

## **International Mediation: Conflict Resolution and Power Politics**

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*This study examines mediation as an exercise in which the mediator has interests and operates in a context of power politics and cost-benefit calculation. It is based on eight cases of international mediation—the U.S.S.R. between India and Pakistan (1966), Algeria between Iran and Iraq (1975), the United States and Great Britain in Rhodesia (1975–1979), the five Western States in Namibia (1977–1983), Algeria between the United States and Iran (1980–1981), and the ongoing activities of the Organization of African Unity, The Organization of American States, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It was found that a mediator intervenes because of its interest in the conflict or in obtaining an outcome, and it can play three roles—communicator, formulator, manipulator—in accomplishing its objectives. The mediator is accepted by the parties, not because of its neutrality but because of its ability to produce an attractive outcome. The mediator's power, or leverage, comes from the parties' need for a solution, from its ability to shift weight among parties, and from side payments.*

Mediation is as common an occurrence in international politics as is conflict; most international conflicts tend to induce third parties to try to mediate, either to reduce the costs of the conflict to themselves or to benefit from the mediation attempt per se. Yet while a considerable body of scholarship concern-

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ing conflicts has accumulated over the years, our understanding of mediation is much less advanced. The existing literature on international mediation, contributed to more by scholars than by practitioners (Berman & Johnson, 1977; Campbell, 1976; cases by Davidow, 1983; Edmead, 1971; Fisher, 1978; parts of Gulliver, 1979; Iklé, 1964; Jackson, 1952; Pruitt, 1981; Raiffa, 1982; Raman, 1975; Touval, 1982; Young, 1967; Zartman, 1984), has only provided the first step in understanding why and how parties try to mediate international conflict.

Our discussion in this article is based on the assumption that the context of international relations, and particularly its power politics, has a major effect on international mediation. This premise and the particular approach adopted toward the study of mediation allows us to analyze motives of the participants in the mediation process, conditions that affect mediators' performance, methods and roles of mediators, and keys to the effectiveness of mediation in resolving international conflict.

The empirical base for our theoretical formulations consists of historical studies of successful mediation and, in particular, eight case studies prepared for a project on international mediation of which we were cosponsors (Touval & Zartman, in press). Reference will be made to these cases, but specific sources will not be cited in the rest of this article.

### The Cases

Before we proceed, let us briefly summarize the eight case studies (by Thomas P. Thornton, Diana Lieb, Stephen Low, Marianne Spiegel, Gary Sick, Michael Wolfers, L. Ronald Scheman, and David P. Forsythe, respectively, reported in Touval & Zartman, in press). The first five cases concern particular disputes.

#### *1. Soviet Mediation Between India and Pakistan at Tashkent, 1966*

The Indo-Pakistani conflict originated in the partitioning of the subcontinent in 1947; in particular, the dispute arose over the possession of Kashmir province. Both sides regarded Kashmir as an issue touching upon the legitimizing principle of their statehood: for Pakistan, the adherence of all predominantly Muslim areas, and for India, the vision of a secular state including both Muslims and Hindus. Following a war between India and Pakistan in 1965, the Soviet Union offered its mediation. Despite previous Soviet support for India, Pakistan accepted the offer, and so did India. At a tripartite summit conference in Tashkent in January 1966, the parties agreed to a withdrawal of forces to the prewar lines. But neither side succeeded in strengthening its claim to Kashmir. The mediation enabled Russia to assert a leading role in the area; it preserved its close

ties with India and it kindled Pakistan's interest in improving relations with the Soviet Union.

## *2. Algerian Mediation Between Iran and Iraq, 1975*

Several controversies brought the two countries to the brink of war in 1975: centuries-old boundary disputes, Iran's support for Kurdish separatists in Iraq, Iraq's support for opponents of the Shah's regime in Iran, competition over influence in the Persian Gulf in the wake of Britain's withdrawal, and ideological antagonism between Iraq's radical Soviet-oriented policy and Iran's conservative U.S.-oriented policy. Following attempts by the United Nations and Egypt, Algeria assumed the mediator's role in 1975. It succeeded in bringing the two sides to a series of pragmatic arrangements, inducing Iraq to accept the Thalweg boundary in the Shatt-al-Arab waterway (as Iran had demanded) and Iran to cease its support for the Kurds. Algeria's principal gains from its mediation were the elimination of a source of dangerous friction in the region and within OPEC, and the enhancement of its international prestige.

## *3. U.S. and British Mediation of the Conflict in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, 1976–1979*

After repeated British attempts failed to resolve the conflict between the white minority government of Ian Smith and the black majority population, a new effort was undertaken jointly by Britain and the United States. The U.S. involvement was prompted by the growing concern after 1974 that continuing conflict might enable the Soviet Union to increase its influence in southern Africa. Despite both parties' claims that the mediator favored their adversary, mediation was accepted because neither side felt able to win its goal by war. Lengthy negotiations involving the Smith government, the various African factions, the neighboring African states, and South Africa prepared the ground for an agreement in 1979 containing three basic elements: (1) a constitution with guarantees for the white minority; (2) a new government to be formed on the basis of majority rule, with Britain supervising the elections and the transitional arrangements; and (3) economic assistance to promote the development of Zimbabwe and to facilitate its adjustment to African rule.

