

# Understanding Causes of War and Peace

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There is a conceptual gap between causes-of-war research and conflict resolution research. This article introduces a macro-level conceptual framework to facilitate analysis of the outbreak, conduct and resolution of armed conflict within states. Three arguments are advanced, linked to the three questions Why do people start fighting?, Why do people stop fighting? and How can peace be made durable? The first argument is that people take to arms because they have Reasons in the form of grievances and goals, Resources in the form of capabilities and opportunities, and Resolve because they see no alternative to violence in order to address grievances and attain goals. Second, the Triple-R concepts also explain the 'outbreak of peace', that is, war termination and peace-building. Third, variations in the dependent variable — different degrees of peace; here termed Triple-M (Mutually Hurting Stalemate, Mutually Enticing Opportunities and Mutually Obtained Rewards) — are explained by changes within those three clusters of explanatory factors.

KEY WORDS ♦ civil war ♦ conflict resolution ♦ Reasons ♦ Resources  
♦ Resolve

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## *Introduction*

What makes countrymen start killing each other? And what makes them stop? The research field devoted to the causation and resolution of armed intra-state conflict has both widened and deepened since the end of the Cold War. Important findings have been established, others are inconsistent or inconclusive. In certain sub-fields, our knowledge remains fragmentary. Occasionally, the search for generalizable knowledge even appears an elusive quest.

A problem facing peace and conflict research is the gap between causes-of-war theory and conflict resolution theory. This article is motivated by the fact that, although conflict and conflict resolution are not two sides of the same

coin, the conceptual relationship between them is in need of improvement. A macro-level conceptual framework to facilitate the analysis of armed conflicts and conflict resolution processes, particularly within states, is therefore introduced.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, three basic arguments linked to three crucial questions are advanced: Why do people start fighting?, Why do people stop fighting? and How can peace be made durable?

The first argument is that people take to arms because they have *Reasons* in the form of grievances and goals, they have *Resources* in the form of capabilities and opportunities and they have *Resolve* because they perceive of no alternative to violence in order to achieve their goals. The academic discourse has for the past decade focused much on the concept of greed, that is, on the opportunity structure for violence and rebellion. Without downgrading the role of opportunity, the argument made here is that grievances, leadership and decision-making processes must be brought back into the picture. A holistic point of departure is required for explaining complex phenomena, such as wars.

The second argument is that the three concepts above can also be used to explain the 'outbreak of peace', that is, war termination and peace-building. Variations in the dependent variable, e.g. different degrees of peace, are thus explained by changes in variable values, or by the addition or deletion of variables, within the three R-clusters of explanatory factors.

The third argument is that specific, process-based variations in the degree of stability and durability of the dependent variable 'peace' — as expressed in the three concepts MHS (*Mutually Hurting Stalemate*), MEO (*Mutually Enticing Opportunity*) and MOR (*Mutually Obtained Rewards*) — are explained by particular variable combinations in the Reasons, Resources and Resolve clusters during the conflict resolution process. In terms of the concepts introduced here, the *Triple-R triangle* is the set of interconnected, explanatory variables that sheds light on the dependent variable, *the Triple-M triangle*.

The conceptual framework does not, strictly speaking, offer new theoretical findings. What it does claim to offer is a novel and constructive way of framing the pursuit of new or more solid findings on the causes of war and peace. It is not paradigm-bound. It can be applied irrespective of theoretical point of departure, methodology employed or empirical data analysed. The bird's-eye view concepts of the framework are intended to be used to derive more precise propositions. An underlying assumption also needs to be accounted for: parties are assumed to be non-unitary; they are seen as consisting of different groupings, factions, opinions, etc.<sup>2</sup>

In the following, this article first introduces the concepts Reasons, Resources and Resolve, relates them to the existing conceptual discourse on causes of war and argues the rationale for employing them. Second, it relates

the Triple-R concepts to the Triple-M triangle, as applied to the phased process of conflict resolution. The article ends by summarizing the argument for using the Triple-R and Triple-M triangles as conceptual tools, in both theory and political practice.

### *The Triple-R Triangle*

The causes-of-war literature is replete with meta-level concepts that capture what sort of variable groupings explain the outbreak of organized armed violence. To mention but a few examples, Sprout and Sprout (1957) introduced the concepts of structure-environment and agency-entity; Starr (1978) and others developed the related concepts of opportunity and willingness; Gurr (1970, 1993) frequently refers to grievances and mobilization; Tilly (1978) uses terms like organization, resources, opportunity and interest; Levy (1983) talks about capabilities and intentions; Azar (1990) combines identity with need deprivation and bad governance; Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2001) focused on the concept of greed; Fearon (1995) and Reiter (2003) refer to capabilities and resolve. This sometimes puzzling array of theoretical concepts suffers from two deficiencies. First, the concepts are too many and sometimes overlapping in terms of what specific variables or phenomena they refer to and, second, they are not frequently referred to in conflict resolution research. The important exception to the latter claim is bargaining theory, an attempt at providing a unified theoretical framework for the explanation of the origin, conduct and termination of armed conflicts. Conceptualizing war as a bargaining failure, the theory identifies the main causal mechanisms behind political violence: uncertainty and security dilemmas, incentives to misrepresent information about capabilities and resolve, problems to credibly commit to upholding mutually beneficial deals and issue indivisibility (Fearon, 1995; Lake, 2003; Reiter, 2003).

Given these deficiencies, what could be a useful way of disaggregating and re-conceptualizing causes of intra-state armed conflict? We may imagine a conflict actor contemplating the dangerous option of transforming a situation of intra-state tension and latent conflict into large-scale, manifest violence. There are considerable risks involved, including the ultimate risk of loss of life. What is required for that actor to actually take such a decisive step? It is argued here that the answer 'Yes' to three fundamental questions is required: (1) Do we *want* to do it? (2) *Can* we do it? (3) Do we *dare* to do it?

The questions and the answers to them translate into three concepts: Reasons, Resources and Resolve, constituting three distinct and interacting clusters of variables that explain changes in behaviour and attitudes of conflicting parties. The three R-clusters thus form an interacting triangle. Resolve has a special status for three reasons: it is, in part, both a product of

and an influence on the other two corners; it is crucial for behavioural and attitudinal change; and it is more difficult to measure due to its location in the 'mind', the black box of perceptions and belief systems of the actors. In the following, this article elaborates further on these three concepts and their relationship.

