Transformative Relationships: The Essence of Adaptive Mediation in Peace Diplomacy

Ishaan Deepak Joshi

TRANSFORMATIVE RELATIONSHIPS: THE ESSENCE OF ADAPTIVE MEDIATION IN PEACE DIPLOMACY

Ishaan Deepak Joshi[1]

ABSTRACT

Adaptive mediation, a sophisticated conflict resolution method, prioritizes fostering consensual agreements by utilizing a transformational, relational, and dialogic approach. It emphasizes the dynamic, nonlinear nature of complex social systems, integrating insights from complexity science. This article explores the foundations and applications of adaptive mediation, highlighting its focus on self-organization, resilience, and locally driven solutions. The discussion delves into the unique challenges posed by complex systems, emphasizing the importance of continuous conflict analysis, participatory approaches, and ethical considerations. Adaptive mediation emerges as a strategy that acknowledges the inherent limitations of understanding intricate systems, utilizing a repetitive deductive process to manage uncertainty and foster sustainable peace agreements.

KEYWORDS

Adaptive Mediation, Complex Systems, Self-Organization, Resilience, Conflict Analysis

I.   INTRODUCTION

Adaptive mediation stands out as a dynamic and transformative approach to conflict resolution, prioritizing consensual agreements within the intricate fabric of social systems.[2] Its theoretical foundations underscore self-organization and resilience as key elements in navigating the complexities of disputes. In contrast to traditional mediation, adaptive mediation recognizes the dynamic nature of conflicts, employing iterative

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[1] Law Student, MIT-WPU Faculty of Law.
[2] Aoi, Chiyuki, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Chandra Thakur, eds. 2007. Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

processes and ethical considerations to address ever-evolving challenges.[3]

This article delves into the distinctive attributes of adaptive mediation, exploring its theoretical underpinnings and practical applications. The emphasis on self-organization and resilience becomes crucial in understanding how this approach navigates the complex landscape of conflicting parties and evolving circumstances.[4] The adaptive nature of the mediation process is highlighted, emphasizing continuous adjustments and ethical considerations as integral components of effective conflict resolution.

As we unravel the intricacies of adaptive mediation, particular attention is given to conflict analysis methodologies and participatory approaches. The article aims to shed light on the unique value that adaptive mediation brings to the pursuit of sustainable peace agreements. By actively involving local parties, embracing ethical considerations, and acknowledging the dynamic nature of conflicts, adaptive mediation offers a nuanced and effective strategy for addressing the ever-changing landscape of conflicts in our world.

II.   ADAPTIVE MEDIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN COMPLEX CONFLICTS

The adaptive mediation technique is an intricate procedure for conflict resolution that seeks to foster consensual agreements between parties involved in conflicts at various levels. Mediation is often defined as a procedure in which a neutral third-party mediator aids two or more conflicting parties in achieving a cease-fire or peace accord. This strategy may also be used more extensively to depict impartial third-party endorsement of national discourse or other forms of peace endeavours.

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[3] Zartman, I. William. 2001. The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments. Global Review of Ethnopolitics 1 (1): 8–18.
[4] Autesserre, Séverine. 2014. Peaceland: Confict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In order for mediation to be successful, it is crucial that the parties involved have reached a stage where they acknowledge the need to pursue a negotiated resolution and make the decision to engage in a mediation procedure. This suggests that they have reached a state of mutually detrimental deadlock, where neither side can attain triumph over the other(s) via force or other forms of coercion, and their positions are unsustainable.[5] This is the point at which each side individually recognises that their optimal choice is to seek a negotiated resolution to the problem. In the field of negotiation theory, this concept is often referred to as the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Settlement (BATNA).

Zartman uses the mutually harmful stalemate analysis as a means of evaluating the extent to which a dispute is ready for settlement. If the parties have not yet reached this stage, it is unlikely that they will choose mediation. Engaging in mediation, particularly under international pressure, is unlikely to result in a successful outcome.[6] In the event that they arrive at a consensus, it is improbable that it will be enduring, since one or more sides maintain the belief that they may get a superior result using other methods.

The second need is that the parties involved in the issue must choose mediation rather than direct negotiation or arbitration and reach a consensus on the selection of the mediator. This might refer to an organisation such as the African Union or the United Nations, or simply an individual with the power to veto any candidate objected to by the parties involved. Adaptive mediation involves a mediator who has a significant yet restricted role in facilitating the mediation process.[7] This approach provides clear instructions on how mediators should handle

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[5] Woermann, Minka. 2010. A Complex Ethics: Critical Complexity, Deconstruction, and Implications for Business Ethics. PhD Dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.

[6] Bercovitch, Jacob. 1991. International Mediation. Journal of Peace Research 28 (1): 3–6.

[7] Winslade, John, and Gerald Monk. 2001. Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

their role to prevent any interference with the natural development of self-organisation, which is crucial for creating sustainable peace agreements.

Several conflicts fail to reach a stage where they are suitable for mediation, either because one side emerges victorious or owing to a no-peace-no-war scenario where the conflict is not officially recognised or resolved. This might result in minor acts of violence and the temporary suspension of peace negotiations. Given the potential for further violence, it is advisable for the parties involved to refrain from attempting to mediate the disagreement. Peace accords may also include provisions for a preferred solution, in which the parties agree to handle sensitive areas at a later stage of the process.

