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Conflict And Communication: The Role Of Third-Party Mediation Of International Conflict

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CONFLICT AND COMMUNICATION: THE ROLE OF THIRD-PARTY MEDIATION OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation with Honors to the Department of Communication at Carroll College, Helena, Montana

Mark Alan Cole
March 30, 1987
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This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of Communication.

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CHAPTER 1

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THIRD PARTY MEDIATION

With an eloquence which distinguished his writing, Gordon Allport observed that:

Mankind has gained notable mastery over energy, matter, and inanimate nature generally, and are rapidly learning to control physical suffering, disease and premature death. But, by contrast, we appear to be living in the Stone Age so far as our handling of human relationships is concerned. (Allport 1954: 54)

Quite so! Rivalry and conflict between various groups and nations is nothing new to our world. What is new is the fact that as our society moves into the postindustrial period, and as our social fabric becomes interwoven with other institutions and individuals of various countries in close contact, both additional conflict and increased opportunity for third-party mediation can be foreseen. (Deutsch 1981: 1-3) Our world is shrinking; increased interdependence of various countries with different histories, customs and modes of social interaction is now a fact of life. And, with this increased exposure, has come conflict and competition in its vast array of different forms and manifestations. Conflict in today’s world is much more visually present and intersubjectively felt than it was for early man who knew little of the activities
of other men of different tribes and nations. Technology has placed the lives of others in our laps; we see the conflict on television and read about it in the newspapers. Conflict is no less pervasive, but much more complex and with the advent of the modern tools of destruction, the risk of future conflict may be irreparable and catastrophic.

While it is clear that as we approach the decade of the nineties and with it episodes of international conflict ranging from international border disputes, to hostage taking, to acts of international terrorism which are increasingly likely to be resolved through the involvement of third parties, our knowledge of third-party mediation has not proceeded apace. (Hilltrop and Rubin 1981: 663-665) As Zartman from the School of Advanced International Studies, and Touval from Tel Aviv University point out:

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 conflict to themselves or to benefit from the mediation attempt per se. Yet, while a considerable body of scholarship concerning conflict has accumulated over the years, our understanding of mediation is much less advanced. The existing literature on international mediation...has only provided the first step in understanding why and how parties try to mediate international conflict. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 27-8)

What role can and should mediation play in international conflicts? Which tactics of third party mediation work best in resolving conflict? What role should international organizations play in resolving conflict? These
are not easily answered questions, but questions that need to be answered if we are to effectively manage conflicts in the coming years.

The central focus of this paper is to suggest that understanding how third-party mediation works and does not work in managing and resolving international conflicts is crucial given the destructive nature of today's international conflicts. Specifically, the first chapter of this analysis will focus on explaining the various roles and functions involved in third-party mediation; chapter two will discuss the contingent effectiveness of particular tactics in certain conflict settings. Chapter three will focus on conducting an exploration of the present and potential resources and capabilities of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his staff in mediating international conflict. Lastly, chapter four will discuss the implications of the first three chapters combined with some concluding remarks.

**International Conflict and Its Resolution**

Conflict in its many forms is a fact of human existence; conflict has been with humankind since the beginning and will likely continue to be. Not surprising, scholars disagree about what conflict is. Some view conflict as being only destructive or dysfunctional; others see conflict as being functional allowing for "an increase rather than
a decrease in the adaptation of particular social groups."
(Coser 1956: 8) Both are right. Conflict has both func-
tional and dysfunctional properties; sometimes conflict
tears apart and is destructive; other times conflict allows
for needed sociological change and progress to occur.
Conflict can play an important part in the development
of needed relationships between nation states. It can
also lead to creative solutions to mutual problems. Accord-
ing to Barbara Hill, a political scientist from Indiana
University:

Conflict is seen as essentially a social phenome-
on with both creative and destructive manifesta-
tions. Conflict, like sex, is an essential
creative element in human relationships. It
is the means to change; the means by which our
social values of welfare, security, justice
and opportunity for personal development can
be achieved. If suppressed, . . . society becomes
static . . . conflict is neither to be deplored
nor feared . . . Indeed, conflict like sex,
is to be enjoyed. (Hill 1982: 113)

"Conflict is a pervasive human activity which is
often viewed as abnormal, destructive and pathological."
(Hocker and Wilmont 1985: 35) But, in reality it is a
normal human event. Countries will continue to wage wars,
take hostages and disagree over fundamental issues. The
question is whether or not conflict will be productive
or destructive. For the purpose of this paper, conflict
shall be defined as "an expressed struggle between at
least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible
goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other
party in achieving their goals." (Hocker and Wilmont 1985:
The nature and underlying causes of conflict are varied and many; it would be impossible to discuss all the causes of conflict during the mediation process but understanding some of the major problems is essential in order to understand the roles and functions of third party mediation. One, among many of the causes of conflict, is poor communication. According to John W. Burton from the University College of London: "...conflict occurs as a result of ineffective communication, and that its resolution, therefore, must involve processes by which communication can be made effective." (Burton 1969: 49)

Generally speaking, conflict can be seen as a "consequence of poor communication, misperception, miscalculation, socialization, and other unconscious processes." (Hocker and Wilmont 1985: 6)

Another major cause of conflict is that of misperception. The costs of misperception can be disastrous, especially between the superpowers with their sophisticated military arsenals. Jervis 1976: 420-4) According to Professor of Political Science from North Carolina University, Nish Jamgotch:

Most fundamentally, however, mutual misperceptions have enmeshed the superpowers in what Morton Deutsch calls a web of interactions and defensive-offensive maneuvers which worsen instead of improve their situations, making the move insecure, vulnerable and burdened. (Jamgotch 1986: 37)

Another precipitator of conflict, closely related
to perception, is ethnocentric evaluations. Ethnocentrism is the "tendency to interpret or to judge all other groups, their environments, and their communication according to the categories and values of their own culture..." (Samovar, Porter and Jain 1981: 194)

Ethnocentrism is not only common among most cultures, but is also a major barrier to intercultural understanding. If ethnocentrism is allowed to interfere with the perception and interactions of the disputants or with the mediator, the possibility of settlement will be significantly reduced. Communication behaviors which are characterized by ethnocentric evaluations often result in increased conflict and tension. In summation, poor communication, misperception and ethnocentric evaluations are all linked to the promotion of conflict once the mediation process has begun.

Mediation is surely one of the oldest and most common forms of resolving conflict generated by poor communication, misperceptions and ethnocentric evaluations. Mediation between nations probably dates back to the beginning of the nation state system itself and although mediation is an ancient phenomenon, research on how it works is relatively new. Only in the last thirty years has there been an upsurge in the study of third-party mediation. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 5) Moreover, according to Jeffrey Z. Rubin, Department of Psychology, Tufts University:

The history of third party intervention is as old as the history of human conflict, which, in turn, is probably as old as the history of
humankind itself. Conflict is a ubiquitous phenomenon, arising in virtually all aspects of social life. Indeed, the seeds of conflict are part of the very process of interdependence that binds people to one another, leading them to work together for common or disparate goals. Whenever conflict exists, impasses can occasionally arise. These impasses, in turn, may be resolved by the disputants themselves—through coercion, through unilateral withdrawal by one of the parties, or through negotiations. Occasionally, however, the disputants fail to resolve the conflict on their own accord and a third-party intervenes to help identify the issues in dispute and/or to resolve conflict. (Rubin 1980: 379)

Before one can adequately understand the functions and roles of third-party mediation, it is crucial to have an operational definition of what mediation is:

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. . . . Mediation is concerned with helping the adversaries to communicate, and like conciliation, it emphasizes changing the parties' images of and attitudes toward one another. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 31-32)

Third Party Roles

Having briefly examined some definitional considerations and some common problems mediators confront, this analysis will now focus on third-party roles and functions: who they are, in effect, and what they do. Although it is possible to distinguish roles and functions of third
party mediation from each other, it is important to note that the distinction is often fuzzy. Nevertheless, it is useful to distinguish the range and variety of roles that third parties occupy from the functions they provide. Moreover, it is important to understand that third parties often occupy several roles simultaneously and that during the course of an intervention, these roles may be changed and modified to particular situations. The following ordering of third-party roles is presented in no particular order of importance and is meant to highlight the diversity of roles that third parties occupy.

