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Analysis of multiparty mediation processes

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CHAPTER
II

MULTIPARTY MEDIATION

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2.1 Existing theory

2.1.1 Definition

While in certain settings (such as domestic or legal disputes) it is customary for mediation to be conducted by a single trustworthy actor with a necessary degree of authority, 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). By noticing this significant difference, several scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution have underlined that today the multiplication of mediators is less a matter of choice and more a fact of life (Crocker et al 1999; Sisk 2009). The popularity of mediation as a conflict management activity and recent proliferation of potential mediators shifted the interest of academia to analyze the process and dynamics of multiparty mediation (Crocker et al 1999, Crocker et al 2001, Diehl and Lepgold 2003, Whitfield 2007, Böhmelt 2011, Hampson and Zartman 2012).

In their analysis, Frazier and Dixon (2006) find that the more the mediation effort is multilateral the greater the chance of a negotiated settlement (pg. 403), as “coalitions serve as a good example of how states utilize their power in an ad hoc but multilateral manner. Coalitions provide states the opportunity to act outside of formal multilateral settings but with some of the benefits of multilateralism such as legitimacy and pooling of resources” (2006, 391).

It is very simplistic to assume that coalitions are formed only by states. In the contemporary international society, which is increasingly becoming multilateral, ad hoc coalitions are continuously changing shape. The archetypical ad hoc coalitions of states are now complemented by participation of other multilateral bodies. In fact “multiparty mediation refers to attempts by many third parties to assist peace negotiations in any given conflict ... it may be undertaken by international or regional organizations, national governments and non-governmental organizations” (Crocker et al. 1999, 230). These attempts may occur sequentially – one institution at a time – over the life of the conflict, or may occur simultaneously involving many different mediators with various

institutional bases on the ground at the same time. In fact, the concept refers to simultaneous interventions by more than one mediator in a conflict, interventions by composite actors such as contact groups as well as sequential mediated interventions that again involve more than one party. Thus the real multilateralism of different ad hoc coalitions can be perceived by parties in conflict as formed not to serve the interest of only one state, but to produce a body that will act with an increased level of legitimacy since it might bring together states and IOs that all act upon a specific interest.

Since mediation is being undertaken by a variety of institutions, comprised of individual states, coalitions of the willing, international organizations, and various transnational NGOs, a number of very important questions challenge contemporary academia (Crocker et al. 1999): how and why these multiparty interventions take place; who is endowed with leadership; what establishes the extent of dedication in terms of human and financial resources; who is accountable for keeping an already mediated settlement on track and preventing the collapse of the agreement lest it become orphaned. 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. Finally, it would be of great value to know more about the main 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.

2.1.2 Benefits and Liabilities of Multiparty Mediation

According to practitioner literature (Crocker et al. 1999) there are several serious challenges that the process of multiparty mediation is faced with. In case the mediation is conducted by a multitude of actors there is always a possibility of confusion in the process. Namely, as Crocker, Hampson and Aall specify, 'if there is no shared analysis of the problem and no sense of a common solution, different mediators will confuse the parties' (2001, 57). This lack of shared ideas tends to produce

mixed signals, which will be sent to conflicting sides, and consequently undermine the mediation efforts. With multiple mediators, disputing sides might tend to go ‘forum shopping’ with different mediators for several reasons. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon noted that “multiple actors competing for a mediation role create an opportunity for forum shopping as intermediaries are played off against each other. Such a fragmented international response reinforces fragmentation in the conflict and complicates resolution” (Ban Ki-Moon 2009). At the same time, forum shopping can turn into a useful tool for procrastination of the overall negotiation process for those parties that lack the real commitment to achieve a settlement. Mediators might also channel their lack of commitment by ‘passing the buck’ to other mediators once things go wrong, in order to avoid being part of a failed effort.

Despite these downturns, multiparty mediation has become a very practical solution to modern day conflicts which require elevated levels of commitment in order to manage them. Since rarely a single entity (being a state or an international/regional organization) is either capable or willing to invest as much as is really required, more than one third party represents a good alternative. First of all, not every mediator enters the process with the same level or type of leverage. A combination of mediators with different leverages might contribute to the efficiency of collective activity, since the process might rely on ‘borrowing leverages’ from various sides. Participation of influential regional and global actors in the mediating coalition can contribute in ‘restructuring’ both domestic and regional relationships that hamper the achievement of a negotiated solution. Finally Crocker, Hampson and Aall emphasize that multiparty mediation’s advantage is that it permits different mediators to enter the process according to their capabilities and thus contribute to the facilitation of negotiation and communication between the conflicting sides (Crocker et al. 2001; 1999). This fact is directly related to the conflict cycle also developed in their analysis.

2.1.3 Conflict Cycle and Comparative Advantage of Different Kinds of Mediators

According to Crocker, Hampson and Aall, at the ‘low end’ of the conflict curve, which indicates the period prior to the occurrence of belligerent activities, the combined interventions by non-official actors

can be efficient in ‘defusing conflicts before they escalate’ (2001, 61). At that time, parties are still inclined to talk to each other, so they might reject efforts by outside states and international organizations perceiving them as interfering with internal issues. By creating informal settings for communication, mediators might help the parties avoid the pressure from respective constituencies, and thus improve the likelihood of achieving a negotiated settlement. In the ‘middle range’ of the conflict curve, parties are reluctant to accept outside intervention, as mutual relationships and perceptions between the parties have solidified due to escalation of violence (2003, 241). In this case the conflict is still not ripe for mutual acceptance that a settlement needs. Thus some low key mediators (i.e. NGOs) might be useful to establish communication between the parties without making them lose face since publicly they might be committed to pursue conflicting policies. Once the communication has been established it is useful to introduce mediators that have coercive/reward power that can be used in a formal setting – a tactic described as “mediation with muscle” (Crocker et al.1999, 242; Crocker et al. 2001, 62). The use of coercive threats and side payments by third parties might induce conflicting sides to change their pre-coined options and convince them away from violence. Without these incentives, parties will have little reason to participate in talks and will be more inclined to continue with hostilities as a means to achieve an acceptable solution. Consequently the ‘upper end’ of the conflict curve requires even stronger presence of mediators with ‘muscle’ that will be able to develop the needed amount of pressure on parties and lead them away from conflicting deadlock. According to Crocker, Hampton and Aall, at this point it is expected from mediators to develop inventive and plausible solutions for ‘confidence-building measures, cease fire monitoring, verification proposals’, to make sure that obligations are being executed and other types of ‘political guarantees’ that facilitate addressing the most complex security issues pertinent to the parties (Crocker et al. 1999, 242). In the end, under these circumstances success can be obtained only if mediators apply effective procedural control over the process.