Mediators have had difficulties dealing with more intricate armed conflicts, and the 2016 Oslo Forum acknowledged that mediation has been ineffective in recent times. Peace mediation has faced criticism for its continued focus on the state and its reliance on rationalistic, interest-based, and material-driven methods.[8] Nevertheless, there has been a rise in the number of peace mediation entities among official players, including tiny nations and international organisations, as well as an expanding presence of non-governmental actors.

Mediation is often seen as a nuanced and intricate process that has a higher probability of ending in failure than success. The likelihood of achieving success is contingent upon several elements, the majority of which go outside the jurisdiction of the mediator and, in some instances, even the conflicting parties themselves. The stakeholders include several parties directly engaged, those impacted by the conflict, and other entities, both domestic and international, who may want to exert influence over the final result.[9] Certain individuals may attempt to hinder the progress or

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[8] Bercovitch, Jacob, and Allison Houston. 1993. Infuence of Mediator Characteristics and Behavior on the Success of Mediation in International Relations. International Journal of Confict Management 4 (4): 297–321.
[9] Wilson-Grau, Ricardo. 2008. "When Is Intentionally Designing Your Work Not Useful?"

undermine the mediation proceedings.

In an optimal framework, the mediator has a comprehensive understanding of the conflict's historical background and context, considers the interests and viewpoints of all involved parties, and comprehends the intricate psychological, group, and intergroup relationship dynamics inherent in the mediation process. Their role is to foster an initial development of confidence in the process, which will ultimately extend to the developing agreement and to one another.

Adaptive mediation is a method that acknowledges and embraces the intricacy of a situation. It utilises ideas and techniques to assist mediators in managing ambiguity, obstacles, and unexpected events while trying to promote complicated processes of social change.[10] According to Peter Coleman and his colleagues, adaptive mediation refers to the capacity to accurately detect significant changes in the fundamental elements of mediation scenarios and respond to them by using strategies and tactics that are better suited to and consequently more effective in such settings.

Adaptive mediation is a distinctive method of resolving conflicts that prioritises the process of change rather than reaching a conclusion. It distinguishes itself from problem-solving and facilitative mediation, which are often seen as problem-solving methodologies. Relational mediation, on the other hand, emphasises transparent communication and the clarification of underlying emotions and perspectives.[11] It centres on the self-organisation and self-management of both individuals involved. Illustrations of this novel paradigm include transformational, narrative, and victim-offender mediation methodologies.

Newsletter 2. Outcome Mapping Learning Community.

[10] Bercovitch, Jacob, J. Theodore Anagnoson, and Donnette L. Wille. 1991. Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations. Journal of Peace Research 28 (1): 7–17.

[11] Wadley, Ian. 2017. Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results, Mediation Practice Series. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

The proliferation of informal peace diplomacy conducted by non-governmental organisations has resulted in the formation of grassroots approaches in the area of peace mediation, which has been recognised as a shift towards dialogue-based strategies in the pursuit of peace. Adaptive mediation is a kind of mediation that is transformational, relational, and dialogic. However, it is crucial to note that the word "adaptive" does not indicate the magnitude or scope of change in the conflict system but rather refers to the philosophy of change.[12] The theory of change in adaptive mediation encompasses two fundamental concepts: resilience and self-organisation.

Resilience is the ability of social institutions to withstand and adjust to maintain an acceptable degree of function, structure, and identity when faced with adversity. Self-organisation is the capacity of a complex system to autonomously arrange, govern, and sustain itself without the need for external control.[13] As social institutions become more complex, they acquire self-organisation mechanisms that spread and weaken vulnerability among interconnected elements, enhancing their capacity to resist shocks and challenges in complex social systems.

Within the setting of mediation, self-organisation arises when the parties engaged reach a critical degree of dependency, acknowledging that they cannot independently fulfil their interests and need each other's collaboration. Agreements achieved via a self-organising mediation process exhibit greater resilience due to the shared ownership and commitment among all people involved in their co-creation. Adaptive mediation requires mediators to emphasise the autonomy and interconnectedness of the parties involved, promoting a process in which the agreements are formed by the interaction among the participants themselves rather than being

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[12] Brusset, Emery, Cedric de Coning, and Hughes Bryn, eds. 2016. Complexity Thinking for Peacebuilding Practice and Evaluation. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
[13] Umbreit, Mark S. 2010. The Handbook of Victim Offender Mediation an Essential Guide to Practice and Research. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

influenced by the mediation team or relying on international best practices.

The discussions that concluded the Apartheid period in South Africa exemplified self-organised mediation. The parties themselves oversaw the multiparty negotiations of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) from 1992 to 1994. The parties had established strong relationships and self-organising networks, which allowed them to find innovative methods to resume discussions and ultimately come to a consensus.

Adaptive mediation is a mediation method that is tailored to handle complicated and unpredictable situations. It aims to strengthen the potential of peace accords to maintain themselves and adapt to changing circumstances.[14] In this technique, the mediator's involvement is restricted to enabling a process of spontaneous self-organization. To get a deeper comprehension of adaptive mediation, it is essential to grasp its theoretical underpinnings and how they are rooted in our knowledge of the intricate dynamics of social systems.

