

# Making Peace When the Whole World Has Come to Fight: The Mediation of Internationalized Civil Wars

Sean William Kane

To cite this article: Sean William Kane (2022) Making Peace When the Whole World Has Come to Fight: The Mediation of Internationalized Civil Wars, *International Peacekeeping*, 29:2, 177-203, DOI: [10.1080/15333312.2020.1760718](https://doi.org/10.1080/15333312.2020.1760718)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15333312.2020.1760718>



Published online: 12 May 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1242



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)



# Making Peace When the Whole World Has Come to Fight: The Mediation of Internationalized Civil Wars<sup>\*</sup>

Sean William Kane

United Nations, New York, USA

## ABSTRACT

After a quarter-century during which it was a relatively rare phenomenon, external military intervention is now a common occurrence during contemporary civil war. Research has highlighted the additional challenges that this poses for peacemaking, but to date has not identified evidence to inform mediators assisting negotiations to resolve internationalized civil conflict. This paper addresses this inadequacy by undertaking a structured, focused comparison of a series of mediation processes in six internationalized civil wars during in the 1980s. I find that effective mediation in this era involved now unfamiliar negotiation process designs related to the types of mandates issued to mediators, participation arrangements for talks and strategic choices on how to best sequence and symbiotically link the external and internal dimensions of civil war negotiations. Likewise, internationalized civil wars introduce a distinct class of issues for negotiation, including troop withdrawals and curtailing outside military assistance, non-intervention pledges, possible foreign policy reform of the civil war state and bespoke international roles in implementation. The paper closes by considering the issue of ripeness in relation to internationalized civil wars and the possible applications of these findings to contemporary mediation processes.

**KEYWORDS** Civil war; Mediation; External intervention

## Introduction

The Syrian crisis began in 2011 following popular protest for domestic political reform. But it escalated into a country-destroying, multi-sided civil war on the back of five separate external military interventions onto the Syrian battlefield. In this sense, it is representative of a troubling broader trend. The incidence of so-called internationalized civil wars – domestic conflicts that have experienced an outside military intervention – is increasing. In 2016, the number of internationalized civil wars as well as their share of overall civil wars (almost 40 per cent) reached their highest levels since 1946.<sup>1</sup>

**CONTACT** Sean William Kane  [kanes@un.org](mailto:kanes@un.org)

<sup>\*</sup>From the author's conversation with a Syrian civil society activist about whether external states should participate in Syrian peace negotiations. Her view was: 'How else can we make peace when the whole world has come to fight in our country?'

<sup>1</sup>Allansson, Melander, and Themnér, "Organized Violence, 1989–2016."

The phenomenon of external military intervention has clear consequence for international peace and security. There is broad consensus that intervention results in longer and deadlier civil wars<sup>2</sup> and reduces the likelihood of a negotiated settlement.<sup>3</sup> Regan further finds that these outcomes do not depend on whether the external intervention is foreign troops on the ground or an increase in outside military aid to the local conflicting parties.<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this paper therefore, external military intervention is defined as a qualitative change in the level of outside military support to a civil war belligerent. The intervention can be direct, with an external power inserting troops, or indirect, with an outside state subsidizing the war effort of a domestic party.<sup>5</sup>

The increasingly common occurrence of external intervention and the problems it creates for peacemaking demands fresh thinking on how to design effective negotiation processes to end internationalized civil wars. The conventional international policy response to civil wars during the 1990s and 2000s focused upon reconciling national actors through power-sharing and internal institutional reform, with almost 80 per cent of recent peace agreements containing political, territorial, or military power-sharing.<sup>6</sup> While this approach made a substantial contribution to the post-Cold War international order and has become so widely accepted as to be referred to by Gowan and Stedman as the 'standard treatment',<sup>7</sup> it largely overlooks issues related to the external dimension of internationalized civil wars. For example, only nine per cent of post-1989 peace agreements contain troop withdrawal provisions.<sup>8</sup> This paper will examine how this standard treatment needs to be supplemented to address the hybrid external-internal nature of internationalized civil conflicts.

The literature provides limited guidance to mediators faced with this daunting challenge. Existing policy recommendations include process elements related to the structure of the negotiations to resolve internationalized civil wars and substantive elements related to the distinct conflict issues that need to be negotiated. Key process design proposals include treating external intervenors as direct parties to civil war negotiations and

---

<sup>2</sup>Mason, Weingarten Jr., and Fett, "Win, Lose or Draw"; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce, "Third-Party Intervention and the Civil War Process"; and Regan, "Interventions into Civil Wars."

<sup>3</sup>Mason, Weingarten Jr., and Fett, "Win, Lose or Draw."

<sup>4</sup>Regan, "Interventions into Civil Wars," 461–462.

<sup>5</sup>Mason, Weingarten Jr., and Fett, "Win, Lose or Draw," 251.

<sup>6</sup>Some 251 of the 323 post-1989 peace agreements contained in the Uppsala Peace Agreements Dataset contain at least one of these forms of power-sharing. Many of the remaining agreements were process agreements, partial agreements focused on a single issue, or preliminary ceasefires (Author's analysis). Pettersson, Högladh, and Öberg, "Organized Violence, 1989–2018 and Peace Agreements."

<sup>7</sup>Gowan and Stedman, "The International Regime for Treating Civil War, 1988–2017," 172.

<sup>8</sup>Only 29 of the 323 post-1989 peace agreements contained in the Uppsala Peace Agreements Dataset include troop withdrawal provisions (Author's analysis). Pettersson, Högladh, and Öberg, "Organized Violence, 1989–2018 and Peace Agreements."

sequencing talks to stabilize the external environment before attempting to reform internal political arrangements.<sup>9</sup> In terms of the substance of the negotiations, multiple authors cite a need to move beyond the standard treatment's focus on domestic power sharing.<sup>10</sup> But they do not elaborate on specific issues that may be central to the settlement of internationalized civil wars or how to deal with challenges related to the ripeness for resolution of the external dimensions of these conflicts.

The paper seeks to fill this gap through a 'back to the future' approach. Internationalized civil wars are returning to prominence after an extended period during which global powers favoured multilateral approaches over unilateral military interventions in civil wars.<sup>11</sup> But they are hardly a new phenomenon. During the Cold War, mediators regularly grappled with the external dimensions of civil wars that had become proxy battlegrounds in the superpower conflict. Accordingly, this paper undertakes a structured, focused comparison of the mediation of six internationalized civil wars during the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> This decade is chosen because it represents the most historically comparable period of outside military intervention in civil wars.

As a result of this review, I argue that in addition to addressing the conflict's internal dimensions, effective negotiations to resolve internationalized civil wars require reaching agreement on how to end the external military intervention in the conflict and measures to re-set the external environment fuelling the civil war. This identification of the desired outcome of negotiations on the external dimensions of internationalized civil wars represents a novel policy contribution. It serves to tie together the discrete recommendations contained in the literature and provides an end goal to orient the mediator's efforts.

## Literature Review

The central preoccupation of the literature on external military interventions has been to assess their impact on civil war duration, severity and outcome (see above). Notwithstanding this, some authors offer policy recommendations. These proposals can be divided into two main areas: process elements related to the design of the negotiations and conflict issues to be negotiated.

Starting with the former, mediators generally conceive of process design as a plan for negotiations tailored to the specifics of a conflict. According to the external intervention literature, external military involvement transforms conflicts by altering the military capacity of local belligerents and injecting

---

<sup>9</sup>Saideman, "Overlooking the Obvious"; Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution"; and Jenne, "Above, Below and Beyond the State."

<sup>10</sup>Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution"; Jenne, *Nested Security*; Jenne, "Above, Below and Beyond the State"; and Posen, "Civil Wars & the Structure of World Power."

<sup>11</sup>Jones and Stedman, "Civil Wars & the Post-Cold War International Order"; and Posen, "Civil Wars & the Structure of World Power."

<sup>12</sup>George, "Case Studies and Theory Development."

new actors into the conflict.<sup>13</sup> Given this, external interventions should have an important bearing on the design of any associated conflict settlement process. This is borne out, with the literature providing recommendations on both participation arrangements and sequencing negotiations on the external and internal dimensions of the conflict.

