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Toward a Better Understanding of Multiparty Mediation in International Relations

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SUMMARY

Peacemaking in contemporary violent conflict tends to involve a myriad of third-party actors of various kinds, including states, international and regional intergovernmental

organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The past experiences of such "multiparty mediation" in many conflict situations have shown that interconnections between individual third-party initiatives significantly affect the overall effectiveness of the mediation process. Indeed, much of scholarly attention has been devoted to the issue of how the involvement of multiple external actors can be managed and turned into assets, not liabilities, for international peacemaking. This article is an attempt to put the accumulated body of literature in perspective and highlight concepts and issues to be addressed to improve a conceptual understanding and practical efficacy of multiparty mediation efforts.

1. Introduction

Mediation is a common form of conflict management in international relations. In structural terms, it can be conceived of as an extension of negotiations in which a third party enters a conflict between two or more states or other actors to affect the course of it and help them find a mutually acceptable solution. In all ages, conflict has been part and parcel of the international system, and negotiations and mediation have been extensively used to deal with it. And in the post-Cold War era ridden by a plethora of violent conflicts, these methods of peaceful settlement have come to be seen as even more relevant and appropriate than the resort to violence fraught with destructive consequences.[1] Against a backdrop of such continued frequency and perceived value of international mediation, it has received much of scholarly attention especially from the 1980s onward.[2]

Contemporary international mediation is often multiparty in nature with the involvement of a variety of third-party state and non-state actors—the general feature that has been evident especially since the end of the Cold War. Crocker *et al* note in their work on such "multiparty mediation" that:

> The multiplication of mediators is less a matter of choice than a fact of life in today's world. This complexity has been brought on by the end of the Cold War and by the increasing involvement of a wide array of both state and nonstate

[1] Jacob Bercovitch, "Understanding Mediation's Role in Preventive Diplomacy," *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 12, no. 3 (July 1996), pp. 241–258; Bercovitch, "Mediation in International Conflict: An Overview of Theory, A Review of Practice," in I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds., *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 131.

[2] See, for example, Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, eds., *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985); Christopher Mitchell and Keith Webb, eds., *New Approaches to International Mediation* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Thomas Princen, *Intermediaries in International Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, eds., *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Bercovitch, ed., *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996); and Bercovitch, ed., *Studies in International Mediation: Essays in Honour of Jeffrey Z. Rubin* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

actors in the more fluid and less structured relationships of the current era.[3]

Mediators in general and mediating states in particular are motivated to mediate as much by self-interest as by humanitarian concerns.[4] States in a conflict region or even afar off may intervene as mediators when they have an interest in a conflict but find direct participation costly, risky, or unjustifiable, which leads to the multiplication of third-party actors involved. The collapse of bipolarity has discharged states from the kind of constraints previously imposed by superpower rivalry and allowed them to engage in mediation more freely. In formulating their policies toward a particular conflict, states are no longer constrained by the consideration of East-West confrontation and are more prompted by their independent foreign policy interests as well as humanitarian concerns.[5] Furthermore, the end of the Cold War revitalized the UN, which was once paralyzed by superpower competition, and made it more active in peacemaking worldwide although with a mixed track record. Being also freed from such constraints, regional organizations have begun to serve as a mechanism to complement and even supersede the UN in resolving conflicts in some parts of the world.[6] As part of the growing influence of private actors in international affairs at large, NGOs have also been involved in international mediation efforts in many conflict situations. In addition to providing services in the areas such as economic development and humanitarian relief, they often find themselves engaged in conflict resolution activities such as facilitating a process of dialogue and reconciliation between disputing

[3] Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, "Rising to the Challenge of Multiparty Mediation: Institutional Readiness, Policy Context, and Mediator Relationships," in Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, eds., *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), p. 666.

[4] Touval and Zartman, "Introduction: Mediation in Theory," in Touval and Zartman, eds., *International Mediation in Theory and Practice*, pp. 8–9; and Zartman and Touval, "International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), pp. 446–447.

[5] See esp. Zartman and Touval, "International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era," p. 448.

[6] See, for example, William J. Durch, *UN Peacekeeping, American Policy, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); and Ruth Wedgwood, "Regional and Subregional Organizations in International Conflict Management," in Crocker et al., eds., *Managing Global Chaos*, pp. 275–285.

communities.[7] Relatedly, it should be noted that mediation is a less costly foreign policy instrument for states than military action and thus is frequently employed by them. And mediating states appear to have become more willing to share the costs and risks of intervention with not only other states but also international and regional organizations. Moreover, states are increasingly aware of the importance of supporting and collaborating with NGOs, which prove to be useful as a source of on-site information and entry point into conflict. The combination of these factors has added to the proliferation of interveners in a conflict situation in the contemporary world.[8]

Since this frequent and almost inevitable multiplication of mediators continues to have profound effects on the nature and effectiveness of international peacemaking, the phenomenon of "multiparty mediation" warrants sustained and even more vigorous attention from those concerned with conflict and peace research in general and the study of international mediation in particular. Thus the purpose of this article is not to develop a brand-new, overarching theory of multiparty mediation but to take stock of major models and frameworks found in the existing relevant literature with the aim of identifying concepts and issues to be focused upon in trying to arrive at a better understanding and practice of multiparty mediation.

2. Existing Models of Multiple Third-party Efforts

The 1990s saw considerable accumulation of the literature on the multiplicity of external peacemakers and the dynamic interrelations among them. For example, John Paul Lederach puts the case for the multiplicity and the variety of third-party peacemaking activities, maintaining that "In almost every situation, it has proved unviable to rely on a single individual or team to sustain and broaden the process of constructive conflict transformation in divided societies."[9] Lederach argues that consistent with his argument are the works of such authors as Christopher Mitchell,

[7] See, for example, Pamela Aall, "Nongovernmental Organizations and Peacemaking," in Crocker et al., eds., *Managing Global Chaos*, pp. 433–443; and Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, "Introduction," in Crocker et al., eds., *Herding Cats*, pp. 6–7.
[8] Crocker et al., "Introduction," pp. 6–7.
[9] John P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 67.

