SMART PARADIGMS OF MODERN INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION[*]

Ramona Alexandra Neagoş[**]

Abstract

Over the past few decades, due to increasing interdependence between societies, the speed of information propagation, the diminishing constraints of time and space on communication and the simultaneous involvement of an increment number of actors in the same operating theatre, we have witnessed the globalization of conflict and along with it a remarkable transformation of conflict and how it is fought. There has been a surge of interest in the recent literature on disaggregating war on defining the mechanisms driving non-conventional warfare, and therefore, the aim of this article is to underline the fact that the existing literature on international mediation has placed far too little stress on finding new approaches on managing these new challenges. The international mediation regime did not to match the rhythm and directions of conflict evolutions.

Keywords: globalization of conflict, international mediation, smart mediation strategies.

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[**] PhD, International Relations and European Studies Department, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
Email: ramona.a.rosu@gmail.com

In Search for New Paradigms of International Mediation

In international relations, power is defined as the ability to get others to do things they would not ordinarily do or to behave in ways they would prefer to avoid[1]. In today's world, as Ernest J. Wilson observes, as the G-8 nations are accelerating their transformation from industrial to postindustrial economies, where power increasingly rests on a nation's capacity to create and manipulate knowledge and information (...) and any actor that aspires to enhance its position on the world stage has to build strategies around these new fundamentals of "smartness[2]." In the same vein, different actors of the international relation scene can become in certain circumstances mediators, and therefore it is a necessary path to efficiency for the contemporary international mediator to build smart mediation strategies. Therefore, starting with the smart power approach defined by the Center for Strategic and International Studies we introduce the concept of smart mediation as an update of traditional mediation by identifying the specific smart elements in the case of international mediation.

The smart power strategy was formulated by the Commission on Smart Power of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies led by Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye. According to the CSIS report in 2007, Smart Power "is neither hard nor soft—it is the skilful combination of both (...) sequencing and integrating hard and soft power instruments, particularly in the same operating theatre[3]."

Central to much of the literature on international mediation field is the is the longstanding debate about the efficiency of coercive strategies and peaceful diplomatic efforts (in other terms, the hard and soft strategies)

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[1] Richard J. Payne, *Global Issues. Politics, Economics, and Culture*, Normal: Illinois State University, 2011, p. 2.

[2] Ernest J. Wilson III, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power", in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* vol. 616, no. 1, 2008, p. 112.

[3] Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye Jr., *CSIS Commission on Smart Power*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/071106_ csissmartpowerreport.pdf>, pp. 7-9.

in the conflict management processes. For instance, the dataset elaborated by Patrick M. Regan, Richard W. Frank and Aysegul Aydin, draws attention to the fact that "quantitative studies of civil war have largely focused on the role of coercive strategies such as military and economic interventions. These empirical analyses have, of necessity, ignored less coercive diplomatic strategies to manage an ongoing internal conflict[4]." The ECPEC dataset on operational prevention in ethnic conflicts (1990-1998) presents an interesting variation on this theme finding that "that the combination of preventive diplomacy and sticks is not particularly effective and that preventive diplomacy by itself stands a better chance of preventing a crisis from escalating to war."

However, we concur with the view that the conjunction of coercive strategies and peaceful diplomatic efforts in international mediation deserves particular attention in further theoretical development. Devoting more attention to this smart strategy would be an important step in promoting a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary mediation. "The literature traditionally refers, for instance, to soft and hard mediation, to power based or trust oriented approaches (…) however this notions are too simple to describe the nuances on international mediation."[5] But, there are also other types of interconnected smart elements that need to be analysed. Hereinafter we will discuss: cooperation and competition, synergy, cultural behavior knowledge and creativity. Joseph Nye indicates that "in today's world, the contexts of power differ greatly on military, economic, and transnational issues. These latter problems, including everything from climate change to pandemics to transnational terrorism, pose some of the greatest challenges we face today, and yet few are susceptible to purely military solutions. The only way to grapple with these problems is through cooperation with others, and that requires smart power." Similarly, we

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[4] Patrick M. Regan, Richard W. Frank and Aysegul Aydin, "Diplomatic Interventions and Civil War: A New Dataset", in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 46, no.1, 2009, p.146.
[5] Isak Svensson, Peter Wallensteen, *The Go-Between. Jan Eliasson and The Styles of Mediation*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2010, p. 15.

believe international mediation also requires smart strategies in dealing with the question of competition and coordination between the actors intervening in a conflict situation.

The reason why cooperation with others requires smart power is because, as Charles Doran correctly observes, cooperation and competition are conjoint: "entire books have been written about cooperation as a self-contained concept. But that is a mistake. Cooperation and competition are linked inextricably. "Pure" cooperation alone cannot exist as a behavioural concept, that is, as an interactive concept, in human terms[6]."

Although many neo-realists like William Zartman insist that "unilateral action to deal with conflicts and problems is the preferred course, for states as well as other parties including individuals,"[7] other scholars believe that "more mediators are generally able to create synergy due to combined efforts, making them more effective than a single third party[8]."

These disagreements serve to create a dialogue that enriches our understanding of the most effective technologies to be used in mediation processes and the application of its instruments and strategies.

Implications of culture for international mediation

Reflecting on culture is another essential element in mediating successfully especially in the context of current systemic complexity with globalizing forces being in play in all societies. Although all cultures have their own methods of managing conflicts, only in the Western tradition (North America and Europe) there have been developed systematic studies

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[6] Charles Doran, "The two sides of Multilateral Cooperation", in I. William Zartman, Saadia Touval (eds.), *International Cooperation: The Extents and Limits of Multilateralism,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 41.

