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## THE PROBLEM

This study investigates the conditions for a successful initiation of *entry* into the mediation of violent conflicts in six African cases. It seeks, on the one hand, to explain the motives behind the prospective mediators' involvement in the mediation process, and on the other, to explain the motives behind the parties' consideration of mediation as a policy option and their acceptance of particular mediators. The major question addressed by the study is: How do prospective mediators gain access to internal conflicts? In other words, how does a prospective mediator initiate a mediation process successfully in an internal conflict? The study deals specifically with other questions directly related to the major research concern: What motivates the parties in a conflict to consider the option of mediation? What motivates an aspiring mediator to accept or initiate a mediating role? Why do parties accept or seek the assistance of a particular mediator?

The study considers mediation as an integral part of negotiation that, in turn, is regarded as a succession of processes divided into three major phases. The first is the preparatory phase. Its main objective is to create a conducive environment through which conflicting parties can be brought to the negotiating table. In negotiation theory this phase is referred to as *diagnosis*, *premediation*, or *prenegotiation*.<sup>1</sup> It can also be referred to as *entry*, *gaining access*, or simply *getting in* to mediation. The second is the mediation phase, in which parties to a conflict are involved in the actual substantive negotiations with the help of a mediator. And the third is the postsettlement phase, in which efforts are taken to implement the mediated agreement.

This study focuses exclusively on the premediation phase—that is, on how mediation entry is initiated. Although the importance and contri-

bution of the entry phase to the substantive phase of mediation and its outcome are appreciated, the study is concerned with neither the final outcome of the mediation process nor that of the conflict as a whole. It is concerned only with the decisions to initiate, invite, and accept mediation as a policy alternative on the one hand, and the acceptance of a particular mediator on the other. Its focus on entry is based on a number of factors. The first is the fact that the other two phases of the mediation process take place only after the success of the first phase. Simply put, there is no mediation before the success of the entry of a mediator in a conflict. But the process of entry has much to do with the process of mediation and the reasons for its course. It is hard to understand and explain what goes on in mediation without understanding how it got started.

The second is the fact that very little work has been done so far on the entry phase.<sup>2</sup> Most work on mediation focuses on the second phase of the process.<sup>3</sup> Alluding to this shortcoming, John Stephens argues that “a great deal of conflict research has centered on the process of mediation and what factors or tactics speed or hinder settlement of disputes. However, the question of how this process begins has been relatively ignored.”<sup>4</sup> Addressing this limitation, Ronald Fisher points out that “there appears to be a gap in both the thinking of conflict theorists and the practice of diplomatic practitioners with regard to the question of how to facilitate movement toward negotiation which is meaningful and ultimately successful. More specifically, there is a lack of knowledge and expertise regarding the process of prenegotiation by which hostile parties move from stalemate to negotiation.”<sup>5</sup>

Another factor is that even among the few studies that have so far tried to deal with the entry phase, there are a number of limitations. First, the studies lack comprehensiveness. They either deal with few elements of entry or address the problem of entry indirectly.<sup>6</sup> Second, emphasis has been on interstate rather than on internal conflicts.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, nothing much has been done to explore the African experience in this area. This study, therefore, aims to fill the vacuum. It attempts, in general terms, to contribute to the understanding of the entry process, particularly to internal conflict. And it attempts, in specific terms, to investigate the characteristics of the African experience in entry initiatives.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is animated mainly by the call for a broader theory of negotiation that integrates the processes that precede formal negotiation.<sup>8</sup> It is guided by three major theses. The first is that an understanding of gaining access to internal conflicts contributes to a better understanding of mediated negotiation. Second, an investigation on entry facilitates the examination of the mediation process from the perspectives of both the intermediaries and the parties. And third, an objective comprehension of entry requires not only an understanding of the motives for such an initiative but also an identification of its underlying problems. An understanding of the obstacles to entry is extremely useful to the mediation process because, according to Stephen John Stedman, “mediators need to know the conditions that facilitate negotiation, the barriers that negotiations face, and how these barriers can be overcome more effectively.”<sup>9</sup> On the basis of the complexities of internal conflict, one of the major objectives of the study is to investigate the possibilities of initiating mediation entry that can lead to a negotiated settlement.

The significance of the study lies in its theoretical and practical values. Understanding the complexities of mediation entry creates a conducive environment that provides the parties with an opportunity to make an informed assessment of each other. Thus, as Janice Stein puts it, “they learn not only about others but also about themselves.”<sup>10</sup> The learning process allows the parties to readjust their perceptions toward each other, toward the mediator, and toward the conflict. With an objective of helping the parties to cooperate in seeking a joint solution to the conflict, initiating entry is useful in redefining relationships, re-evaluating alternative means to a final solution, and considering potential intermediary roles.<sup>11</sup> At the practical level, an understanding of entry characteristics provides general guidelines to practitioners for an improved negotiation process.

The relevance of the study lies in the realization that the world is currently experiencing a dangerous wave of violent internal conflicts, particularly in Africa, that threaten national, regional, and international peace and security. A study that deals with the issues of understanding these conflicts and prescribing the means of resolving them is quite relevant and timely.

There are three levels at which the study contributes to knowledge. First, its findings are an additional conceptual contribution to the emerging lit-

erature that is trying to understand internal conflicts and the models of their resolution. Second, its findings can also help in determining useful policy recommendations. And third, its findings can also play a catalytic role of provoking further debate and research.

