International Conflict Mediation Organizations in the Post-Cold War World Order

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Presented by: Misti Wuori
Conflict Mediation Project Planning
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The conflict resolution literature in the post-Cold War era provides a vast analysis of a number of dimensions of conflict resolution, conflict mediation and peacebuilding. Nearly 500 different organizations around the world are involved in some aspect of conflict mediation practice or peace research, from academic research concerning the nature of conflict to community-based reconciliation in war zones. As we look to find our "niche" in the conflict mediation field, it is important to understand some broad organizational types and past examples of mediation efforts undertaken by existing organizations. This paper offers a brief analysis of the nature of conflict in the world today and the corresponding field of "third party" conflict mediation organizations and efforts that have arisen to meet this need. While the organizations presented are by no means exhaustive, the purpose of this paper is to offer a number of key points for discussion as we move into the next phase of planning and critical analysis of the role that a Melton Foundation alum-based program might serve in the international conflict mediation arena.

Nature of Conflict in the post-Cold War Era

A new pattern of conflicts prevails in the post-Cold War period, thereby provoking new patterns of responses by NGOS and conflict resolution researchers alike. The main focus of conflict resolution research used to be international wars provoked by global power centers, and much of the theory of conflict resolution developed in response to this kind of conflict. Now many post-Cold War conflicts (excluding the Gulf War) involve internal conflicts reflecting breakdowns in states or challenges to state authority, often targeting and involving large civilian populations. Today's wars are typically started by rebels who either want to secede from the

union, have some greater degree of autonomy, have greater participation as minorities in the way their governments are run, or have greater access to economic resources within their countries (Spencer 1992, p. 9). Table 1 below lists the conflicts occurring in world during the years 1995-1997 with the most conflict-related deaths. A complete list of all active conflicts is much longer and includes ongoing conflicts such as those occurring in Northern Ireland, Russia (Chechen rebels), Sierra Leone, etc. While the numbers of persons killed in these conflicts may be fewer than those conflicts listed in Table 1, the impact of all conflict on the personal well-being of citizens and the socioeconomic well-being of the nations involved should not be diminished.

TABLE 1: Countries with major armed conflict in progress, 1995-1997.
Source: Contemporary Conflict Resolution (1999), Compiled from datasets at research institutes in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and the United States.

Location	Inception	Principal parties	Deaths
Afghanistan	1978	Taleban vs. Dostum/Masood	1-2 m.
Algeria	1992	Govt of Algeria vs. rebels	>60,000
Angola	1975/1992	Govt of Angola vs. UNITA	>500,000
Azerbaijan	1988	Govt of Azerbaijan vs. Armenia	>50,000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1992	Govt of Bosnia-Herzegovina vs. Bosnian Croats vs. Bosnian Serbs	>100,000
Burundi	1993	Govt of Burundi vs. Hutu etc. militia	>100,000
Cambodia	1975	Govt of Cambodia vs. PDK (Khmer Rouge)	>2 m.
Chad	1966	Govt of Chad vs. CSNPD, MDD	>100,000
Guatemala	1968	Govt of Guatemala vs. URNG	>45,000
Indonesia	1975	Govt of Indonesia vs. Fretilin (E. Timor)	>100,000
Liberia	1989	Govt of Liberia/ECOWAS vs. NPFL, Krahn factions etc.	>200,000
Rwanda	1990	Govt of Rwanda vs. Hutu death squads	>800,000
Somalia	1991	USC (Mahdi) vs. USC (Aidid) etc	>400,000
Sri Lanka	1983	Govt of Sri Lanka vs. LTTE (Tamils)	>35,000
Sudan	1983	Govt of Sudan vs. SPLA, NDA	>1.5 m.

