of negotiations in a comprehensive settlement of a conflict. Moreover, an objectively opportune situation may not be perceived as such by the parties, and therefore it may not be ripe. Therefore much about conflict resolution is about influencing the parties' perception: making the parties understand the costs of conflicts (that leaders and elites often do not personally experience) as well as seeing that their efforts to win the war are not working. Third parties therefore play an important role in convincing parties in conflict about the existence of ripe situations, as well as to make use of the ripe situation when it occurs. Moreover, considerations of ripeness should not necessarily be an alibi for passivity of the outside world. If a conflict is not ripe for resolution – the conflict parties are at that moment at a less opportune position for conflict resolution – then the outside world should not necessarily sit idle and wait for more ripe moments to come by. Ripeness is also something that can be created – structural conditions, such as the balance of power between the parties can be changed, for instance by withholding available resources (weapons embargoes, sanctions, etc.), or by increasing the value of a negotiated peace (conditional promises of aid, for instance). Hence, ripeness is both about diagnosis – to know when a conflict resolution attempt could potentially be launched – and discernment – to know which types of strategies to use in a conflict resolution process.

One controversy related to the timing question has to do with the cost of conflict. Previous research has shown that duration of conflicts is an important determinant for civil war settlement (Mason and Fett 1996). Hence, seen from a rational choice perspective, the cost of conflict is a major determinant for the resolution of conflict, as it creates disincentives for continuing the conflict and incentives to resolving the conflict peacefully. There are several explanations for why the duration of conflict is related to the propensity for conflict resolution. The war weariness explanation found in Mason and Fett (1996) focuses on the increasing conflicts for

parties in drawn-out conflicts. Longer time requires more resources spent and lost in a conflict. Another explanation of the cost of war and duration focus less on the way the costs change the analysis of the parties, but more on how the consumption of costs functions as a way to signal resolve and reveal information to the other side. The more costs involved in a conflict, the more information will be transferred to the other side.

However, from a more social psychologically oriented perspective, increased costs of conflicts are primarily seen as a factor that serves to increase the motivation of parties, by a number of individual and social mechanisms that hinder the cognitive and emotional abilities of parties in conflicts. The greater the costs, the more entrenched the positions, stereotypes and group identities will be and the less likely it is that there will be a mutually beneficial agreement between the parties (Pruitt and Kim 2004). If we polarize these perspectives somewhat, they would therefore lead to radically different perspectives on whether costs should be accepted or minimized: since more suffering increases the pressure to settle the conflict, they could be instrumentally utilized to get the parties to make necessary conditions, or on the contrary, lead to further escalation in demands and aspirations. This controversy is discussed surprisingly little in the field, given its normative implications and that it represents a core dilemma for the conflict resolution field. How the contradictory negative and positive effects of conflict costs could be reconciled within one theoretical framework remains to be investigated. Overall, the ripeness concept as described by Zartman still stands as the main explanation for when conflict resolution processes are most opportune for solutions.

Who: spoilers and inclusion in conflict resolution

An important debate in the civil war conflict resolution literature has evolved around the *who* question of conflict resolution, in particular around the notion of “spoilers.” Stedman coined the concept in his article from 1997, where he identified different types of spoilers (limited, greedy and total) and three basic approaches in managing spoilers (inducement, socialization and coercion) (Stedman 1997). Several important insights were generated in this study. First, an acknowledgement that in the transformative events that constitute a peace process not all sides stand to gain from peace. There are in fact some actors – individual leaders, factions or groups – that feel threatened by the movement away from the antagonism towards accommodation. These actors, outside or inside the peace process, can utilize violence to provoke a breakdown of trust and negotiation attempts. Höglund (2008) argues that the parties’ benefits of peace and their perceived costs of conflict can help to explain why violent provocations sometimes succeed in overthrowing a peace process, whereas at other times, the negotiating parties are able to secure a robust process towards peace. Moreover, Greenhill and Major (2007) have made a modification of Stedman’s spoiler model by introducing a capabilities-based model, emphasizing the distribution of relative power as well as incentive structures.