**Formal Versus Informal Roles**

According to Jeffrey Rubin in the book, *Dynamics of Third Party Intervention*:

Formal third party roles include those of mediator: a person who attempts to help the disputants reach a voluntary agreement; fact finder: a person who listens to arguments from the principals in order to ascertain the facts surrounding the dispute in question, and who subsequently makes recommendations for settlement. (Rubin 1981: 8)

In contrast, there are informal third parties, such as the Pope or the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The distinction here is that formal third parties have their roles defined on the basis of some mutual understanding among the principals while informal third party roles tend to arise out of some short-lived function that the informal party just may happen to be able to provide. (Rubin 1981: 8)
**Individual Versus Collective Roles**

Usually a third party is a single individual who represents some group or organization or some other collective unit. For example, the Secretary-General represents the United Nations; the Pope, the Catholic Church; the U.S. Secretary of State, the authority of the United States. In other cases the third party might be a collection of various individuals, as in the case of problem solving workshops. One risk of collective/group mediation of disputes, is the possibility that the various individuals might disagree among themselves, making them more vulnerable to division and less able to promote consensus.

**Impartial Versus Partial Roles**

It is usually expected that third parties will be impartial and not favor either of the disputants in a conflict. However, in many situations a third party might be enlisted because of his/her partiality. Zartman and Touval recognized this point when they stated:

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. What is important to the party's decision is their consideration of the consequences of acceptance or rejection--for achieving favorable outcome to conflict above all,... the question for the parties is not whether the mediator is impartial, but whether it can provide an acceptable outcome. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 36)

In this sense, impartiality is not always necessary or desirable in international third-party mediation. What
is desirable is a mediator who can best solve or manage the conflict and is acceptable in the eyes of both of the disputing parties.

For example, Algeria was accepted by the United States as a mediator with Iran not because it was viewed as impartial, but, on the contrary, because of her ability to gain access to people close to Khomeini that held promise that they would help release the U.S. hostages. In this case, Algeria's motive for intervention was not one of humanitarian concern for the hostages, but rather inspired by the hope that it would improve relations with the U.S. and that the U.S. might be more inclined to support Algeria in its war with Morocco in the Western Sahara. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 36) What this example demonstrates is that sometimes third parties are enlisted not because of their impartiality but because they can best mediate the conflict and improve their relations with one or more of the conflicting parties.

In summation, third parties can occupy several roles. Formal versus informal roles, individual versus collective roles, impartial versus partial roles, advisory versus directive roles, as well as conflict-preventing versus conflict-managing versus conflict-escalating roles.

**Third Party Functions**

Having briefly listed and commented upon some of the various roles that third-party mediators occupy in
a wide range of situations, this analysis will now focus on a discussion of third-party functions.

Functions are relatively broad strategies designed to establish certain conditions favorable to conflict settlement. [In turn] functions are expressed through specific behavior interventions in the ongoing dialogue which can be referred to as third-party tactics. (Fisher 1973: 72)

Discussion of particular tactics will not be done here, but will be saved for analysis in chapter two. Although there are many third-party functions, the functions tend to fall into three general categories: modification of the physical and social structure; modification of the issue structure; and increased motivation to reach agreement. (Rubin 1981: 20)

Even though asked to serve in an advisory capacity only, the third party is nevertheless likely to retain considerable control over various aspects of the physical and social structure within which the conflict is waged. As the following discussion will indicate, these areas include: "communication structure, site openness, site neutrality, time limits, and resources." (Rubin 1981: 20)

**Structuring of Communication**

Many practitioners and scholars alike believe that if one can only get the parties in a conflict to communicate effectively and to sit down allowing them to air out their grievances, then the conflict will resolve itself. Sometimes, in certain conflicts, this may be the case, but not always. Nevertheless, from the mediator's perspective,
"there is a great deal of power involved in controlling the flow of communications which could, in some cases at least, be turned to the task of facilitating the termination of crisis." (Burton 1969: 49) Improving communication is perhaps the most pervasive third-party function, since it is necessary to clear up misunderstandings, to make accurate diagnosis possible to explore alternative areas of commonality and so on. Basically, improving communication is essential to all stages of the mediation process and is intricately linked to the success of other third party functions. It is noteworthy to remember that one of the causes of conflict and misperception is poor or ineffective communication. Therefore, the goal of the mediator is to make communication effective. "Effective communication is the deliberate conveying and accurate receipt and interpretation of what was intended should be conveyed, and the full employment of information received and stored in the allocation and reallocation of values, interests and goals." (Young 1967: 39)

Another relevant aspect of the communication function is to increase the openness of communication, that is, to get the disputants to talk openly about the nature of their conflict in a candid and nondeceitful manner. To elicit openness, a third party should speak respectfully and in a considerate way with the aim of teaching the parties how to communicate. Many other tactics exist to accomplish this end, but will not be elaborated on
in this chapter. In short, it is enough to say that apart from teaching the disputants basic communication skills in order to make communication effective, the third party should be able to alter the perception of the conflict in the disputant's eyes by how the mediator structures communication.

Closely related to the function of communication facilitator is the function of communication postman; what is meant by this is that often the disputants are unwilling to make concessions in the eyes of salient others. In such cases, a third party might act as a postman delivering messages from one party to the other because they were unable to make such proposals on their own accord. In performing this function, the mediator acts "more or less as a passive conduit and respository...tact, palatable wording, and sympathetic presentation are important as--but must not infringe upon--accuracy and straightforwardness." (Zartman and Touval 1985: 38) In other words, the postman function is not designed so that the third party can manipulate what is said; rather, this function is much like that of a telephone wire, and the mediator, while performing this function, should not alter the intensity or intent of the message.

Apart from influencing and structuring the process of communication between the disputing parties, a third party may be able to modify the contact between the disputants and their respective constituencies, as well as
other audiences (e.g., the media) by regulating the openness of the conflict site. (Rubin 1981: 24) Sometimes during a conflict the mere presence of a party's constituency will cause a spokesperson to adopt a more hardline bargaining stance than might otherwise occur. In such a situation, a third party may wish to isolate them from access to their constituencies in order to benefit the conflict resolution process. In another situation the constituencies might be a source of pressure toward agreement; in this case, a mediator might invite them to observe the proceeding in order to pressure the bargainer into reaching agreement. It is essential to recognize that it is better in the early stages of a conflict to keep things relatively secret, only allowing other parties in when agreement has been reached. According to Rubin:

In the early stages of a conflictual impasse, a third party may have to be extremely cautious about the introduction of observing audiences, lest these audiences render a bad situation even worse; at this point the third party may be well advised to shield the disputants from public view. At a later time, after the principals have embarked upon the concession making process and may have reached tentative agreement, the third party may wish to deliberately throw open the gates of public and media visibility in an effort to solidify the disputants' commitment to this course of action. (Rubin 1981: 24)

Quite obviously, the function of managing site openness is an important function that can be manipulated to aid the principals in reaching settlement.