On the participation question, Cunningham suggests that when an external state intervenes in a civil war, it should be treated as a separate party in the negotiating process even though it may back one of the domestic belligerents. With regard to the complex dilemma of how to resolve the linked external and internal dimensions of an internationalized civil war, Jenne proposes an outside-in approach. That is, sequencing the mediation process to deal with the external issues between rival states first or at the very least dealing with external and internal conflict issues simultaneously.<sup>14</sup> Cunningham similarly supports 'sequenced negotiations' to resolve a war's external and internal dimensions.<sup>15</sup>

Moving to the substance of negotiations to resolve internationalized civil wars, the literature provides limited guidance. To be sure, it does reference a need to move beyond the standard treatment's focus on internal institutions.<sup>16</sup> Jenne in particular argues that even well-designed power-sharing, autonomy arrangements or electoral reforms are unlikely to lead to peace while the conflict remains fuelled by external dynamics. Cunningham discusses the international community inducing external states to leave the civil war. But the literature does not provide an enumeration of specific issues that may need to be added to the standard civil war negotiating agenda.

At a more macro-level, the external intervention literature does not address the issue of ripeness of internationalized civil conflicts for negotiated resolution. To put it bluntly, what can a mediator hope to accomplish if external states are not yet ready to depart a civil war as Cunningham suggests? To some extent this oversight is understandable as the external intervention research is not directed at the practice of mediation *per se*. However, for the purposes of this study it is a critical issue to be factored into the analysis.

## Methodology

The increased internationalization of contemporary civil war and preliminary nature of policy recommendations motivate for the development of evidence to inform decision-making by today's mediators. One way to respond to this challenge is to review the practice of civil war mediation in previous eras of

---

<sup>13</sup>Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce, "Third-Party Intervention and the Civil War Process," 359; and Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution."

<sup>14</sup>Jenne, *Nested Security*; and Jenne, "Above, Below and Beyond the State."

<sup>15</sup>Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution," 125.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*; Jenne, *Nested Security* and Posen, "Civil Wars & the Structure of World Power."

intense external intervention. This paper does so utilizing the methodology of a structured, focused comparison.<sup>17</sup>

This methodology recognizes the contribution that analytical induction arising from the controlled comparison of a relatively low number of cases can make to the development of policy-relevant theory.<sup>18</sup> It starts with the identification of a class of events of interest and a corresponding aspect of current theory that requires re-assessment. From here it relies on the selection of appropriate cases and a treatment of the cases focused upon those elements most relevant to theory development (as opposed to doing full justice to each case).

For this paper, the event class of interest is internationalized civil wars. The theory-related goal is to enable effective negotiations to end these conflicts, in particular by adapting the so-called standard international treatment. The six cases selected are peace processes from 1980s internationalized civil wars that produced some form of formal agreement addressing the external dimension of the conflict. The outcome of interest is the success of the broader peace process aimed at ending the internationalized civil war. In keeping with the methodology, the paper does not attempt to provide a complete conflict history or even a full accounting of the mediation process for the cases although basic details for each peace process are provided in Annex I.

### *Case Selection and Sources*

The 1980s decade was chosen because it is the era of geostrategic competition most comparable to today's international environment. Earlier decades of the Cold War also featured widespread external intervention in civil conflicts, but were marked by a normative environment in which 'fighting to the finish' was the most accepted way to end a civil war. In contrast, particularly by the latter half of 1980s, greater value was beginning to be placed upon negotiated settlements and a practice of peace mediation that was the direct antecedent to the post-Cold War standard treatment was emerging.<sup>19</sup>

To be clear, the paper does not argue that the 1980s represents a perfect analogue to the current international environment, merely the best available. Fully exact historical comparisons are impossible, but careful analysis that acknowledges its own limitations can help prevent today's mediators from having to re-invent the wheel. In this respect, a critical challenge posed by the selected time period is the common ripening of the cases for resolution around the end of the Cold War. The implications of this unique historical

---

<sup>17</sup>George, "Case Studies and Theory Development."

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>19</sup>Howard and Stark, "How Civil Wars End," 129.

event for the lessons that can be drawn from the research will be addressed in the discussion of results.

Notwithstanding this, the chosen decade offers a rich diversity of civil war mediation processes that produced signed agreements addressing external dimensions of the conflict. The six selected internationalized civil wars of Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Lebanon, and Namibia span multiple regions and continents. Importantly, these cases also exemplify a range of results in relation to the outcome of interest (the ultimate success of peacemaking efforts). Specifically, the peacebuilding outcomes literature considers Cambodia, El Salvador, and Namibia to be either full or partial successes, Lebanon to be either a partial success or a failed peace, and Afghanistan and Angola to be failed peaces.<sup>20</sup> Most notably, Afghanistan, Angola and Lebanon all experienced some level of fighting in the first five years after the signing of external agreements while the other cases did not.

From a standpoint of mediation strategy, the selected cases usefully include a variety of process design approaches for handling the external dimensions of the conflict. The mediations were also conducted by a range of third parties, including superpowers, former colonial powers, regional organizations, ad-hoc groups of states, and the United Nations. These variations in mediation characteristics allow for some consideration of what types of strategies may be associated with successful peacebuilding outcomes.

Finally, in order to develop theoretical insights that are of maximum policy value, the review makes extensive use of primary materials. These include UN resolutions, UN Secretary-General reports and proposals, interim and final agreement texts, and mediators' reflections.

### ***Selection of Mediation Elements***

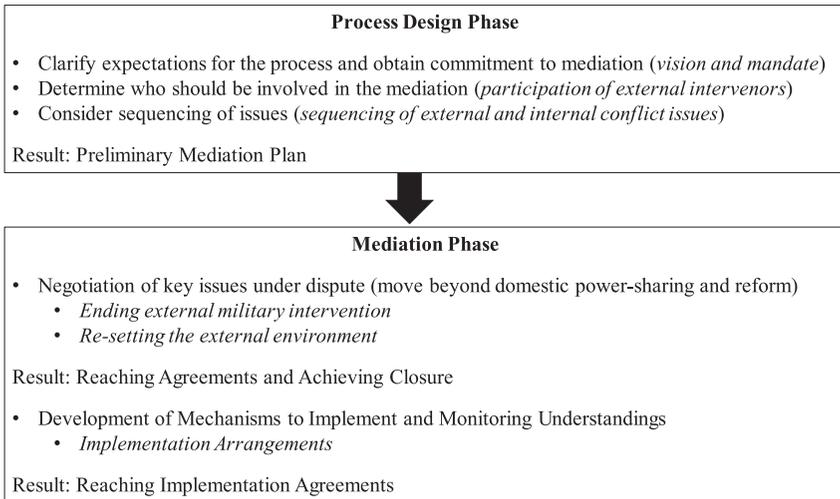
The structured, focused comparison methodology relies upon the analysis of a limited number of key elements across cases. This requires identifying mediation elements from the selected peace processes that are most relevant to the design of effective negotiations to end internationalized civil wars.

Key mediation elements were identified for analysis by anchoring policy recommendations from the intervention literature in Moore's mediation process roadmap. Moore divides the mediation process into two main stages: the preparation (process design) phase, which results in a preliminary mediation plan; and the mediation phase, where the mediator assists the parties to negotiate agreement on the conflict issues.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>This literature relies upon metrics such as a recurrence of conflict, whether the country experienced repeat UN peacekeeping deployments, and democratization. See e.g. Doyle and Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding"; and Call, "Knowing Peace When You See It."

<sup>21</sup>Moore, *The Mediation Process*.



**Figure 1.** The mediation process road map.

Note: Simplified and adapted from Moore, “The Mediation process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict,” 186.

