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## **Analysis of multiparty mediation processes**

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## *Introduction*

In an international system deprived of central authority, mediation has often been advocated as the most suitable way of third-party conflict management. Traditional academic literature studying international mediation, derived most of its insights from labor-management disputes (Zartman 2008). These insights relied mainly on the assumption that the mediation is conducted by a single trustworthy third-party that is deprived of any interest in the conflict. Over the past three decades, this traditional conceptualization of international mediation experienced important advancements and changes. As it will be illustrated later in this research, the issue of impartiality was gradually challenged, and several theories formulated conditions under which a third-party's bias might not be liability to the peace-process. As such, today mediation is defined simply as a process in which a third-party helps conflicting sides to find a solution to their conflict that they cannot find themselves (Touval and Zartman 2006). Nevertheless, despite these important theoretical developments, the core assumption that mediation is conducted by a *single* third-party still limits the practical applicability of various academic studies of international mediation. As numerous cases around the world show, international conflicts are increasingly being managed by more than one third-party.

Contemporary scholarship defines the processes where a conflict is managed (i.e. mediated) by more than one third party as *multiparty mediation* (Crocker et al. 1999; Crocker et al. 2001). Even though in recent years multiparty mediation processes have been under growing academic scrutiny, traditional literature on international mediation recognized the benefits of having multiple mediators working in concert. As emphasized by Zartman, “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” (Zartman 1989, 276). To this day, several studies have shown the potential benefits and liabilities of having multiple mediators (Crocker et al. 1999; Crocker et al. 2001, Diehl and Lepgold 2003), the relationship between the size of the mediating coalition and its effectiveness (Böhmelt 2011), and the need to have a cooperative endeavor by multiple mediators in order to achieve success in the mediation process (Whitfield 2007, Böhmelt 2011, Hampson and Zartman 2012).

Contemporary studies of multiparty mediation are unanimous in the claim that *cooperation* is the key ingredient for a successful multiparty mediation. However, apart from empirically confirming that cooperation exerts positive influence on multiparty mediation effectiveness (Böhmelt 2011, 874), the complexities of cooperation as a concept have not yet been scrutinized. Thus, some shortcomings in the previously mentioned studies could be easily observed. First of all, in all of them the concept of cooperation has often been equated to the concept of coordination, which has limited the analytical depth of such studies. Secondly, in each study cooperation has been treated as a static phenomenon, which does not change over time, but is rather observed in a binary manner: as present or not throughout the entire process. Therefore, what these studies failed to integrate was the impact of a potential change of mediators' attitudes that could occur throughout the process. In other words, while in the beginning one mediator might show clear intentions of cooperating with the rest of the mediating coalition and thus contribute to the overall potential effectiveness of the process, along the way as the mediating process unfolds, due to different circumstances, such attitude might completely change. Similarly, an initially non-cooperative mediator might alter its preferences, and decide to cooperate with the rest of the mediators. The fact that mediators' attitudes might change from cooperative to non-cooperative behavior, and *vice-versa*, throughout the process will inevitably have an effect on the effectiveness of the mediating coalition.

Although considerable progress has been made in studying multiparty mediation, the process still poses several unanswered questions. Following the logic of earlier studies that challenged the traditional literature regarding the impartiality of mediators, contemporary research on multiparty mediation still lacks a clear emphasis on specific self-interests that drive various mediators to get involved in managing the conflict. Publically third-parties often invoke humanitarian concerns as their sole motivation to act as mediators. However, given the considerable costs that mediation produces, it is reasonable to presume that mediators are at least as motivated by self-interest as by humanitarian impulses (Touval and Zartman 1985, 8). Mediation represents a useful foreign policy tool that helps international actors to promote specific self-interests (Touval 1992). As such, the investment of substantial material and non-material resources should not be seen as only aimed at

resolving a dispute; it is also done so that mediators can gain something from managing the dispute (Greig 2005). Thus, just as mediators' involvement needs to be compatible with their self-interest, their choice to cooperate once they've committed to mediation also needs to be perceived as useful for the promotion of their self-interests.