Louis Kriesberg, and Ronald Fisher and Loraleigh Keashly, who "share a view of conflict as a dynamic process and peacebuilding as a multiplicity of interdependent elements and actions that contribute to the constructive transformation of the conflict."[10]

In what he calls "mediation-as-process model," Mitchell suggests that we should see third-party involvement "as a complex process, to which many entities might contribute, simultaneously or consecutively, rather than as the behavior of a single, intermediary actor."[11] While stating this view is theoretically more useful in understanding the concept of mediation, Mitchell stresses that a conflict resolution process may indeed be more successful if multiple intermediary actors instead of a solo third party contribute to it.[12] By the same token, Kriesberg maintains that a variety of mediating activities can be undertaken by different persons and groups, which he labels as formal and quasi-mediators, at different stages of conflict de-escalation. Kriesberg notes that this line of thinking fulfils "the social service of demonstrating how many different kinds of people can contribute to peacemaking."[13]

Fisher and Keashly present the case for the complementarity of mediation and consultation within the framework of a "contingency model of third-party intervention," where the type of third-party intervention strategies is to be matched to specific stages of conflict. Underlying the contingency approach is a belief that different kinds of third parties should seek to "entertain a complex view of conflict, and to develop and adopt strategies from a range of options" instead of confining themselves to certain strategies.[14] In addition to these authors, David Bloomfield can be conceived of as part of this school of thought. By modifying and expanding Fisher and Keashly's model,

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[10] Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 67.

[11] Christopher Mitchell, "The Process and Stages of Mediation: Two Sudanese Cases," in David Smock, ed., *Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 140.

[12] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 140.

[13] Louis Kriesberg, "Varieties of Mediating Activities and Mediators in International Relations," in Bercovitch, ed., *Resolving International Conflicts*, p. 230. See also Kriesberg, "Formal and Quasi-Mediators in International Disputes: An Exploratory Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1991), pp. 19–27.

[14] Ronald J. Fisher and Loraleigh Keashly, "The Potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation within a Contingency Model of Third Party Intervention," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1991), p. 34; and Keashly and Fisher, "A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions: Theoretical and Practical Considerations," in Bercovitch, ed., *Resolving International Conflicts*, pp. 240–241.

Bloomfield has developed a model suggesting the complementarity of the main approaches to conflict management, settlement and resolution. Bloomfield argues that these two approaches, whose implementation often involves different types of actors, should be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.[15]

3. Three Levels of Conceptualization

While the models of the above-noted theorists share similarities in many respects, one possible way to sort them out is by how they conceptualize acts of peacemaking. Fisher and Keashly adopt a typology of third-party interventions which includes conciliation, consultation, pure mediation, power mediation, arbitration, and peacekeeping.[16] With their typology in mind, Mitchell suggests an alternative conception for understanding third-party action, developing a list of thirteen intermediary roles that can be carried out by different third parties.[17] Indeed, Mitchell himself tries to articulate the distinction between his idea of "intermediary roles" and Fisher and Keashly's notion of intervention "strategies." He points out that "[a] strategy, in their [Fisher and Keashly's] terms, consists of a cluster of related roles and functions, making up a broadly conceived pattern of third-party behavior, such as "conciliation" or "mediation."[18] Conceived of in this way, Mitchell's view of intermediary action based on the concept of roles and functions is microscopic as compared to the strategy-based perspective taken in the Fisher-Keashly model.

Kriesberg's conception of third-party intervention is akin to Mitchell's. Kriesberg states that mediation (used as an umbrella term embracing a range of intervention strategies suggested by Fisher and Keashly) normally refers to "a set of activities that a mediator performs to facilitate settling a conflict."[19] Although Mitchell

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[15] David Bloomfield, "Towards Complementarity in Conflict Management: Resolution and Settlement in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1995), pp. 151–164; Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies in Northern Ireland: Building Complementarity in Conflict Management Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

[16] Fisher and Keashly, "The Potential Complementarity," pp. 33–34; and Keashly and Fisher, "A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions," pp. 241–242.

[17] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 147.

[18] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 140.

[19] Kriesberg, "Formal and Quasi-Mediators," p. 19. See also Kriesberg, "Varieties of Mediating Activities," p. 219.

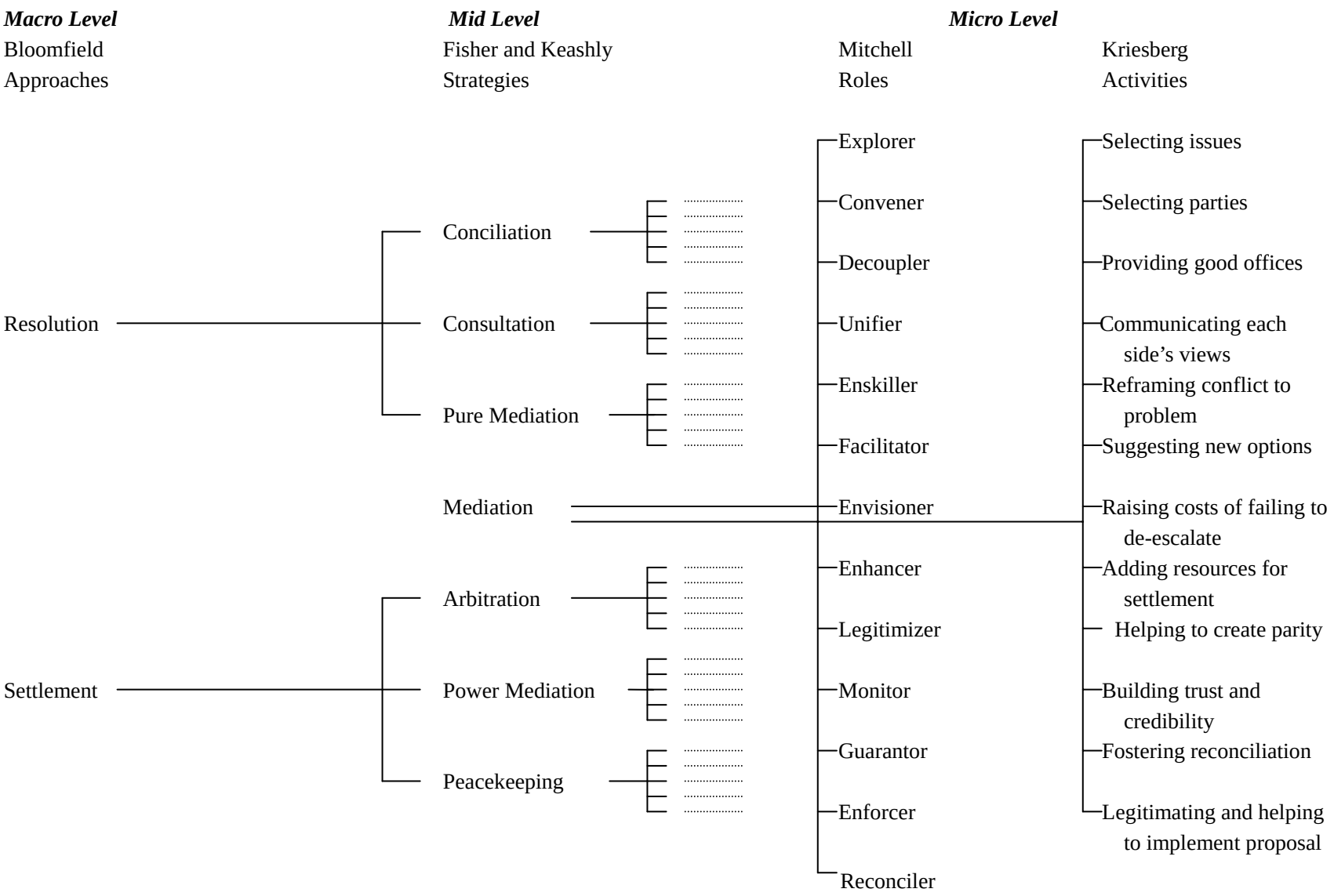
and Kriesberg use different terms—i.e. intermediary roles and mediating activities, they share a microscopic view of third-party action in comparison with the idea of strategies put forward by Fisher and Keashly.