Apart from regulating the interaction between the
disputants and various audiences, the third party has the function of deciding where the negotiations will be held. As a general rule, it is usually best to choose a neutral site that does not favor one side or the other during the dispute. No one should have the "home turf" advantage except in situations where there is a large power imbalance between the two disputing parties; in this situation, a third party may wish to give the "home turf" advantage to the weaker party in order to create a more equal power relationship. It is not surprising that many of the third party sites that have been chosen are relatively neutral:

It surely is no accident that the SALT talks between the U.S. and the Soviet Union took place in Finland; the four-way Vietnam peace talks were held in Paris; and the Camp David meetings between Egypt and Israel were conducted in the Catactin Mountains of Maryland. (Rubin 1981: 28)

Modification of the Issue Structure

Apart from the function of a third party to modify the physical and social environment in a manner that facilitates movement toward conflict resolution, it is the function of a third party to help the disputants identify issues, order these issues in terms of their importance, set up tentative agenda in which they will be discussed, and suggest some recommendations concerning packaging of issues and in some cases, introducing new issues or potential solutions that may need to be considered in
order to reach final agreement. "In general, a skilled third party can use the structuring of issues to modify the principal's perspective, thereby facilitating the resolution of conflict." (Rubin 1980: 383)

By identifying the issues in a conflict and ordering these issues in terms of importance, a third party can help the disputants accurately evaluate the size and nature of their conflict. It is often very beneficial in certain conflicts to encourage accurate evaluations of conflict intensity by the disputants, but not always. Nevertheless, issue identification is a very important function:

It is widely believed that one of the most useful things a third party can do during a conflict is to help the parties identify the issues in dispute. By directing their attention to the several points of agreement and disagreement, the third party can provide the disputants with accurate information about their adversary's preferences, expectations, and intention with regard to each issue. Such information should help the bargainers to better understand which issues require considerable further work and which ones are close to resolution. (Rubin 1981: 30)

The function of issue identification is extremely important and can be quite helpful in facilitating dispute resolution; it should, however, be used with great care. Sometimes identifying the issues might just highlight the fact that the disputants have a deep felt fundamental conflict and will not aid the disputants one iota in achieving settlement.

It is sometimes the case that a conflict might revolve around a single issue and under such circumstances there is not much a third party can do to structure the issue
in a new and interesting way. But, more often than not, especially in international conflicts, the conflict between the disputants revolves around multiple issues that can be packaged and ordered in a way which is likely to have a significant impact on kinds of issues that can be reached. It is, however, generally better for a third party to opt for a wholistic package deal in which multiple issues are considered as part of a package than to opt for a partitive approach. According to Rubin:

Given that multiple issues exist, a third party can affect the dispute resolution process by advising the principals to adopt either a wholistic set or a partitive set. All things considered, there is some reason to believe that a wholistic approach is preferable. (Rubin 1981: 30)

When a mediator attempts to go for a package deal, it is essential to understand that the sequence of the discussion of particular issues is vitally important. Generally speaking, it is good to address the less central issues first in hopes of generating a climate of good will and cooperation that should aid in tackling the more hardened issues in packages.

Apart from helping disputants identify issues, and ordering issues in terms of their importance, a third party can also introduce new issues or potential solutions. The goal here is to change the size of the conflict pie so as to alter the perception of the conflict in a way that pressures the disputants to pursue settlement. "As a result of introducing new issues and alternative solu-
tions, a third party can thus generate significant pressure to break a conflictual impasse and move toward agreement."
(Rubin 81: 32)

An excellent example of how expanding the agenda that eventually led to settlement was when Dag Hammarskjold, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, mediated the Jordanian-Israel dispute of 1957. The original dispute concerned Israel's right to transport gasoline into a Jewish area of Mount Scopus. "While mediating this issue, Hammarskjold took advantage of the opportunity to expand the agenda and facilitate a stable pacification of the entire area." (Wall 81: 165) This more active role of third-party mediation, that of formulator or proposer of potential solutions, requires a creative outlook to conflict resolution and may, in some situations, help the disputants to discover real mutual interests that were somehow initially overlooked.

In summary, identifying issues, setting up the agenda in terms of their importance, suggesting recommendations for package deals and introducing new issues and potential solutions, are all functions involved in third party mediation of conflict.

In order to function effectively, a third party must be able to do more than modify the disputants' physical and social environment and structuring of issues. The third party must also be able to modify the psychological climate so as to increase the motivation to reach agreement.
The number "1" motivational concern that must be addressed by a mediator, is that of allowing concession making to take place without loss of face to the bargainer. "Numerous theorists have observed that people in conflict tend to have accentuated concerns with the image of strength, competence, honor, and wisdom that they convey to their adversary." (Rubin 1980: 380) Being that this is the case, the vast majority of the literature on mediation of international conflict suggests that the mere presence of a third party can allow concessions to be made without loss of face. Rubin recognized this point when he writes:

"...the presence or anticipated involvement of a third party provides a socially appropriate mechanism for managing such concerns. Thus, a concession that one was unwilling to make before lest it cast doubt on one's strength and resolve, may now be made in the belief that it was done at the behest of the third party was seen as wanting or expecting such behavior. A concession that was taken as a sign of personal weakness before may now even be seen as a sign of personal strength to the extent that it is viewed as a product of the moral determination to do the right thing, to bite the bullet, if necessary, and make concession simply because the third party asked one to do so. (Rubin 1980: 20)

In any event, the mere presence of a third party increases motivation to seek agreement and quite often if one side makes a concession, it will usually be reciprocated by the other.

Another way a third party can increase motivation toward settlement is through rewards or side payments. Typically side payments consist in the giving of economic
or military aid. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 41) Side payments often motivate the disputants to make concessions that may lead to greater cooperation between the disputants. Nevertheless, side payments should not be used routinely, only in cases of complete deadlock should they be considered. No doubt, in practice it is difficult for a third party to increase the motivation for settlement. It is expected that the costs of nonagreement and the destructive nature of the conflict at hand, combined with the fact that the disputants have agreed to third party mediation, indicates that they are already somewhat motivated to settle their dispute.

Although people have been engaged productively in the practice of third party mediation for thousands of years, the study of third party mediation is a more recent development and much of the existing literature is highly theoretical and abstract with contributions more from academicians than from actual practitioners. As this chapter has suggested, there are a number of important roles and functions that third parties do provide in the process of international dispute settlement. People and nations have always had a nasty propensity for stirring up conflict between themselves. Conflict and interdependence will not just go away, they are a fact of life. One of the questions that must be answered is--will we seek to peacefully resolve our conflicts, or will we, as Gordon Allport has put it, "be confined to living in the Stone Age?"
CHAPTER TWO

THIRD PARTY TACTICS: A CONTINGENCY APPROACH

Having discussed the various functions and roles involved in third-party mediation of international conflict, it is now appropriate to discuss the various repertoire of tactics that may be used. A contingency approach will be utilized here, "which starts with the assumption that mediator tactics that are highly effective under some conditions will be highly ineffective under others." (Kressel and Pruitt 1985: 194) It should be noted that much of the existing literature pertaining to third-party tactics has not, thus far, been concerned with the contingent effectiveness of particular tactics in various circumstances. No doubt, researchers have found it difficult to study a single tactic in a particular circumstance because more often than not, combinations of techniques are used in a variety of different environments. In addition, mediation tactics which are varied and somewhat ambiguous have not been fully understood, primarily due to the methodological problems of testing their effectiveness in actual international disputes. Despite these problems, there does appear to be consensus on certain tactics that seem to work better under conditions of low
intensity conflicts, as opposed to high intensity conflicts. Much of the forthcoming analysis will focus in on these contingencies, as well as others. Initially, however, discussion of tactics that do not seem to be contingent on the intensity of conflict will be given attention.