International conflicts usually draw into the mediation process all sorts of outside actors, that are "just as numerous and frequently as diverse in their interests as the warring parties themselves" (Hampson and Zartman 2012, 1). Since each mediator will try to promote its self-interests, the larger the number of participants in a multiplayer mediation, the larger the probability of conflicting interests and positions and the more complex the relationship among the parties will be (Crocker et al. 1999). Potential conflict in mediators' interests will have a direct impact on the likelihood of achieving cooperation. In other words, compatibility or convergence of interests between mediators is a necessary precondition for the achievement of cooperation. In this research a special focus is given to the impact of 'drop-outs' - mediators that due to various circumstances believe that non-cooperative behavior is in their self-interest, and as such choose not to cooperate with the rest of the mediating coalition - and potential factors that might change their general strategy/attitude from defection to cooperation. This research identifies three basic factors - exogenous geo-political shifts, change in conflict dynamics and bargaining for cooperation - that might induce mediators to alter their attitude from non-cooperation to cooperation.

Once actors achieve full convergence of interests, the mediating coalition will then have to overcome the challenge of *coordinating* different mediators' actions. While in earlier studies, the conceptual difference between coordination and cooperation was at best blurry, this research will aim to avoid such analytical limitation. When joining a mediating coalition, each mediator enters with a specific set of resources that could be used to leverage the disputants towards a mutually acceptable solution. The theory of international mediation defines these resources as power or leverage, which is 'the ability to move a party in an intended direction' (Touval and Zartman 2006, 436). Such ability derives from the very fact that disputing sides need mediators' assistance in finding solutions to their problems (Touval and Zartman 1985, Touval 1992). Earlier studies have shown that one of the most important comparative advantages of multiparty mediation efforts is in the dynamic where

various mediators pool in their resources, which allows for a creation of necessary incentives for resolution that would have been unavailable through a single mediator (Crocker et al. 1999). A harmonious employment of various leverages can be instrumental for the effectiveness of the mediation process - "where direct leverage is limited it may be borrowed from others" (Crocker et al. 1999, 40). This research looks at *coordination* as a method of synchronized usage of different leverages and resources each mediator has at its disposal in the process in order to create incentives which are instrumental for successfully resolving the conflict. Since power/leverage is never aimlessly employed, the decision to use a particular type of leverage (depending on the mediator's relative capacities) will be directly linked to the self-interest that the mediator aims to promote through the process.

In essence, the aim of this dissertation is to explain in more details the effects of cooperation and coordination on multiparty mediation. As previous illustrated studies have shown, crucial challenges that must be overcome in multiparty mediation processes are the (1) achievement of adequate *cooperation* among the mediators and (2) consequent *coordination* of their activities in the mediation process. While the two concepts have in common the presumption that actors involved in the mediating coalition need to have shared goals on how to resolve the conflict, they is still a clear difference between the two: a necessary prerequisite for a successful cooperation is that all parties recognize mutual benefits of working together; once the parties perceive the benefits of working together, cooperation might lead to a coordinated endeavor which implies a more mechanical process of dividing the labor effectively, and clarifying who needs to do what, when and how.

With all this in mind, crucial ingredients for a successful multiparty mediation seem to be '*consistency in interests*' and '*cooperation and coordination*' between mediators. The aim of this dissertation is to further expand the existing knowledge on multiparty mediation by answering a number of *(sub)research questions*. First of all, how much do the 'consistency of interests' and 'cooperation and coordination' affect the overall process? Given the dynamic nature of cooperation, and likelihood that a party changes its behavior from cooperative to non-cooperative throughout the process of multiparty mediation, it is important to understand if the efforts that lack cooperation inevitably end in failure. Similarly, what happens to the mediation process when mediating par-