In response to the presence of on-going intra-national conflict, there has been a differentiation and broadening in the scope of third party 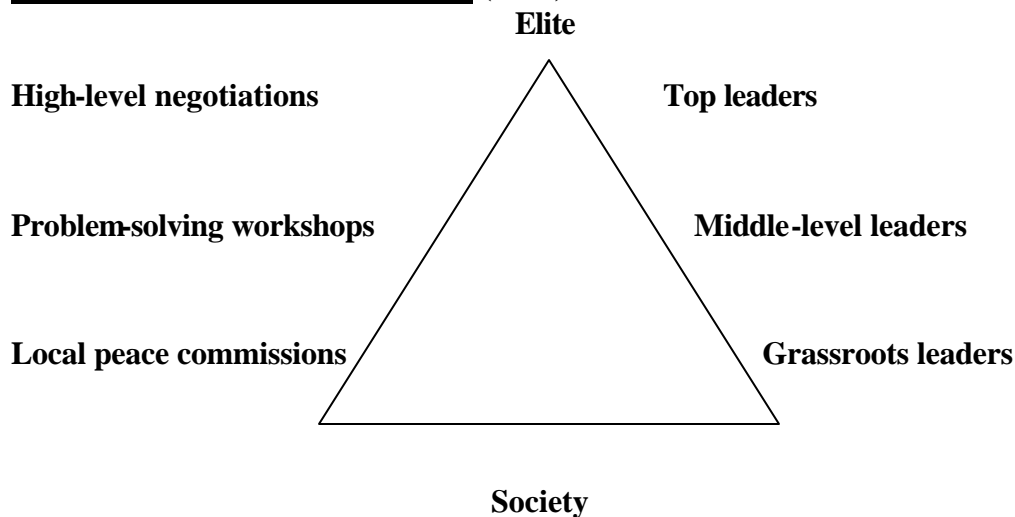intervention (Miall et al. 1999, p. 16). Whereas classical conflict resolution was mainly concerned with the beginning or entry into the

conflict itself and with how to enable parties in violent conflict to resolve the issues in non-

violent ways, the contemporary approach is to take a wider and more holistic view of the timing

of intervention. That is, conflict resolution theories now reflect the need to intervene to resolve

conflict before armed battle has broken out and continue throughout the height of conflict until

the conflict is settled. Then, conflict intervention should continue through into the post-

settlement phase when peacebuilding must continue to address issues of conflict. This extended

theoretical timeframe for successful conflict resolution provides a basis for understanding the

substantial growth of conflict-related NGOs and organizations that are currently involved in

different dimensions of conflict resolution (Alger in Jeong 1999, p. 30).

Types of Conflict Mediation Actors and Organizations

  John Paul Lederach adopts a pyramidal model to illustrate the interaction of public and

private actors in conflict mediation. As shown in Figure 1, at the top level of leadership a few

key political or military leaders represent legitimate governments or opposition movements. The

middle-level leadership represents a broader base of constituencies such as business,

**Figure 1: Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding. Source: <u>Building Peace: Sustainable
Reconciliation in Divided Societies</u> (1997).**

Elite

High-level negotiations		Top leaders
Problem-solving workshops		Middle-level leaders
Local peace commissions		Grassroots leaders

Society

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religious, education and labor leaders. These people might be informally connected with the top leaders but are better connected with the populace. Grassroots leaders often best understand the impacts and origins of conflict as they live everyday with the reality. However, they are the most removed from official decision-making processes.

In response to the changing patterns of conflict and the multiple sources of international and intra-national conflict in the post-Cold War era, responses are required at different levels, often simultaneously (Zartman 1997, p. 45). This is often termed *multitrack diplomacy*, or the complementary integration of multiple levels of third party intervention to bring about conflict resolution (Miall 1999, p. 19). Most conflict researchers refer to conflict resolution "Tracks" of third party mediation or negotiation. Track I refers to the work of the UN, international and regional organizations, governments and diplomats and international financial institutions as third party mediators working with top leaders. Track II refers to the work of international NGOs, churches, academics and private business as third party mediators working with middle level leaders. Track III involves domestic and international NGOs focused on building social cohesion between citizens in a grassroots context, paying special attention to indigenous resources and local actors. Multitrack diplomacy calls for cooperation between involved international and internal agencies working at various levels with a sustained commitment to the conflict over time.

The shift towards multitrack diplomacy has allowed for the emergence of emphasis on the significance of bottom-up processes and the growth of NGOs and international organizations involved in conflict resolution. Often, these organizations developed in response to the gaps left by the lack of involvement in internal conflicts by Track I entities such as governments and international organizations.