In contrast, Bloomfield aims at grasping peacemaking initiatives in terms of the two main general approaches to conflict management, resolution and settlement. His perspective may be regarded as macroscopic relative to those of other authors in that he focuses on the comprehensive peacemaking approaches under which specific intervention strategies can be subsumed. He classifies such intervention strategies as conciliation, consultation, and pure mediation under the resolution approach, while placing other strategies like arbitration, power mediation and peacekeeping within the settlement approach.[20]

In sum, the writers conceptualize third-party peacemaking action at the following three different levels: Mitchell and Kriesberg at the micro level of roles and activities; Fisher and Keashly at the mid level of strategies; and Bloomfield at the macro level of approaches. These three levels of conceptualization and interrelationships among them are shown in Figure 1. Some clarifications are in order with regard to the mid and micro levels and their relationships. Here I employ the term "mediation" as a general umbrella term denoting a variety of third-party intervention strategies, although it is not used in Fisher and Keashly's typology. (Such specific intervention strategies as pure mediation and power mediation are included in it.) Indeed, as Fisher and Keashly themselves point out, such a general usage of the term is frequent throughout the literature, and both Mitchell and Kriesberg actually use it in general terms and consider it to contain a whole range of intermediary roles and mediating activities, respectively. Conversely, specific types of third-party intervention strategies as conceived by Fisher and Keashly are regarded as composed of a set of some intermediary roles or mediating activities. For instance, pure mediation possibly consists of the roles of convener, envisioner, facilitator, among others, from Mitchell's list, while power mediation would include adding resources for settlement and raising costs of failing to de-escalate from Kriesberg's list of mediating activities.

[20] Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies*, p. 208.

Figure 1. Three Levels of Conceptualization of Peacemaking Action



Having clarified the essential differences among the scholars in how to conceptualize peacemaking initiatives, I will now closely examine these models in the light of the three concepts that are the keys to systematic discussions on multiparty mediation—multiplicity, contingency, and complementarity. In considering how variedly they are treated in each model operating at the three different levels of conceptualization, I will contemplate its strengths and weaknesses as an analytic framework for understanding multiparty mediation.

4. Multiplicity

To begin with, Mitchell's idea of intermediary roles at the micro level of conceptualization would help us to obtain a more nuanced and precise understanding of third-party actions taken by many different kinds of mediators. In contrast, more macroscopic conceptions based on the notions of approaches and strategies only serve to broadly delineate the parameters of those actions because of a substantial degree of generalization and abstraction involved and are suited to the focused examination of third-party involvement by a relatively small number of major actors.

The rather broad nature of the macro-level conception of approaches is reflected in the working of Bloomfield's complementarity model. Briefly, the model operates in such a way that the various ingredients of the conflict are first identified as either subjective or objective. Those subjective and objective elements are then assigned to resolution and settlement approaches respectively, each of which in turn entails a corresponding set of strategies. (Again, the resolution approach includes such strategies as conciliation, consultation, and pure mediation while the settlement approach contains the strategies of arbitration, power mediation, and peacekeeping.) And general prescriptions made in the form of strategies are ultimately translated into practical methodologies specific to the context of the conflict through the use of what Bloomfield terms the embedded criteria.[21] This working of the complementarity model suggests that the conceptions of resolution and settlement approaches are indeed too broad to adequately indicate the precise nature of third-party efforts, although they are useful in grasping the general orientations of them.

[21] Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies*, pp. 203–214.

It is noteworthy that Bloomfield's substantial focus on the two general approaches to conflict management in preference to specific third-party intervention strategies can be conceived to have resulted from the unique feature of his case study of the Northern Ireland conflict—that is, the lack of third-party involvement by purely external actors and focused attention to initiatives that have emerged from among the parties to the conflict.[22] More specifically, he is primarily concerned with cultural initiatives in the form of reconciliation or community relations work and structural initiatives conducted by the British government. Although the validity of his case for the paucity of genuine third-party intervention in Northern Ireland might be open to debate, what appears to be evident is that his attention to these two kinds of conflict management efforts in Northern Ireland has led to the emphasis on resolution and settlement approaches as a means of conceptualizing peacemaking activities. In this sense, the broad conceptions of approaches may not be appropriate for describing a third-party process that involves a wide variety of peacemaking efforts made by many heterogeneous third-party actors and thus is not amenable to such rather simple dichotomization between resolution and settlement.

