

Introduction

In polarized situations of armed conflict and humanitarian crisis, there is often a need for a go-between, an international third-party mediator who can help to overcome barriers and divisions that keep conflicting parties apart. There is a growing awareness that international mediators can play a critical role in the process from war to peace. This book explores how mediators mediate. We examine the *styles* of international mediation. Style, we suggest, is not only a matter of manner and personality. It is more important than that. It refers to the overall priorities in the process of mediation. Style is crucial for understanding how the mediation process unfolds. Furthermore, it cannot be understood in isolation. In particular, we argue that the mandate of international mediation influences both the style employed by mediators and how that style affects the international mediation process.

One rationale for this book is the disturbing gap between the practice and theory of mediation. At its core, mediation is a practical diplomatic skill. But at the same time, mediation is the focus of a developing theoretical discussion. Knowing more about international mediation is therefore crucial for policymakers as well as academics. Yet, many policymakers are unfamiliar with the debates and insights within academia. Further, theoretical discussions are not always firmly anchored in the policymakers' reality, and conclusions arrived at are not easily transformed into practical lessons. The gap between theory and practice has to be narrowed. Mediation theory needs more input on how mediators actually mediate, and policymakers would benefit from analytical tools in deciding on optimal mediation strategies.

One reason for this gap can be found in the fact that previous mediation research has been limited to two basic types of approaches. Typically it consists of the narratives of mediators in autobiographies or tries to explain general patterns through systematic comparison of some mediators. This has resulted in descriptions that are not necessarily anchored in theory and systematic studies that do not necessarily speak to policymakers.

The unique contribution of this book is to explore the styles of mediation by a systematic analysis of the experiences of Swedish diplomat and statesman

Jan Eliasson, a key actor personally involved in several of the most contentious conflicts of the past few decades. This means combining Eliasson's political-practical insights with contemporary theoretical discussions in research on international mediation. We hope this will contribute to filling the gap between the theory and practice of mediation. In contrast to both the narrative approach and the cross-individual comparison, this book sets out to describe and compare mediation in different conflicts and crises by the same mediator.

The focus of this book is on international mediation, by which we mean diplomatic actions that aim to assist primary parties (whether states or nonstate actors) in social conflict to mitigate, manage, or settle their disagreements. Since mediation basically is a voluntary commitment by conflict actors (although the parties' enthusiasm for participating in mediation efforts may vary considerably), some degree of acceptance is necessary. The level of acceptance from the parties can help to distinguish mediation from other forms of third-party intervention, such as arbitration, which is a judicial mechanism where parties are bound by the third-party outcome. Another example is coercive intervention, such as military intervention and economic sanctions, where an outcome is forced upon the parties.

A note on the process of writing this book is needed. Jan Eliasson has been associated with the Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research for a long time. This has led to friendship and cooperation with one of the authors (Wallensteen). As will be described, the department has at certain instances played a role in some of Eliasson's efforts. More recently, as a visiting professor at and honorary doctor of Uppsala University, Eliasson has shared his understanding of international mediation with students and researchers. This book grew out of a need to not only collect and organize his experiences, but also to link them to the theoretical discussion in our field. One empirical basis for the book is a set of direct interviews with Jan Eliasson by one of the writers (Svensson). Both authors have also conducted interviews with some of Eliasson's colleagues and associates from the different missions. These include Anders Bjurner, Jörn Beckman, Paul Kavanagh, Anders Lidén, Mathias Mossberg, Giandomenico Picco, Agneta Ramberg, Helena Rietz, Iqbal Riza, Diego Cordovez, and Per Thöresson.¹ We also want to express our thanks to Professor Gerd Haverling, Uppsala University, and Bill Montross. In addition, we have had access to the archives at the Swedish Foreign Ministry as well as to some of Eliasson's own notes and excerpts from his personal diaries. Let us also make clear that although Jan Eliasson has read the manuscript, the views expressed and the interpretations made are solely those of the two authors.

1. Anders Bjurner, Stockholm, August 22, 2008; Jörn Beckman, Stockholm, June 7, 2008; Paul Kavanagh, New York, February 20, 2009; Anders Lidén, Stockholm and New York, August 25, 2008, February 18–19, 2009; Mathias Mossberg, Uppsala, March 9, 2009; Giandomenico Picco, New York, February 18, 2009; Agneta Ramberg, Stockholm, March 6, 2009; Helena Rietz, Stockholm, October 1, 2008; Iqbal Riza, Madrid, February 2, 2009; Diego Cordovez, e-mail correspondence, February 2009; and Per Thöresson, Stockholm, August 29, 2008.

This gives the book unusual insights that are significant for analyzing the workings of an international go-between. It implies that we have information on the processes as seen from the lens of the mediator; on the conflicting parties' perspective and negotiation behavior as understood from third parties; and on the dynamics of the larger peace processes as reflected in correspondence and memos by third parties. This means that this book is written from the perspective of a third-party mediator. This is evidently only one side of a larger picture, which we do not have the aspiration to draw here. For a fuller understanding, our analysis—as well as any other mediation analysis—would have to be complemented with the perspective of the primary parties.

This book raises pertinent questions of what a go-between actually does, and thus analytically examines the role of a mediator. Although we will make a critical assessment in the concluding section of this book, our emphasis throughout the book is not to question whether the “right” approach was used at particular junctures. It suffices here to determine how the different aspects of style actually played out. We will discuss how the particular profile of Eliasson's style contributed to the different outcomes, but we do not set out to explain factors behind the success or failure of international mediation. Rather, this book is a theory-generating, descriptive analysis trying to answer some of the how questions of international mediation.

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In addition, let us note that in the spring of 2009, Jan Eliasson was a Senior Visiting Scholar at the United States Institute of Peace. The Institute's Jennings Randolph Fellowship program and the Institute's Center for Education and Training organized a workshop to discuss the first draft of this book while Jan Eliasson was in residence. The comments received were extremely valuable for us in completing this manuscript.

PETER WALLENSTEEN
UPPSALA, SWEDEN

ISAK SVENSSON
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