## *4. Western Five Mediation of the Conflict in Namibia, 1977–Present*

Refusing acceptance of South Africa's proposal for unilateral independence of its former mandate territory, Namibia (Southwest Africa), the five Western members of the U.N. Security Council (United States, Great Britain, France,

West Germany, and Canada) got agreement from South Africa and the African Frontline States to try to mediate a settlement based on U.N. Resolution 385. The démarche began in 1977 and produced U.N. Resolution 435, providing for one-man-one-vote under joint U.N. and South African auspices. But the agreement fell apart as soon as it was made. In 1978 South Africa put its own elected administration in place and the Southwest African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) continued its guerrilla warfare. Under President Carter's administration, the mediation process continued uncertainly. When President Reagan's administration began in 1981, new conditions required the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia. Again, the negotiations bogged down over an inability of the mediators to convince the two sides that it was necessary to come to an agreement rather than pursue or even merely limit the conflict.

#### *5. Algerian Mediation for the Release of the U.S. Hostages in Iran, 1980–1981*

In November 1979, Islamic revolutionaries overran the U.S. embassy in Tehran, seizing the U.S. personnel as hostages. The United States retaliated by imposing economic sanctions against Iran and freezing Iranian assets in U.S. banks. After several unsuccessful attempts to negotiate the release of the hostages, the failure of a military rescue mission, and the death of the Shah, serious negotiations opened in September 1980, with Algeria the principal mediator. As the negotiations progressed, they were increasingly influenced by the Iran–Iraq war and by the impending transfer of authority in the United States to the new administration headed by President Reagan. On January 19, 1981, final agreement was reached about the terms and procedures for the release of the hostages in exchange for the unfreezing of Iranian assets and the adjudication of mutual claims.

The remaining three case studies pertain to the work of international organizations.

#### *6. The Organization of African Unity (OAU)*

One of the purposes of the OAU, founded in 1963, was to assist member states in the peaceful resolution of their disputes. However, the machinery envisioned by the charter—a permanent Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration—was never activated. Instead, OAU members have resorted to ad hoc procedures, including mediation at Council of Ministers and Heads of State conferences, and to ad hoc committees. In several instances, OAU efforts have been helpful in reducing the level of conflict, even if only temporarily. Whatever moderating influence the organization has exerted can be attributed to two main factors: (1) the normative principles of African solidarity to which the

member states were attracted, and (2) the influence of neighbors and other interested states that participated in mediation efforts.

### *7. The Organization of American States (OAS)*

The OAS has played an important role in resolving and moderating disputes among Latin American states. Its influence is exercised by informal ad hoc procedures rather than in accordance with the OAS charter or other treaties comprising the inter-American system. Mediation is only one of the procedures applied, and is used mostly in disputes over the activities of exiles granted asylum in neighboring states, and on rare occasions in territorial disputes. On the whole, the OAS has been effective under four conditions: (1) when it operates on an informal, noncompulsory basis, (2) when it deals with issues not in the vital interest of member states, (3) when it deals with smaller states, and (4) after hostilities have broken out. Its influence can be attributed to the multiple pressures that the Organization and member states can exercise within the interdependent Latin American system.

### *8. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

This is an independent, all-Swiss component of the International Red Cross. Although it disclaims any general role as mediator, it has become the principal intermediary on humanitarian issues, such as the treatment of prisoners in situations of armed conflict. At times it treads on delicate ground when humanitarian and political issues intertwine. The ICRC's influence derives from being recognized as an important guardian of the Geneva Convention's and humanitarian norms, and from its ability to confer upon (or withhold from) the parties a "Good Housekeeping Seal" of approved state behavior on humanitarian matters. Its limited leverage suffices because the humanitarian issues it deals with appear to be of secondary importance to the governments concerned and seldom affect their vital interests.

## **Definitions and Distinctions**

Mediation is a form of third-party intervention in a conflict with the stated purpose of contributing to its abatement or resolution through negotiation. Like other forms of peacemaking or conflict resolution, it is an intervention acceptable to the adversaries in the conflict who cooperate diplomatically with the intervenor. Mediation differs from other forms of third-party intervention in conflicts in that it is not based on the direct use of force and that it is not aimed at helping one of the participants to win. Like good offices, mediation is concerned with helping the adversaries to communicate, and like conciliation, it emphasizes

changing the parties' images of and attitudes toward one another—but it also performs additional functions. Mediators suggest ideas for a compromise, and they negotiate and bargain directly with the adversaries. Mediation differs from arbitration in that the latter employs judicial procedure and issues a verdict that the parties have committed themselves to accept, whereas the former is basically a political process without advance commitment of the parties to accept the mediator's ideas.