2.1.4 Composition of the Mediating Coalition

According to a study by Strimling (2008), mediation conducted simultaneously by official diplomats and private facilitators are most likely when their efforts are characterized by high levels of communication, coordination, collaboration and integration. For Böhmelt (2011) these four factors could be best observed in coalitions composed of democratic states. Democratic peace literature argues that one of the most important norms of democracies is the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Dixon 1994, Bercovitch and Huston 2000, Mitchell 2002). Dixon (1994) already showed that democratic opponents are more likely to reach a peaceful settlement because their systems are based on norms that promote compromise and non-violence. At the same time, democratic features such as transparency and inclusivity decrease the level of uncertainty and facilitate communication. In multiparty coalitions composed of democracies this helps mediators to overcome collective action problems and consequently promotes cooperative interactions (Böhmelt 2011, 112). The same argument can be applied to concept of coordination because coordination is also best achieved through predictable procedures that reflect those present in democratic societies. However, despite expectations that democracies are best suited for multiparty mediation, according to Böhmelt chances for effective conflict resolution are not driven by regime type (2011, 127). In fact, as experience shows, on numerous occasions multiparty mediation was successful even when it was conducted by a coalition composed of democratic and non-democratic states.

Since the diversity of regimes in the coalition was not an obstacle to achieve success, the composition should be observed from the angle of previous relationships between mediators. For instance, patterns of predictable behavior that are instrumental for a more cooperative and coordinated effort between mediators can develop through a series of repeated mediation interactions. As it was previously stated, while it is useful for a coalition to be composed of actors that have compatible interests, the “team of rivals” hypothesis (Hampson and Zartman 2012) illustrates that successful mediation is also possible even if mediators have competing interests. The crucial challenge is to have “negotiating teams that are not necessarily comprised of likeminded, ideological soul mates but are ‘teams of rivals’ who develop mutual respect and a common

understanding that they share wider strategic interests and goals which go beyond the conflict in question” (Hampson and Zartman 2011, 17). Positive past relations between actors that intervene as mediators in a given conflict – even with conflicting agendas – might contribute to the success of multiparty mediation activity through a coordinated effort.

Conflicting sides are often reluctant to accept third party mediation if they perceive an external actor’s preferences bias to the advantage of the opposing side. Prior to their decision to start negotiations, conflicting sides do a cost-benefit analysis on whether continuing the conflict is less advantageous than resorting to a negotiated settlement. At the same time, the achieved settlement needs to deliver results that would increase (if not maximize) the utility for both sides; otherwise they would just resort to war (Bercovitch et al. 2007). Since the conflict is intractable to the extent that conflicting sides are unable to achieve a settlement bilaterally, the role of the mediating coalition becomes very delicate. It is quite possible that each one of the actors within the coalition will have a distinct agenda to promote, and thus be inclined to one of the disputants’ claims. This way, a confirmation that their claims are well embedded within the coalition will certainly give a positive impulse to both conflicting parties to accept the multilateral mediation. As previously stated, multiparty mediation allows a distinct mechanism of ‘borrowing leverage’. Generally, increasing leverage in such circumstances improves the position of mediators in the process and contributes to the efficiency of collective activity. Involvement of important regional and global actors in the process can help change relationships between conflicting parties that hamper the achievement of a negotiated solution. As such, the various mediators may provide numerous carrots and sticks that can facilitate and improve communication between parties and change the attitudes of parties that are not fully committed to achieving an agreement.

For the purposes of this research, the analysis will focus on two types of actors that are invested with a particular amount of relative leverage and are capable of conducting a formal mediation process: states and international organizations. As previously illustrated, international organizations rarely have any coercive power of their own whenever they join the mediation process, but they have to rely on their member-states. Presently, the only type of power international organizations have at their disposal is reward power. But the main type of leverage inter-

national organizations can count on is legitimacy. This type of leverage makes them being perceived as credible and thus acceptable mediators, which makes them a valuable asset for a potential mediating coalition. But quite often, legitimacy in itself is not enough to keep the process going and abusing reward power might have a converse effect. States on the other hand, usually have at their disposal coercive means and (on occasions) reward policies towards conflicting sides, but their legitimacy is much more limited. For this reason a very beneficial feature of multiparty mediation - ‘borrowing leverage’ - can be observed through the creation of a specific leverage which blends coercive-reward power and legitimacy.

As explained earlier, ‘borrowing leverage’ is a clear illustration of a coordinated activity. In cases when the mediating coalition lacks the necessary leverage to move the parties toward an agreement, they might explore the option of including those actors that possess the much needed leverage. Once a new actor offers or is invited to join the mediating coalition, the crucial challenge for a multiparty endeavor is to achieve the necessary level of “mutual respect” despite the possibility that their interest in the dispute might be conflicting.

2.2 Advancing the Theory of Multiparty Mediation

2.2.1 Challenges of Cooperation and Coordination

Reflecting on the previous statement by Frazier and Dixon (2006), the more multilateral the mediation effort is, the greater the chance of a negotiated settlement; there might also be a converse relationship between the number of players and issues in a multiparty mediation and the probability of creating and supporting a synchronized intervention strategy. As Crocker, Hampson and Aall claim, “increasing numbers and difficulties in negotiation are related to heterogeneity of interests and perceptions” (1999, 250). So the larger the number of participants in a multiparty mediation, the larger the probability of conflicting interests and positions, and the more complex the relationship among the parties will be (*idem*, 252). Böhmelt (2011) empirically confirms this argument. He finds that the relationship between the size of a mediating coalition and the effectiveness of a multiparty mediation effort can be illustrated with a U-shape: “both small and very large groups are

less likely than medium-sized intervening coalitions to mediate disputes effectively” (Böhmelt 2011, 109). He argues that a single mediator or a small group rarely have the needed amount of leverage to produce crucial incentives for the parties in conflict; while the bigger coalitions are more likely to possess the necessary leverage. However their size makes them more difficult to organize and does not allow them to have a “greater heterogeneity of interests” (Böhmelt 2011, 122).

In cases where the mediation is conducted by a coalition, intractable barriers of the process can be avoided if interests of mediators are homogeneous or converging and the coalition is ready to delegate power and accountability to the mediator while also granting the mediator the authority to bargain for the group as a whole (Crocker et al 1999, 252). However, in reality mediators often do not have a shared interest in the conflict. It is hard to imagine that a mediating effort could be successful if conducted by mediators with competing interests that do not wish to cooperate with each other. In cases where mediators have competing interests and diverse alliances (relationships) with parties in conflict, mediation coalitions can be seen as “teams of rivals” (Hampson and Zartman 2012). In such cases, in order to be efficient, the mediators agree to work as a team, which is a clear signal of acceptance of cooperation (initial cooperation), while still maintaining diverging interests. The fact that they maintain diverging interests sends a signal to the parties in conflict that their stakes might be secured (i.e. they have an ally in the team of rivals).