Forms of Mediation

      International organizations and governments still play a large role in managing conflicts as some of the most highly publicized conflict negotiation focuses on efforts by world political and religious leaders such as Bill Clinton in the Middle East, George Mitchell in Northern Ireland and Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela in Burundi. However, as mentioned, there is a growing presence of domestic and international NGOs in the conflict resolution arena. The approaches and practice of the different conflict mediation entities range along a spectrum of "soft" and "hard" intervention approaches. These approaches include conciliation (intermediary efforts to encourage the parties to move towards negotiations), "pure" mediation (voluntary processes in which parties retain control over the outcome during negotiation processes) and more forceful methods of mediation and peace enforcement (Miall 1999, p. 22). Which model is "best" remains hotly contested and debated, as is discussion on whether third party intervention should be impartial or partial, coercive or noncoercive, state-based or nonstate-based, focused on structural transformation or personal and group transformation or carried out by cultural outsiders or insiders. The empirical data pointing to the limited success of mediation efforts further complicates the selection of the "best" mediation methods. Bercovitch, in the examination of 284 attempted mediations occurring between 1945 and 1989 in 79 international conflicts, found that a settlement was reached in only 5 percent of the conflicts and a cease-fire in only 8 percent. Eighty-six percent of the mediation efforts failed in conflicts involving over 100,000 fatalities (Bercovitch and Rubin 1992, p. 30). Further, Bercovitch found that the mediation efforts had no effect half of the time. In their analysis of the 101 armed conflicts fought between 1989 and 1996 (mostly internal conflicts), Wallensteen and Sollenberg found that while 68 had come to an end, only 19 ended in a peace agreement. The others ended either

in a victory to one side or in some other means (UN intervention, the fizzling out of conflict without victory or settlement, etc) (Spencer 1992, p. 14).

Despite this record, few dispute the very important role conflict mediation efforts play in trying to lessen the massive human, social and financial costs of conflict for societies concerned. Irrespective of their theoretical perspective, most experts and theorists conclude that third party interventions usually need to be continued over an extended period of time and that no third party acts alone in its effort to bring about conflict mediation (Hampson 1996, p. 233).

With this framework in mind, the next section will provide a number of brief case studies outlining the mission and operational approaches to conflict mediation for a few of the most respected and referenced nongovernmental, third party conflict mediation organizations. These organizations have been cited with contributing to "successful" conflict mediation outcomes.

The Carter Center—International Negotiation Network

Through its Conflict Resolution Program—International Negotiation Network (INN), The Carter Center uses experienced peacemakers to prevent and resolve armed conflicts around the world. The INN is a network of eminent persons, chaired by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, and includes world leaders, former heads of state, Nobel Peace Prize laureates, conflict resolution practitioners, representatives of international organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations. The Conflict Resolution Program (CRP) regularly monitors many of the world's armed conflicts to better understand the histories, primary actors, issues spurring conflict and efforts being made to bring about resolution. If the situation arises, President Carter mediates directly and most recently, the CRP has worked on projects in the Baltics, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Korea, Sudan, Liberia and Uganda. The Carter Center is also widely recognized for its work in the civil war conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The INN developed in 1987 to meet what Carter considered the emerging need for world leaders to serve a role in intra-national conflict. He found that international organizations and governments were not willing to become involved in peacemaking and peacekeeping within nations. He found this constituted a serious "mediation gap," especially in relation to developing countries (Spencer 1992, p. 9-10). The INN was launched with the purpose of: (1) finding non-military means of reducing armed conflicts, and (2) helping to prevent the escalation of lesser-scale conflicts into armed ones by focusing on intra-national arenas (Spencer 1992, p. 10). The mission was conceived to function as a network linking various resources available at many levels and to work with existing organizations involved in humanitarian or conflict mediation roles in the areas of conflict. Carter stressed that the INN would not compete with existing organizations, but rather work them to more effectively meet the needs. He also stressed that the organization would not "look for easy victories that might be tracked on a score card" but instead focus on the most devastating conflicts (Spencer 1992, p. 10). The CRP serves a research purpose by producing detailed analysis of conflict situations by top experts (formally called the INN Secretariat) on the conflict in question and bringing awareness to the world community. The INN's model for intervention is largely country and culture specific. When INN Secretariat members identify a conflict that might be ready for intervention and mediation, they design an overall strategy for managing a mediation process based on the situational characteristics of the conflict.