**Traditionally Effective Tactics**

No single tactic or approach will always work consistently in a variety of circumstances, but researchers have found that with a fairly high degree of frequency certain tactics have led to settlement more often than not. These tactics are described by Kressel and Pruitt in 1985:

In the Thoennes and Pearson (1985) investigation, the parties' perceptions that the mediator had facilitated communication, and had provided clarification and insight were the two most important determinants of settlement. Hilltrop (1985) reports that three of the five mediation techniques significantly associated with settlement were of the contextual variety (assisting in the negotiator's relationship with their constituents, arranging separate preliminary meetings with the parties to explore the disputed issues and the parties' attitudes, and acting as a communication link between the parties). (Kressel and Pruitt 1985: 191)

It is not surprising that many of these tactics revolve around the function of improving communication between the disputants. This is primarily due to the fact that under conditions of international crises serious misunderstandings tend to arise because of poor communication. (Young 1986: 117-120) Moreover, "disturbances of the
international setting that characterize periods of crisis frequently unsettle previous understanding and open up new possibilities for misinterpretations and miscalculations." (Young 1968: 117) Nevertheless, shifts in the prevailing modes of communication under conditions of crisis, especially in the direction of more tacit forms of communication will tend to have a significant impact on the mediation process. In such situations, third-party tactics designed to make communication more accurate will have the greatest impact in terms of moving the disputants towards agreement.

Another particularly useful tactic which tends to benefit the communication process, specifically in terms of generating reciprocal understanding, is when the mediator continually interjects summary statements to clarify positions. According to Ronald J. Fisher from the Department of Psychology at the University of Michigan:

... summarizing either parties' view makes the first party feel that he has adequately transmitted a justifiable view, while at the same time it increases the understanding of the second party through decreased distortion in his/her perception. (Fisher 1973: 85)

The overall effectiveness of such a tactic does not appear to be any less useful in high or low intensity conflicts and will undoubtedly help in eliminating misperception while at the same time acting in the clarification of the issues.
Contingency #1: Deadlock in Negotiations

Quite often in international negotiations a complete deadlock arises where neither of the disputants is willing to make any concessions or to facilitate movement toward agreement. In such a situation a number of tactics are available to help push the disputants toward concession-making. Such tactics include: offering rewards or side-payments for concessions (Wall 1981: 165); establishing time limits in which movement towards agreement must be made (Rubin 1981: 26); or threatening to withdraw from mediation altogether. (Rubin 1981: 26-7)

As noted in chapter one, the use of side-payments or rewards should not be relied upon unless absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, there have been cases in which such rewards were utilized with some degree of success. For example, "President Carter agreed to build air bases for the Israelis in exchange for their exit from the Sinai." (Wall 1981: 165) Moreover, Kissinger, while mediating intractable conflicts between Israel and Egypt or Israel and Syria, commonly "promised infusion of U.S. economic and military resources." (Rubin 1981: 27) In fact, according to Rubin, "In some sense it can be argued that the 1978 Camp David agreement was made possible by the involuntary generosity of the American taxpayer." (Rubin 1981: 27) In short, it seems that such rewards can be effective in a variety of deadlock situations and will likely continue
to play a role in future mediation attempts. Despite the apparent usefulness of offering rewards or side-payments, there is a lesson to be learned, not that third parties should refrain from introducing rewards, but rather they should be cautious lest they lead the disputants to expect such infusions of generosity in the future, especially from the U.S. and other economic powers which have a variety of military and economic resources available.

Apart from the use of side-payments or rewards for concessions, there are some occasions when a third party may wish to impose time limits where none exist. This tactic will work best in situations where the disputants are not taking their conflict seriously or where a deadlock situation is in effect. The establishment of such deadlines will often have the effect of generating greater conciliatory movement than would otherwise naturally occur. (Rubin 1981: 26) "Such ultimata may apply to one or both disputants and may be accompanied with tacit threats or promises of rewards." (Wall 1981: 167) For example:

During the Camp David talks, President Carter threatened to terminate the meeting and his own participation as mediator if an agreement were not reached by a particular time. Whether this threat was instrumental in generating a settlement is not entirely clear, although it no doubt had the effect of uping the ante for agreement. (Rubin 1981: 26)

It should be noted that threats of this type will only work if the threat is credible. If movement or concessions
are not reached, the threat must be carried out, that is if the mediator is to retain credibility in the eyes of the disputants in future mediation efforts.

In summary, such tactics as offering rewards for concession making, the imposition of deadlines on negotiations, threatening to withdraw from the mediation process, are all potentially effective tactics but should be employed with great care and usually as a last resort.

Contingency #1: Deadlock in Negotiations

1. Offering rewards or side-payments for concessions
2. Establishing time limits
3. Threatening to withdraw from negotiations

Contingency #2: Power Imbalance Between the Disputants

A typical problem that seems to inhibit the ability of disputants to reach agreement is that of relative power discrepancies. International politics quite often operate on the principal of balance of power. When one nation is inordinately powerful, the possibility of reaching agreement through mediation is diminished. As a general rule, a highly powerful country will seek to achieve agreement through coercive practices rather than through conciliation. The importance of balance of power was recognized by Professor of Political Science Orin Young when he observed:
It is, of course, clear that the probability of success for an intervening party in any given crisis will be related to the existence of at least rough parity of power between the parties to the crisis. [When] bargaining power is equal . . . when each side knows that the other side can and, under certain provocations, will fight . . . the area of negotiation is broader and the usefulness of the mediator is correspondingly increased. (Young 1967: 44)

On the other hand, in cases where the margin of power favors one side in the dispute, the importance of the relative power of the third party becomes a crucial issue. The greater the gap in power, the greater the importance of the third party's ability to power balance becomes.

In situations characterized by power imbalances, a third party makes no pretense of playing the role of a third force to help reach agreement. In order to help achieve rough parity in power, there are a number of useful power balancing tactics that may be employed. Such tactics include: favoring the weaker party (Wall 1981: 164); conducting the negotiations on the "home turf" of the weaker party (Rubin 1981: 25); offering side-payments in the form of military and/or economic aid to the weaker party. If employed correctly, such tactics can help narrow the actual and perceived gap in power. "Doing so lowers the probability that the stronger negotiator will attempt to exploit the weaker and that the weaker will abandon the relationship. . . ." (Wall 1981: 164)

To reach a balance of power between the disputants the third party provides the necessary power underpinnings
to the weaker negotiator. Such power may come in the form of "...information, advice, friendship" (Wall 1981: 164) or the promise of military and/or economic aid. According to Rubin:

To offset an obvious discrepancy in the relative power of the principals to a conflict is by at least temporarily favoring the weaker party, thereby providing the underdog with greater counterpower than before. The effect of doing this is to force the more powerful disputant to wage the conflict through means other than coercion. (Rubin 1980: 385)

Apart from directly favoring the weaker party, a more subtle approach is to conduct the negotiations on the "home turf" of the weaker party. A "...third party may occasionally recommend a site that favors one principal over the other. This may be a particularly important consideration when the two sides are bargaining from positions of differential strength and when the third party wishes partially to offset this asymmetry by conducting the negotiations on the home terrain of the weaker party." (Rubin 1981: 25) Although in reality such structural modification may only be illusory, it does, however, seem to perceptually increase the power of the weaker party in the eyes of the stronger.

In summary, the tactics of favoring the weaker party, conducting the negotiations on the "home turf" of the weaker party and offering military and/or economic aid to the weaker party can all be utilized to help the disputants achieve a balance of power relationships, which
in turn will increase the likelihood of settlement.