Having all this in mind, key concepts for a successful multiparty mediation appear to be ‘*consistency in interests*’ and ‘*cooperation and coordination*’ between mediators. But how much does this affect the overall process? Do efforts that lack cooperation inevitably end in failure? What happens to the mediation process when mediating parties do not share the same idea and interest in a common solution?

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. Böhmelt (2011) already showed that cooperative interactions between mediators improve the likelihood of mediation success. Looking at coordination, Crocker notes that when broader policy objectives diverge, this tends to result in confusion and a lack of *coordination* in negotiation efforts (emphasis added, Crocker et al. 1999,

687). Similarly, according to 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” (emphasis added, Zartman 1989, 276). Unfortunately, existing literature goes only as far as to make it clear that for a successful mediation it is important to achieve necessary cooperation and coordination among the actors as if these features were exogenous to the process. Synchronized activities are only observed as if they are either present or not in the process, without considering whether or not these features might change over time and if this change could have an impact on the overall mediation process.

As numerous cases of multiparty mediation indicate, it is not rare that parties who are initially willing to pool their resources and act in concert, at a certain point decide to stop cooperating with the rest of the coalition. However, without this willingness to continue cooperating with other mediators, it is illusory to talk about coordinated activities. Given that cooperation is a precondition for coordination, under what conditions will potential dropouts see cooperation as their dominant strategy? How does cooperation or lack of cooperation affect the outcome of peace talks?

It would be implausible to expect that mediators are only driven by humanitarian concerns to intervene. Bearing in mind the considerable investment of resources that mediation requires, it is reasonable to presume that mediators are at least as motivated by self-interest as by humanitarian impulses (Touval and Zartman 1985, 8). Mediators play their role in negotiations and spend resources not only because they aim to resolve a dispute, they also seek to gain something from it (Greig 2005; Touval 1992). In a similar vein, just as their 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.

Cooperation can be understood as a situation where parties agree to work together to produce new gains for each of the participants that would be unavailable to them by unilateral action, at some cost (Zartman and Touval 2010, 1). It implies a dynamic through which conflicting interests can be pooled together in order to achieve common interests. When faced with a shared problem, parties can choose from three scenarios: unilateral action, cooperative action and not acting at

all. In most cases, parties are inclined to act on their own; or as Touval phrases it, to act “unilaterally if possible, multilaterally if necessary” (Touval 2010). The decision to act unilaterally is directly related to the costs that cooperation implies – when the cost of cooperation is greater than the perceived benefits, parties will defect.

Depending on the type of conflict, cooperation may occur on two different levels: between the parties to a conflict directly, via negotiations, or with the help of outside parties, via mediation. In both cases, according to Zartman, cooperation is a direct consequence of three elements that parties take into consideration (Zartman 2010). The first one is the ‘effectiveness’ of cooperation as opposed to more conflictual strategies. The second is the cost/benefit calculation of cooperating. Finally, actors must consider ‘playback effects’ – the reputational costs that an actor may suffer for non-cooperative behavior. Each one of these elements plays a crucial role in parties’ decisions for or against cooperation.

In the realm of multiparty mediation, cooperation can be observed in its full complexity. In order to attain a successful outcome, cooperation needs to take place on three distinct yet highly interrelated levels. First of all, since the dynamics of the conflict impede the parties from negotiating directly (i.e. bilaterally), they have to choose to cooperate with the third parties in order to find a commonly acceptable solution. At the same time, since the conflict is mediated by a multitude of outside actors, these actors also need to come up with a ‘common script’ which will serve as a clear guideline for resolving the dispute. Thus all the third parties need to cooperate among themselves and reduce the possibility of sending mixed signals which might jeopardize the management process. Finally, it should not be forgotten that each outside actor also has a specific interest in resolving the conflict, and this interest is directly related to the mediator’s relations with one (or both) disputing sides. For this reason it is essential that cooperation takes place also on this third level, as this is the level that gives outside actors their added leverage.

Once cooperation is in place along all of these dimensions, we may move one step further and start observing the dynamics of *coordination*. Cooperation and coordination are not two distinct processes; rather, coordination represents a subset dynamic of a larger cooperation process. While both cooperation and coordination imply that the actors involved need to have shared goals, there is still a very clear difference between

en the two phenomena. A precondition for cooperation to be successful is that all parties recognize mutual benefits of working in concert. Once acknowledged as beneficial, cooperation opens the doors to the dynamics of coordination which involves the more mechanical aspects of dividing the labor effectively, and clarifying who needs to do what, when and how. In other words coordination is the next step in the process of achieving full cooperation, as parties make sure that they do not cross purposes or stumble over each other in their efforts to accomplish their shared cooperative goal.

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 necessary incentives for resolution that would have been unavailable through a single mediator. As Crocker, Hampson and Aall already underlined, a harmonious employment of various leverages represents a crucial element of an effective multiparty mediation process: “where direct leverage is limited it may be borrowed from others” (Crocker et al. 1999, 40).

It is essential to keep in mind that while producing new gains, cooperation is also generating certain costs for participants. When multiple mediators act in concert, they all face dual costs: those of cooperating plus the inevitable costs of mediation. Given the combined costs of multiparty mediation, for cooperation to take place, parties need to know that benefits will outweigh detriments. However, as previously mentioned, it is not uncommon that at a certain point in the process of cooperating, a party decides to defect from the group. Defection may come in different forms – from procrastination to the full abandonment of the process – but its distinct feature in multiparty mediation processes is the fact that a party is unwilling to use the full potential of its leverage and resources to move the conflicting parties toward an agreement.

2.2.2 Game theoretical model

In order to fully understand the complexities of achieving cooperation in a multiparty mediation effort, this research will first provide an abstraction of the process through a game theoretical model. Game theoretic approaches are useful inasmuch as they allow us to analyze the decisions parties make regarding potential strategies available to them in the mediation process as they pursue maximization of their expected

utilities. Numerous studies of mediation have already benefited from the use of rational choice models (Kydd 2003, Kydd 2006, Maoz and Terris 2006). The intention here is not to create a new theoretical model, but to bring into play those findings that can help understand general relationship patterns between parties and enhance our understanding of specific decisions they made as the process of mediation advanced.

