

Global _____
Peace Operations

Review



▶ Lessons from Multilateral Envoys

GLOBAL PEACE OPERATIONS REVIEW

The **Global Peace Operations Review** is an interactive web-portal presenting in-depth analysis and detailed data on military **peacekeeping operations** and civilian-led political missions by the United Nations, regional organizations, and ad-hoc coalitions. The web-portal is a product of the New York University Center on International Cooperation (CIC) and a continuation of its long-standing print publications the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* and the *Review of Political Missions*.

Providing the most comprehensive overview of multilateral contributions to **peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and post-conflict peacebuilding**, the *Review* aims to initiate and inform discussions on the comparative advantages and appropriateness of different missions, and through constructive analysis to further strengthen existing partnerships necessary for them to succeed.

Through the **Country & Regional Profile pages**, the *Review* provides background information and regularly updated key developments on peace operations and the contexts in which they operate. The analysis is further enhanced by the provision of detailed data on each of the UN's peace operations, and headline data on missions fielded by regional organizations and ad hoc missions, which can be accessed in full through the **Data & Trends** section. Data on non-UN peace operations was compiled by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**. For more details, please see our **Data guide**. The **Strategic Summary** provides an overview of main developments in mission settings over the past year and presents analysis on trends and the impact these may have on shaping peace operations of the future. Thematic essays presented in the In Focus section unpack issues critical to peace operations, providing analysis and guidance on possible approaches.

The Library section enables readers to download full text .pdf files of past editions of the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* (2006-2012) and the *Review of Political Missions* (2010-2012). For those interested in conducting their own analysis using the data generated for these publications, we have provided spreadsheets of all the **statistics** used to compile these reports.

Scope of the Global Peace Operations Review

The *Review* covers more than one hundred multilateral peace operations active in the previous year including missions fielded by the UN, AU, EU, ECOWAS, OSCE, OAS and coalitions. It uses a **broad definition of peace operations** that includes multilateral and ad hoc military and police missions, as well as civilian led political missions. Neither type of mission has a simple definition. Alongside more straightforward peacekeeping missions, the *Review*, mindful of the need for peace operations to adjust to the changing nature of conflict, also includes peace enforcement operations that employ the use of force and engage in active combat.

Under political missions, we include multilateral civilian-led missions that have political engagement in the form of launching and supporting political processes at their core. This includes, for example, the EU's Special Representatives and the African Union Liaison Offices that support the implementation of peace agreements and accompany political processes. We have excluded missions, such as EU delegations and other liaison offices that may engage in political activities, but as their core function serve more as regular diplomatic or developmental presences. Along the same reasoning, we have also excluded election observer and human rights monitoring missions.

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JAN ELIASSON, THE THEN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DARFUR (FOURTH FROM LEFT AT THE TABLE), IN JANUARY 2007 MEETS INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS' REPRESENTATIVES IN THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE SUDAN (UNMIS) COMPOUND. ©UN PHOTO/FRED NOY

LESSONS FROM MULTILATERAL ENVOYS

by Richard Gowan and Alischa Kugel

IT IS SURELY SAFE TO SAY THAT THERE IS NO SINGLE PERFECT APPROACH TO RATIONALIZING AND GUIDING HYBRID MEDIATION PROCESSES. BUT THE MERE FACT THAT NEARLY TWO THIRDS OF THE ENVOYS IN OUR SURVEY ARE DEPLOYED ALONGSIDE ANOTHER MULTILATERAL ENVOY - TO SAY NOTHING OF NATIONAL, NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND LOCAL ACTORS - MEANS THAT THE RECURRENT CHALLENGES IN HYBRID MEDIATION CANNOT BE IGNORED.

Mediation was a central concern for the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations convened in October 2014. The group had a deliberately broad mandate to review the UN's peacekeeping operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs). It was authorized to assess and advise on challenges to the Secretary-General's good offices and the "special and personal envoys of the Secretary-General" that are part of the broader category of SPMs. While the Panel discussed mediation issues in this context, it also had to consider how the UN's field-based political missions, regional offices and large-scale PKOs handle mediation issues. Additionally, its purview included the UN's partnerships with regional organizations and other actors, allowing the Panel to look at how UN operations coordinated with regional players in cases such as South Sudan.

The Panel was well-positioned to propose improvements to the ways in which the UN selects, deploys and backstops envoys and mediators; supports mediation in cases where PKOs and SPMs are deployed; and works with partners, including not only regional organizations but also individual states and international NGOs on mediation. This is, of course, only one of many areas ranging from Security Council mandates to logistics chains that the Panel was mandated to study. It had to juggle the concerns and interests of numerous different constituencies inside and outside the UN.

A basic question for the Panel was whether the UN can defend its traditional role as an impartial actor in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. This is crucial in a period in which the Security Council has requested a PKO to “neutralize” specific opponents (e.g., the Force Intervention Brigade in the DRC), and many SPMs work closely with non-UN-commanded peace enforcement missions. Can the UN retain its role as mediator in parallel with coercive measures authorized by the Council?

This question is further complicated by the need for a realistic assessment of how non-UN actors’ mediation activities impact the work of UN peace operations. In many cases, hybrid mediation is clearly advantageous for the UN. Yet in several recent cases, such as South Sudan and Mali, blue helmet missions have been cut out of crucial political processes by regional actors despite having thousands of troops on the ground. What happens to a UN mission when it loses the political initiative in this way?

Considerable progress that has been made in terms of mediation support inside and outside the UN since 2000. The UN has strengthened its systems for deploying and sustaining PKOs in the wake of the 2000 Brahimi Report, and has taken significant steps to bolster SPMs. It has also expanded its support systems for envoys and mediators over the last fifteen years. The creation of the Mediation Support Unit and Mediation Standby Team – inspiring complimentary efforts in other regional organizations and in civil society – means that the UN is able to provide more consistent and professional support to political processes than previously capable.

Nonetheless, demands for such services from those working in the field is high. UN officials and friendly member states complain that mediation remains under-resourced. Strategic dilemmas confront the UN and other mediators in an increasingly fragmented international environment. There are obstacles to mediation, but there are also opportunities through partnerships with local actors in countries affected by conflict. How can the UN make best use of these relationships?

THE ENVOYS PROJECT

The essays in this series are based on research a Center on International Cooperation (CIC), largely undertaken in 2014, on multilateral envoys. CIC was lucky to have the advice and support of the Center in Humanitarian Dialogue as we designed and undertook this work (although the responsibility for the final conclusions is our own. As part of this research, CIC conducted interviews with the African Union (AU), Commonwealth, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and UN officials and also studied public material on other organizations. The Center for Humanitarian Dialogue provided considerable support for this work.

This research – based on a study of 50 envoys with a focus on addressing specific conflicts deployed by the UN, regional organizations and other multilateral organizations at the end of 2013 – only gives part of the picture of international mediation. As another recent study has emphasized, “**states still remain the single most important type of mediator**” while NGOs are also key actors in the field. Even when the UN and regional actors are involved in a conflict, they do not necessarily deploy a formal envoy.

But studying formally-appointed envoys does help raise three questions that, while hardly unfamiliar to the mediation community, may need some answers. First, what are the strategic demands on multilateral mediators today, and what organizations are taking the lead in response to these demands? Second, how professional and systematic is the support these mediators receive? Third, what are the lessons for the UN in terms of collaborating with other actors in mediation processes?

MULTILATERAL ENVOYS: A STRATEGIC PROFILE

As of late 2013, we identified 50 envoys meeting our criteria for dealing with specific conflicts mandated by the organizations covered by our study. Twenty-eight of these were working on a conflict where at least one other multilateral envoy was also active. Of these, sixteen were UN envoys; seven represented the African Union; eleven other African organizations; and sixteen other organizations. The concentration of multilateral activity in Africa is clear: 30 of the 50 individuals worked on the continent, in contrast to seven in the Asia-Pacific; six in the Middle East; five in Europe and two in the Americas. We are presently reviewing these figures to factor in the last year's events in Ukraine, the Middle East and Africa but we presume that the latter will remain the main focus of multilateral efforts.

Reflecting this trend, 24 of the envoys we covered at the time of this research were Africans themselves (and 22 of them are dealing with conflicts on the continent). Multilateral envoy-hood otherwise appears to be a distinctly European trade: seventeen of our subjects come from Europe, with the remainder largely coming from the Americas and Asia-Pacific. Of the UN-mandated envoys in the study, six were African and five were European. Such categorizations can obviously obscure key factors about the personalities involved: as an Algerian, for example, Lakhdar Brahimi features in our data as an African but his experience and networks in the Middle East, Europe and globally are essential to his political leverage.

THE CONCENTRATION OF MULTILATERAL ACTIVITY IN AFRICA IS CLEAR: 30 OF THE 50 INDIVIDUALS WORKED ON THE CONTINENT, IN CONTRAST TO SEVEN IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC; SIX IN THE MIDDLE EAST; FIVE IN EUROPE AND TWO IN THE AMERICAS.

Nonetheless, the data emphasizes two points. The first is that, at least in the field of multilateral mediation, the mantra of “African solutions to African problems” is increasingly a reality. (As a point of comparison, five of the SRSGs currently leading UN PKOs in Africa are from the continent, whereas four [come from elsewhere](#).) The second is that, in a global context where European power seems to be diminishing, Europeans punch above their weight in multilateral diplomacy. It is worth asking whether the increased tensions on Europe's borders will now absorb more of its best diplomats – and if there is a strategic case for expanding the pool of UN mediators from other regions. There is only one Asian and one Latin American citizen working as a UN envoy, SRSG or DSRSG dealing with conflict-related matters deployed in Africa at the present time.

The data also reaffirms the well-established observation that multilateral envoys typically deal with civil wars and their consequences: fully 26 in our sample were dealing with intra-state conflicts and transitional political processes in late 2013. Seven were dealing with conflicts involving non-state armed groups of various types, while seven more were focused on inter-state conflicts and six on land or border disputes between countries.

Again, these figures highlight a clear trend while obscuring a number of qualifying factors. They also obscure geographical factors, such as the absence of multilateral envoys from most Asian conflicts. A comparative study for this project by Teresa Whitfield emphasizes that multilateral envoys tend to be handling internationalized civil wars, whereas they are often excluded from more contained conflicts. Moreover, multilateral envoys have largely been excluded from mediating or facilitating peace talks with transnational Islamist extremist groups. Given the threat posed by such actors to peace operations and humanitarian efforts in cases like Libya, Mali and Syria, Whitfield's findings raise hard questions about how UN and non-UN mediators can adapt to current conflicts.

MEDIATION SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

The growing challenges to multilateral envoys raise questions about how well-supported and professional these individuals are. Academic mediation analysts typically underline the importance of mid-level staff in managing peace processes. Senior multilateral envoys do not always defer to their juniors so readily. In the words of one international official interviewed during our work, “sometimes we take for granted that high profile people will know certain things . . . we need people who know all the daily nuts and bolts of the process, someone who knows all the discussions and the complexity. Otherwise we can miss a lot.” Nonetheless, multilateral organizations (especially in Africa) continue to invest a great deal of trust in high-profile figures. The average age of the individuals in our sample was a little over 64 at the time the survey was completed – but depressingly, only three of the entire group were women. While there remains a strong case for involving senior figures as mediators, some African officials raised concerns about reliance on *grandees*: “They are limited in what they can do and bound by time constraints in a process that shouldn't be bound by time.”

In this context, ensuring skilled and well-resourced nuts-and-bolts experts are in place to support mediation processes takes on additional importance. Whitfield argues that the UN's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) is “setting a standard” in this field through developing strategies and providing thematic advice on peace processes – in addition to acting as a “global asset” supporting mediation by non-UN actors. The Mediation Standby Team also plays a significant role. But, as noted above, diplomats and UN officials share concerns that the MSU and Standby Team are overloaded – and the need to liaise with non-UN actors frequently increases the strain.

For UN mediation to succeed, it needs strengthening of these centralized assets and a guarantee that individual UN mediators also have the staff and resources they require. Looking beyond the UN system, there is a further need to assess the state of mediation support within the UN's partner organizations. Whitfield notes that the EU, OSCE and Commonwealth have all made progress in this area but that the AU and ECOWAS have less well-developed assets. In the AU, for example, “the high level of most envoys means that they receive no formal training, and the literature, tools, management skills and knowledge developed in recent years are still quite scarcely used.” The UN and non-governmental organizations still often provide considerable support to African-led peace initiatives, a fact reflected by projects such as AU-UN cooperation on drafting joint mediation guidelines. As these complex

mediation partnerships are developing, one question is how to best target the UN's assistance. Possible solutions include civil society organizations, who can play a role in providing advice on triangular cooperation between the UN, regional organizations (in Africa or elsewhere) and NGOs on matters ranging from policy formation to operational support.

POLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES OF HYBRID MEDIATION

Any commentary on cooperation between the UN and non-UN actors in peace processes needs to address political as well as organizational tensions. In many recent cases, cooperation has been marred by tensions between the UN and its partners. This certainly includes Darfur and Syria, where the UN has appointed joint mediators with, respectively, the AU and the Arab League. In such cases, as Alischa Kugel notes in her essay for this project, the joint envoy may receive “blurred” guidance from different institutions or “take initiatives into his/her own hands without communicating strategies to the organizations’ oversight bodies.”

It is surely safe to say that there is no single perfect approach to rationalizing and guiding hybrid mediation processes. But the mere fact that nearly two thirds of the envoys in our survey are deployed alongside another multilateral envoy - to say nothing of national, non-governmental and local actors - means that the recurrent challenges in hybrid mediation cannot be ignored.

How should the UN approach those cases where its mediators deploy alongside partners from other organizations, whether in a pre-arranged framework or an ad hoc fashion? And what of cases where field-based UN operations, whether SPMs or PKOs, operate in parallel with non-UN-led mediation processes? We have noted rising concerns with those cases, most prominently in Mali and South Sudan. UN PKOs are operating in volatile environments but are effectively cut out of related political talks. How long can the UN credibly undertake military and civilian tasks on the ground when its top-level political role is limited in this manner?

Further questions concern how a UN mediator works in conjunction with both non-UN political partners and a blue helmet PKO (most recently in the Great Lakes region with MONUSCO). Such arrangements may be operationally and politically useful or necessary on a case-by-case basis, but they risk obvious transaction costs. They also underline the questions about how to balance the political work of a UN mediator with the security activities of the peace operation. This is especially so when, as with MONUSCO, the latter is mandated to undertake coercive action against specific spoilers. There are no easy ways to resolve these dilemmas, but we hope this collection of essays on envoys makes a contribution to understanding the challenges involved as these issues are discussed and debated.

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THEN UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DARFUR JAN ELIASSON (LEFT) AND AU SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DARFUR SALIM AHMED SALIM (CENTER) ARRIVE ON 14 FEBRUARY 2007 IN UM RAI FOR A MEETING WITH KEY COMMANDERS OF NON-SIGNATORY REBEL GROUPS TO THE DPA (DARFUR PEACE AGREEMENT). © UN PHOTO/TIM MCKULKA

THREE'S A CROWD? INTER-ORGANISATIONAL COOPERATION IN CONFLICT MEDIATION

by Alischa Kugel

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUPPORT MECHANISMS REPRESENTS A SHIFT IN THE MANNER IN WHICH PEACEMAKING IS CONCEIVED AND CONDUCTED. WHILE THIS IS WELCOME, THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT HAS NOT YET CAUGHT UP WITH THE COLLECTIVE ASPIRATION TO OFFER IT.

Out of the at least 51 multilateral envoys deployed in 2013 to address conflict situations around the world, 28 envoys from different multilateral institutions worked together in mediating conflicts in the same country, region or sub-region across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. With over half of multilateral envoys active in 2013 working alongside each other in various conflict settings, inter-organisational cooperation in conflict mediation is an increasing necessity. Cooperation in mediation processes involves a wide range of multilateral actors and can take different forms. Each presents advantages and disadvantages impacting both the actors involved and the respective mediation processes.

Using some recent mediation processes as examples, it is useful to review how envoys from different institutions have worked together by looking at their policies, guidance and mechanisms. Examining the detailed functioning of envoys lets us see their

strengths and weaknesses as well as how joint envoys that represent more than one institution can or cannot work together. Finally, in today's crowded mediation field, it is worth analyzing the benefits and drawbacks for envoys working with other actors that engage in mediation such as governments and private organisations, as well as actors from the wider UN system. To obtain a complete picture, it is important to study how envoys navigate these relationship, including with heads of peacekeeping operations and political missions, and actors in the development, human rights and humanitarian realm.

COOPERATION BETWEEN ENVOYS FROM DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS

WHY COOPERATION?

Mediation and good offices form part of the core tasks of the UN Secretary-General and his representatives, and the UN is the main actor in mediating inter- and intra-state conflicts. However, regional and sub-regional organisations play an increasingly important role in the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Their involvement is enshrined in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which states that the Security Council is to encourage pacific settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements or agencies.

