¿How to Understand the End of Conflict? Addressing a Theoretical Context from Zartman's Theory and a "Three-Dimensional" View

¿Cómo entender el fin del conflicto? Abordando un contexto teórico desde la teoría de Zartman y una visión "tridimensional"

Nelson Cano-Holguín
Armada Nacional de Colombia
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9425-5810
nedcano@gmail.com

Javier Jiménez-Osorio*
Universidad San Buenaventura - Colombia
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5762-7758
jjimenez@usbctg.edu.co

* Autor a quien debe ser dirigida la correspondencia

Abstract

Based on the assumption that each armed conflict has different origins, the end of the conflict corresponds to a cessation of hostile activities and the beginning of a peace process. However, recognizing when the parties immersed in a conflict have the will to negotiate is a complex issue to understand. In this sense, this article addresses Zartman's theory of maturation to increase the understanding of the elements necessary for the parties to come together and resolve their conflicts. The novelty of this article is that it complements such a theory with a three-dimensional vision of the end of the conflict, that is, military, political and economic dimensions. Based on a bibliographic review, the main conclusion is linked to the possibility of providing the understanding of conflicts with some arguments through the theory of Zartman's ripening; however, this still has limitations in the sense that such a moment of ripening does not guarantee that the conflict will be solved, nor does it offer a look at it before reaching that moment, but it is possible to observe it only after it passes, giving rise to new investigations that go deeper into those gaps.

Keywords

Resumen

Partiendo de la base de que cada conflicto armado tiene un origen diferente, el fin del conflicto corresponde al cese de las actividades hostiles y al inicio de un proceso de paz. Sin embargo, reconocer cuándo las partes inmersas en un conflicto tienen la voluntad de negociar es una cuestión compleja de entender. En este sentido, este artículo aborda la teoría de la maduración de Zartman para aumentar la comprensión de los elementos necesarios para que las partes se unan y resuelvan sus conflictos. La novedad de este artículo es que complementa dicha teoría con una visión tridimensional del fin del conflicto, es decir, las dimensiones militar, política y económica. A partir de una revisión bibliográfica, la principal conclusión está vinculada a la posibilidad de dotar de algunos argumentos a la comprensión de los conflictos a través de la teoría de la maduración de Zartman; sin embargo, ésta sigue teniendo limitaciones en el sentido de que tal momento de maduración no garantiza que el conflicto se resuelva, ni ofrece una mirada sobre el mismo antes de llegar a ese momento, sino que es posible observarlo sólo

después de que pase, dando lugar a nuevas investigaciones que profundicen en esas lagunas.

Introduction

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union, many internal armed conflicts have occurred around the world. Although these conflicts have different origins based on social, cultural, economic and many other aspects, the end of such conflicts is one of the most important issues when addressing this topic. In this sense, this article presents the understanding of the end of armed conflicts through Zartman's theory of maturation, and then complements these postulates with three dimensions, thus offering the methodology to address the problem and providing some conclusions, limitations and gaps to be investigated.

Background theory

Zartman's Theory of Conflict Maturation

The proposal to resolve armed conflicts on the basis of certain specific moments when the best chances of ending such conflicts present themselves is not a revolutionary approach at all. However, what is indeed a revolution is the establishment of the fittest conditions that determine the best moment for the end of the conflict so that it becomes more successful through an intervention or process, which is what William Zartman proposed in his "Maturation Theory" of conflicts.

The Theory of Maturation adopts an approach in which efforts must be conceived on the part of all parties involved towards the resolution of the conflict (Zartman 2000); however, it is not precisely based on the proposals that each of the parties submit to end the conflict, but rather on the ideal moment to do so; this is due to the fact that these proposals, as such, will not have much effect if the conditions of maturity that require true negotiations do not exist, and will only work if the parties are not only convinced that negotiation is the best alternative, but also that they are willing to compromise (O'kane 2006).

In general terms, this assessment may seem repetitive or tautological and, in fact, many re-searchers who have used this approach have been strongly criticized (Kleiboer 1994, Licklider 1995) because, by default, the view that maturity is a necessary condition for resolving conflict allows for the argument that if the negotiation fails, the reason is that such maturity has not yet been reached, which becomes a superficial argument for running tests on protracted conflicts when a satisfactory outcome has not been reached (O'kane 2006).

As a response to the above, Zartman argues that there are differences between the maturity of a conflict and its outcome, that is, one should not confuse the two expressions in the sense that a conflict may be on the verge of coming to an end, but, if it has not matured, then negotiations might fail and the parties may return to arms; therefore, maturity and end results are not the same (Zartman and De Soto 2010).