The study is undertaken on the conviction that the understanding of the nature of an internal conflict and its resolution within one region can have some relevance to other regions as well. This conviction takes cognizance of the fact that a conflict in one region can have far-reaching consequences to other regions. This is true for both its contagion as well as its demonstration effects.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore hoped that the relevance of its findings is universal. The findings would provide invaluable learning experiences in dealing with internal conflicts in various parts of the world.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Conceptualizing Internal Conflict

Conflict refers to parties' attempts to pursue incompatible ends.<sup>13</sup> Thus conflicts are intrinsically nonviolent; they may turn violent, but violence is not their inherent aspect, only a potential form or means that conflicts may adopt.<sup>14</sup> Internal conflicts, like interstate conflicts, can be political, economic, social, cultural/perceptual, and structural, and they can move from normal politics to violence.

Internal conflicts can be *centralist* or *regionalist*.<sup>15</sup> Centralist conflicts are disputes over the central authority. Insurgencies fight in order either to replace the government or to be included in it, and governments fight back to resist being replaced or sharing power with the insurgents. Regionalist conflicts aim at self-determination through secession or regional autonomy.

Two models, "ethnic" and "territorial," are presented by Anthony D. Smith to provide a conceptualization of organizing a national identity that is helpful in understanding the nature of centralist ethnic conflict.<sup>16</sup> According to the ethnic model, a nation-state is identified with one self-defined ethnic group, to which the state belongs and which belongs to the state.

To turn a motley horde of people into an institutionalized nation, to give them a sense of belonging and identity, to unify and integrate them, to give them a sense of authenticity and autonomy and fit them for self-rule, all require a symbolic framework in and through which they can be mobilized and stabilized.<sup>17</sup>

There are negative implications of this model: internally, it can lead efforts to make the nation-state ethnically pure; externally, it can foster militant irredentism. Political entrepreneurs from the dominant ethnic groups can capitalize on ethnic appeals, enforce homogeneity, repress differences, and promote intolerance and discrimination.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the ethnic model, national identity in a territorial model is based on individual allegiance to the state, independent of ethnicity. The emphasis in this integrative approach is on the “legal equality of citizen-residents.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Mediating Internal Conflict**

Both centralist and regionalist conflicts involve high stakes. Left on their own, the parties strive mainly for zero-sum outcomes, usually attainable only at a very high cost. Both parties in a centralist conflict want to rule the state exclusively; both parties in a regionalist conflict want to rule a part of the state exclusively. It is within this zero-sum context that intermediaries try to intervene in internal conflicts. The objective of the intervention is not to assist either party to gain outright victory over its adversaries, but to break the impasse and bring the parties to a level where they would be able to settle for a win-win outcome. Mediators help them to move from the generally desirable but untenable zero-sum victories to the relatively malleable compromise solutions. Mediation then makes sense when parties to a conflict abandon the option of a zero-sum outcome and embrace a desire for a compromise outcome. This shift entails the lowering of the high stakes each party had previously perceived in the conflict. Once all the parties are genuinely committed to mediation, they should be aware that the agenda for a zero-sum outcome is dead and that a compromise settlement becomes the most rational outcome of the mediation process. In practice, however, mediation can and has taken place even when some parties are not fully committed to compromise. This is one of the major conundrums that this study will explore.

Mediation is one of the specific forms of the intermediary roles in the broader processes of negotiation. While negotiation refers to the peaceful means of resolving conflict through dialogue, mediation, in its intermediary capacity, plays a role of facilitating the dialogue between the conflicting parties, particularly in a situation where they are unable, by themselves, to conduct the negotiations. The notion of inability among the conflicting parties to conduct negotiation by themselves introduces an external component

to the conflict. Generally referred to as a “third party” in the literature, the intermediary intervenes, by either invitation or other means, in the middle of what Jeffrey Rubin calls “the interface of cooperative and competitive interests,” when the disputants are sufficiently cooperative that they are willing to invite or accept the intrusion of one or more external (third) parties who may be able to break the conflictual stalemate.<sup>20</sup>

Mediators are distinguished between those on “Track One,” consisting of official mediators representing states and intergovernmental organizations, and those on “Track Two,” constituting either nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or private persons. Across the two tracks, intermediaries can be discussed either as individuals or as institutions. All mediation—indeed all diplomacy—is done by individuals, and individual interaction is crucial to the practice and study of mediation. Individuals vary widely in their personal attributes, of course, but they also vary according to their institutional capacity. Institutions—states and organizations—do not actually do the mediating; individuals do, but the institutions for which they speak make a crucial difference in their operation and effectiveness. This study concerns mediation as an institutional rather than an individual exercise.

### Initiating Entry

Entry is a process of achieving *acceptability* for intermediary involvement in negotiations. It is the process through which a prospective mediator gains access to a conflict. It begins when one party or a potential intermediary considers mediation as a policy option and continues to a point when mediation is formally endorsed by both parties and a specific mediator is agreed upon.<sup>21</sup> Entry can be either mediator-initiated (entry by proposition) or parties-initiated (entry by invitation). Entry is a voluntary process; there is no legal sanction facing the parties in accepting a mediation initiative.<sup>22</sup> In theory, a potential mediator will not gain access to a conflict without the consent of the parties, nor will invited intermediaries be automatically involved in mediation without their prior consent to play such a role. Therefore, consent is the backbone of entry to mediation.

## THE PROBLEMATIC ISSUES

### The Imperviousness to External Intervention

Why are we concerned about entry? Entry into internal conflicts becomes a problematic and interesting area of study because of a number of significant theoretical and practical factors. The first is internal conflicts' imperviousness to external interventions. General observations about international relations and conflict management hold that internal conflicts are resistant to outside efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution and usually do not end in a compromise agreement.<sup>23</sup> More frequent is victory for the secessionist insurgency, as in the victory of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in 1991; or for the anti-centralist insurgency, as in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's victory in 1991, the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) victory in 1994, and the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire's (AFDL) victory in the Congo in 1997; or else for the government, which succeeds in preserving the unity of the country, as in Nigeria in the 1970 Biafran conflict.<sup>24</sup> There are very few cases of governments' victory over insurgencies in centralist conflicts.