Regional actors have unique advantages in local conflict resolution, including closer access to conflict situations as well as more knowledge of and leverage over conflict parties. In the last five to ten years, regional and sub-regional organisations, particularly in Africa but also in the Middle East, have taken a more prominent role in addressing political crises. In 2013-14, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) have worked together in addressing crises from Cote d'Ivoire to Guinea-Bissau to Mali, while the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has engaged with the conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan. In the Middle East, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) played noticeable mediation roles in Yemen and Syria. The UN is increasingly working with regional organisations in different ways, including in a "lead role, in a supporting role, in a burden-sharing role, in sequential deployments and in several joint operations".

Whatever form cooperation takes, mediation actors need to agree on a lead actor by consulting early and in a transparent manner on existing organisational capacity, capabilities and available resources. This will allow informed decision-making on the division of labor based on comparative advantages. The [UN's Guidance for Effective Mediation](#) underlines that coherence, coordination and complementarity of mediation efforts is indispensable and recommends that cooperation should be based on "a common mediation strategy", ensuring "consistent messaging to the parties".

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The involvement of envoys from different organisations in a mediation process has its benefits, as each actor and their respective institutions bring particular strengths which enable a division of responsibilities. Furthermore, each envoy can make unique contributions to a process by employing different skills and expertise to the various phases of a mediation process.

The April 2010 political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, in which the government was overthrown, illustrates the advantages of cooperation between different organisations in mediation. In the aftermath of the crisis the UN worked alongside special envoys of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU in mediating between the conflict parties. The engagement was coordinated through an OSCE-initiated tripartite mechanism, called the "Troika," which included the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the EUSR for Central Asia, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and head of the UN's regional office for Central Asia.

Both the OSCE and the EU's mediation roles were constrained during the crisis. The OSCE, which maintains centers in all five Central Asian countries (including a field presence in Kyrgyzstan in place since 1999), was able to make use of its extensive network of contacts with government officials and civil society. However, its role in mediating the crisis was hampered by the OSCE chair at the time, a position held by Kazakhstan, which was perceived by some Kyrgyz actors as biased. Similarly, the EU, which had deployed an EUSR to the region since 2005 and was able to play a useful advocacy role, was seen by some Kyrgyz political actors as an outsider with a Western political agenda. The UN in turn was perceived as an unbiased actor with the additional ability to leverage its capabilities in facilitating the conditions necessary for humanitarian response and mobilization of resources.

By working closely together, these three actors were able to pool together their respective strengths. In addition, the Troika sent consistently unified messaging that lent legitimacy to the transitional government and reinforced a united stance on the need for stability and respect for human rights. Through their successful cooperation, the Troika achieved sustained international attention on the conflict and contributed to preventing a deterioration of the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

More recently, the UN, AU and ECOWAS successfully joined efforts in mediating a return to constitutional order in Mali following the March 2012 coup. The organisations continue to work together in finding a political solution for the conflict that ensued in the country's north. And in Yemen, the UN's Special Advisor worked closely with the Gulf Cooperation Council in facilitating the latter's power-sharing agreement that led to a relatively peaceful hand-over of power in February 2012.

WHEN ELEPHANTS FIGHT, IT IS THE GRASS THAT SUFFERS

However, inter-organisational cooperation in mediation can also bring disadvantages that at their worst jeopardize the very processes they were supposed to support. Deciding on a lead actor can pose the first hurdle to effective cooperation. A leaked exchange between two US state department officials over why the UN and not the EU should lead efforts to oversee a political transition in Ukraine in early 2014, illustrated that **decision-making on the lead actor is a sensitive political process** that is often driven by the interests of influential countries. Complicating matters, the UN Charter does not offer clear guidance on the question of whether it is **the world organisation or regional organisations that should take the lead in mediation efforts**. Further, the 2009 **report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities** acknowledges that there is no clear framework for effective decision-making between the UN and regional organisations regarding partnership arrangements.

The risks in failing to establish a clear lead are manifold. Organisations with diverging interests may launch parallel processes in competing for a mediation role, creating an "opportunity for forum shopping as intermediaries are played off against one another. Such a fragmented international response reinforces fragmentation in the conflict and complicates resolution." In Cote d'Ivoire following the disputed 2010 presidential elections, the AU and ECOWAS both engaged in parallel mediation processes that had contrary approaches to the crisis. While ECOWAS, along with the UN, took a firm stance on the need for the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo to yield power to Alassane Ouattara, the AU's envoy, former South African president Thabo Mbeki, insisted on a power-sharing agreement between the two. Though the AU soon endorsed the ECOWAS decision to recognize Ouattara as the winner, divisions on the way forward within the AU mediation panel, **particularly driven by South Africa**, persisted. Responding to the persistent differences, then-**ECOWAS president James Victor Gbeho warned of a lack of unity in the approach** to the crisis and charged that these actions undermined ECOWAS's mediation efforts.

Even with an established lead in the mediation effort, lack of coordination on the way forward among stakeholders as well as the lack of a coherent mediation strategy can still prove problematic. Following the military coup in Guinea-Bissau in April 2012 that took place just ahead of the presidential elections, ECOWAS took over the lead in mediating an agreement for the return to civilian rule. The mediation efforts achieved an agreement wherein the junta ceded power to a transitional civilian government, which, however, did not include any members of the government overthrown in the April coup. The ECOWAS agreement created deep divisions between national and international stakeholders that either supported the transitional government or wanted to see a return to constitutional order with the authorities in place prior to the coup. The differences were particularly stark between ECOWAS and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), which wanted to see a resumption of the presidential vote.

The failure to agree on a common strategy further emboldened some political actors to refuse compromise, halting domestic political progress. In addition, the unease with which the agreement was received among the international community made it difficult for the transitional government to receive broad recognition, which affected its ability to mobilize resources for the transitional period.

WAYS TOWARD IMPROVED COORDINATION

These setbacks notwithstanding, cooperation in mediation processes, as mentioned in the introduction of this essay, is increasingly common. This is in part due to the growing assertiveness of regional organisations to address conflicts in their respective areas of influence. In recognition, the UN and regional organisations have begun institutionalizing processes to enhance cooperation in mediation. These include exchanges between organisations on **lessons learned and best practices**, including joint training exercises that help to build stronger ties between organisations and enhance cohesion.

The UN has also entered into partnership agreements with several regional and sub-regional organisations including the AU, EU, OSCE, OAS, CARICOM, ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN and OIC. These relationships aim to strengthen mediation capacities and enhance **“more coherent and complementary approaches in specific mediation processes”**. These partnerships range from multiyear programs with “institutionalized cooperation procedures such as desk-to-desk interactions” to more flexible approaches like joint deployments. Meanwhile, the AU’s Peace and Security Council Protocol, under Article 16, **provides a framework to enhance the AU’s cooperation on peacemaking activities** with other regional organisations, aiming to promote effective continental mediation and conflict prevention measures.

The most advanced formalized cooperation agreement to date exists between the UN and AU in the form of draft **joint mediation guidelines**. These aim to enhance the sharing of information, as well as the coordination of policy and strategy to make joint mediation efforts more coherent. The guidelines are intended to help map out the organisations’ core competencies. Work on the joint guidelines began in 2008, with a first draft completed by 2010. The process, however, was marred by disagreements between the AU and UN over the electoral dispute in Cote d’Ivoire in 2010/11 and between the UN and NATO and the AU over the use of force in response to the crisis in Libya in 2011. These difficulties notwithstanding, the AU **recently proposed in its submission for the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO)** that the two organisations should revisit these guidelines with the aim of finalizing and adopting them.

JOINT ENVOYS

The closest type of institutional cooperation takes the form of joint envoys that represent more than one institution. This form of cooperation between institutions is fairly new and examples are few and far between. In 2013, there were only two joint envoys: Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Joint African Union-United Nations Special Representative for Darfur, and Joint Chief Mediator and Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. The position for the AU-UN Joint Mediator was established in 2008, while the UN-LAS post was created four years later in 2012. An earlier example of a joint envoy not involving the UN includes the AU/SADC Envoy to Madagascar, appointed in 2009.

The main advantage of a joint envoy is the added political weight the position receives through the representation of two institutions. Regional organisations are likely to be more familiar with the conflict and benefit from access to and influence over conflict parties, while the UN's participation signals the attention of the international community to the conflict, and the direct involvement of the Security Council that can take wide ranging punitive measures if needed.

The appointment of a joint envoy can also be used to refocus international attention on a country's situation. For example, the establishment of the AU-UN Joint Mediator position that combined the previously separate UN and AU envoy positions to the Darfur conflict was conceived as part of an effort to revive momentum toward achieving a resolution. The appointment can also come out of a compromise with the parties involved. For the Darfur conflict, the government of Sudan reportedly wanted to see an African-led process and was reluctant to accept the UN's role, while the AU lacked the necessary instructional capacity to take on a larger role. The Joint mediator position provided a solution that worked for all stakeholders.

MEDIATORS AND ENVOYS HAVE LONG RELIED ON A COMBINATION OF A SMALL, UNIFIED TEAM AND THE CAPACITY TO CALL ON SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE FROM OUTSIDE WHEN APPROPRIATE.

Joint setup also enables a division of labor according to the respective institutions' comparative advantages in the conflict setting, as well as the sharing of support functions and overall financing. The UN-LAS envoy, for example, received support in exercising his mandate from two deputies, each appointed by one of the two organisations, and held an office in Cairo, the headquarter location of the LAS.

However, the joint envoy model can also prove difficult. Regional actors may feel marginalized in the decision making process at the Security Council, which is ultimately determined by the five permanent members. Once the LAS brought the Syria crisis to the attention of the Security Council, for example, the League's influence over the process was hampered – even with the establishment of the position of the joint envoy – and meaningful progress was obstructed by China and Russia. There may also be a blurred understanding of responsibilities toward the respective organisations from one side of a joint envoy. In 2011, the AU voiced concern that despite repeated instructions from its Peace and Security Council, **the then-Joint Mediator did not liaise or coordinate efforts with the other AU mediation entities on the ground**. The AU specifically requested the Joint Mediator

to consult with it before taking further decisions, and both the AU and the UN requested **the Joint Mediator to provide a comprehensive report on his activities and any future plans**, indicating a clear lack of such consultations previously.

While the reporting practices and level of cooperation with other entities on the ground can depend on an envoy's personal approach to their work, the joint deployments setup may put one or both organisations at a disadvantage. It may also expose a lack of coordination between the organisations' headquarters that can encourage joint envoys to take initiatives into their own hands without communicating to the organisations' respective oversight bodies. The lack of consensus on a political strategy between the organisations can also send confusing messages to an envoy that at worst can paralyze a process. Close and effective cooperation between organisations deploying a joint envoy is therefore paramount to avoid **"a clash of political or bureaucratic approaches"**.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER ACTORS ON THE GROUND

Envoys rarely operate alone in a specific conflict setting. In the majority of cases, along with the likely presence of actors from regional and sub-regional organisations there frequently already exists a network of UN Country Teams (UNCTs), civil society groups, international NGOs, private diplomacy and bilateral actors. Mediation is also not an exclusive task for envoys. Heads of peacekeeping operations and political missions conduct good office functions on behalf of the Secretary-General and support compliance with and implementation of peace agreements.

In countries where the UN does not have a political presence, it increasingly relies on UNCTs for political analysis, but also for early warning, prevention and early engagement to address tensions on the ground. It is important to note here that the political engagement by UNCTs is limited, as they don't have a mediation mandate. Similarly, NGOs and civil society groups can provide crucial analysis on the potential and actual impacts of a situation on the ground and make recommendations on further action for the international community. Furthermore, both individual states that act as third-party intermediaries and private diplomacy actors can play an important role in early engagement with conflict parties, as they can react quickly, discreetly and with flexibility. Private diplomacy actors may have the added advantage of being perceived by the conflict parties as not pursuing their own agenda, and can thus be more acceptable to the parties involved. They do, however, lack the influence over conflict parties that individual states or multilateral institutions may have.

Once an agreement is reached, the various actors – particularly field missions, UNCTs, NGOs and civil society groups – assist through the provision of technical knowledge and local expertise in implementing the various aspects of a peace agreement. These can range from security sector reform efforts and rebuilding institutions to national reconciliation and reviving the economic sector. **Local partners can also be key in generating pressure on domestic elites**, mobilizing constituencies and sustaining pressure for peace on the national and sub-national level. In working with local civil society groups, it is important to be aware of their possible connection with the government or opposition parties. One of the main challenges is thus to ensure a balanced representation of groups in order to avoid a biased approach.

At times the presence of a multitude of actors can lead to a maze of fragmented peacemaking efforts, inhibiting a clear definition of roles and hindering effective cooperation and coordination. **Teresa Whitfield recounts that in Nepal**, between 2002 and 2006, in addition to UN involvement,

... international NGOs engaged in peace efforts ... included the Carter Center, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Crisis Management Initiative, Community of Sant'Egidio, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, International Alert, International IDEA, Transcend and the US Institute for Peace. In addition, there were workshops organized in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, as well as in Nepal; ... and offers of specific help in mediation from the governments of Norway and Switzerland.

It is important to note, however, that a number of these actors, particularly those that engaged in the conflict over the longer term, were able to make significant contributions to peacemaking efforts in Nepal.

The various actors on the ground are thus vital interlocutors for an envoy, who can make use of their knowledge and expertise to make progress on political processes and ensure the implementation of agreements. Mary Robinson, the then-UN Envoy for the Great Lakes region, tapped into the existing network of women's groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region to build an "inclusive peace dialogue" aimed at **ensuring women's participation in peacebuilding efforts**. In addition to the AU Special Representative of the African Union and the European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region the Envoy also worked closely with the US Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the DRC on implementing the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework Agreement. **The U.S.'s long-standing diplomatic and security engagement in the region**, its important role as a bilateral donor to the DRC, and its considerable influence within international financial institutions that provide funding and technical assistance to the DRC government, allowed the US Special Envoy to exert considerable influence over the process and makes him an important partner in its implementation.

IT IS HOWEVER, PREMATURE TO DECLARE THE EMERGENCE OF MEDIATION SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS AS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS.

In some cases, envoys may also leverage peacekeeping operations, political missions or UNCTs to their advantage. In the DRC, **Mary Robinson fully supported the military offensive by the UN's Force Intervention Brigade against the M23 rebels in the DRC**, which through its military gains has enabled advances on the diplomatic track. In addition, Robinson and the head of the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Martin Kobler, collaborate closely and have daily interactions on approaches to developments on the ground. The presence of liaison officers in MONUSCO and the Envoy's office in Nairobi, respectively, further ensures their linkage and close cooperation.

Envoys with regional mandates frequently coordinate their efforts with relevant UNCTs to harmonize political, security and development approaches to specific crises. The Great Lakes region once again serves as a good example, where the UN Special Envoy initiated the close involvement of UNCTs in the implementation of the PSC framework. Since then, country teams in the signature countries agreed on each others' specific role in the framework's implementation and laid out a plan to move forward.

As with the other cases discussed, effective cooperation lies at the core of a fruitful relationship between envoys and other actors on the ground. Successful linkages to these actors can influence peace processes from the early stages to the implementation of peace agreements – even after the envoy's engagement has concluded. Crucial also is the necessary support and buy-in from headquarters, which often have to overcome existing divisions between departments to enable collaboration on the ground.

THREE'S A CROWD, OR THREE'S COMPANY?

The deployment of multilateral envoys is an important and effective tool in civilian crisis management. But mediation is no longer an exclusive task carried out by the UN. With the increased engagement by regional actors and the presence of actors on the ground making critical contributions to peacemaking efforts, effective cooperation between multilateral envoys is vital for effective engagement in a conflict. Only well-coordinated efforts can bring the benefits that international cooperation has to offer.

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ZHANYBEK KARIBZHANOV, SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE OSCE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE, DISCUSSES THE CURRENT SITUATION IN KYRGYZSTAN WITH THE INTERIM DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, 9 APR 2010. (OSCE/MALIK ALYMKULOV) @OSCE

CHOOSING ENVOYS WISELY

by Bart M.J. Szewczyk

SINCE THE OVERALL POLICY OBJECTIVES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACEBUILDING ARE COMMON TO THE SURVEYED ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE SPECIFIC ENVOYS AND EXPERTS SOMETIMES WORK ACROSS VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS, THERE IS GREAT POTENTIAL VALUE IN FURTHER STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SPECIAL ENVOYS.

Special envoys are, by definition, agents appointed by a principal or a group of principals for a particular task. Yet their scope of power and authority varies across institutions. Different international organizations have made distinct decisions in terms of selecting special envoys; defining their mandates; deploying, financing and supporting an envoy's support team; and establishing report and oversight mechanisms. These formal decisions occur in the context of informal customary practices, which are for the most part beyond the scope of this study.

