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What is the essence of international mediation in civil wars? The challenge of managing complexity

Laurie Nathan

BRICS Policy Center Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS

GSUM
Global South Unit for Mediation

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BRICS Policy Center/Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas BRICS

Rua Dona Mariana, 63 - Botafogo - Rio de Janeiro/RJ
Telefone: (21) 2535-0447 / CEP/ZIP CODE: 22280-020
www.bricspolicycenter.org / bpc@bricspolicycenter.org

GSUM

The Global South Unit for Mediation (GSUM) is a learning, research and training platform focused on international mediation. The Unit will promote the diffusion of knowledge and expertise among scholars, diplomats, governmental officials and non-governmental actors from the Global South.

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BPC Team

GENERAL SUPERVISOR
Paulo Esteves

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR
Lia Frota e Lopes

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Bruna Risieri

DESIGN AND PUBLICATION
Stéphane Méheux
Thalyta Gomes Ferraz
Vinicius Kede

GSUM Team

COORDINATION
Monica Herz
Maíra Siman Gomes

RESEARCHERS
Paulo Esteves
Jana Tabak

ADMINISTRIVE STAFF
Lia Frota e Lopes
Aurélie Delater

ASSISTANTS
Isabel Cantinho
Ana Clara Telles
Nathalia Braga

Summary

What is the essence of international mediation in civil wars?
The challenge of managing complexity *

Laurie Nathan

1. Introduction

International mediation in civil wars is a hugely important activity in terms of its political, social and humanitarian potential and impact. It is often the only viable bridge from hostilities to peace and, if successful, it can forge among mortal enemies a consensual platform for long-term reconciliation, reconstruction and state-building. Where it fails, as in Rwanda before the 1994 genocide and as is currently the case in Syria, the fatalities and destruction can reach catastrophic proportions. By contrast, in 1996 United Nations (UN) mediation ended the long-running civil war in Guatemala and in 2008 the African Union (AU) mediation in Kenya prevented a descent into protracted violence.

Given the importance of international mediation, there are a wide range of efforts to boost its effectiveness. The UN seeks to enhance the prospect of success through training, after-action reviews, lessons learnt workshops, policy guidance and support of various kinds to regional organisations (1). The Department of Political Affairs now houses the Mediation Support Unit, co-ordinates the deployment of the Standby Team of Mediation Experts and recently set up an Academic Advisory Council on Mediation. The Group of Friends of Mediation, co-chaired by Finland and Turkey, has been formed in the UN General Assembly, which passed its first resolution on mediation in 2011 (2). In addition, a growing number of non-governmental organisations undertake

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(1) For example, UN, 2009, 'Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities', UN document S/2009/189; and UN Department of Political Affairs, 2011, 'Mediation start-up guidelines', New York.

(2) UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/65/283.

training, policy research and other activities related to international mediation (3).

   If we want to improve the quality of international mediation in civil wars, whether through research, training, policy guidelines or organisational innovation, it is vital that we have a good grasp of the essence of the enterprise. What, then, is the essence? A simple way of answering the question would be to derive the essence from the core goals of the process and frame it as the challenge of ending hostilities and resolving the conflict. Yet this formulation seems too bland to capture the formidable crux of the matter. In this paper I argue that the essence of international mediation in civil wars – that is, the overarching, dominant and most significant characteristic of this form of peacemaking – is the challenge of managing complexity. The paper motivates this argument, discusses the failure of international mediation to respond adequately to the problematic of complexity, and identifies some practical ways in which mediation could be better equipped to manage complexity.

2. The challenge of complexity

   International mediation in intra-state conflict is a fantastically complicated endeavour, akin to playing high stakes chess in multiple dimensions rather than merely two, where the knights, bishops and other pieces are not waiting passively to be moved but have volition, and where there is no consensus among the players on the rules of the game and the boundaries of the board. In the discussion that follows I set out some of the reasons for the complexity of mediation in a civil war, examining the disposition of the parties, the multiplicity of actors, and systems and structures (4).

