

# **Herding Cats**



# **Herding Cats**

***Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World***

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Fen Osler Hampson  
Pamela Aall**  
*editors*



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The views expressed in this book are those of the authors alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace.

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# Foreword

*Herding Cats* is a serious-minded book on a subject of the utmost importance to the lives of millions of people in conflict situations throughout the world. It is also a fascinating volume full of unforgettable characters, unpredictable plots, desperate situations, and significant diplomatic achievements. This combination is, to say the least, rare. By marrying sober analysis with captivating narrative, *Herding Cats* may encourage readers who tend to shy away from more serious tomes to engage with the important ideas presented herein; by the same token, it may remind an academic audience that concepts of conflict management and conflict resolution are anything but abstract in their application. In *Herding Cats*, the bridge between theory and practice is open for all to cross.

Much of the credit for this volume's ability to speak to practitioners as well as scholars, and to generalists as well as to specialists, belongs to its editors, Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall. Building on the success of their 1996 volume, *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, this gifted team has assembled a distinguished cast of international mediators to recount and reflect on their experiences. Crocker, Hampson, and Aall have framed those reflections with insightful assessments of key concepts and strategies, common threads and points of contention, and policy-relevant findings.

No less of the credit for the multifaceted appeal of this volume, of course, is due to the authors themselves, who have furnished thoughtful and compelling accounts of their individual experiences as mediators on the frontlines of international conflict. Their wisdom and candor are bound to be invaluable to those who will follow in their footsteps and to the governments and

organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, who will support future mediation efforts.

The mediation of contemporary conflict is an activity that typically involves throwing well-intentioned individuals into a lion's den of conflicting interests, beliefs, and forces. The mediator is usually asked to do no less than persuade the lions to lie down with one another, and though the onlookers customarily shout out encouragement and instructions, the hapless mediator is rarely armed with much more than quick wits, seasoned judgment, and dedication. It is, to be sure, a situation rich in dramatic possibilities—hence the opportunities for engrossing narrative. It is also a situation in which the odds are stacked so heavily against the mediator that any kind of success is not easy to explain—hence the need for intellectual sophistication.

Such sophistication is also needed if we are not only to understand why a particular attempt at mediation succeeded or failed but also to detect general patterns in an endeavor that, despite its complexity and unique challenges, is becoming increasingly popular as an approach to dealing with international conflicts. Mediation is hardly a recent invention, but in the past twenty years, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, mediation has become both much more common and much more complex. The increase in the number of efforts to mediate interstate and intrastate conflicts owes much to the disappearance of the constraints previously imposed by the rival superpowers on both warmaking and peacemaking among and within their respective client-states. The discipline of the bipolar order has crumbled, leaving many states vulnerable to the reassertion of old antagonisms among contending national, religious, and especially ethnic groups. As conflicts have multiplied and escalated, the opportunities for external mediators to intervene have proliferated.

The increasing complexity of mediation is the product of several factors. Some of these are more or less unrelated to the demise of the Cold War—for instance, the advent of almost instantaneous global coverage of crises and conflicts by the transnational media. Many of today's negotiations, however, reflect the sea change in the international order. Surely, the most notable of these latter factors is the above-mentioned proliferation in the number and types of third-party intervenors. As the somewhat provocative title of this volume makes graphically clear, it is rare that a mediator undertakes a peacemaking effort alone. For instance, the parties to a conflict may wish to engage more than one mediator for the effort, or may not agree on the same choice of mediator, or may jump from one third party to another during the course of a negotiation. Even when the conflict parties are in

accord, outside institutions may decide to provide a mediator: the UN secretary-general appoints a special representative, as does the United States and perhaps a former colonial power; the neighboring states and local regional organization intervene to protect their interests and keep the conflict from spreading; a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with a long-term relationship with the area tries to help out; an eminent person, acting on his or her own initiative, decides to become involved.

The following chapters cast much new light on how this multiplicity and diversity of players can impede or assist the process of effective mediation. For instance, by focusing on the mediating institutions rather than on the intervention itself, the book illuminates such underexplored aspects of mediation as the comparative advantage of different mediators and mediating institutions, and the strategic effect that any third-party intervention, whether official or private, has on international peace and security.

*Herding Cats* does justice not only to the complexity of multiparty mediation but also to its variety, presenting an extraordinarily broad range of actors and an equally wide array of conflicts, each of which is itself the stage for a multilayered drama involving numerous actors and issues. As a glance at the table of contents reveals, the chapters cover four continents and almost two dozen conflicts, they take us from televised gatherings of world leaders to meetings cloaked in complete secrecy, from academic workshops in quiet universities to the basements of besieged embassies, from churches to jungles to war-scarred hotels and mountains; and they deal with all stages in the life cycles of conflict, from prevention through efforts to halt ongoing hostilities to attempts to reach and implement lasting settlements.