Whether by design, default or accident, these constitutive choices become more apparent through a systemic analysis across international organizations and across stages of the institutional process of envoys. Each of these steps is an opportunity for the principals to create and maintain control over their special envoys in order to achieve desired policy objectives. Conversely, inattention to the overall structure in which envoys operate can lead to unintended consequences.

SELECTION

The selection of special envoys has two types. Within some institutions, envoys are chosen by a wide group of political stakeholders. In other organizations, they are appointed directly by the head of an institution, although there may also be informal consultations and vetting with other relevant actors.

Within the European Union, EU Special Representatives (EUSR) are appointed by the Foreign Affairs Council (the EU national ministers for foreign affairs, defense and development who meet collectively on a monthly basis) at the suggestion of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), who also chairs the Council's meetings. While there is no formal nomination process, the HR generally leads the process. The ten current EUSRs act as the "voice" and "face" for the EU on specific policy areas. Generally, EUSRs tend to be selected from among diplomats and foreign policy experts rather than political leaders, with the notable exception of a few EUSRs in Bosnia such as Paddy Ashdown (former head of the Liberal Democrats party in the United Kingdom) or Miroslav Lajčák (former foreign minister of Slovakia).

Similarly, the African Union special envoys (titled variously as special representative, special envoy, high representative and chairperson) are selected by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the AU Commission Chairperson. The PSC, patterned on the structure of the UN Security Council, has fifteen members elected by the AU Assembly for two- or three-year terms. AU special envoys tend to be former African heads of state or government, such as Thabo Mbeki of South Africa or Alpha Konaré of Mali.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL ENVOYS DEPENDS ON HAVING THE POLITICAL SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE OF CONSTITUENTS BEYOND THE APPOINTING HEADS.

In the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a trade bloc of eight countries in Eastern Africa, special envoys are appointed through an endorsement of their nomination by respective member states. Notably, IGAD representatives have been appointed in pairs for each conflict (in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan), providing a potential tension in the unity of institutional representation.

Uniquely, the Quartet Representative, currently Tony Blair (former UK prime minister), was selected by the Quartet Principals: UN Secretary-General, U.S. Secretary of State, Russian foreign minister and EU High Representative. Although this institutional model is an outlier in the analyzed group of special envoys, it also illustrates the range of possibilities of institutional representation whereby one individual is a multi-hatted envoy of actors relevant to the particular conflict.

In contrast to the EU and AU, special envoys at other international organizations tend to be chosen by the respective institutional heads. Sometimes, leaders of multilateral organizations find it useful to appoint an envoy informally for a particularly sensitive mission, allowing the scope for plausible deniability in case that becomes necessary.

At the UN, the Secretary-General has the sole prerogative of appointing special representatives, envoys, and advisers. In practice, however, the selection is made after an informal process of consultation with actors relevant to a particular situation, such as partner countries, warring armed groups and other governments and international actors. The selection of the different types of special appointees is oftentimes communicated to the Security Council by letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Council, who then acknowledges the selection. There are currently over 50 special envoys, representatives and advisers to the Secretary-General. These are also sometimes dual-hatted as head of mission to a particular country.

In NATO, the Secretary-General has periodically appointed special representatives for specific issues, such as women, peace and security (in 2012) or for the regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia (in 2014). In these two cases, both individuals had already been serving within NATO, one as a deputy ambassador to NATO and the other as NATO's spokesperson.

At the OSCE, special representatives are selected by the Chairperson-in-Office, a position which rotates every year among foreign ministers of OSCE member states. The current thirteen OSCE special envoys, more like the EUSRs rather than the AU special envoys, are generally drawn from diplomatic and military services. The OAS Secretary-General appoints representatives from among OAS permanent staff, outside diplomats or political leaders, such as Bill Richardson (former governor of New Mexico and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations). At the time of writing, there were five OAS special envoys.

Likewise, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) has two special envoys appointed by the OIF Secretary-General. Both are political leaders from their respective countries, Belgium and the Ivory Coast. In the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commission President selects special envoys, of whom there are currently five. The Commonwealth of Nations had three special envoys in 2013, selected by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the recommendation of the Political Affairs Division, as determined by consultation between the Good Offices Section and the relevant Regional Section.

It is unclear to what extent the choice between the two types of selection processes has practical consequences. Generally, envoys selected by a group of principals could claim greater authority because they represent a larger constituency. Perhaps for this reason, envoys are sometimes dual-hatted or even multi-hatted by several organizations, although in practice they are likely to have one primary institution as the lead principal. But presumably, even when a special envoy is directly appointed by the head of an international institution, that head is responsible to a wider group of actors. Moreover, the effectiveness of special envoys depends on having the political support and confidence of constituents beyond the appointing heads. Nonetheless, these informal channels of control can be more uncertain than the formal power to select an envoy, or block his appointment in the first place.

Upon being selected, a special envoy's marching orders are enclosed in the mandate of appointment, another mechanism through which principals can guide their representatives' scope of action toward desired outcomes.

MANDATE

Not surprisingly, mandates of special envoys are generally determined by the principals that select them. For instance, the EU Foreign Affairs Council (and the EU High Representative), the AU Peace and Security Council (and the AU Commission Chairperson), the IGAD Council of Ministers, and the Quartet set forth the jurisdiction and policy guidance for special envoys through resolutions. At the UN, the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations negotiate the terms of reference for the Secretary-General's approval. The final mandate documents are typically confidential until released by the UN. Within the OSCE, mandates

are defined by the Chairpersons-in-Office in the official appointment letters. The OAS General Secretariat develops mandates for its special envoys, sometimes also in consultation with a host government. At the OIF, the Secretary-General defines the terms of reference on the basis of an evaluation undertaken by the Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights Department and in accordance with the OIF foundational legal document, the Declaration of Bamako. In ECOWAS, mandates are set by the Commission President on the advice of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace & Security. In the Commonwealth, the Good Offices Section, in consultation with the Regional Section, develops the terms of reference, which are then approved by the Secretary-General after making any necessary amendments.

Mandates vary in their level of specificity and comprehensiveness. In some cases, particularly within the EU, they can be highly detailed and include instructions regarding policy objectives and priorities, strategy and tactics, implementation, reporting, and oversight. In other cases, the constitutive documents appointing special envoys are more general in describing a representative's role. In terms of duration, some mandates are open-ended, whereas other organizations such as the EU and the Commonwealth generally have a specified time limit after which a mandate is terminated, reviewed or extended.

To be sure, there are benefits and burdens inherent in each approach. Detailed mandates ensure greater mission clarity and can serve to exercise greater control over envoys by their principals. Moreover, within groups of principals such as the EU Foreign Affairs Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, codifying an envoy's strategy can help prevent unilateral attempts by some principals to shift the strategy in their preferred direction after agreement has been reached.

CRISIS SITUATIONS NORMALLY DO NOT ALLOW FOR REFLECTION ON THE OVERALL INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS ESTABLISHED TO SELECT, MANDATE, DEPLOY, FINANCE, SUPPORT AND OVERSEE SPECIAL ENVOYS.

On the other hand, crisis situations that lead to the appointment of special envoys in the first place can be unpredictable and are not amenable to precise instructions. Less tactical detail provides greater operational flexibility within the overall policy objectives. Particularly where special envoys are directly appointed by the head of an international organization, mandates can be defined as much by informal and unwritten understandings and expectations. These can have the benefit of greater flexibility, as opposed to more rigid formal constitutive documents.

DEPLOYMENT, FINANCING AND SUPPORT

The extent of deployment, financing and support of special envoys depends on the particular mission and institution. Within the EU, budgets and team sizes of special envoys are typically established by the Council decision document appointing the envoy and setting forth the mandate. EUSRs are supported by geographic units within the European External Action Service, as well as by EU delegations in the particular countries covered by special envoys. The existence of EUSRs alongside heads of EU delegation can lead to friction in cooperation and a lack of mission unity. Indeed, the current model is under review and may be replaced by double-hatting specific EU ambassadors as EUSRs. Were the current arrangement to change, however, EU member states acting

through the EU Foreign Affairs Council would lose their direct financial control over EUSR budgets, which would then be absorbed into the overall EEAS budget.

At the UN, a specially-designated Mediation Support Unit (MSU) was established in 2006 to provide envoys with proper staff assistance and advice. Envoys are financed in one of three ways: raising new funds from governments; through the Secretary-General's Unforeseen Fund; or by reallocating funds approved biannually from the special political mission budget. Staffing is mostly by officials from within the UN Secretariat through a recruitment process coordinated by MSU in consultation with the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations. MSU also manages a UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts, an “on call” group of advisors that can assist envoys on their missions.

Like the UN, IGAD has a Mediation Support Unit, which is currently finalizing the roster of prospective mediators and a list of technical experts ready for deployment. Missions are financed through direct fund-raising efforts with IGAD development partners or, in the case of preventative diplomacy efforts, under projects already funded at the secretariat level in the IGAD Peace and Security Division. Similarly, ECOWAS is establishing a Division of Mediation Facilitation to coordinate a standby roster of experts and support envoy missions with advisors. ECOWAS missions are financed mainly through the community levy paid by member states.

In the OSCE, the Conflict Prevention Centre has a Mediation Support Team, which supports the work of envoys through training, retreats, debriefings, expert deployments and operational support. Although there is no standby unit of envoys, there is a roster of OSCE officials who have indicated their willingness to be deployed as “first responders” in support of crisis response actions. The OSCE also maintains a roster of external mediation experts who can be deployed in support of mediation and dialogue facilitation efforts. Envoys are financed either by the country holding the chairmanship in a given year or as part of the general OSCE budget.

The Quartet Representative employs about twenty advisors, as well as administrative and security staff. The team is financed through the UN Development Programme by the U.S., the European Commission, Norway, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia and Netherlands. Policy experts are either seconded by partner countries and institutions, or employed directly by the Representative. Notably, the current Representative, Tony Blair, does not receive any compensation for his work nor reimbursement for travel expenses; however, when in Jerusalem, he receives lodging and meals.

Within the AU, funding for envoy missions comes from the general AU Peace Fund or, more commonly, from partners' contributions (in particular, the European Commission, Denmark, UK and Spain). Envoys have experts working on a six- to twelve-month contract basis, some of whom are seconded from governments and other international institutions. Although there is no standby unit equivalent to the UN MSU, the AU has desk officers that help as experts.

The other institutions in this study—NATO, OIF, Commonwealth, and OAS— have neither any standby rosters of envoys nor experts, but support envoy missions with staff from the particular organization. They finance missions through their general budgets.

REPORTING AND OVERSIGHT

Report and oversight mechanisms flow to the principals that select and mandate envoys in the first place. For instance, EUSRs formally report to the EU Foreign Affairs Council as well as the High Representative, who can propose to the Council to terminate a special representative's mandate. Similarly, the AU special envoys report to the AU Commission Chairperson and the Peace and Security Council, as well as the UN Security Council if the envoy is dual-hatted with the UN. Within the UN itself, special envoys report directly to the Secretary-General following the informal process of consultation that precedes their selection. They also brief the Security Council, the General Assembly and other actors relevant to a particular situation. At IGAD, special envoys report to the IGAD Summit and liaise with member states' high-level authorities in order to conduct their business.

The Quartet Representative regularly updates Quartet Principals on any developments. In addition, his head of mission updates the local representatives of the Quartet through regular meetings and teleconferences with their staff on the ground in Jerusalem and Ramallah, and during visits to capitals.

In ECOWAS, special envoys report to the Commission President on a monthly basis, and sometimes more frequently during crises. Similarly, the Commonwealth special envoys submit reports after each mission visit and, at the conclusion of an assignment, each envoy is required to write a final report with assessments and recommendations. These confidential reports are submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General and are also available to the Political Affairs Division. While envoys have no obligation to report to member states, they may brief regional countries and representatives of member states serving on the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group as a matter of courtesy. Within NATO, OAS and OIF, special envoys report to the respective secretaries-general and, in addition, may brief member states depending on the perceived need.

Envoys who are dual-hatted or multi-hatted report to their respective institutions, although in practice there is likely to be one organization that is the lead principal. And even envoys that represent a single organization are likely to be more effective if they are able to brief multiple actors relevant to a particular situation.

CONCLUSIONS

Crisis situations normally do not allow for reflection on the overall institutional process established to select, mandate, deploy, finance, support and oversee special envoys. Moreover, some design choices such as appointment and oversight are likely to reflect the political structure of a given organization and may be relatively inflexible to change.

Yet, as this brief study shows, there is a range of design choices available to international institutions with respect to the role of special envoy. In particular, given the contemporary ubiquity of special envoys, multilateral organizations could consider establishing permanent budgetary lines to support their activities. Additionally, mediation support units established at the UN and AU are useful institutional models in providing both a readily available roster of potential envoys and policy advisors able to staff and support them. Some crises may necessarily demand ad hoc approaches or require outside experts, but such rosters at the very least provide good default options.

The surveyed institutions also cover the spectrum of choices with respect to mandates, from general to granular and from public to private. An envoy's terms of reference are instrumental not only to controlling his or her conduct and guiding it in the direction of a principal's desired policy objectives, but can also communicate to a wider constituency the principal's strategy in a particular situation and the scope of the envoy's authority.

On the other hand, some situations may require less disclosure and more discretion, in which case the appointment of an informal special envoy might be considered. Utilized by some international institutions, informal envoys can provide their principals with the same intelligence-gathering and mediation functions, but under the cover of plausible deniability in case a principal perceives a need. Informal envoys are likely to be more feasible in multilateral organizations, in which the institutional head appoints the representatives directly, rather than in institutions such as the EU and AU, where a group of political stakeholders is responsible for selecting envoys. Nonetheless, even those institutions might consider the potential utility of informal representation if the required confidentiality could be maintained.

To be sure, none of the specific choices with respect to special envoys are necessarily linked to their ultimate effectiveness. But their continued and growing use should trigger additional attention to the various phases of the institutional process of special envoys so that the overall structure reflects greater design rather than default or accident. Moreover, there is likely to be significant room for intellectual exchange among the various international institutions regarding their experiences with special envoys and any lessons learned. Since the overall policy objectives of conflict resolution and peacebuilding are common to the surveyed organizations, and the specific envoys and experts sometimes work across various institutions, there is great potential value in further study of the role of special envoys.

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LEILA ZERROUGUI (LEFT), THEN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT, GREETES A CHILD ON HER TOUR OF THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS SITE
23 JUNE 2014, JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN ©UN MULTIMEDIA

MEET THE ENVOYS: TRENDS IN ENVOY PROFILES AND APPOINTMENTS

by Nora Gordon

WITH MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS' GROWING EMPHASIS ON CONFLICT PREVENTION, EFFORTS TO SELECT ENVOYS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND WITH A WIDE RANGE OF SKILLS WILL BE EVEN MORE CRUCIAL IN THE FUTURE.

Since the first UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, was appointed in 1948 to serve as UN Mediator in Palestine, multilateral institutions have increasingly deployed envoys to mediate conflicts between and within countries, and more recently conflicts involving non-state actors. In 2013, some 52 multilateral envoys were working in 29 locations around the world. How does Count Bernadotte stand in comparison with these 52 envoys? At the spritely age of 53 at his time of appointment, if he were appointed in 2013 he would be among the youngest envoys, whose average age was 64.2. He would also be among many fellow Europeans, who make up 33 per cent of multilateral envoys in this sampled year, although the highest percentage of envoys in 2013 were African.

Although more women envoys have been appointed in recent years, Count Bernadotte's gender matches 94.2 per cent of the envoys that year. His experience and status would put him in good company with these mediators, as high-profile envoys are commonly sought after. This essay analyzes some key trends in the profiles of the envoys of 2013, including status, gender, nationality, age and region.

WHY ARE THERE MORE ENVOYS?

The overall number of active UN multilateral envoys, including those involved with border disputes, joint/double-hatted envoys, and heads of regional missions, more than **doubled from 2010 to 2013**, increasing from 6 to 16 envoys. A key reason behind this growth is enhanced emphasis on conflict prevention. The role of special envoys in mediation of disputes, and their efforts to defuse tensions before conflicts escalate, are in high demand. Experience has shown that as a conflict intensifies over time, it becomes increasingly difficult to resolve. This has fueled a renewed focus on conflict prevention among multilateral institutions involved in peace and security. In 2010, the then-UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, **noted a re-emergence of preventive diplomacy and mediation**, describing these tools as cost-effective options for addressing crises.

Interest in prevention has continued to grow since Pascoe's time. Current USG Jeffrey Feltman has said **prevention should begin before conflict** is even visible, to keep unaddressed low-level tension from becoming more serious. Conflict prevention is central to DPA's current strategy. Feltman describes Good Offices of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys as **"pivotal in preventing conflicts from erupting and in bringing wars to an end ... Our Special Envoys are perhaps the most visible manifestation of the Secretary-General's good offices mandate"**. Although prevention efforts do not always halt the escalation of conflict, mediation and conflict resolution are crucial for achieving security and reconciliation in the long term.