2.1. The disposition of the parties in a civil war

   The defining features of international mediation include the elements of consent and cooperation (5). A productive process and positive outcome depend on the consent of the conflict parties, on cooperation between them and on their cooperation with the mediator. Even the most skilful mediator has no chance of being effective without this consent and co-operation. Yet international mediators in civil wars are confronted by parties, leaders and other individuals at their very most uncooperative, intransigent, adversarial and bellicose. The parties are locked in a deadly zero-sum game, determined to defeat their opponent. What the mediator has to offer – facilitated negotiations in order to broker a settlement – is precisely what the parties to intractable conflict do not want. They view negotiations with their enemy as anathema, their differences with their opponents as irreconcilable, their own demands as self-evidently non-negotiable, and the possibility of a negotiated settlement as unimaginable.

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   (3) The profiles, activities and policy reports of these NGOs can be viewed via the website of the Mediation Support Network at http://mediationsupportnetwork.net/.

   (4) For an excellent volume on the complexity of international mediation, see Chester Crocker, Fen Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds), 1999, Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World, US Institute for Peace, Washington DC.

   (5)The UN Secretary-General defines mediation as 'a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements' (UN, 2012, Guidance for Effective Mediation, New York, pg. 4).

In the midst of this life-and-death struggle, the mediator is relatively impotent, neither a general in command of an army nor a magician equipped with a wand. The assets she has closest to hand are soft, intangible attributes: stature, credibility, persuasiveness, empathy, affinity, patience, etc. Even if she is backed by states and international organisations that are prepared to offer substantial inducements and ratchet up the pressure in order to push and pull the adversaries towards the negotiating table, she will make no progress unless every one of the main protagonists believes that its interests are served by going to, and staying at, the table.

The mediator's challenge is further complicated by the fact that the parties in high intensity conflict do not plot their moves solely on the basis of a rational cost-benefit analysis. Their decisions are invariably informed by ideological or religious dogma, existential fears and aspirations, and visceral emotions, chief among them fury and hatred. As a result of these non-rational dynamics, the parties may be impervious to the mediator's entreaties, whether in the form of logical reasoning (e.g. 'negotiations are inevitable because you don't have the capacity to defeat your enemy') or humanitarian pleading (e.g. 'the need for talks is urgent because the violence is destroying your country and people'). From the perspective of the disputants, violence is not the worst-case scenario – it is a means of preventing or overcoming a worst-case scenario and it is therefore deemed essential and righteous. The parties may consequently be prepared to endure an enormous amount of pain before they are willing to contemplate a negotiated settlement.

Moreover, the mixture of pragmatic, emotional, ideological and existential considerations that drive the parties' decision-making makes it very difficult for the mediator to predict their moves and gauge their assessment of the balance of power and trajectory of the war. Nor can she be confident that they will respond positively to her well-intentioned actions and proposals. This makes mediation analysis, planning and strategizing a fraught exercise. The mediator would dearly love to have 20-20 vision but she will not get close to this. As the parties posture in public and plot in secret, she finds that she is always looking through a glass darkly. And the more ignorant she is, the greater the risk of making a serious blunder.

2.2. The multiplicity of actors

Prior to the start of negotiations, the mediator is preoccupied with the seemingly impossible task of convincing the adversaries to act contrary to their deepest convictions and perceived best interests. To add to her woes, the actors that require her attention are not limited to the domestic belligerents. Virtually all civil wars have regional and international dimensions, with an array of allies and patrons in neighbouring states and further afield. These external actors have a major influence on the belligerents' calculations and they sustain the war through the provision of arms, sanctuary and diplomatic support to one side or another (6). Despite their influence and involvement, however, the regional and global players are usually not defined as 'parties to the conflict' and are therefore absent from formal negotiations. The mediator is thus obliged to traverse diverse diplomatic channels as she seeks to dissuade these players from reinforcing hostilities and instead support a peace process.