[7] I. William Zartman, "Conflict Management as Cooperation", in I. William Zartman, Saadia Touval, *op cit.*, p.180.

[8] Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds.), *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, Washington, D.C., United States Institute for Peace Press, 1999, p. 249.

on conflict resolution. For this reason, and also because of the dominant realist tradition (suggesting that all human behaviors are influenced by the logic of political power) determined, until recently, the absence of the concept of culture in the theory and practice of conflict resolution. Kevin Avruch explains that "the dominant international relations (IR) theories of the times were realist or neorealist, focused on the behavior of states as maximizing rational actors and privileging power, usually reduced to the barest attributes of coercion or force, as the *sine qua non* of motivation and dynamics[9]".

The End of the Cold War has brought a reorganization of the world, and the cultural analysis becomes the central interest of a significant number of studies. Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996) starting from the reputed civilization theories of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, offered a new paradigm according to which international conflicts and cooperation will be determined by culture and civilization.

Critics to this theory have rapidly developed, not only rejecting the notion of "clash of civilizations", but also by proposing solutions such as "the dialog between civilizations."

The German theologian Hans Kung answer to this paradigm of global politics asserting that: "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions; no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions;" invoking the need of a "global ethos" created on the foundations of the Golden Rule of Humanity which can be found in all great religions and ethic traditions[10]. The emphasis Hang Kung places on religion is explicable by the fact that, although culture refers to a variety of totems and borders, the religious affiliation exerted, over time, the most powerful influence. Similarly, the Iranian president Mohammad

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[9] Kevin Avruch, "Culture Theory, Culture Clash, and The Practice of Conflict Resolution", in Dennis J. D. Sandole *et al.* (ed.), *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 241.

[10] Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.92.

Khatami reiterated the idea of "Dialog between civilizations", with the purpose of paradigm change from violence, conflict, intolerance and trans-cultural disagreements towards o culture of peace among world's civilizations by recognizing the shared ethical values between them. As a consequence, in November 1998, through resolution GA/RES/53/22, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2001 as the "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations[11]".

Paradoxically, the year 2001 of the "Dialogue among Civilizations" coincided with the events of September 11 which abruptly changed the role of conflict resolution in global politics. The Global War on Terror dominated the scene, and the field of conflict resolution was once again marginalized.

The events of September 11 had a forceful cultural impact, which seemed to confirm Huntington theory on the "clash of civilizations." As Bercovitch and Foulkes observe "the post-9/11 period has already been marked by several conflicts which have a pronounced cultural component. These types of inter-cultural conflicts often appear to be intertwined with the use of terrorist-style warfare. Increasingly, we are seeing attacks on prominent cultural symbols such as the bombing of mosques and temples, while the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been framed at times as a 'clash of civilizations.[12]'"In this respect, Raz Block Jr. and David A. Siegel correctly remark that "whether or not one believes that Huntington's (1996) 'clash of civilizations' obtains, there is substantial evidence that identity cleavages alter conflict behavior via increased ease of mobilization.[13]"

The emergence of a global, cosmopolitan and risk culture requires a high degree of cultural behavior knowledge that the international

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[11] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Dialog Among Civilizations*, <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue/en/background.htm>, March 2013.

[12] Jacob Bercovitch, Jonathan Foulkes, "Cross-Cultural Effects in Conflict Management: Examining the Nature and Relationship Between Culture and International Mediation", in *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management,* vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, p.1.

[13] Ray Block Jr. and David A. Siegel, "Identity, Bargaining, and Third-Party Mediation", in *International Theory,* vol. 3, no. 3, 2011, p. 420.

mediators need to acquire. To date, though a set of important findings has been yielded, as for example the „identity game[14]" formulated by Ray Block Jr. and David A. Siegel, inadequate attention has been paid to this line of inquiry and a closer examination of the cultural behavior is sorely needed in order for the mediators to be able to create efficient strategies of mediation based on profound understanding of the context of mediation, dispute and the nature of the belligerents. Another smart element mediators need to master is creativity. Creativity, along with other mediation instruments, can be learned and enhanced. The mediation trainings, establishing the main lessons from the experiences of international mediators and the lucrative conjunction of those with the academic findings, the preparation of mediators or of groups of mediators to enter a mediation mission, all these factors fundamentally influence the success of modern mediation characterized by a complexity of actors and challenges unprecedented in history.

Conclusions

Today, it would be correct to talk about teams or groups of mediation and coalition of mediators sustained in their missions by well-defined institutions and epistemic communities, which can offer the necessary resources throughout the entire mediation process. There are some promising signs in this direction, like the *Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation* within the USAID organization. Their mission is to "to put innovate ideas and greater creativity into USAID's work so that the agency may better understand and respond to conflict. The office is supporting USAID missions by developing a series of toolkits. (…) These "toolkits" provide USAID missions with access to concrete, practical program options, lessons learned, and options for partners, mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation tools for implementing more effective conflict

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[14] *Ibidem*, p. 423.

programs".[15] Here we can also mention the Mediation Support Unit established in 2006 within the UN Department of Political Affairs. Its function is to provide "envoys with the proper staff assistance and advice (…) and advisory, financial and logistical support to peace processes; it works to strengthen the mediation capacity of regional and sub-regional organizations; and serves as a repository of mediation knowledge, policy and guidance, lessons learned and best practices[16]".

Therefore, the new agenda of international mediation must become more complex, inclusive, flexible, interconnected and sophisticated, in one word, smarter.

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[15] United States Agency for International Development, Conflict Management and Mitigation, <http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/toolkits.html>, accessed on March 2013.

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