Another reason the tool of envoy deployment has been used more frequently is that governments are more likely to comply with this approach. For governments, **cooperation with an envoy is a more palatable alternative to UN Chapter VII involvement** and inclusion on the Security Council's agenda.

The growing importance of rising powers in global decision-making, along with a shift in the U.S.'s approach to diplomacy, have also contributed to the **increased demand for mediation and conflict resolution**. President Barack Obama's call for a "new era of engagement" revealed a shift toward intensified multilateralism with a new focus on conflict prevention and negotiations.

Increased interest in mediation can be seen through the **strengthening of analytical capacities and technical expertise at the UN Department of Political Affairs**, such as mediation lessons learned and best practices. Other international and regional organizations are also responding to greater demand for conflict prevention through **the development of peace and mediation support mechanisms**. The Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union (APSA) contains a number of conflict prevention initiatives including Africa's Continental Early Warning System, which **became fully operational in 2009**, and the **Panel of the Wise**, first appointed in 2007, which supports the Peace and Security Council and Chairperson in conflict prevention.

Envoys and mediators from multilateral institutions are more commonly used to negotiate peace agreements. According to **research from Uppsala University** on 70 formal peace agreements signed from 2001-2011, 84 per cent were brokered by third party facilitators or mediators. Of those mediators, 51 per cent came from multilateral institutions or ad-hoc multilateral coalitions; 30 per cent were state governments; and 3 per cent were third party individuals, including a former head of state, and an NGO

representative. By contrast, from 1975-1985, only 24 formal peace agreements were recorded. Half of them were brokered by state governments and 37.5 per cent had no facilitator at all. Only three involved multilateral institutions.

The growing number of envoys means that there is a risk of crowding on the ground. Envoys are increasingly required to work together effectively to avoid duplication and maximize efficiency. The appointment of double-hatted envoys is a trending practice that multilateral organizations have utilized in order to streamline efforts.

Aside from the increase in numbers of envoys, what are the current trends in envoy profiles? In order to address this question, this essay utilizes confidential surveys and interviews conducted by CIC during spring 2014 with actors from nine multilateral institutions: the UN, AU, EU, OSCE, ECOWAS, OIF, IGAD, OAS, and the Commonwealth.

STATUS AND THE AFRICA EXAMPLE

Many multilateral organizations are appointing high-profile envoys to address conflicts. These include heads of state (HoS), former heads of state, and former heads of multilateral institutions. The main reasons for selecting envoys with such prestige is that they tend to have great influence, access and leverage for obtaining results in peace agreements.

AU interlocutors noted a trend of appointing more high profile envoys such as HoS and former HoS. They noticed a distinct advantage to such high profile appointments in that these envoys' opinions tend to hold more weight and are taken seriously by all parties to a conflict. It can be easier for former or current HoS to interact with HoS and government officials that are involved in a conflict, which helps facilitate conflict resolution. According to an officer at the AU Peace and Security Department, issues can be so complex that they require the access and leverage that comes with high-ranking envoys. Thus, political suitability is a major consideration in envoy selection. In comparison to HoS, former HoS often have more leeway. Their political appointments as President have come to an end, but they still have the ability to leverage countries and actors for support.

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL ENVOYS IN MEDIATION OF DISPUTES, AND THEIR EFFORTS TO DEFUSE TENSIONS BEFORE CONFLICTS ESCALATE, ARE IN HIGH DEMAND

AU officials frequently cited the example of former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP). As a former president with experience negotiating a complicated transition in South Africa and expertise in dealing with rebel movements, Mbeki is highly respected and seen as influential by all conflict parties, factors which informed his appointment. Interlocutors describe Mbeki as having more leverage and using his personal capital in the peace process.

Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chair of the High-Level Panel for Egypt, is also described as having significant influence. As former head of the AU and former president of Mali, Konaré's stature was a significant factor in his appointment. Also serving on the panel are the former president of Botswana and former prime minister of Djibouti. Sitting heads of state are also frequently called upon by the

African Union to engage in mediation, such as the HLP in Cote d'Ivoire, which consisted of five African presidents, and the Ad hoc High-Level Committee on Libya, comprised of five African HoS and the AU Chairperson.

A third example mentioned by several AU interlocutors is Mohamed ibn Chambas, former Executive-Secretary of ECOWAS and Joint AU-UN Special Representative for Darfur. According to one interlocutor, Chambas was “easily accepted due to his stature and could alleviate fears and suspicions [of conflict parties].” He had experience dealing with Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia, which informed his appointment.

There also are several challenges to appointing high-profile envoys. According to one respondent, “sometimes we take for granted that high profile people will know certain things ... we need people who know all the daily nuts and bolts of the process, someone who knows all discussions and the complexity. Otherwise we can miss a lot.” When high profile envoys are appointed, technical experts are crucial for backing their processes. A great number of AU officials emphasized that conflict resolution and prevention requires full-time expert-level staff to provide HoS and former HoS with input and analysis.

Some AU interlocutors argued that there are no great advantages to appointing current heads of state unless the conflict is very serious. “They are limited in what they can do and bound by time constraints in a process that shouldn't be bound by time,” said one interlocutor.

The ability to mediate is not always taken into consideration, particularly for mediators of prominent stature. According to several interviewees, not all envoys have this ability, and it is not possible to sit down and train HoS and former HoS. In addition to ample expert level support staff, one interlocutor noted that development of a stand-by roster of skilled mediators could be beneficial for addressing this issue.

Multilateral institutions overwhelmingly noted that the status of the envoy chosen, whether a former head of state or foreign minister, depends on the context. However, there are differences in how envoys of prominent stature are received. In Madagascar in 2009, AU envoy Ablassé Ouedraogo was the former foreign minister of Burkina Faso. When SADC sent former Mozambican head of state, Joaquim Chissano, AU interlocutors noted that he was instantly shown a greater level of respect. Being a former head of state from the same region as the conflict also contributed to Chissano's strong influence.

Several other multilateral institutions mentioned the importance of appointing envoys with high-level profiles. One institution found that governments do not generally accept high-level envoys when they do not perceive a pending or existing crisis. These governments prefer to avoid the heightened media scrutiny that high-level envoys can attract to a conflict.

GENDER

UNSC resolution 1325 in 2000 urged the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices missions. However, it was not until March 2013 that Mary Robinson, **the first woman to serve as chief UN mediator**, was appointed. A 2012 UN Women study noted that the numbers of women participating at the negotiation table in official roles remain remarkably low, making up only 2.4 per cent of chief mediators from 1992-2011. It noted no significant

improvement in women's participation in official negotiation positions since similar studies were conducted in 2010, but found that more consultations with women's civil society have occurred.

While the AU Chair is a woman, there are no female AU envoys dealing with specific conflict situations. At the time of writing, the only female special representative of the Chair was Bineta Diop, Special Representative for Women, Children and Armed Conflicts, but Diop was not included in this research as she is appointed to address a thematic issue rather than a specific conflict location. However, two out of the five members of the AU Panel of the Wise, which also holds mediation functions, are female. In 2008 **the AU appointed Graça Machel of Mozambique as one of three mediators** to address the Kenya elections.

Only three envoys, 5.8 per cent of the 52 included in this research, are female. Two represent the European Union, and one the UN. While this is some improvement since the 2012 UN Women study was conducted, the overall data still shows a notable lack of female representation in chief mediator roles, although it must be acknowledged that the criteria for inclusion of envoys in the UN Women study with its mediation focus may differ from CIC's.

Some studies observe certain character traits to be more prevalent in women, and make the case that those traits are desirable for mediators. However, arguing that women are natural peacemakers and have unique skills that make them inherently successful at mediation is a slippery slope. Character traits that are seen as beneficial to mediation can be perceived as either feminine or masculine and can be adopted by mediators of any gender.

Why, then, is women's participation in mediation an important issue? According to Bineta Diop, AU Special Representative for Women, Children and Armed Conflicts, **female mediators are more likely to prioritize gender issues**. Women's inclusion at the negotiation table sets the stage for the incorporation of women's issues into peace agreements and reconciliation processes. Studies show that countries with more gender equality are less likely to experience armed conflict. This could be incentive for taking steps to ensure that gender equality is improved through peace agreements, making the case for the **inclusion of women**.

A 2013 International Peace Institute (IPI) issue brief on women in mediation argues that women can bring different perspectives, mediating styles, and approaches to the negotiation table. The study also noted that a more "robust and resilient peace" is achieved as a result of the participation of women, and that inclusive peace processes are more likely to result in a durable peace. IPI and Diop also emphasize the role of men in contributing to both gender equality and peace efforts.

Furthermore, women mediators are likely to focus on inclusion in mediation processes. Exemplifying this, Mary Robinson has shown great commitment to the participation of women on high-level processes as well as gender equality. The IPI report argued that Robinson's approach to the inclusion of women in negotiations could be an effective model for other mediators to emulate.

While the idea that more women should be appointed to envoy positions is widely accepted and even incorporated into UN resolutions, progress in this area has been markedly slow. Furthermore, with the emphasis on experience and status in the selection of envoys, it can be more difficult for women to obtain the desirable characteristics of envoys, which contributes to their underrepresentation. Because of the dearth of women envoys, evidence indicating the success of women envoys in helping to facilitate lasting peace agreements has been limited. Perhaps with the growing numbers of women envoys, more studies can highlight the benefits of their leadership, and as a result the numbers of women envoys will grow more rapidly in the future.

NATIONALITY, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

HD's Mediation Ten Years On report noted that in addition to the substantial growth in the numbers of mediators over the last decade, the emerging diversity among mediators was also remarkable. One way that diversity reveals itself is in the regional and national origins of envoys. In this study, 24 envoys are from Africa. There are seventeen Europeans, five from the Americas, three from Asia and the Pacific, and one from the Middle East.

AU officials observed wide-ranging diversity among African Union envoys. When multilateral envoys are chosen, some of the most important factors that play into appointments include country of origin and regional representation, language abilities and religion. There are political reasons behind appointment decisions. In Sudan, for example, the country of origin of the envoy, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and that country's relationship with Sudan, was a significant factor. AU officials also recognized that the Sudanese would feel more comfortable with a Muslim envoy, and that factored into the AU's proposal to appoint Chambas, which was accepted by the UN.

IGAD's negotiations in Sudan also involved nationality as an important role in envoy selection. The lead negotiator, Seyoum Mesfin, was a former Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, a country that was seen as neutral and accepted by different parties in the conflict.

Religion is an important factor for acceptance by conflict parties, and religious sensitivities can sometimes make a difference in regards to the outcome of negotiations. One interlocutor described a situation in which a high-level panel distributed an idea during an Eid holiday and it was not well received by conflict parties. In Somalia, Al-Shabab argued that mediation attempts were part of Christian crusades.

In general, AU representatives found that the AU could propose certain envoy profiles, which would generally be accepted by the UN or other multilateral and bilateral actors involved in a conflict. UN consultations with the AU to define the needed envoy profile for a given conflict are therefore becoming more common. However, one AU interlocutor observed that the UN argues at times for a non-African envoy, who would be perceived as more "tough" on pertinent issues.

AGE

Preferences for appointing experienced and high-profile individuals have made the average age of envoys noticeably high. The average envoy in 2013 was 64.2, more than two years past the retirement age for most existing non-contracted UN staff and less than a year under the retirement age for new staff. Veteran Algerian mediator, Lakhdar Brahimi, was nearly 80 years old at the time of his appointment as the UN-Arab League Joint Special Representative for Syria. **Brahimi's strong reputation as a high-profile mediator with experience in the region informed his appointment.** Brahimi had wanted to retire in May 2013, but pressure to follow up the Geneva talks kept him from doing so until he finally stepped down a year later. In addition to frustrations related to the conflict, health issues and exhaustion were factors contributing to Brahimi's resignation.

Former Personal Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute, Oliver Jackman of Barbados, passed away at the age of 76 in 2007. Three years later, Norman Girvan was appointed as his replacement. Just four years after that, Girvan passed away at the age of 72, also while still in office. At the time of this publication, Girvan had not yet been replaced. While Jackman and Girvan were well known and respected for their experience and intellectual capacities, qualities

that tend to coincide with a diplomat's age, the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute is an example of how appointing older envoys can lead to gaps in mediation processes.

Other envoys have aged while in their positions, and because of many years of experience dealing with a specific conflict are seen as the best choice for continuing to mediate that conflict. Examples include 76-year-old Matthew Nimetz, who has served as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Greece-FYROM talks since 1999, and 66-year-old Andrzej Kasprzyk, who has served as Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference since 1997.

A 2009 Secretary-General report highlights the necessity of developing the next generation of UN mediators. To achieve this goal, the UN must create opportunities for younger UN staff to develop mediation skills and experience. The Secretary-General advocates for partnerships with member states and regional organizations in support of mediation training programs.

REGIONS AND DISTANCE

Regional organizations and states have increasingly played a role in mediation, and regional actors are often chosen to mediate in regional centers of conflict. The UN has emphasized the increasing importance of partnerships with regional multilateral institutions for addressing conflict. According to USG Feltman, "the crises we face are too complex for any one organization or Member State to address alone." Feltman has noted the importance of strong partnerships with regional actors such as the League of Arab States in Syria, and the African Union in Somalia and Mali. He also expressed the UN's efforts toward a strong partnership with ASEAN as the organization grows.

OVERALL DATA STILL SHOWS A NOTABLE LACK OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN CHIEF MEDIATOR ROLES, ALTHOUGH IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION OF ENVOYS IN THE UN WOMEN STUDY WITH ITS MEDIATION FOCUS MAY DIFFER FROM CIC'S.

The African Union emphasizes the idea of "African Solutions for African Problems." This does not mean Africa should solve its problems in isolation, but that it should take a lead role in addressing them, working in partnership with the international community. Out of the 30 envoys working in Africa, 22 are African.

Despite efforts to increase regional engagement in conflicts, envoys are still traveling great distances to reach the countries in which they work. Of the 52 envoys in this study, only seven are actually based where the conflict is taking place. Of the envoys traveling from afar to the countries in which they work, from the incomplete data available in 2014, the average distance was about 7,300 km or more than 4,500 miles. There are some benefits for envoys to have distance from a conflict, such as backstopping at headquarters locations, reducing safety and security concerns, and preserving the perception of impartiality. However, traveling long distances to reach a conflict presents several challenges including time considerations, financing and more effort needed to gain a deeper understanding of the situation on the ground.

CONCLUSION

A 2009 UN Secretary-General report highlights that political and mediation skills, experience, knowledge, judgment, language abilities and personal characteristics suitable for cultural context are important for mediation. The report also emphasizes characteristics such as good listening and problem-solving skills, the ability to handle stress and criticism, and strong communication. It also noted that careful selection of mediators avoids The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation; ignorance, arrogance, partiality, impotence, haste, inflexibility and false promises. However, few organizations surveyed for this publication mentioned the importance of specific skills and behaviors in the negotiating room when selecting envoys. Experience and status were much more commonly cited as attributes contributing to envoy appointments.

Some multilateral institutions such as the UN have developed standby units of mediators. These can offer a diverse selection of mediators with relevant skills that can be deployed on short notice to mediate conflicts as needed. The African Union is also developing the mediation component of standby rosters and working to further professionalize mediation at the AU. With multilateral institutions' growing emphasis on conflict prevention, efforts to select envoys of diverse backgrounds and with a wide range of skills will be even more crucial in the future.

Ms. Gordon wrote this piece in her personal capacity and it does not necessarily reflect the views of the State Department.



JAN ELIASSON (LEFT), THEN SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR DARFUR, MEETS WITH THE FORMER TRADITIONAL LEADER OF THE FUR TRIBE IN NYALA, SUDAN IN JULY 2007. © UN MULTIMEDIA

WHERE ENVOYS AREN'T

by Teresa Whitfield

THE 34 CONFLICTS IN WHICH MULTILATERAL ENVOYS HAVE BEEN PRESENT MAY NEVERTHELESS SEEM A LOW RESULT GIVEN A WIDELY SHARED PERCEPTION OF INTENSE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM. THE NUMBER BECOMES LOWER STILL IF WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THOSE ENVOYS DIRECTLY MANDATED TO ENGAGE IN THE MEDIATION OR FACILITATION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT CONCERNED, AND THOSE WHOSE GOOD OFFICES OR OTHER ROLE HAS A MORE TANGENTIAL RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS IT.

This series of essays was conceived to document and analyze the work of multilateral envoys, particularly their engagement in efforts to mediate or manage armed conflict. It necessarily focuses on the conflicts in which one or more multilateral envoys are present. This essay, in contrast, reviews the conflicts where envoys are not present, and attempts analysis of the reasons why this might be the case.

In their 2003 article "[Where Do the Peacekeepers Go?](#)", Michael Gilligan and Stephen John Stedman observed that the literature on the determinants of peacekeeping suffered from several methodological problems. The most prominent of these was "a tendency to select cases on the basis of the dependent variable and, by doing so, to restrict the sample to peacekeeping operations that the

UN has chosen to undertake". This led characteristics that these cases had in common to be used as the basis for understanding UN intervention, while ignoring the cases of civil wars or interstate aggression in which UN peacekeepers had not been present. The result was analysis that could not fully address the factors responsible for the decision to intervene.