The second major insight is that a right diagnosis is crucial for correctly finding the remedy to this problem. Understanding what types of spoilers one is facing is, in other words, important for deciding on the appropriate management approach. Depending on their motivations – whether it is an ideological resistance towards peace, or a more instrumental (even economic) reason – the spoilers will be open for different types of influence. How to optimally use influence strategies in the context of a peace process is an important research question, not yet fully answered (Cortright 1997).

The third is the development of a basic typology of actors, which has also been influential for the field. Stedman identifies three types of actors: spoilers, custodians and patrons (see Table 29.1). We have already discussed spoilers. The *custodians* are external actors that intervene, through

Table 29.1 Typology of actors in peace processes

	<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
Incentives for peace		Custodians
Incentives for war	Spoilers	Patrons

mediation, peacekeeping, aid or other types of engagement, with an agenda of reaching a resolution of a civil war through a negotiated settlement. The role played by third parties is an important one. Custodians are important for bringing about resolution in civil wars, not least because there are inherent commitment problems that arise when civil wars are about to be brought to their end. Even though parties may have peaceful intentions and want to have a negotiated settlement of the conflict, they can fail to reach an agreement because at least one side will gain advantages in the future, and because of this, cannot credibly commit to refrain from utilizing these advantages to the other side's disadvantage. The bargaining dilemma can be mitigated through the utilization of third party security guarantees (Walter 2002). External guarantors will threaten to punish the side that does not uphold its commitment, and thereby the commitments can be made credible (Saideman 2002). One of the primary discussions about the role of custodians is therefore the supply-side: how can credible guarantees be generators, and where are credible guarantors to be found?

The *patron* is also an important actor: an outside actor that has influence and leverage over the spoiler. Having an international component is crucial for conflict resolution processes: it may give a patron a stake in reaching a resolution of a civil war. Hence, it creates possibilities for conflict resolution if there is someone with leverage over the rebels that can force them – twist their arms and compel them – to make concessions. Therefore, rebel-biased mediators may be particularly important mediating in the conflict resolution processes in civil wars (Svensson 2007). This represents a triangulation of the conflict – a dynamic between the rebels, their patrons and the government facing an insurgency (Zartman 1993).

In Table 29.1, we can see that one cell (in the upper-left corner) is empty. Scant attention has been paid to one particular type of actor, which was not described in Stedman's article. This actor is the internal actor inside a civil war society that is basically pro-peace, that is, that has positive incentives for a resolution of the internal conflict. How could actors such as the civil society counterbalance attempts to disrupt peace processes? What is the role of civil society in bringing about resolution of conflicts? Nilsson has examined this missing piece of the overall picture – the inclusion of civil society and the degree to which it helps to solidify peace settlements. Examining whether civil society has been mentioned or participated as signatories of peace settlements, Nilsson shows that chances for durable peace are increased if civil society has been mentioned or participated (Nilsson 2012). Yet, if we compare the attention paid to violent provocateurs (spoilers) and external actors that either support the parties (patrons) or safeguard the peace (custodians), then the analysis of internal actors with a more constructive agenda has been rather missing from the analysis. However, the argument can be made that it is the internal actors that have the best possibilities for effective policing (Fearon and Laitin 1996), as well as mediation (Wehr and Lederach 1991; Svensson and Lindgren 2013).

We have up to now discussed the various actors surrounding the primary parties: spoilers, custodians and patrons, as well as peacemakers from the inside. The characteristics of the rebel side are also important in a discussion about actors and conflict resolution in civil wars. What is it with rebels that make them different, from a conflict resolution perspective? Three important