### *Reasons*

The 'Reasons'-concept provides answers to the question 'Do we want to do it?' Reasons, then, have to do with issue-generated cleavages in society. They concern what the conflict is about in terms of the substantive or procedural grievances of the conflicting parties. A distinction is here made between two types of reason. First, there are background reasons, often also referred to as structural conditions or underlying, remote causes. Second, there are proximate reasons, where proximity refers to a temporal closeness to the outbreak of armed conflict.

#### *Background Reasons*

There are at least two external explanations behind the existence of background conditions conducive to intra-state armed conflict. First, a protracted economic and political subordination to a powerful and exploitative external actor in the recent or distant past — such as was the case during colonialism, for example — fuels such conditions (Ayoob, 1992; Job, 1992; Stedman, 1996a). Another explanation has to do with the asymmetric character and structural dynamics of the international system which, it is argued, systematically tends to favour some of its members and disfavour others, leading to problems for the disfavoured in terms of, for example, problems with state-making and the establishment of legitimate central authority (Ayoob, 1995; Goldgeier and McFaul, 1992; Holsti, 1996; Mason, 2003; Wallerstein, 1991).

The above contributes to a weak state structure, with low capability to govern effectively and deliver public goods to citizens. Instead, these processes and conditions tend to favour the emergence of structural background reasons for war, taking the form of internal systems of governance that become exclusionary, discriminatory or otherwise generate inequality in terms of their political, economic or identity dimensions (Azar, 1990; Gurr, 1993). People, ordinary citizens as well as elites, may be excluded or otherwise discriminated against when it comes to political participation, access to political power or decision-making. Similarly, economic systems can be discriminatory, taking the form of denial of access to the fruits of economic development and wealth. It is also found in absolute levels of poverty and scarcity, and it can be

observed in terms of relative socioeconomic inequality or demographic and environmental stress. Finally, sustained discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour often also emerges on the basis of group identity and historical antagonism between groups, today frequently linked to patrimonial rule and high levels of corruption. This hardens social identities and creates collective uncertainty and fear of the future, both horizontally and vertically, between different identity groups. A weak or weakening state also tends to politicize identity and fuel group-based loyalties (Horowitz, 1985; Kaufmann, 1996; Paris, 2004; Young, 2002).<sup>3</sup>

Following Holsti (1996) and others, it is here argued that legitimacy is a critical variable when attempting to explain the relative weakness and strength of states. Vertical legitimacy establishes the connection, the 'right to rule', between citizens, society, institutions and regimes. It is thus the belief by the population in the rightfulness and authority of holders of state power to rule. Horizontal legitimacy refers to attitudes and practices of individuals and groups within the state towards each other. Thus, vertical legitimacy is about responsible authority and voluntary subordination, horizontal legitimacy is about mutual acceptance and tolerance at elite and mass levels. Linked to both dimensions of legitimacy, the term *legitimacy gap* is used here with reference to *either* the difference between what citizens perceive they have a right to expect (or not to expect) from their state in terms of protection, political and cultural freedom, socio-economic well-being, etc. in exchange for taxes and loyalty, on the one hand, and what the state is willing or able to do for its citizens, on the other *or* the difference between what groups expect from each other in terms of understanding, benevolence and magnanimity, on the one hand, and the actual leniency manifested in group relations, on the other. The implied relationship is that background reasons are manifested in a legitimacy gap, and the wider this gap becomes, the greater the risk for intra-state violence.<sup>4</sup>

Theoretically, the notion of background reasons conducive to the outbreak of armed conflict refers to factors with three distinctive features. First, such factors are — while not totally fixed parameters — characterized by a high degree of value inertia. They change only slowly and over time. Second, in terms of conflict causation, these factors are of an indirect nature. Rather, background reasons constitute long-term enabling conditions for conflict: fault lines that over time have become almost built into society, providing fertile ground and a conducive environment for conflict. While they correlate positively with armed intra-state conflict, they need to interact with other factors in order for the conflict to become violent. Third, they pose special problems for conflict resolution. On the one hand, they do not need to be addressed in order to terminate an armed conflict. Therefore, they are, at best, dealt with only poorly in most conflict resolution processes. On the

other hand, their twin characteristics of being both difficult to change due to their structural nature *and* providing permissive conditions for new conflict imply that not addressing them properly may impact negatively on the prospects for durable peace and stability.

### *Proximate Reasons*

It was argued above that background conditions are important, yet neither sufficient nor necessary to initiate armed conflict. We may, thus, observe states and relationships that come across as relatively peaceful and relatively stable, yet at the same time are ripe with inequality, discrimination and exclusion. So, if background reasons do not start wars, which — if any — reasons do? It is logical to argue that something has to happen to this relatively stable system; there has to be a sudden widening of the legitimacy gap. This could be *either* a marked change for the worse for an identifiable group, actor or party with respect to one or more of the background reasons *or* a sudden shock to the whole system, changing the entire set of conditions underpinning the previous stability. Examples of the former might be economic or political decisions that alter the relationship between groups: massive price increases in basic staple foods, big infrastructure projects threatening the livelihood and lifestyle of those living in the area, the removal of rights previously granted — such as autonomy or self-governance, or ideological shifts making previously accepted injustices be seen as a reason for rebellion (Cramer, 2003; Gurr, 1993). Examples of the latter might be a serious drought, the sudden departure of a dictator leading to strong pressures for democratization or a dramatic incident, a trigger, related to the fault lines of conflict in society.<sup>5</sup> In both senses, then, proximate reasons are not about absolute levels, they are about relative worsening.

To sum up, the motive dimension related to the outbreak of intra-state armed conflict is captured in the concepts of Background and Proximate Reasons, generating a legitimacy gap made up of issue-based cleavages or fault lines in society. Reasons, however, are not sufficient components of an explanation of the onset of war. There are, in other words, situations with both background and proximate reasons eminently present, yet with no outbreak of war. This means that there is more to initiating armed conflict than an issue to fight over.