### **Motives Behind Mediation**

The intervention of mediators is legitimized by the goal of conflict reduction, which they typically proclaim. Their desire to mediate is, however, intertwined with other motives best described within the context of power politics. For understanding these motives a rational-actor approach is most useful, one that employs cost-benefit considerations, because mediators are players in the plot of relations around the conflict, with some interest in its outcome; otherwise, they would not mediate. In view of the considerable investment of political, moral, and material resources that mediation requires, and the risks to which mediators expose themselves, the motives for mediation must be found in self-interest as well as in humanitarian impulses. A parallel statement can be made about the parties' attitude toward mediation. It is unlikely that they invite or accept mediation because they are interested only in peace—any peace. They usually also expect the mediator's intervention to work in favor of the parties own interests.

From the mediator's point of view as a player, two kinds of interests can be promoted through mediation. One is essentially defensive: the continued conflict between two actors threatens the mediator's own interests. In this case, solution of the conflict is important to the mediating party because of the conflict's effects on its relations with the parties. For example, if two of the mediator's own allies or friends engage in a conflict, this can disrupt and weaken the alliance or strain their relations with the third-party mediator. Or a conflict between two states may be seen as upsetting a regional balance, or may provide opportunities for a rival power to increase its influence by intervening on one side of the conflict.

The second self-interested motive for mediation is the desire to extend and increase influence. Here the solution of the conflict has no direct importance to the mediator, and it is only a vehicle for establishing closer relations with one or both parties. A third party may hope to win the gratitude of one or both parties in a conflict, either by helping them out of the conflict or by aiding one of them to achieve better terms than would be otherwise obtainable. To be sure, the mediator cannot throw its full weight behind one party, but it can increase its own influence by rendering its involvement essential to the negotiations between the two parties and by making each party dependent upon the mediator whenever it

desires something from the other party. Mediators can also increase their influence by becoming guarantors of whatever agreement is reached.

It follows from the foregoing that mediators are seldom indifferent to the terms being negotiated. Even when they seek peace in the abstract, they try to avoid terms not in accord with their own interests, although those interests usually allow for a wider range of acceptable outcomes than the immediate interests of the parties. They can also allow themselves greater flexibility in bargaining because they have incurred fewer commitments and have invested less in the conflict than have the parties. Mediators are likely to seek terms that will increase the prospects of stability, deny their rivals opportunities for intervention, earn them the gratitude of one or both parties, or enable them to continue "to have a say" in the relations between the two adversaries.

These propositions can be illustrated by a number of historical examples. Both the U.S. mediation in the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe conflict, and the Soviet mediation between India and Pakistan, were inspired by a mix of defensive and expansionist motives. The United States feared the Rhodesian conflict would provide opportunities for the Soviet Union to gain influence by supporting the African nationalists. But since the African groups concerned were already close politically to the Soviet Union and China, one can also interpret the U.S. mediation as an attempt to win over, or at least to improve relations with these groups, and not to abandon them to the exclusive influence of its political rivals. Soviet mediation between India and Pakistan was partly inspired by the desire to improve its relations with Pakistan, which had hitherto been on far better terms with the United States and China than with the Soviet Union. It also sought to build its prestige and establish a precedent that might help it justify future involvement in the affairs of the region. At the same time, there were important defensive motives for its intervention. The Indo-Pakistan conflict provided an opportunity for China to extend its influence in Pakistan, and thus to establish its presence close to the southern borders of the Soviet Union. The reduction of the conflict would make it more difficult for China to accomplish this.

Mediation by middle-sized powers may be motivated by a desire to enhance their influence and prestige. Egypt and Algeria's mediation between Iran and Iraq resulted from their desire to prove their usefulness to both belligerents, as well as to reduce intra-Islamic conflict. Algerian mediation between the United States and Iran seems to have been inspired by the hope that it would generate good will toward Algeria among the U.S. public and thus help improve relations between Algeria and the United States. This hope was presumably related to U.S. support for Algeria's adversary, Morocco, in the Western Sahara war against the Algerian-supported Polisario movement. Similar examples of other states seeking to enhance their international standing through mediation come to mind: India attempting to mediate between the United States and the Soviet Union and China in the 1950s; Nkrumah of Ghana trying to mediate in the

Vietnam war in 1965–1966; Rumania playing an intermediary role in that same conflict, in U.S.–Soviet relations, and in Arab–Israeli relations (notably in helping arrange President Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in 1977). There should be little wonder that small and medium states seek to enhance their international standing through mediation. They have few alternative instruments at their disposal, and such activity increases both their usefulness and their independence vis-à-vis stronger allies. Moreover, when pressed to take sides in a conflict, they may seek to escape their predicament by mediation.