The assumption that internal conflicts are impervious to external mediation efforts is based mostly on the parties' perceptions about the nature of the conflict and the high stakes they attach to the perceptions. The higher the stakes the parties attach to the conflict, the more likely they will be willing to make more sacrifices for the realization of their goals, creating an environment not conducive to a compromise solution. Hence, a win-lose scenario becomes the most obvious expected outcome.

### Normative and Legal Issues

A second issue emerges from the assumption that intervention in internal conflict violates a country's sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> Thus an intermediary role in an internal conflict will be resisted by the government because, in one way, it undermines its authority and in another, it legitimizes the insurgency. Saadia Touval addresses this point succinctly:

For state authorities confronted by internal opponents challenging their legitimacy, external attempts at mediation pose difficult dilemmas. When the government itself is a party to the conflict, acceptance of outside mediation carries a bargaining disadvantage. It implies that it recognizes its opponents as being equal in status, entitled to present their point of view to an

outside body, regardless of the government's claim to exclusive jurisdiction over the citizens living in its sovereign territory. Placing the internal opponents of a government on an equal footing with the regime implies that the opponents' claims are no less legitimate than those of the government. Since this inevitably weakens the position of the government and strengthens that of its opponents, governments are usually reluctant to accept external mediation in domestic conflicts.<sup>26</sup>

Because the insurgency also challenges the central authority, the denial of legitimacy then becomes mutual: "When adversaries do not recognize each other as legitimate, a negotiated ending to any conflict between them is most difficult."<sup>27</sup>

Entry could also be resisted by the insurgency if it feels that mediation could undermine its cause or favor the government. An insurgency on the verge of defeating the government obviously will have no interest in engaging the government at the negotiating table and will continue the armed option to its logical conclusion. This was demonstrated by Laurent Kabila's AFDL during its struggle to replace Mobutu in the former Zaire in 1997. When Kabila's forces were closing in on Kinshasa, there was a flurry of diplomatic efforts led by the United Nations (UN) envoy Mohammed Sahnoun, South African president Nelson Mandela, and U.S. ambassador Bill Richardson, to obtain Mobutu's dignified exit, to prevent Kabila from taking Kinshasa by force, and to negotiate a lasting solution to the crisis by involving all the parties. The diplomatic efforts failed to achieve all the three objectives simply because the AFDL was in no mood to negotiate at a time when a military victory was in its sights.<sup>28</sup>

### **Who Takes the Initiative?**

A third factor concerns the manner in which entry is initiated. Initiation by the mediator creates the challenge of convincing the parties, first, to accept mediation as a policy option and, second, to accept the initiator as playing the mediating role. In initiation by invitation, the challenge is to convince not only the prospective mediator but also the other party, who can see the invitation as a sign of the initiator's weakness, as a tacit acceptance of the initiator's inability to win militarily, or as an attempt to bias the mediation process by engaging a friend.<sup>29</sup> Either case contains an incentive for the other party to reject mediation and continue with the violent option, convinced that it might gain an outright military victory.



### **The Scope of Engagement**

Another problem about entry involves its scope, or the magnitude of engaging the parties. An internal conflict usually involves many parties, but at the highest level of its escalation, aspiring mediators seem to engage only the government and the armed groups in their efforts to gain entry into the mediation process. The crucial question here is whether it is enough for the prospective mediators to get the consent of entry only from the principal parties. If the other parties' consent and involvement in the mediation is desirable, under what framework should they be involved?

Louis Kriesberg talks about the selection of parties to be engaged as among the strategic choices a prospective mediator must make.<sup>30</sup> Selection connotes partial engagement; other parties will be left out. Including all the parties may be practically impossible, and "all" is an elastic concept. Yet entry is not a single event. Usually, the entry of just one mediator does not result in a mediated settlement. If the mediator is making some progress, others may try to join in the success or, at least, work it in their preferred direction. If the mediator seems to be encountering obstacles, others may try to pick up the challenge. In either case, mediators are not likely to act alone, and the challenging question subsequent mediators must ask themselves before attempting entry is: What can I offer to help the mediation process that the exiting mediator did not have?

### **Timing of Initiating Entry**

Timing is another problem of initiating entry—specifically, at what level in the conflict's escalation should entry be attempted? Analysts seem to agree that timing matters when it comes to both the entry phase and the substantive phase of mediation, but they differ in isolating the propitious moment. Some argue that it is better to attempt entry at a low level of escalation. Frank Edmead, who shares this view, believes that entry should be attempted at an early stage, well before parties cross the threshold of violence and begin to inflict heavy losses on each other.<sup>31</sup> Others are of the opinion that entry should be attempted when a "mutually hurting stalemate" has set in and the parties have already tested their strength.<sup>32</sup> Stephens, who also shares this view, is of the opinion that entry initiatives are of greater relevance if attempted in situations of significant suspicion or antagonism between the parties. He contends that at lower levels of escalation there is little need logically for external parties to assist disputants who trust one

another, as they should be able to negotiate directly.<sup>33</sup> A study of entry contributes to a better understanding of this controversy.