### *Resources*

The Resource-concept refers to that which is needed in order to answer ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Can we do it?’ This implies that the concept covers a broad range of concrete things. First, there are *military capabilities* necessary for

fighting a war, such as soldiers, weapons, supporters and money. Second, it refers to certain *organizational capabilities* related to mobilization, such as networking capabilities (Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1978). The degree of capabilities needed in the two respects mentioned differs markedly depending on potential scope and intensity of a conflict, the opponents' resources, etc. In terms of onset of conflict, analysts today tend to take these capability requirements as givens or, at least, as less interesting in terms of explaining variations in outcome. Instead, the focus is on what is here seen as the third resource dimension, namely that the resources available to a conflict party — either in absolute terms or in relation to the opponent — are determined by environmental or contextual constraints and possibilities, the so-called *opportunity structure*, in a given situation. Some aspects of the opportunity structure are more or less fixed, such a mountainous terrain, poor road networks or deep jungles. Other aspects are dynamic, for example, a sudden political instability at the centre of a weak and incapacitated state, the possibility to loot easily marketable goods with high value-to-weight ratio, or the presence/absence/appearance of diasporas, foreign governments or foreign rebels willing to supply rebels or governments with money, weapons, training, safe havens, etc. (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

More specifically, research has focused on changes in the opportunity structure, raising the likelihood of war. In particular, as of the mid-1990s, researchers have begun to investigate the political economy of civil war, especially in the emerging context of globalization, weak central state authority and the increasing role played by non-state actors (Ballentine and Sherman, 2003; Berdal and Malone, 2000; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Kaldor, 1999). It is argued that there are benefits of war that do not accrue in peacetime, especially in states with low income levels and high unemployment, in the form of positions of power, authority and status, access to wealth and personal enrichment through kleptocratic behaviour, profiteering on the spoils of war, etc. These benefits, in and of themselves, may function as a cause of armed conflict. This points to an alternative instrumentality of war: the objective of winning the war by defeating the enemy becomes replaced by 'economically driven interests in continued fighting and the institutionalization of violence at what is for some clearly a profitable level of intensity' (Berdal and Malone, 2000: 2). War does not represent anarchy, but an alternative order for obtaining and distributing power and profit. This is close to the theories launched by Paul Collier and others about the role of greed in explaining civil war (Collier, 2000; Collier and Hoeffler, 1998, 2001).

Indeed, powerful individuals as well as groups may benefit from war; they may develop an interest in its continuation or perpetuation and this will impact on conduct in, scope and duration of armed conflict. The combination of greedy leaders and opportunities for looting is something that

deserves continued attention, academically and politically. Nevertheless, the debate positing greed *vs* creed/grievance, loot-seeking *vs* justice-seeking has been somewhat confusing. First, it has focused almost exclusively on opportunities for rebellion and neglected the looting carried out by government officials. Second, in the terminology employed in this article, a greedy leader that wants more power or money or both, has a grievance. Greed is a form of grievance, albeit one that may be immoral or not objectively legitimate. Nevertheless, greed, creed and grievance are all part of the motive dimension, they refer to 'Reasons'.

Easily lootable alluvial diamonds, on the other hand, are a resource — an option, a tool, something that is part of the opportunity structure in the conflict context. Such diamonds might be used by some to fatten their Swiss bank accounts and by others to finance a justice-seeking war effort. If the former goal is dominant, then the tactic might be to make permanent a state of ungovernability so as to facilitate infinite pilfering. If the latter goal is dominant, then the objective is to win the war and set out to correct the injustices with the help of the diamonds, arguing that the ends justify the means. Most often, however, the realities of conflict and insurgency require 'ambiguous and evolving combinations of justice-seeking and loot-seeking over the course of a conflict' (Cater, 2003: 41). By classifying greed as a grievance (Reason), and by keeping reasons and resources apart, we are better equipped to conceptually explain under what conditions different combinations of reasons and resources lead to various types of behaviour, by rebels as well as by governments.

However, we may observe the presence of background and proximate reasons, as well as resources in the form of capabilities and an opportunity structure in favour of war, yet still no war. It remains, therefore, to introduce the third corner of the Triple-R triangle.

### *Resolve*

Resolve has to do with questions like 'Do we dare to do it?' and 'Must we do it?' It concerns willpower, alternatives and their underpinnings. Decisive here is the range of perceived alternatives and the assessment of costs and benefits of different alternatives. Can we reach our objectives any other way than through the use of violence or not? How likely are we to succeed? This rationality-driven process in which actors evaluate alternatives in order to minimize risks and maximize benefits concerns outcome validity and is often associated with expected utility approaches (Bueno de Mesquita, 1985; Lichbach, 1995). However, the process leading up to the set of alternatives also needs to be problematized, and this is done by including a dimension which focuses on the mental processes that organize information and select the final subset of alternatives (Mintz, 2004, Mintz and Geva, 1997).



One may thus argue that resolve is, in part, about belief systems: the first step concerns the input into that belief system in the form of existing reasons and resources and the second step focuses on the output in the form of choices or decisions (Friedman and Starr, 1997; Most and Starr, 1989; Sprout and Sprout (1957); Starr, 1978; see also Geva et al., 2000; Rosati, 2000). Resolve is, essentially, a black-boxed process, an aggregated cognitive concept that refers to the degree of collective mobilized mental readiness for and willingness to use resources for a particular reason to achieve a particular goal.

The formation of resolve is thus a complex mechanism involving interaction between structure and agency. At the heart of this mechanism is the cognitive belief system of the key decision-making unit within a conflict party, often a leader. A belief system is a fairly fragmented construction, constituted by a number of beliefs that sometimes contradict one another. Beliefs influence the 'selection, interpretation, and memory of information pertaining to the actor' (Herrmann et al., 1997: 406). As 'the human mind is beset with great limitations when it comes to monitoring and analyzing highly complex physical and social environments' (Stern, 2001: 37), individuals use heuristics such as historical analogies, categorization, and stereotyping to make sense of a situation or simplify a complex problem (Herrmann et al., 1997; Jervis, 1976; Khong, 1992).

This resolve-forming mechanism works as follows. First, facts about reasons and resources — those of 'self' and 'other' — are filtered through the belief systems of the members of the decision-making unit. That filter becomes a mediating variable, consisting of an idiosyncratic mix of distant and recent experiences, perceptions and misperceptions, imperfect information, hopes and fears, etc. (Levy, 1983). The leverage of this filter over decisions about going to war does stand out: explanations of dramatic policy changes regarding core issues and values, such as those at stake in intra-state armed conflict, should involve the concept of belief systems as it helps to explain why structural factors affect decision-making units differently and to varying degrees.