Another constellation of relevant secondary actors are the local civil society groups – which might include religious formations, traditional leaders, women's associations and peace movements – that clamour for the mediator's attention and demand participation in the negotiations. The UN motivates strongly that mediation processes in civil conflicts should be inclusive (7). This is intended

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(6) See, for example, Michel Brown (ed), 1996, The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict, MIT Press, Cambridge.
(7) UN, Guidance for Effective Mediation, pp. 11-12.

to ensure that the needs of affected communities are taken into account, heighten the legitimacy of the negotiations and resultant settlement, and avoid the perception that resort to violence is the only way of gaining a seat at the negotiating table. Frequently, though, the legitimacy and representativeness of the civil society groups are questionable, and the greater the number of negotiating parties, the harder it is for the mediator to forge consensus. The UN recognises that the imperative of inclusivity can make mediation more complex and 'overloaded' (8).

As if all this were not trouble enough, the mediator also has to worry about a galaxy of 'friends', some of them genuinely supportive but others of them quite meddlesome and bothersome. Most of the international mediators in today's civil wars are appointed by the UN or a regional organisation. Although this organisation is then formally the mediating body, responsible for backing the mediator with resources and political support, it is also a forum of states that may have competing economic, strategic or ideological interests in the conflict and its resolution. A divided principal poses a severe predicament for the mediator, which savvy parties are bound to manipulate, diminishing her authority and leverage (9).

A second set of friends are the donor countries that offer invaluable aid to the peace process but might also harry the mediator to 'speed up' and broker a 'quick accord', regardless of how unrealistic and counter-productive that is (10). In addition, like bees around the honey pot, there is always a swarm of inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental peacemakers jostling to get in on the game. Synergy, complementarity and a sound division of labour among these actors can be very helpful, increasing the mediator's reach and capacity and putting concerted pressure on the belligerents. But multiple peacemakers can also undermine the mediator with their separate approaches to the parties and some of them are occasionally not averse to shoving the mediator off a cliff (11).

The wide array of domestic, regional and international actors described above, each with its own goals, motives, priorities and interests, must somehow be managed by the mediator without losing sight of the belligerents as the primary protagonists. She must find appropriate ways to cajole, assuage and bargain with the various parties in order to minimise their harmful activities and maximise their positive contributions. Just as she attempts to corral the disputants into the negotiating chamber, so she will need to bring together the donors, neighbouring states and other external actors in a 'friends of mediation' or 'international contact' forum that promotes co-ordination and harmonisation of approaches (12).

2.3. Systems and structures

When political and community disputes arise in stable democratic countries, they are contained and restrained. They take place within a governance system comprising rules, norms, structures

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(8) UN, Guidance for Effective Mediation, pg. 12.

(9) For example, the divisions within the UN Security Council over the Syrian crisis contributed to Kofi Annan's resignation in 2012 as the joint UN – League of Arab States mediator for Syria. See J. Michael Greig, 2013, 'Intractable Syria? Insights from the scholarly literature on the failure of mediation', Penn State Journal of Law and International Affairs 2(1), pp. 48-56.

(10) For a case study on donor pressure on the mediator, see Laurie Nathan, 2006, 'No ownership, no peace: the Darfur Peace Agreement', Working Paper 2(5), Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics.

(11) On the problem of competition among mediators, see David Lanz and Rachel Gasser, 2013, 'A crowded field: competition and coordination in international peace mediation', Mediation Arguments 2, Centre for Mediation in Africa, University of Pretoria.

(12) The UN Secretary-General places a premium on attaining 'coherence, coordination and complementarity' in relation to multi-actor mediation efforts in a given conflict (UN, Guidance for Effective Mediation, pp. 18-9). See also Lanz and Gasser, 'A crowded field'.

and authorities that are robust and broadly considered legitimate. Even if a dispute relates to the system itself, there is widespread agreement on the appropriate processes and entities for resolving it. At the very least, and of fundamental importance, there is consensus that the methods for addressing domestic conflicts should be non-violent. Whatever the mistrust of politicians and officials, there is also consensus that the competent authorities for managing and overcoming disputes encompass parliament, the executive, local municipalities, the police and the courts. In most civil wars, by contrast, the system of politics and governance is not viable or legitimate. Both its content and its leadership are under fierce challenge. More often than not, the system is broken.