Even the mid-level conception of strategies is too general and broad to accurately capture the substance of a third-party activity. The notion of a strategy, as has been noted earlier, can be regarded as composed of a series of related roles and function, and such an inclusive nature of the concept causes some vagueness surrounding it. Relevant to this point is Keith Webb and his colleagues' critique of the Fisher-Keashly contingency model. Among other things, Webb and others call into question the clear-cut functional differentiation of a range of intervention strategies as presented in the contingency model.[23] Arguably, distinctions between different kinds of intervention strategies are blurred partly because they have some roles and functions in common. For instance, it is conceivable that both pure mediation and power mediation contain elements of such roles as convener, facilitator, and envisioner. In other words, the micro-level conceptualization would give us a developed sense of what a strategy entails and allow us to have the most precise and concrete picture of a third-party

[22] Bloomfield, "Towards Complementarity," p. 156.
[23] Keith Webb, Vassiliki Koutrakou and Mike Walters, "The Yugoslavian Conflict, European Mediation, and the Contingency Model: A Critical Perspective," in Bercovitch, ed., *Resolving International Conflicts*, p. 173.

activity.

Viewed in this light, the micro-level analysis based on the concept of roles and functions enables us to gain a fuller understanding of contributions made by a multiplicity of third parties, as compared to the strategy-based view. As Mitchell suggests, it is implicit in the Fisher-Keashly model that a single entity enacts a strategy that is actually made up of the whole range of roles and functions. This assumption may well lead us to try to understand third-party processes in an oversimplified manner, paying too much attention to the initiatives of a handful of prominent figures while neglecting the activities of many other less visible actors. Mitchell points out that such an image of "the" mediator associated with high profile representatives of governments and international organizations is prevalent in an account of third-party processes in international and intra-national conflict.[24] Indeed, Fisher and Keashly construct their case study of Cyprus, focusing on a small set of actors pursuing certain intervention strategies; the UN is seen to engage in pure mediation and peacekeeping, and great powers like Britain and the United States in power mediation, although they incorporate into the analysis scholar-practitioners—less prominent and visible—as agents for consultation in the form of problem-solving workshops.[25]

Labeling this kind of perspective as the "single mediator model," Mitchell proposes the "mediation as process model" as an alternative view, in which a number of third parties rather than a few dominant actors can contribute to a mediation process in various capacities and roles. In Mitchell's words, this process notion of mediation is often a "more accurate reflection of an empirical reality than the single mediator model."[26] According to Mitchell, this was the case in the two civil wars in the Sudan:

> No single third party in the traditional sense can be readily identified. Instead, what is found in each case is a variety of external third parties, each of which made a definite contribution to efforts aimed at achieving a solution but none of which can reasonably claim to have been the sole mediator in either conflict.[27]

[24] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 140.
[25] Fisher and Keashly, "The Potential Complementarity," pp. 39–41.
[26] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 140.
[27] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 148.

In terms of the levels of conceptualization, it is not always feasible to expect a single intermediary actor to fulfill all the necessary roles and functions associated with a concept of a particular strategy. Rather, as Mitchell supposes, it may be more realistic to envisage that multiple third parties are involved in a mediation process with each of them carrying out some of the roles and functions deemed to be part of an intervention strategy.[28] By embracing a finer concept of roles and functions, we would be able to free ourselves from the image of "the" mediator and grasp modest but definite contributions made by a number of mediators to the third-party process, which we might overlook if we rely on the broader concept of an intervention strategy.

In short, there are certainly trade-offs among different models working at the three different levels of conceptualizations. The micro-level conceptualization can be seen as suitable for attempts at making a detailed and nuanced analysis of third-party processes by trying to grasp a whole range of a multiplicity of third-party actors including minor, frequently-overlooked actors, while it may run the risk of failing to convey the overall picture of those processes. On the other hand, the mid- and macro-levels of analysis would be useful for attempts at a bird's-eye analysis of mediation processes with an emphasis on selected influential actors but at the price of losing sight of the multiplicity and complexity often involved in them.

5. Contingency

The notion of contingency is one of the key elements in understanding the multiple and interconnected nature of third-party processes. Particularly, it occupies a central place in the Fisher-Keashly model of third-party intervention. In principle, their contingency model works in such a way that appropriate methods of third-party intervention are matched to particular developmental stages of a conflict. More specifically, a certain intervention strategy—conceptualized at the mid level and associated with a particular type of third parties—is conceived to be most effective at one of four stages: discussion, polarization, segregation, and destruction. And after a strategy of initial choice has been applied, other follow-up strategies may need to be implemented in a sequential manner

[28] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 140.

to further de-escalate the conflict. For example, consultation by scholar-practitioners is regarded as the most appropriate strategy at the stage of polarization, in which relationship issues such as mistrust and negative perceptions are main obstacles to de-escalation. Once relationships between adversaries have been improved as a result of consultation, pure mediation becomes a useful follow-up strategy to deal with substantive issues.[29]

Here it is important to note the essential property of the model. As Mitchell characterizes it, the Fisher-Keashly contingency model implicitly assumes that an intervention strategy is implemented by a single entity,[30] and the possibility of a particular strategy being carried out jointly by multiple actors is not their primary concern. Furthermore, as described above, Fisher and Keashly envisage the sequential application of intervention strategies, but they have left mostly underdeveloped the possibility of simultaneous employment of different strategies. They try to justify such a conceptual orientation of their model, claiming that although concurrent application has been in evidence in some conflicts, it has rarely been pursued in a coordinated fashion.[31] Thus such working of the Fisher-Keashly model exhibits the nature of the single mediator model; a single actor intervening with one type of strategy dominates a third-party process at any given point.