Because one of the underlining assumptions of this research is that cooperation can change over time, the model will utilize the dynamic Theory of Moves (ToM). Brams developed this theory in order to bring, “a dynamic dimension to the classical theory of games, which its founders characterized as ‘thoroughly static’” (von Neumann and Morgenstern 1944; 3rd edn, 1953, pg. 44 as quoted in Brams 1994, 1). The first rule of ToM is that a game has to start at an outcome, called “initial state” (Brams 1994, 22). The assumption is that from this state, players can aspire to move to a better state by switching their strategies. As Brams explains it, “as they look ahead at their possible moves, the possible counter-moves of other players, their own counter-counter-moves, and so on, the players try to anticipate where play will terminate” (Brams 1994, 7). Thus, the game ends when, after a series of “alternating responses,” the player who has the next move decides not to switch its strategy (Brams 1994, 22). Another important rule of ToM is that a player will not move from an initial state if this move “leads to a less preferred final state; or returns play to the initial state” (Brams 1994, 27). Brams calls this rule “a *rationality rule*, because it provides the basis for players to determine whether they can do better by moving from a state or remaining in it” (Brams 1994, 28). The last rule is that of “*precedence*”, and it implies that once a player makes a move “its move overrides the player who stays, so the outcome will be induced by a player who moves” (idem). As each player looks ahead and makes rational calculations where to move from each initial state, the process ends in outcomes that Brams calls *nonmyopic equilibria* or NME (Brams 1994, 33).

Brams’ theory proves its applicability to the case of mediation by arguing that:

“some decisions are made collectively by players in which case it would be reasonable to say that they choose strategies from scratch, either simultaneously or by coordinating their choices. But if say two countries are coordinating their choices, as when they agree to sign a treaty, the important question is what individualistic calculations led them to this point. The formality of jointly signing a treaty is the culmination of their negotiations, which covers up the move-countermove process that preceded it. This is precisely what ToM is designed to uncover” (Brams 1994, 23).

For the purposes of simplification let's assume that there are two disputing sides – side A and side B – who are unable to negotiate a settlement themselves. The intractable nature of their conflict and the issues at stake draw attention from more than one outside actor who have an interest in managing the peace process. Again, for the purposes of simplification, let's assume that we have (at least) three such players, each one with specific interests in the conflict, leverages they can exert in the peace process and relationships they have with other mediators and conflicting sides. Therefore, let's presume that mediators 1 and 3 are what scholarship calls *biased mediators* due to the particular nature of their relationship with parties to the dispute (Touval and Zartman 1985). Mediator 1 is biased toward party A, and has particular leverage over it, so as it is able to move party A in an intended direction. The same relationship can be found between mediator 3 and party B. On the other hand, mediator 2 is what scholarship calls a *pure mediator*, who does not have any special relationship with neither of the conflicting sides but nevertheless has a strong interest in resolving the conflict. The model will assume that mediator 2 is the only actor that is unwilling to dropout from the process, while actors 1 and 3 might opt for this strategy, and thus undermine cooperation within the mediating coalition. Under all these assumptions, the model prescribes four different scenarios. In the first scenario all three mediators choose to cooperate throughout the process. In the second and the third scenario, actors 1 and 3 respectively choose to defect from the group while still maintaining a biased relationship with either A or B. In the fourth scenario both 1 and 3 chose to deflect, leaving the entire mediating process to 2, though they again keep biased relations with conflicting sides.

The model⁽¹⁾ prescribes two choices (X) for each actor involved: to cooperate (1) or not to cooperate (0). That is: $X_A, X_B, X_1, X_2, X_3 = 0$ or 1 . All other values in the model also range from 0 to 1.

In case parties are unable to engage in mediation, payoffs of resolving the conflict through fighting are described through expected utility functions:

1 This model was originally developed during the 2009 YSSP research at IIASA, Laxenburg, Austria, and further expanded to its current state together with Dr. Ben Allen (Harvard University).

$$A : P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A$$

$$B : P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B$$

$$1 : U_{\mathcal{A}}^1 P_w^A$$

$$2 : 0$$

$$3 : U_{\mathcal{B}}^3 P_w^B$$

Where, P_w is the probability that a conflicting party will win by fighting; U_f is the utility of winning through fighting, which is supposed to be very high ($U_f \approx 1$) given the fact that through fighting a party can either win or lose; C_f represents the costs of fighting, which are supposed to be also high ($C_f \approx 1$) in order to make the option of fighting not appealing; finally as third parties are not involved directly in the conflict their payoffs are related to the probability of winning by a side they support and the utility of that victory ($U_{\mathcal{A}}^1, U_{\mathcal{B}}^3$); obviously party 2 does not have any utility if the fighting continues.

If there is agreement to conduct mediation, each actor has a payoff. The payoffs are still described through an expected utility function which for each conflicting side is:

$$P_m^A U_g^A - C_m + i_1^A X_1$$

$$P_m^B U_g^B - C_m + i_3^B X_3$$

Where, P_m is the probability of winning through mediation for a conflicting side; U_g represents the utility each conflicting side has from an agreement achieved through mediation ($U_g < U_f$); C_m is the cost of mediation; i is the influence a biased mediator has on a conflicting side. This relationship represents a cost that biased mediators face in order to influence their partners in conflict - it should not be too high, otherwise mediation is not very attractive for outside actors.

$$P_m \text{ has a function: } \begin{aligned} P_m^A &= (P_m^A)^{(0)} + Q_{m1}^A X_1 - Q_{m3}^B X_3 ; \\ P_m^B &= (P_m^B)^{(0)} + Q_{m3}^B X_3 - Q_{m1}^A X_1 \end{aligned}$$

$(P_m)^{(0)}$ stands for a fixed probability of winning through mediation; Q_m indicates the influence an outside party has on the mediation process – it comes into play only if $X=1$; the probability has a negative Q_m of the opposing side since an outside player by increasing chances of winning for their partners also decreases the probability of winning for the other conflicting side.

The cost of mediation C_m has a function: $C_m = C_m^{(0)} + C_m^{(1)}(2 - X_1 - X_3)$; $C_m^{(0)}$ indicates the fixed costs of mediation; the other part of the formula stands for additional costs of mediation that A and B face each time an outside actor does not participate in mediation – this refers to biased mediators 1 and 3, as the model assumes that neutral mediator 2 will always be engaged in the mediation process.