Finally, it is important to stress that attitudinal change and learning is possible among decision-making units, as the lack of consistency in belief systems makes them 'open to piecemeal, incremental changes over time' (Rosati, 2000: 65). Learning concerns the way a leader interprets and learns from similar self-experienced conflict situations in the recent or distant past, thus possibly modifying or changing his/her underlying beliefs (Levy, 1994).<sup>6</sup> This may cause the leader to argue for policy change — such as turning a latent conflict violent.

This indicates the second step in the process of resolve formation. The decision-making unit/leader is left with one or more perceived alternative concerning whether or not to go to war. What alternative to opt for depends on a rational, expected utility-based interpretation of two aggregate

factors: perceived *intra-party cohesion* and perceived *inter-party cost-benefit calculations*.<sup>7</sup> The interpretation of these two aggregate factors is normally made under conditions of asymmetry. Different types of reason may require different levels of resources. There are also differences between rebels and governments. For a rebel organization, for example, the government's military/repressive capabilities are especially important to assess (Gurr and Moore, 1997; Tilly, 1978). The number of goals or concerns also differs. A government, for its part, has to balance the implications of fighting rebels against the fact that a government normally has a much wider agenda in terms of obligations to citizens, external relations, etc. than do rebels. The latter normally only have to consider the amount of violence they are willing and able to employ in order to address their grievances and attain their — oftentimes singular — goal (Zartman, 1995). Most of the above is closely linked to bargaining theory: the need to consider such uncertainty-driven phenomena as information failure, incentives to bluff, commitment problems and security dilemmas. Both asymmetry and uncertainty suggest differences between the cost-benefit equations of rebels and those of governments.

The final step in the resolve-forming process is to mobilize around the chosen alternative. Depending on the strength and quality of the argument, the belief of the decision-making unit/leader may convince followers and the entire organization that violence, in a sense, has been chosen for them; that the lack of alternatives necessitates the recommended path to be followed (Jervis, 1976; Levy, 1994; Ohlson, 1998). In this context, Brown (1996: 571ff.) has argued that bad leaders are by far the most important single cause of intra-state armed conflict. In war, as in peacemaking, some must lead and others must follow. Thus, leaders mobilize or manipulate followers, turning them into resources willing to make sacrifices for the reason and the goal in question. Some may be driven by private greed and rent-seeking ambitions, so they use manipulation techniques to mobilize followers into perceiving certain political, economic or other injustices. Other leaders mobilize from a genuine conviction that their cause is a justice-seeking one, for example, in religious, ideological or distributional terms.

In sum, it is argued that a heightened degree of Resolve is crucial for explaining why a societal conflict is moved from a state of tension or imminent crisis into organized, large-scale physical violence. A higher degree of Resolve may then generate concrete changes in the other two R-clusters; changes that, in turn, feed back into the Resolve corner of the triangle.

### *Triple-R and Other Conceptualizations*

This article has so far argued that the onset of intra-state armed conflict requires a combination of three things: *Reasons* in the form of motivating

grievances, *Resources* in the form of capabilities and opportunity and *Resolve*, in the form of a perception that nothing short of violence will allow you to achieve your goals. There are already concepts for this, such as greed, grievance, capability, opportunity, willingness, identity, organization, environment, context, structure, agency, mobilization, goals, interests, intentions, etc. Why introduce additional concepts and reorganize what are, by and large, the same explanatory factors under a new set of headings?

There are two main arguments for doing so. The first has to do with bridging the conceptual gap between research into the causes of war and research on the causes of peace. As argued earlier, while most of the above concepts emerged in the context of causation research and are still regularly used in such research, they are less frequently employed in conflict resolution research. Thus, if concepts can be better matched between different subsets of the same discipline, they should.

Second, many of the existing concepts encompass two dimensions: one that has to do with (relatively) hard and (relatively) objective facts and one that has to do with perceptions of those facts, that is, with subjective beliefs. For example, opportunity can be conceived of as structural constraints and possibilities (objective) as well as perceptions of such constraints and possibilities (subjective). This does not seem optimal, theoretically or practically.

To illustrate: most would agree that there must be a division of labour between different third parties involved in a conflict resolution process. This division of labour should allow each third party to do what it does best. The principal task of all third parties is to reduce the resolve for war and increase the resolve for peace. Some third parties are better suited to taking measures directed at relatively objective facts (*Reasons* and *Resources*) thus indirectly getting at the *Resolve*. Sweden was, arguably, likely to be more successful in introducing, say, sanctions against blood diamonds from Angola than in trying to change the late UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi's perception of the conflict in Angola. Others, such as highly powered, emphatic or resourceful third parties or mediators, may be better placed to address more directly the complex mix of facts and perceptions that constitutes resolve. It seems useful, therefore — academically and in terms of conflict resolution practice — to try to separate facts from beliefs about facts to the greatest possible extent.

### *The Triple-M Triangle*

Conflict and conflict resolution are processes, not events. Researchers in the field are also in increasing agreement that it is useful to divide these processes into phases. Some phases shift naturally from one to the next; other phase shifts are more like a forked road: the process arrives at a crucial breakpoint, calling for a choice between alternative courses of action. One such breakpoint

is when talking replaces fighting or when talking is introduced parallel to continued fighting. Another breakpoint is the signing of a peace agreement.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of these arguments on phase shifts and breakpoints, this section assumes that three general phases can be distinguished: the dialogue phase, that is, pre-agreement contacts, talks and negotiations, leading up to a peace agreement; the implementation phase, when the stipulations of the peace agreement are to be carried out; and the consolidation phase, when consequences and changing circumstances resulting from the implementation of the agreement are internalized, accepted and thus seen as legitimate by both followers and leaders.

The Triple-R triangle was introduced to frame the explanation of the outbreak of armed conflict. This section will argue that the same triangle can be used to explain the outbreak of peace. Variations in the dependent variable, e.g. different degrees of peace, are thus explained by changes in variable values, or by the addition or deletion of variables, within the R-clusters of explanatory factors. As each conflict actor has its own Triple-R triangle, a peace process is thus about harmonizing the Triple-R triangles of different conflict actors so that they, together and mutually, promote cooperation instead of conflict. The section will introduce the Triple-M triangle, representing different degrees of peace in a conflict resolution process, as it moves through the phases of dialogue, implementation and consolidation. Finally, it will suggest by what mechanisms the Triple-R concepts explain the Triple-M concepts.

