1. Introduction to *Research Handbook on Mediating International Crises*

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This *Research Handbook* brings together a number of perspectives on the practice of mediation in the international system. A diversity of origins and a wide array of actors typify conflicts and crises today. The widespread availability of lethal weapons at the disposal of parties to conflict have made civilian populations tragically vulnerable as they are often caught in the crossfire. These circumstances require a systematic approach to crisis management whereby we can attempt to match the conditions of conflict with appropriate conflict management mechanisms as we seek more effective control of conflict. Mediation, the subject of this *Research Handbook*, is but one of a number of tools available for addressing conflict and crisis – others include arbitration, adjudication, and intervention in the form of peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping. We focus on mediation because we believe that when applied to the confluence of conditions that typify today's conflict and crisis arena, mediation – either alone or in combination with other intervention mechanisms – can make a crucial difference in whether or not the international community will be successful in limiting conflict and crisis.

Let us begin first by clarifying our thoughts on *crisis*. We feel the best way to think about conflict/crisis is as a continuum. At some point in an ongoing conflict, perhaps over land or resources, control of government, borders between states, and so on, that conflict, whether interstate or intrastate, reaches crisis proportions – widespread protests, threatening troop movements, violations of cease fires, or actual violence. That is, there has been a change in the disruptive interactions between the parties, resulting either in hostilities or in a higher than normal likelihood of violent hostilities. At that point, the conflict has escalated to crisis. It need not entail violence, but the probability that violence will ensue has increased.

Regarding *mediation*, we adopt the classic definition as put forward by Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille (1991: 8): “a process of conflict management where disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, state, or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law.” According to Beardsley (2011: 18): “There are three necessary components of mediation in a conflict: (1) the mutually permitted involvement of a third party, (2) third-party reliance on non-violent tactics, and (3) an absence of authority for the third party to make a binding resolution.” Key to the question of whether or not mediation will occur in a particular conflict/crisis is the convergence of incentives both for the disputants and for third parties in support of third-party mediation.

Mediation can of course occur at any point in the continuum, from the onset stage of a conflict (let's call it pre-crisis), or as it escalates and reaches a crisis stage. This *Research Handbook* focuses on mediation that occurs when the crisis has already occurred. From

the perspective of the international system, there are two defining conditions of an international crisis: (1) a change in type and/or an increase in intensity of *disruptive*, that is, hostile verbal or physical, *interactions* between two or more states, with a heightened probability of *military hostilities*, which in turn (2) destabilizes their relationship and *challenges the structure* of an international system – global, dominant, or subsystem. For an individual state or non-state actor, crisis is typified by a threat to basic values, finite time for response to the value threat, and heightened probability of involvement in military hostilities (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997).

Just as mediation can occur at various stages of the conflict/crisis continuum, there is also a continuum in terms of the goals of mediation. At one end, crisis mediation might seek short-term violence prevention or the abatement of hostilities if they have already occurred. The goal of mediation then can be crisis management, that is, possibly rolling back the crisis to the pre-crisis state of the conflict through the achievement of a cease fire or some other form of agreement. At the other end, the goal of mediation can be conflict resolution in general, in which case not only is the immediate crisis terminated, but we have the possibility of resolution of the overall conflict which gave rise to the crisis in the first place.

How does crisis mediation differ from conflict mediation in general?

1. For crisis mediation, the practitioner's objective is more related to short-term abatement of the hostilities and less about the long-term durability of peace.
2. For crisis mediation, the status quo has been rejected by one of the parties as less desirable than fighting; other periods of mediation are ones occurring when the status quo is acceptable relative to the prospects of fighting.
3. In crisis mediation, the calls for third-party intervention are most acute.
4. In crisis mediation, the potential for conflict parties to use the peace process for strategic advantage is heightened.

The impetus for this *Research Handbook* at this particular time is a concern that currently accepted mediation practices, mechanisms, and institutions are in need of adaptation to critical changes in the characteristics of the international system. In particular, the *Research Handbook* will focus on critical emerging features of the international system which are potentially disruptive to the traditional "standard operating procedures" available to the international community for dealing with burgeoning crises.