Contingency #2: Power Imbalance Between Disputants

1. Favoring the weaker party

2. Conducting the negotiations on the home turf of the weaker party

3. Offering of side payments from the third party to the weaker party.

Having discussed various tactics that may be used in situations characterized by lack of understanding, deadlock in negotiations or power imbalances; the discussion here will now center on specific tactics that work best in situations of high intensity conflict as opposed to low intensity conflicts. It should be observed that there are no objective standards for determining exactly what is a high intensity conflict as opposed to low intensity conflicts. Not all disputes are high intensity conflicts; in fact, the vast majority of international conflicts tend to fall into the moderate or low intensity categories where mediator tactics may potentially be most useful. Generally speaking, high intensity conflicts tend to be characterized by deadlocks in negotiations, tougher, more emotional bargaining stances, higher degrees of polarization, increased use of coercive orientated tactics and high concern for not appearing weak in the eyes of salient others. Border disputes, ethnic and racial conflicts, religious wars and wars based upon fundamental ideological differences are often high intensity conflicts because
their basis are often rooted in historical dislikes that have been years in the making. Moreover, in such cases of planned and determined aggression the conflict intensity usually falls into the high intensity category because the parties involved tend to be highly polarized and antagonistic towards one another. Usually, however, in practice the conflict intensity of any particular conflict is subjectively determined by the third party and may change during the course of negotiations.

Contingency #3: Tactics for Low Intensity Conflicts

As noted in chapter one, occasionally third parties are called upon to help disputing parties settle their dispute. The nature and characteristics of various disputes vary greatly with regard to their nature and intensity. Usually once the disputants have agreed to some sort of mediation the conflict has cooled off considerably from its initial, perhaps crisis, level. Tactics which are effective in low intensity conflicts will not necessarily work in high intensity conflicts, although:

At a strictly intuitive level, it is tempting to assume that an intervention that works well when conflict is relatively low in intensity can also prove to be effective--perhaps even more so--when conflict intensity is relatively high. If talking seems to help ease the way toward resolution of a minor lover's quarrel, why should it not be at least as useful to introduce communication between the participants in a protected international dispute? (Rubin 1980: 382)

Despite the intuitiveness of such an assumption, many
of the current findings of various studies, both in the laboratory and from field observation have indicated that such tactical interventions that are useful in low intensity conflicts may actually backfire and increase conflict in high intensity conflicts. (Rubin 1980: 381-82)

Tactics which are most useful in low intensity conflicts are relatively noncoercive and are designed to help the disputants reach agreement on their own accord. The tactics that have proven to be effective in resolving low intensity conflicts include: issue identification procedures, role reversal procedure, opting for a wholistic problem solving set, and introduction of communication by the third party between the disputants.

**Issue Identification**

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the main functions of a third party is to assist the disputants in identifying and ordering issues in terms of their importance so as to separate points of agreement from points of disagreement. Such a process of ordering issues will help the disputants to better understand the nature of their conflict and perhaps some of its causes. Unfortunately, understanding itself will not resolve the conflict, it takes consensus and accommodation by both parties to a conflict to achieve settlement. It is interesting to observe that several studies' findings thus far indicate that the issue identification procedure only works well
in conditions characterized by a low level of conflict intensity. According to Rubin:

Issue identification by the third party resulted in more frequent settlement. . . only when the conflict intensity was low. Under conditions of high conflict, the exact reverse was found: issue identification actually led subjects to reach fewer agreements than they did in the absence of this procedure. When conflict was relatively less intense, issue identification helped the parties to zero in on the few problems that required their serious attention while reminding them of the several points on which they already were in, or close to agreement. However, the very procedure that had proved helpful under low intensified the conflict under conditions of high conflict. Issue identification by the third party served to remind the disputants that they were in serious disagreement regarding most points, that they were able to see eye to eye only on a small number of issues, and that their chances of reaching settlement were therefore negligible. (Rubin 1980: 383)

Role Reversal

Many times in international affairs conflicts are caused or promoted by a lack of understanding or by ethnocentric evaluations. One particular procedure that seems to be useful in generating reciprocal understanding in low intensified conflicts is the role reversal procedure. To perform the role reversal procedure a third party simply asks the disputants to assume their opponent's role temporarily. Employing such a procedure usually has the effect of generating a more accurate understanding of the other disputant's positions and perceptions regarding particular issues. Unfortunately, this process works best only when the disputants' positions were actually compatible (i.e.,
low conflict), in conditions of high incompatibility (i.e., high conflict). Such a procedure "engenders a heightened perception of dissimilarity between self and opponent" (Rubin 1980: 381) and may well increase the intensity of the conflict and decrease the ability of the disputants to cooperate with each other in hopes of reaching settlement.

**Wholistic Approach to Problem Solving**

Whenever the disputants in a conflict have multiple issues to resolve, questions often arise concerning the ordering of the issues and whether or not issues will be handled one at a time or as a part of some package deal of some sort. Generally speaking, researchers have found that a wholistic approach to problem solving, in which multiple issues are considered as part of a package to be preferable to the issue by issue approach, but only in low intensity conflicts. (Rubin 1980: 383) In conditions of high intensity conflict, such coupling of issues has been shown to have no effect on settlement. "Therefore, a third party will be advised to go for a wholistic integrative set since it allows for greater latitude to make concessions and trade offs." (Rubin 1980: 383)

**Introduction of Communication**

It is sometimes believed that if a third party can get the disputants to sit down and communicate with each
other, that the conflict will surely resolve itself. Despite this commonly held belief, the "mere introduction or availability of communication channels has been shown to aid in settlement only in conditions of low conflict, in conditions of high conflict the more introduction of communication between the disputants may lead to polarization and intensified conflict." (Rubin 1980: 382) The mere introduction of communication will not suffice, disputants must be shown how to communicate effectively, to cooperate and listen attentively. It can be argued that in high intensity conflicts it may be best to not have any compulsory communication between the disputants; in such a context separating the disputants may prove to be the best approach.

To summarize briefly, it appears that certain tactics and procedures of third-party mediation, such as the introduction of communication between the disputants, the recommendation that the conflict parties consider multiple issues as a part of a package, and the use of issue identification and role reversal procedures will facilitate concession making and understanding only in conditions of low intensity conflict. In situations characterized by high intensity conflict, such tactics and procedures may well exacerbate and polarize the conflict more than otherwise would normally occur.
Contingency #3: Low Intensity Conflicts

1. Introduction of communication between the disputants

2. A recommendation that a wholistic problem solving set be used

3. The issue identification procedure

4. The role reversal procedure

Contingency #4: Tactics and Procedures for High Intensity Conflicts

Occasionally in international disputes the conflict between nations escalates into violence and overt hostilities. After the parties to the dispute have realized that the conflict is a no win situation, they may submit to third-party mediation. Resolving or even managing such conflicts is difficult and the number of potentially effective tactics and procedures is limited. Such high intensity conflicts are often polarized and characterized by deadlock situations in which neither side is willing to make concessions nor cooperate.

Tactics that are applicable to deadlock situations, namely offering rewards or side payments for concessions, establishing time limits on the negotiation in which movement towards agreement must occur, threatening to withdraw altogether from the mediation process and emphasizing the costs of nonagreement may be useful, but their successful functioning is by no means guaranteed. In addition
to these tactics, scholars and practitioners have observed that a few tactics and procedures exist that tend to work better than others in high intensity conflicts. These tactics include: the introduction of cooling off periods; the increased use of the go-between function by the third party; increased use of constituency management tactics, designed to make possible concession making by the disputants without loss of face, increased assertiveness (i.e., forcefulness) by the third party while interacting with the disputants; and increased use of a procedure designed to handle single issues one at a time.