A closer look at the INN—Eritrea/Ethiopia Case Study:

The INN began its concentration on the Ethiopian/Eritrean conflict almost a full year before it convened the parties. In the fall of 1988, a small group of scholars were asked to develop a short list of "hot spots", i.e., conflicts that were at or near the boiling point and were

not being mediated by any governments or international organizations. Due to the length and severity of the conflict, Eritrea/Ethiopia topped the list. The INN Secretariat conducted an analysis of the historical , political, sociological and economic aspects of the conflict. This included reviewing the literature produced by the parties in conflict to gain an understanding of the perceptions the parties had about themselves and each other. Furthermore, they conducted a number of preliminary interviews with scholars, policy analysts and relief organizations to better understanding the cultural differences of the parties. During the early stages, they also began talking with Track I diplomatic entities in order to understand what efforts were being made or had been made to resolve the differences and why they had failed or succeeded.

The INN maintains that conflicting parties must invite them to intervene and must want to seek an end to conflict. In this case, neither party would readily extend the invitation due to the protracted nature of the conflict. So, in conjunction with a relief mission to the Horn of Africa, INN mediators met with the leadership of both sides to explore their interest in a mediation effort. The parties agreed and the INN negotiators and experts devised a multitrack, multiphased approach to work with the parties. This approach called for simultaneously conducting a bargaining strategy, a single-text negotiating approach and a joint problem –solving approach (Spencer 1992, p. 14). The bargaining strategy involved President Carter as the master negotiator using bargaining strategies to keep the parties at the table and move them toward agreements they had previously been unwilling or unable to make. Carter's political clout was most important as he used his influence to go to the media with progress reports as a means of inducing agreements. The single negotiating text strategy was employed when Carter worked with a single delegation or representative of a delegation. He would show a working draft document to the delegation chairperson or small group and call for comments. The mediation

team did this with each side of the conflict until acceptable working documents were created.
The joint problem-solving strategy was most often employed in private sessions and off-the-record discussions. The key to this approach is to build trusting, personal relationships framed on the shared problem that all involved, including the mediation team, needed to have resolved.
All members were seen as partners in the process of problem solving (Spencer 1992, p. 30).

While the INN's first attempt to resolve the conflict in Ethiopia/Eritrea failed, it did bring enormous attention to the conflict which stimulated grassroots pressure for change (Miall 1999, p. 58).

Nairobi Peace Initiative:

The Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) began its work by raising public awareness of the nature and consequences of African conflicts, sensitizing people and organizations about the need for peaceful settlements and stimulating discussion on peace and development. With time, the NPI became directly engaged in assisting parties search for peaceful solutions and moved towards conflict mediation practice. It has now developed into an indigenous African peace resource organization directly involved in peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict resolution training at both the grassroots and the political leadership levels. In Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, Rwanda and Malawi, NPI has facilitated dialogue between the leadership of warring parties and has worked with grassroots organizations assisting in reconciliation. They have organized conflict resolution training workshops and seminars to help bring about reconciliation processes. In Liberia, together with the INN of the Carter Center and George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, the NPI has organized conflict resolution training workshops and seminars to help in the process of reconciliation.

Generally, conflict resolution training focuses on the following methodologies and strategies:

Reframing the Parties' Conception of Their Conflict—Parties in conflict, and especially protracted conflict, often view their situation as hopeless. A training program can offer participants knowledge about conflict dynamics and intervention options for preventing or deescalating conflict. Conflict resolution trainers often use theoretical frameworks as well as case studies on conflict resolution in other regions to encourage dialogue. The value of this training is that it gives participants some hope that there may be real, viable conflict resolution options that have previously been unexplored. Second, participants are presented with alternate ways of looking at conflict, not only as it applies to them individually, but also as it applies to the way groups theorize about conflict.

Reframing the Parties' Conception of the "sides" of the Conflict—Most conflict resolution training programs incorporate exercises to put participants in the "shoes" of the other side. This encourages participants to think critically about the other side's concerns and needs.

Building Skills for Dialogue and Problem Solving—Training can assist participants in developing or improving communication, negotiation and problem-solving skills. This gives participants a chance to reflect on their personal characteristics and presumptions regarding negotiation. The workshop or training environment provides a safe environment for individuals to practice and test new approaches and skills (Zartman 1997, p. 365-366).

Community of Sant'Egidio:

The Community of Sant'Egidio is a world-wide assembly of Christian communities based in Italy. They are most often cited for successes in Mozambique and Algeria where they utilized a mediation strategy that stressed the common interests between the parties. In

Mozambique, the Community of Sant'Egidio built up a relationship with both parties to the conflict while serving humanitarian and relief needs, which then enabled them to assume a third party mediator role. They initiated discussions between warring factions that resulted in a peace agreement and the deployment of a peace-keeping force. The Community of Sant'Egidio provides a good example of an organization that combines humanitarian relief with explicit Track II mediation efforts. The relief work often creates possibilities for mediation, as humanitarian agencies develop contacts across the conflict boundaries (Miall 1999, p. 147).