III.   NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY IN MEDIATION FOR SOCIAL SYSTEM CHANGE

The notion of complexity is often used to describe an intricate conflict or the subsequent international reaction to it. The field of study that examines the behaviour and attributes of intricate systems is being progressively used in the realm of social sciences, including economics, political science, international relations, and peace and conflict studies.[15] The examination of complex adaptive systems offers valuable insights into enhancing our comprehension of how to exert influence on intricate social

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[14] Buchhold, Christina, Jonathan Harlander, Sabrina Quamber, and Giles Pitts. 2017. Peacemaking in a New Era of Geopolitics. Meeting Report Oslo Forum 13–14 June 2017, Oslo, Norway. Geneva: The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.
[15] Sparks, Allister. 1996. Tomorrow Is Another Country: The inside Story of South Africa's Road to Change. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

systems and how they undergo development and react to external pressures.

Mediation involves mediating a process in which parties involved in an antagonistic relationship aim to reach an agreement that allows them to peacefully live within a shared social structure.[16] Complexity science insights may enhance our understanding of the optimal points of intervention for mediators seeking to alter intricate social networks. According to Donella Meadows (1999), our attempts to affect complex systems typically focus on characteristics that, surprisingly, have little effectiveness. Within the framework of mediation, this refers to the duration dedicated to achieving consensus on matters such as committee formation, allocation of roles, specific timelines for certain procedures, and similar aspects.[17] While these areas may have significance and need careful handling during a negotiation, they fail to tackle the fundamental underlying reasons or primary catalysts of the conflict. The high leverage points of complex systems, which have the greatest influence with relatively few changes, consist of rules, structures, objectives, and paradigms. These features of any mediation process are both delicate and crucial for effecting significant change in the organisation of a society and the resolution of future conflicts.[18]

Researching intricate systems has provided us with the knowledge that change does not always transpire in a gradual manner. The need for change increases, but frequently lacks substantial proof during the first period. At a certain threshold, a system may undergo a rapid and substantial transformation. In mediation, it is common to see this phenomenon where significant progress is not usually achieved by gradual

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[16] Bush, Robert A. Baruch, and Joseph P. Folger. 1994. The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict through Empowerment and Recognition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
[17] Rihani, Samir. 2002. Complex Systems Theory and Development Practice: Understanding Non-Linear Realities. London: Zed Books.
[18] Byrne, David. 1998. Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences: An Introduction. London: Routledge.

advancement but rather in response to impasses or even the possibility of failure.[19] From a mediation standpoint, such transitions provide chances to exert influence on higher-level leverage points.

Social systems and social interactions, such as mediation processes, are empirically complex. This means that they have the capacity to adapt and exhibit emergent qualities, including self-organising behaviour. Complex adaptive systems exhibit significant levels of dynamism, nonlinearity, and emergence, rendering the identification of universal principles or rules that may accurately forecast the behaviour of a given society or community, or the development of a specific mediation process, impossible.

Complexity theory posits that a complex system, such as a society, is a specific kind of integrated system that may adapt and exhibit emergent qualities, including self-organization. Nonlinearity is crucial in the development and self-control of intricate adaptive systems. While a certain procedure may contribute to the creation of a harmonious result in one culture, it cannot be replicated in a different setting with a reasonable expectation of achieving the same conclusion.

A system is a set of interrelated components that together generate a certain pattern of behaviour throughout the whole system. Within intricate systems, the interplay is characterised by dynamism, indicating that a complex system undergoes changes as time progresses.[20] Complexity refers to the manner in which the various components interact and how this interaction leads to the emergence of novel system capabilities that were not present in the individual components.

From a mediation standpoint, the parties involved in a dispute may be seen as components within a system, and the goal of the mediation process

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[19] Ramalingam, Ben. 2013. Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[20] Chapman, Jake. 2002. System Failure: Why Governments Must Learn to Think Differently. London: Demos.

is to facilitate the development of a new system. Initially, these systems exist as distinct entities that vie for superiority. However, if they achieve success, they transform into constituent pieces of a new system, whereby the components acknowledge their mutual reliance and establish a harmonious coexistence. This does not indicate that they cease to compete or abandon their own interests.[21] Rather, it signifies that they have reached a consensus on how to calmly manage their competition and resolve any resulting disagreements in the future while remaining together within the same system.

In intricate systems, the whole has characteristics that are not present in the individual components or in the combined total of their characteristics. In social systems, the collective society establishes and upholds norms and identities that fulfil the shared requirements of the community. This may subdue some interests and requirements of both the individual and certain interest groups in favour of the overall welfare and preservation of society as a whole.[22] The whole might also be diminished compared to the aggregate of its constituent elements due to the fact that "a specific quantity of attributes and characteristics found in the individual components can be suppressed by the overall structure." This aligns with the mediation environment, when parties are anticipated to relinquish some demands to establish a new relationship that would facilitate the protection of their paramount interests.

The terms "social" and "society" evoke the idea of organised structures, including individuals who possess a shared sociocultural, national, or civic connection. When examining individuals within the framework of their societal membership, a distinct facet of their existence is unveiled, including elements pertaining to their societal function and the limitations

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[21] Pospisil, Jan. 2019. Peace in Political Unsettlement: Beyond Solving Confict, Rethinking Peace and Confict Studies. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
[22] Cilliers, Paul. 1998. Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems. London: Routledge.

imposed upon them by complying with societal norms. By analysing the collective behaviour of individuals and the interconnected networks and subsystems within a society, such as family, clan, and tribe, we can gain valuable insights into how individuals find significance in their community roles and how the interactions between these roles influence and change both the society as a whole and the individuals within it.[23]

Boundaries and borders play a significant role in complex systems, which is another component of a comprehensive approach that considers the whole system. Complex systems are characterised as open systems, meaning that interactions occur outside their bounds. These interactions occur between the system and its surroundings, including the exchange of information.[24] Conflicts are often impacted by and interconnected with different interests and developments in their broader surroundings. However, the root causes of the conflict can usually be traced back to the structure and functioning of the main social system in which the parties are situated and aligned.