The model prescribes that mediators also benefit from participating in the mediating process. Biased mediators have a utility from what their partner state in the conflict wins through a reached agreement (U_{Aag}^1 , U_{Bag}^3) - multiplied by the probability of them winning - which comes at a cost of their influence/relation with the conflicting side (i). Thus the payoffs for biased mediators are:

$$\begin{aligned} U_{Aag}^1 P_m^A - i_1^A \\ U_{Bag}^3 P_m^B - i_1^B \end{aligned}$$

Fighting occurs unless both conflicting sides agree to mediation. For mediation to occur, both of these inequalities must be satisfied:

$$\begin{aligned} P_m^A U_{Aag}^A - C_m + i_1^A X_1 &> P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \\ P_m^B U_{Bag}^B - C_m + i_3^B X_3 &> P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

CASE 1: Neither mediator cooperates

If neither mediator cooperates, the conditions for mediation (1) become:

$$\begin{aligned} (P_m^A)^{(0)}U_{Aag}^A - C_m &> P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \\ (P_m^B)^{(0)}U_{Bag}^B - C_m &> P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

If conditions (2) fail, fighting continues. The mediation receives expected payoffs

$$P_w^A U_{\mathcal{A}}^1 - C_f^1 \quad \text{and} \quad P_w^B U_{\mathcal{B}}^3 - C_f^3$$

If conditions (2) hold, mediation takes place under mediator 2, without cooperation from 1 and 3. The mediators receive expected payoffs:

$$(P_m^A)^{(0)}U_{Aag}^1 \quad \text{and} \quad (P_m^B)^{(0)}U_{Bag}^3$$

CASE2: One mediator cooperates

In case mediator 1 cooperates, but mediator 3 does not, the conditions for mediation become:

$$\begin{aligned} (P_m^A)^{(0)} + Q_{m1}^A)U_g^A - C_m + i_1^A &> P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \\ (P_m^B)^{(0)} - Q_{m1}^A)U_g^B - C_m &> P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

If conditions (3) fail, fighting continues, and mediators receive expected payoffs

$$P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \quad \text{and} \quad P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B$$

If conditions (3) hold, mediation takes place under mediators 1 and 2, without cooperation from 3. The mediators receive expected payoffs:

$$(P_m^A)^{(0)} + Q_{m1}^A)U_{Aag}^1 - C_m - i_1^A \quad \text{and} \quad (P_m^B)^{(0)} - Q_{m1}^A)U_{Bag}^3 - C_m$$

The case that mediator 3 cooperates and mediator 1 does not is similar.

CASE 3: Both mediators cooperate

If both mediators cooperate, conditions for mediation are

$$\begin{aligned} (P_m^A)^{(0)} + Q_{m1}^A - Q_{m3}^B)U_g^A - C_m + i_1^A &> P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \\ (P_m^B)^{(0)} - Q_{m1}^A + Q_{m3}^B)U_g^B - C_m + i_3^B &> P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

If conditions (4) fail, fighting continues. The mediators receive expected payoffs

$$P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \quad \text{and} \quad P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B$$

If conditions (4) hold, mediation takes place under all mediators. The mediators receive expected payoffs

$$\begin{aligned} (P_m^A)^{(0)} + Q_{m1}^A - Q_{m3}^B)U_{Aag}^1 - C_m - i_1^A \\ (P_m^B)^{(0)} - Q_{m1}^A + Q_{m3}^B)U_{Bag}^3 - C_m - i_3^B \end{aligned}$$

Finally, if both

$$\begin{aligned} (P_m^A)^{(0)} - Q_{m3}^B)U_{Aag}^A - C_m > P_w^A U_f^A - C_f^A \\ (P_m^B)^{(0)} - Q_{m1}^A)U_{Bag}^B - C_m > P_w^B U_f^B - C_f^B \end{aligned}$$

then mediation is so good that the parties agree to it no matter what. In this case, the actions of mediators are determined by weighing their costs of cooperating against the utility they gain from influencing the mediation.

Thus, mediator 1 will cooperate if

$$Q_{m1}^A U_{Aag}^A - i_1^A - C_m > 0$$

and mediator 3 will cooperate if

$$Q_{m3}^B U_{Bag}^B - i_3^B - C_m > 0$$

The model predicts that cooperation in the process of multiparty mediation can be explained through an inverted prisoner's dilemma. This

dilemma describes a situation in which the conflicting sides (A and B) get involved in the mediation process, regardless of the action of the mediators. In other words, the mediation process will continue even if one mediator decides not to cooperate with the rest of the group. Using the theory of moves, we can interpret the model as follows:

		1	
		Cooperates	No cooperation
3	Cooperates	2 (c)	1 (b)
	No cooperation	4 (b)	3 (a)

Point (a) is a common starting point for all international conflicts. It is the moment when a conflict assumes necessary characteristics to encourage outside actors to get involved. Numerous studies have examined the phenomena, of who, when and why mediates (Bercovitch and Schneider 2000; Greig and Regan 2008). As the model shows, here mediation is conducted by one outside actor (number 2) that parties perceive as trustworthy and unbiased. In this point, each biased mediator chooses not to participate in mediation, while still maintaining a biased relationship with a particular conflicting side. In this case, outside actors avoid both the costs of mediation and of cooperation. At the same time, they still maintain a special relationship with one of the parties at dispute, and thus indirectly still exercise some influence over the mediation process, being conducted by actor 2 alone. Theoretically speaking, this outcome is NME, because it creates greater benefits than any other, so in case the game started at this point, rational actors would not move from it. Nonetheless, as only one mediator is involved in the process we

cannot talk about multiparty mediation taking place in this state.

In the contemporary dynamics of international relations, we can expect to observe a proliferation of actors willing to step in and manage a conflict in accordance with their particular interests. Knowing that it can benefit more by joining the mediation coalition, one actor might decide to opt for a cooperative strategy from the beginning. Thus, the game actually starts in points (b), when one biased mediator decides to start cooperating with mediator number 2. In this state the mediator that does not cooperate with the other two faces smaller benefits compared to the one that chose to take part in mediating efforts through cooperation (1,4) or (4,1). Nevertheless, in reality we often witness that some actors purposefully chose not to cooperate with other mediators. Why would this be the case? Because their rationality is myopic, actors may fail to recognize that the game cannot revert to point (a), where a non-cooperative strategy created far greater benefits. Here the choice of non-cooperation (point (a)) is complemented by the fact that some actors aim to use their biased position to influence the behavior of a particular side in the conflict and consequently to spoil the mediation efforts of other actors. In fact, as the rule of ToM dictates, the next move is that of a player that does not yet cooperate, and its next move cannot be to move the other player back to non-cooperative behavior. Thus they need to realize that the best they can hope to achieve given the game's progress is a move to point c.

However appealing the non-cooperation decision might appear at a first glance, spoiling the process might actually backfire. When an outside actor decides not to cooperate while others are engaged in the mediation, it undercuts its own potential to exercise influence over other actors involved in the mediation and loses the potential to create benefits for itself and its partner side in the conflict. While the biased mediator stays outside the coalition, the side it is supporting might still remain trapped in the process, and it is to be expected that in such a constellation, there are less chances that potential solutions will be tilted to its advantage. When one side in the conflict is losing through mediation, so will its outside partners, even though they are officially not cooperating in the process. For example, their international reputation might be undermined, as might their leverage to influence future developments in the process. In such circumstances both the non-cooperative outside actor and its partner party to the conflict will face far smaller

benefits than those who opt to cooperate and potentially (through constructive dialogue and exercising necessary leverage) move the proposed solution to their advantage.