Unlike a domestic mediator in a democratic society, who is confronted by a small storm of trouble in a broader ocean of calm, the international mediator in an intra-state conflict has to navigate an acutely tempestuous and unsupportive environment. She cannot rely on domestic laws and authorities to contain the conflict and provide a frame of reference for its resolution. In particular, there is no societal consensus on the rules for political competition, and certainly no consensus that the competition should be pacific. On the contrary, the belligerents' conduct is not only violent but largely unrestrained in the use of violence. Since the mediator cannot command the attention of the belligerents by resorting to violence herself, she is easily ignored or brushed aside (13). Her posture might be similar to that of an impartial referee but she is treated by the players as a spectator.

In the anarchic or semi-anarchic conditions of civil war, it is possible that a host of semi-autonomous governance and conflict sub-systems might emerge at provincial and district levels, all of them with their own leaders, disputants and dynamics (14). There are also likely to be regional and international conflict systems, with their peculiar contours and norms, impinging on the war. The mediator must constantly monitor, understand and be able to operate in these different systems, agile enough to employ varied strategies and styles as befits each of them.

The contested and broken nature of the state and its institutions gives rise to an extremely tough and ambitious agenda for negotiations. The talks cannot focus solely on ending hostilities but must also cover the underlying political and structural problems that led to the war; if not, a ceasefire might be reached but there is a risk that the war will resume at some point (15). In any event, rebels are always loath to disarm unless their grievances, which relate to the causes of the conflict, are assuaged. Accordingly, a negotiated settlement might amount to a blueprint for a wholly new kind of state and society, at once aspirational and substantive, covering numerous sectors and issues, many of which are politically sensitive and technically complicated (16).

A central thrust of the mediator's job is to help the adversaries negotiate the details of the blueprint to their collective satisfaction. She will labour to reconcile their divergent perspectives and demands, facilitate tough bargaining and creative problem-solving, grapple with deadlocks and walkouts, and bring in technical expertise and comparative experience from other countries. Yet she dare not become fixated with the text. The 'magic' in crafting a stable peace through mediated negotiations lies less in the content of the formal agreement than in a transformation of the relationship between the parties, which must make a seismic shift from mortal enmity to hitherto unimaginable political

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(13) For example, over a two-year period two of the most accomplished international mediators, Kofi Annan and Lakhdar Brahimi, were unable to kick-start a serious negotiating process for Syria.

(14) For a graphic illustration of the complexity surround the Congolese rebel movement known as M23, see http://www.stabilityjournal.org/hosted/m23-rebel-support-in-drc/.

(15) UN, Guidance for Effective Mediation, pp. 20-21.

(16) The agreement might also include technical provisions on implementation. This is the case with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Sudan, which runs to 260 pages. See http://unmis.unmissions.org/Portals/UNMIS/Documents/General/cpa-en.pdf

cooperation (17). In many instances there is no suspension of hostilities when the talks begin and the mediator must therefore try to effect this transformation while the parties are still killing each other on the battlefield.

3. Failing to grasp complexity

In 2010 a PowerPoint graphic on the situation in Afghanistan, prepared for US military officers, became the butt of viral jokes about the army's obsession with convoluted slides. The graphic was so intricate that it was compared to a bowl of spaghetti. When it was shown to General Stanley McChrystal, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, he remarked: 'When we understand that slide, we'll have won the war' (18). The slide appears at the end of this paper. Take a look at it. Contrary to the derisory view of its detractors, it makes a potent point about the complexity of international endeavours to stabilise countries mired in war. The summary depiction of a blizzard of actors, processes, structures and other variables, all in continuous interaction, gives the lie to the delusion of politicians and peacemakers who imagine there is a quick fix solution to intra-state conflict.