When the 'intervention' comes in the more modest form of a multilateral envoy, it is no less necessary to broaden the frame of reference to include the cases where multilateral envoys are not present. The high number of these cases serves as a sobering reminder that there are many other means of addressing armed conflict than the appointment of a multilateral envoy. There are also cases, perhaps Syria most prominent among them, where the presence of a multilateral envoy has quite clearly not advanced progress towards a settlement, or may reflect a strategy little more sophisticated than a desire for the international community to be seen to be doing something, rather than nothing, to bring an intractable conflict towards its end. Meanwhile, there are numerous examples of political processes in which other international actors – e.g., individual states and/or non-governmental mediators – have been involved. In some cases, the confidentiality of their engagement complicates their documentation. In others, the quiet or gradual engagement of a multilateral actor (for example through a mid-level official not formally named as an envoy) lends a degree of discretion to multilateral involvement that can also be difficult to quantify.

The data nonetheless indicates a relatively high number of armed conflicts in which sensitivities to national sovereignty or the nature of the adversary – especially in this era of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) - complicate external involvement in mediation or facilitation. The governments concerned instead pursue the military defeat of their opponent(s) or another purely internal solution.

Modesty is called for to excuse both the "snapshot" methodological approach adopted within this essay, as well as the limitations of its closing conclusions. The "snapshot" provided by the accompanying table correlates the incidence of armed conflict as documented by the [Uppsala Conflict Data Program \(UCDP\)](#) between 2011 and 2014 with the presence of one or more multilateral envoy. Obvious methodological drawbacks to this approach are that it does not attempt to factor in important issues such as the gravity of the conflict (measured in battle-related deaths), its duration, or the moment within the conflict at which an envoy is appointed. Nor does the analysis include issues addressed elsewhere in this series such as the multiplicity of envoys present in some conflicts, or questions related to the challenge of evaluating their impact.

The findings developed from the data nevertheless suggest that "where envoys aren't" can largely be attributed to three distinct, but sometimes overlapping factors:

- 1) Regional dynamics, and in particular sensitivities regarding national sovereignty that manifest themselves in attitudes toward the UN and other multilateral actors.
- 2) Push-back from strong states, again for reasons of national sovereignty.
- 3) The nature of the adversary and, especially in the post-9/11 climate, the legal and practical difficulties of engaging with those labeled as terrorists and other extremists. This is a problem that has become more acute given the increasing fragmentation of armed groups, the blurring of criminal and political agendas, and the rapid spread of Salafi jihadist groups which have so far demonstrated considerable success in sowing division and polarization within and between a wide range of international actors.

ARMED CONFLICT 2011-2014

The UCDP defines an armed conflict as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a state”. The table draws from the annual updates to the UCDP database Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014 included in the special data features published in the Journal of Peace Research, in each of the years 2011 (37 armed conflicts), 2012 (32 armed conflicts), 2013 (33 armed conflicts, subsequently revised to 34), and 2014 (40 armed conflicts). The figure of 40 armed conflicts made 2014 the year with the highest number of conflicts seen since 1999; it was also the year with the highest-number of battle-related deaths in the post-Cold War period.

THE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT, IN WHICH MANY CONFLICTS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THE FRAGMENTATION OF ARMED ACTORS AS WELL AS THE GROWING PRESENCE OF JIHADI GROUPS, HAS BROUGHT WITH IT UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES TO THE TOOLS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE DEVELOPED SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR.

Changes in the panorama of armed conflict during this four-year period are attributable both to processes set in motion by the upheaval in the Arab world that began in 2011 and to the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West. This has been at its most acute in Ukraine, but also manifests as hindrance to building international consensus on other crises, most notably including Syria. Revolutions and counterrevolutions in the Arab world contributed to the emergence of armed conflicts in Libya and in Syria, the latter by 2012 seeing exceptionally high levels of casualties for the post-Cold War period, as well as massive levels of displacement and other forms of humanitarian duress. Arab unrest also precipitated the deterioration of the situation in Iraq, markedly including the rise of the Islamic State, as well as the eruption of conflict in Mali and the exacerbation of violence and insecurity across much of North Africa and the Sahel. Elsewhere in Africa conflict surged in the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Somalia; South Sudan in late 2013 deteriorated into civil war.

This complex environment, in which many conflicts are characterized by the fragmentation of armed actors as well as the growing presence of jihadi groups, has brought with it unprecedented challenges to the tools of conflict management and response developed since the end of the Cold War. In many situations they have been found to be wanting.

The period was nonetheless one of active peacemaking. In Asia a major peace agreement was reached in the Philippines between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao, with a framework agreement signed in October 2012 and the final agreement in early 2014. However, the activity of other armed groups in the Southern Philippines contributed to the perpetuation of conflict in Mindanao in 2013, as well as the outbreak of a brief conflict in Sabah in Malaysia. Substantial progress has also been made in addressing Myanmar’s long-standing ethnic conflicts, alongside impressive steps away from authoritarian rule. The complexity of the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar contributed to the resurgence of fighting between the government of

Myanmar and the Karen, Polaung and Shan in 2013, and fighting continued with Kachin, Kokang and Palaung in 2014. But steady advances have been made towards a national ceasefire agreement that in October 2015 was signed by eight out of fifteen officially recognized armed groups.

Over the four years, given annual fluctuations reflecting the decline or settlement of some conflicts and the emergence of new ones, UCDP recorded a total of 59 armed conflicts. Of these, twelve conflicts (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine-Donetsk, Ukraine-Novorossiia, and Yemen) in at least one year surpassed the threshold of 1,000 battle-related deaths, leading UCDP to classify them as wars. Meanwhile there were eighteen “internationalized intrastate armed conflicts”, which are defined by UCDP as armed conflicts that occur “between the government of a state and internal opposition groups, with intervention from other states in the form of troops”. These conflicts were in Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Afghanistan, Algeria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel-Palestine, Mali (Ansar Dine/Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa [MUJAO]), Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine (Donetsk), Ukraine (Lugansk), Ukraine (Novorossiia), Uganda, the United States (with Al Qaeda), and Yemen.

WHERE ENVOYS ARE ...

The table records the presence of multilateral envoys in more than half (34) of these 59 conflicts. With one exception (Pakistan), these conflicts include all twelve wars, and fifteen of the eighteen internationalized conflicts (the exceptions being Algeria, Mauritania, and the U.S.). This strongly suggests that both the gravity of a conflict and its degree of internationalization favor the appointment of multilateral envoys.

The 34 conflicts in which multilateral envoys have been present may nevertheless seem a low result given a widely shared perception of intense international activism. The number becomes lower still if we distinguish between those envoys directly mandated to engage in the mediation or facilitation of the armed conflict concerned, and those whose good offices or other role has a more tangential relationship towards it. In seventeen cases the envoys fall into the latter category, reducing the number of situations in which multilateral envoys were directly mandated to mediate or facilitate an end to armed conflict to only 17 out of 59, or little more than a quarter.

The conflicts in which an envoy, or more than one envoy was directly engaged include:

- Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)
- Ukraine (Donetsk)
- Ukraine (Lugansk)
- Ukraine (Novorossiia)
- Israel-Palestine
- Syria
- Yemen
- Cambodia-Thailand
- Central African Republic
- Ivory Coast

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- Libya (Ghadafi)
 - Libya (Zintan brigades)
 - Mali (Azawad)
 - South Sudan (internal conflict)
 - South Sudan-Sudan (Abyei)
 - South Sudan-Sudan border
 - Sudan-Darfur/Sudanese Revolutionary Front.

It is striking that, of these seventeen conflicts, three were in Ukraine, nine were on the African continent, and four within or between South Sudan and Sudan, where several conflicts were addressed under the broad mandate of the Chairperson of the African Union's High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan. Only one, the very particular case of the Cambodian-Thailand conflict over the temple of Preah Vihear and their common border, was in Asia. This long-standing conflict was, exceptionally, resolved through talks facilitated by an envoy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The seventeen conflicts in which envoys have been present but played or continue to play more tangential roles generally embrace situations in which the UN and other international actors are heavily engaged, but do not have a direct mandate to act as mediator or facilitator in the conflict. This is typically because there is no peace process or engagement with the concerned armed group(s) taking place – with the Islamic State in Iraq, for example, or AQIM in Mali. Even in Yemen, where the UN has long played a central role, UN Special Adviser on Yemen worked closely with the Gulf Cooperation Council and the EU to support the Yemeni national dialogue but did not engage directly in the conflict between Yemen and Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula. (The role would have been coded as “more tangential” to the armed conflict were it not for the escalating violence in the conflict with the Houthis, with whom the UN was engaged, seen in 2014.)

Similarly, the UN and other envoys (the former, it should be recalled, work within the framework of a broad good offices mandate that **(may be either implicit or explicit in the role of a representative or envoy of the UN Secretary-General)** played significant supporting roles but were not directly mandated to facilitate or mediate talks between:

Afghanistan and the Taliban (even as engagement with the Taliban was pursued by a variety of official and unofficial actors, including the UN)

Somalia and Al Shabaab (although successive UN SRSGs explored the possibility of supporting dialogue)

the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the M23 (March 23 Movement, whose talks were facilitated by Uganda)

Mali and Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)

Rwanda and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), with whom engagement would in June 2014 be attempted by the Community of Sant' Egidio, to the outrage of Rwanda)

Nigeria – where a high level UN envoy became engaged only in 2014, with his efforts largely concentrated on preparations for elections in early 2015 – and Boko Haram

The government of Myanmar and ethnic armed groups (although a UN Special Adviser on Myanmar offered support to the peace process overall)Meanwhile, in December 2011, three years after the collapse of the Juba peace talks between Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the **AU appointed a Special Envoy on the LRA**- but with a mandate to “provide overall political and strategic coordination of the operation against the LRA”, rather than to attempt a new political process.

... AND AREN'T

Beyond the 34 conflicts in which envoys have been directly engaged or present, there are 25 cases in which no multilateral envoy has been involved. In some conflicts, as expected, this is because – as in the previous category – there is no public political process or engagement underway. In others, it is because a peace process has taken shape, but it has not been deemed appropriate or helpful to engage multilateral envoys within it. The regional distribution is of note: twelve (out of total of nineteen Asian conflicts) of the 25 no-envoy conflicts are in Asia; a further six (out of a total of 24 African conflicts) are in Africa,, three (out of eight) are in the Middle East; two (out of two) are in the Americas;, and two (out of six) are in Europe.

THE AFRICAN UNION AND AFRICAN SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE DEVELOPED NORMS AND PRACTICES THAT REFLECT A HIGH TOLERANCE FOR INTERVENTION AND APPOINT ENVOYS ON A REGULAR BASIS.

In a number of cases the state concerned sought a military solution against an armed group it held to be and/or formally designated a terrorist organization. Examples include the conflict between Russia and the Caucasus Emirates in Chechnya; that between Ethiopia and the Oromo Liberation Front; that between Algeria and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and MUJAO; and that between the U.S. and Al Qaeda. A number of these conflicts emerged or escalated during the four-year period. The Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) mutated into the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and launched a dramatic offensive against the government of Iraq in mid-2014. Levels of violence in the conflict between Nigeria and Boko Haram, which first erupted in 2009 – and where, as noted above, a multilateral envoy was not directly involved - also accelerated from to over 1,600 battle-related deaths in 2013, and over 4,600 in 2014.

India and Pakistan, meanwhile, pursued distinct but predominantly militaristic policies against the six conflicts within the two countries. The four in India included its decades-old conflict in Kashmir; its conflict with the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in states in central India; and territorial conflicts with two rebel groups, the Goro National Liberation Army, formed in 2010, and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, which had low but fluctuating levels of violence. Pakistan continued its territorial conflict in Baluchistan and its conflict with different branches of the Pakistani Taliban and other armed groups. The threshold of violence in the latter remained at a level of war in all four years under review (talks were attempted in early 2014 before a return to a military offensive). Concerns about sovereignty – especially on the part of India – have also long precluded the engagement of a multilateral envoy in the inter-state conflict between the two countries, which was recognized as active by UCDP in 2014, albeit only at a low level.

The conflicts in Iran, Tajikistan and Mauritania did not register as such in the UCDP database after 2011. Iran appeared to have subdued the Kurdish rebel group Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan after a large offensive in 2011. In Tajikistan a low intensity conflict against the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan dwindled as the government pursued its leaders in the courts. And in Mauritania there was little fighting with AQIM after 2011 in part, **UCDP surmised**, because AQIM was active elsewhere, notably in Northern Mali.

The confidential nature of some peace processes, especially in their early stages, complicates their documentation, but in at least six of the conflicts in which no multilateral envoy was present there has either been a public peace process without the involvement of an envoy, or indication that a more confidential process has been underway. The latter is the case in the long-running conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party where in early 2013 Prime Minister Recep Erdogan **confirmed the existence of talks with Abdullah Ocalan**, the imprisoned Kurdish leader.

Standing in contrast to the Turkish case is the complex and very public international involvement in the peace process in Mindanao, in the Southern Philippines, where multilateral organizations have been involved but kept at arms' length. The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) facilitated talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that led to an agreement in 1996 from which later agreements have drawn. The Philippine government sought the involvement of ASEAN in the MILF process, but encountered resistance from Malaysia – which became the facilitator of the talks – over the involvement of Indonesia. The EU, meanwhile, was keen to develop a role for itself, but remained outside an International Contact Group (ICG) formed in 2009 with a composition that mixed states (Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Kingdom) with international NGOs (The Asia Foundation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), Conciliation Resources and Muhammadiyah). Both the EU and OIC were mentioned in the **terms of reference of the ICG**, and implicit within its composition was an understanding that the EU would be kept informed and play a major role in peace process support. A peace process with the Communist Party of the Philippines, meanwhile, has languished, but continues with the facilitation of Norway.

Norway is also one of two facilitators – the other being Cuba – in a very active peace process, public since 2012, that seeks to bring to an end the armed conflict between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The talks are held in Havana, Cuba. Other international actors involved include Chile and Venezuela as 'accompanying' states, and in 2015 delegates of the UN Secretary-General and the president pro-tempore (Uruguay) of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) were appointed to support talks on a ceasefire and disarmament.

Regional states also have leading roles in a slow developing peace processes addressing the conflict between Ethiopia and the Ogaden National Liberation Front, facilitated by Kenya, and in Southern Thailand. Early in 2013 Malaysia assumed facilitation of the process between Thailand and the Pattani insurgency, which had long been conducted confidentially by the HD Centre. The HD Centre and the Community of Sant'Egidio, work in a coordinated fashion to facilitate different tracks of the peace process between the government of Senegal and separatist movements in the Casamance. Unofficial actors also played a successful role in support of the peace process between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO, the Mozambican National Resistance, that concluded in an agreement to end the low-level armed conflict that had developed in advance of the elections held in 2014.

FINDINGS

There are exceptional cases in which the gravity of a conflict or crisis such as a coup precipitates the appointment of an envoy or envoys without consent. However, in most circumstances, the factors determining the presence of a multilateral envoy reflect issues of both supply and demand. A multilateral entity has to be ready to deploy the envoy, and the parties concerned – with the government invariably the primary interlocutor for an envoy sent in representation of other states – have to be ready to receive and engage with him or her.

The data suggests three broad findings to explain the interplay of supply and demand that determines the appointment of multilateral envoys:

FINDING 1: SENSITIVITIES TOWARD NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY EVIDENT WITHIN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND IN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UN AND OTHER MULTILATERAL ACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO DETERMINING THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF ENVOYS.

There is considerable regional variance in the cases in which no envoy is present. Most striking is a comparison between Africa and Asia, the two regions with the highest number of armed conflicts in the 2011-2014 period. Envoys were not present in only seven out of the 24 armed conflicts in Africa, but 12 out of 19 conflicts in Asia. Moreover, even this figure skews low given that five out of the seven Asian conflicts in which an envoy is indicated as present were in Myanmar, where the UN Special Adviser had limited direct involvement in the peace processes with ethnic groups. (An envoy of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation was in 2014 appointed to address the issue of the Rohingya.) A fourth was the anomalous case – in Asian terms – of Afghanistan.

The data reflects what is amply documented elsewhere in this series: multilateral organizations vary greatly in the mandates and sensibilities with which they approach conflict intervention due primarily to the sensitivities of member states over their sovereignty. The UN has a universal mandate, but finds differing degrees of receptivity to its involvement in different regions, and little room for a political role in Asia. The European Union, uniquely for a regional organization, has no internal mandate and a global presence, but rarely assumes the lead in a mediating effort; in Ukraine, it is unsurprising that it is the OSCE, whose membership includes Russia and Ukraine, as well as EU member states, that has assumed the prime responsibility for peacemaking.