As seen in [Figure 1](#), Moore’s model has preparation steps that relate to the literature’s recommendations on the participation of external intervenors in peace talks and need to sequence the negotiation of the external and internal dimensions of internationalized civil wars. I add a third element to the analysis, namely the vision and mandate for the negotiations. This is because in international peace mediation especially, mandates have a crucial impact on the orientation, trajectory and results of negotiations.<sup>22</sup>

Moving to the mediation phase, the intervention literature recommends that in addition to domestic power-sharing issues, negotiations on internationalized civil wars should cover external conflict issues. Cunningham suggests that this could include stopping the external military intervention and this element is included in [Figure 1](#). In addition, I propose that the negotiations should attempt to develop understandings to re-set the external context that triggered the intervention(s). Finally, following Moore’s approach that negotiations should also encompass mechanisms to implement peace agreements, I include implementation arrangements in the analysis.

In summary the structured, focused comparison is conducted across six mediation elements related to the negotiation of internationalized civil wars. Three of these relate to process design (*vision and mandate*, *participation*, and *sequencing*) and three are conflict issues for negotiation (*ending external military intervention*, *re-setting the external environment* and *implementation arrangements*).

<sup>22</sup>Nathan, “Marching Orders.”

## Results

Using Moore's framework of process design and mediation phases, the results of a structured, focused comparison of the mediation of six 1980s internationalized civil wars are now presented.

### *Process Design Phase*

The review of 1980s mediation practice generally supports the external intervention literature's recommendation on the need to integrate external intervenors into civil war negotiations. However, there is only partial support for the prioritization of an 'outside-in' strategy for the negotiation of external and internal conflict issues. Specifically, while an outside-in sequence can work, it is not necessarily to be preferred to other approaches.

In addition, the historical review suggests the questions of participation (*who is needed*) and sequence (*how negotiations are organized*) should be linked to an over-arching vision for ending external military intervention in the civil war state and re-setting the external environment that triggered it. This vision is *the why* that should inform the complicated decisions that mediators face on participation and sequencing.

Here it is important to note that developing such a vision does not depend upon an internationalized civil war being 'ripe'. Ripeness refers to the prospects for a negotiated settlement to a conflict and not the potential for a mediator to engage with the conflict parties. Zartman's ripeness concept is furthermore not limited to the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate, but equally importantly the parties developing the subjective sense that a negotiated solution offers a 'Way Out'.<sup>23</sup> Putting in place an appropriate vision and corresponding process design for negotiations can contribute to building such a perception, even if it can only be capitalized upon once battlefield and external circumstances align.

### *Vision and Mandate*

In a notable contrast to the mandates granted to mediators today, the visions undergirding all six 1980s mediations explicitly encompassed the external and internal dimensions of internationalized civil wars.

UN mediators for the 1980s Afghan<sup>24</sup> and Cambodian<sup>25</sup> conflicts for example were similarly tasked to negotiate political solutions that included the withdrawal of foreign troops, re-affirmation of the principles of non-interference and interference, international guarantees for the peace settlements,

---

<sup>23</sup>Zartman, "Ripeness."

<sup>24</sup>UN, A/RES/35/37.

<sup>25</sup>UN, A/RES/36/5.

domestic groups freely choosing their own political systems, and interim domestic power-sharing.

Multi-dimensional visions were also present in mediations conducted by individual states and regional actors. For example, from 1982 to 1989 the US mediated a southern African regional peace agreement. US mediator Chester Crocker described his mandate for this effort as including a Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola, Namibian independence from South Africa, implementation of a UN plan for a new constitution and elections in Namibia, and reconciliation between the government and rebels in Angola.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the 1987 Esquipulas II Central American peace agreement produced after regionally-led negotiations was based on the challenging vision of eliminating 'external factors intensifying' civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua (i.e. the Cold War rivalry), establishing a 'peaceful co-existence and mutual respect among states' in the sub-region, and commitments to undertake democratic reform and pursue cessations of hostilities and reconciliation with insurgent groups.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding the eventual emergence of these multi-dimensional visions, the historical record also reveals the difficulty of generating mediation mandates for internationalized civil wars. With the superpower rivalry paralyzing the United Nations Security Council, an important commonality among the six 1980s peace processes is that they were not originally mandated by the pre-eminent body responsible for international peace and security.

Rather, creativity at the international level and regional initiative were required to launch negotiations. Notably, Security Council deadlock did not fully preclude UN mediation in several internationalized civil wars. In the Afghanistan and Cambodian conflicts, UN mediators for example unusually ended up being mandated by the General Assembly.

Meanwhile, an *ad hoc* initiative contributed to the eventual emergence of an attempted regional peace settlement in Central America. Specifically, in January 1983, a Mexican-initiated coalition of regional states known as the Contadora Group promoted negotiations among the five Central American states. Their core motivations were to buffer the Central American isthmus from the Cold War superpower competition and limit spillover from interlocked civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. This necessitated a party other than multilateral bodies such as the Organisation of American States (OAS – headquartered in Washington DC) or the UN (given the two superpowers' role in the Security Council) to 'step into the void'.<sup>28</sup> While several years of regional diplomacy produced the Esquipulas II regional peace agreement in 1987, superpower disengagement from Central America

---

<sup>26</sup>Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 66.

<sup>27</sup>UN, *A/38/68*.

<sup>28</sup>Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*, 53; Meyer, "Latin American Diplomacy and the Central American Peace Process."

at the end of the decade, battlefield stalemate and further diplomatic creativity in the form of a good offices initiative of the UN Secretary-General were ultimately required for peace to finally be brokered in El Salvador.<sup>29</sup>

This first major takeaway from the historical practice of the mediation of internationalized civil wars is self-evident. The strategy for resolving these conflicts should inasmuch as possible be based on clear understandings and ideally explicit mandates that enable mediators to work on external drivers of conflict in addition to internal conflict issues. Simply putting such a mandate in place is of course no guarantee of a positive outcome. The historical mandates issued to the UN in Cambodia and Afghanistan were for example close to identical, but the former process succeeded and the latter failed. However, using the tool of the mandate to signal political support for a mediator to broach the external dimensions of the conflict with powerful intervening states could bolster her chances of success.

Secondly, there is a clear commonality among the 1980s mediation mandates related to the desired outcome of ending outside military interventions and re-setting relations among the states involved in the civil war. This is the basis for strategic framework that this paper proposes for the conduct of effective negotiations to resolve the external dimension of internationalized civil wars. Notably, these objectives were put in place at the start of the various 1980s mediation efforts even if their ultimate realization did not become feasible until the international environment changed and external military support for local proxies began to be withdrawn with the end of the Cold War.

### **Participation**

Mediation mandates embody goals related to the preferred political solution for resolving the conflict. These process goals should in turn inform decisions on whose participation is required for effective negotiations. The focus of the standard civil war treatment on power sharing and institutional reform as the solution to civil wars has for example resulted in participation arrangements focused on national actors such as the concerned government, opposition groups, and domestic civil society.

However, as just seen, the need to address the external dimension of internationalized civil wars creates distinct process goals related to ending outside military intervention and re-setting the external environment. The implication explored in this section is that unfamiliar participation arrangements may be required to achieve these goals.

Starting with the focus on ending outside military interventions, the experience of the 1980s suggests that external states will need to become

---

<sup>29</sup>De Soto, "Ending Violent Conflict in El Salvador."

parties to civil wars talks and even signatories to resulting settlements. This was the case with the Afghanistan<sup>30</sup>, Angola<sup>31</sup> and Cambodia<sup>32</sup> conflicts, where negotiations all resulted in full withdrawals of foreign forces (albeit not long-term peace in Afghanistan and Angola). In the Afghan and Angolan processes, the relevant national government, regional states and extra-regional powers negotiated troop withdrawal agreements that were intended as precursors to domestic peace processes. In the case of Cambodia, the four primary domestic antagonists to the conflict and 18 external states signed a single comprehensive internal and external peace agreement (that included verification of the unilateral withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia). In Central America meanwhile, the architects of the Contadora regional diplomacy and extra-regional powers did not become formal parties to domestic peace talks in El Salvador. But they did remain involved and support UN efforts through the formation of the first instance of a Group of Friends of a mediation process.<sup>33</sup>

While the goal of ending foreign military intervention may require adding seats at the negotiating table for external intervenors, the goal of re-setting the external strategic context sometimes resulted in deferring the participation of domestic opposition groups in peace talks. For example, the 1987 Esquipulas II Central American regional peace agreement and the agreements on the external dimensions of the Afghan<sup>34</sup> and southern African (Angola and Namibia)<sup>35</sup> conflicts can be considered attempted regional peace settlements. In each of these wars, the various domestic armed opposition groups were not included during the negotiation of regional settlements (which only included state actors). The rebel groups fighting in the respective underlying civil wars only gained seats at the table during subsequent domestic peace talks convened at the individual country level. While there is a certain superficial logic to this approach, it proved problematic in practice. As noted, the Afghan and Angolan cases resulted in failed peaces and resumed fighting. Meanwhile, implementation of the Esquipulas II agreement was limited by its purely intergovernmental approach and failure to more directly acknowledge that peace would have to involve political negotiations with insurgent forces.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>UN, A/RES/ES-6/2, Op. 4.