We should not imagine that international mediation takes adequate cognisance of the complexity of conflict. On the contrary, it suffers from a quick fix syndrome and other negative tendencies that reflect an abject failure to grasp the nettle of complexity. Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed have written an illuminating exposition on the 'seven deadly sins of mediation' committed by UN and other senior peacemakers, one of which is the 'sin of haste' (19). Negotiations to end major conflicts, and the consultations that should precede those negotiations, typically require months, even years, of effort by the mediator, the mediating organisation and its partners (20). But too often mediators rush prematurely to negotiations and then prematurely to conclude peace agreements, which subsequently unravel. The unsuccessful Darfur Peace Agreement of 2006 is a stark example of this. Mediated by the AU under relentless pressure from donors and the UN Security Council to 'wrap up promptly', the process was driven by inappropriate deadline diplomacy and gained no traction with the parties (21).

The haste stems not only from humanitarian anxiety about the impact of hostilities and from donor concerns that their funding of a peace process is bearing no fruit. It also derives from a hubristic belief among international actors that warring parties can quickly be brought to their senses through a combination of carrots, sticks and reason. A related cause of haste is the mediator's 'sin of arrogance', as Brahimi and Ahmed put it, being a lazy lack of rigor when analysing the conflict and exploring options for peacemaking on the grounds that 'I have seen this all before' and 'we already know what works and what doesn't' (22).

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(17) A classic example of this is the South African negotiations in the early 1990s, which led to the ending of apartheid, the advent of a democratic constitution and the formation of a government of national unity. See Alistair Sparks, 1994, *Tomorrow is Another Country. The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution*, Struik, Johannesburg.

(18) Elisabeth Bumiller, 2010, 'We have met the enemy and he is PowerPoint', New York Times, 26 April, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/27/world/27powerpoint.html?pagewanted=print.

(19) Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed, 2008, *In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace: The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation*, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, pg. 9.

(20) Brahimi and Ahmed, *In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace*, pg. 9.

(21) Nathan, 'No ownership'.

(22) Brahimi and Ahmed, *In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace*, pg. 6.

A third negative tendency is the 'sin of inflexibility' whereby a mediator, having prepared a map of the political terrain and designed the contours of a peace process, fails to adapt to the fast moving pace of the conflict (23). Brahimi and Ahmed attribute this malaise to the mediator's personal rigidity and indifference to the changing context (24). But in the case of the UN, the problem is embedded in a bureaucratic culture averse to creativity, responsiveness and adaptability. When large UN missions are established in countries in crisis, the mediation component, which ought to have the mobility of a windsurfer, can instead have the obduracy of an ocean liner.

4. Practical steps to better manage the complexity of mediation

If the management of complexity is the essence of international mediation, two broad questions arise: what should the mediator do to best manage the complexity, and what can be done to support her? I present below a range of more specific sub-questions and pointers – relating to research, theory, monitoring and analysis, planning, and organisational design and expertise – in the hope of setting out an agenda for further reflection and research.

4.1. Research

As noted in the Introduction, many NGOs have produced policy reports on international mediation. Academic research on this subject, on the other hand, tends not to have a strong policy component. A recent review article observes that 'mediation research seems to remain remote from the world in which actual mediators find themselves' and the authors call for steps to be taken to make the research useful in a world full of significant conflicts (25).

So what kind of research would be useful? At one end of the spectrum, there is a need for research that is specific to the country in which the mediator is working, conveying insights into historical and contemporary conflicts, peacemaking and culture (26). At the other end of the spectrum, as discussed further below, there is a need for highly generalised theory that is relevant to a spread of cases regardless of their specificities. It is less clear what kind of research would be most rewarding in the middle of the spectrum, that is research based on quantitative analyses or small-n case studies that attempt to draw general lessons on particular themes, such as mediator bias, the use of leverage and implementing peace agreements.

(23) Brahimi and Ahmed, In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace, pg. 10.

(24) Brahimi and Ahmed, In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace, pg. 10.

(25) Peter Wallensteen and Isak Svensson, 2014, 'Talking peace: international mediation in armed conflicts', Journal of Peace Research, published online 8 January 2014, pg. 324.

(26) For a good example of this kind of research, see Ken Menkhaus, 1996, 'International peacebuilding and the dynamics of local and national reconciliation in Somalia', International Peacekeeping 3(1), pp. 42-67.