Faced with a lower payoff, a rational second biased mediator decides to cooperate, which moves the game to its final state found in point (c), which is the outcome of the game and a NME. Even though in this case their utility is smaller than in point (a) (due to the costs of both mediating and cooperating), they will undeniably experience bigger benefits than if they are not part of the mediating coalition. In such a setting each mediator will be able to exercise a certain pressure over the process, and bargain in favor of the side in the conflict that they have special relations with. Biased mediators attain important utility as their partner involved in the conflict gains through mediation. Thus, despite the costs of mediating and acting in concert, the second outside actor still manages to create greater benefits through coordinated activities than if it opted for a defecting strategy, assuming that mutual defection is not an option. This goes in line with the initial statement that cooperation implies the creation of new gains for each party that were unavailable to them by unilateral action, albeit at some costs.

2.3 Insights from the model and formulation of hypotheses

This model underlines that employment of cooperative strategies for parties involved is actually more beneficial than spoiling the process. In fact, even cumulative costs of cooperating and mediating complemented with potential benefits of acting as a spoiler still do not manage to match the benefits generated by cooperative strategies. Since cooperation proves to be decidedly beneficial not only to the process but to the parties themselves, it is important to understand what should be done once a party opts to defect from a group. As noted by Sisk, “game theory contributes to mediation strategies through the finding that one can *encourage moderation and deter ‘defection’* in bargaining relationships by not allowing a player to gain from a defection strategy, even if it imposes additional costs to cooperation to prevent a defector’s gain” (emphasis added Sisk 2009, 48).

In view of the fact that defection is often a direct expression of a party’s self-interested goals, another way of encouraging change is to

engage a defecting party in a bargaining process, where an alternative to their current behavior can be found. It is not always very clear who should take responsibility to steer a party off a non-cooperative course. While in most cases coordination of mediating activities is attributed to players with necessary levels of credibility and legitimacy, they often do not have the same leverage over those mediators who represent key patron states for conflicting sides. Having key patron states or lead-states on board has proven to be essential for the peace process. These actors - usually an interested regional state or a global power with considerable influence in the region - should be ready to produce a well thought-out blend of carrots and sticks against the parties, and guide them toward a mutually acceptable solution (Sisk 2009). With such capabilities these third-parties generally act as biased mediators that were already introduced and illustrated in the game theoretical model. Reflecting on the previously illustrated statement by Touval and Zartman (1985) about the utility of biased mediators, and their potential constructive role, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: While cooperating with other mediators, biased mediators are useful inasmuch as they can use their special relationship with one conflicting side to influence its behavior, positions and perceptions and consequently move it toward an agreement.

However, when these actors decide to stop cooperating with the rest of the group, the conflicting side they have a special relationship with might also stop cooperating with other mediators and potentially even defect from the process. By cementing their positions, non-cooperative actors produce significant complications for the bargaining process and put at risk all the mediation efforts.

As experience shows in these situations the responsibility for encouraging a mediator to develop a common idea about a final solution and opt for a cooperative strategy is on the rest of the mediating coalition. More precisely, it is the actors who have strong self-interests in the conflict's outcome that generally take initiative to negotiate with defecting mediators. Confrontation of self-interests between mediators in order to find common ground on an acceptable outcome to the conflict shifts the focus from negotiating with conflicting sides (mediating) to *negotiation between mediators*. This research proposes three hypotheses

in this regard:

H2: When the mediating coalition is faced with conflicting interests, if one mediator decides to defect from the group dynamic, this will lead the peace process into a deadlock.

H3: If the mediators manage to achieve convergence of policy objectives among them, there are bigger chances that the peace process will be successful.

H4: In case mediators do not reach such convergence, the conflicting sides will be induced to defect from negotiations, making it more likely for the peace process to fail.

If interpreted through classical game theory, cooperation represents a dominant strategy in this model, and the Nash equilibrium is point (c) (2,2). ToM also provides a similar interpretation, given that once the multiparty mediation starts, cooperative behavior produces higher payoffs than defection, and the final state is also in point (c). Overall, cooperation can be identified as a rational strategy that leads to nonmyopic equilibria. Once a party chooses to cooperate, short-term goals which induced a party to defect are no longer a priority. Rather, for a rational outside party that received low payoffs from a defecting strategy, cooperation becomes a useful mechanism through which it is possible to limit the other side's utility. In other words, cooperation proves to be decidedly beneficial not only to the process but to the parties themselves. Reflecting on the previous statement by Sisk (2009, 48) that game theory can help understand how to "encourage moderation and deter 'defection'" in mediation activities, the model might provide useful insights that could be further elaborated in order to better understand what might induce a party to deter from defective strategies and switch to cooperation.

Discouraging defection is certainly not a simple task, as it directly implies interference in another party's policy objectives. In this case it is not enough just to reprove non-cooperative behavior or warn that such a strategy is not constructive for the overall process of mediation and leave it at that. It is necessary that the defecting party comes to recognize the benefits of deciding to change its strategy and pursue cooperative strategies. This research proposes at least three general reasons why a

party would change its policy objectives, and all three will be further tested through case studies.

On the one hand, *exogenous geo-political shifts* - significant developments on a systemic level caused by pivotal political, social, economic and/or natural events - might encourage a party to rethink its guiding principles. This is because no policy objective is ever self-motivated or independently strong enough to linger indefinitely; it should rather be seen as a building block of a complex network of strategic choices developed by each actor in the international arena. Since such incidents rarely affect one actor at a time, they may cause not only a shift in priorities within a party, but also a *convergence of interests* among several actors. Once their interests are compatible, parties will be more inclined to cooperate.

H5: A strong geo-political shift will induce the defecting mediator to change its strategy and engage in a cooperative mediation effort to manage the conflict.

On the other hand, *changes in the conflict dynamics* might induce those outside actors that are directly involved in the conflict - for example by providing logistical and/or military support - to consider using mediation as a viable option for ending the conflict. This argument follows the logic of the theory of 'ripeness' (Zartman 1989) which prescribes specific conditions for ripeness to occur. In principle the theory focuses on conflicting parties' perceptions that they are in a 'mutually hurting stalemate' and that they can identify 'a sense of way out' through mediation. Zartman and notes that "these can be brought to the conflicting parties' attention by a mediator or an opposing party if they are not immediately recognized by the party itself, and they can be resisted so long as the conflicting party refuses or is otherwise able to block out their perception" (Zartman and de Soto 2010, 6). A similar logic could be applied to the perception of a mediator that has been invested in the conflict but is not a direct party to the conflict. As Sisk rightfully noted, once the mediation process starts it does not produce an automatic termination of hostilities (2010). In fact, violence can be seen as a "beyond-the-table tactic used not as an alternative to bargaining but as an integral part of the negotiation" (Sisk 2010, 2-3).