The first emerging feature of the contemporary international system is the decline in the number of international conflicts and crises between states, coupled with the increasing prevalence of intrastate conflicts and crises. This, in turn, spurs us to rethink the institutions and mechanisms that served mediation roles for disputes between nation states. As Melander, Petterson, and Themnér (2016) note, the phenomenon of *interstate conflict*, involving two or more states, has all but disappeared from the international system during the course of the past four decades. Conflict in the system today is made up almost entirely of internal or *intrastate conflict*, that is, conflict within states. One of the key outcomes of the shifting of crisis to the intrastate level is the frequency with which crises recur – a sure sign that mediation and others interventionist mechanisms are not doing their job. The greatest threat of armed conflict today comes from countries that recently managed a serious armed conflict. One of the greatest challenges facing the international community

today involves achieving real and lasting resolution of these recurring and seemingly intractable conflicts.

The second emerging feature of the contemporary international system is the *gray zone*. This has been conceptualized as a space between war and peace where major powers spar with each other indirectly or through the actions of their proxies. The gray zone is a conceptual space, occurring when actors purposefully use multiple elements of power to achieve political-security objectives with activities that are ambiguous or cloud attribution and exceed the threshold of ordinary competition, yet fall below the level of large-scale direct military conflict, and threaten US and allied interests by challenging, undermining, or violating international customs, norms, or laws (Bragg 2016). The link between gray zone and crisis could not be clearer: in the decade ending in December 2015, 15 of the 28 international crises were directly related to gray zone conflicts, including the North Korea crises of 2009, 2010 (2), 2013, 2015; Syria 2012 (2), 2013, 2015; and South China Sea 2012, 2014. And the trend is increasing with time: nine of the ten international crises in the past four years have their origins in a gray zone conflict.

A third central feature of the international system today is a class of crises arising from *transnational threats to human security*. Climate change, refugee flows, cybersecurity threats, and massive inequality within and between nations, have contributed to a sense of crisis that is beyond the ability of single states to address. The challenges and opportunities facing the international system today are easily recognized. They differ from those identified by previous generations only to the extent that their impact is on a grander scale – organizations with conflicting agendas and interests become societies and nations with the use of violence and war at their disposal; local pollution becomes a contributor to global warming and climate change; and poverty and income disparities become a flood of illegal immigration into Southern Europe and the southwestern United States (Wilkenfeld 2016). A key question that we grapple with in the last part of this *Research Handbook* is whether aspects of these transnational crises can be mitigated through mediation, and if so, how mediation practice must be adapted to this class of crises. Or do issues like sovereignty and enforcement stand in the way of crisis management in these areas?

In the case of both the rise in prevalence of intrastate crises and the increasing prominence of gray zone conflict, the international system is faced with new actors and new modes of interactions that are not necessarily part of internationally accepted norms of behavior. In the Syrian civil war, for example, a toxic mix of major and regional powers, non-state actors, and international and regional organizations, have stood in the way of effective negotiation for years. Mediation under such circumstances must adapt to these changed and changing conditions. In the area of climate change as a transnational threat to human security, such seemingly insurmountable challenges as differential treatment for the developed and developing world, mitigation versus adaptation, and even an agreement on the science of climate change itself have stood in the way of addressing this imminent threat. Can mediation techniques be implemented where other crisis management tools have failed? This *Research Handbook* will examine the key mechanisms and actors that have been traditionally associated with successful mediation efforts over the past several decades. The contributing authors have been asked to identify both weaknesses in traditional mediation and points where it can be bolstered in order to be more effective in the current international system.

ORGANIZATION OF THE *RESEARCH HANDBOOK*

As noted, we have conceived of the uniqueness of this *Research Handbook* on crisis mediation as deriving from its explicit identification of gray zone conflict and the increased prominence of non-state actors. We have asked contributors to the *Research Handbook* to focus on one or both of these phenomena as they expand on aspects of the theory and practice of contemporary mediation in interstate and intrastate conflict and crisis. In addition, in the final part of the *Research Handbook*, we have asked authors to discuss mediation in the context of several issues that cut across the more traditional inter- and intrastate divisions, such as refugee issues, climate change, and cybersecurity. It is here that the focus shifts from one which has national security at its core to one which focuses on aspects of human security.

Part I – Contemporary Issues in Mediating International Crises

Part I addresses mediation in an evolving international system. Wilkenfeld and Brecher (Chapter 2) present the International Crisis Behavior definitions of crises, and discuss the four phases of crisis: onset, escalation, de-escalation, and impact. In incorporating the concepts of gray zone conflict and the increasing role of non-state actors in crises, their recommendations include adapting mediation to the interplay of domestic and international conditions in crisis onset and escalation, adapting mediation practices to the multiplicity of issues that state and non-state actors bring to the negotiation table, and calling for the increased use of domestic mediators on mediation teams.