While many states occasionally become mediators, the United States often finds itself “condemned” to play this role (Stephan Low’s phrase, in Touval & Zartman, in press). Since it fears that conflicts will provide the Soviet Union with opportunities to intervene and expand its influence, the United States often seeks to dampen conflict, and mediation is often a convenient instrument to that end. In addition, without reference to the Soviet Union, U.S. help is often solicited by smaller states engaged in conflict because of U.S. power and prestige. Pressed by its friends for support, and always fearful that support for one side in a local conflict will throw the other into the Soviet embrace, the United States apparently often finds that the least risky course is to mediate between the disputants. (Examples since 1946 abound: the United States has mediated between the Arab states and Israel since 1949; between Britain and Iran in 1950; between Holland and Indonesia; between the various Lebanese factions in 1958 and again since 1982; between Italy and Yugoslavia over Trieste; between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus; between whites and blacks in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe; between South Africa and the black Africans over Namibia; and between Britain and Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas.)

International organizations are also frequently involved in mediation. But in their case, one could say they were “born to mediate,” for that is a *raison d’être* enshrined in their charters. Mediation by regional organizations also has a defensive aspect, reducing the opportunities for external intervention and interference within their regions, a purpose seen clearly in the charters and actions of the OAS, OAU, and Arab League (with varying degrees of success).

Several motives lead the conflicting parties to seek or accept mediation. The most obvious is the expectation that mediation will help gain an outcome more favorable in the balance than continued conflict—a way out. Another motive is the hope that mediation will provide a more favorable settlement than could be achieved by direct negotiation. Although the adversary may have a similar assessment, it may still accept and cooperate with the mediator, because a rejection might cause even greater harm—for example, damaging relations with the would-be mediator, decreasing the chances for an acceptable negotiated outcome, or prolonging a costly conflict. The parties may also accept mediation in the hope that the intermediary will help them reduce some of the risks entailed in concession making, protecting their image and reputation as they move toward a



compromise. They may also believe a mediator's involvement implies a guarantee for the final agreement, thus reducing the risk of violation by the adversary.

A basic question, then, concerns the turning point in the parties' cost-benefit evaluations: What brings governments to change course in midconflict and to replace confrontation policies with attempts at accommodation, including cooperation with a mediator? Sometimes the cost-benefit calculation is revised in favor of conflict resolution because of a changed perception of the stakes. The fate of the U.S. hostages could be mediated once they had served the Iranian government's internal political purposes, and it was seen that they could be bargained against the frozen assets. Lord Carrington conveyed the idea that an agreement could be put together based on the Rhodesian Front's demands for a constitution and the Patriotic Front's demands for a free and fair election. Mediation between Iran and Iraq became possible when the Shah was able to give up the Kurdish war for a settlement on the Shatt-al-Arab. The Western Five mediators (mainly the United States) tried to turn the Namibian impasse into a means for South Africa to win the Cuban departure from Angola, rather than a zero-sum encounter on Namibia alone. Redefining the issues and enlarging the field of concern to include items that can be traded against each other are often the keys to a mediator's success in persuading the disputants that it is rational for them to take a conciliatory approach.

Another element compatible with cost-benefit calculations in favor of cooperating with mediators is the policy crisis, where a party is confronted with the difficult choice of having either to escalate its military effort or to make concessions with a view to concluding an agreement. The mediation between Iran and Iraq in 1975 was brought about by such a crisis. A similar dilemma was faced by Israel in 1970 when it decided to accept U.S. mediation for a cease-fire to end the "War of Attrition." Would-be mediators can presumably help generate awareness of such a dilemma among the parties, although there is no evidence that the mediator played such a role in the cases discussed.

The acceptance of mediation by international organizations needs to be ascribed to somewhat different motives. It appears more often to be premised on the ability of these organizations to bestow normative approval than on their capacity to influence the adversary or arrange for a satisfactory compromise. This point is clearest in the case of the ICRC. This agency's ability to offer an improved image to a fighting or detaining authority can be a powerful incentive for the parties to accept its presence and services, and for acceding to its proposals.

### **Partiality and Acceptability**

If acceptance of mediation is based on a cost-benefit calculation of obtainable outcomes, this has a profound effect on our understanding of the mediator's

position and methods. The acceptability of a mediator to the adversaries in a conflict is not, as is sometimes believed, determined by their perceptions of the mediator's impartiality (Touval, 1975). What is important to the parties' decision is their consideration of the consequences of acceptance or rejection—for achieving a favorable outcome to the conflict above all, but also for their relations with the would-be mediator. Thus, meddling by third parties is tolerated because they are already part of the partial relationships with the parties, but third parties are accepted as mediators only to the extent that they are thought capable of bringing about acceptable outcomes. Although there is no necessary relation between past partiality and future usefulness, good relations between the mediator and one party may in fact be an aid to communication, to developing creative proposals, and to bringing the two parties' positions into convergence. Closeness to one party implies the possibility of "delivering" that party and hence can stimulate the other party's cooperativeness. For example, the Africans' suspicions about British and U.S. sympathies with the white Rhodesians rendered British and U.S. mediation promising for them, and stimulated their cooperation. But the mediator must be seen as motivated, and able to "deliver" the party to which it is closest, in order to turn its partiality into such an asset.