Conflict Management Group:

The Conflict Management Group (CMG) is an international nonprofit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. CMG engages in negotiator training, consulting, diagnostic research, process design, conflict analysis, consensus-building and mediation. CMG also facilitates the building of institutions for the prevention and management of conflicts. CMG joined with the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy to form the Cyprus Consortium. The Consortium provides conflict resolution training to members of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in an attempt to encourage dialogue. CMG and other Consortium members have trained Cypriot University students, community leaders and senior policy-makers in an effort to create a broad-based network of "citizen peacebuilders". CMG consultants have also worked with high-level diplomats from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on preventative diplomacy in Cyprus.

For more than a decade, CMG professionals have worked with South African leaders from all sides of the national conflict, including labor organizations, churches, the community, businesses, the political arena and the government. On the local level, CMG has trained South Africans to use negotiation and conflict management skills to assist communities in the

reconciliation process. On the national level, CMG-trained South Africans helped launch and facilitate the negotiations between African National Congress and Inkatha partisans that led to the suspension of violence in the Meadowlands District of Soweto and to the creation of the Joint Monitoring Committee to prevent further violence there.

CMG has developed and adapted methods of interest-based joint problem-solving to various African environments with partners and clients from the political, diplomatic and business sectors, including the Organization for African Unity (OAU). These techniques juxtapose the vast and rich history of relationship-based conflict management practices from many parts of Africa with newer, interest-based negotiation models from the West. In collaboration with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and The Carter Center, CMG has conducted workshops on conflict management and resolution skill building with African diplomatic representatives from OAU member states. The focus of the workshops was on practical, nontheoretical skills that individuals and teams could actually use in potential or actual conflicts. Over the course of the workshop gathering (numerous days), participants examined their assumptions about conflict and negotiation, developed their list of personal negotiation strengths and applied those lessons to a broader inquiry into the role of third parties in joint-problem solving. The workshops concluded with concrete analysis of the challenges facing African leaders today.

Summary of the role of NGOs in Conflict Mediation

As is evidenced by the case studies presented, nongovernmental organizations serve diverse roles in the international conflict resolution arena. One, NGO representatives are directly involved in bargaining and negotiation, third party mediation and reconciliation efforts, in Track II, Track III and multitrack diplomatic efforts. Two, NGOs create neutral forums, workshops

and training formats at which conflicting parties can safely meet to open lines of communication, share their personal experiences with conflict and discuss options for bringing about sustainable conflict resolution. Three, NGOs serve as information gathers and disseminators of complex information and analyses on the social, economic, cultural and historical dimensions of specific conflicts. Often, NGOs have the channels established to conduct in-depth interview with opposing parties and leaders (Zartman 1997, p. 352).

Summary and Implications for MF Conflict Mediation Project Planning:

The case studies provided offer a profile of the various broad types of organizations involved in conflict mediation and peacebuilding efforts from which we can generate a short list of common themes that reverberate through the literature of many of the nongovernmental organizations involved in some aspect of international conflict mediation. It is my hope that these themes provide a framework for discussing the vision and viable approaches that a Melton Foundation project might take.

- ➢ *Conflict mediation efforts should be long-term in their focus*
- ➢ *Conflicts today are complex and not easily reconciled*
- ➢ *Multiple approaches to conflict resolution are often employed (multitrack)*
- ➢ *Multiple constituencies are often targeted*
- ➢ *Conflict mediation organizations work in partnership with each other*
- ➢ *Academic research serves a key function in understanding conflicts*
- ➢ *Conflict mediators must "be in it for the long haul" in order to build relationships*
- ➢ *There is no one "best" approach to mediation*
- ➢ *Approaches to mediation are cultural specific and situation specific*
- ➢ *Mediation efforts are not always successful*

In many ways, NGOs are still trying to find their way as third party conflict mediators in the post-Cold War era. Unfortunately, there is no lack of internal strife and conflict to keep them busy. As we formulate the role for the Melton Foundation in this field of NGOs, the issue does not seem to be whether there is a need, but rather what approaches might this organization take and what existing organizations might it partner with to make the most impact. Those are the challenge now before us.

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