Beardsley, Quinn, and Wilkenfeld (Chapter 3) focus on mediation in the midst of an evolving international system and the ways in which the practice of mediation has changed and will need to continue to adapt to this evolution. The chapter examines both complexity in crisis actors (a mix of state and non-state actors) and complexity in issues. The authors show that mediation tends to occur in the most complex cases, and that in these seemingly irreconcilable crises, mediation can at least help manage tensions.

Stevenson (Chapter 4) addresses the concept of gray zone, which he distills down to two common elements: actions that have harmful intent; and actions that play within a spectrum between war and peace brought into being by the violation of norms. In locating gray zone conflict as a spectrum between ordinary competition and international crisis, he notes security policy implications for such things as maritime disputes, interstate mediation, and international law.

Crocker, Hampson, and Aall (Chapter 5) explore the relationship between the changing geopolitical environment and the emerging structure of contemporary conflict. They identify developments at both the local and geopolitical levels that complicate the field of mediation. This complexity is magnified by the phenomenon of multiparty mediation that raises key challenges for the achievement of coherence and effective leverage. The authors develop a series of implications from these changing patterns for the practice of mediation.

Part II – Mediating Interstate Crises

Part II addressed mediation in interstate crises. Greig, Owsiak, and Diehl (Chapter 6) note that parties employ myriad conflict management strategies when intervening in an

interstate crisis. Of these, disputants turn frequently to mediation, which allows them to retain control over the process and outcome of their dispute while also receiving third-party assistance. Mediation, however, does not occur in isolation. Most interstate conflicts experience *multiple* conflict management attempts, many of which are *not* mediation. The chapter reviews the most prominent alternatives to mediation, including legal approaches (arbitration and adjudication), sanctions, and peacekeeping. The authors explore the compatibility and sequencing of conflict management strategies. Some combinations and sequences of strategies may enhance conflict management, while others undermine it.

Böhmelt and Bakaki (Chapter 7) note that previous attempts to understand mediation diffusion focused on geographic ties. Their work adds culture as a potentially meaningful link that helps facilitate mediation diffusion. Ties, if strong and well established, facilitate the flow of information. If two crises are tied to each other via such links, actors might learn from what happened in the past, even if this occurred in another conflict. Shared cultural characteristics can lower coordination and collaboration costs.

Melin and Olander (Chapter 8) ask what explains which crises experience third-party mediation. International mediation varies greatly from crisis to crisis, and this variation shapes if mediation occurs, when it occurs, and who mediates. The authors examine the characteristics of third-party mediators and their decision to mediate a crisis. They discuss mediation supply in crises, the various affiliations of mediators, and mediators' different incentives to mediate. They present trends in mediation across international crises that help us understand when mediation occurs and why.

Vuković and Hopmann (Chapter 9) explore a range of factors that shape the final outcomes in international crisis mediation. The emphasis is on the role mediators play in creating and justifying specific outcomes, which in turn may explain why final solutions seldom reach their full potential and frequently do not produce optimal outcomes. They distinguish optimal solutions from all other outcomes that may be accepted within the constraints of crisis bargaining. These non-optimal outcomes are accepted because of their sufficient and satisfactory nature to at least resolve the current crisis even if neglecting broader resolution of the underlying issues of conflict. Finally, the authors also look at the strategic and tactical choices mediators make in the process of creating and strengthening the outcomes that they pursue throughout the peacemaking process.

Carment, Nikolko, and Belo (Chapter 10) close this part with a case study of mediation efforts in Ukraine, with specific focus on the Crimea and Donbas regions of Eastern Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis captures the essence of gray zone conflict in which parties and strategies are not easily identified and mediation efforts are made difficult by the complexity, number, and array of competing stakeholders. One of the major obstacles facing mediators in gray zone conflicts is situational ambiguity regarding the techniques used by the belligerents against each other as well as the uncertainty associated with the perception of the point of victory.

Part III – Mediating Intrastate Crises

Part III begins with a chapter by Zartman (Chapter 11), in which he argues that the job of a mediator is often considered to be one of facilitating the “what” of negotiation or helping the parties find an outcome on which to find agreement. However, most often the challenge is first to find the “when” or to bring the parties to a realization that they

need to find a joint agreement to handle the conflict or problem because they are in a hurting stalemate. This is the ripening function of a mediator. A second challenge is one of coordination among multiple mediators, which is particularly the case when Track I (official) and Track II (unofficial) mediators are working the case. A third challenge is to determine the mediatability of the conflict or problem: there are problems where the parties are resistant to any attempt at ripening.