IV.   NONLINEARITY: INSIGHTS INTO ADAPTIVE MEDIATION DYNAMICS

Complexity is a notion that examines the intricate relationships between pieces and how these interactions create traits that go beyond what each individual part has. It is crucial to acknowledge that in intricate systems, the causal patterns of these interactions exhibit nonlinearity, indicating that the outputs are not directly proportionate to the inputs.[25] Nonlinearity refers to the presence of dynamic and disproportionate interactions

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[23] Popolo, Damian. 2011. A New Science of International Relations: Modernity, Complexity and the Kosovo Confict. Farnham: Ashgate.

[24] Cloete, Fanie. 2004. Chaos and Quantum Complexity Approaches to Public Management: Insights from the New Sciences. Conference of the Association of South African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management, Pretoria, May 13–14.

[25] Paffenholz, Thania. 2014. Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Beyond the Inclusion–Exclusion Dichotomy. Negotiation Journal 30 (1): 69–91.

between variables in a system.

Within intricate social systems, we often discuss the occurrence of indirect or unintentional outcomes, such as fostering teamwork, establishing social connections, or facilitating the development of a shared comprehension of their interests and anticipated benefits resulting from the mediation process. The lack of reproducibility is a fundamental feature of complex systems, indicating that the success of one peace process cannot be reliably duplicated in another.

Nonlinearity is often linked to the notions of disorder, chaos, and randomness, while it is not connected to disorder in the context of complexity. Nonlinearity is a crucial factor in the emergence and self-organisation processes that create order in complex systems. Nonlinearity is the characteristic that sets apart a complex system from a linear, deterministic, or mechanical system.[26] It implies that the system is fundamentally understandable, predictable, and controllable in theory. Nonlinearity in complex systems, on the other hand, makes it easier for them to adapt and grow, which leads to new phenomena that aren't limited by the properties of the system's parts.

Complex systems use feedback mechanisms as a means of imposing limitations and ensuring that they operate within certain boundaries. Positive or negative feedback is used to rectify the system when certain thresholds are exceeded, bringing it back within its established boundaries. Although complex systems have the potential to perform a wide range of activities, their behaviour is usually confined to a narrow set of alternatives.[27] Our lives are characterised by a certain level of

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[26] Coleman, Peter T. 2003. Characteristics of Protracted, Intractable Conflict: Toward the Development of a Metaframework-I. Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology 9 (1): 1–37.
[27] Murray, Carol, and David R Marmorek. 2003. Adaptive Management: A ScienceBased Approach to Managing Ecosystems in the Face of Uncertainty. Prepared for presentation at the Fifth International Conference on Science and Management of Protected Areas: Making Ecosystem Based Management Work, Victoria, British Columbia, May 11–16.

consistency and predictability, which is why we value peace and stability. Nevertheless, people sometimes choose not to prioritise their own interests, even when faced with societal limitations, resulting in the inherent unpredictability of intricate social systems.

The key factor that distinguishes a stable and peaceful system from one that is prone to outbreaks of violent conflict is the extent to which society possesses a robust network of social institutions. These institutions are capable of effectively preventing, managing, and resolving disputes and tensions in a peaceful manner. Additionally, they are able to establish and uphold social norms that discourage the use of violence as a means to pursue political, social, and other interests.[28] The use of negative feedback involves using various social punishments to guide the person back towards conforming to the social norm.

Within the mediation setting, stakeholders use positive and negative feedback to exert influence over the conflicting parties. Simultaneously, the parties themselves utilise input to highlight potential areas of agreement and establish their non-negotiable boundaries. Complex system dynamics and nonlinearity play a crucial role in adaptive mediation by facilitating the development, self-regulation, and adaptability of complex systems.[29]

V.   SELF-ORGANIZATION, GOVERNANCE, AND EMERGENCE

Self-organisation is the capacity of a complex system to autonomously arrange, govern, and sustain itself without reliance on any external or internal regulating entity. A conventional system intended to maintain a certain condition incorporates a regulating device, such as a thermostat in

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[28] Coleman, Peter T., Lan Bui-Wrzosinska, Robin R. Vallacher, and Andrzej Nowak. 2006. Protracted Conficts and Dynamical Systems. In The Negotiator's Fieldbook, ed. Andrea Kupfer Schneider and Christopher Honeyman. Washington, DC: American Bar Association.
[29] Morin, Edgar. 2005. Restricted Complexity, General Complexity. Translated from French by Carlos Gershenson presented at the Colloquium "Intelligence de la complexité: épistémologie et pragma-tique," Cerisy-La-Salle, France, June 26.

a refrigerator. Nevertheless, every social system functions as a self-organising system, since it consistently and naturally adjusts itself in reaction to the combined impact of all the choices made by people and social institutions that constitute the system.[30]