H6: An increase in costs of supporting a war will induce the defecting mediator to change its strategy and engage in a cooperative mediation effort to manage the conflict.

Both exogenous geo-political shifts and changes of conflict dynamic imply that the defectors will change their strategy by their own initiative. However, a third trigger of cooperation is also feasible – the initiative might come from the rest of the coalition, through *bargaining for cooperation*. In view of the fact that defection is often a direct expression of party's self-interested goals, another way of encouraging change is to engage a defecting party in a bargaining process, where an alternative to their current behavior can be found by offering them sufficient incentives to make participation an attractive option. Hampson and Zartman refer to this challenge as building a "team of rivals," and notes that even when the mediation is conducted by "global or regional competitors," they still need to "have the wisdom to realize that they share a common problem or project which can only be resolved together" (Hampson and Zartman 2012, 2).

As previously stated, when cooperating with other mediators, biased mediators are useful inasmuch as they can use their special relationship with one conflicting side to influence its behavior, positions and perceptions and consequently move it toward an agreement (Touval and Zartman 1985). However, when these actors decide not to cooperate with the rest of the group, the conflicting side that they have a special relationship with might suffer in the negotiation process. The potential mediator's decision to deflect is costly for the state it supports. In such circumstances, the party to the conflict might find the agreement less attractive, and consequently refuse to accept it. By cementing their positions, non-cooperative actors produce significant complications for the bargaining process and put mediation efforts at risk. As the case studies show, the lack of conflicting side's willingness to cooperate in the peace process might range from a mere stalling of the process to the use of violence as a "beyond-the-table tactic" (Sisk 2010, 2-3). At a certain point, the coalition members might pick up this signal, approach the defector and bargain for a new arrangement which will create new benefits for both. However, it is not always clear who should take responsibility for steering a party off a non-cooperative course. As experience shows that in these situations, the responsibility for encouraging a mediator to

develop a common idea about a final solution and opt for cooperative strategy might rest with others in the mediating coalition.

H7: If a mediator's defecting strategy produces high costs in the mediation process for the state it supports, this will induce the defecting mediator to change its strategy and engage in a cooperative mediation effort to manage the conflict.

Overall, cooperation can be achieved when mediators perceive cooperation as being in their self-interest. The reasons why some actors decide not to cooperate can be described as myopic rationality. Mediators that see defection as their strategic choice are those that focus on short-term instead of long term goals. However, the choice of defection will inevitably have an impact not only on the mediating coalition, but also on the overall process, as it might encourage (at least) one disputing side to stop cooperating in the peace process. This dynamic is directly related to the fact that mediators often have a particular relationship with (at least) one of the disputing sides, which induces them to get involved in the mediation process and correlates the pursuit of self-interest with the promotion of a partner state's agenda.

Thus, when the mediating coalition is faced with a potential dropout from the group, mediators might need to negotiate with the dropout to find a compromise solution that can bridge their conflicting interests in order to (re)establish a cooperative relationship. The outcome of this rapprochement will have a direct effect on the overall mediation effort. Accordingly, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H8: If the mediators manage to reach/negotiate an agreement with the dropout, the mediation process is more likely to be successful.

Even when multiple mediators manage to achieve a convergence of interests in managing a conflict, their efforts to operationalize and synchronize their activities often prove to be incongruous. As indicated previously, one of the most challenging aspects of multiparty mediation is the problem of *coordination*. In the case of multiparty mediations, coordination prescribes a method of synchronized usage of different leverages and resources each mediator has at its disposal in the process in order to create necessary incentives for resolution that would have

been unavailable through a single mediator. 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). In order to reduce or resolve the conflict while still satisfying self-interests, third parties can resort to three key methods or strategies that define their relations with the conflicting parties. Ranging from most passive to most invasive, they can act as communicator-facilitator, formulator, or manipulator (Touval and Zartman 1985).

Coordination among mediators sends a strong signal to disputing sides about their commitment to manage and resolve the conflict. A strong dedication in alleviating the problem will increase the credibility of the group, reduce the chances of sending mixed signals to the conflicting sides, and minimize the chances for conflicting sides to go 'forum shopping'. As a result there will be fewer options for procrastination of achieving a negotiated settlement. At the same time, a well coordinated mediating coalition will be able to exploit the comparative advantages of all the mediators – each one entering the process with a specific leverage. This way they are able to produce specific incentives for resolution that are not available through mediation conducted by a single mediator. Thus, impending liabilities of multiparty mediation are directly diminished while the benefits are exploited through coordination of mediators involved in the process. Coordination of mediator activities implies overall synchronization of communicator, formulator and manipulator roles (Touval and Zartman, 1985; Zartman and Touval, 1996) along with similar negotiating tactics by all mediators depending on their comparative advantage (Lax and Sebenius 1991).

Full employment of mediators' leverages is directly related with self-interests that drive mediators to get involved in the process. Manipulation strategies that imply powerful interventions by mediators are most needed when the conflict has escalated to the point that the costs of continuing become too high. In contemporary mediation literature, these costs are generally attributed to the conflicting sides. The ripe moment to negotiate is when conflicting sides have reached a "mutually hurting stalemate," and any further continuation would only be costlier than resorting to peace talks (Touval and Zartman 1985).

But current scholarship fails to address another important issue: what about the costs that mediators face, especially when they resort

to the most coercive measures at their disposal? The mere fact that a state is prepared to take very costly measures to change the dynamics in a conflict in which it is not directly involved implies that the state has something more at stake.

The size of the country in conflict is rarely a factor. Even the smallest countries, whether islands or landlocked, may represent something of strategic importance for more powerful states. A good example in this regard is the case of Taiwan and its strategic relevance for the United States (Ross 2006; Wu 2006). A conflict, regardless of the size of the country involved, attracts attention from outside and induces third parties to intervene as mediators.

Powerful states that might assume the role of lead state are driven by geopolitical considerations much wider than the resolution of any specific conflict—considerations that embrace both defensive and offensive motives. The capability to “mediate with muscle” is what distinguishes strong mediators. The mediator’s power to punish the disputants—coercive power—encourages respect for the mediator, and greater cooperation in making concessions (Carnevale et al. 1989). In cases when the conflict has escalated to the point that disputants cannot engage in joint problem solving, forceful mediator intervention becomes most effective (Carnevale 2002).