<sup>31</sup>US mediator Chester Crocker the policy mandate from his government as promoting 'Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola'. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 66.

<sup>32</sup>UN, A/RES/34/22, Op. 7.

<sup>33</sup>Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*

<sup>34</sup>Each of the 1988 Geneva Accords instruments begin with a reference to the goal of 'strengthen[ing] international peace and security in the region'. UN, S/19835, 3, 6, 7.

<sup>35</sup>Crocker refers to negotiations on the external dimensions of these conflicts as the 'southern African peace process'. Crocker, *Peacemaking in Southern Africa*, 3.

<sup>36</sup>Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*, 54.

This review of mediation practice from the 1980s demonstrates that addressing the external dimensions of internationalized civil wars can result in unfamiliar participation arrangements as compared to current mediation practice. These unorthodox configurations of the metaphorical negotiating table add meat to the bones of Cunningham's recommendation that outside intervenors should be treated as a separate party in a civil war. The 1980s cases also underscore the difficulty of establishing a single, all-encompassing negotiating forum for all of the internal and external actors in an internationalized civil war. While this was achieved in Cambodia, the more common practice was to satisfy the distinct participation requirements of internationalized civil wars through a mix of different negotiating forums at different stages of the process.

### *Sequencing*

The foregoing on participation arrangements for the mediation of internationalized civil wars is part of a wider process design strategy for how to best sequence the mediation process. Perhaps the most tangible policy proposal to emerge from the intervention literature are Cunningham and Jenne's recommendations to sequence the mediation process to first deal with the external dimensions of the conflict. The experience of the 1980s suggests that this 'outside-in' approach is viable, but is not necessarily to be preferred to other sequences.

The 1980s Central American peace process represents one example of the sequential treatment of external and internal conflict issues. The external dimension of the peace process, the 1987 Esquipulas II Central American peace agreement, called for reductions in extra-regional military assistance to conflict parties in the isthmus and ending regional interventions in each other's civil wars. It also included an appeal to the region's insurgent groups for an end to hostilities and commitments by the Nicaraguan, Guatemalan and Salvadorian governments to pursue reconciliation and democratization to end their respective civil wars. Some of these commitments were also ultimately made subject to international monitoring (including security commitments and elections). On its own, Esquipulas was unable to produce an end to external military assistance to the region that it sought and its state centric nature was viewed with suspicion by the sub-region's rebel groups. However, Esquipulas' very existence contributed to currents of change in the region. When combined with the winding down of the Cold War and the emergence of mutually hurting stalemate on the battlefield in late 1989, Esquipulas contributed to the launch of UN-mediated domestic peace talks in El Salvador that successfully ended this conflict.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 314; and Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*

Elsewhere, the Cambodia and Lebanon processes also produced successful peace agreements that ended armed conflict. But neither entailed sequenced negotiations. Rather in both cases, extra-regional powers, regional states, national government representatives and opposition groups were integrated into either a single process (Cambodia) or simultaneous, parallel processes (Lebanon). In both these cases, external and internal conflict issues were ultimately dealt with in a single comprehensive peace agreement.

While both process design structures have therefore been shown to be viable approaches to ending internationalized civil wars, caveats apply. Some 1980s mediations went beyond sequencing to fully separate the external and internal dimensions of the peace process with poor results. For example, the UN mediation effort that led to Afghanistan's 1988 Geneva Accords was 'addressed solely to achieving a negotiated solution to the international aspects of the Afghan conflict'.<sup>38</sup> The international community certainly hoped that this agreement on withdrawal would enable local power-sharing.<sup>39</sup> The UN even subsequently attempted to launch Intra-Afghan peace talks. But there was no effective bridge between the external and internal phases of the mediation process. Halting Afghan reconciliation efforts were overtaken by battlefield developments and civil conflict has lasted until present day. Meanwhile, the 1988 New York Agreements on southern Africa also consciously avoided domestic conflict issues in Angola's civil war so as to not complicate the US mediator's primary goal of a Cuban military withdrawal from the region.<sup>40</sup> While subsequent, follow-on Portuguese-mediated domestic peace talks did produce a peace agreement between the Angolan government and UNITA rebels, fighting quickly resumed and continued for another decade.

The decision on whether to pursue a simultaneous or sequenced treatment of the external and internal dimensions of internationalized civil wars is a process design choice of fundamental importance. The experience of the 1980s suggests that either approach can be successful and does not support the literature's contention that dealing with external issues first is to be preferred. Rather it is essential to ensure that the chosen process design includes a symbiotic link between efforts to negotiate the resolution of external and internal conflict issues.

### **Mediation Phase**

Having considered how external military intervention can re-shape the process design phase of civil war mediation, this section turns to the distinct

<sup>38</sup>Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 7.

<sup>39</sup>The UN General Assembly saw the Accords as an 'important step' towards 'intra-Afghan dialogue ...'. UN, *A/RES/43/20*, Ops. 1, 8.

<sup>40</sup>Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*; and Hare, "Angola: The End of an Intractable Conflict."

conflict issues that could arise in the mediation phase. While the previous section dealt with the *why*, *who* and *how* of negotiations to end internationalized civil wars, the present focus is on *what* distinct issues need to be negotiated beyond the standard treatment's focus on domestic power-sharing.

The review of historical practice supports Cunningham's contention that negotiations should lead to an external intervenor exiting the civil war. Unsurprisingly, agreeing on this issue in isolation may not be sufficient to end the conflict if other external drivers of the fighting are left unaddressed. However, troop withdrawals still warrant central attention in negotiations. For it is the emergence of a willingness among external actors to negotiate with their rivals on battlefield withdrawals that is perhaps the clearest sign of a ripe moment for conflict resolution.

### **Ending External Military Intervention**

The *sine qua non* of the external dimension of mediation processes to end internationalized civil wars is usually agreement on the withdrawal of foreign troops and military assistance. In all six cases, securing a foreign troop withdrawal (Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Lebanon) or averting a foreign troop intervention and curtailing external assistance (Central America) was a core feature of peace processes.

In the Afghan, Angolan and Cambodian conflicts, the mediation mandates and resulting settlement agreements included provisions for UN-monitored withdrawals. In Lebanon's civil war, intra-Arab divisions prevented a Syrian troop withdrawal from being a part of the mandate issued at the 1989 Emergency Arab League Summit. However, in order to overcome deadlock in intra-Lebanese talks, Syrian consent for this issue to be added to the negotiating agenda subsequently had to be obtained.<sup>41</sup> The 1989 Taef Agreement also ultimately set an (unmet) two-year deadline for the Syrian military presence in Lebanon to end.

The Central American civil wars did not feature foreign troops fighting on the various battlefields, but these conflicts and peace negotiations were nonetheless shaped by the militarization of the region as a result of the super-power rivalry. This included billions of dollars of security assistance from the US, USSR and Cuba to the conflict parties and high-profile events such as the 1983 US invasion of Grenada and US military exercises in Honduras near the border of Sandinista-led Nicaragua. Preventing a direct US military intervention in Nicaragua was thus a central motivating factor for the pursuit of a Central American regional peace agreement.<sup>42</sup> At the end of the decade, the reduction of military assistance to government and rebel forces by the two

---

<sup>41</sup>Nasrallah, "Syria After Ta'if."