The theory of maturation provides two aspects that, according to such a theory, cannot be related to each other, but that must exist in order to consider that the conflict has arrived at the right moment (O'kane 2006). The Mutually Hurting Statement (MHS) is the first of these elements and implies that both parties must point out, at some point during the confrontation, that they have reached a point where the conflict cannot be intensified or, if possible, that such intensification will not allow their opponent to be defeated and that the cost of continuing the war will inevitably lead them to a situation where the conflict is going to be perpetuated with the respective loss of capital and human resources, thus reaching a dead end.

It should be clarified that it is not easy to identify this concept since it is based on the perception of the parties involved; therefore, it is something subjective, being recognized at any time throughout the conflict, that is, either at the beginning, with few casualties on both sides, or at the end, after many losses (Berman and Zartman 1982; Zartman 1989; Touval and Zartman 1985). Similarly, these perceptions are highly influenced by the military dimensions of the parties in conflict and the existing balance of power, adding to

the fact that the parties recognize the viability of possible solutions that have not been considered before (Kleiboer 1994). Although it is possible for both sides to realize this moment of maturity from the beginning of the confrontation, Zartman has observed that, in many conflicts, for one side to significantly change the power relationship and the military capabilities of their opponent, a long-term confrontation and an escalation of violence is required in order to reach the MHS (Zartman 2000).

Another possible scenario, also considered by Zartman, is that only one of the parties perceives the MHS, which will apparently prolong the confrontation until both parties admit to that moment. Finally, it is the leaders, rather than the organizations as a whole, the ones who perceive the moment of stagnation which, as it is a perception, is not exempt from being wrong. (Zartman 2008).

The "exit" coined by Zartman corresponds to the second fundamental element of the theory of maturation, in which the warring leaders believe that the best option to resolve the conflict is through negotiation (Zartman and De Soto, 2010), being this concept, unlike the previous one, easier to identify due to the willingness of leaders to engage in a dialogue instead of continuing up in arms (Zartman 2000).

This exit does not necessarily imply having to sacrifice the basic objectives of the parties; it simply implies that the members in dispute change their position and look for another way to achieve this objective through negotiation. At this point, some analysts propose that third parties can greatly influence and generate trust between the two warring parties, hence facilitating this exit to a greater extent and getting closer to the end of the conflict (Pruitt, 1997).

However, a weakness recognized by Zartman is that the theory fails to predict when a moment of maturity will occur in a given situation (Zartman and De Soto 2010). This means that the focus of the theory is to predict when a way out of conflict may appear (Zartman 2007), making it clear that the success, or otherwise, of the negotiation process cannot be predicted (Lustenberger 2012).

Taking into account that the notion of maturity is a simple idea that emerges from numerous studies, the original concept has not only generated followers and detractors, but also several approaches that seek, from different angles, to better explain the application and scope of the theory in different scenarios and conflicts. Zartman is clear that the theory permits sufficient room for future research, analysis and focus within the maturation process (Zartman 2000).

In this vein, only when certain characteristics and conditions are observed and the conflict is at a dead end (which does not allow either side to obtain a military victory), is there a possibility of entering into a negotiation (Zartman 2007). Therefore, it is at this point that a series of military, political and economic dimensions affect the dynamics of the conflict and the perception of the parties, thus becoming key factors.

Military Dimension

The military dimension is considered as relevant for the measurement of the conflict since it allows for the analysis of the balance of forces, military power and the possibility of victory for any of the parties (Zartman 2008).

For the rebel group, this dimension must consider recruitment capacity, the speed at which the loss of men and weapons occurs as a direct result of the confrontation, the control of strategic areas for the survival of structures and the capacity to confront government aggression. It should be clarified that both the establishment and the rebels are difficult to measure in terms of their military dimension, since it is something subjective.

On the other hand, the government will consider some parameters such as military efficiency, security policies, the capacity to counteract the military actions of rebel groups, territorial control and the functioning of the force, among others.

The analysis of all these factors makes it possible to determine whether the dynamics of the conflict have ever come to a standstill.

Political Dimension

The political dimensions of a conflict must be carefully considered, since it is necessary to analyze the political aspects on a separate basis in some instances, and to analyze them altoge-

ther in others, because, in essence, the means and objectives for each of the parties are different.

Insurgent groups are, essentially speaking, political participants who are fighting in various ways to achieve their objectives. Therefore, this may motivate them to explore ways other than warfare to accomplish such objectives, especially when the conflict is at a standstill. In this case, groups with a political agenda are more likely to negotiate than those with exclusively military aims.