4.2. Theory

What theoretical and conceptual tools would help mediators to manage complexity? To be useful, such tools must shed light on difficult, recurring problems, accommodate diverse cases and have considerable explanatory and predictive power. They are worthless if they are simplistic in the sense of ignoring the complexity of mediation, but they must be relatively easy to apply. A good example of a useful theory is William Zartman's model of conflict ripeness, an elegant package of ideas that can be employed with telling effect to analyse whether a conflict is ripe for negotiations, diagnose the reasons for an absence of ripeness (27) and strategise options for inducing ripeness. Given its utility, this theory has been included in the UN High Level Mediation Course.

Another conceptual tool included in the UN training course is the distinction between a party's positions (i.e. its stated demands), its interests (i.e. the perceived benefits, costs and threats that inform the positions) and its needs (i.e. the elemental aspirations and fears that underlie the positions and interests) (28). This distinction is enlightening because in high intensity conflict the adversaries expound positions that seem to be irreconcilable but they may well have common interests and they are likely to have similar needs, such as for respect, dignity and security. During negotiations a mediator can build common ground by shifting the debate away from the parties' competing positions to consideration of potentially compatible interests and needs.

A potentially interesting line of inquiry is whether civil war mediation could benefit from an appreciation of complexity theory and its application in other fields, such as economics, social interactions and urban planning (29). A possible point of departure might be the study of intractable conflicts as 'dynamical systems', which draws on complexity theory (30). Mediation can be understood as the quest of a peacemaking system to become increasingly influential in stabilising and eventually transforming the conflict system in which it is situated.

4.3. Monitoring and analysis

What structures and methods are needed to monitor and analyse a conflict at the requisite level of sophistication? There is scant prospect of managing adequately the complexity of mediation in a civil war if the parties and dynamics are poorly understood. Surprisingly, this is frequently the case. According to Brahimi and Ahmed, 'ignorance-based decision-making' is the norm rather than the exception in international mediation, especially in the early phase of peacemaking when mediators are least familiar with the conflict (31). Ignorance is the 'original sin of mediation', leading to poor judgement and flawed decisions that can result in serious political mistakes with long-lasting consequences (32).

When states undertake international mediation, as the US had often done in the Middle East and South Africa has often done in Africa, it is not uncommon for them to seek intelligence from their

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(27) William Zartman, 2001, 'The timing of peace initiatives: hurting stalemates and ripe moments', The Global Review of Ethnopolitics 1(1), pp. 8-18.

(28) For a practical discussion on various conflict analysis tools, include the positions-interests-needs tool, see Simon Fisher (ed), 2000, Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action, Zed Books, London, chapter 2.

(29) For example, Steven Manson, 2001, 'Simplifying complexity: a review of complexity theory', Geoforum 32(3), pp. 405-414.

(30) See Robin Vallacher, Peter Coleman, Andrzej Nowak and Lan Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010, 'Rethinking intractable conflict. The perspective of dynamical systems', American Psychologist 65(4), pp. 262-278.

(31) Brahimi and Ahmed, In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace, pg. 6.

(32) Brahimi and Ahmed, In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace, pp. 5-6.

intelligence agencies; of particular interest to the mediator are the parties' objectives, expectations, internal debates, external alliances and military movements and capabilities (33). For the UN and most other multilateral mediating organisations, however, collecting intelligence for peacemaking is politically too sensitive. The questions, then, are whether their mediation teams should have dedicated monitoring and analysis units, what the priorities, expertise and methods of such units should be, and what can be learnt from the experience of the Joint Monitoring and Analysis Centres (JMACs) that gather intelligence for UN peacekeeping operations (34).

4.4. Strategic planning

Many UN and AU mediations have proceeded without a strategic plan, leading to a lack of direction, assertiveness and consistency, as well as reducing the mediator's credibility in the eyes of the parties and partners (35). On several occasions I have heard members of a UN or AU mediation team complain that 'if the boss has a plan, we haven't been told what it is'. The chief mediator often seems to believe that a plan is too constraining given the need for flexibility in a turbulent situation. This reasoning is fallacious. National armies and international peacekeeping missions, by way of contrast, recognise that sound planning is an indispensable means to achieving objectives, minimising risks and mitigating uncertainty in volatile conditions. Any mediation that involves multiple parties and complex processes ought to be guided by strategic and operational plans, constantly reviewed and revised, that identify the mediator's overall goals, her specific objectives and strategies in relation to each of the key actors, and the commensurate structure, expertise and financial resources needed to implement the strategies.