aspects of rebel movements in civil wars have significant implications on conflict resolution. The first aspect is the *asymmetry*: they are structurally unequal to the government they are fighting. In particular at the initial stages of rebellions, governments hold the upper hand both in terms of material (support base, arms, personnel) and non-material (legitimacy, reputation, recognition) resources. This also means that peace processes are unequally beneficial for governments and rebels. Rebels stand to gain in peace processes: in terms of international recognition and in capacity to rebuild strength. Peace processes therefore have an inherent rebel-sided commitment problem, which can be mitigated by the acceptance of government-biased mediators (Svensson 2007). The second aspect is the *factionalization* of rebel movements: there are many actors. Nilsson and Cunningham have shown the complications that arise due to the fact that rebel movements commonly are factionalized into different groups (Cunningham 2006; Nilsson 2008). Several non-state actors challenging, or potentially challenging, a government, also creates an additional complication. It creates incentives for the government to care about its internal reputation, in order to stave off future challenges. The fact that the government is facing several challenges creates obstacles for the resolution of conflicts, a need to establish a reputation of toughness against other potential challengers even in a situation where both parties would have preferred a peaceful resolution of the conflict. This is particularly challenging in state-formation conflicts that regard territory, where secessionist conflicts are particularly difficult to resolve by peaceful means because of the structural reputation problem that governments face (Walter 2009). When governments engage rebels in mediation, rebel group changes are more likely to occur (Olson Lounsbury and Cook 2011). The third dimension of civil war is that of *mobilization*. In order for conflict resolution to be sustainable, rebels basically need to transform themselves – they need to move from a mobilization mode to statesmen mode. Whereas governments have both mobilization and ordinary politics going on at the same time, and they need to shift in the balance between these two after a settlement, the rebels, on the other hand, need to shift in nature and make a much more transformative shift. One aspect of this is that the rebels need to demobilize. The reasons for why some actors remobilize after an internal armed conflict is that a key role is played by middle-ranged rebel leaders (Themnér 2011). Another is that they commonly need to take up political activities, form a political party and compete in elections (Söderberg Kovacs 2008). These three aspects help to explain why conflict resolution is more difficult in civil wars than in other types of conflicts.

What: peace settlements and conflict resolution

What are the types of settlements that could resolve conflicts? Since civil wars basically are conflicts around the issue of governmental power – political power at the core of the state, or territorial control of the regions – then the sharing of power is essential for its resolution. Therefore, political and territorial power-sharing arrangements can be seen as essential components of conflict resolution of civil wars. Previous research categorizes power sharing into three dimensions: political, military or territorial (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003b). The effect of political power sharing on peace and democracy is disputed (Mukherjee 2006; Toft 2009). Political power sharing, by itself or in combination with other factors, is an important institution for peace to prevail and democracy to grow in the aftermath of civil wars (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007; Mattes and Savun 2009). For instance, the distribution of political power has been considered “the most important issue in any civil war settlement” (Licklider 2001: 706), and control over the state’s government has been thought of as involving a basic incompatibility of internal armed conflict (Wallenstein 2011). Power-sharing arrangements have dual purposes: both to signal peaceful intent, but also to create effective institutions that can function after a

settlement has been reached (Walter 2002; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003b). Similarly, there is evidence indicating that if the parties agree to territorial power-sharing arrangements, then the chance for durable peace increases (Walter 2002; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008). Parties in conflict generally tend to implement political power-sharing deals (Jarstad and Sundberg 2007). Finally, several ethnic conflicts have been resolved through autonomy settlements (Gurr 1993). Moreover, military power sharing represents an important conflict resolution mechanism. Overall, there is some support in previous research that this type of power sharing increases the chance for peace in civil wars (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003a; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008).

Another important debate regards partition as a solution to ethnic civil wars. This is relevant to civil wars fought over control of territory, rather than governmental power. Arguments have been made for why partition is a necessary type of settlement and basically the only one that would work in highly escalated civil wars along ethnic lines. Kaufmann (1996) suggests that since ethnic identities cannot easily be deconstructed once they are polarized, and since security dilemmas are structurally inherent in populations living mixed in multi-ethnic societies, the only two solutions are powerful actors that take control over the conflict parties and enforce a peace from the outside, and partition. However, since in many situations, outsiders are not willing nor capable of acting as guarantors in other countries' internal conflicts, then partition stands as the only realistic and workable alternative. Hence, on one side of the debate, pro-partition scholars argue that since fighting has hardened ethnic identities and destroyed the possibilities for inter-ethnic cooperation, territorial separation of the belligerent sides is the only credible way to give them security and to ensure political influence for vulnerable minorities (Kaufmann 1996, 1998; Chapman and Roeder 2007; Johnson 2008). On the other hand, partition-skeptics suggest that the empirical ground for partition is lacking or shaky, that partition may lead to instability in the form of interstate wars replacing intrastate wars, may require transfer of populations that by itself can be a humanitarian catastrophe, and that partition disables opportunities from fostering true peaceful relationships (Kumar 1997; Sambanis 2000; Fearon 2004; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2009).