<sup>42</sup>Meyer, "Latin American Diplomacy and the Central American Peace Process."

superpowers was a critical factor in enabling the national peace agreements that would follow.

Mediation practice from the 1980s also reveals an important limitation to the criticality of troop withdrawals. In the failed Angolan and Afghan peace processes especially, strategic considerations led to external actors continuing to arm the internal belligerents even after foreign troops were withdrawn. In the context of the 1988 New York Agreements on Cuba's withdrawal from Angola, the Angolan government hoped that the departure of its Cuban military protectors would be matched by Washington curtailing aid to UNITA rebels. Kagan-Guthrie writes that the US did not agree, believing that military aid to UNITA would keep it from losing the Angolan civil war while giving the US leverage over future domestic peace talks.<sup>43</sup> In this context the two domestic belligerents never abandoned the goal of military victory, fighting for two more years before agreeing to a ceasefire (which did not hold past winner-take-all elections in 1992).

In the Afghan case, failure to end external military assistance was even more disastrous. With Moscow maintaining that Afghanistan's Communist-led government had a sovereign right to request military assistance and the US facing domestic pressure not to cut off the Afghan mujahedeen opposition, the 1988 Geneva Accords enabled a Soviet troop withdrawal but allowed each superpower to continue arming its proxies. By the time the US and Russia belatedly agreed in January 1992 to cease all military assistance to the Afghan sides, it was too late.<sup>44</sup> The mujahedeen captured Kabul in April that year, setting off a chaotic new intra-mujahedeen phase of the civil war.

It is meanwhile notable that the relatively successful Cambodian peace agreement regulated external military assistance in some detail. The Paris Peace Accords required Cambodian parties to refrain from seeking outside military assistance; neighbouring countries submitting to UN monitoring to ensure that no Cambodian party had military presence on their territory; and the 18 signatory states refraining from entering into military agreements with Cambodia that were inconsistent with Phnom Penh's newly established neutral foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> In Central America, the 1987 Esquipulas II Agreement also contained a number of military assistance related provisions, including sub-regional governments committing to end military support to each other's rebels and pledging to negotiate regional arms control measures and limits on military exercises. The agreement's verification mechanism proved ineffective however, necessitating the establishment in 1989 of UN peacekeeping mission to monitor compliance (which was

---

<sup>43</sup>Kagan-Guthrie, "Chester Crocker and the South African Border War, 1981–1989," 73.

<sup>44</sup>Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*.

<sup>45</sup>"Final Act of the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia." in UN, *A/46/608-S/23177*,

later recognized for contributing to the restoration of peace in Central America).<sup>46</sup>

A major finding from 1980s peace processes is thus that in addition to foreign troop withdrawals, establishing, monitoring and actually implementing commitments to curtail other foreign military aid to the civil war parties is just as critical to ending internationalized civil wars. This is an important addition to the literature, whose focus is confined to troop withdrawals (e.g. Cunningham). Mediator mandates for internationalized civil wars should therefore ideally include parameters related to negotiating limits on all types of foreign military assistance. This is by no means straightforward; as in the failed Afghan and Angolan peace processes, external powers can overestimate the military prospects and political appeal of their local allies and want to keep supporting them even after they withdraw their own troops. But as seen in Lebanon, eventual consent by the external intervenor to negotiate on this issue is an important indicator of a ripe moment for settling an internationalized civil war.

### *Re-Setting the External Environment*

External military intervention in a civil war does not arise in a vacuum. It is usually undertaken in service of specific geostrategic objectives that are additional to the goals of the domestic combatants.<sup>47</sup> Responding to this actuality, the 1980s peace agreements uniformly included provisions committing concerned states to limit interference in each other's internal affairs. In addition, some agreements included foreign policy reforms by the civil war state to ensure that post-war governments would not be hostile to key external actors' strategic interests. These can be seen as concrete channels to address Cunningham's observation that internationalized civil wars may require peace agreements that reflect the strategic interests of intervenors.

The most common mechanism by which 1980s peace processes sought to re-set the external context related to a civil war was through re-commitments by relevant state actors to non-interference and intervention. This principle was explicitly included in certain mediation mandates (Afghanistan, Cambodia) even if this outcome was only to become achievable at a later date. Indeed, ultimately all six of the 1980s cases eventually incorporated non-interference pledges based on the UN Charter and commitments by signatories to not permit their territory to be used to direct hostile acts against others. However, these provisions had a mixed impact in practice. For example, despite the appeals to external powers contained in the 1987 Esquipulas II Agreement and 1988 Geneva Accords, superpower military aid continued

---

<sup>46</sup>UN, S/23421.

<sup>47</sup>Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution," 116.

to flow into the Central American and Afghan civil wars and only later declined with the end of the Cold War. Nonetheless, the negotiation of such provisions can play an important political signalling role and potentially have an important reinforcing impact in combination with other provisions that address the civil war's external environment.<sup>48</sup>

For example, obtaining agreement on troop withdrawals and following through on pledges to curtail military aid are more likely to be feasible if the intervening states are satisfied that the future political arrangements in the civil war state will not be inimical to their strategic interests. Foreign policy reform is one important policy area in this respect not normally addressed by the current standard treatment for civil wars. In Lebanon for example, the 1989 Taef Agreement devoted substantial attention to defining a special, bilateral relationship between Lebanon and Syria (an external intervenor in the civil war). In several other instances (Afghanistan, Cambodia and Namibia), parties to peace talks at least considered establishing a neutral foreign policy for post-war governments.

Notably, in the successful Paris Peace Accords, Cambodia undertook to proclaim its perpetual neutrality, enshrine this principle in its new constitution, and terminate any treaties incompatible with this end.<sup>49</sup> This formula may have been the only satisfactory conclusion to the Soviet-American-Chinese-Vietnamese competition in the Cambodian conflict. In southern Africa meanwhile, US mediator Chester Crocker noted that it was important to Washington that the newly independent Namibia would have 'internationally guaranteed neutrality.'<sup>50</sup>

The failed Afghan peace process by contrast suggests that the explicit rejection of a proposed neutrality provision can be a warning sign. In this case, as negotiations on the Geneva Accords approached their conclusion, the 'main concern' of the USSR was that 'Afghanistan should have a neutral... regime, not hostile to the Soviet Union...'.<sup>51</sup> UN mediator Diego Cordovez even proposed a 'Declaration of Neutrality' for inclusion in the Geneva Accords.<sup>52</sup> This concept did not however attract support from the US and Pakistan, who bet on military victory by the Afghan mujahedeen.

The fact that a diverse set of peace agreements from the 1980s decade had the common thread of attempting to reset the strategic environment surrounding the civil war state and its relationships with external intervenors is important. It supports Cunningham's contention that outside military

<sup>48</sup>For a general discussion of the cumulative impact of multiple types of provisions in a peace agreement, see e.g. Joshi and Quinn, "Is the Sum Greater than the Parts?"

<sup>49</sup>"Final Act of the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia," Annex V "Principles for a New Constitution for Cambodia" in UN, A/46/608-S/23177.

<sup>50</sup>Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 66.

<sup>51</sup>UN, A/42/600 – S/17527, 3.

<sup>52</sup>Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 300.

intervention creates additional demands to be satisfied beyond those of the domestic civil war actors. From the standpoint of today's conflicts, including parameters in mediation mandates on the reaffirmation of the UN Charter's principle of non-intervention is one possibly acceptable framing to insert this issue into the negotiating process. It is also commonsensical that dealing with the external dimensions of internationalized civil wars may also require consideration of the concerned state's external orientation, possibly through foreign policy reform to reassure intervening states about their future relationships with the post-war government.

### *Implementation Arrangements*

Peace negotiations are only one phase of a broader, comprehensive conflict settlement process that includes agreement implementation.<sup>53</sup> In line with this, experience from the 1980s suggests that steps to re-set a civil war state's external environment do not end with peace agreement signature. Instead it also creates possible requirements for bespoke international underwriting of the peace settlement and possible oversight of its implementation. These mechanisms can be conceived of as attempts to constrain any cheating on commitments which intervenors view as vital to their own strategic interests.