The African Union and African sub-regional organizations, on the other hand, have developed norms and practices that reflect a high tolerance for intervention and appoint envoys on a regular basis. As the reach and capacity of African regional organizations has grown, so the tendency for their envoys to engage – either with the support of the UN or independently of it – has also developed. (The relatively small role, in political terms, played by the UN in efforts to resolve the conflict in South Sudan is a good example of this).

In Asia, meanwhile, sensitivity to intervention is high and regional organizations do not have robust mandates for peace and security. There is insufficient consensus within ASEAN's member states, for example, to play the good offices role outlined in its Charter, where the first of the organization's purposes is defined as being: "To maintain and enhance peace, security and stability and further strengthen peace-oriented values in the region". A more generalized aversion to the formalization of diplomatic roles contributes to a dearth of envoys. In several cases it has facilitated the involvement of non-governmental organizations in mediation and mediation support.

FINDING 2: PUSH-BACK FROM STRONG STATES CAN PREEMPT THE APPOINTMENT OF ENVOYS.

A high number of the conflicts in which no multilateral envoy is present take place in strong states that actively resist external involvement, and especially that of a multilateral organization. Russia, India and Pakistan have clearly rejected the engagement of multilateral actors in their internal conflicts (seven in the four-year period under review). Nigeria similarly long resisted the involvement of either the UN or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the regional organization in which it is the dominant power, in its conflict with Boko Haram. This was even as it was – in contrast to Russia, India, Pakistan or indeed China – relatively open to the involvement of NGOs (for example in efforts to address conflicts in Jos state). In 2014, in the exceptional circumstances of increased international attention after Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls, **Nigeria did accept the engagement of a high level UN envoy**. However, his efforts were focused on preparations for the general elections held in early 2015. During 2015 Nigeria assumed the lead of an ad hoc coalition of West African counterterrorism troops – the Multinational Joint Task Force – to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

Senegal has also resisted the involvement of ECOWAS in the Casamance. Ethiopia, meanwhile, preferred the facilitation of Kenya in its conflict over the Ogaden to the involvement of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, an eight-country sub-regional organization whose peacemaking capacities have long been complicated by the regional rivalries amongst its membership (prominently on display in the peace process it leads in South Sudan).

The power of strong states to resist outside intervention within their borders or in their “near abroad” has also been evident in a number of long-standing conflicts with levels of violence below the UCDP threshold of armed conflict between 2011-2014. There have, for example, been no multilateral envoys in Tibet, or to address China’s conflict with the Uighurs. The UN, meanwhile, was discouraged by Russia from exercising too assertive a role in Ukraine, and by South Africa, as well as Zimbabwe itself, from involvement in the latter. In the European context, Spain’s sensitivity to its sovereignty ensured that there was no EU or other formal international role in the Basque conflict – in contrast to Northern Ireland where the British government welcomed the engagement of a US mediator. But this did not impede a rather an unusual mix of informal international involvement in a peace process that contributed to the **decision by the separatist group ETA to end its violence in October 2011**.

FINDING 3: THE NATURE OF THE ADVERSARY, ESPECIALLY IN THE POST-9/11 CLIMATE, BRINGS LEGAL AND PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES TO ENGAGEMENT AND RESTRICTS THE APPOINTMENT OF ENVOYS.

An overlapping number of conflicts in which no envoy is present are those in which a state is in conflict with an extremist group, understood or classified by the state itself and the international community as a terrorist organization. (It is important to note that **states routinely consider internal insurgencies as terrorist organizations**, regardless of the existence of underlying grievances or legitimacy among some sectors of the population.) As we have seen, there were no multilateral envoys mediating or facilitating talks with extremists with varying links to Al Qaeda in Russia, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Somalia or indeed the Philippines (Abu Sayaf). And after the collapse of the peace process with LRA in Uganda in 2008, international engagement has been focused on support to military efforts to secure its defeat.

Engagement with extremists - especially by formal mediators – brings with it particular constraints of both supply and demand. In many cases international opinion has coalesced behind a view that only a military solution that brings the defeat of the terrorist opponent is acceptable. Legal impediments to engagement are also significant obstacles to many multilateral actors. These are most evident in restrictions on “material support” to foreign terrorist organizations contained within US legislation, but also reflected in national counter-terrorist legislation and UN sanctions regimes. UN officials enjoy diplomatic immunity from national legislations, but are nonetheless subject to political pressures from member states that can complicate their engagement. NGOs may frequently have greater capacity for early contacts and the opening of discreet channels for communication. All potential mediators, meanwhile, are challenged by situations in which an armed group has no wish to talk and will violently prevent engagement, or is prepared to engage but only on terms that restrict what there might be to talk about – for example, absolutist demands for an Islamic Caliphate.

CONCLUSION

These findings have different implications for the conflict resolution field. The presence of a multilateral envoy, or not, is a result of a variety of different contextual factors. In itself it may be value-neutral, even for the wider engagement of the international community, as innovative international support provided to the peace processes in the Philippines and Colombia demonstrates. And the increasing sophistication of mediation support offers new possibilities for the helpful involvement of multilateral actors such as the UN or EU even in situations when their envoys may not have a mandated role.

Meanwhile, there would appear to be a rising number of contexts “where envoys aren’t”, in which either individual states or experienced non-governmental actors may be more acceptable than a multilateral envoy. Both may be able to engage with more discretion than a representative of a multilateral actor. Non-governmental actors in particular are less restricted by political and diplomatic constraints than a representative of a multilateral actor, or even a state. They may therefore be able to make and sustain contacts with an armed group with a degree of acceptability that might elude a more formal actor.

Opposition from a strong state represents perhaps the greatest obstacle to the engagement of a multilateral actor, state, or indeed an NGO. But as adroit diplomacy by the UN has demonstrated in some cases, there may be circumstances in which what appeared to be unwavering hostility to its engagement can gradually be shifted towards acceptance that it might play a helpful role. The case of Nepal is illustrative. In that instance the UN was able to overcome initial Indian objections to a formal envoy through the quiet deployment of a skilled mid-level official. Over time, his efforts helped pave the way for a substantial UN role in the support of the peace process. In Colombia progress towards what seems a likely UN role in the monitoring of the ceasefire has followed a different route. Respect and support for negotiations led by national actors and an ad hoc number of individual states has paved the way for the UN’s technical know-how, and capacity to deploy a mission into what will surely be a complex post-conflict environment.

Regardless of the presence or absence of a multilateral envoy, in a world of increased armed conflict, but also diffusion of power, intense international activity, but also polarization, the fragmentation of armed actors, as well as the presence of increasingly powerful transnational networks and capacities, creative diplomacy is required. This should involve careful attention as to which entity may be best placed to provide it in order to avoid regional and bureaucratic rivalries that can further complicate an inevitably already complicated situation, rather than help nudge all involved forwards to a solution.

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SEE ARMED CONFLICTS AND MULTILATERAL ENVOYS TABLE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

ARMED CONFLICTS AND MULTILATERAL ENVOYS

Armed Conflicts ¹	Over govt. or territory	2011	2012	2013	2014	Inter-national-ized conflict ²	Multilateral Envoy(s) present ³	No Multilateral Envoy
Europe (6)								
Azerbaijan-Nagorno-Karabakh	T		x		x	X	X	
Russia-Caucasus Emirates	T	x	x	x	x			X
Ukraine (Donetsk)	T				X	X	X	
Ukraine (Lugansk)	T				x	X	X	
Ukraine (Maidan)	G				x			X
Ukraine (Novorossiya)	T				X	X	X	
Middle East (8)								
Egypt - Islamic State (IS)-Sinai	G				x			X
Iran—PJAK (Kurds)	T	x						X
Iraq-IS	G	x	x	X	X	X	(x)	
Israel-Palestine (Hamas, PU, PIJ)	T	x	x		X	X	X	
Lebanon- IS	G				x		(x)	
Syria-FSA, JaN	G	x	X	X	X		X	
Turkey-PKK	T	x	x	x				X
Yemen-AQAP, Houthis	G	X	X	x	X	X	X	
Asia (19)								
Afghanistan -Taleban	G	X	X	X	X	X	(x)	
Cambodia - Thailand	T	x					X	
India- Bodoland	T			x	x			X
India - Garoland	T		x		x			X
India - Kashmir	T	x	x	x	x			X
India - CPI-Maoist	G	x	x	x	x			X
India- Pakistan	T				x			X
Malaysia - Sabah	T			x				X
Myanmar - Kachin	T	x	x	x	x		(x)	
Myanmar - Karen	T	x		x			(x)	
Myanmar - Kokang	T				x		(x)	
Myanmar - Palaung	T			x ⁴	x		(x)	
Myanmar- Shan	T	x		x			(x)	
Pakistan - Baluch.	T	x	x	x	x			X
Pakistan - TTP etc.	G	X	X	X	X			X
Philippines - Mindanao	T	x	x	x	x			X
Philippines - CPP	G	x	x	x	x			X
Tajikistan - IMU	G	x						X
Thailand - Patani	T	x	x	x	x			X
Africa (24)								
Algeria - AQIM/MUJAO	G	x	x	x	x	X		X

CAR - Seleka	G	x	x	x		X	X	
DR Congo - Katanga	T			x	x		(x)	
DRC - M23, APCLS, PARC-FAAL	G		x	X	x	X	(x)	
Ethiopia - Ogaden	T	x	x	x	x			X
Ethiopia - Oromiya	T	x	x	x				X
Ivory Coast - post elections	G	x					X	
Libya - Ghadaffi-NTC	G	X					X	
Libya- Zintan Brigades	G				x		X	
Mali - Azawad	T		x		x	X	X	
Mali - Ansar Dine, MUJAO	G		x	x			(x)	
Mali- al-Murabitun, AQIM	G				x		(x)	
Mauritania - AQIM	G	x				X		X
Mozambique- Renamo	G			x				X
Nigeria - Boko Haram	G	x	x	X	X		(x)	
Rwanda - FDLR	G	x	x			X	(x)	
Senegal - MFDC, Casamance	T	x						X
Somalia - Al Shabaab	G	X	X	x	X	X	(x)	
S. Sudan - SSDM, SSLM	G	x	x	X		X	(x)	
S. Sudan - SPLM/A in Opposition	G				X	X	X	
S. Sudan - Sudan (Abyei)	T	x					X	
S. Sudan - Sudan (border)	T		x				X	
Sudan - Darfur/SRF	G	X	X	x	x		X	
Uganda - LRA, ADF	G	x		x	x	X	(x)	
Americas (2)								
Colombia - FARC	G	x	x	x	x			X
USA - Al Qaeda	G		x	x	x	X		X
Total	59	37	32	34	40	18	34 (17)	25

ENDNOTES

¹Lists of armed conflicts from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014 dataset drawn from annual data feature in the July issue of the Journal of Peace Research. x denotes armed conflict (generating a minimum of 25 battle-related deaths a year); X denotes conflict classified by UCDP as war (generating more than 1,000 battle related deaths in a year).

²Conflicts that saw international involvement with troop support from an external state to one or both warring parties, within this three-year period.

³Multilateral envoy(s) engaged within this three-year period; in situations in which an envoy or envoys are engaged but without a mandate to address this specific conflict through mediation, facilitation or conflict resolution this is indicated by (x).

⁴Themnér and Wallensteen (2014) reported 33 conflicts as active in 2013, but Petersson and Wallensteen (2015) subsequently revised the 2014 data to include the Myanmar-Palaung conflict as active in 2013.



IN 2001 DARFURIS AWAIT THE ARRIVAL OF IBRAHIM GAMARI, JOINT SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE AFRICAN UNION-UNITED NATIONS HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID). MR. GAMBARI AND HIS TEAM VISITED MUKJAR FOLLOWING THE FOURTH SPECIAL ENVOYS RETREAT EL GENEINA, WEST DARFUR. ©UN PHOTO/OLIVIER CHASSOT

MULTILATERAL ENVOYS: CHALLENGES TO ASSESSING SUCCESS

by the Center on International Cooperation

CAUSAL LINKS BETWEEN MEDIATION EFFORTS AND ULTIMATE OUTCOMES, ESPECIALLY THOSE CONCERNING PEACE OR JUSTICE, ARE SELDOM AS DIRECT AND TRANSPARENT AS ASSESSMENT SPONSORS WOULD HOPE FOR.

Envoys dispatched to make peace deploy with a bag full of assumptions. Those who send them believe the multilateral framework gives their emissary the moral legitimacy to intervene. They think that pooling efforts under one collective engagement is more cost effective. They claim multilateral conflict prevention saves lives. But how can these and other assumptions about the effectiveness of multilateral envoys be tested?

As the UN and the AU have worked to improve their work in the field of mediation, they have concurrently strengthened their ability to measure and account for the results of their interventions. This builds on a growing body of evaluative work undertaken by the mediation community to identify success factors and articulate norms and good practices for an increasingly crowded field.

Any analysis of these efforts should begin with a review of the common obstacles to assessing mediation initiatives, examining the main success factors and the extent to which a multilateral approach renders these challenges more or less acute. In the low-control, multi-causal world of multilateral special envoy diplomacy, an examination of assessment issues reveals a range of implications and choices for how multilateral organizations go about deploying special envoys. Ultimately, such evaluations cannot escape the tensions inherent to multilateralism. If nothing else, they bring these tensions into even greater focus, while offering at the same time opportunities for sharpening the narrative for a multilateral approach to conflict prevention.

ASSESSING SUCCESS OR FAILURE

The difficulties in assessing, as objectively as possible, the success or failure of mediation and conflict prevention diplomacy have been well documented. Several of these challenges, such as the difficulty in determining a relevant baseline for many indicators or the lack of reliable counterfactuals, are inherent to the nature of the endeavor, regardless of the type of mediation or profiles involved.

Likewise, assessments of mediation efforts, whether undertaken from bilateral or multilateral entities, are also heavily influenced by perceptions and political agendas that are often divorced from facts and objective analysis. Maintaining confidentiality during and after various proceedings is an imperative of most if not all mediation processes, but it does affect post-assessment efforts.

AS THE UN AND THE AU HAVE WORKED TO IMPROVE THEIR WORK IN THE FIELD OF MEDIATION, THEY HAVE CONCURRENTLY STRENGTHENED THEIR ABILITY TO MEASURE AND ACCOUNT FOR THE RESULTS OF THEIR INTERVENTIONS.

The difficulty in establishing a foolproof counterfactual and the lack of access to all that was said and done combine, in turn, to make attribution notoriously resistant to objective metrics. Causal links between mediation efforts and ultimate outcomes, especially those concerning peace or justice, are seldom as direct and transparent as assessment sponsors would hope for. Lacking robust, unfalsifiable foundations, these links are often disputed on political and technical grounds.

Finally, the field of mediation is particularly vulnerable to the selection effect, whereby the most intractable conflicts receive the most attention, including when it comes to assessment. As a result, the sense that mediation is difficult, while axiomatic, is often amplified by a pundit focus on those truly complex cases.

Other assessment challenges, while also applicable to bilateral mediation, become particularly acute in the case of multilateral deployments. The aforementioned selection effect is a predominant feature of multilateral mediation assessments, precisely because the most difficult conflicts tend to be handed to multilateral organizations. Furthermore, building consensus on the objective of the mediation is even more difficult when the mandates and support for the mediation need to be negotiated among many competing member state agendas and perspectives. Often, agreement among member states to “get someone out there” can only be achieved on the basis of vague objectives, which renders assessments of results more complicated. Even within smaller multilateral organizations, shared definitions of success and goals prove to be problematic.

Multilateral mediation also faces more difficulty in delineating and obtaining consensus on a clear endpoint. For multilateral organizations, engagement never really ends, especially where the UN or regional organizations are intervening within their regions. When a mediator is called back, diplomacy continues in some form. Even when a formal mediation process is successfully closed, an assessment must consider the aftermath, which inevitably raises the question: when is it safe to declare mission accomplished? This conundrum affects all mediation initiatives, and is compounded by all of the aforementioned challenges, but it affects multilateral efforts with distinct intensity.

The mediation community has undertaken significant efforts to overcome these challenges. In recent years, it has shaped a growing consensus on the need to combine robust, data driven approaches with contextual analysis and, where relevant, imports from other disciplines such as psychology, rational choice and game theory.

Generally, reporting on mediation efforts has gained increased credibility, narrowing the understanding gaps among relevant actors including member states that oversee, authorize and fund multilateral efforts. However, beyond the increased complexity and costs of properly assessing mediation, this renewed focus on assessment brings into relief two broader, strategic questions.

The first question relates to the very real possibility of assessments “doing harm.” From technical challenges to political pressures, there are various reasons for which an assessment can be discarded, misinterpreted or manipulated, in increasing order of harm. The repercussions are also varied. They can take the form of a damaged reputation for individuals, including the mediator, an institution or, more generally, for the practice of mediation. In the case of mediation failure or even stalemate, disagreements over an assessment and how to properly interpret its findings can also potentially undermine member state decision-making for corrective measures, with many avoiding self-examination as to if and how they may have contributed to such failure.