Although Mitchell does not treat the notion of contingency in presenting his mediation-as-process model as explicitly as Fisher and Keashly do, he does so in a loose and thus flexible manner to make the model as a strand of the contingency approach. Conceptualizing third-party peacemaking action at the micro level, Mitchell assigns a set of intermediary roles to four different stages of the mediation process—prenegotiation stage, negotiation stage, postagreement stage, and final reconciliation stage. For instance, the roles of explorer (sounds out adversaries' willingness to talk and consider alternative solutions) and enskiller (provides adversaries with training in negotiation and diplomatic skills) are conceived to be enacted at the prenegotiation stage, while the facilitator (facilitates face-to-face talks

[29] Fisher and Keashly, "The Potential Complementarity"; and Keashly and Fisher, "A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions."
[30] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 140.
[31] Loraleigh Keashly and Ronald J. Fisher, "Towards a Contingency Approach to Third Party Intervention in Regional Conflict: A Cyprus Illustration," *International Journal*, vol. 45 (Spring 1990), pp. 439–440.

between adversaries by chairing meetings) and envisioner (offers new information, ideas, and possible alternatives for solution) are seen as the roles for the negotiation stage. And the roles of monitor (reassures parties about implementing agreement through verification) and enforcer (polices parties' postagreement behavior and imposes sanctions in case of non-compliance) are assigned to the postagreement stage and the reconciler role (undertakes long-term actions to build new relationships between adversaries) to the final reconciliation stage. And as for some of those third-party roles, he suggests types of actors who could possibly enact them, rather than strictly relating a particular strategy to a particular actor as Fisher and Keashly do. For instance, the envisioner role is seen as open to third parties with little leverage or muscle such as third-party organizers of problem-solving workshops, and the enforcer role to those with leverage. In the case of the monitor role, no specific reference has been made as to who could perform it.

It is now clear that Mitchell's model contrasts sharply with that of Fisher and Keashly. The picture Mitchell's model presents is that more than one third party is active at each stage of the mediation process, enacting different intermediary roles. In the prenegotiation stage, for instance, such roles as explorer, convener, decoupler, unifier, and enskiller could be pursued by a wide variety of third parties including church groups, NGOs, governments, and international organizations. Importantly, the model allows for the possibilities that a single role may be performed jointly by multiple actors and also that a single actor may carry out multiple roles.

Indeed, Kriesberg shares a similar description of the mediation process, and as Fisher and Keashly put it, Kriesberg presents "a description of international mediation with some elements of a contingency approach built in."[32] Also working at the micro level of conceptualization of peacemaking action, he suggests that many different actors are engaged in various mediating activities at each of four stages of de-escalation: preparation or prenegotiation, initiation, negotiation, and implementation. For example, Kriesberg relates mediating activities like selecting parties, providing good offices, and communicating each side's views to the preparation/prenegotiation stage. The UN, states, and unofficial persons or organizations are examples of providers of such

[32] Kriesberg, "Formal and Quasi-Mediators," p. 35; and Kriesberg, "Varieties of Mediating Activities," p. 243.

mediating services.[33]

It is unlikely that a snapshot of the third-party process taken at a particular moment shows a single actor intervening with a single strategy. Most probably, in the words of Mark Hoffman, what it shows are "consecutive, concurrent, parallel, or overlapping initiatives carried out by a variety of third parties."[34] The rather fluid, flexible versions of the contingency approach as put forward by Mitchell and Kriesberg, rather than the simplified, mechanical contingency model proposed by Fisher and Keashly, seem to offer a more realistic and accurate account of the international mediation process.

Apart from such a descriptive purpose, the contingency approach is intended to achieve a prescriptive aim—that is, to provide policy guidelines on who could undertake what kind of third-party action at which point in the evolution of a conflict in question. In the type of a contingency model that is as determinate and mechanical as Fisher and Keashly's framework, there is a danger that it is too cumbersome and inflexible to be applied to the actualities of international mediation. At the other extreme, however, if one goes as far as to obliterate the elements of contingency in mediation modeling, the result would amount to a mere tool-kit of third-party actions to be taken at any points by whoever the mediators may be, leaving potential third-party decision makers in the dark about the timing of their effective involvement. Viewed in this light, there is the apparent need to strike a balance between the room for maneuver and flexibility within the model and the degree of determinism necessary to make it informative enough for policy makers.

6. Complementarity

The issue of complementary interconnections among different third-party efforts has

[33] Bloomfield attaches lesser importance to the notion of contingency. He rejects the staged framework of conflict escalation, based on his critique of a linear view of conflict development and the assumption of intra-party cohesion. Instead, he maintains that a conflict could be separated into its component parts and that a prescriptive approach most relevant to each part, rather than to a specific escalatory stage, should be implemented. See Bloomfield, "Towards Complementarity," pp. 155–156, 160; and Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies*, pp. 86–89.

[34] Mark Hoffman, "Third-Party Mediation and Conflict-Resolution in the Post-Cold War World," in J. Baylis and N.R. Rennger, eds., *Dilemmas of World Politics: International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 276.

stimulated a major theoretical debate in the field of conflict management, and it is certainly the central concept in all of the analytic frameworks put forward by the theorists under discussions. For example, in proposing their contingency model, Fisher and Keashly have argued that consultation, an unofficial third-party activity, is neither the antithesis nor replacement of mediation, a more traditional and official form of third-party intervention. Rather, they have suggested that these two strategies ought to be seen as complementary to each other and utilized in combination to de-escalate protracted conflicts. In particular, they have emphasized that third-party facilitation or problem-solving conflict resolution efforts might fulfill "prenegotiation" functions and provide a basis for official negotiations.[35] Later, Bloomfield has tried to make Fisher and Keashly's contingency model more flexible and realistic by rejecting the idea of conflict stages and sequencing third-party interventions according to them as well as by incorporating contextual variables unique to specific conflict situations. In doing so, Bloomfield has formulated a "complementarity model" prescribing a more flexible usage of official settlement and unofficial resolution approaches to conflict management.[36] Kriesberg also deals with the issue of complementarity among different peacemaking efforts made by a variety of mediators and quasi-mediators—that is, representatives or members of one side in the dispute mediating between their government and its adversary. In particular, he pays special attention to quasi-mediator activities by unofficial persons and groups through problem-solving workshops and Track Two diplomacy.[37]

Although these theorists work at different levels of conceptualization of peacemaking initiatives, they are particularly concerned with the question of how to achieve the constructive interaction of various third-party activities of both official and unofficial kinds within an overall mediation process so as to produce complementarity effects among them. What is important to note is that their notion of complementarity was in large part a reaction to the dichotomy prevalent in the literature between two

[35] Fisher and Keashly, "The Potential Complementarity"; and Keashly and Fisher, "A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions." On the notion of prenegotiation, see Janice Gross Stein, ed., *Getting to the Table: The Processes of International Prenegotiation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

[36] Bloomfield, "Towards Complementarity"; and Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies*.