Governments lack the ability to exert direct control over society; their impact is limited to shaping our social structure. They are integral components of the system, susceptible to the same effects and limitations imposed by internal dynamics, resources, and the external environment. They possess a formidable array of tools at their disposal, but they are insufficient to exert control over society. Governments use many tools, such as taxes, tax rebates, expenditures and investments, interest rates, and regulation, to exert influence and promote economic growth.[31] However, these incentives or punishments often prove ineffective or fail to produce the desired outcomes. Social policies may also serve as a means to gently steer society towards adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Democracy is a system of political self-governance in which elected representatives have distinct positions and wield more influence within our social institutions. Nevertheless, their behaviours just contribute to the self-organising system at a higher level. Examples of administrations that have effectively guided countries towards periods of peace and prosperity may also include policies that resulted in warfare and socioeconomic deterioration.

Experiments with various types of governance have led to the conclusion that countries that have a clear understanding that their governments should not have control over the political, social, and economic aspects of their society tend to be the most successful. They understand that for the

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[30] Coleman, Peter T., Katharina G. Kugler, and Ljubica Chatman. 2017. Adaptive Mediation: An Evidence-Based Contingency Approach to Mediating Conflict. International Journal of Conflict Management 28 (3): 383–406.
[31] Mitchell, Melanie. 2009. Complexity: A Guided Tour. New York: Oxford University Press.

government to effectively fulfil its mission of supporting the development and sustainability of social institutions, both inside and outside of its own structure, it must engage in self-organisation.

High levels of public or social trust are characteristic of the most successful regimes, regardless of whether they are democratic or authoritarian. This trust serves as evidence of their resilience in effectively governing their community.[32] These regimes exhibit resilience not just via their capacity to exert control over certain aspects of the system through negative feedback but also because significant portions of the system willingly back the state owing to positive feedback dynamics, such as stability, security, and economic prosperity. Nevertheless, social systems exhibit self-organising properties, rendering any regime incapable of exerting absolute control over the community in which they operate.

The overall organisation of the social system is determined by the interplay between different actors and their surroundings. The system is not under the control of a single entity or organisation but rather consists of several agents who attempt to affect its behaviour. These agents also react to the perceived state or future trajectory of the system based on local knowledge.[33] Consequently, society naturally arranges itself via an emerging process that occurs due to the combined and collective interaction of all the individuals in the system. This process is characterised by nonlinearity and dynamism, rendering it unpredictable and uncontrollable.

Emergence is a significant characteristic of complexity, especially in the context of self-organization. Emergence elucidates the phenomenon whereby the constituents of a system engage in interactions that extend

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[32] Collier, Paul, V. L. Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffer, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2003. Breaking the Confict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy. A World Bank Policy Research Report. Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press.
[33] Meadows, Donella. 1999. Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System. Hartland: The Sustainability Institute.

beyond self-preservation.[34] Within intricate systems, the interplay between constituents engenders novel collective phenomena that would not have arisen had the individual agents behaved independently. Nonlinearity is essential for establishing and maintaining order in intricate systems, allowing for the emergence of order.

Entropy is a natural phenomenon in which energy is lost inside a system. If left uncontrolled, this process may lead to the slow deterioration and eventual collapse of the system. Social systems exhibit remarkable longevity due to their ability to constantly adjust and mutually develop with their surroundings via the phenomenon of emergence.[35] The introduction has presented three fundamental attributes of complexity: a comprehensive approach that considers the whole system, nonlinearity, and self-organization. Additionally, important ideas like feedback and emergence have been discussed.

VI.   RETHINKING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The prevailing approach to mediation and conflict resolution, which originated in the post-Cold War era, is characterised by deliberate and strategic thinking. This statement presupposes that individuals with specialised knowledge can examine disputes, ascertain fundamental origins, and formulate resolutions based on global standards and optimal methodologies. This procedure entails the parties reaching a consensus on a modified version of the proposed solutions that takes into account local circumstances and the key interests of the parties involved.[36] The majority of the proposed solutions are constrained within a predefined set of choices, resulting in the inclusion of a transitional phase of power-sharing

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[34] Dahlberg, Rasmus. 2015. Resilience and Complexity: Conjoining the Discourses of Two Contested Concepts. Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research 7 (3): 541–557.

[35] Mack, Andrew. 2012. Even Failed Peace Agreements Save Lives. Political Violence at a Glance. August 10.

[36] Deutsch, Morton, and Peter Coleman, eds. 2012. Psychological Components of Sustainable Peace, Peace Psychology Book Series. New York: Springer-Verlag.

in the majority of peace accords.

Insufficient institutional and informal structures to handle tensions, power rivalries, and greed may result in fresh outbreaks of violent violence in electoral politics. Furthermore, it often gives rise to political systems in which a certain group of influential individuals seizes control and manipulates the government in order to further their own agendas.[37] These resolute and purposeful design and mediation procedures, aimed at resolving conflicts, have had a success rate of less than 50% over a span of 10 years after the peace accord was implemented.

Adaptive mediation acknowledges the inherent limitations and temporal constraints of our comprehension of complex systems. The intricate structure of complex systems, which are nonlinear and highly dynamic, imposes intrinsic constraints on human capacity to comprehend, forecast, and manipulate such systems, including social systems. This intricacy serves as a reminder to approach conclusions and findings that purport to be universally applicable or transferable with scepticism, irrespective of the methodology used.[38]

Adaptive mediation utilises a repetitive deductive process, known as the theory of change, to acknowledge and manage uncertainty by consistently producing new analyses and scheduled moments of reflection. During these reflection points, teams or organisations assess and make decisions about the identified changes and their consequences.