Strategic power is never applied aimlessly. Rather, it is a direct consequence of the powerful mediator’s premeditated decision on whether applying that power is in its best interest. These strategic interests are rarely found in an official document that sets the guidelines for future involvement. However, by looking at the different elements that influence state behavior, we may well discern what is strategically important for a powerful state. Reflecting on the U.S. role in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, we can see that specific features of the United States’ relations with actors in those areas determine the likelihood of a U.S. intervention in specific conflicts. This research proposes the following elements as the most significant in defining strategic interests:

- Proximity to vital economic resources (e.g., water, oil, gas) and corresponding infrastructure
- Economic relations
- Proximity to the source of security instability
- Political relations and ideological compatibility

- Proximity to a rival-power state, and relations with it
- Proximity to a partner state, and relations with it
- Historical record

Current multiparty mediation scholarship comes short in explaining under which circumstances we can expect a powerful state to intervene in its full capacity. Instead, it focuses either on the possibility of “borrowing leverage” from a powerful state or on the importance of having a powerful state in the mediating coalition. While less coercive measures have become the norm in mediation activities, especially because of the lower costs they produce for mediators, coercive power has not been applied as often. Although one might expect a powerful state to use its leverage whenever necessary, this is seldom the case in reality. Groneveld-Savisaar and Vukovic (2011) used the case of Sri Lanka to illustrate the link between strategic-interest and coercive power. They argue that the key factor that drives lead states to employ the most coercive measures, thus investing considerable resources, to resolve the conflict is its strategic interests. In other words, when the parties lack sufficient motivation to settle and strategic strength is needed, the strategic power must have a strategic incentive to use that power. This research will expand this argument by linking a coordinated use of leverages between mediators and strategic interests that drive them to get involved, through the following hypothesis:

H9: The stronger the mediators’ strategic interest in the conflict the higher the chances of successful mediation through a coordinated effort by mediators in a coalition.

Jones identifies two necessary conditions for effective coordination: a high degree of international commitment and a rough correspondence of interests of the major powers (Jones 2002, 90). While both the ‘high degree of international commitment’ and ‘correspondence of interests’ point out the importance of prior achievement of cooperation between multiple mediators and strategic relevance of the conflict for them, Jones also hints to a very important aspect of effective coordination - that of a *leadership*. According to Jones, “ideally, strategic coordination should establish clear lead actors in the mediation... it should allow those lead actors to set priorities, to ensure those priorities are pursued by all

the third-party actors involved, and to provide consistency across phases of a political process” (Jones 2002, 111). In other words the role of the lead actor is to guide and coordinate multiparty mediation activities.

Kriesberg points out that “the choice of the person or organizations which take on the leadership or the coordinating role may be made by the adversaries themselves, by the intermediaries, based on assessing who would have the interest and resources, or through a power struggle” (Kriesberg 1996, 348). While the choice of assigning (or assuming) the leadership role appears to be quite contextual and ad hoc, as no actor, be it a powerful state or an international organization, would ever be inclined to easily give up its authority or room to maneuver in the mediation process (Jones 2002, 112). So the real aspects that need to be assessed are the conditions under which a particular third-party is most suitable to lead and coordinate mediation activities.

The utility of having major powers involved in the process has been highlighted by several studies (Jones 2002, Sisk 2009, Hampson and Zartman 2012). According to Sisk (2009), the primary role of a powerful state in a multiparty mediation effort is to ‘play heavy’. He argues that “one state, usually an interested regional state or a global power with significant influence in the region should sustain the focus and provide the communications, diplomatic consistency, intelligence, and finance to make the mediation more effective. This lead state should also be willing to provide strongly structured incentives and sanctions against the parties” (Sisk 2009, 53).

While the value of having a powerful state in the mediating coalition is quite clear, assigning the leadership role to it might prove to be counterproductive. Jones pointed out an important limitation of having a powerful state coordinating the mediation activities. According to him, “coordination by a major power will tend to be coordination in support of one party, as distinct from impartial support to the peace process itself” (Jones 2002, 111). In fact, the role of a lead actor might be translated into that of ‘mediating between mediators’. As emphasized by Jones, “lead actors should also be given the authority to resolve disputes between third parties about those priorities or about strategies used to achieve them” (Jones 2002, 111). As stated previously the potential utility of a biased mediator derives from its ability to ‘deliver’ the conflicting party with which it has close relationships to an agreement. This unique dynamic of international mediation is quite difficult to re-

plicate on the level of the mediating coalition, as the lead-state might not have sufficient or adequate power to leverage the other mediators to a more coordinating dynamic coordination. In such conditions, a coordinated effort might be best achieved under the lead of an actor that has the ability to prescribe collective behavior, and this ability should derive from a norm accepted by all participants. In other words, the most suitable actor to coordinate mediation activities is that one with most legitimate power (Carnevale 2002, 28).

In international mediation, legitimacy has been often associated with actions undertaken by international organizations, especially the UN (Touval 1992). As Touval points out, the UN's most resourceful leverage is "the aura of legitimacy" as its actions "carry as representing the consensus of the international community" (Touval 1994, 52). For Rubin, legitimate power of the UN derives from a general perception that the UN is "the official representative of the world community" (Rubin 1992, 265). Following this argument both Jones (2002) and Sisk (2009) highlighted the importance of assigning the role of a lead actor in charge of coordinating mediation activities to an international organization - namely the UN, and its Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSG). According to Sisk, coordination acquires the necessary level of legitimacy under the leadership of the SRSG especially as the "involvement in and coordination of the mediating effort by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) lends a necessary credibility and consensus and coherence to the initiative" (Sisk 2009, 52). Jones also claims that "there can be little doubt that there is a high correlation between effective strategic coordination and the presence and good management of an SRSG or equivalent" (Jones 2002, 96). However, Jones points out that proliferation of international actors with competing interests and strategic disagreement and the diminishing authority of the UN have unquestionably "constrained the capacity of the UN to perform essential strategic coordination functions" (Jones 2002, 111). More importantly, "a clear, consistent alternative has not yet emerged" (*idem*).

Overall it appears that unless there is a compatibility of interests between powerful states and other mediators (both international and/or regional organizations and small and/or medium sized states) successful coordination of mediation activities cannot take place, which undermines the chances of success. In light of this limitation, it appears that

the crucial element for a properly executed coordination in multiparty mediation is that the lead actor has the necessary degree of legitimate power to guide the mediating coalition's activities, and the necessary degree of compatibility of interests with major powers (Jones 2002, 90). Therefore, this research proposes the following hypothesis regarding the lead actors.

H10: The more legitimate the lead actor, the more successful the mediating efforts will be.

H11a: In cases where multiparty mediating activities are coordinated by an international organization – the more compatible with powerful states' interests its guidance is the more successful the process.

H11b: In cases where multiparty mediation activities are coordinated by a small or medium sized state – the more compatible with powerful states' interests its guidance is the more successful the process.

H11c: In cases where multiparty mediation activities are coordinated by a powerful state – the more that state's agenda is in line with other third-parties' expectations the more successful the process.