In a stylized and normative sense, it will be argued that a *Mutually Hurting Stalemate* (MHS) generates change within party elites in the onset of the dialogue phase, opening the parties to the possibility of negotiation and changed conflict behaviour; *Mutually Enticing Opportunities* (MEO) then generate growing inter- and intra-party trust, a gradual change in attitudes, a degree of horizontal legitimacy between elites and confidence in the peace process during the dialogue and implementation phases; and *Mutually Obtained Rewards* (MOR) lead to vertical legitimacy and a gradual return to normal politics — that is, to a relatively stable and durable peace — in the implementation and consolidation phases.

Put differently, the process begins with negative pressures coming out of the conflict process itself. These pressures are normally related to fears of continued war and have to do with constraints in the availability of Resources for fighting the war with any prospect of winning it. Such pressures constitute, then, disincentives to continue the violence; they suffice to terminate the fighting and possibly also to initiate talks, but they are not enough to hold the peace. The process continues by introducing benefits of peace. This has to do with selective and collective incentives for peace, such as addressing security concerns and increasing the Resolve for peace by addressing the Reasons.

This is attained either by resolving grievances or by creating a perception that they are resolvable in a manner meeting, at the least, the minimum requirements of the parties. This will be further developed in the following section.

Increasing the resolve for peace, that is, the process by which a negotiated and non-violent compromise outcome gradually becomes not only a necessary, but also an attractive option to the conflicting parties, is, in reality, *not a simple and linear process* from MHS over MEO to MOR. As parties are non-unitary, as there may be many parties to one conflict, e.g. many conflict dyads in one conflict, and as there may be cross-border linkages bringing together different conflicts in so-called conflict complexes, warring parties may — during a conflict resolution process—perceive of MHS, MEO and MOR in any sequence or combinations of sequences or, indeed, not at all.<sup>9</sup>

### *Phase I: Dialogue, Negotiation and Mediation*

Terminating a war and building thresholds against a new one is risky, time-consuming and cumbersome. The shift from unilateral to bilateral strategies, from confrontation to cooperation, and from ‘winning’ mindsets to ‘reconciling’ ones is difficult. In the context of an intra-state armed conflict, any other outcome than victory or defeat implies that the parties must coexist without resorting to violence, often within the borders of a state, after a settlement. This is a crucial difference from inter-state wars. In the case of the latter, states may have a dissociative option, i.e. they can agree to minimize their interactions after the war. This is not a viable option within a state, unless the settlement stipulates partition. We may imagine a leader contemplating the shift from war to negotiation, thereby not only risking being betrayed by the opponent, but also running the risk of being dethroned or branded as a traitor by militant leaders and factions within his own party.

While each former adversary obviously seeks the best possible outcome, the conflict resolution process is fundamentally about addressing the issues at hand by redirecting the existing resources and resolve from conflict to peace, from confrontation to compromise. To some, and sometimes, the ultimate goal or result is conflict transformation, meaning that the conflict issue, the incompatibility, is eliminated. More often, the parties agree to place the conflict within bounds, that is, they find a way to manage or regulate the conflict without resorting to violence over an issue that will remain in some form.

Regarding the onset of the dialogue phase in intra-state conflicts, Zartman (1989) has pointed out that there occurs a moment when a given conflict is ripe for resolution. He refers to that situation as a *Mutually Hurting Stalemate* (MHS).<sup>10</sup> A conflict resolution process usually begins when both belligerents for one or another reason perceive the war as deadlocked and

painfully costly. This argues against continued military confrontation and suggests a need for changed behaviour. When belligerents decide to abandon unilateral strategies to win the war and instead switch to a bi- or multilateral strategy of finding a negotiated peaceful solution to the conflict, then behavioural change takes place. A central objective is thus to explain such change. At one level it is obvious that the cost–benefit calculations of the parties to the conflict come out differently than earlier. The fear of continuing the war becomes greater than the fear of compromise and peace. But what explanatory factors generate this perception of ripeness and cause behavioural change? What factors sustain the search for a solution through the negotiating process?

The circumstances that make intra-state wars ripe for resolution normally correspond to the following characterization. The perception of ripeness most often results from power politics, force, coercion and fear. The change in behaviour is enforced, not voluntary. It does not normally come from political goodwill, moral reassessment or a genuine change of mind. Instead, it emerges out of power-based pressures inherent in the conflict process itself. The result is the perception that it would hurt too much to continue with the war. In some cases such pressure comes from a military standoff between the belligerents. In other cases it may come about because both parties know who will win and at what cost to oneself. External military pressure may also be brought to bear on one or more of the belligerents. Most often, however, external pressures are non-military in nature, such as diplomatic actions or economic and other sanctions in various forms. External pressure may also be exerted on crucial secondary parties, that is, on parties supporting the belligerents. Often, several factors, military and non-military in nature, combine to produce ripeness.

The perception of an MHS —that the conflict is ripe for resolution — is thus primarily located in the Resource corner of the Triple-R triangle. Ripeness and war termination are, most often, caused by resource constraints and reduced opportunities to successfully prosecute the war. It has, most often, little to do with changed attitudes or rectified grievances.

Ripeness theory is about what kind of resolve on the part of the belligerents brings about the phase shift from fighting to talking, or from fighting to fighting and talking. It does not explain the entire dialogue phase, just its onset. The problem with ripeness and the behavioural change it produces is that, most often, while there is a more or less enforced change in conflict behaviour, the underlying conflict attitudes often remain unchanged. If the dialogue phase is to lead up to a mutually agreed peace agreement, then the conflict-induced ‘negative’ pressures that initiated the dialogue must be complemented with the provision of more constructive incentives. This refers to factors emerging out of the process of negotiation and/or mediation and

which (a) suggest an attractive compromise solution, (b) reduce the fears of peace and (c) generate increasing trust between the party elites and play up perceptions of the benefits of peace.