Thus, the Soviet Union was accepted as mediator by Pakistan despite its close relationship with India. Pakistan perceived the Soviets as concerned enough about its growing cooperation with China to want to improve their own relations with Pakistan, and as close enough to India to bring it into an agreement. Algeria was accepted by the United States as a mediator with Iran not because it was considered impartial, but, on the contrary, because its ability to gain access to people close to Khomeini held promise that it might help to release the hostages.

The mediator may have two different "partialities" that balance each other only in the aggregate, but that render it acceptable to both sides. Often a mediator motivated by its own concern for position in the area seeks to use its intervention to maintain close ties with one side, while at the same time improving ties with the other. We are told Kosygin was neutral at Tashkent. But Russia and India had good relations neither wanted to jeopardize, and the Soviet motive of inhibiting the growth of Chinese-Pakistan relations meant that the Soviets desired an outcome that would induce Pakistan to lose interest in improving relations with China. If one of the Egyptian motives in mediating between Iran and Iraq was to improve its relations with the Shah, then clearly the fulfillment of its goals was dependent upon how much it supported the Iranian position.

Even in the case of the international organizations acceptance is not automatic, but depends on the promise of attractive outcomes through mediation. When the OAU establishes a commission to mediate a dispute, consultation procedures are such as to give the parties an implicit say in the composition of the commission. The result will often be a balanced slate rather than an impartial

commission, since members are likely to seek to protect the interests of their friends, not to form their views solely on the basis of objective criteria. The battle of the slate is separate from the actual practice of mediation, which only comes to life as long as the commission shows promise of providing an acceptable solution.

As an independent nonstate agency, the ICRC has problems neither of partiality nor of composition. Nevertheless, its acceptance as a mediator is not automatic. To quote Forsythe (in Touval & Zartman, in press): "While the ICRC is widely regarded as having a mediating role to play in wars, in any particular war the ICRC may be *persona non grata*." What concerns parties to a conflict is not whether the ICRC will perform its humanitarian functions objectively, but whether the legal framework of its involvement may affect their interests. Thus, states may contest that an armed conflict justifying an ICRC intervention actually exists, or that an international war has occurred. This framework is sometimes subject to negotiation, and the terms of involvement are influenced by their perceived effect on the interests of the parties rather than by the latter's perception of the ICRC's impartiality.

To say that it is not necessary for third parties to be perceived as impartial to be accepted as mediator is not to suggest that a mediator can espouse the cause of one side in a conflict while ignoring the interests of the other. Mediators must be perceived as having an interest in achieving an outcome acceptable to both sides, and as not so partial to one side as to preclude such an achievement. Again, the question for the parties is not whether the mediator is impartial, but whether it can provide an acceptable outcome.

Although they cannot fully side with one party, there is some latitude in the degree of partiality that mediators can allow themselves. This latitude may go so far as to enable them to express their preference regarding the outcome of the negotiation. In the Zimbabwe and Namibia negotiations, the United States was not indifferent to the nature of the settlement to be reached. The outcome had to open the way for majority rule. Although this meant that the United States supported the essence of the African position and, by implication, sought to eliminate the white settlers as a sovereign political actor, its mediation was nevertheless accepted by the whites when it was seen as getting them out of a no-win situation and presenting certain lesser advantages for them.

An interest in specific outcomes is quite common in the mediations of the international organizations. The ICRC, OAU, and OAS all have some general criteria for solutions to disputes, beyond just agreement by the parties. They try to promote solutions that can be interpreted as compatible with the standards of the Geneva Conventions and of their charters, respectively, and that protect their image as a guardian of these standards. Indeed, they can use the weapon of condemnation for parties' deviation from these standards as a means of their enforcement.

## Mediators' Roles

There are three principal roles in which mediators operate to affect the positions of the parties in conflict, inducing them to agree to concessions necessary for the reduction or resolution of the conflict and also contributing to the advancement of the mediators' self-interested goals. The first—and least—is the *mediator as communicator*. Conflict often implies the breakdown of communications, with parties becoming locked in a situation they cannot escape simply because they dare not contact each other directly. Concessions may be required, which the parties cannot make unless they find a way of communicating them without losing face or appearing weak. In such cases, mediators may be required to start the initial contacts and to serve as a "telephone wire." They may also carry proposals of concessions or word of the other's concession when conceding directly would be psychologically or processually impossible. And they may act as holders of concessions or agreements when direct communication of agreement between the parties is impossible. In this role, mediators are more or less a passive conduit and repository, although no medium is completely passive in human affairs. Tact, palatable wording, and sympathetic presentation are as important as—but must not impinge upon—accuracy and straightforwardness.