DeRouen and Barrett (Chapter 12) examine two key themes in international conflict mediation: conflict type (inter- vs. intrastate) and mediator identity (state/single actor vs. multiparty). The dynamics of the two forms of conflict are analyzed to illustrate their crucial differences and the implications of these differences for the practice of mediation. The authors also examine the implications for the mediation process when the complication of multiple mediators is involved.

White, Cunningham, and Beardsley (Chapter 13) point out that while there is a great deal of scholarship on the response of the United Nations (UN) to violent crises, less is known about the UN's ability to prevent violence from erupting in the first place. Their analysis shows that the UN has had success in responding to potential intrastate crises to prevent civil war. They find that the UN is motivated to act primarily by a dispute's history of violence and potential regional contagion. For both civil wars and self-determination movements, diplomatic action, such as mediation, is a central activity.

Gent (Chapter 14) examines the important role that experience and reputation play in crisis management. Whenever possible, crisis actors prefer to bring in mediators who have both experience and expertise. An analysis of past mediations in civil wars shows that third parties with prior mediation experience and recent mediation successes are more likely to be selected as conflict mediators. However, the need for mediators to produce demonstrable achievements to bolster their reputations can potentially lead to peace agreements that reduce tensions in the short term but do not promote long-term conflict resolution.

Kishi, Quinn, Wilkenfeld, and Gelfand (Chapter 15) focus on the mediation of violent, ethnicity-based intrastate crises in Africa. Mediators are classified into three categories: Western, regional, and domestic. Mediators are assessed on their relative impact in terms of their (1) leverage, (2) decision-making processes, (3) proximity to the disputing parties, and (4) interest/stake in the crisis. Mediation is found to be effective in achieving short-term conflict management, particularly when Western mediators are involved and when they employ manipulative techniques. Mediation was found to be generally ineffective in achieving long-term conflict resolution, although the inclusion of domestic mediators alongside other mediators shows some promise.

Menninga (Chapter 16) explores when multiparty mediation efforts are most likely to occur as well as the effect of mediator composition on mediation success. She argues that the composition of multiparty efforts has important implications for mediation success. Understanding when multiparty efforts are most likely provides the foundation for considering how the nature of multiparty mediation affects mediation outcomes. Salience to the international community is expected to increase the number of mediators who intervene in a conflict. Three characteristics of mediation efforts – the number and diversity of mediators as well as coordination – are explored.

Reid (Chapter 17) explores the question of whether mediators influence the content of negotiated settlements. While third-party mediators are often successful at achieving civil

war settlements, little is known regarding how they influence the substance of peace agreements. This chapter examines the extent to which mediated settlements differ in content from those reached in the absence of third-party assistance. It also considers whether mediators with softer forms of influence, or credibility leverage, shape agreements in unique ways. Mediated settlements tend to be more robust in their provisions than those reached in the absence of mediation; moreover, mediation with credibility leverage offers added benefits by increasing the likelihood of justice and reconciliation provisions within peace agreements. The findings thus reveal that mediators do play an influential role not only in achieving peace but in shaping the nature of peace settlements.

Part III ends with two case studies. Hoffman and Christie (Chapter 18) focus on the multiple crises occurring in Myanmar related to the management of the Rohingya population and the creation of a national peace agreement. Myanmar is a rare example of local actors managing these crises by intentionally limiting outside involvement. These features make Myanmar a unique case for examining insider mediation efforts. This chapter analyzes Suu Kyi's role in mediating these crises. While Suu Kyi has some inherent strengths due to her familiarity with the crisis, she is limited by her inability to shift the power dynamics and other constraints due to being an insider mediator. The authors identify lessons learned for other insider mediators and outside actors looking to support their efforts.

Zahar and Boutellis (Chapter 19) explore how gray zone dynamics affect efforts to mediate negotiated outcomes to armed conflict. Drawing upon the case of Mali where the UN and Algeria have each attempted to bring about durable peace, they argue that gray zone dynamics complicate such mediation initiatives, even when a peace accord is reached. They make it difficult to bring actors to the table, to find mutually acceptable solutions, and to coordinate and impart coherence to the often multiple and simultaneous efforts to find mediated solutions. They particularly pose challenges for the management of spoilers, especially where background conditions include terrorism and trafficking. Yet, the temptation to use security responses to address low-level violence and terrorist attacks runs the risk of closing the space for further mediation.