These factors that provide an attractive outcome, or, at a minimum, one that the former belligerents can live with have been termed *Mutually Enticing Opportunities* (MEO) (Ohlson, 1998; Zartman, 2000). MEOs are central to the conception of a 'resolving formula'.<sup>11</sup> Third parties are important in this context. True, the primary parties to the conflict are the ones mainly responsible for negotiating, implementing and upholding a peace agreement. Durable peace should, essentially, in this long-term sense be seen as a self-enforced phenomenon, even if it may need to be militarily and politically guaranteed from the outside for quite some time. Weak and war-torn states also all depend on external assistance at most stages in the conflict resolution process. This means that third parties — for example, the United Nations, global and regional powers, neighbours, national or international donor organizations and NGOs — have a number of political, economic and military 'carrots' and 'sticks' at their disposal. Third parties may facilitate communication and build trust between primary parties. They can add resources, alter perceptions of reasons and influence the resolve of belligerents by restructuring conflict issues, by showing how goals and perspectives can be modified and by suggesting alternatives and ways out in stalemated situations.

A third party has two principal tools: leverage and problem-solving abilities (Stedman, 1996b). Leverage mainly refers to the Resource corner of the Triple-R triangle. It refers to the ability of the mediator to alter the objective environment of the conflict and the parties, by influencing their war fighting capacity or by offering security guarantees to minimize the fears of peace. Problem-solving is directed at the Reasons corner of the Triple-R triangle: it refers to the ability to devise solutions that to a sufficient degree deal with grievances and meet the concerns, demands and goals of the parties. The role of mediators is to make belligerents perceive of a given situation as conducive to a negotiated solution. The principal source of leverage by a mediator, Zartman argues, is the ability to reorient the perceptions of the parties away from unilateral and violent solutions using persuasion and the ability to produce an attractive outcome — an MEO — based on each party's perceived need for a compromise outcome (Zartman, 1991; Zartman and Touval, 1992).

### *Phase II: Agreement Implementation*

The signing of a peace agreement marks the beginning of the implementation phase. The components making up a peace agreement are rather similar from

case to case, normally falling into two baskets. First, military stipulations aim at regulating the termination of armed violence: cantonment of troops, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration of former soldiers and guerrillas into civilian life, release of prisoners, the setting up of new — often joint and slimmed down — armed forces and reductions in military expenditure. Second, political stipulations aim at regulating the distribution of political power, often including constitutional changes, an election law and elections (Wallensteen, 1994: 165). Peace agreements, then, are not only about terminating an old war, but also about putting in place various mechanisms to prevent the occurrence of a new one.

Implementation of the stipulations in a peace agreement is a fundamental test of the sincerity of the parties and of the quality of the agreement. During this phase it is vital that the former conflicting parties' commitment to the agreement is underwritten by concrete action. This is the main route by which there can be further increases in trust and reductions of fear and suspicion between them. This suggests that horizontal relations between party elites with respect to military and political issues are central during this phase. The concerns of party elites as implementation begins primarily constitute immediate, short-term fears related to issues of physical and organizational security, political power, economic well-being and recognition of identity. They are frequently discussed in terms of fears of peace/war and benefits of peace/war.<sup>12</sup> The fears of peace are often expressed in concepts such as misperceptions, information failures, security dilemmas, commitment problems, etc. This can also have an intra-party dimension in the form of remaining internal opposition against either the negotiated compromise or against its terms.

In order to meet this and other challenges, the hurt-related, negative pressures from the dialogue phase must, first of all, be carried over from the dialogue phase and remain operative also during the implementation phase. However, as the situation is ripe with uncertainty and threats to successful implementation, the negative pressures cannot carry the peace through the implementation period on their own. Positive incentives and constructive elements, some form of MEO, conceived and born during the dialogue phase, has to be added in order to sustain the perception of ripeness, maintain the faith of the parties in the resolution process, hold out promises of future rewards and, thus, continue to reduce mutual distrust and fear.

MEOs are particular to any given peace process and come in different forms and combinations. They can perhaps be best described as selective incentives more aimed at the elite than at the mass level of the parties. Examples of factors that can produce an MEO are immediate material benefits, guaranteed rights of power, property or position or participation; the opportunity to gain power with legitimate and non-violent means, enhanced domestic legitimacy,



enhanced international prestige or a massive inflow of donor funds. The MEO holds out offerings that can help modify a party's perceptions of itself and the other, of conflict goals, and of the conflict itself. In terms of the Triple-R triangle, a perceived MEO has to do with Reasons, it results from modifications of goals or addressed grievances. Most often, external parties have a key role in prompting the perception of these opportunities and changes. Also, processes largely internal to the parties, such as leadership consolidation and the marginalization of spoilers, can be decisive, as can concrete changes in the implementing environment.<sup>13</sup> These changes, then, are not caused by negative pressures and power politics in the conflict dynamics, but rather represent attitude changes arising out of a peace dynamic that is generated by party interactions and the appearance of pro-peace incentives in the conflict resolution process. A MEO complements the negative pressures, in place in the form an MHS since the beginning of the process, thus generating increases in physical and organizational security, sustaining changes in behaviour and causing a preparedness to live side by side within the same borders without resorting to violence. The MEO produces — to party elites in particular — a gradual but genuine change of mind and attitude, not just a temporary and tactical change of behaviour.

There are strong forces working against the successful introduction of MEOs during the implementation phase. Specifically, during implementation third parties as well as the primary parties to the conflict, and their elites especially, have to address three problems. First, they must deal with mutual fear and distrust, so as to bring about a feeling of being physically and organizationally secure. Second, they must implement the agreed political mechanism for deciding the future distribution of political power. Third, they have to do this in an environment that is full of stumbling blocks, challenges and difficulties that threaten to derail implementation.

On the first problem, Walter argues that resolving the underlying issues over which a civil war has been fought is not enough for settlements to succeed. Each group must also convince its opponents that it will faithfully disengage its military force and stick by what has been agreed. To end a civil war through a negotiated settlement, the parties must therefore design credible guarantees on the terms of the agreement, a task made difficult without external assistance by third parties. Groups that obtain such third party security guarantees during the demobilization period following the signing of an agreement are, however, much less likely to renege on the agreement and return to war (Hartzell et al., 2001; Walter, 1997, 1999).

Issues related to political participation are important in the implementation phase. In general, however, there is still scant scholarly agreement on the crucial issue of political mechanism. No particular type of democracy or participatory system seems especially conducive to peace in the short term.