The Assertiveness Approach

In high intensity conflicts a third party will have to become more forceful and coercive while interacting with the disputants if the conflict is to be managed or resolved. In past conflicts, mediators have been forced to engage in arm twisting in order to persuade reluctant parties to agree to specific proposals. The utility of the assertiveness approach was recognized by Kressel from the Rutgers University and Pruitt from New York State College when they wrote:

Mediator assertiveness has been positively associated with settlement in a number of studies. This association is especially clear under the less auspicious conditions of conflict; for example, when matters of principal are involved or when conflict intensity is especially high. (Kressel and Pruitt 1985: 193)

In other words, in high intensity conflicts a third-party
mediator should increase his/her assertiveness (i.e., forcefulness) level while interacting with the disputing parties.

**Introduction of Cooling Off Periods**

Apart from becoming more assertive, a third party may wish to introduce periodic cooling off periods between the disputants in high intensity conflicts. "...when conflict is intense or protracted, the third party may be best to help by introducing a temporary cooling-off period. During this time the third party may choose to serve as a go-between, funneling and occasionally filtering information back and forth until the disputants are able and willing to address the issues in the dispute through direct exchange." (Rubin 1981: 22) Introducing cooling-off periods has a number of additional functions. First, during such times the disputants are encouraged to vent their anger onto the third party. This itself helps to lower the conflict intensity. Secondly, during such periods the third party can use this time to discuss possible compromises and/or specific proposals. Broadly speaking, the introduction of cooling-off periods works best in high intensity conflicts and tends to have the effect of making the disputants more eager to cooperate once the negotiations have resumed.
Constituency Management Tactics

Occasionally in an intensified conflict the problem with concession making is that a negotiator fears making concessions in the eyes of his/her constituencies. Remember, face saving is important in most conflicts, even more so in high intensity conflicts. In such a situation a third party may want to isolate a negotiator from his/her constituents in hopes of making it easier for the negotiator to compromise, etc. If the negotiator's constituents still prevent the disputant from compromising on a particular issue, a third party may wish to soften the negotiator's stance by publicly claiming that the negotiator is bargaining too stanchy, in hopes that the constituencies will then allow the negotiator to compromise. This tactic has been used effectively in actual international disputes. For example, President Carter, during the Camp David talks, separated Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat from their constituents and eventually in this case, settlement was reached. (Rubin 1981: 23) In short, an effective tactic in high intensity conflicts is to isolate the negotiators from their constituents and to conduct the bargaining in secret.

Narrowing of Issues Tactic

As noted, in low intensity conflict third parties are well advised to opt for a wholistic approach to problem
solving. However, in conflicts which are relatively intense a third party will be better off going issue by issue, narrowing down the dispute to a few critical issues. For example, according to Rubin, during the Camp David talks: "Although there were, and continue to be, multiple issues in dispute, only a small number of these issues were targeted for clear identification and exploration." (Rubin 1981: 24) The resultant effect in this case was that it made the bargaining process easier and more manageable. In short, conflicts which are intense and protracted, narrowing things down to a few issues, tends to lead to settlement more often than opting for a wholistic approach to problem solving.

In summation, tactics which are effective in high intensity conflicts include: the introduction of cooling-off periods between the disputants; increased use of the go-between and filtering function; increased use of constituency management tactics; increased assertiveness by the third party while interacting with the disputants; and narrowing of the agenda to a few critical issues. All of these tactics and approaches are effective in high intensity conflicts and should help the disputants manage their conflict.

What the analysis in this chapter has indicated is that there are a number of tactics and procedures available for use in settling disputes, some of which are more effective in certain contexts than are others. The contingent
effectiveness of particular tactics is related to: whether a deadlock in negotiations is in effect; the degree of power parity between the disputants and the relative intensity of the conflict.

Contingency #4: High Intensity Conflicts

Effective tactics and procedures:

1. Offering rewards or side payments for concession making
2. Establishment of time limits in which movement toward settlement must be made
3. Threatening to withdraw from mediation
4. Introducing of cooling-off periods between the disputants
5. Increased use of the go-between and filtering function
6. Constituency management tactics
7. Narrowing of the agenda to a few critical issues
8. Increased third party assertiveness, while interacting with the disputants

Ineffective tactics and procedures:

1. Issue identification procedure
2. Role reversal procedure
3. Wholistic problem solving set
4. Introduction of communication between the disputants

The nature of international conflict makes it difficult to prove that any particular tactic or procedure will work effectively in any given context. Despite this,
researchers are in agreement on a limited number of tactics and procedures that work best in certain conflict settings. It is clear that third-party mediators occupy various roles related to their task and perform various functions, that they carry out through the use of specific tactics. These tactics in turn are carried out by specific procedures in an attempt to reach certain objectives, which usually is either conflict settlement or conflict resolution.

Third-party mediation is an emerging field of study, which is somewhat unrefined and less than understood. It is hoped that the contingency approach used here has added to our knowledge of how mediation works or does not work. Future research needs to be more concerned with testing a variety of tactics, as well as combination of tactics, in a variety of different conflict contexts. In addition, researchers need to move out of the laboratory and into the international community where conflicts actually occur; too much of the research conducted on third-party mediation has been based upon laboratory findings and not upon actual international disputes.
CHAPTER THREE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

AS A MEDIATOR OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

Having previously discussed, on a more of less theoretical level, the various roles, functions, and tactics involved in third-party mediation of international conflict it seems fitting to move from the abstract to the concrete level. The central focus of this chapter will be to conduct an exploration of the present and potential resources of the Secretary-General and his staff for mediating international conflict. Special attention will be given to assessing the ability of the Secretary-General in terms of performing the various roles and functions described in Chapter One. Initially, however, discussion will focus on why the United Nations was created, and some common problems that plague its efficacy.

In order to effectively evaluate the Secretary-General and his staff, it is essential to understand why the United Nations was created, and what role it was intended to play in managing and resolving international conflict. According to Thomas Franck, Professor of Law and Director of the Center for International Studies at the New York University School of Law:
There are two principal tasks for which the United Nations has established and on which it ultimately must be judged. First, there is the task of mitigating, or better resolving, disputes and keeping peace between states when interests clash. Second, there is the task of mobilizing the international community to act collectively to deter, or, if that fails, to resist aggression by one state against another." (Franck 1985: p. 3)

Broadly speaking, the United Nations may contribute to the resolution of international conflict in three principal ways. The General Assembly and the Security Council may pass resolutions that provide guidelines for conflict resolution. The Security Council may dispatch peace-keeping forces to the conflict area. Finally, the Secretary-General or his representative may function as a mediator of conflict or provide fact-finding services. All three of the principal organs of the United Nations, the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General offices, are designed to prevent conflict from occurring, or when conflict does occur, to manage and contain it.

The ability of the United Nations to effectively perform its various roles and functions is largely a function of the degree of support its member nations impower it with. Recently, during the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, after receiving harsh criticism as to the utility of the organization, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar commented:

It seems that greater coherence could be achieved and the sense of solidarity strengthened if there were less confrontational postures and also if member states faced with an issue, paid
regard both to the principles and the practical considerations involved. Multilateralism as embodied in the United Nations is sustained by an attachment to common ends and this attachment is born of adherence to principals. . . . If the note of authority in the pronouncements of the United Nations is weakened, if either principals or pragmatic considerations are disregarded, there is a price to pay in terms of mobilizing the support of governments and the enthusiasm of people throughout the globe. Humanity cannot afford to pay that price. (de Cuellar 1985: 2)

Quite clearly, then, maintaining a strong sense of solidarity within the United Nations is essential if the organization is going to effectively mediate international disputes.

During the last decade, the United States' attitude toward the United Nations has deteriorated. (Keohane and Nye, Fall 1985: 148) Much of this is due to the fact that the United States has been sharply criticized in the United Nations, especially from the nonaligned states in the General Assembly. Increasingly these days, both the United States and the Soviet Union appear willing to abandon the principals and mandates of the United Nations in favor of pursuing their own national objectives.