When considering the consequences of violence as a form of struggle, especially in fields such as political legitimacy, interaction with local residents and the international community can be crucial, because it is clear that when one has political ambitions, community support, both domestically and internationally, that is an important asset (Lustenberger 2012). This legitimacy is threatened when the rebel group engages in activities that the community does not tolerate, such as targeted killings or massacres of civilians, extortion, kidnapping, forced displacement and a range of other abuses. These killings are not only aimed at ensuring survival, but also gain control through fear in the territory; however, these events reduce the legitimacy of the insurgent group at the national and international level (Kalyvas 2006).

For this reason, popular support and legitimacy are aspects that can have a greater impact than military ones, especially when the rebel group begins to grow weaker as an organization due to direct consequences such as their military actions or indirect consequences such as changes in political and social realities, (Cronin and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2008).

Cronin also highlights an important element in terms of the pressure that the international community can exert on the group, and this cannot be denied. There are rebel groups that receive support from third countries, as a strategy to weaken the government and institutions of the country to which they belong, and, therefore, it is relevant to ask to what extent certain international actors can influence or have an effect on the group and how this affects the leaders' perception when looking for nego-

tiation alternatives (Cronin and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2008).

As for the government, political realities are different, especially on account of various obligations and responsibilities in the domestic environment and its obligations and role in the international context.

Economic Dimension

The economic dimension covers all the means by which the rebel group funds the conflict and how these resources affect its interests and reasoning (Lustenberger 2012). Much has been theorized about this aspect, especially when the rebel group benefits from large amounts of money through the illegal access and exploitation of natural resources such as mining, oil and even coca, which brings in huge profits, turning the continuation of the war into a simple strategy to keep up the business in what is called "greed and grievance". (Berdal and Malone 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner 2009).

On the other hand, being rebel groups and having the character of illegals, their economy is derived from illicit activities (Chernick et al., 2007). In the particular case of Colombia, such activities include drug trafficking, illegal extraction of mining resources, extortion, and kidnapping, among other sources that, in one way or another, also affect their legitimacy and, therefore, their political capital.

On the government's side, the economic dimension considers not only the weight of military spending with respect to the economy as a whole, but also the loss of investments.

Methods

With the objective of achieving a greater understanding of how armed conflicts are resolved, this article proposes the theory of Zartman's maturation as a valid vision to achieve such an understanding. In this sense, a bibliographic review was carried out to elaborate a theoretical framework that allows us to elucidate at which point the enemies of one side begin to realize the appropriate moment to negotiate.

The treatment and management of scientific literature by quantitative means of counting and analysis serves not only to analyze the volume of publications, the productivity of authors, and journals or subjects, but also, in a broader sense, for the knowledge of the processes and the nature of Sciences (Sanz *et al*, 2014, cited by Corrales *et al*. 2017); it is in this nature of conflict-related issues that this article aims to contribute, since, based on one of the most important publications on this specific topic, it manages to raise some discussions regarding the aspects of Zartman's theory combined with a three-dimensional vision, that is, the military, political and economic dimensions, providing a new perspective of study.

Conclusions and limitations

Zartman's theory of maturation offers a theoretical vision regarding the end of an armed conflict, where two elements must materialize for it to be accomplished successfully; firstly, both parties must recognize that they are in a deadlock where neither seems to be headed towards victory or defeat, in addition to their disposition to negotiate upon recognizing that this is a viable alternative for both parties. These elements, nonetheless, do not ensure a successful outcome, so military, political, economic and other dimensions must be taken into consideration.

Taking into account the level of acceptance that Zartman's theory has reached, this author also recognizes some limitations, among which is the fact that achieving an impasse in the conflict does not guarantee that the parties will establish approaches or dialogues to work out their disagreements. On the contrary, there is the possibility that the worse the pain and damage caused as a result of the confrontation, the greater the refusal of the parties to find a negotiated solution (Zartman 2000,).

This means that, whereas the theory of maturation points out that the condition of a mutually damaging stalemate is necessary to reach the moment of maturity, nothing will indicate which path the parties prefer, once maturity has been reached,; hence it is essential to study various contexts, not only the perception of the parties, but also the setting and the reality of such moment at the national and international level.

Another limitation of the theory is that, taking the moment of maturity leading to negotiations as a reference point, the theory of maturity only considers such a point in reverse and tries to explain how that moment is reached, but not the other way around, that is, determining the possible consequence or outcome of negotiations.

This allows future research in this field to make an investigative contribution as to how some explanations can be put forward for these gaps, generating new debates that help to better understand the end of conflicts and achieve world peace.

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