There is no confirmed correlation between polity and outcome. No conclusive causal pattern between type of political system — be it the electoral, the parliamentary or the executive system — and the outcome can be discerned (Licklider, 1999, 2001). However, some tentative findings exist. First, there is intuitive and some empirical support for the notion that simple majoritarian democracy is unwise in divided, weak and war-torn societies. Letting all major parties have some form of access to power makes more sense, particularly at the early stages of transitions from war to peace to democratic rule when fears and suspicions are still high. Proportional representation, decentralization and various forms of power-sharing are conceivable (Hartzell, 1999; Hoddie and Hartzell, 2001; Sisk, 1996). Intuitively, this makes sense, at least in the short term. The more parties that have influence over decision-making on the progression of the implementation process, and the more they adopt responsibility for it, the more difficult will it be for them to spoil it. Another finding has to do with risk minimization and gain maximization. If the primary parties, in negotiating the nature of the political mechanism, settle for a mechanism that will maximize their gains and their power if they come out the winner after the election, then the risk for a return to war is high. If the parties, on the other hand, seek to identify a political mechanism they can live with if they lose by it, then the risk for a return to war is reduced (Ohlson, 1998: 182).

Looking beyond the short term, Rothchild (2002) discusses a potential dilemma: even though power sharing solutions may meet the short-term concerns of the former warring parties, they may not generate the best societal environment for democracy and longer-term state- and institution-building. A related dilemma is raised by Lyons (2002) and concerns the role of elections and the pros and cons of holding them early. The literature on democratization and conflict resolution gives empirical support for seemingly contradictory views on this question. One view is that it is necessary to elaborate and specify in some detail the rules concerning the distribution of political power and implement them rapidly after the agreement is signed, while the parties still perceive an urgency to settle the conflict. This implies early elections. An alternative view is that a post-war democratization process should begin with a consensus-seeking exercise on the rules of the political game. Such an exercise must take time and may involve actors other than the former warring parties.<sup>14</sup> The former argument seems particularly aimed at short-term concerns of preventing one or more of the two former belligerents from returning to war. The latter argument appears more grounded in longer-term considerations about institution-building, durable peace and the overall popular legitimacy of the political system.

Finally, on stumbling blocks, a major study on peace agreement implementation concludes that three variables frequently correlate with a difficult

environment and lead to implementation failure. First, the presence of spoilers, that is, leaders or factions that try to sabotage or otherwise derail the agreement; second, bad neighbours, that is, governments or other actors in neighbouring countries that oppose the agreement and assist the spoilers; and third, valuable spoils of war, that is, easily marketable goods such as diamonds (Stedman, 2002).

### *Phase III: Consolidation and Normalization*

The borderline between phases II and III is more fluid than the other phase shifts. However, there is a crucial difference between the two phases. During implementation, the key relationship to worry about in terms of maintaining the peace is a horizontal one: between, and often also within, the elite levels of the former belligerents. During consolidation the key relationship is vertical: between elites and peoples. The key objective here is vertical legitimacy, that is, the degree of faith that ordinary people have in the system that rules them and in the leaders that currently hold power in that system.

In the consolidation phase the main issue is no longer to terminate one war, but to prevent another one from starting. If consolidation is successful, then the likelihood of using violence as a conflict resolution method is reduced. In a sense, it can be called a return to 'normal politics'. Are there power-hungry leaders that can use remaining grievances to mobilize support for a new war? Even more importantly, are large population groups still so dissatisfied that they are prepared to be re-mobilized for war? To what extent has the new polity managed to constrain the Resources for conflict and address the issues in the Reasons corner of the Triple-R triangle, thus reducing the legitimacy gap and increasing the Resolve for peace? In short, people ask themselves: now that peace has been implemented, are we better off than before, or not?

The key to successful consolidation is here referred to as *Mutually Obtained Rewards* (MOR), which completes the triad of concepts linked to the phases and to different degrees of peace. There is a need for concrete and manifest mutual rewards, such as improvements in political participation and access to political influence, more distributive justice or increased manoeuvring space for cultural identity. There should be mutual acceptance of each other's right to exist among former enemies through processes of reconciliation and retribution. There must be improvements in civil security and in the rule of law. The polity should offer more accountability and transparency in the execution of power. There must, eventually, be more or better roofs over ordinary people's heads and more food on their tables.<sup>15</sup>

These improvements are gradual and differ idiosyncratically in kind and degree between different post-conflict situations and their surrounding

environment. Similarly, improvements in one area can be traded against lack of improvement in others. For example, in South Africa the right for all to vote generated a considerable patience with the fact that there were less improvements with regard to the problems of economic inequalities and overall poverty levels. What is decisive is that the vast majority of citizens become less mobilizable for armed conflict, since they perceive that their overall life situations have improved compared to before and during the armed conflict, and since they ascribe these improvements to the peace agreement and its implementation.

### *By Way of Conclusion*

This article has introduced the Triple-R triangle, Reasons, Resources and Resolve, arguing for its conceptual and analytical advantages in the context of research on the causation and resolution of armed intra-state conflict. Specifically, four advantages are suggested in terms of the process dimension of conflict/conflict resolution.

First, it has been argued that the Triple-R triangle allows for an inclusive and comprehensive listing of necessary and sufficient requirements for *starting an armed intra-state conflict*. Second, while not having consistently developed the argument in the article, the Triple-R triangle would also seem to be useful for *describing and analysing the dynamics of war*. Escalation, de-escalation, diffusion and contraction can usefully be described in terms of changes in the constituent variables in the Triple-R-triangle. Third, it appears fruitful to *analyse the conflict resolution process*: dialogue, the agreement and its implementation, conflict management or conflict transformation and peace consolidation in terms of how changes in the variables — making them function as disincentives for war and as selective and collective incentives for peace — of the Triple-R-clusters explain the Triple-M triangle, that is, the phenomena labelled Mutually Hurting Stalemate, Mutually Enticing Opportunities and Mutually Obtained Rewards. Fourth, in times of ‘normal politics’ and during early stages of armed conflict, the concepts can be used to *explain or practice conflict prevention*.