ties do not share the same idea and interest in a common solution? At the same time, present research will explore the obstacles in achieving coordination and coherence between various mediators in such an environment and how to surmount the problems that multiple mediators face when operating without a 'common script' in attempting to mediate a negotiated settlement. In other words, this study will investigate which mechanisms (both on the systemic and contextual level) have the potential to deter defection from a (potential) member of the multiparty mediation coalition? Finally, as the number of states and international actors that are involved in mediation increases, a careful assessment is necessary not only of their relative institutional strengths and weaknesses, but also of how to promote complementary efforts and how to synchronize the whole process when one actor is transferring the responsibilities for mediation to others. In other words, this research will try to point out the importance of self-interests that motivate third-parties to get involved and to unveil the link between coordination and self-interests (also described as strategic interests) and the impact of such interaction on the overall effectiveness of the mediating process.

Multiparty mediation is not a new theory of mediation, rather an advancement of the existing knowledge. Therefore this dissertation will start by laying out a theoretical framework of mediation in Chapter 1. Existing literature will reflect the multicausal nature of the mediating process, where interplay of a variety of factors (systemic and behavioral) directly affects the effectiveness of the process. Once the fundamental theoretical framework of international mediation has been described, this research will move to the existing knowledge of multiparty mediation in Chapter 2. Given the existing limitations of current knowledge on multiparty mediation, this research will aim to expand it with a game theoretical model that was developed in order to observe a general pattern of mediators' behavior in multiparty mediation. The model will be interpreted using the Theory of Moves (Brams 1994). Reflecting on the insights from the existing literature on mediation and the game theoretical model, this research will generate several hypotheses regarding the dynamic of cooperation and coordination in multiparty mediation. These will be tested on the basis of five different case studies, of recent international conflicts that were managed through a multiparty endeavor. The existing studies (Kriesberg 1996, Crocker et al. 1999, Crocker et al. 2001, Böhmelt 2011) have all shown that there is a strong correla-

tion between cooperation and coordination among multiple mediators and success in multiparty mediation. Present research will aim to go one step further and try to analyze potential existence of a causal mechanism between success in multiparty mediation and cooperative and coordinated activities of multiple mediators. One of the most suitable methods of examining causality is certainly *process tracing* (George and Bennett 2005, Beach and Pedersen 2012), and this study will conduct a process tracing analysis on five different case studies of multiparty mediation.

The cases were selected based on two criteria. The first one is quite straightforward, and it implies that a particular international conflict was managed by multiple mediators. Second criteria, prescribed in process tracing literature (Beach and Pedersen 2012), implies the existence of both hypothesized X and outcome Y, which in this research means the existence of a cooperative (and coordinated) effort and (un)successful outcome. Therefore, three cases that were selected had a successful outcome - Tajikistan, Namibia and Cambodia - while two failed - Sri Lanka and Kosovo. In principle, using a process tracing method, this research will analyze various dynamics surrounding the achievement of necessary cooperation and subsequent coordination between mediators, and the effect these had on the outcome of the peace process. The dissertation will conclude with a discussion on various factors that could induce the change in mediators' attitudes and promote cooperative behavior within the mediating coalition, which in turn would improve the chances of successfully managing the conflict.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that nearly the entire dissertation has been already published in various academic forms. The theoretical background in Chapter I together with the existing theory on multiparty mediation from Chapter II (section 2.1) has been published in the Special Issue on Literature Review in the *International Journal of Conflict Management* (Vukovic 2012b). The segment on mediation strategies and mediator's bias from Chapter I was also published in *Cooperation and Conflict* (Vukovic 2011). An abbreviated version of the Chapter II, which included the game theoretical model and existing hypotheses, together with the analysis of three cases studies (Tajikistan, Cambodia and Kosovo) has been published in *International Negotiation* (Vukovic 2012a). Finally, the case of Sri Lanka together with the hypothesis regarding the link between strategic interests and coordination (H9) has been published as a book chapter together with a visiting doctoral fellow Maria Groeneveld-Savisaar (Groeneveld-Savisaar and Vukovic 2011).