The superpowers have had no problem rationalizing their noncompliance with the United Nations when its decisions and pronouncements contradict their often militant foreign policy objectives, such as in the cases of Afghanistan for the Soviet Union, and Nicaragua for the United States. The net result of such actions tends to degrade the efficacy of the United Nations by undermining the authority and normative character of the institution making
U.N. mediation of superpower conflicts impossible if not severely limited.

Despite United States noncompliance with some of the actions taken by the United Nations, the U.S. has remained very supportive of the office of the Secretary-General. According to Seymour Maxwell Finger, Professor of Political Science at the Graduate School of the City University of New York, "She [Jean Kirkpatrick] has also expressed full support for the Secretary-General's efforts at strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to maintain peace." (Finger 83/84: 447)

Another problem facing the United Nations, apart from the tendency of the superpowers to pursue national objectives over and above international objectives, is the growth in the number of member nations participating in the U.N. system. This increase in membership has made managing international conflict a complex and difficult task. According to Sylvia Brucan, Professor of International Government:

Perhaps the greatest merit of the United Nations lies in its capacity of accommodating the decolonization struggle and the support it gave the new nations in achieving statehood... The very principle of sovereignty that made the U.N. system work and enabled it to successfully carry out the internationalization of the state system is now the single greatest barrier in coping with the problems now confronting the international community. (Brucan 1984: 251)

Without doubt, most international relations scholars would agree that nationalism and assertions of sovereignty are major promoters of interstate conflict. It seems somewhat
ironic that the United Nations, in fostering decolonization, helped lay the groundwork for the fragmentation of the international community that has made conflict management and confidence building measures so difficult.

Closely related to the growth in the number of nation states has been the dissemination of power from the center powers to the peripheries. According to Raimo Vayrynen from the Department of Polyscience, University of Helsinki:

The gradual dissemination of power from centers to peripheries will continue to foster collective violence in international relations. Such a process of deconcentration probably removes restraints on local conflicts. Destruction and complexity are enhanced by the involvement of great powers in these conflicts, by providing political support, sending economic aid, supplying arms and sometimes becoming directly involved in combat. . . . In general, conflicts are growing more complex as their domestic roots, interstate connections and global linkages become ever more intertwined. Consequently, the intractability of conflicts makes their effective settlement difficult if not impossible. (Vayrynen 1985: p. 189)

In summation, three major problems seem to be plaguing the ability of the United Nations to work effectively as a mediator of international conflict. First, the noncompliance by several member nations, particularly the superpowers with the charter mandates and principals. Second, the polarization and fragmentation that has resulted from the increase in the number of member states seeking national interests within the United Nations. Third, the dissemination and deconcentration of power from the centers to the peripheries throughout the world.
The Secretary-General as a Third-Party Mediator

What is the proper role of the United Nations in settling conflict, given the type and scope of the problems facing this organization? Despite the shortcomings of the United Nations, the vast majority of the world seems supportive of both the spirit and the letter of U.N. principals and mandates. "...the office of the Secretary-General has, over the year, acquired very great prestige and authority in the international arena." (Young 1967: 264) International organizations are frequently involved in mediation of international disputes. In fact, over half of the conflicts in which one or more parties are non-aligned were referred to the United Nations. (Vayrynen 1985: 190)

In terms of having the training and capacity to perform the various roles, functions and tactics involved in third-party mediation, the Secretary-General and his staff rate high. The Secretary-General's ability to formally and impartially mediate, combined with the unique capabilities of his office and staff: their factfinding services, their ability to gain access to the nations involved in dispute, makes the Secretary-General's office an ideal place in which to settle disputes. The Secretary-General office has, over the years, maintained a comparative advantage with regard to acceptability over the other principal organs of the U.N. Professor Young recognized this when
he stated that:

There is, finally, the fact that the Secretary-General has comparative advantages over any other element in the United Nations system in problems of acceptability. One of the central problems in carrying out successful third-party activities in any area characterized by international tension is that of gaining at least minimal acceptance from the parties concerned. Without going into detail at this point, it is possible to say that the Secretary-General enjoys two broad types of advantages in this area. Related to the question of salience is the fact that precedents and expectations gradually piling up have the effect of reducing the novelty of executive action by the Secretary-General and of increasing the predispositions of the parties involved to accept such action as legitimate. Then, too, the Secretary-General has advantages in the realm of acceptability which spring from his relative impartiality and noninvolvement, his independence, and his ability to mobilize machinery comparatively rapidly. (Young 1967: p. 262)

The ability of the Secretary-General to perform third-party activities and his various resources for intervention make him and his staff appealing as potential mediators of international conflict.

...the Secretary-General has shown that even without the military, political, or economic leverage to compel resolution of a conflict, his office sometimes has unique capabilities as a mediator and a catalyst. (Luck 1984/85: p. 152)

As it stands now, international organizations are increasingly accepted in mediation of international disputes.

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. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 25)

During the last twenty years there has been numerous occasions in which the Secretary-General has acted as a mediator. Secretary-General U Thant, for example, acted as a mediator during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. (Young 1967: 324) Kurt Waldheim acted as an intermediary between Rhodesia and Namibia, and between America and Iran during the hostage crisis. (Gordenker 1983: 30) Moreover, according to Edward Luck, writing in Foreign Affairs:

Indeed, the Secretary-General and his representatives have used their good offices in the Iran-Iraq War, Afghanistan, Southern Africa, the Middle East, Cyprus, and Indochina, as well as in the Falklands dispute. His efforts have met with only modest success, but he has managed to open channels of communication in situations where no other exists and where none of the major powers has credibility and leverage with all sides. (Luck 1984-85: 151)

Although it is difficult to quantify the overall effectiveness of the United Nations in mediating disputes, some studies suggest a fairly high percentage of successes. According to K.J. Holsti from the University of British Columbia, "In the most difficult task, mediation, the United Nations has achieved desired results in about 40% of the attempts, while in reporting, interposition, and supervision rates of success have been much higher." (Holsti 1977: 501)

Generally speaking, the conflicts in which the Secretary-General has been successful have been in Third World conflicts in which the superpowers were not directly in-
volved, and in which conflict intensity was relatively low. According to Professor Vayrynen, in high intensity conflicts the U.N. is much more limited:

It is obvious that in such cases of planned and determined aggression the United Nations is not able to function effectively. U.N. failures in the Iran-Iraq War, in Afghanistan and in Kampuched further suggest that in antagonistic and high intensity conflicts its role is considerably constrained. (Vayrynen 1985: 193)

Another way to judge the capacity of the Secretary-General and his staff as intervening agents is to assess their abilities to carry out the various instrumental functions, such as: the ability to structure communication, the ability to help the disputants deal with their various constituencies, the ability to modify the issue structure, and the ability to modify the social environment in which the conflict will be waged. Generally speaking, the Secretary General's office has two virtues. First, its confidentiality enables the parties in question to avoid public statements of their positions while mediation is underway. This itself creates an atmosphere in which there is some prospect for conflict management or resolution. Second, it is frequently easier for the parties to a conflict to accept the Secretary-General, the representative of the entire world organization, than it is for them to accept mediation from some third state which may have ulterior motives or interests. Because of the ability to avoid the polarization of viewpoints which occur from negotiating in the mass media and the ability of the Secre-
tary-General to perform the various functions and tactics involved in international mediation, the prospect for effective settlement is higher here than in any other branch of the U.N. system.