### **The Issue of Asymmetry**

The sixth problem for the entry of mediation of internal conflicts emanates from the structure of the conflict. Internal conflicts are characteristically asymmetrical. The government “enjoys international recognition as the legitimate authority and has at its disposal the resources of the state, including its security forces,” whereas the insurgency “lacks such legitimacy and possesses far fewer material resources than its opponent.”<sup>34</sup>

The issue is whether mediation is possible in such a situation of power and resource imbalance. Kriesberg holds that if the balance of the means of coercion is relatively equal between disputants, it is more likely that mediation will be accepted. If there is a wide disparity, the stronger party will not be prompted to accept mediation and make concessions. Its superior power should enable it to dictate a more favorable outcome to the conflict.<sup>35</sup>

In line with this argument, Kjell Skjelsbaek and Gunnar Fermann posit that usually the weaker party first accepts the services of an intermediary. The stronger party, according to them, may hope to win, or at least to prevail, and consequently regards offers of mediation as detrimental to its interests.<sup>36</sup> In a study that related the parties’ power balance to the effectiveness of mediation, Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston found a clear pattern showing high mediation impact when power disparity is high.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Issue of Neutrality and Interests**

Neutrality or impartiality and the broader matter of mediator interests are the seventh issue in the study of initiating mediation. It is by now generally recognized that a mediator has interests and engages only because of them, and therefore some degree of partiality is always likely. Indeed, bias may be useful, as the biased mediator is expected to deliver the party toward which it is partial.<sup>38</sup> What is required of a mediator, however, is both avoidance of the reverse (the construction of an outcome favorable to the favored party) and, more positively, reliability on the part of the mediator as a conveyor of ideas and messages. Mediators do not play that role for altruistic reasons alone. They do so in order to promote or protect any interests they may have, even though they are not parties to the conflicts in which they get involved. Keith Webb, for one, states categorically that the act of mediation

is not a neutral one. According to him, it is a moral and political act undertaken by the mediator to achieve desired ends. He further notes that although a mediator may claim to be neutral with respect to the values and claims of the combatants, the activity of mediating is still a declaration of values held by the mediator.<sup>39</sup>

In agreement with Webb, C. R. Mitchell asserts that all intermediaries possess motives and reasons for undertaking that role quite apart from any desire to bring about a satisfactory peace settlement.<sup>40</sup> Peter Carnevale and Sharon Arad agree that mediators have interests and motives that provoke them to get involved in conflicts. Their detailed research experiments demonstrate that effective mediation may well be undertaken by biased or partial mediators, and that decisions concerning the acceptability of mediators do not simply reflect the mediators' bias.<sup>41</sup>

### **Costs to Intervenors**

Finally, beyond whatever motives drive prospective intervenors to engage in intermediary roles, it is important to realize that there are costs involved in the exercise. On the one hand, there are costs incurred from laying down the infrastructure for the mediation process itself and its maintenance to the point where the process is concluded or breaks down. And, on the other hand, there is a personal bill to prospective intervenors because they invest capital in order to gain benefits from the process. Whereas the costs of the first type are mostly in the form of finance and material, those of the second type include time, perseverance, endurance, and frustration. In view of the fact that mediation can drag on for months, prospective mediators, in a typical cost-benefit consideration, look at the financial, material, and psychological price tags before making a commitment to get involved. These considerations have a restraining effect on some potential mediators who would want to play the intermediary role.

Mitchell addresses the subject of costs in the context of the impact of intervenors' decision to mediate on their relationship with the parties and on their domestic constituencies. He contends that using mediation to increase dependence (and hence influence) on one or both of the parties may backfire, and mediators may be left with less influence, an escalated level of violence, and less opportunity to establish what they regard as a satisfactory relationship with the parties.<sup>42</sup> As far as the domestic support is concerned, Mitchell argues that costs can also come in the form of dimin-

ished support and approval from internal constituencies. "Adopting the role of intermediary when there are strong domestic factions feeling that the full weight of governmental or organizational effort should be thrown behind a favored party can be a dangerous action for the leadership making a choice."<sup>43</sup> Mitchell's specific conclusion is that it is necessary to recognize that although somewhat asymmetric, there is always a balance of potential benefits and costs in undertaking the role of mediation.

### THE ANALYTICAL APPROACH

This study is guided by a realist interpretive framework of international relations whose notions of interests, power, and rationality are relevant to the analysis of entry.<sup>44</sup> The realist perspective helps us to construct a theoretical model that can relate the motives for initiating and accepting mediation and a particular mediator to the self-interests of the parties and the mediators. The construction of the model is inspired by Stephens's work, the one model that tests the reasons that some mediation initiatives are accepted while others are rejected.<sup>45</sup>

Stephens's model consists of dependent factors that determine parties' decisions on a mediation initiative and independent factors that help explain such decisions. Three related assumptions flow directly from the dependent factors. The first is that a mediation initiative's success or failure is based on the decisions by the parties' leaderships. Success or failure refers to, respectively, acceptance or rejection of the initiative. The second assumption, which is a corollary of the first, is that parties to a conflict are distinct entities, with recognized individuals as leaders, and that the leadership is not homogenous, which creates the potential for intraparty factions. And the third assumption concerns the level of antagonism between the parties, which ranges from very low to very high. The hypothesis here is that the higher the level of antagonism between the parties, the more likely that mediation will be considered.

Two judgments stem from the three assumptions. The decision of the parties' leadership to accept or reject mediation depends on, first, whether the preconditions for negotiation exist, and, second, whether a particular mediator is acceptable. Four preconditions for negotiation are provided. The first is a low or decreasing probability of attaining conflict goals unilaterally through violence. The second is a decreasing value of conflict goals relative

to the direct costs of pursuing those goals and relative to other goals. The third is some common or compatible interests between the parties. The last precondition is flexibility by each leadership to consider negotiation. Stephens also provides two judgments on the acceptability of a particular mediator: a party's *trust* in the prospective mediator and a party's perception that the potential mediator is *independent* of the adversary's opponents.