[37] Kriesberg, "Formal and Quasi-Mediators"; and Kriesberg, "Varieties of Mediating Activities."

opposing schools of thought, usually couched in resolution and settlement. Put simply, the resolution approach, based on a subjective and needs-based view of conflict, is aimed at eliminating the root causes of conflict and achieving a comprehensive solution with the help of rather facilitative third-party roles. The settlement approach, on the other hand, takes an objective, issue-based view of conflict and is aimed at reducing the conflict and bringing about a negotiated, compromise solution with the aid of third parties assuming more directive roles. As an extension of these polarized arguments, the resolution approach puts an emphasis on the involvement of unofficial third parties through problem-solving and facilitation, while the settlement approach stresses the centrality of third-party roles played by official mediators through traditional, diplomatic channels. The above-mentioned theorists have challenged this polarity and tried to explore the possibilities of combining both approaches in a complementary fashion for the sake of effective mediation.[38]

Thus the existing notion of complementarity is contemplated, for the most part, with regard to interaction between official and unofficial third-party efforts. To be sure, this kind of complementarity is a useful conceptual tool for the understanding of contemporary international mediation that often involves third-party interventions undertaken by private participants such as scholar-practitioners and NGOs. But at the same time, more than likely, the official process itself is likely to consist of multiple third-party actors. The possibility therefore arises that different kinds of complementarity effects can be discerned with regard to different kinds of interaction among official entities. More specifically, intervening states may differ in terms of the relationship with the parties in conflict and their third-party efforts may relate to one another in a complementary manner. The involvement of international and regional organizations might bring other types of complementarity to the mediation process. States and intergovernmental organizations are typically at the centre of peacemaking diplomacy and their initiatives may complement each other. And when more than one intergovernmental organization gets involved, they could exhibit distinct forms of complementary interaction. Thus it seems that the notion of complementarity ought to be expanded to include various kinds of interaction among many different actors

[38] See, for example, Hoffman, “Third-Party Mediation”; and Bloomfield, “Towards Complementarity.”

involved in the mediation process.

What emerges from this line of reasoning is the notion of complementarity that seems to be much more nuanced than the existing one. Indeed, Mitchell provides a clue to developing it in his discussion of the mediation process model without full elaborations. In a rather cursory manner, he states that a mediation process would "take the form of a number of interlocking and complementary roles enacted by a variety of…intermediaries."[39] But he fell short of explicitly conceptualizing which of his thirteen roles enacted by what kinds of third parties—either official or unofficial—can be interconnected with which role—either the same or different one, by other third parties—either official or unofficial—and what complementary impact those interconnections produce at which point in the negotiation process. Hypothetically, the role of facilitator enacted by official third parties such as the UN and state mediators can be seen as complementary to the role of the same kind fulfilled by organizers of unofficial workshops. And as a further theoretical possibility, the UN and states can exhibit complementary interaction in enacting the facilitator role. Furthermore, the role of facilitator can be enacted in combination with other roles such as convener or envisioner, whether by the same actor or different actors, to result in producing complementary effects.

Stressing the limitation of relying on the traditional theoretical dichotomy between mediation and facilitation (settlement and resolution) in understanding the interconnected nature of the third-party process, Hoffman states:

> Each of these characterizations may be an accurate account of one particularized form of third-party initiative, but they fail to capture the nature of the third-party process as a whole. What is needed is a "thick" account of the whole of the third-party process which accurately captures and explains the dynamic connections between different third-party initiatives. The need for such an account becomes obvious when we look at third-party practice in relation to any particular international conflict. What we find are consecutive, concurrent, parallel, or overlapping initiatives carried out by a variety of third parties. If we view these individual efforts as part of a larger, ongoing, and

[39] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," p. 142.

> cumulative process, the result is a whole series of initiatives, each of which may embody one particular approach but which, taken as whole, are difficult to characterize in anything other than an interconnected framework.[40]

Thus one of the remaining challenges for researchers concerned with the issue of complementarity appears to try to formulate such an "interconnected framework" by developing a broader and multifaceted notion of complementarity and revealing "dynamic connections," with the ultimate aim of arriving at a better understanding of the contributions of multiple mediators to a peace process.

7. Cooperation and Coordination: A Key Issue in Multiparty Mediation

What is common to the aforementioned scholars is that they place emphasis on the question of how different third-party actors can engage in different peacemaking activities at any given point in the third-party process, bringing about complementary effects. What is lacking, or at least remains underappreciated instead, is the issue of cooperation and coordination among the third parties involved, which is often the key to successful multiparty mediation.

Indeed, the past examples of multiparty mediation in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia, among others, have pointed up the difficulty in managing the complexity arising from the presence of a number of mediators with different interests, priorities, and policy objectives. The major flaw common to these rather unsuccessful cases of multilateral peacemaking has proved to be the weakness or lack of cooperation and coordination among the multiple third parties involved. Specifically with regard to the case of Rwanda, Bruce David Jones argues that the failure of the peace process in the country was due to the lack of coordination among different third-party efforts rather than the weakness of any single effort.[41]

In a similar vein, Michael Lund has stated that the weakness or lack of cooperation and coordination among the many third parties involved undermined the

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[40] Hoffman, "Third-Party Mediation," pp. 276–277.

[41] Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001). On the Yugoslav conflict, see, for example, Saadia Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars: The Critical Years, 1990-95* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Press, 2002).

effectiveness of peacemaking efforts in the former Yugoslavia, Zaire, and Rwanda, while concerted and coordinated third-party actions led to successful intervention in the Congo and Macedonia. Similarly, in Somalia uncoordinated intervention was conducive to an unsuccessful outcome, while a better-coordinated multilateral peacemaking initiative in Cambodia met with relative success.[42]

As suggested above, the multiplication of mediators can have both a positive and a negative impact on the effectiveness of conflict management. It is obvious that the involvement of multiple mediators can add chaos to a conflict situation if they do not cooperate with each other and coordinate their efforts. The potential benefits of multiparty mediation—positive interconnections among different third-party efforts—cannot be realized in the absence of adequate cooperation and coordination among those third parties involved. According to I. William Zartman:

> Conflict resolution is best carried out *in concert*. If a number of conciliators are available to the parties themselves and if a number of friends of the conflicting parties can *coordinate* their good offices and pressure, the chances of success are improved.[43] [Emphases added]

Then the important question is: How can cooperation and coordination in multiparty mediation be both theorized and practiced? Reflecting upon international mediation efforts in the former Yugoslavia, Keith Webb and his colleagues have raised this point specifically with Fisher and Keashly's contingency model that has attracted particular attention in the field:

> [T]he impossibility of coordinating the activities of states with different interests in the conflict has emerged clearly and sometimes dramatically. States may intervene for a number of reasons, such as the perception of a role, the defense of material interests, the acquisitions of prestige, for humanitarian considerations, on behalf of one or more of the participants, or for reasons of

[42] Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), pp. 94–95.
[43] I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 276. See also Louis Kriesberg, "Coordinating Intermediary Peace Efforts," *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 12, no. 4 (October 1996), pp. 341–352.