The question of what to do with an assessment, even in the rare instances where member states agree on its findings, underlies a second major consideration. It is fairly clear that a narrowly-defined drive for evaluative perfection is ill-suited to mediation. This truism should not be construed by mediation practitioners and institutions as a reason to dismiss assessments. But the incongruity of expecting a scientific formula means that member states and decision makers must debate mediation results in an effort to reduce the scope for disagreements.

The aim should be to maximize the value and relevance of the assessment findings in subsequent decision making. In the context of political negotiations, one may even argue that the inherent difficulty in drawing definitive conclusions is in itself valuable, as it forces debate and further engagement.

These debates are only productive if they are based on a reasonable set of interpretations. The value of assessments is to narrow, but not always to eliminate, the range of potential interpretations. Hence, rather than strive Sisyphus-like for technically perfect and indisputable findings, multilateral organizations should seek to develop and implement clear methodologies. Harmonizing the factors and indicators used to reach credible conclusions will also narrow the scope of potential interpretations. Such an approach would go a long way in shaping the necessary, and healthy, discussions among member states that such claims could trigger. In other words, keeping in mind the potential to do harm, assessments of mediation efforts should support, rather than stifle, conflict prevention dialogue and engagement in the public arena.

WHAT MAKES OR BREAKS A MEDIATION EFFORT?

While assessing the results of a specific multilateral engagement remains fraught with technical and political hurdles, there is little disagreement, in principle, on the factors that seem essential for mediation to succeed. These factors combine four broad distinctions:

- they range from the personal to the structural;
- several are well within the mediator and the mediating organization's control while many are not;
- they usually reinforce one another; and,
- for a few, their degree of relevance generally increases under a multilateral envoy framework.

A common feature of most success factors is that, more often than not, their significance is proved by their absence. Such is the case with conflict party willingness to negotiate, and the perceived appeal of any alternative to a negotiated agreement, tragically demonstrated in Syria. Other well-documented variables which the mediation community collectively emphasizes as critical to any engagement include the timing of deployment; the legitimacy and personal qualities of the special envoy; the strategic use of thematic expertise to generate options or settle factual questions; and the *incentives* (negative or positive) that a mediation effort may have at its disposal to move the parties forward.

IN RECENT YEARS, IT HAS SHAPED A GROWING CONSENSUS ON THE NEED TO COMBINE ROBUST, DATA DRIVEN APPROACHES WITH CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND, WHERE RELEVANT, IMPORTS FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES SUCH AS PSYCHOLOGY, RATIONAL CHOICE AND GAME THEORY.

As with the methodological constraints described in the previous section, the relevance of several success factors increases when the mediation is conducted under a multilateral approach. With regards to legitimacy, multilateral cachet constitutes a double-edged sword, with claims of supra-national impartiality contending with suspicions by warring parties or other actors of hidden member state agendas and a history of malevolent interference. The perception of the multilateral organization and its special envoy is therefore highly contextual.

The AU's credibility as a mediator varied greatly from Kenya in 2008 to Madagascar in 2009. In Kenya, the AU mediator, Koffi Annan, was quickly accepted as the only mediator and benefitted from a great level of acceptance in the country. In Madagascar, the AU mediator suffered from the organization's difficult history with the island country.

Similar variances beset the UN, the EU, and other regional entities. In Guinea in 2008, the UN's regional special envoy enjoyed wide acceptance, built through a combination of personal efforts and local appreciation for the UN system's long-standing support to the country throughout the crisis. In 2008, the UN's regional Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) mediated the crisis. The UN enjoyed great legitimacy following its decision to maintain a significant presence throughout the violent incidents while other international actors withdrew or severely limited their presence. Such legitimacy, which similarly allowed the UN to offer timely assistance in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, is not something the organization can always take for granted.

Legitimacy can also be buttressed – or undermined – through the choice of status conferred upon the special envoy. In Madagascar, the UN's ability to sustain engagement, both among rival factions and between the international community, was undermined *inter alia* by the relatively low administrative rank given its mediator. Similar choices confront the EU, with changes in titles to its representatives providing signals, at times unintentional, as to the level of engagement, support and interest on the part of EU member states.

Communication and reporting on the process is a well-recognized mediation tool *per se*, but, particularly in a multilateral process, it can also make or break the special envoy's legitimacy. Any communication may expose her or him to accusations of member state manipulation and undermine the impartiality and principled approach that multilateralism is meant to embody.

A second factor compounded by a multilateral designation relates to the strength of the mandate. As noted earlier, such strength, which is critical for success, is notoriously difficult to achieve among member states for whom deployment of a special envoy is often the easiest and weakest common denominator they can agree on in the face of a conflict. The mediation in Madagascar provides a compelling illustration, since it can be argued that not even the lead-SADC mediator, let alone the UN and the AU, benefited from clear and robust mediation mandates.

The issue of legitimacy is inextricably and positively linked to the level of international support for a multilateral engagement. The extent to which member states (of the organization and beyond) are aligned behind the special envoy constitutes perhaps the single most determining factor for multilateral diplomatic success. The evidence for such a connection abounds. In Yemen, which up in 2011-12 presented the only “Arab Spring” case of a negotiated agreement, the UN Special Envoy's mediation has been significantly aided by a consistently unified international community within the UN Security Council and the GCC, in stark contrast with the bitter divisions that have undermined the joint LAS-UN engagement in Syria.

Similar examples of international cohesiveness were found in other “success stories”: In Kenya in 2008, following an early plethora of competing efforts, the AU mediator achieved widespread support from key member states. In the Great Lakes in 2009, the UN special envoy managed to unify disparate efforts behind one multilateral process. The recent experiences of Syria, Madagascar and, to a lesser extent, Libya, offer a tragic illustration of the impact of disunity, when international divisions play directly into the interests of the warring parties, further weakening their willingness to negotiate and accept multilateral mediation. The UN's Special Envoy in Libya initially benefited from strong support from the UNSC. But this support began to fray following the UNSC authorized and NATO-led military operation. Significant divisions within the AU further undermined his ability to mediate between the two parties.

Sustained, unified international support also allows the special envoy a judicious use of pressures and even threats from various member states. Such mediation tactics are highly risky, and are usually only successful if well-timed and coordinated with relevant member states, as in Kenya, when the possibility of economic sanctions from leading donors was strategically mooted at key moments of the negotiation. Strong support also permits greater coherence with related initiatives designed to complement, rather than contradict, the special envoy's work. These can include track II diplomacy through bilateral channels, and the formation of a team of bilateral envoys under the multilateral framework of a group of member state friends to provide additional incentives and oversight.

For several multilateral organizations, a carrot and stick approach can also be built from within, depending on the weight and depth of the toolbox at their disposal. The ability on the part of the special envoy to leverage the organization's technical and financial resources can significantly contribute to her or his mediation efforts. In this regard, the playing field among multilateral institutions is highly uneven. An EU or a UN special envoy can usually rely on a range of tools, including aid financing and access to specialized expertise throughout a mediation process. In Yemen in 2011-12, for example, the legitimacy of the mediation in the lead-up to the National Dialogue was greatly enhanced by the use of the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the establishment of a trust fund to support the preparatory committee and finance the logistics of the conference proceedings. However, looking back now in 2015, the long-term impact of this intervention needs to be questioned.

Such resources may not need only financial support. An extensive country presence of related actors, e.g. development or humanitarian entities, can also provide the eyes and ears to support the mediation process and the special envoy's analytical capacities. The UN's engagement in Guinea or Kyrgyzstan, whereby the regional special envoy worked closely with UNDP and other agencies in conflict prevention programming, provides an interesting illustration of internal connectivity and its value for mediation. Such reach is however not available to all multilateral institutions. Even in those institutions with multidimensional mandates and capacities, leveraging of political, technical and financial resources in support of a mediation strategy is often under-utilized due to poor internal coordination and institutional silos.

Finally, no peace agreement can result in a sustained settlement in the absence of follow-on capacities and mechanisms for monitoring implementation of key provisions. In this regard, multilateral special envoys are in theory better placed to ensure sustained institutional follow up and support: few, if any, of their institutions ever completely withdraw from the scene following the end of a formal mediation process. In one form or another, the organization remains. The challenge, however, is to ensure that what stays behind is equipped, politically and financially, to support and monitor the aftermath. Here as well, the record is mixed, even for large multilateral organizations such as the UN, the EU, or the AU. This fact is often omitted from mediation claims, as this success criterion captures, along with the others just cited, a number of the political and technical dilemmas these organizations face when assessing their special envoy diplomacy.

DILEMMAS FOR MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

The list of success factors appears quite daunting – and in fact, no single mediation effort has benefited or will mostly likely ever benefit from all of them coalescing simultaneously. For multilateral special envoy deployments, this reality has two important corollaries.

First, as the factors listed above demonstrate, multilateral special envoys usually work in circumstances where they have at best only limited control over a number of important variables. From the mandate to access to resources, their operational space for independent maneuvering is beholden to a range of actors and motivations. In only a very few exceptional cases do the stars all align to provide an optimal mediation environment.

This fact shapes a second reality. For multilateral institutions, assertions related to their special envoy interventions are fraught with pitfalls. Beyond the technical challenges in assessing impact, any claim of results achieved must carefully factor in imperatives of national ownership and leadership in ensuring lasting political settlements. In particular, taking credit for success can rankle national sensitivities and upset delicate member state dynamics.

For multilateral institutions, these realities carry hard choices and implications across a number of areas. Among them, the initial decision to deploy, and the choice of special envoy, loom as the most sensitive. Regardless of the genesis for such deployment, multilateral organizations must communicate clear understanding of the elements that contribute to the “chemistry” in order to create the right “baseline” at date of entry for future strategy formulation. Questions of whether the time is ripe for multilateral engagement, and who is the right mediator, are critical, but they are not always left to the decision of the organizations themselves. Hence – especially when the choice to deploy is influenced by heavy member state pressures – multilateral organizations must improve their ability to shape discourse on how it will be assessed. This can be achieved by tracking and keeping record of the (often suboptimal) conditions in which the special envoy was deployed.

Similarly, astute assessment is required to inform the exit strategy, and the timing and conditions under which a multilateral special envoy should end its mediation. Here again, in complex situations, the decision will often balance competing factors. These may at times include political agendas and “do no harm” considerations, which can apply when a multilateral engagement seems to prolong the violence. In these cases, the organization must keep a close finger on the member states’ pulse when thinking about initiating and publicizing any formal assessment of its mediation engagement. The conduct of an assessment can itself be potentially misconstrued as a harbinger of changes that key stakeholders may not necessarily wish for.

Finally, operational constraints on multilateral envoys have implications as to how the organizations report on their mediation efforts. Particularly in cases of success, recognizing the international mediator’s role doesn’t necessarily conflict with ensuring national ownership of the peace attained, or with giving credit to member state support. In their efforts to tread that careful line, multilateral organizations often end up either downplaying or overstating their case. This balancing act takes many forms. On one hand, claims of success are often overblown and unsubstantiated by robust evidence. On the other, the responsibility for failures is unduly accepted. And too often for multilateral diplomacy, evidence of genuine success resembles Melville’s description of misery: it hides aloof, so we deem that it is none.

WHEN ARE ENVOYS EFFECTIVE?

Assessments of multilateral special envoy mediations bring into full display the fragile balancing act that is inherent to multilaterally-led diplomacy. Even reporting on results poses challenges that extend beyond the technical obstacles associated with evaluation of conflict prevention initiatives. As such, for organizations such as the UN, the AU or the EU, reflections on their special envoy deployments provide a stark reminder of the realities of multilateralism. Their envoys are rarely in full control of all success factors, and their mediation efforts and how they present them must constantly balance competing agendas.

These realities need not however obfuscate opportunities for multilateral organizations to shape a compelling narrative for their special envoy diplomacy. First they must acknowledge constraints, and then frame discussions of their mediation engagement around the core ethics of multilateralism. In the low-control, multi-causal environment in which these organizations operate, greater transparency in choices made and principles invoked, as well as enhanced clarity of responsibilities, would send a powerful signal to their member states: multilateralism is often the worst form of mediation – except for all the others.

CASE STUDIES: MAIN FEATURES OF SELECTED MEDIATION PROCESSES

Madagascar 2009: SADC, UN, and AU

- Lack of unified support from the international community: competing agendas and objectives
- Lack of clarity on roles amongst SADC, AU and UN mediators
- Good analytical capabilities within the UN mediation team but weak logistical support from the UNCT
- Weak mandate and status of the UN Special Envoy
- Weak political support within the organization

Kyrgyzstan 2010: UN and OESCE

- Standing and access, of UN Special Envoy and UN SRSG (regional)
- Effective collaboration between UN and OESCE
- Adequate timing of deployment
- UN systems and capacities on the ground to monitor the situation and inform the mediation strategies

Guinea 2008: UN

- Accessibility and responsiveness of UN SRSG (regional)
- UN SRSG mediation skills and approach
- Analytical capacities on the ground, and logistical support
- Link between mediation and programmatic tools and resources, through, inter alia, effective collaboration with UNDP
- Country acceptance and legitimacy of the UN, based on history of UNCT presence and support during the crisis

Yemen 2011-2012: UN and GCC

- Strong, unified international community support (UNSC, GCC) Accessibility and responsiveness of UN Special Envoy
 - UN Special Envoy mediation skills and approach
 - Link between mediation and programmatic tools, through, inter alia, trust fund for national dialogue and UN PBF funding
-

Libya 2011: UN

- Contradicting international goals and strategies
- Party (un)willingness
- Weak mandate of the Special Envoy and lack of programmatic tools resources to complement mediation effort

Kenya 2008: AU

- Unified international community behind one mediation process
- Standing and access, of AU Special Envoy
- Weak alternatives on both sides
- Strong external pressure at key moments
- Smart mediation approaches (communication, expert inputs)

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COUNT FOLKE BERNADOTTE, UN MEDIATOR FOR PALESTINE, AND HIS STAFF, IN A SEPTEMBER 1948 BRIEFING FOR UN MILITARY OBSERVERS PRIOR TO THEIR DEPLOYMENT IN THE HOLY LAND. LEFT TO RIGHT ARE: GENERAL FRANK STONER, CHIEF OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE MEDIATOR; COUNT BERNADOTTE; COLONEL NILS BRUNSSON, SWEDEN, CHIEF MILITARY OBSERVER IN JERUSALEM, AND DR. RALPH BUNCHE, PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL. ©UN MULTIMEDIA

SUPPORT MECHANISMS: MULTILATERAL, MULTI-LEVEL, AND MUSHROOMING

by Teresa Whitfield

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUPPORT MECHANISMS REPRESENTS A SHIFT IN THE MANNER IN WHICH PEACEMAKING IS CONCEIVED AND CONDUCTED. WHILE THIS IS WELCOME, THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT HAS NOT YET CAUGHT UP WITH THE COLLECTIVE ASPIRATION TO OFFER IT.

The idea that “peace processes must be well-supported politically, technically and financially”, as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated in the introduction to the [UN Guidance for Effective Mediation](#), is something of a truism. Certainly, no one would ever advocate poor political technical or financial support to a peace process. But the appearance of mediation support as a dedicated activity, along with formal mechanisms to pursue it, is a relatively recent development with significant implications for the work of multilateral envoys.

The establishment of support mechanisms represents a shift in the manner in which peacemaking is conceived and conducted. While this is welcome, the institutional capacity to provide effective support has not yet caught up with the collective aspiration to offer it. In some cases, senior envoys may resist the idea of support outside their trusted staff, grounded in the confidence that they have been engaged for their lifetime experience and authority, and no further expertise or training is required. In others, resource constraints present a problem. Elsewhere, there may be an open door to mediation support and the resources available to provide it - the negotiation of the Libreville agreement on the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2013 for example - while the underlying conditions for a durable settlement are not present. Even when effective support is provided, it may have a limited causal impact on the outcome.

The establishment of a Mediation Support Unit (MSU) within the UN led to rapid understanding of the utility of a standing support structure for good offices, conflict prevention and the mediation efforts of an envoy. Regional organizations have sought to improve their capacity to support envoys with technical expertise and comparative experience, drawing on others like the UN, EU and sometimes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help them.

Individual governments and NGOs have also developed their own support mechanisms, frequently with a disposition to extend support to others as well. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, or HD Centre, established its Mediation Support Unit in 2007; Swisspeace and the Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, established the Mediation Support Project in 2005; more recently in September 2015, the United States, in a [Presidential Memorandum](#) that represented the first guidance on support to UN peace operations in two decades, made a clear commitment to support for conflict prevention and mediation. This work is informed by a growing body of guidance, guidelines, training and other materials, as a well as a healthy degree of cross-fertilization among peace processes on issues such as constitutional reform, national dialogues and the inclusion of gender perspectives.