Perhaps the greatest advantage to the good offices of the Secretary-General is the ability to provide a place out of the limelight in which to discuss things and funnel information. According to Eduardo Crawley, writing in the World Politics Annual:

Defenders in principle of the U.N. system can, however, point to a fair number of cases (apart from the direct use of U.N. peace-keeping forces) in which quiet diplomacy, usually through the good offices of the Secretary-General, has helped to diffuse or prevent the spread of conflict. And they usually add that on balance, there are far more areas in which the U.N. works than those in which it does not. (Crawley 83/84: 225)

Despite the actual and potential advantages to U.N. mediation many states find themselves turning to the United States for mediation because of its power and prestige. According to Zartman and Touval:

While many states occasionally become mediators, the United States often finds itself condemned to play this role. 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 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 the least risky course is to mediate between disputants. (Zartman and Touval 1985: 34)
It is somewhat disappointing that the United States' motive for mediation is linked into our global struggle against the communist bear, and not out of our humanitarian concerns for the countries involved in conflict. Perhaps we would be better off in turning over the small state conflicts to the Secretary-General for mediation, being that the Secretary-General is not tied into an East-West struggle for power and that he has been successful at mediating in a variety of different contexts.

In summation, the good office of the Secretary-General of the U.N. has proven itself capable of mediating international conflict in a number of situations. The Secretary-General's ability to perform the various roles and functions effectively, combined with the unique capabilities of his office and staff makes him well qualified to mediate international conflict. If indeed the seeds of conflict lie in the interdependence between nations, then promoting an impartial organization designed to aid disputants in settling conflict will be advantageous to all of humanity. Adhering to the principles embodied in the U.N. charter and following its recommendations and decisions will no doubt, as our world shrinks, become increasingly important. Indeed, there is something fundamentally wrong in countries pursuing national interests at the cost of international ones.

In the future, the United States should pay greater attention to the normative authority and humanitarian
motives of the United Nations and turn over more of the responsibility for mediating disputes to the organization than we currently do. Realizing, of course, that in doing so we understand that:

The United Nations obviously cannot manage all conflicts and resolve all disputes successfully. Yet its critics regularly complain that the United Nations is useless in promoting international peace and security because it cannot do the impossible. It can, and does, provide a mechanism to help manage crises and contain conflicts, but it cannot offer panaceas or simple solutions. (Luck 84/85: 149)

In an increasingly interdependent, dangerous and uncertain world, American economic and political security interests require stability, which can be bolstered by a much stronger set of international institutions and norms aimed at resolving conflict in a peaceful, nonviolent manner. The U.N system will not perform miracles. But it is the only multilateral mechanism available for coping with crucial global problems which have come to fore in recent years. The United Nations, after all, will never be anything more than what its members allow it to be. In the long run, the U.S. as well as the rest of the world needs stronger multilateral institutions to buttress the stability of international relations in an unequivocally turbulent world.
CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

This article posits, that mediation despite its importance remains understudied, less than understood and somewhat unrefined. Despite the many shortcomings, the literature on mediation has produced numerous useful insights concerning particular tactics and procedures that enhance or impede the chance of resolving conflict in a number of different contexts. The contingencies discussed in this article represent the mere tip of the iceberg of the actual tactics and procedures that may prove useful in particular situations. Nevertheless, this article has broadened our understanding of how third-party mediation works, as well as the importance of the roles and functions mediators occupy and perform. In addition, this article has provided an in depth analysis into the present and potential resources of the Secretary-General in mediating international conflict. The Secretary-General is well qualified and capable of mediating conflict and should be allowed to mediate many of the conflicts involving small states that the U.S. finds itself "condemned" to play as a part of our east-west struggle for power.

Despite the shortcomings in our understanding of how medication works, it is clear that third-party mediation
is perhaps the purest form of conflict resolution. Too often countries have sought to maintain peace through threats of force and other forms of coercion. But with the increased interdependence between countries and the conflict entailed in such relationships, the need for third-party mediation of international conflict has increased. Building military weapons can no longer guarantee peace, in fact, such an approach tends to promote conflict and competition. Real peace and security is achieved only through cooperation and maximization of shared interests between nations. The Pugwash Council, writing in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists recognized this view when they stated:

It is sometimes claimed security can be enhanced only by strengthening deterrence, which usually translates to building more weapons. Experience should have taught us by now that this approach does not work. Real [peace] security emerges only when past or potential adversaries discover that their differences, even though significant, are outweighed by shared interests and by the potential benefits of cooperation in these areas of common interest. (Pugwash Council 1985: 48)

Finding such shared interests can be facilitated by the mediation process. Mediation is designed to help disputants in a conflict to recognize their common interests and the benefits of cooperation as opposed to their differences.

The proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction throughout the world combined with the polarization of the international community have together created a situation where it is desirable to support an international
institution capable of resolving conflicts and transforming shared interests into actual policies. If we fail to act we risk conflict that may be irreparable and catastroph-ic. According to Christian Bay, Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto:

War becomes a possibility whenever national governments come to assume that their separate interests outweigh their shared interests; peace requires communication policies and transnational action programs that can reinforce the general awareness of how weighty are the shared interests of nations in avoiding war and other massive calamities. (Bay 1979: 169)

One of the presumptions of the functionalist theory of international relations is that, by breaking down the world's problems into separate functions, solutions can be found. It is time for nations to recognize that they have more to gain through cooperation than through conflict and violence.

The superpower nations of our world need to accept the fact that, in the long run, relinquishing some degree of national sovereignty is more beneficial than pursuing national objectives over and above international ones. The short-sightedness of abjuring participation in international structures in order to be able to pursue national interests unfettered by agreement by the United Nations mandates and principles will soon become apparent as we become increasingly dependent on various countries around the globe. It is time to recommit to the United Nations principles and re-establish the U.S. as a supporter of
international law and justice. Above all, one thing is clear, the interrelatedness of problems and the interdependence of states has become so complex and the globalization and dissemination of power so pervasive, that no nation can remain safely insulated in a prosperous cocoon while the rest are mired in poverty, economic decay, conflict and despair.

Implications

Although mediation is an ancient phenomenon, an understanding of how it works is relatively new. It is apparent that the creativity and inventiveness of mediators has thus far outdistanced the ability of researchers to comprehend the mediation process and to accurately assess its value. An intellectually rich set of ideas can be found in the literature on mediation, though it can hardly be said that an integrated theory has emerged "although these analyses have provided numerous useful insights concerning the particular techniques that enhance or impede the chances of resolving different forms of conflict, there remains a dearth of pertinent basic research." (Rubin 1980: 380)

To correct these deficiencies, future research needs to be oriented around synthesizing and integrating the literature from the fields of Communication, Social Psychology, International Relations fields into a unified theory. Too much of the literature regarding mediation is theoretical and abstract in nature. Too many of the
findings thus far have been based upon laboratory testing and not upon actual international disputes. Researchers need to move out of the laboratory and into the international community where disputes actually occur. Lastly, researchers need to test the contingent effectiveness of various tactics, as well as combinations of tactics in a variety of different conflict circumstances.

Thus far scholars from various fields have established individual islands of knowledge of mediation. It is now up to future researchers to build bridges between the islands in an attempt to integrate our understanding of the mediation process. Researchers' findings have provided much insight into the art of mediation. It is now up to the various practitioners, the diplomats, envoys and go-betweens to determine whether the finding on the contingent effectiveness of particular tactics and procedures have any general relation and applicability to actual conflict settings.

The state of affairs that characterizes today's international relations makes research into conflict management and conflict resolution compelling. International conflict is without a doubt on the increase, terrorism, ethnic and racial tensions, hostage takings, border disputes and resource oriented conflicts are common occurrences today. As the currents of international relations clearly indicate, there is an urgent necessity that these problems do not go ignored. Ultimately, the question before mankind
is whether progress toward peace and tolerance will continue, or whether, as in many regions of the world, a fatal retrogression will set in. The human family does not yet know the answer, but hopes it will be in the affirmative. Perhaps in the future mankind will realize that the power of the tongue is indeed mightier than the power of the sword.
REFERENCES