> national security…. The largely chimerical nature of sequencing and coordination in international mediation is attributable to the nature of international system itself, which although not wholly unordered lacks any overarching authority and hence has anarchic characteristics. To sequence and coordinate implies a degree of control over the activities of numerous actors that is simply unattainable in the international system.[44]

If we accept that the kind of sequencing and coordinating interventions as envisaged by Fisher and Keashly is politically infeasible in a third-party process at the international level, do we also need to accept that different third parties just intervene and assume whatever roles they intend to, at their own timing and pace, and that there could be neither coordination nor order of any kind among multiple third-party efforts?
Comparing the challenge of ensuring a concerted international response in situations of multiparty mediation to the task of "herding cats," Crocker *et al* note that:

> Management in these circumstances [in multiparty mediation] is not a matter of establishing a line of command and responsibility. Organizing the diverse third-party peacemaking entities is a lot like organizing cats. As anyone who has lived with them can tell you, cats cannot be organized. Independent beings, they will do what they choose to do, gazing at your efforts to organize them with mid curiosity, or simply ignoring you. Gaining a cat's cooperation is a complicated matter of setting a course the cat might find reasonable and employing incentives (food often works) that persuade it at least to give your idea some thought. … In this aspect of his or her work, the mediator faces an array of highly autonomous individuals and organizations, such as special representatives of powerful states or of the UN secretary-general, high-level politicians, and committed individuals who are privately funded and accountable to no government and international organization. Like cats, these independent agents rarely feel an obligation, or even a desire, to cooperate and they retain the ability to walk away from the mediation or to launch competing

[44] Keith Webb, Vassiliki Koutrakou and Mike Walters, "The Yugoslavian Conflict, European Mediation, and the Contingency Model: A Critical Perspective," in Bercovitch, ed., *Resolving International Conflicts*, p. 184.

> initiatives. The mediator cannot force these other third parties to collaborate but must persuade them to enter into a working relationship that reinforces rather then undermines the peacemaking mediation.[45]

This statement hints at the nature of cooperation and coordination in international mediation where a range of third parties intervene to promote their disparate and often selfish goals in the absence of any overarching authority in full control of them. More specifically, it offers the two key insights that might provide a direction for the further study on this issue. First, it is necessary to recognize the presence of independent and possibly divergent interests of participating third-party actors in trying to understand why and how they cooperate with each other. Second, some lead actor can play a significant role in coordinating their third-party efforts and facilitating cooperation among them for the effective conduct of international peacemaking.

8. Cooperation and Interconnectedness among Individual Third-Party Initiatives

Different actors have different levels of commitment to and different kinds of interest in the mediated settlement of a particular conflict. Although states, international organizations, and NGOs might intervene equally out of humanitarian considerations, they are likely to differ in terms of interests, priorities, and commitments. States' behaviors are inevitably influenced by independent national interests while those of international organizations and NGOs by the institutional desire to demonstrate their usefulness as peacemakers. The underlining assumption here is that there is no overarching authority in the realm of international peacemaking which can fully dictate the policies of many intervening actors and that different actors or groups of actors would choose to cooperate with each other when interests and commitments converge among them. Several states might share particular policy interests and try to mediate the conflict jointly. Those states might choose to work with international organizations for recognition of specific mutual interest. Official and unofficial third parties might have some interest in common and cooperate with each other. And what should be born in mind is that the interests and commitments of third parties may change over time,

[45] Crocker et al., "Introduction," p. 4.

possibly affected by some external factor or event. In sum, third-party actors may come to cooperate with one another, prompted by a broad coincidence of interests and commitments.

Furthermore, it is likely that when third parties cooperate with each other, there arise positive interconnections among their intermediary roles. And different forms and degrees of cooperation between third parties would lead to different types of interconnection among their roles. When states engage in joint mediation, their roles as mediators, which are affected by their independent policy interests, would interact with each other and bring forth specific types of positive interconnections. Such interconnections are likely to differ in nature from those that occur with regard to collaborative relationships between states and international organizations, official and unofficial third-party processes, and among other sets of third parties. Moreover, it may be that even the same combination of third-party roles exhibits different features of interconnectedness, depending on which kinds of third parties enact them jointly.

9. Coordination by Lead International Mediator

Hoffman has pointed out the difficulty with the degree of coordination as deemed necessary for the functioning of the Fisher-Keashly contingency model and has advocated the need to entertain a more realistic view of coordination in the third-party process. As Hoffman argues:

> [T]here may be some logical sequence for the application of different kinds of third-party interventions over the course of the third-party process. More than likely, however, we are likely to discover that there is no precise *recipe* for managing conflict beyond some broad, generalized guidelines. The contextualities and contingencies of each individual conflict will come into play. This, in turn, will point to the need to develop an adaptive and coordinating component in the third-party process as a whole in which there is an element of feedback both within individual third-party efforts and between efforts as part of the larger overall process.[46] [Emphasis in original]

[46] Hoffman, “Third-Party Mediation,” p. 278.

Given that the kind of coordination envisaged in the contingency model reduces it to no more than a "recipe" that would not lend itself to application in actual conflict situations, what is exactly an "adaptive and coordinating component," a seemingly workable mechanism in a real conflict setting, and how does it work?