Cambodia is a straightforward example of so-called international guarantees to a settlement agreement having a central purpose of managing the external rivalries. In this case, the 18 signatory countries to the Paris Peace Accords undertook to re-convene and jointly act against any future threats to Cambodia's newly proclaimed neutrality. Afghanistan's Geneva Accords similarly contain a 'Declaration of International Guarantees' signed by the USSR and US, although this proved ineffectual given that Moscow and Washington appended reservations to the Accords setting out opposing interpretations of the document.

For its part, Angola's 1992 Bicesse Accords illustrate how international guarantees can directly buttress commitments to end external military assistance. In this case, Portuguese mediator Jose Manuel Barroso invited the US and USSR to participate in the Government-UNITA peace talks that led to the Accords. In his words, this was because 'many of the difficulties in this process ... can only be assured through ... international guarantees.'<sup>54</sup> The most significant of these was the Accords' so-called Triple Zero provision, wherein Portugal, the USSR and the US not only finally agreed to cease arming the Angolan parties but also to use their good offices to ensure that all other states would likewise stop doing so.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup>Moore, *The Mediation Process*.

<sup>54</sup>United Press International, "Portuguese Mediator Says Soviets, U.S. to Join Angola Talks."

<sup>55</sup>Hare, "Angola."

Finally, international actors may be given oversight roles in agreement implementation so as to reduce the stakes of disagreement between external actors over how their respective local allies share power in post-war transitions. In the successful Cambodian and Namibian processes, the UN was tasked to supervise a transitional period and the first set of elections. In the former case, UN supervision of peace agreement implementation was key to overcoming domestic and international disagreement as to whether the Khmer Rouge should be part of the transitional authority. This had been the principal cause of deadlock at the 1989 Paris Peace Conference, and the proposed UN supervision role gave China a face-saving way to accede to constraints being placed on its Khmer Rouge proxy during the transitional period.<sup>56</sup>

The 1980s experiences therefore suggest that external involvement in a civil war country does not simply end with foreign troop withdrawals. Somewhat paradoxically, preventing future intervention may require a more positive form of international involvement going forward. In this respect, external expressions of guarantee for peace agreements had a mixed record and were unable to underwrite sustainable peace in Afghanistan and Angola. The experiences of Cambodia and Namibia meanwhile suggests that significant third-party roles for the international community in day-to-day peace agreement implementation may be more impactful.

## Discussion

This paper has sought to uncover means to promote effective negotiations to end internationalized civil wars. In today's increasingly competitive and multipolar international system, outside military intervention in civil wars will likely increase the duration and severity of many civil conflicts. This creates a need for policy attention towards internationalized civil wars as a class of events as such.

Towards this end, a structured, focused comparison of six specific elements of the mediation of internationalized civil wars during the 1980s was conducted. It took Moore's mediation process roadmap as a point of departure to organize the intervention literature's extant policy recommendations on participation, sequencing negotiations on the external and internal dimensions of these conflicts, and expanding the contents of peace agreements beyond domestic issues. It advanced these recommendations by developing a strategic framing for the desired outcome of negotiations on the external aspects of these conflicts. Namely, ending outside military intervention and re-setting the external strategic context that triggered it.

---

<sup>56</sup>Evans, "Cambodia."

This framing can help orient the development of mediation strategies for this class of conflicts. From a process design standpoint, obtaining multi-dimensional mediation mandates and integrating external intervenors as full participants in civil war negotiation processes appear necessary to conflict resolution efforts. While uncommon today, these process features were omnipresent in 1980s mediations of internationalized civil wars and helped set the stage for seizing a series of ripe moments that emerged around the end of the Cold War.

Accomplishing these goals was not dependent on any particular sequencing of the negotiation of external and internal conflict issues. Successful mediation processes during this decade employed multiple sequencing strategies, including re-setting the external environment prior to domestic peace talks (Central America, Namibia) or conversely incorporating external and internal conflict parties and issues into a single process and agreement (Cambodia, Lebanon). Notwithstanding this, getting the sequencing question right for a particular conflict context can be – as one 1980s mediator described it – the ‘key’ to facilitating peace.<sup>57</sup>

Turning to the mediation phase of internationalized civil wars from the 1980s, most of the processes included a baseline combination of reinforcing measures. In particular, while agreement on troop withdrawals was core to most of the agreements, it was ideally paired with commitments to cease all external military aid to the conflict parties (the failure to undertake the latter proved particularly problematic in Afghanistan and Angola). Moreover, the full set of agreements studied also featured attempts to re-set the external environment fuelling conflict and intervention through formal commitments by the civil war state and external actors to non-interference and not to allow their territory to be used to direct hostile actions against each other. These military and non-interference commitments were also generally subject to third-party monitoring. In addition, some of the more successful 1980s peace processes (Cambodia, Lebanon, Namibia) reinforced these baseline provisions with foreign policy reforms and bespoke arrangements aimed at reassuring intervenors that their interests would be respected during agreement implementation.

Finally, the cases highlight the severe difficulty of efforts to resolve internationalized civil wars. With the exception of the Arab League’s mediation in Lebanon, all of the 1980s processes addressing the external dimensions of these conflicts lasted for at least half a decade. This reality highlights the importance of battlefield ripeness and raises questions regarding the relative impact of mediation as compared to the end of the superpower conflict in 1989.

The winding down of the Cold War and resulting diminution of military support to civil war proxies was unambiguously critical to unlocking

---

<sup>57</sup>Crocker, *Peacemaking in Southern Africa*, 9.

negotiated solutions to these conflicts. But as seen in Afghanistan and Angola, international shifts that produce a readiness to withdraw troops are not sufficient in and of themselves to end an internationalized civil war. To find their 'Way Out', the external intervenors and domestic conflict parties still require a fit for purpose negotiating structure that reflects the distinct requirements of internationalized civil wars.

Moreover, even early mediation efforts in unpromising international environments can make a significant contribution to the ultimate settlement of the conflict issues. In several of the cases, such initial groundwork shaped the contours of distant peace agreements. For example, Cambodia's 1991 Paris Peace Accords reflected the UN Secretary-General's proposed elements for a comprehensive settlement issued in 1985,<sup>58</sup> the 1987 Esquipulas II Central American peace agreement was a less ambitious version of the 1984 draft Contadora Peace Act,<sup>59</sup> and Crocker describes the key concepts in 1988 New York Agreements on Angola and Namibia as 'remarkably similar' to exchanges with the parties that dated to the early 1980s.<sup>60</sup>

### *Application to Contemporary Mediation*

If ending external military intervention and re-setting the external environment are essential to the effective negotiation of internationalized civil wars, present-day mediators should intuitively be returning to some of these historical practices. There is some evidence that this is happening.

There are multiple present-day examples of multi-dimensional civil war peace negotiations. The on-again, off-again Afghan peace talks of 2018–2020 followed an explicitly sequenced process design: first Taliban-US talks to address external dimensions of the conflict; and, second, planned negotiations between the Taliban and other Afghans on the country's future political system. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has even pointed to US, USSR and Chinese cooperation in the Cambodia peace talks as a 'good example' for the current Afghan process.<sup>61</sup> Mediation in the eastern Ukraine has meanwhile been politically mandated by the Normandy Format of the France, Germany, Russia and the UK (rather than the Security Council). It entails a process design that incorporates the concerned national government (Ukraine), internal opposition (the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics), and an external state (Russia) into the Minsk process and the simultaneous treatment of internal and external conflict issues in the Minsk I and II Agreements.

---

<sup>58</sup>Solomon, "Bringing Peace to Cambodia."

<sup>59</sup>Meyer, "Latin American Diplomacy and the Central American Peace Process."

<sup>60</sup>Crocker, "High Noon in Southern Arica," 397.

<sup>61</sup>Karzai, "Tweet Message."