What is the role of third parties in bringing about different types of outcomes? This is studied surprisingly little. Whereas there has been a long and intensive debate on how various peace institutional arrangements affect the durability of peace and the prospect for post-conflict democratization, little attention has been paid to the conditions under which these forms of conflict resolution are crafted. In particular, whether certain types of mediators or certain types of mediation strategies lead to specific outcomes (beyond aggregated categories such as peace agreements or conflict termination) is yet to be found out. We know that biased and neutral mediators are associated with different types of outcomes, in terms of political and territorial power sharing, as well as third party security guarantees (Svensson 2009).

How: mediating conflict resolution

One of the instruments for a conflict resolution process is obviously mediation.² Whereas mediation in interstate conflicts has been broadly examined, the systematic study of mediation in civil wars is a relatively new area of research. Much of what we have discussed hitherto has implications for mediators: third parties need to be aware of the belligerents' perceptions about the feasibility of military strategies and capitalize on situations when both sides perceive the situation as stuck, and as so unpleasant that they have incentives to consider alternative ways (such as negotiation). Mediators also need to be aware of the possibility that not all actors have peace highest on their agenda, and mediators therefore need to have strategies to counter spoilers and incorporate patrons of the parties, as well as broaden participation to include civil society.

Moreover, mediators need to craft specific stipulations that can pave the way for sustainable resolution to the civil wars, stipulations relating to power sharing, autonomy, partition, etc.

Quantitatively based mediation research has grown substantially in recent years (Greig and Diehl 2012). Several important insights have been generated through systematic analysis of data from different armed conflicts on how mediators mediate. Three particular ongoing discussions can be identified regarding how mediators can mediate in civil wars.

First, there is a discussion on which kind of mediation strategies are most effective as peacemaking strategies. On the one hand, there are results indicating that communication or facilitation strategies are most effective. That can be because the use of power, pressure and threats may lead to decreased levels of trust among the conflict parties, and may therefore turn out to be counter-productive (Nathan 1999). Moreover, facilitative and formulative strategies seem to work best in territorial conflicts (Möller *et al.* 2011). These less intrusive strategies seem also to be most frequently used by mediators (Hewitt *et al.* 2012). Power mediation seems to be negatively associated with durable peace in civil wars (Gurses *et al.* 2008). On the other hand, Sisk (2009) makes the case for powerful peacemaking that can withstand provocative violence and engage in spoiler management. Beardsley *et al.* (2006) find that manipulation works best in getting the parties to a formal agreement and reduces the risk for further crisis.

Second, mediators can help to overcome bargaining problems in armed conflicts. If civil wars occur due to lack of credible information between the parties (the so-called information failure), then mediators could help by credibly transferring information and thereby minimizing the informational gap between the parties. Kydd (2003) has suggested that biased mediators (on your side) are particularly suited for communicating information in a credible manner, whereas unbiased mediators have a basic credibility problem, as he/she will have strong incentives to bluff for the sake of peace (e.g. reveal information that the other side has high resolve regardless of truthfulness of such information). Mediators can also help to overcome commitment problems. Svensson (2007) suggests that since rebels often gain through peace processes, there can be a rebel-sided commitment problem, which government-biased mediators are particularly equipped to mitigate.

Third, there is a discussion on the occurrence of mediation – why mediators go where they do. Greig and Regan (2008) show that neighboring countries are more likely to offer mediation in civil wars, compared to states further away. One reason for this could be that neighboring states are most likely to bear consequences of regional intrastate conflicts. Similarly, defense pacts, shared historical linkages such as colonialism, and prior involvements – such as a previous history of conflict management – increase the likelihood that third parties will offer mediation, while third parties with close trade links to countries at civil war are less likely to offer mediation. DeRouen *et al.* (2011) find that mediation is more likely to occur in territorial (rather than governmental) conflicts, in civil wars that last longer and in internationalized intrastate conflicts. Gartner (2011) detects a crucial selection effect in mediation processes, by showing that mediations by regional organizers are likely to lead to fragile agreements due to selection effects, as regional organizations are selected in civil wars that are harder to manage.