Mediators may also perform a more active role. The breakdown of communication may not only impede the delivery of messages without the services of a messenger; it may also keep the parties from even thinking of solutions that meet the needs of both sides. In such a situation, the second role—*mediator as formulator*—is needed as well. Third parties must be capable of innovative thinking that is not possible for the parties to the conflict, constrained as they are by their commitments. Redefining the issues in a conflict, or finding a formula for its management or resolution, is the substantive key to its termination, and the parties frequently need help not only in finding a key hidden in the morass of bad relations but, more frequently, in inventing a key out of pieces of the conflict itself (Zartman & Berman, 1982). In this role, mediators need to add the qualities of creativeness and invention to the communicator's traits of tact and empathy, and must seek to discover the parties' real and basic interests, and their component ingredients.

Thus the roles of the mediator as communicator and formulator are facilitator roles, necessitated by a breakdown in physical and psychic aspects of communications that prevent the parties from working together to find a solution to their common problem. Mediators in these roles do nothing to change the nature of the problem or the circumstances of the conflict; at most, they work on perceptions. They are neutral hyphens in a dyadic relationship. This is "pure" mediation, in which they have no preference among solutions (except for a solution that satisfies the parties), exercise no power (except the power of persuasion to change people's minds), and have no weight (except the weight of the

arguments required to get the parties' attention and confidence). As the exceptions show, nothing is pure in human relations; but mediators who carry messages and propose ideas for problem solving are engaged in about as pure an exercise in human relations as can be found.

In some situations, communication and innovation may not be enough to bring about the reduction of conflict or the promotion of self-interest. Mediators may have to take on a third, even more active role—that of *mediator as manipulator*, utilizing their positions and other resources to move the parties into agreement, or perhaps into a particular agreement that appears most stable or favorable. This is a structural role, since it directly involves power and relations, and as such is a role of power politics. In this role, mediators transform the bargaining structure from a dyad into a triangle, and become actors with interests or “full participants” (to use current diplomatic language)—not just neutral intermediaries. The parties may seek to reconvert the triadic relationship back into a dyad by forming a subtle coalition with the mediator, bringing that party in on one side or the other under the cover of its problem-solving guise, and thereby effecting a favorable solution preferable to continued conflict. It becomes the mediator's interest to counter such moves and keep the parties locked into a mutual stalemate, ensuring that neither can prevail and therefore that both will look to the mediator for a way out of their joint deadlock. The triangular structure provides the mediator with bargaining power vis-à-vis the parties because of the constant possibility that it will join in a coalition with one against the other, or at least threaten to do so, if mediation fails. Parties too can use the triangular relations to discredit the mediator, labeling the mediator a tool or partner of the other party when they want to improve terms or withdraw their cooperation.

To achieve the goals of mediation, the country that mediates—that is, intervenes to abate or resolve the conflict—must use the triangular structure of relations to move both parties to agreement, rather than create a victory for one side. Yet, paradoxically, this may mean temporarily reinforcing one side to keep it in the conflict, to maintain the stalemate, and to preserve the triangular relationship. As seen, mediation as power politics means maintenance of the mediator's role, not simply allowing the parties to solve their own conflict by themselves; but it also means maintenance of the parties' stalemate, not simply allowing one party to end the conflict by victory. This reinforcement can be physical, through tangible support for one party during the conflict, or it can be verbal, legitimizing one party's demands, but it must not be unconditional. Support should be used—implicitly or explicitly—to win the party's commitment to join in a mediated agreement. The rationale is very sound within the dynamics of the conflict: A unilateral victory may not be stable because the defeated party may seek to overthrow it at the first occasion, and it may not be fair because the defeated party may have some important interests to be taken into account. But it may also not be desirable from the point of view of the

mediators, who may have an interest in not seeing a party vanquished, or in seeing their own role maintained in the region. Stalemate is necessary to mediation, just as mediation is necessary to overcome stalemate.

### Power in Mediation

The mediator can provide a way out of the stalemate in one of two ways: either by providing communications and ideas so attractive that they “naturally” lead the parties to agreement, or by adding arguments and inducements that make unattractive proposals look attractive. This distinction is useful conceptually, though it may be less so in practice. The mediator’s power or ability to employ the latter strategy (of providing additional attractiveness) is often referred to as leverage (on power as an added value; see Zartman, 1974). Leverage is the ticket to mediation—third parties are only accepted as mediators if they are likely to produce an agreement or help the parties out of a predicament, and for this they usually need leverage. This somewhat circular dilemma plagues every mediation exercise. Contrary to the common image of mediation, mediators are rarely “hired” by the parties; if they were, they would at least have a contract to perform the job of finding a solution to the conflict. Instead, because they fear failure more than do the parties, they are more interested than are the parties in ending the conflict, a position that actually weakens their leverage. In all eight cases studied, mediators staked their efforts and reputations on success at conflict resolution, while the parties clung to their conflict. Parties have a stake in winning. They criticize the mediator for meddling in their conflict and for not producing attractive outcomes. They welcome the mediator into the fray only to the extent that it has leverage over the other party, and berate the mediator for trying to exert leverage over them.