Part IV – Emerging Norms and the Expanding Role of Mediation

Gartner, Bangerter, Goncz, Sarver, and Schreffler (Chapter 20) observe that many have called for more women third-party mediators to help manage international crises and disputes. There has been comparatively little analysis of the general factors that influence mediator selection and the specific role that gender plays in the process. This experimental study examines how disputants' hostility and the stakes of the dispute interact with gender to influence third-party mediator selection. Previous studies have shown that, compared to other forms of dispute management such as bilateral negotiations, third-party mediation is more likely to be employed in hostile situations. Therefore, part of the preference for male mediators may derive from a gendered preference for mediators in hostile situations, a dynamic the authors call *conditional sexism*.

Hultman (Chapter 21) states that conflicts sometimes escalate into human security crises in which armed actors use violence against civilians to pursue their political or military goals. She discusses the role of mediation in the context of violence against civilians. Can mediation be a useful tool for persuading actors engaged in one-sided

violence against civilians to halt their activities? And how common are such attempts by the international community? The chapter also explores to what extent changes around the turn of the millennium, such as 9/11 and the adoption of the responsibility to protect, have altered the relationship between mediation and violence against civilians.

Duman and Çelik (Chapter 22) note that statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that 3.6 million Syrian refugees have been registered in Turkey. They adopt a human security approach to examine the problems the refugees face in terms of rights, security, intergroup relations, and access to basic services. They also discuss the various roles governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played as third parties. The data are drawn from interviews with Syrian refugees and leaders or employees of the international governmental organizations (IGOs)/NGOs working with the refugee community. Evidence from field research shows the “refugee crisis” is complex and multi-faceted. Both the Turkish government agencies and IGOs/NGOs provide social, financial, and legal support to the refugees, yet, these efforts are not found sufficiently responsive.

Svensson (Chapter 23) observes that whether unbiased or biased mediators are the most effective peacemakers in armed conflicts represents a long-running and central debate in mediation research. He explores the role of bias in international mediation occurring in internal armed conflicts, that is, on the violent side of the conflict-to-crises spectrum. He shows that there are four different theoretical approaches – idealist, realist, bargaining, and emancipatory approaches – that have led to different expectations regarding the role of biased mediation. Focusing primarily on the quantitatively based research on international mediation, the chapter also discusses the research strategies and indicators that have been utilized in previous research for examining biased mediation. Moreover, it presents the current status of the empirical evidence on biased mediation.

Kemp (Chapter 24) observes that the climate negotiations have struggled to resolve conflicts for two decades while ignoring undeveloped arbitration procedures and “conciliation commissions” to oversee mediation as outlined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Instead, the negotiations are in a state of “procedural purgatory” and have relied on a patchwork of informal practices, particularly smaller, exclusive meetings. The negotiations towards the Paris Agreement saw an increasing use of confined, closed-door sessions, and a mounting reliance on the power and often manipulative tactics of the Chair (facilitators) of negotiations. Countries should turn towards adopting the annexes for arbitration and conciliation commissions to enable transparent and effective mediation in the post-Paris era.

Valeriano and Maness (Chapter 25) note that while research on cybersecurity has proliferated recently, we know very little about mediation strategies and dynamics during cyber disputes. There has been scarce attention paid to the critical question of how cyber disputes stop. In this work, the authors consider how ongoing diplomatic or conflict resolution initiatives impact, alter, and restrain cyber incidents between rival states and constrain or start the climb up the escalation ladder. The study investigates mediation efforts during ongoing cyber incidents, looks at diplomatic initiatives focused on diplomacy after mediation in a cyber event, and discusses the possible avenues of resolving ongoing cyber engagements.

We conclude the *Research Handbook* with a chapter on findings and policy recommendations. Readers should be able to skim through the topics covered in this summary,

identify the findings and recommendations of greatest interest, note the authors who deal with these issues, and go directly to their chapters. The findings and recommendations are organized according to the following categories:

1. Mediation achieves results despite facing significant challenges in the current international system.
2. Effective crisis mediation requires attention to both the domestic and international levels.
3. Mediator reputations, gender, and ties with disputants are important factors influencing mediation incidence.
4. Managing a crisis, despite being a short-term solution, is important and should not be undervalued.
5. Make sure the right players are at the table.
6. Weigh the composition of the mediation team.
7. There is a need for multi-faceted and coordinated intervention.
8. The disputants are sensitive to mediation style and bias.
9. The UN must continue to lead as a peacemaker.
10. Mediation is not appropriate or effective in certain contexts.

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