Conflict resolution in civil wars: challenges ahead

What are the research challenges ahead for conflict resolution? This chapter will conclude by identifying some of the most promising future directions for conflict resolution research. There are three major areas of potential development in the future. First, there are two relatively recent trends in the development of conflict resolution in civil wars, that partly run counter to each other. On the one hand, there is an increased professionalization of the conflict resolution field,

not at least in the field of mediation. The development of more institutional support structures (within the United Nations there is the Mediation Support Unit, for example) and more active actors on the conflict resolution field (for example, Finland and Turkey have in recent years engaged in profiling international mediation) is strengthening conflict resolution practices. On the other hand, such agreements have become less frequent. As the international system is moving from an unipolar world under American leadership towards a more multipolar world, the conditions for conflict resolution have been changed. In line with that, more efforts now seem to be on how to settle conflicts militarily through winning decisively on the battlefield, rather than negotiating the interests of the parties at the negotiation table. The shifting global landscape has so far implied fewer opportunities for conflict resolution, and research on conflict resolution in civil wars has largely reflected this. However, there is a growing awareness that accommodation between different interests will be more sustainable in the long term, and therefore it is not unlikely that conflict resolution will be reinvigorated as an instrument for dealing with civil wars. Rising powers such as China, Russia, Iran and others will eventually come around to see the value of international mediation and conflict resolution. How conflict resolution will manifest itself in an increasingly multipolar world is a fascinating area for research.

Second, there is a clear need for a more disaggregated analysis in the conflict resolution field. The last decade has shown the value of breaking away from the state as the unit of analysis. Hence, there is a need for disaggregated analysis of not only conflict management, but also conflict resolution in civil wars. An important insight when it comes to the study of civil wars lies in the acknowledgement that civil wars can be highly localized. A more geographically disaggregated analysis would therefore be needed in order to capture within-country variations. This type of geo-referenced data is changing the way civil wars are studied. Yet, the research on conflict resolution lags behind this trend. By their nature, disaggregated analysis of conflict behavior will have a more profound impact on the study of conflict management than conflict resolution, simply because it is a measurement of one of the dimensions (namely, behavior) of conflicts. One of the reasons for this is that the issues in conflicts have largely been treated as a black box. There are rudimentary typologies of issues, the most prominent is the distinction between government and territorial civil wars. However, such typologies say nothing about the positions of the parties in terms of these issues, nor do they show the different issue dimensions. Hence, a more disaggregated analysis of the issue dimension would hold a lot of potential for research in the future. In line with this, there is a clear need to develop new methodologies in the conflict resolution field. Utilizing controlled randomized interventions and field experiments can help to clarify causality and pin-point the mechanisms at play behind conflict resolution processes in civil war contexts.

Lastly, to reconnect to the conceptual introduction of this chapter, there is a need to examine not only settlement and resolutions, but also *transformations* of civil wars. Conflict transformation is a problematic concept since there has been, hitherto, no scholarly accepted definition that can make the concept useful in systematic research. However, it does entail an important dimension that has been missing in previous conflict resolution research on civil wars, that is, how broader social change can be brought about through negotiations and other resolution attempts. In wake of the Arab Spring events, there is increasing awareness of the importance of power shifts through non-violent means. Yet, the discussion on these largely unarmed conflicts has largely omitted any reference to the conflict resolution literature. Likewise, conflict resolution research on civil wars has not incorporated the insights from the research on strategic non-violent conflicts. Yet, in the real world, these phenomena – “conflict resolution” and “conflict revolution” – are intermingled and part of a similar social complex. How to understand how intrastate conflicts such as civil wars can be transformed therefore remains a challenge.

Notes

- 1 Regan and Aydin (2006) suggested (contrary to some other studies) that ripe moments occur in the middle stages of the conflict. By contrast, DeRouen and Bercovitch (2008), examining enduring internal rivalries, find that it is best to intervene in early stages of conflict, to avoid conflict becoming a locked-in rivalry.
- 2 For an overview of research on the role of mediators in conflicts, see Wallensteen and Svensson 2014.

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