Stephens's model then focuses on the independent variables that are relevant to the decision of whether or not to accept mediation. The identity and resources of the prospective mediator and the nature of the issues in conflict are identified as the central variables. Identity is constituted by three interlinked components: status, prestige, and constituency. Status is defined as the nature of the link between the persons who would mediate and their constituency. Prestige is the parties' perceptions of the mediator's attributes; these include authority, skill, or fame. Constituency refers to the mediator's authority base, which ranges from political to economic to ethnic.

The resource variable is separated into technical, moral, diplomatic, and material forms. Technical resources are defined as communication links, a meeting place, and secretarial support. Moral resources emanate from the potential mediator's perceived authority and worthiness. Diplomatic resources involve the potential for action in political forms that could support principles, initiate censure, or promote other assistance for, or persuasion toward, one or more of the parties. Material resources are goods and financing that a mediator can offer to compensate for concessions made in the negotiations.

On the variable of the nature of the issues in conflict, Stephens underlines the complexity of defining them and identifying their sources, their relative importance, and their links as the conflict unfolds. Underscoring the different perceptions and values parties attach to the issues, Stephens warns that the difference in the definition of the issues among the parties should be expected. Hence, he provides a caveat in applying the model especially to the analysis of the nature of the issues involved in a conflict. The caveat is that while one label is convenient for discussing the issues, each party's definition and explanation of "the issue" must be included.

A general assumption has been that entry is supposed to be initiated by potential mediators and not by the parties. The assumption is based on the perception that parties would be constrained to take such an initiative, first, by their zero-sum perceptions of the conflict, which rules out mediation as a policy option, and, second, by the considerations of sovereignty, legiti-

macy, and the structure of the conflict. A government's initiative to invite mediation would translate into accepting interference in its internal affairs, legitimizing the insurgency, and admitting its weakness in facing up to the rebels. An insurgency would hesitate to take such an initiative in order, first, to prevent the mediation process from rescuing an unacceptable regime that it is determined to replace and, second, to avoid giving an impression of weakness. An insurgency would additionally hesitate to take the initiative on the assumption that its stigmatic label of being a "rebel" would not attract a positive response in an international environment that holds high the concept of sovereignty.

This study focuses on the assumption that entry can be initiated by both the mediators and the parties. The assumption is based, first, on the rational and cost-benefit premise of parties' actions and, second, on the changed international political environment and its impact on sovereignty, legitimacy of insurgencies, and the structure of the conflicts. A party's self-interest can be a driving force for taking the initiative in mediation and inviting a mediator. On the other hand, human rights issues, injustice, and accountability are currently challenging the traditional interpretation of the concept of sovereignty as related to intervention. Those challenges provide the justification for insurgencies to invite intervention and for prospective mediators to respond positively to such an invitation. Issues of minority rights and self-determination also play a positive role in encouraging insurgencies to take the initiative. A conflict's structural change also can force the government to take the initiative to invite entry of a mediator particularly when the power balance is not in its favor.

Whether the initiative for mediation comes from the parties or from outside, the mediator is always an outsider to the conflict. This means that while a third party may have interests in the conflict to the extent of accepting a mediating role, that does not make it a party to the contested issues and outcomes of the conflict.

Thus Stephens's analytical model needs to broaden its scope to cover entry by invitation from one or more parties, as well as by proposition from the potential mediator. Stephens's model confines itself exclusively to the mediation attempts initiated by the intermediaries.<sup>46</sup> Another problem with the model is that all the preconditions for accepting mediation it presents have the sole objective of a compromise settlement; yet mediation initiatives have more objectives than just a compromise settlement.

Stephens's model also needs to be expanded to analyze mediation initiatives from the intermediaries' perspective. Although the model addresses the parties' motives for accepting mediation, it does not address the motives of intermediaries to initiate mediation. A model is needed that is comprehensive enough to help participants understand the entry phase of mediation from the perspectives of the intermediaries and the parties in the conflicts. From the potential mediators' perspective, the model's central objective is to facilitate an understanding of why they present themselves to play the intermediary role. And from the parties' perspective, the objective is to provide an understanding of why they accept mediation and why some mediation initiatives are readily accepted, some face initial resistance, and others are rejected outright.

The model assumes the rationality of actors in making policy decisions on the basis of self-interests and cost-benefit considerations. According to Touval, actors weigh costs and benefits of alternative policies and prefer those they believe to be least costly and most effective.<sup>47</sup> This model is applicable both to the parties and to the aspiring mediators in initiating entry into the mediation of internal conflicts. This means that beyond altruistic motives prospective mediators are driven by self-interests in their attempts to enter into a conflict. Also, the disputants' self-interests are central in their decisions to accept mediation and a particular mediator. Hence, the model is applied in the following analysis of the various types of mediation initiators. Its adoption has been inspired by the fact that there has been a conspicuous neglect of tying mediation initiatives to self-interests of the parties and the mediators. According to Mitchell, there has been an overemphasis on the belief that "any intermediary is wholly or, at worst, largely motivated by a desire to bring about a settlement restoring peace and stability to the adversaries' relationship and terminating the conflict in some satisfactory manner."<sup>48</sup> As a result, it is often forgotten that intermediaries possess goals and objectives that they attempt to further through mediation. The central focus of the analysis is to examine the motives behind the intermediaries' initiatives and those of the parties for accepting both mediation and the mediators.

In his instructive analysis of mediation in international conflicts, Thomas Princen argues that in its application to the mediating role the realist framework's traditional focus on state actors should also be extended to include nonstate actors.<sup>49</sup> This extension recognizes the important role that regional

and international organizations and also private individuals and NGOs play in the area of conflict management.

According to Princen, states' active involvement in facilitating mediation moves them beyond the traditional focus on and roles of alliance power politics, characteristic of the Cold War era, to a new level whereby power is used not in its coercive sense to force conflicting parties to submission in a balance of power context, but in its persuasive sense to influence them to move to compromise solutions.