VII.   ADAPTIVE CONFLICT ANALYSIS

An examination of conflicts in complex social systems must take into account the broader system's context, including the situation's operating

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[37] Lehti, Marko. 2019. The Era of Private Peacemakers: A New Dialogic Approach to Mediation, Rethinking Peace and Confict Studies. Palgrave Macmillan.
[38] Dziatkowiec, Authored Paul, Christina Buchhold, Elodie Convergne, Jonathan Harlander, and Tinahy Andriamasomanana. 2016. Oslo Forum 2016: Adapting to a New Confict Landscape.

context and surroundings. This method highlights the significance of dynamic and nonlinear relationships among actors in the system, since each specific issue manifestation is unique to its own environment. Adaptive mediation proposes that conflict analysis should be a continuous process of investigation and self-evaluation, guided by an understanding of the limitations in comprehending the intricate systems we are addressing as well as the dynamic and evolving nature of the system.[39]

The study should have a narrow focus and cover a very short timeframe, necessitating a versatile and flexible methodology. This facilitates receptiveness and responsiveness to input and modifications in the system and surroundings. Being self-critical and receptive to new knowledge that necessitates adjusting previous interpretations is crucial.

Within expansive organisations such as the UN system, there is often a need for various components of the system to align and collaborate on a unified "joint" conflict analysis.[40] Nevertheless, this might result in an oversimplified or too broad approach. An inclusive conflict analysis that incorporates other viewpoints and thoughts may lead to a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis. This method promotes a more intricate and comprehensive comprehension of the current situation.

Complexity in intricate systems, such as social systems, includes dynamic processes that arise from within the system and are characterised by evolutionary tendencies. The local system adjusts to its surroundings and develops its own patterns of behaviour via an ongoing process of inductive adaptation, governed by its own self-organising mechanisms.[41] In order to implement a complex adaptive system's approach to mediation, mediators

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[39] Kriesberg, Louis. 2007. The Conflict Resolution Field: Origins, Growth, and Differentiation. In Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

[40] Fisher, Roger, William Ury, and Bruce Patton. 2011. Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In. New York: Penguin Books.

[41] Kressel, Kenneth. 2014. The Mediation of Conflict: Context, Recognition, and Practice. In The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice, 640–662. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

must consider the local systems and external effects within their context while also recognising the limitations imposed by framing choices.

A complex-systems perspective implies that mediators must see peace processes as fundamentally localised, with an emphasis on cultivating robust social institutions capable of peacefully managing internal tensions and conflicts. External entities may play a beneficial role in reestablishing stability after episodes of violent conflicts, although their involvement alone is inadequate for achieving enduring peace that can be maintained independently.[42] Adaptive mediation promotes the active involvement of local parties in conflict analysis to foster self-organisation and resilience.

A framework for adaptive conflict analysis allows mediation support teams and parties to constantly adjust their methods and approaches to evolving circumstances. Engaging in participatory conflict analysis among conflicting parties may foster mutual comprehension and a sense of shared responsibility for the solutions achieved via mediation. Public engagement in national debates and procedures is crucial for the emergence of a new common knowledge system.[43]

VIII. CONTINUOUS ADJUSTMENT IN MEDIATION

The presence of complexity in mediation implies that it is not feasible to conclusively pinpoint a problem and devise a remedy using an analytical problem-solving approach. Instead, a dynamic planning approach is required, which prioritises the development of adaptability and adjustment based on performance indicators. Intentional design in conditions characterised by significant uncertainty might impede the ability to effectively adjust and develop. Design and planning should be included in a continuous process of adjustment over the duration of the mediation

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[42] Gray, Stephen, and Danny Burns. 2021. Local Agency, Adaptation, and Vertical Integration of Bottom-Up Peacebuilding: Refecting on Systemic Action Research in Myanmar. Peacebuilding 9 (1): 15–39.
[43] Kleinfeld, Rachel. 2018. A Savage Order: How the World's Deadliest Countries Can Forge a Path to Security. New York: Pantheon.

process. The planning process should include a diverse and inclusive group of specialists, including local stakeholders and representatives of the conflicting parties. Adaptive mediation views planning as a continuous and iterative process that grows with the system it aims to affect.[44] The process utilises variation and selection to develop a diverse range of hypotheses or possibilities for reaching goals, then subsequently utilises results for assessment and modification.

IX. DECENTRALIZED CONTROL

Dynamic systems are complex, and using a management strategy that adjusts to the pace of change in the system and its surroundings is more likely to handle them effectively. The adaptive mediation strategy, which includes guiding experimentation, evaluation, and adjustment procedures, is more efficient in addressing extremely dynamic and nonlinear complex systems.[45] Command-and-control approaches are not as successful in managing large adaptive systems since they require continuous monitoring of overall performance patterns together with careful small-scale incremental modifications.

Optimal judgements in complex systems sometimes need a trade-off between the immediacy of the action, the accessible knowledge, and the time and chances for achieving consistency. Recognising the boundaries of our knowledge in this particular situation is beneficial, as it serves as a reminder to avoid overestimating our capacity to analyse disputes, uncover underlying causes, and provide remedies that span from the medium to the long term.

