

1

The
Terrain
of Peace

A PEACE PROCESS CAN BE COMPARED to climbing a mountain, but climbing a mountain range is a better metaphor. All previous expeditions have failed. There are no obvious paths to the top. The climbers are inexperienced in negotiation and must pick up the skills as they go along. To make matters worse, the mountaineering team is composed of people who have previously been at each other's throats, often literally, and who are now roped together. They must now overcome their suspicions and fears to accomplish a common task. For many, the ending of violence is a sufficient objective. If they succeed, a cease-fire may follow. At last the travelers are able to peer over the summit—but they will not see a tranquil panorama of gentle hills. Instead, the view reveals new mountains, some apparently more formidable than the one just climbed.

The process, it turns out, requires participants to climb an entire mountain range rather than a single mountain. It becomes evident that the successful conquest of each new peak requires different skills and different guides. Those who negotiate a cease-fire are not necessarily the appropriate people to negotiate a political agreement or to achieve economic regeneration and redistribution. The only available guidebooks and maps are drawn from descriptions of similar expeditions across other ranges, so they provide only general and sometimes misleading advice.

To continue the analogy with the mountain range, peace processes are often regarded as journeying through four separate phases. The prenegotiation phase often involves secret negotiations, during which terms of disengagement from violence and engagement in talks are agreed on. The formal ending of violence, usually through cease-fires, is the next phase. Third come the negotiations themselves, aiming at a political or constitutional agreement. The final phase is often referred to as postsettlement peacebuilding. Violence affects each of these phases differently. Although the process itself usually follows open warfare between a highly militarized state and a guerrilla-type opposition, the level of violence may actually intensify temporarily during the prenegotiation phase, as combatants try to optimize their negotiating positions. The negotiations themselves are often conducted against a background of quasi-

paramilitary violence and the emergence of more extreme dissidents. Negotiators may also confront a new range of content issues, including demands for the early release of prisoners, decommissioning and demilitarization,¹ and policing reform. If an agreement is reached, the focus shifts to the reintegration of militants into society and a consideration of their victims.

It would be easier if the mountains to be tackled were ranged in obvious sequence. In reality, unexpected peaks often emerge from the mists and demand the immediate attention of the climbers. Each peace process has its own distinctive terrain and its own priorities. In Northern Ireland the decommissioning of weapons became one of the most formidable obstacles, yet this task was bypassed at a brisk trot in South Africa. In the Basque Country significant reforms in policing and administrative devolution were achieved before inclusive negotiation was possible. So a peace process is rarely a predictable sequence from violence to settlement. There are no clear boundaries between the phases, and their sequence varies significantly between different settings.

The unpredictability of peace processes and the unique challenges and opportunities that each presents are evident in the following four chapters. The first of these chapters provides a brief history of peace processes, as well as several important definitions. The second, the largest, presents an analysis of the four types of violence that arise during peace processes and their policy implications. The third proposes that violence, under certain conditions, may actually become a catalyst for peace. The fourth offers five propositions on the relationship between violence and peace processes.

Interspersed among these chapters are profiles of five conflicts and peace processes that feature prominently in this book: Northern Ireland, South Africa, Spain and the Basque Country, Sri Lanka, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each of these profiles outlines the background to the conflict, introduces the key issues and players, and sketches the course of the peace process to date. Unlike the chapters to this book, the profiles do not need to be read in sequence. They are intended to give readers unfamiliar with one or more of the cases a

good, if inevitably incomplete, understanding of the causes and dynamics of the conflict. The profiles, which have been written by subject experts, do not speak directly to the main body of the text but they do complement and enrich it.