THE EMERGENCE OF MEDIATION SUPPORT

Mediators and envoys have long relied on a combination of a small, unified team and the capacity to call on specialist knowledge from outside when appropriate. But for many years the process to assemble both was surprisingly ad hoc. Even successful negotiations conducted from inside the United Nations, such as those on El Salvador, Guatemala and East Timor during the 1990s, were largely dependent on the personal contacts and initiative of the envoys and their small teams, rather than any additional institutional support. A long-running [project](#) developed by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) sought to preserve and pass on the lessons gleaned from the experiences of envoys and representatives of the Secretary-General, but there was little follow-through in making use of them in any operational sense.

In recognition of the growing disconnect between the demand for UN mediation and the resources devoted to it, the report of the [Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change](#) observed in 2004 that “mediators and negotiators need adequate support”. Two years later, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) established the first [Mediation Support Unit](#). It took shape quite slowly amidst considerable skepticism amongst some envoys who were its potential beneficiaries.

Attention to mediation and the legitimacy of mediation support received a boost in 2009 with the publication of a [report](#) to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General on “enhancing mediation and its support activities”. This report advocated the need for “systematic preparation” for mediation, and called for UN mediators to have at their disposal “a reasonable level of operational

support”. In addition to political analysis, this support was described as including: “(a) experts on the design and management of mediation, facilitation and national dialogue processes; (b) thematic experts from specialized partners within the United Nations system, as well as external experts — on issues such as security arrangements, constitution-making, elections, power-sharing, the rule of law, human rights, refugees and internally displaced persons, gender, child protection, transitional justice, and wealth-sharing; (c) flexible funding arrangements; and (d) versatile administrative and logistics options for different situations”.

The report further stressed the need for closer partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations and other mediation actors, noting that DPA “should be ready to offer its support to mediation partners, assist in building their mediation capacity, and exchange lessons learned and best practice”.

SETTING A STANDARD: THE UN MEDIATION SUPPORT UNIT

The UN’s Mediation Support Unit has as its primary “clients” the envoys and representatives of the UN Secretary-General. But it has also developed as a global asset, available to the mediation efforts of Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations and other partners through the delivery of services in three main areas: technical and operational support for peace processes; capacity-building; and guidance development, lessons learned and best practices in the area of mediation.

The MSU’s technical and operational support usually takes the form of assistance in the development of strategies and advice on thematic issues. These include security arrangements (ceasefires, DDR and SSR), constitution-making, power-sharing, natural resources (wealth-sharing), and gender and social inclusion. The MSU also develops mediation guidance, and captures lessons learned and best practices for mediators and their teams. One recent example was guidance on [natural resources and conflict](#), jointly developed by DPA and the UN Environment Programme. Capacity-building and training on mediation and negotiation techniques and skills, strategy development, and process design is offered to UN mediators and envoys in widely varying configurations. Even within the UN, some envoys draw on the MSU a great deal, while others hardly at all.

In addition to its own staff, the MSU is home to the Standby Team of Mediation Experts, who are based in their home countries and can be deployed anywhere in the world within 72 hours. It maintains a mediation roster of senior mediators, operational-level mediators and technical-level experts who are available to be hired as consultants on a longer-term basis, either by the UN or other actors. Finally, the MSU has developed partnerships with a network of NGOs and academic institutions that can be called upon to provide expertise in support of mediation, facilitation and dialogue - again, either by the UN or by others.

A steady rise in the engagement of the MSU speaks eloquently to growing acceptance of the utility of mediation support. Deployments have included support to UN envoys working on Syria, in the Great Lakes, and in the negotiations between Guyana and Venezuela, to peace processes taking place in contexts where UN peacekeeping operations are present, such as the CAR and Mali, as well as to processes such as the Kampala talks between the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the M23 rebels, led by other actors. In an interesting example of variegated support, during 2013 and 2014 the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Yemen drew on both the MSU and external experts as well as political and diplomatic support provided by the Gulf Cooperation Council, EU and five permanent members of the Security Council in the “Group of 10”.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SUPPORT CAPACITY

The perceived success of the MSU has been one of the factors encouraging regional organizations to develop their own capacities for envoy support. This has taken place to a somewhat uneven extent, reflecting the different levels of peacemaking activity within regional and sub-regional organizations (ASEAN's limited involvement in regional peacemaking means no envoys and therefore no support mechanisms), as well as the distinct level of resources they can draw upon. In some cases organizations have pursued separate units, mirroring the MSU within the UN: the EU has a Mediation Support Team; the OSCE and Commonwealth established a dedicated Conflict Prevention Centre and Good Offices Section respectively. Others, including the Organization of American States and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, have sought to build capacity within existing structures.

In 2009 the African Union (AU) launched a two-year “Plan of Action to Build the AU’s Mediation Capacity”, with the backing of the UN and non-governmental mediation support actors who joined forces in an AU Partner Group to avoid duplication in their efforts. The plan foresaw a training curriculum that was developed by the AU in collaboration with the South Africa-based civil society organisation ACCORD and the Crisis Management Institute of Finland. Efforts were bolstered by desk-to-desk, lessons-learned exercises organized by the UN MSU. The HD Centre facilitated the development of Standard Operating Procedures to help define the support the AU Commission is expected to extend to its mediation teams and envoys in the field and helped produce a [three-volume handbook for AU practitioners on managing peace processes](#).

Progress in building the AU’s support mechanisms has, however, been disappointingly slow. Some Member States’ perception that an independent institutional capacity within the AU Commission might threaten their interests limited the resources they were prepared to commit. Consequently, its mediation support capacity remained embedded in its conflict management division, and the support arrangements available for AU envoys something of a mixed bag. Former President Thabo Mbeki, as Chairperson of the High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan, could draw on around fifteen experts, some seconded from the World Bank or governments. Former President Alpha Konare, Chairperson of the High Level Panel for Egypt, had four or five experts, while other envoys generally have more skeletal teams. The high level of most envoys means that they receive no formal training, and the literature, tools, management skills and knowledge developed in recent years are still quite scarcely used. A recent decision that the Peace and Security Department will host a new mediation support unit should help introduce a more consistent use of expertise and resources.

Sub-regional organizations in Africa have prioritized the creation of standing mediation support divisions or units. But the pressures of other work and a lack of resources have meant that they have also taken shape quite slowly. In February 2010 the ECOWAS Commission decided to establish a Mediation Facilitation Division, but progress in putting it in place – it was only formally constituted in 2015 – was painfully slow. In the interim, ECOWAS was adept in finding support from other sources, including the UN Office in West Africa, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, and the HD Centre. Meanwhile, in 2012 the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) established a small Mediation Support Unit (this had also been under discussion since 2010). The Southern African Development Community took steps in the same direction in 2014, operationalizing mediation, conflict prevention and preventative diplomacy structures that had originally been agreed to at a SADC Summit meeting in 2004 (and as the need for support was highlighted by mediation interventions in Lesotho in 2007, Zimbabwe in 2008, and Madagascar in 2009). The IGAD unit was particularly active in the establishment of the office of the Special Envoy for South Sudan, and all IGAD envoys are required to undertake training in mediation skills and conflict resolution prior to deployment. More broadly, however, the integration of these sub-regional capacities with AU structures will likely prove a difficult task.

The European Union has long been an important donor to, and partner in, the mediation work of others, but it has developed its own understanding and approach to mediation only relatively recently. The **Concept on Strengthening of EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities**, adopted in 2009, acknowledged the particularity of the EU as a mediation actor: alone among the regional organizations it has no internal mandate, although it does have some internal involvements, such as in Cyprus. The Concept recognised EU Special Representatives (EUSRs), who answer to Member States through the Political and Security Committee, as a mediation resource but also acknowledged the role of other EU actors. The expectation was implicit that the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Heads of EU delegations would increasingly assume responsibilities in the field of mediation and support to peace processes, not least because of the political role assigned them by the Lisbon treaty. In several contexts, Myanmar and Yemen for example, Heads of Delegation indeed been able to play a positive role.

A Mediation Support Team (MST) established within the EEAS is loosely modelled on the UN's MSU. It has a broad remit reflecting the far-ranging reach of EU mediation and mediation support and the complex institutional means by which it is delivered. The team offers operational support; knowledge management and the assessment of lessons learned; training and capacity building; and networking and coordination with partners in the UN, AU, other regional organizations and civil society. Its clients include those EUSRs with facilitation/mediation tasks within their mandates, the top hierarchy of the EEAS involved in mediation efforts (as in the case of the Iran nuclear talks), Heads of EU Delegations as well as EEAS Managing Directors, envoys or advisers who served as facilitators or mediators in a specific context (as in the case of the Great Lakes and Myanmar).

In recognition of the role played by various MEPs as mediators or facilitators of dialogue (as for example the high profile involvement of former Presidents Pat Cox and Alexander Kwásniewski in Ukraine, but also the role of others in Sudan or Myanmar), in 2014, the European Parliament set up the European Parliamentary Mediation Support (EPMS) Service. The EPMS seeks to provide expert professional support for MEPs engaged in conflict prevention, mediation and facilitation efforts within the framework of the EU's comprehensive mediation strategy.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND HYBRID SUPPORT

The challenge of aligning the EU's engagements is indicative of an increasingly crowded stage of envoys and support structures. As explored elsewhere in this series, competition between multilateral – as well as national and non-governmental – envoys and actors at the political level can be a significant impediment to effective peacemaking. There are, however, grounds for cautious optimism that the prospects for coordination among support mechanisms may be improving.

This optimism is rooted in a number of different developments: first, there is new appreciation within the UN, EU, and other multilateral organizations of the value of partnerships, collaboration and cross-institutional support. The UN MSU, for example, is in 2015 providing support to the OSCE in Ukraine and IGAD in South Sudan. Another positive development is the disposition shown by some institutions and organizations to supply staff to multilateral envoys. A staff member of the HD Centre was among the team of outside experts providing support to the UN's Special Advisor on Yemen in 2013 and 2014, while Swisspeace has provided in-kind support to the UN including by seconding a staff member to the team of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara. Further signs of optimism come from experiments with hybrid support structures, as well as concerted efforts at collaboration within the mediation support community, most vividly illustrated by the formation and development of a Mediation Support Network (MSN).

The MSN was established in September 2008 and met for the first time in Switzerland. It is a global network composed of the UN's MSU and primarily non-governmental organizations that support mediation in peace negotiations. Over the years its membership has grown to around twenty regionally diverse members. They meet once or twice a year in order to exchange information, explore opportunities for collaboration in joint activities and share analysis of trends and emerging challenges in peace mediation. Although not specifically constituted to provide support to multilateral envoys, this network and the presence within it of a number of hybrid actors (e.g., Swisspeace and the U.S. Institute of Peace) that retain direct ties to their respective governments, as well as others regularly engaged in the support of sub-regional organizations, has improved the exchange of information within the sector and helped break down barriers to more structured coordination.

The EU's interest in more hybrid structures of mediation support is suggested by both the initiation in January 2014 of a project intended to facilitate EU mediation support to third parties, and the establishment of the European Institute for Peace (EIP). The project "Technical assistance to European resources for mediation support", or ERMES, is implemented by a consortium of non-governmental mediation support entities able to provide fast and flexible support to international, regional and local actors. The EIP, meanwhile, resembles USIP in its quasi-governmental status, but with a narrower thematic focus. It is conceived as "**an independent partner to the European Union and Europe**" and pursues mediation, informal dialogue and multi-track diplomacy and acts "as a flexible, external tool in support of EU mediation efforts where the EU has limited freedom to act".

MORE SUPPORT, BUT MORE CHALLENGES?

The mushrooming of support mechanisms is a positive development in the peacemaking field. It has encouraged an understanding of mediation as a professional activity which can benefit from structured and professional support; contributed to the production of a rapidly expanding body of guidelines, guidance and other materials that reflect best practice and lessons learned (or at least identified, as the field is awash with examples of lessons not learned); and put in place the means to deploy high quality expertise and support on a range of issues to those multilateral envoys who request it. As the report of **High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations**, submitted to the Secretary-General in June 2015, suggested, it has also opened up the possibility of dedicated support to help national governments and others address emerging conflict situations.

It is however, premature to declare the emergence of mediation support structures and mechanisms as an unqualified success. Core functions in support of conflict prevention and mediation by the UN are still not funded by the UN's Regular Budget – a situation the High-Level Independent Panel criticized as "unacceptable". The building of mediation capacity within some regional and multilateral organisations has met with resistance, institutional rivalries and resource problems. Meanwhile, the profusion of support on offer has not always been adroitly linked to the envoys concerned. And even the best mediation support – whose impact is always difficult to quantify -- cannot be expected to compensate for problems in the appointments of multilateral envoys, the institutional limitations or overcrowding of the political space with which they operate, let alone the more fundamental structural or regional obstacles to settlement seen in many of today's conflicts.

In sum, mediation support works best when offered to an envoy capably leading a peace process, or at least his or her engagement within it. Such support can be an extremely useful, indeed essential, auxiliary feature of a complex peace process, but it cannot and will not rescue or redeem a process that may be failing for other reasons.

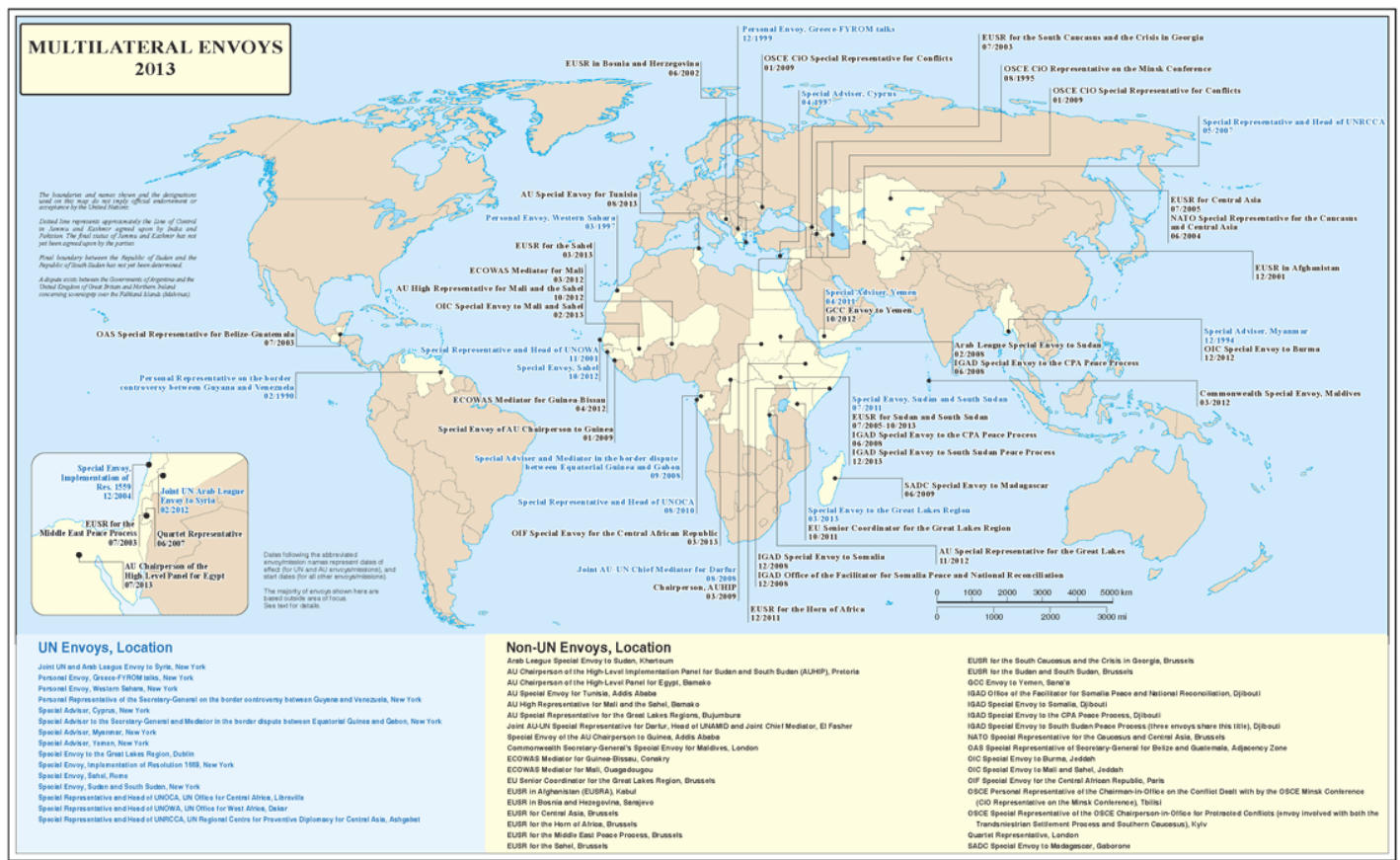
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MAPS AND COUNTRY PROFILES

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MULTILATERAL ENVOYS

THIS MAP REPRESENTS MULTILATERAL ENVOYS FOR 2013-2014



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The Global Peace Operations Review has received generous support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, French Ministry of Defence, German Federal Foreign Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.



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