The use of distributed and decentralised control enhances the adaptability

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[44] Hendrick, Diane. 2009. Complexity Theory and Confict Transformation: An Exploration of Potential and Implications. Working Paper 17. Centre for Confict Resolution Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford.
[45] Kiel, L. Douglas. 1995. Chaos Theory and Disaster Response Management: Lessons for Managing Periods of Extreme Instability. In What Disaster Response Management Can Learn from Chaos Theory: Conference Proceedings May 18–19, 1995, ed. Gus A. Koehler. Sacramento: California Research Bureau.

of a system, enabling it to effectively handle rapid and complex changes both in its surroundings and inside the system itself.[46] This concept challenges the excessive focus on centralised, hierarchical control of the process by the mediator. The presence of centralised control mechanisms in complex systems might result in the deterioration of the system.

The mediator's primary function is to aid the mediation process, ensuring the development of a strategic direction and operational coherence without exerting control over it. Effective management and coordination in a complicated mediation process require the use of talents and techniques that may contradict the conventional expectations of managers, such as possessing a visionary mindset and making decisive decisions.[47] Alternatively, the adaptive mediation approach requires process facilitators who possess the ability to convince autonomous agents to collaborate towards common goals and objectives. These facilitators must also effectively manage a flexible process within a constantly changing and unpredictable environment without excessively intervening or exerting control that could hinder the natural development of self-organisation among the involved parties.

X.   ACHIEVING RESILIENCE AND OWNERSHIP

Adaptive mediation is a technique that seeks to establish peace agreements that are self-sustaining by using a minimally invasive approach. It entails safeguarding parties from outside influences and objectives, promoting deductive processes that optimise their ability to self-organise, and facilitating the creation of agreements based on local context and story.[48] The assessment of a peace agreement should be based on its sustainability, which refers to the extent of the parties' dedication to

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[46] Hughes, Bryn. 2012. Peace Operations and the Political: A Pacifc Reminder of What Really Matters. Journal of International Peacekeeping 16 (1–2): 99–118.

[47] Kaufmann, Mareile. 2013. Emergent Self-Organisation in Emergencies: Resilience Rationales in Interconnected Societies. Resilience 1 (1): 53–68.

[48] Jervis, Robert. 1997. System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life. Princeton University Press.

independently executing the agreement after the mediation process has concluded.

Peace accords that do not have a strong sense of ownership from the parties involved tend to lack durability and longevity. Implementation breakdowns may occur when international mediation methods compel parties to adhere to procedures or desired outcomes that may not align with their interests or are impractical to carry out in the local setting. Adaptive mediation seeks to provide the advantages of external intervention while avoiding any negative impact on self-organisation.

When a mediator steps in to resolve a perceived issue between the parties, they disrupt internal communication and prevent them from collectively responding, leading to a missed chance to develop self-organisation and resilience. The key to achieving effective adaptive mediation rests in striking the right balance between external facilitation and self-organised mediation.

Adaptive mediation acknowledges that mediation is essentially political, since choices on participation and agenda issues have political aspects and consequences. In a particular setting, political feasibility usually takes precedence over the "technical" components of a mediation, which is an uncommon occurrence. Despite receiving professional counsel, no mediator can substitute for the function of the political marketplace in efficiently evaluating and weighing all political interests and concerns.

Adaptive mediation enhances self-organisation, resilience, and the capacity to absorb and adjust to stress collectively, hence increasing the process's resistance to internal political compromises and external disturbances.

XI.   THE ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The linear deterministic assumptions in peacemaking are ill-suited for complex and dynamic situations. Conventional monitoring and assessment approaches are often used in ever-changing conflict scenarios, diverting focus from genuine worth. In a complex linear system, little alterations might result in significant effects in other parts of the system, making it challenging to determine causality.[49] The behaviour of complex systems is determined by both internal processes and external factors, and the internal structure of the system has developed as a consequence of its unique history.

Conventional notions of accountability and responsibility are linked to a basic linear view of causality. In order to track progress effectively, it is crucial to establish performance metrics and set specific objectives. Nevertheless, in intricate systems, the endeavour to achieve a solitary objective is prone to skew the functioning of the system and diminish its general efficiency. The feedback derived from the process of monitoring and reporting on the indicators will impact the system and have subsequent consequences.

Feedback is crucial for adaptation, and closely monitoring feedback and its consequences should be a very significant aspect of facilitating adaptation throughout mediation and conflict resolution procedures. Presently, the implementation of mediation often overlooks the crucial aspects of monitoring and evaluation. In cases where monitoring and evaluation are carried out, their purpose is often confined to ensuring accountability and providing progress updates to sponsors. There have been limited efforts to assess mediation in order to provide insights for improving the mediation process.

Researchers at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue have suggested an adaptive monitoring and evaluation model. This approach aims to improve

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[49] Jones, Harry. 2008. Outcome Mapping and Complexity. Newsletter 2. Outcome Mapping Learning Community.

the assessment of actual value in uncertain mediation environments by ensuring that evaluations focus on measuring the quality of the process rather than merely visible outcomes. This is accomplished by guaranteeing the excellence of expert assessments via peer evaluation, evaluating the strategy coherence and execution of a project, and quantifying observable outcomes wherever feasible.