The model has two interlinked sets of propositions. One set is the outcome of the problematic issues outlined previously in this chapter. The other arises from the conditions that satisfy the relationship between (a) the motives for initiating and accepting mediation and a particular mediator and (b) the self-interests of the parties and the mediators.

What then motivates potential mediators to either propose mediation or accept an invitation to mediate? The response comes directly from the study's analytical model: they are motivated by self-interests. The self-interests are as diverse as the aspiring intervenors and are particular to specific mediators. What follows is a presentation of the prospective intervenors and what motivates them to play the intermediary role.

### **States**

From a realist perspective, states' intervention in an internal conflict of another state is analyzed within the context of the conflict's impact on national interests of the other states. Regardless of its size and strength, a state may be motivated to initiate or accept an intermediary role in an internal conflict if that conflict affects its national interests. The degree of a conflict's impact on a state's national interest is a function of the state's moral principles, its physical proximity to the conflict, and the closeness of its bilateral relations. A state's humanitarian, democratic, and justice principles may motivate it to intervene in an internal conflict where these principles are seriously violated by the state in conflict. A state sharing borders with the state in conflict will be motivated to initiate mediation as a result of the conflict's contagion and demonstration effects.<sup>50</sup>

A conflict in a neighboring state produces refugees, who become a socio-economic burden to the host state. It likewise encourages discontented groups in neighboring countries with similar latent disputes to take up arms against their governments. A conflict in one country destabilizes regional



peace and security and undermines regional trade and communication. But a state may also be motivated to play a mediating role as “a strategy to avoid having to choose sides in a dispute from which it cannot remain wholly aloof.”<sup>51</sup> The avoidance of choosing sides has the advantage of either establishing or maintaining good relations with both parties, as persuasively argued by Touval.<sup>52</sup>

The above reasons by themselves are not always sufficient to inspire a neighbor to play a mediating role. In discussing the concept of “triangulation,” which explains the relationship between conflicting parties in an internal conflict and neighboring states, I. William Zartman emphasizes that the relationship may be either friendly or hostile, but scarcely indifferent.<sup>53</sup> The neighbor has an option of supporting either party according to how it perceives the nature of the conflict in relation to its own national interests. This option creates a triangular relationship whereby the conflict becomes internationalized and the neighbor becomes an interested party. By being an interested party, a neighbor may restrain itself from initiating mediation and discourage others from playing such a role if the negotiation between the parties will affect its interests in the conflict. Characterizing mediation as “a means to a particular end rather than an end in itself,” Webb argues that “there may be cases where those ends are more likely to be achieved through not mediating” and by allowing a conflict to run its course.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from the option of supporting either party, “there are also narrow but specific conditions under which the host neighbor will also find it in its interest to mediate the internationalized conflict.”<sup>55</sup> One of these specific conditions is when the neighbor’s support to either party becomes unbearably costly. It is when the triangular relationship reaches this stage that the neighbor not only becomes interested in playing a mediating role but also becomes the best placed party to play that role. This is so because “the host-neighbor has leverage over the insurgency, by virtue of its sanctuary, and also leverage over the government by virtue of its ability to produce a solution. It also now has a motive to mediate, reduce its own costs, and increase its influence.”<sup>56</sup>

A state thousands of miles away may be as strongly affected by an internal conflict as a neighboring state if it has stronger strategic bilateral relations with either the state in conflict or its neighbors. It is most likely that such a state might be motivated to either initiate or accept a mediating role. Such a state might as well be motivated to intervene as a way of preventing the

intervention of other powerful external actors that could lead to the internationalization of the conflict.<sup>57</sup>

Such a state might likewise intervene because of domestic public opinion on the conflict. The public opinion pressures might be a result of general humanitarian concerns or of interests of a particular important constituency.<sup>58</sup> According to Mitchell, governments frequently take up the role of honest broker in order to “buy off” domestic pressure to support one side or another—a pressure that can become a major factor in domestic politics in countries where domestic cleavages mirror the external conflict. Often these pressures relate to external influences and pose serious problems for a government that might best be resolved by adopting an intermediary role.<sup>59</sup> He discusses the relationship between domestic public opinion and states’ decision to play the intermediary role under the concept of *constituency arena*. He defines the benefits accrued from this relationship as those emerging out of the state’s domestic “internal audience,” which simply means the state’s domestic support.

### Intergovernmental Organizations

Intergovernmental organizations’ intermediary role is motivated by their members’ interests and by the interest of the organizations’ executive secretariats. The two are not always in harmony with each other, or indeed with themselves in the case of the members’ interests. International organizations decide or agree to mediate when their members see it as in their interests to do so rather than taking sides or staying unengaged; it must be remembered that an international organization is primarily a place, not a thing, with “individual, sovereign state members acting to authorize its action.”<sup>60</sup> That decision will be based on the sum of the members’ self-interests combined with their judgment between two conflicting interests for the self-preservation of the organization—the question is whether reconciling the parties to the conflict is worth the risk of offending members of the organization, the parties themselves, and their friends. Whether the organization (thus understood) is mediating between two or more of its members, its members must weigh their interests against the effect of intervention on the life and interest of the organization. Because an international organization is established to broker some specific purposes and principles, the members must see the potential mediation and its likely outcome as consistent with those goals.

Related to internal institutional interests is the issue of the organization's standing among other international institutions with similar objectives. It is prestigious to the members of an organization with peace objectives to become involved in a conflict and succeed in mediating a lasting solution. It is an indication that the organization is achieving its objectives.