The phenomenon of external military intervention has also begun to shape the content of current-day peace mediations. Foreign troop withdrawals and ending other forms of military aid to civil war parties have been raised by at least one party in several peace processes: Afghanistan (US troop withdrawal); Syria (unsuccessful UN mediation efforts to limit external military aid to the Syrian parties in 2012<sup>62</sup>); Ukraine (withdrawal of all 'foreign armed formations' from eastern Ukraine<sup>63</sup>); and Yemen (a ceasefire proposal released by the Ansar Allah group includes a provision on "ending the foreign [military] presence" in Yemen).<sup>64</sup>

Some contemporary civil war peace processes have also begun considering the baseline non-interference principles employed by 1980s peace agreements to re-set the strategic external environment. In Syria in 2019 for example, former Iranian and Saudi officials jointly proposed that their governments re-commit to the principle of non-interference in Syria's internal affairs to help end the civil war there.<sup>65</sup> The supplementary concept of a neutral foreign policy has been floated in Ukraine to help resolve conflict in the country's Donbass region.<sup>66</sup> Finally, recalling the international supervision mandates in Cambodia and Namibia, in 2015 the UN was tasked to supervise future Syrian elections pursuant to a hoped for peace agreement.<sup>67</sup> This represents the UN's first electoral supervision mandate since 1989.

However, these instances should not be overinterpreted as representing a systematic revision of the standard international treatment for civil wars. Even in the most intense current day theatre of external military intervention (the Middle East and North Africa),<sup>68</sup> contemporary civil war mediation mandates still centre around domestic power sharing.<sup>69</sup> This is at least in part due to the difficulty that great power rivalries pose to achieving consensus on multi-dimensional mediation mandates. In addition, the norms undergirding contemporary mediation have evolved since the 1980s. While certainly recognizing the importance of regional and international consensus in support of peace processes, mediation today places greater emphasis on consent, national ownership, and the inclusion of a wide range of domestic actors beyond the main warring parties.<sup>70</sup> Concerns on these scores could be contributing to hesitations in mandating the direct participation of external actors in civil war peace talks. Sharp criticism of the US

---

<sup>62</sup>UN mediator Kofi Annan proposed language to this effect for inclusion in drafts of the 2012 Geneva Communiqué but it was not agreed to by Action Group for Syria.

<sup>63</sup>Trilateral Contact Group, "Package of Measures for the Minsk Agreements."

<sup>64</sup>Al Kibsi, "Houthis Issue a Document for Proposed Comprehensive Ceasefire."

<sup>65</sup>Mousavian and Sager, "It's Time for Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Leaders to Talk."

<sup>66</sup>Interfax, "DPR, LPR Propose Vast Autonomy for Some Districts."

<sup>67</sup>UN, S/RES/2254, Op. 4.

<sup>68</sup>Jones and Stedman, "Civil Wars & the Post-Cold War International Order."

<sup>69</sup>Security Council mandates for UN mediation of civil wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen focus upon ceasefires, interim power sharing, constitutional reform and elections. See e.g. UN, S/RES/2254.

<sup>70</sup>See e.g. UN, *Guidance for Effective Mediation*.

– Taliban talks for excluding the Afghan government and civil society is a case in point.<sup>71</sup>

The uncomfortable truth however is that external military intervention signifies that a civil war is no longer a purely national affair fought solely among domestic actors. In response, a layered understanding of national ownership may be needed. This could take the form of emphasizing the need for national ownership and wide inclusion in phases of the mediation focused on domestic power sharing. But this should be supplemented by a recognition of the need to integrate external actors into negotiations for the specific purpose of ending outside military intervention and re-setting the external environment amplifying the civil conflict. Understanding where and how to draw these lines is no simple task, but as the number and severity of internationalized civil wars mount it unmistakably deserves urgent attention.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Govinda Clayton, my colleagues and classmates at the ETH Zürich University Mediation of Peace Processes MAS programme, Teresa Whitfield, Roxaneh Bazergan, the editor, and the anonymous peer reviewers for their very useful comments and suggestions. All errors and omissions remain my own.

## Disclosure Statement

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations or any other organization.

## About the Author

*Sean William Kane* works for the Mediation Support Unit of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. He has supported UN mediation processes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, and Syria and worked on promoting local dialogue in Libya for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Kane has published on a number of topics related to mediation, including political transitions, natural resources negotiations, territorial disputes, constitutional and electoral issues in peace processes, and peace agreement design. He holds a Masters of Advanced Studies in the Mediation of Peace Processes from ETH Zürich University and a Masters in Public Affairs from Princeton University.

## Bibliography

Al Kibsi, Mohamed. "Houthis Issue a Document for Proposed Comprehensive Ceasefire, End of War in Yemen." *New Yemen*. April 9, 2020. <https://newyemenen.com/houthis-issue-a-document-for-proposed-comprehensive-ceasefire-end-of-war-in-yemen/>.

---

<sup>71</sup>Landay, "U.S.-Afghan Tensions Erupt over Kabul's Exclusion from Peace Talks."

- Allansson, Marie, Erik Melander, and Lotta Themnér. "Organized Violence, 1989–2016." *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (2017): 574–87.
- Balch-Lindsay, Dylan, Andrew Enterline, and Kyle Joyce. "Third-Party Intervention and the Civil War Process." *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2008): 345–63.
- Call, Charles. "Knowing Peace When You See It: Setting Standards for Peacebuilding Success." *Civil Wars* 10 (2008): 173–94.
- Cordovez, Diego and Selig S. Harrison. *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Crocker, Chester. *Peacemaking in Southern Africa: The Namibia-Angola Settlement of 1988*. Institute for the Study of Diplomacy Case 335. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1999.
- Crocker, Chester. *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992.
- Cunningham, David. "Blocking Resolution: How External States Can Prolong Civil Wars." *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2010): 115–27.
- De Soto, Alvaro. "Ending Violent Conflict in El Salvador." In *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 345–85. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999.
- Doyle, Michael, and Nicholas Sambanis. "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis." *The American Political Science Review* 94 (2000): 779–801.
- Evans, Gareth. "Cambodia: The Peace Process –And After." Presentation to the Cambodia Roundtable, Monash University, November 2, 2012. <http://www.gevans.org/speeches/speech498.html>.
- George, Alexander. "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison." In *Alexander L. George: A Pioneer in Political and Social Sciences*, ed. Dan Caldwell, 191–214. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2019.
- Gowan, Richard, and Stephen John Stedman. "The International Regime for Treating Civil War, 1988–2017." *Daedalus* 147 (2018): 171–84.
- Hare, Paul. "Angola: The End of an Intractable Conflict." In *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Cases of Intractable Conflict*, eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 209–30. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2005.
- Howard, Lise Morjé and Alexandra Stark. "How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms and the Role of External Actors." *International Security* 42 (2018): 127–71.
- Interfax. "DPR, LPR Propose Vast Autonomy for Some Districts." *Interfax*, May 13, 2015. <http://www.interfax.co.uk/newsinf.asp?id=592096>.
- Jenne, Erin K. *Nested Security: Lessons in Conflict Management from the League of Nations and the European Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Jenne, Erin K. "Above, Below and Beyond the State: New Directions in Ethnic Conflict Studies." *Ethnopolitics* 16 (2017): 48–55.
- Jones, Bruce D., and Stephen John Stedman. "Civil Wars & the Post-Cold War International Order." *Daedalus* 146 (2017): 33–44.
- Joshi, Madhav, and Jason Michael Quinn. "Is the Sum Greater than the Parts? The Terms of Civil War Peace Agreements and the Commitment Problem Revisited." *Negotiation Journal* 1 (2015): 7–30.