Bruce Jones gives a clearer view on the issue of coordination in international peacemaking, presenting one possible form of a coordinating component in the third-party process as suggested by Hoffman. Jones argues that the effectiveness of international peace efforts can be improved by the use of "coordination mechanisms" such as "friends groups" by special representatives of the UN Secretary-General or other possible lead mediators, in which to bring together key participating third-party actors, harmonize their divergent interests and forge a common peacemaking strategy, and muster political support from them.[47]

Indeed, the importance of some major actor or actors taking the initiative in coordination has been suggested by other scholars as well. Referring to as examples peacemaking efforts in Macedonia, the Congo, and Burundi, Lund maintains that coordination among third-party actors is likely to be greatly enhanced by "the presence of an individual diplomat, other single player, or small, united group that, backed by a major power or organization, takes charge and orchestrates a unified…strategy."[48] Also, based on the application of his mediation-as-process model to the Sudanese cases, Mitchell states that the success of international mediation may well depend on "having one party (whether external or internal) acting in a coordinator role, overseeing and controlling the proper fulfillment of the various necessary functions."[49] Dunn and Kriesberg have approached the subject from a slightly different angle, arguing that international NGOs or transnational organizations might be better positioned in future conflict settings to perform such coordinating tasks, drawing on their increasing involvement in conflict resolution and mediation.[50]

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[47] Bruce D. Jones, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination," in Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, eds., *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 89–115.

[48] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts*, p. 95.

[49] Mitchell, "The Process and Stages," pp. 157–158.

[50] Larry A. Dunn and Louis Kriesberg, "Mediating Intermediaries: Expanding Roles of Transnational Organizations," in Jacob Bercovitch, ed., *Studies in International Mediation:*

The essentiality of the presence of lead international coordinator has been born out by numerous cases of international mediation. Among them, one could cite the rather unsuccessful case of coordination in the Yugoslav mediation, where major European powers and the United States were often "speaking with different voices" in coping with the disputing parties. The lack of agreement among them adversely affected the coherence and credibility of peacemaking efforts by the EC/EU and the UN. These intergovernmental organizations, in the person of prominent figures such as UN special representative Yasushi Akashi, former U.S. secretary of state Cyrus Vance, and former British foreign secretary David Owen, were "incapable of pursuing coherent, flexible, and dynamic negotiations guided by a coherent strategy," greatly hampered by the multiple, contradictory pressures of their membership and by weak political support from it.[51] Thus the composite, collective nature deprived these organizations of the opportunity to exercise their coordinating functions, which made the presence of multiple interveners detrimental to the effectiveness of international peacemaking.

Based on this and other experiences, it can be postulated that lead international mediators are likely to be able to effectively exercise coordinating functions through what might be termed the coordination mechanism, when they are accepted as a chief coordinator by the disputing parties as well as major third-party actors and are never seriously challenged in that regard. Moreover, the international consensus on the peacemaking strategy may well be essential for effective coordination to occur. As Stephen Stedman put it, in order for mediators to be effective, they must "speak with one voice." When they, especially the interested states, "support the mediation process" and "reach a consensus on how to terminate a war," the UN can be an "effective agent for bringing this about."[52] The common sense of direction in peacemaking may well allow a leader mediator such as the UN to not only prompt and influence to some extent various third-party efforts by other major third parties but also oversee and manage interconnections among these and their own initiatives. This could be conceived as the prototype of the coordination mechanism, which ought to remain as a subject of further conceptual and empirical study.

Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Z. Rubin (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

[51] Touval, *Mediation in the Yugoslav Wars*, pp. 176–177. See also Jones, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination," pp. 90–92.

[52] Stedman, "Negotiation and Mediation in Internal Conflict," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 361–362.

10. Conclusions and Implications

In order to arrive at a better understanding of multiparty mediation for the sake of its more effective practice, it would be helpful to bear in mind what different images of third-party processes the existing models are to project in terms of the key aspects of multiplicity, contingency and complementarity discussed in this article. Each model has its unique features—both strengths and weaknesses—in shedding light on how these elements manifest themselves in the actualities of international mediation.

Another important point underscored in the article is that the effective working of multiparty mediation may well depend on the requisite elements of cooperation and coordination among third parties involved. More precisely, it is not only cooperative interactions among the various sets of third parties involved—prompted by a broad coincidence of interest and commitments—but also the presence of a lead mediator serving as coordinator that contributes to constructive interactions among them and thus realizes positive interconnections between their different intermediary roles.

In closing, it is worth mentioning the relevance of the discussions here to ongoing policy challenges. Most of the debate on multiparty mediation dealt with in the article has been conducted in the post-Cold War period and as such has centered on the issue of how many third-party stakeholders could contribute to a negotiated, mediated settlement of internal wars, the most prevalent form of violent conflict during this period (and even today). What should be noted here is that although this debate continues to be relevant, it now has different implications in the post-9/11 period and is indeed more complex and challenging. The attacks of 11 September 2001 have caused the paradigm of global order and security to be dramatically changed, and within that context international efforts at conflict resolution and mediation have been constantly overshadowed by the demands of the global “war” on terrorism. Negotiating a political settlement to internal conflicts has not necessarily been given a central place on the international agenda, and when some form of international mediation is attempted, the essential elements of cooperation and coordination are even harder to obtain. Great powers, especially permanent members at the UN Security Council, are often polarized and divided on how to respond to a particular conflict situation; an alignment of their

interests and commitments is rare and fleeting, which renders the building of the core of the international consensus an extremely thorny task. With regard to the issue of who leads and coordinates, greater chaos and confusion have been caused, partly because the UN's mediating and coordinating role has often been relegated to the sidelines while regional and sub-regional organizations have increasingly taken up such a role. Viewed in this light, the challenge of "herding cats" in multiparty mediation continues to be of great concern to the international community with obstacles and complexities compounded, which would warrant renewed attention from scholars of international conflict management.[53]

[53] One of the recent developments relevant to the subject discussed in this paper is the debate on a "coherent, coordinated, complementary (3C) approach" as a way to enhance coordination among states, international and regional organizations, and NGOs operating in diplomatic, military, development, financial, and humanitarian areas in response to conflict and fragile situations. For details, see the report of the conference convened in March 2009 in Geneva by the Swiss government in collaboration with the OECD, UN, World Bank, and NATO, at http://www.3c-conference2009.ch/.