4.5. Organisational design and expertise

At a prosaic but nevertheless crucial level, there is the question of whether international mediation teams are appropriately designed to manage the complexity of peacemaking in civil wars. Do they have suitable structures, personnel, competencies and resources? Do they, for example, have diplomats capable of interacting skilfully at regional and international levels, interlocutors able to engage with domestic constituencies, specialists in public communication and experts in constructing and managing peace processes? In short, are the mediation teams fit for purpose, fashioned according to the exigencies of each case, or are they based uncritically on a template?

As noted above, UN missions are sometimes too bureaucratic and formulaic, their structure and functions overly determined by the organisation's expansive normative agenda and the inter-departmental tensions at headquarters in New York. The mediation teams of the AU and the sub-regional bodies in Africa, by contrast, are usually far too small and poorly resourced to cope with complexity. In all these organisations it is striking how much effort is devoted to designing peacekeeping forces and preparing for military operations while no remotely comparable effort is made to prepare mediation teams for equally difficult assignments.

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(33) Laurie Nathan, 2014, 'The intelligence requirement of international mediation', Intelligence and National Security 29(2), pp. 208-226.

(34) On the JMACs, see Philip Shetler-Jones, 2008, 'Intelligence in integrated UN peacekeeping missions: the Joint Mission Analysis Centre', International Peacekeeping 15(4), pp. 517-527.

(35) This observation is based on my mediation engagements with the UN and the AU, including facilitation of UN-AU mediation lessons learnt workshops in 2009 and participation in the AU mediation for Darfur in 2005-6, the UN-AU mediation for Darfur in 2010 and the establishment of the UN Office in Mali in 2013.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to show that the essence of international mediation in civil wars can be conceived as the management of complexity. This perspective throws up a host of questions about the ways in which the quality and efficacy of mediation could be enhanced. The commentary by Brahimi and Ahmed on the 'seven deadly sins of mediation' suggests there is considerable room for improvement. Further reflection and research would profit from exchanges with active and retired mediators and their staff. Many of them would have been struck, and at times felt overwhelmed, by the complexity of the job at hand. They would have tried various strategies to deal with it and would have a sense of what worked best and what was politically, strategically and organisationally most problematic.

Afghanistan Stability / COIN Dynamics

Legend:
- Population/Popular Support
- Infrastructure, Economy, & Services
- Government
- Afghanistan Security Forces
- Insurgents
- Crime and Narcotics
- Coalition Forces & Actions
- Physical Environment

╫ = Significant Delay

WORKING DRAFT – V3

Major categories shown: NARCOTICS, INSURGENTS, OUTSIDE SUPPORT TO INSURGENT FACTIONS, POPULAR SUPPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES & ECONOMY, POPULATION CONDITIONS & BELIEFS, ANSF TACTICAL, ANSF INSTITUTIONAL, OVERALL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY, TRIBAL GOVERNANCE, CENTRAL GOV'T, COALITION CAPACITY & PRIORITIES, COALITION DOMESTIC SUPPORT