But an internal organization can also defer to its secretary-general or his representatives who have their own interests and who represent the organization's corporate interests as well. An organization's success is the success of its staff: "For an international civil servant rewards may be the sense of gratification from a job well done or an attempt made in difficult circumstances. More mundanely, there may be an increase in personal standing or career prospects within an organization,"<sup>61</sup> but also a chance to enhance the prestige and purpose of the organization. Mitchell discusses the intergovernmental organization's symbolic rewards accrued from the organization's constituency arena. An internal conflict in a member state can have a negative effect on the organization's institutional objectives as well as on its physical existence. The intermediary role is then to demonstrate the organization's efforts in restoring the political stability of the member state in conflict as well as in preserving its own unity.

## NGOs

Like the intergovernmental organizations on the first track, the second-track NGOs' entry into internal conflicts is driven by their institutional interests. Moral values are part of the humanitarian and religious NGOs' interests, yet, in pursuing their mission, such organizations cannot ignore the question of their relative standing within their own framework of reference—the system comprising other humanitarian and religious organizations performing similar work. In such situations, political motives may accompany moral and humanitarian ones.<sup>62</sup>

The moral-value interests provide a strong incentive to NGOs to find lasting solutions to internal conflicts. This commitment explains the successful involvement of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches in the first Sudanese civil war that culminated in the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement and that of the Community of Sant'Egidio in Mozambique that helped in the mediation that ended the civil war.<sup>63</sup>

It is on the advantages that NGOs bring to an environment of an internal conflict, compared with other prospective intermediaries, that they hinge their

hope of being accepted by the parties to play the intermediary role. In an environment where the entry of intergovernmental organizations and states may be resisted strongly by the parties on the basis of sovereignty and interference in internal affairs, an NGO can gain access merely for being nonpolitical and nongovernmental and, hence, not a threat to the state's sovereignty. According to Hizkias Assefa, the intermediary involvement of such a third party would not necessarily confer international political status on the insurgents and would not threaten the sovereignty of the incumbent government.<sup>64</sup> This would make a government more willing to accept the mediating role of an NGO than that of a state or an intergovernmental organization.

Assefa also points out NGOs' infrastructural advantages in comparison to formal intervenors. NGOs, especially the international ones, have a very wide infrastructural network that can provide an invaluable access and information base that is rarely available to states and intergovernmental organizations. The infrastructure can be usefully harnessed for peacemaking. Apart from the infrastructural advantages, the humanitarian nature of many NGOs provides an additional advantage. In conflicts that entail large-scale humanitarian suffering, according to Assefa, humanitarian agencies have a great advantage over many other organizations in obtaining access to the conflict.<sup>65</sup>

Some circumstances call for the quiet, informal services of "unofficial diplomats," individuals without official status, operating on the second track. While they have no political, economic, or military clout, they have the freedom to be flexible, to disregard protocol, to suggest unconventional remedies or procedures, to widen or to restrict the agenda or change the order of items, to propose partial solutions or package deals, or to press the case for constructive initiatives or magnanimous gestures.<sup>66</sup>

Individuals who get involved in mediation are not just ordinary people. They are prominent personalities who carry with them a lot of weight and influence. They can be prominent retired politicians, seasoned international diplomats and former heads of state, religious leaders, or renowned academics. Some of them initiate mediation because of moral and humanitarian interests. Others do so for personal prestige and reputation, and others do so from sheer joy of professionalism. Whatever motivations push them toward an intermediary role, they all accept the role on the basis of their professional background. Hendrik van der Merwe argues that the most important advantage of private intermediaries is their detachment from an "official status," although this has become a liability rather than an asset in intermediary roles.<sup>67</sup>

As individuals who generally play the intermediary roles are prominent personalities in their societies, it is doubtful whether their freedom can be as unlimited as van der Merwe suggests. Touval warns that sometimes these prominent personalities find it difficult to be unaffected by political considerations and may feel bound to take into account the views of their governments. He cites the example of President Carter, who was initially restrained from mediating the civil war in Ethiopia at a time when his government viewed such an initiative as unfavorable. Carter had to take the initiative in 1989, when the U.S. government's attitude had changed, but when the moment was no longer ripe (if it ever had been).<sup>68</sup> Foreign governments tend, erroneously, to view the status of a private individual such as Carter as completely official. Yet most private individuals will consult with their government before undertaking mediation, whether they follow its counsel or not.

### **Individual Consultants**

Apart from conventional intermediaries, another innovative category of mediation initiators at the premediation phase is that of the problem-solving consultants.<sup>69</sup> This is a group of prominent scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution who play a facilitative and diagnostic role in assisting the parties in analyzing their conflict and searching for mutually acceptable solutions. Keashly and Fisher define the problem-solving consultation as "the intervention of a skilled and knowledgeable third party (usually a team) who attempts to facilitate creative problem solving through communication and analysis using social-scientific understanding of conflict etiology and process."<sup>70</sup> Problem-solving consultation is generally conducted through workshops.

Problem-solving consultation is relevant to the entry phase of the mediation process because it not only helps in analyzing the nature of the relationship among the parties, their perceptions and attitudes, and the underlying causes of the conflict, but it can also have a useful influence on the parties to accept mediation and its final outcome.

While problem-solving consultation places more emphasis on the subjective factors, highlighting social-psychological elements such as perceptions, attitudes, communication, and various characteristics of the relationship, mediation emphasizes the objective side and attempts to work around the subjective elements even though it is cognizant of them and their effects.<sup>71</sup>

The consultants' entry into a conflict is generally governed by the same rules that guide the entry of other potential mediators. This is true for the motives and acceptability for such a role. Like the other aspiring individual mediators, consultants also are motivated by personal interests. Their biggest motivation is the belief that they have something to contribute toward peace, which is their expertise. Collectively, problem-solving consultants constitute a unique and significant reservoir of intermediary experts that can be exploited by potential mediators as resource persons or can play a contributing role to the mediation. But they are unlikely to be able to carry the burden of mediation alone.