In addition, the article has suggested other advantages. The Triple-R/ Triple-M concepts are, arguably, on an appropriate level to facilitate generalization and the bridging of the gap between causation and resolution research. Theoretically, they are paradigm- and theory-insensitive. The framework allows for distinctions to be made between the reasons, resources and resolve of governments and rebels, of elites and followers, of primary, secondary and third parties, respectively. Theoretical phenomena, such as collective action problems, ripe moments, costly signals, security dilemmas, commitment problems and spoiler management, as well as events and challenges, such as instances of violence in peace processes or barriers to peace

agreement implementation can all be conceived of as functions of the interaction — or the parties' perceptions of such interaction — within and between the variables that constitute the explanatory clusters Reasons, Resources and Resolve. Methodologically, they allow for a variety of operationalizations of these variables, irrespective of whether qualitative or quantitative methods are used.

Finally, in terms of practical relevance, the Triple-R/Triple-M concepts would seem to offer a useful way of organizing the toolboxes of peace negotiators and conflict prevention practitioners, as well as motivating and structuring political action, international cooperation and coordination in the general context of negotiating and implementing a peace settlement. The framework thus allows for thinking and action with respect to how changes in variables or variable values can be influenced or brought about in order to terminate armed intra-state conflict and build strong peace by raising the barriers against future violence.

### *Acknowledgements*

I thank the members of the Research Seminar at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, my research team on intra-state conflict resolution and other colleagues for helpful ideas and comments on earlier drafts of this article. I am particularly indebted to Nils Petter Gleditsch, Mats Hammarstöm, Kristine Höglund, Erik Melander, Desirée Nilsson, Roxanna Sjöstedt, Stephen J. Stedman, Isak Svensson, Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs, Peter Wallensteen, I. Willam Zartman and three anonymous peer reviewers. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Ford Foundation.

### *Notes*

1. The conceptual framework suggested in this article may, or may not, be applicable also to inter-state war. It is conceived on the basis of reading and reflecting upon the literature on intra-state war. References to analyses of inter-state war are therefore scant and unsystematic, indicating the possibility that theoretical contributions relevant for this article may have been omitted.
2. We also need to distinguish between elite- and mass-level factors within a party to a conflict. The unitary actor assumption began to be abandoned by the early 1990s. The focus turned on the potential of intra-party dynamics as an explanation for the outbreak and termination of intra-state armed conflicts. Thus, researchers identified horizontal cleavages between different elite factions within a party (Atlas and Licklider, 1999; Kelman, 1993; Stedman, 1991, 1997; Zartman, 1995) as well as vertical ones between elites and constituencies within the party's support base (Darby and Mac Ginty, 2000; Kelman, 1997).
3. The concept of identity here refers to those social identities that are deeply entrenched, durable and powerful in terms of their psychological (individual)

and sociological (collective) properties. Race, ethnicity, tribe, clan and religion are the key identities in these respects.

4. The concept 'legitimacy gap' is thus related to other grievance-based concepts in conflict theory, such as basic needs, relative deprivation and frustration-aggression, see Azar (1990); Azar and Burton (1986); Coser (1956); Gurr (1970, 1993).
5. The notion of 'trigger' and how it relates to other explanatory factors is a somewhat neglected aspect in causes-of-war research, even if there are exceptions (e.g. Brecher, 1993; Dessler, 1994; Stoessinger, 1978).
6. Experiential learning normally refers to the leader's own self-lived experiences (Levy, 1994), but may also refer to the experiences of others, such as conflict actors in neighbouring states (Ohlson, 1998: 180).
7. The former is linked to the assessment a conflict party — rebel or government — makes of itself. It is, as noted, to a considerable degree a function of specific key factors in the Reasons and Resources corners of the Triple-R triangle. The latter is an opportunity *vs* risk assessment: an aggregate measure of a party's perceptions of, first, the general, contextual constraints and possibilities in the situation at hand and, second, the balance between its own reasons, resources and resolve and those of the opponent.
8. Researchers that have argued for, or used, phases as an analytical tool include Darby and Mac Ginty (2000, 2003), Guelke (2003), Ohlson (1998), Walter (2002) and Zartman (1991).
9. On regional conflict complexes, see Buzan and Wæver (2003) and Lake and Morgan (1997).
10. For definitions of the concepts Hurting Stalemate and Ripe Moment, see Zartman (1989: 266–73). See also Zartman's revised definition of the 'soft stalemate' (Zartman, 1995: 18).
11. Zartman argues that durable peace is more likely if the parties early on during the negotiations perceive of a resolving formula regarding how to deal with the procedural and substantive grievances that brought about the conflict. They must then gradually develop the details of that formula during the negotiations and embody them in the peace agreement (Zartman, 2004).
12. A useful survey and application of theoretical arguments pertaining to inter- and intra-party dimensions of fears of peace and benefits of war is found in Höglund (2004).
13. The concept 'spoiler' was introduced by Stedman (1997). It refers to a leader, inside or outside a peace process, who sees the peace agreement as such a fundamental threat to his goals, interests and worldview that he becomes intent on sabotaging it.
14. Arguments in favour of early elections are mentioned by Hampson (1996: 206) and Stedman (1996b: 353). Arguments that caution against early elections are found in Kumar (1998) and Ottaway (1997).
15. It may be of interest in this context to relate MEO, MOR and the implementation/consolidation of peace after intra-state war to integration theory. Applying a wide interpretation of the term security community in Deutsch's classic study — one that refers not only to a set of contiguous states, but to any group of people within any spatial confine — we note Deutsch's argument that a

'security community is a group of people which has become "integrated". By integration we mean the attainment, within a territory, of a "sense of community" and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a "long" time dependable expectations of "peaceful change" among its population' (1969: 5). If we see a peace agreement after intra-state war as a functional equivalent of an agreement that initiates and lays down the terms for a (pluralistic) security community, we may adapt the following propositions from Deutsch's work regarding the conditions conducive to a successful integration (peace process). Integration (here: durable peace after intra-state war) is furthered if there is (1) an increase in political and administrative capabilities after the agreement, (2) more rapid economic growth than before, (3) a broadening of the political elite, and (4) a multiplicity of ranges of communication, transaction and interaction. Similarly, it is detrimental to integration if there is (1) economic decline, (2) increasing ethnic or linguistic differentiation, (3) excessive delay in expected political, social and economic reform, and (4) an inability of a formerly strong party to adjust to a loss of dominance (Deutsch, 1969: ch. 2).

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