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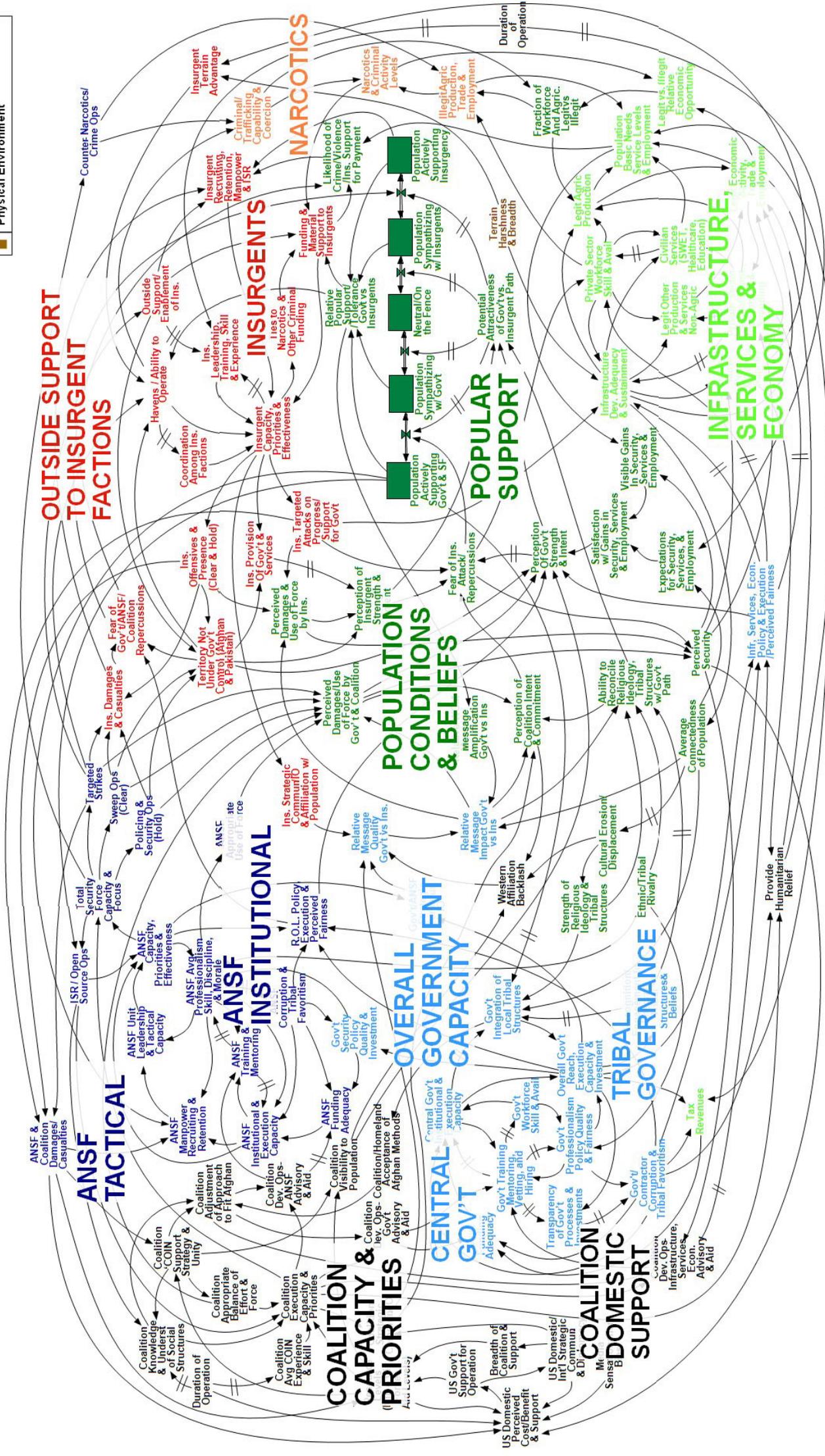
Source: Joint Chiefs of Staff, undated, 'Dynamic planning for COIN in Afghanistan', PowerPoint presentation, pg. 22, available at http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/MSNBC/Components/Photo/_new/Afghanistan_Dynamic_Planning.pdf.

About the author

Laurie Nathan, Director of the Centre for Mediation at the University of Pretoria, is also a member of the United Nations Mediation Roster and a member of the United Nations Roster of Security Sector Reform Experts. His research focus is on Southern African and South African conflicts. More specifically, Prof.Nathan is interested in exploring the causes, prevention and resolution of civil wars in Africa. This entails studying the structural causes of state crisis; regional security regimes and dynamics; and mediation and other forms of peacemaking. In addition to that, he has an extensive experience as a policy adviser to the South African government and other governments in this region.

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