Given this variety of experiences, it is not surprising that the authors of these chapters come from a wide array of backgrounds. Here, diplomats and politicians rub shoulders with generals and academics. Some have acted in their private, personal capacities, some have represented governments, others have worked for NGOs, still others have pursued careers within international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. What one might not expect, however, is the eloquence and immediacy with which they communicate not only the details of their work but also the often powerful emotional and psychological tensions in the mediation process. To judge from these accounts of the ebb and flow of negotiation and violence, of optimism and pessimism, one might add "storyteller" to the numerous other skills required of today's mediator.

Few, if any, of the authors acquired these skills through formal training. Some skills were in-born, some were developed during careers, and some

were acquired during the experience of mediation itself. Although they come from a wide variety of institutions, the authors have all had to develop special skills as part of their mediation effort, learning to differentiate between the long-term sources and the proximate causes of the given conflict; to receive and decipher the messages sent by parties in contention; to deliver effective messages of their own—both to the antagonists and to their home institutions; and to recognize and use resources at hand to weave together a credible peacemaking process.

The lessons learned from these experiences go to the heart of the work of the United States Institute of Peace. Dedicated to promoting a better understanding of international conflict and to enhancing the abilities needed to prevent or resolve such conflict, the Institute supports a wide variety of research on the causes, types, trajectories, and management of disputes that threaten international peace and stability. Many other Institute publications have directly or indirectly addressed the subject of mediation. Some have focused on the tools and skills required to safeguard or restore peace: for instance, *Preventing Violent Conflicts* by Michael Lund, *Building Peace* by John Paul Lederach, and *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, edited by I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen. Several others have focused on specific conflicts: for instance, *Mozambique* by Richard Synge, *Angola's Last Best Chance for Peace* by Paul Hare, and *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope* by John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley.

The fundamental assumption behind these works, behind *Herding Cats*, indeed behind all the work of the Institute, is that conflicts do not always need to burn themselves out on the battlefield. There are steps that can be taken to prevent and manage them that do not involve the use of force. Equally important, in the response to conflict situations, many different individuals and institutions—local civic organizations as well as governments, NGOs, regional organizations, and the United Nations—can play vital roles, especially if they support one another. This book provides hard evidence that these assumptions are well-founded. It does not conceal the difficulties and dangers facing a mediator. It does not pretend that intervention always works. It does not shy away from the uncomfortable fact that mediation may sometimes make things worse. But it shows—with candor, eloquence, and a sharp analytical eye—what mediators can accomplish and why so many people have benefited from their efforts.

Richard H. Solomon, President  
United States Institute of Peace

# Preface

This book grew out of a desire to unravel the complexities of the frequent third-party interventions in the violent conflicts of the 1990s. We decided to approach the topic by examining how third-party institutions involved in the international response—the United Nations, regional organizations, individual states, groups of “friends,” NGOs, and others—had interacted or had failed to interact in carrying out their missions. That confusion and a lack of teamwork dominated the playing field had been amply illustrated by Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, and we wanted to identify ways to lessen that confusion. As we looked at these interventions, a common element emerged: the key role that individual mediators played in providing coherence to the third-party peacemaking efforts and the enormous challenges—not least from their own and other third-party institutions—that these mediators faced in creating this coherence. Our project on intervention became focused on mediation in general, and on multiparty mediation in particular.

In the eyes of most people, mediation practiced in the international sphere remains an obscure activity performed by little-known individuals mysteriously appointed to broker an agreement in some remote corner of the globe. Occasionally, these mediators do make headlines, as George Mitchell and Richard Holbrooke did in Northern Ireland and in Bosnia, respectively. More often, however, the names of individual mediators appear only toward the end of news articles, as the mediators serve up matter-of-fact assessments of progress or the lack thereof in peace processes struggling to end seemingly endless conflicts. The real stuff of mediation—what it entails and what tempests and shoals it encounters—often goes unreported

in media accounts and unnoticed in academic analyses. And yet, for complex political, social, economic, and moral reasons, mediation is becoming a common tool of international relations, a means by which the international community tries to extinguish violent conflict or to prevent it from igniting.

To capture the world of present-day mediation, we have developed a book with three components. First, to help us grasp the nature of multiparty mediation, we asked almost two dozen mediators who had worked in very different circumstances and for very different institutions to write about their experiences. These experiences, which furnish a rich fund of new perspectives, insights, facts, and lessons learned, constitute the heart of this book. Second, we situated these first-person accounts within the context of current academic research and analysis, thus creating the conceptual framework for this book. Third, we identified the strategic and operational recommendations that grow out of this academic framework and the lessons distilled by practitioners. These recommendations are found in the concluding chapter. The result is a book that is much longer than we originally intended, but one that will serve, we hope, as a guide for both official and nonofficial peacemakers, as well as a powerful resource for teaching and research in conflict management and resolution.

For their willingness to take time from their busy lives to engage in this project, we thank first and foremost the authors of the case studies collected in the volume. Mediators do not normally seek the limelight; often their success depends on providing a quiet diplomacy that emphasizes not their own efforts but rather the efforts and contributions of the parties to the conflict. For this volume, however, the authors were kind enough to step further toward center stage and into the analytical spotlight. Their accounts give us an insider's perspective on the mediation process, and the authors were particularly generous in helping to pinpoint lessons learned and in creating a road map for future mediators and their sponsoring institutions. Special thanks go to those authors who came to Washington in September 1998 to engage with us in an intense and enlightening discussion of multiparty mediation. Their deliberations, captured in chapter 3, added depth to this project.