There are only three sources of leverage, although each category may cover a number of different manifestations. Leverage comes, first, from the parties’ need for a solution that the mediator can provide; second, from the parties’ susceptibility to shifting weight that the mediator can apply; and third, from the parties’ interest in side payments that the mediator can either offer (“carrots”) or withhold (“sticks”). It should be noted that in each case the source of the *mediator’s* leverage lies with the *parties*, a characteristic that increases the difficulty of finding leverage (see Bell, 1971, p. 83, footnote 9).

The first source, the parties’ perceived need for a solution, is extremely unstable, since it depends on a sometimes stubborn and sometimes flexible perception rather than an objective fact. As such, it responds above all to the mediator’s persuasive skill in cutting through the noise of the situation, and changing the perceptions of the parties about the costs and benefits of alternative situations and outcomes. It is here that the mediators’ role as communicator and formulator comes into play; they must transmit and create information that will

help change the parties' views about the ability of the proposals to fill their need for a way out of the conflict. The greater the parties' perceived need, the greater the mediator's leverage.

The second source, susceptibility to shifting weight, is even more delicate, since it involves both the mediator's ability to shift weight and the parties' sensitivity to that shift. The mediator must help maintain the balance between the parties in the conflict in such a way as to produce the painful stalemate that leads them to see a mediated solution as the best way out. The mediator must be able to tilt, threaten to tilt, or refrain from natural tilts toward one of the parties, but without being perceived as actually taking sides (Zartman, 1984). Shifting weight can be categorized in many ways: on a spectrum from tangible to intangible actions, such as arms supplies or U.N. votes; as negative or positive actions, such as statements or deliveries favorable or unfavorable to one side; or as present or future actions, such as condemnation of an attempt to change reality during the conflict, or condemnation of an incident or announced policy as an indication of a future attitude if the conflict were to continue. There does not seem to be any significant theoretical distinction to be made within these various typologies. Russia threatened to shift weight away from India in the Security Council debate on the Indo-Pakistani war, and Britain threatened to shift weight to the internal settlement in Rhodesia; the United States actually shifted some weight toward South Africa and avoided shifting weight against it in U.N. votes on the Namibian issue.

The third source, side payments, is perhaps less delicate, but it can be costly and can imply an ongoing commitment to a region, which the mediator might want to avoid. Side payments, of course, should not have the appearance of buying adherence (which is what they do) but must be presented as a facilitating aspect of the general settlement. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger offered economic aid to the white Rhodesian settlers, Reagan offered economic aid to an Angola free of Cubans, and the OAS and IDB have told conflicting Latin American states that no development funds would be available until their conflict was settled.

Although this typology opens up possibilities for leverage, it also leaves some limitations common to all three types. Theoretically, the more ties mediators have with a party—and the more disposable goods they possess that the party values—the greater the potential they have for pressing the party by suspending ties and denying values. This insight is incontrovertible and forms the basis for the effective use of sticks—or in reality, withheld carrots—in mediation. Unfortunately, it is only part of the story. Suspended ties also mean reduced influence, since certain elements of communication are thereby interrupted. Moreover, sticks of any kind cause resentment, and the party may decide it can just as well do without carrots in its diet rather than conceding in order to achieve their delivery. Finally, too intense a use of sticks can cause the party to withdraw

its acceptance of the mediation, and turn the mediator into an intervenor or force the mediator out of a role altogether.

Leverage can also be seen as enhancing the mediator's ability to convey a future alternative preferable to the present conflict. Some of the inducements may be perceptual, produced indirectly by the mediator's ability to persuade the parties of a better outcome without conflict, and some may be tangible, produced directly by the mediator's ability to provide sweeteners of its own to add to the terms offered by the other side. But again there are limitations to the exercise of leverage. On the perceptual inducements, limits are imposed by the ability of the mediator to convey convincingly or to produce a better outcome. Since the process of persuasion is a gradual one, the parties must be able to see each other's positions and concessions as initial steps, must be convinced that promises of concessions are deliverable, and must be able to feel that their own concessions will produce counterconcessions toward an acceptable midpoint of agreement by the other side (Bartos, in Zartman, 1978). Mediators dare not promise more than the other side can produce, and so their leverage on one party is limited by their leverage on the other. Limits are imposed on the sweeteners by the ability of the mediators themselves to pay, in a situation where the conflict is basically not their own, compounded by their limited ability to keep on paying (since sticks are put aside after they are successful, and carrots are expended when they are successful) (Baldwin, 1971). Our theory about the concept of leverage helps us understand more about its limitations than about how to increase it.