In adaptive mediation, the activities of conflict analysis, planning, and outcome evaluation should not be seen as sequential stages in a linear project cycle. Instead, they should be seen as interconnected aspects of an iterative adaptive process that are carried out concurrently. An adaptive mediation process involves recurring meetings among parties to analyse the conflict context, dynamics, drivers, and implications for planning and implementation. It also assesses the practicality of current or alternative options and gathers lessons and data for internal decision-making and external accountability purposes.

XII.   EMBRACING HUMILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We have examined the ethical implications of complexity in the context of mediation and conflict resolution. Complexity entails the inability to forecast future events and the lack of control over future actions. On the contrary, a complexity approach entails making decisions and formulating plans for existence and behaviour while also addressing the often-unforeseen consequences of these plans.[50] One may foresee, influence, adapt to, and interact with an uncertain future, but this engagement should be guided by a knowledge of the limitations of one's capacity to completely comprehend intricate systems.

From an ethical standpoint, it is important to recognise that mediators operate based on their own limited knowledge and personal agenda rather

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[50] de Coning, Cedric. 2010. Mediation and Peacebuilding: The Role of SRSGs in UN Integrated Missions. Global Governance: Special Edition on Mediation in Post-Confict Peace Operations 16 (2): 266–281.

than possessing superior wisdom that allows them to bring about peace in intricate social systems. Mediators are obligated to use prudence and closely observe the consequences of their actions on the mediation process, recognising that their acts will ultimately affect the daily lives and livelihoods of actual individuals. To make judgements with care and humility, it is crucial to have a clear and self-aware understanding of the limitations of our knowledge and abilities. This includes considering the potential consequences, particularly any potential damage.

The ethical responsibility moves from relying on the supposed goodness of a tried-and-true model, a preferred theory, or the mediator's good intentions to the people who have the power to decide which model or theory of change will be used in a given situation. The outcomes and consequences that arise are not caused by the assumptions of the model or a misapplication of a sound theory. Instead, they are the result of deliberate choices made with a clear understanding of the limitations of our prior knowledge and the recognition that our efforts to influence mediation processes and social systems will inevitably lead to unintended consequences.

Aoi et al. suggest that individuals in charge of planning, managing, and evaluating interventions should establish institutional mechanisms to deal with unintended consequences. They should also incorporate planning and assessment mechanisms into the institution's practices to be able to predict and handle unforeseen outcomes. Complexity necessitates that mediators assume ethical accountability for their decisions and behaviours, carefully considering the ethical consequences of their overarching theories as well as their specific choices and acts within a particular setting.

XIII. EXTERNAL FACILITATION AND LOCAL SELF-ORGANISATION

The intricate nature of social systems has significant implications for

comprehending and addressing mediation and conflict resolution. External actors possess a restricted capacity to analyse, devise, and implement ideas that may lead to the establishment of enduring peace. Within intricate systems, there is no one issue that has a definitive solution.[51] In order for a peace process to endure, each intricate social system must establish its own institutions to effectively handle disputes in a peaceful manner. International or external mediators may aid and promote this process, but excessive intervention might weaken and prolong the self-organising process.

The key to achieving effective mediation rests in discovering the optimal equilibrium between external facilitation and local self-organisation, which will vary depending on the specific circumstances. Adaptive mediation distinguishes itself from conventional determined-design and directed-mediation approaches by specifically addressing the challenges posed by uncertainty, unpredictability, and irreproducibility that are inherent in complex social change processes. The goal of the mediation is to empower the parties involved to independently come up with solutions, ensuring that peace agreements result from a collaborative process that is under the control of the conflicting parties themselves. The mediator's function is restricted to assisting the process, and adaptive mediation focuses on improving the self-sustainability of peace accords and comprehending the mediator's role in enabling a process of emergent self-organisation.

The use of mediation procedures in conflict analyses, planning, monitoring, and evaluation will strengthen their capacity to manage ambiguity and adapt to changing dynamics. Adaptive mediation necessitates that mediators use a subtle approach that fosters increased interdependence among the parties and discourages reliance on the mediator in order to attain more robust and self-sustaining agreements.

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[51] de Coning, Cedric, and Stephen Gray. 2018. Adaptive Mediation. ACCORD. Conflict Trends.

This strategy is expected to provide peace accords that are deeply rooted in the local context, capable of sustaining themselves, and resistant to unforeseen challenges and disruptions.

XIV.   CONCLUDING REMARKS

Adaptive mediation offers a valuable approach to navigating complex social systems and promoting self-organization and resilience. Recognizing the inherently political nature of mediation, it emphasizes the importance of local autonomy and interconnectedness. Linear deterministic assumptions in peace-making prove inadequate for the dynamic and intricate nature of conflicts. The strategy's focus on feedback, monitoring, and continuous adaptation sets it apart, challenging traditional models.

Furthermore, adaptive mediation underscores the ethical responsibilities of mediators within complex systems, where unforeseen consequences and limited control prevail. The approach advocates for a dynamic planning process that embraces diversity and inclusivity, acknowledging the evolving nature of conflicts. It emphasizes the necessity of finding a delicate balance between external facilitation and local self-organization, tailoring strategies to the unique circumstances of each social system. In the ever-changing landscape of mediation, adaptive approaches prove essential for fostering enduring peace agreements.