- Kagan-Guthrie, Zachary. "Chester Crocker and the South African Border War, 1981–1989: A Reappraisal of Linkage." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35 (2009): 65–80.
- Karzai, Hamid (Karzaih). "Tweet Message." *Twitter*. July 18, 2019, 2:27 PM. <https://twitter.com/KarzaiH/status/1151921389131091969>.
- Landay, Jonathan. "U.S.-Afghan Tensions Erupt over Kabul's Exclusion from Peace Talks." *Reuters*, March 14, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-mohib/u-s-afghan-tensions-erupt-over-kabuls-exclusion-from-peace-talks-idUSKCN1QV2XU>.
- Mason, David, Joseph Weingarten Jr., and Patrick Fett. "Win, Lose or Draw: Predicting the Outcome of Civil Wars." *Political Research Quarterly* 52 (2000): 239–68.
- Meyer, Mary Kathryn. "Latin American Diplomacy and the Central American Peace Process: The Contadora and Esquipulas II Cases." 1992. *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 – February 2014*. 1840. [http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1/1840](http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/1840).
- Moore, Christopher. *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014.
- Mousavian, Hossein and Abdulaziz Sager. "It's Time for Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Leaders to Talk." *New York Times*, May 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/opinion/saudi-arabia-iran.html>.
- Nasrallah, Fida. "Syria After Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian politics." In *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. Eberhard Kienle, 132–8. London: British University Press, 1994.
- Nathan, Laurie. "Marching Orders: Exploring the Mediation Mandate." *African Security* 10 (2017): 155–75.
- Pettersson, Therese; Stina Höglbladh and Magnus Öberg. "Organized Violence, 1989–2018 and Peace Agreements." *Journal of Peace Research* 56 (2019): 589–603.
- Posen, Barry. "Civil Wars & the Structure of World Power." *Daedalus* 146 (2017): 167–79.
- Regan, Patrick. "Interventions into Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas." *Civil Wars* 12 (2010): 456–76.
- Saideman, Stephen. "Overlooking the Obvious: Bringing International Politics Back into Ethnic Conflict." *International Studies Review* 4 (2002): 63–86.
- Solomon, Richard. "Bringing Peace to Cambodia." In *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 325–44. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999.
- Trilateral Contact Group. "Package of Measures for the Minsk Agreements." February 12, 2015. [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/UA\\_150212\\_MinskAgreement\\_en.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/UA_150212_MinskAgreement_en.pdf).
- UN. A/RES/34/22. New York, United Nations, 1979. 14 November, 1979 <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/34/22>.
- UN. A/RES/ES-6/2. New York: United Nations, 14 January 1980. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/ES-6/2>.
- UN. A/RES/35/37. New York: United Nations, 20 November, 1980. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/35/37%20>.
- UN. A/RES/36/5. New York: United Nations, October 21, 1981. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/36/5>.
- UN. "[Contadora Group] Information Bulletin." In A/38/68. *Letter dated 11 January 1983 from the Charge d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Panama to the United Nations*. New York: United Nations, 12 January 1983. <https://undocs.org/en/a/38/68>.

- UN. A/40/759. *The Situation in Kampuchea: Report of the Secretary-General*. New York: United Nations, October 1985. <https://undocs.org/A/40/759>.
- UN. "Annex: Procedure for the Establishment of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America." In A/42/521 – S/19085. *Letter Dated 27 August 1987 from the Permanent Representatives of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua to the United Nations*. New York: United Nations, August 31, 1987. <https://undocs.org/A/42/521>.
- UN. A/42/600 – S/17527. *The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General*. New York: United Nations, October 1987. <https://undocs.org/A/42/600>.
- UN. "Annex I: Agreements on the Settlement of the Situation Relating to Afghanistan." In S/19835. *Letter Dated 22 April 1988 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 3–17. New York: United Nations, April 22, 1988. <https://undocs.org/S/19835>.
- UN. A/RES/43/20. New York: United Nations, November 3, 1988. <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/43/20%20>.
- UN. "Final Act of the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia." In A/46/608 – S/23177. *Letter dated 30 October 1991 from the Permanent Representative of France and Indonesia to the United Nations*. United Nations: New York, October 30, 1991. [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KH\\_911023\\_FrameworkComprehensivePoliticalSettlementCambodia.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KH_911023_FrameworkComprehensivePoliticalSettlementCambodia.pdf).
- UN. S/23421. *United Nations Observer Group in Central America: Report of the Secretary-General*. New York: United Nations, 1992.
- UN. *Guidance for Effective Mediation*. New York: United Nations, June 25, 2012. [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation\\_UNDPA2012%28english%29\\_0.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation_UNDPA2012%28english%29_0.pdf).
- UN. S/RES/2254. New York: United Nations, December 18, 2015. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2254>.
- United Press International. "Portuguese Mediator Says Soviets, U.S. to join Angola Talks." *United Press International*, August 31, 1990. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1990/08/31/Portuguese-mediator-says-Soviets-US-to-join-Angola-talks/7085007262525/>.
- Whitfield, Teresa. *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuria and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994.
- Whitfield, Teresa. *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends and the Resolution of Conflict*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007.
- Zartman, William. "Ripeness." In *Beyond Intractability*, eds. Guy Burgess, and Heidi Burgess. Boulder: University of Colorado, 2003. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essage/ripeness>.

## Annex I. Case summaries

Case	Process(es)	Agreement
<b>Afghanistan (Sequenced)</b>	UN-mediated proximity talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan (who also indirectly represent the Afghan mujahedeen) from 1982 to 1988; US/USSR observers.	1988 Geneva Accords: Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan; Kabul and Islamabad agree to not interfere in each other's internal affairs; US and USSR guarantees.
	Unsuccessful UN efforts to convene intra-Afghan talks in 1988 and 1991-1992.	UN mediation overtaken by events; Kabul falls to Afghan mujahedeen and civil war continues.
<b>Angola and Namibia (Sequenced)</b>	Indirect US mediation between Angola, Cuba and South Africa from 1980 to 1988; US-mediated direct tripartite talks during 1988.	1988 New York Agreements: parties agree to troop withdrawals from Angola and Namibia; implement UN-supervised plan for Namibian independence.
	Portuguese-mediated direct talks between Angolan government and UNITA rebels from April 1990 to May 1991; US/USSR observers.	1991 Bicesse Accords: internationally monitored ceasefire; end to external military support; 18-month political transition. Civil war resumes after disputed 1992 elections.
<b>Cambodia (Simultaneous)</b>	UN pre-negotiation meetings result in 1985 proposal on settlement principles; France and Indonesia co-convene 1989 Paris Peace Conference (4 Cambodian parties, 18 states); Security Council P-5 talks from January to August 1990 to overcome Paris Conference Deadlock; P-5 framework elaborated by reconvened Paris Peace Conference in 1991.	1991 Paris Peace Accords: UN supervision of interim period; quadripartite interim Cambodian authority; establishment of Cambodia as a permanently neutral state; international guarantees of the peace agreement; UN supervision of transition period and verification of completeness of unilateral Vietnamese troop withdrawal from Cambodia that took place in 1989.
<b>El Salvador (Sequenced)</b>	Contadora Group* meetings with Central American Five** from 1983 to 1986 produce draft Contadora Peace Act; Costa Rica leads 1986-1987 talks among Central American Five on simplified version of draft Act.	1987 Esquipulas II Agreement: requests extra-regional states to end military assistance, Central American Five commit to not support insurgencies on each other's territory and agree to pursue national reconciliation and democratization; international verification.
	UN-mediated negotiations between Salvadorian Government and FMLN rebels from 1989 – 1992. Initial indirect shuttle talks followed by direct negotiations.	1992 Chapultepec Peace Agreement: ceasefire; demobilization of troops; security sector reform; creation of a human rights mechanism; electoral and judicial reform; truth commission.
<b>Lebanon (Simultaneous)</b>	Arab Tripartite Committee (Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia) shuttle between Lebanese and external parties from May to September 1989; surviving Lebanese parliamentarians meet in Saudi Arabia in September and October to finalize draft agreement prepared by co-mediators.	1989 Taef Agreement: reformed power-sharing; demobilization of militias; special Syria-Lebanon bilateral relationship; (unmet) deadline for Syrian troop withdrawal. Fighting continues until October 1990 when civil war ends and Taef arrangements incorporated into revised Lebanese constitution.

\* - Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela. Later expanded to include Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay.

\*\* - Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.