There are two major practical problems with leverage that these distinctions do not address: How to maximize it, and how to avoid counterproductive reactions. On these subjects the cases give only limited insights. If anything, the cases reflect the anguish of mediators over the elusiveness of leverage and the unreasonable expectations of greater power under which they operate. Leverage, the cases indicate, comes above all from the first source—the parties' need for a solution that they cannot obtain without the mediator's help. The perception of this need can be enhanced by the mediator, but it cannot be created out of nothing. Side payments, the third source, can be useful when the mediation gets stuck, but they are not a major source of leverage throughout the process, and even at the end their use is limited—Kissinger in the disengagement negotiations notwithstanding (see Zartman, in Rubin, 1981).

The first lesson, then, is that the mediator's challenge is primarily one of persuasion: to bring out the parties' sense of a need for help and enhance the first source of leverage. The second lesson is that the mediator's job is nonetheless dependent on the evolution of the conflict, on the particular conjuncture of forces that makes the undertaking appear as an opportunity for the parties to solve their problem at the least cost rather than as a meddlesome distraction. Yet this lesson leads back to the first, for mediators cannot merely sit by until the parties feel the



need with proper force. They must develop that need, arouse it, even anticipate it, so that as the moment ripens the parties will be ready to acknowledge and seize it. Parties come to agreement best when their own preferred solution is blocked but when they themselves are strong, so as to be able to make a compromise decision and defend it against internal opposition. This condition, of course, makes mediation even more delicate, since strong opponents are difficult to deal with and are perhaps slower to see that their unilateral solutions are blocked.

There are not many examples of such leverage in the cases presented, and not many more elsewhere. The conventional wisdom on Namibia—that Carter showed there are no sticks and Reagan showed there are no carrots—is only half true. The Carter initiative never used sanctions of any kind other than verbal, and these proved counterproductive; but the strategy during the Reagan administration was indeed based on the use of three positive inducements toward South Africa—constitutional guarantees, improved relations, and Cuban withdrawal from Angola. It tripped over the third for a long while because it was unable to deliver agreement from an Angolan government that was not internally strong enough to make the concession. Kosygin in Tashkent, like Kissinger in the Middle East, had the leverage of need, which he used by threatening to call off the mediation. Lord Carrington at Lancaster House threatened to shift weight to one side. The other cases have little to say about leverage. Some rare examples of leverage outside the cases studied here come from Arab–Israeli negotiations, where the United States has constantly been criticized for not pressuring more. One was the reassessment of U.S. policy in the Middle East in the summer of 1975, after the breakdown of the second Sinai disengagement talks; discussions of a possible Geneva conference, delays in delivery of military material, and postponed consideration of Israeli applications for new economic and military aid were all part of effective leverage. In other situations, the only leverage came from need, and the mediators were more facilitators of the parties' desires for conflict resolution than manipulators of yet unfelt desires.

### Conclusion

This study of international mediation has used an approach based on a cost-benefit and power politics analysis of both mediators and parties' interests as a key to motives, roles, and above all, leverage. By taking mediation out of the realm of idealism and by bridging the artificial distinction between the "disinterested facilitator" and the "interested manipulator," this analysis has sought to illuminate ways in which mediators have operated.

The cases examined here were successful in reaching agreements, and many of them touched on core values. Yet, in the broadest sense, even where basic issues were resolved, the mediation provided conditions by which the parties

could learn to live together, but it did not effect any deep reconciliation of the parties or a restructuring of their perceptions of each other. For this reason, mediators should keep as firm a hand as possible on the procedures of settlement while helping the parties work out the substance of the solution between them. The physical presence of mediators in otherwise bilateral sessions between the conflicting parties, and their follow-through as observers of any agreement's implementation, are important adjuncts to their role as communicators and builders of trust. Left alone to their own devices, the parties may fall out of an agreement just as it is being made or implemented.

But mediators cannot chaperone forever, nor can they be expected to reorient all the perceptions underlying the conflict—often perceptions that have been years and even centuries in building. Successful though they were, the mediations did not change the basic distrust between Iran and Iraq, the United States and Iran, some blacks and whites in Zimbabwe, Indians and Pakistanis, Moroccans and Algerians, Somalis and Ethiopians, among others. But to belittle their accomplishments on this account would be to measure them by superhuman standards. Mediators can be successful on three attainable levels. They can manage a conflict, by dampening or removing its violent means and manifestations. They can resolve a conflict, by arranging trade-offs among its immediate causes and issues. They can provide mechanisms for handling future outbreaks of conflict among still suspicious and troubled parties. Any one of these is praiseworthy and shows skill; any combination is impressive.

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