The United States Institute of Peace, and particularly its president, Richard H. Solomon, has been very supportive of this project. The Institute, which straddles the academic and the operational worlds, is deeply immersed in the question of how to create an enduring peace. With its many substantive resources and wide-ranging contacts, the Institute has provided an excellent milieu and appropriate home for this project. We are

also grateful to Dick Solomon for the title of this book—the picturesque phrase appears in Dick’s chapter in this volume and seems to us to capture the difficulty of coordinating independent third parties.

A number of other experts in mediation and conflict intervention have offered helpful advice along the way. Early on in the project, we asked several people to review our initial research design; for their wise suggestions, we are grateful to Antonia Handler Chayes of the Conflict Management Group, Alexander George of Stanford University, Harriet Hentges of the United States Institute of Peace, Andrew Natsios of World Vision, Robert Pastor of Emory University, Peter Schoettle of the United States Institute of Peace, Astri Suhrke of the Christian Michelsen Institute, and I. William Zartman of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. Bill Zartman also played an important role at the September 1998 authors’ meeting, spinning general conclusions out of a wealth of personal observations and proving that, if one has sufficient breadth of vision, there need be no gap between the academic community and the practitioners’ world.

A book of this nature is a challenge to publish, and we greatly appreciate the close attention, care, and wise counsel we received from members of the Institute’s Publications program: Dan Snodderly, Joan Engelhardt, Kay Hechler, Marie Marr, Mike Chase, and Michael Sonesen. In this regard, there is the inestimable contribution of our managing editor, Nigel Quinney, who shepherded this book through the publication process. Providing direction, clarity, perspective, and good humor, he kept us on track and focused, and produced a very fine text. In its own way, it was an act of multiparty mediation and, like the case authors in this book, he succeeded admirably.

Much research and administrative support goes into the creation of a book this size. Janice Hoggs and Camilla Pessima have provided a great deal of appreciated administrative support, which may have been hidden from the rest of the world but which was essential to the smooth functioning of this complicated project. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Greg Maruszecka of Carleton University, Michael Taylor of Georgetown University, and Louis Klarevas and James Rae of the United States Institute of Peace. Lou saw the book off to a good start, tracking down written material and UN special representatives with zeal and skill, while offering excellent suggestions on many topics. James Rae deserves special recognition for keeping this project going on a daily basis, checking facts, collecting data, communicating with authors, and making sure that we, the editors, understood what we needed to do next and stayed on schedule. In addition, James wrote the summaries that precede each of the case

studies, and thus he has contributed a valuable reference tool to the book. He also served as the research assistant for Richard Solomon's chapter on Cambodia. In fact, James has been involved in every aspect of this book, and we are deeply in his debt.

# Contributors

**Chester A. Crocker** is the James R. Schlesinger professor of strategic studies at Georgetown University and chairman of the board of directors of the United States Institute of Peace. From 1981 to 1989 he was assistant secretary of state for African affairs; as such, he was the principal diplomatic architect and mediator in the prolonged negotiations among Angola, Cuba, and South Africa that led to Namibia's transition to democratic governance and independence, and to the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. He is the author of *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*, and coeditor of *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* and *African Conflict Resolution: The U.S. Role in Peacemaking*. He is also an adviser on strategy and negotiation to U.S. and European firms.

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\* \* \*

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**Andrea Bartoli** founded the SIPA International Conflict Resolution Program at Columbia University and currently holds the chair of the Columbia University Seminar on Conflict Resolution. He has been the special representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio (a Catholic international lay association) to the United Nations since Sant'Egidio mediated a settlement of the Mozambique civil war in 1990–92.

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Politiques de Paris. Since 1995, she has been analyzing the Great Lakes of Central Africa in various capacities: as a research associate with the Center for Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations, and as a head of mission with Doctors of the World. She has been an observer to the Arusha peace process and has published a number of articles on Burundi.

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**Harold H. Saunders** is director of international affairs at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, where he engages in nonofficial dialogue to change relationships among people in deep-rooted ethnic, racial, or communal conflicts. Since March 1993, he has helped to facilitate the Inter-Tajik Dialogue within the Framework of the Dartmouth Conference. He was assistant secretary of state, 1978–81.

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**Gordon Smith** is director of the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria and chairman of the board of the International Development Research Centre. He was Canada's deputy minister of foreign affairs when Canada led efforts to dispatch a multinational military force to alleviate the crisis in eastern Zaire in 1996.

**Richard H. Solomon**, president of the United States Institute of Peace, was assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs from 1989 to 1992. In that role, he led the U.S. effort to negotiate a peace process for Cambodia and begin normalization of relations with Vietnam. For his efforts, he received awards from the Cambodian community in the United States, the Government of Thailand, and the U.S. Department of State.

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# **PART I**

## **MULTIPARTY MEDIATION**

Concepts, Issues, Strategies, and Actors