## **MULTIPLE MEDIATORS**

Mediators are attracted to conflict because that is their business, although, at the same time, potential mediators are highly selective, even wary, about taking up the challenge. The result is that several mediators are often operating on the same case. Coordinated, this situation can have its advantages; uncoordinated, it weakens and often defeats the process. Multiple mediators can increase the resources and influence available in the mediation process. "Different members of the coalition may be more acceptable than others to certain parties and their patrons in the conflict."<sup>72</sup> United, multiple mediators can combine ideas, expand communications, and compound pressure on the parties to the conflict. Even rivals, jealous of protecting their individual interests, can engage in joint mediation when it is in their interest.

Furthermore, the collective approach can compensate for the individual deficiencies in terms of the intervenors' attributes, skills, and resources. The cooperation of individuals with different but complementary skills and expertise creates the requisite skills and knowledge base that no one mediator can possess. The team approach provides an opportunity for an expanded range of ideas, options, and strategies to be considered in order to cope with problems that may arise during the mediation.<sup>73</sup>

## **PARTIES' ACCEPTANCE OF MEDIATION**

When entry is analyzed from the disputants' perspective, acceptability has two levels. One is the decision to turn to mediation, and the other is the decision to accept or invite a particular mediator. What influences the par-

ties in reaching those two decisions? In line with the study's model, both decisions are explained by the parties' interests. Motivated by self-interest, the parties accept mediation because either they wish to make a fundamental change of policy orientation or they wish to enhance the prevailing policy track.

The desire to change a party's policy orientation is an outcome of its realization that it cannot achieve its initial preferred outcome of the conflict through the military track. That realization is in turn a result of the party's change of perception about the conflict's final outcome—from a zero-sum to a win-win mindset, or from a competitive to a cooperative mindset. This dramatic change of policy is explained by such cost considerations as "mutually hurting stalemate."<sup>74</sup> It comes at a time when a party realizes that it is too costly to pursue a unilateral solution and recognizes the importance of a joint-solution alternative. Zartman characterizes this change as a "shift to a conciliatory mentality where parties believe that the solution is to be found with, not against, the adversary and are prepared to give a little to get something, to settle for an attainable second-best rather than hold out for an unattainable victory."<sup>75</sup>

This acceptance can be conceptualized as a "perceptual acceptability" because it is an outcome of perceptual change on how the conflict will finally be resolved. The fact that parties may not arrive at the hurting stalemate at the same time poses the challenge of how the other party would be brought to this level. The relevant question is how a mutually hurting stalemate could be induced to facilitate mediation entry. It is the aspect of inducing ripeness to the other party that makes an intermediary's role the more important. It might appear that once the conflict reaches the level of mutually hurting stalemate and parties recognize the importance of a joint solution, an intermediary role would become redundant because parties can now afford to engage in direct negotiation. However, while this is theoretically possible it is generally impractical because the mutual feeling of "pain" does not remove the parties' mutual hostility toward and suspicion of each other. Hence, the intermediary role is still relevant because "mediation will provide a more favorable settlement than could be achieved by facing the adversary alone in bilateral negotiation. The parties may also accept mediation in the hope that the intermediary will help them reduce some of the risks entailed in concession making, protecting their image and reputation as they move toward a compromise. They may also believe that a mediator's

involvement implies a guarantee for a negotiated agreement, thus reducing the risk of violation by the adversary.”<sup>76</sup>

In contrast to perceptual acceptability, potential intermediaries gain access to internal conflicts also through what could be called “expedient acceptability.” This acceptability is not motivated by a desire for a compromise solution but to enhance their given policy. Such “devious objectives” include time to regroup and reorganize, internationalization of the conflict, the search for an ally, empowerment, legitimization of parties’ negotiation positions and current status, face saving, and avoiding costly concessions by intending to prolong the process of mediation itself.<sup>77</sup> Rather than steering a party toward a compromise solution, expedient acceptability is geared toward the enhancement of the competitive course.

### **PARTIES’ ACCEPTANCE OF AND INVITATION TO PARTICULAR MEDIATORS**

On the basis of rational cost-benefit calculations, parties accept or invite particular mediators according to the roles they are expected to play in line with their interests. The choice among the various types of potential intermediaries depends on how the prospective mediators’ qualities and resources match with the roles they are supposed to perform. Qualities refer to the calabashes contained in the mediator’s basket that can be useful in fulfilling the parties’ objectives. The choice of a particular mediator is based on what he or she brings to the negotiation and its relevance to the interests of the parties.

States may be preferred if the parties’ objective of accepting entry is to get a compromise solution because of the resources they command and their ability to guarantee the compromise agreement. If entry acceptance has the objectives of empowerment, legitimization, or internationalization, then an international organization could be the appropriate choice. An international organization would also be preferred, according to Touval, if parties want to “deflect the pressure that a single state mediator might bring to force an undesired settlement.”<sup>78</sup>

Kriesberg addresses the riddle of what he calls the “officiality” of the mediator in relation to what an intermediary brings to the negotiation. He notes that persons with a position in a state or an organization may bring greater authority to their efforts, yet may be constrained by protocol or



the organization's policies and principles. On the other hand, a mediator without such a position may have greater freedom to meet with people and suggest concessions but, without an organization's backing, lack sufficient influence with the disputants.<sup>79</sup> The sufficient influence Kriesberg is alluding to is a requirement not only of impressing upon the parties the need to strike a deal but also of convincing them that the mediator will guarantee that the agreement holds and will be implemented. Such an assurance can be provided by powerful states and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union.

There are two other forms of accepting a particular mediator. One is what Stephens calls "unavoidable mediator"<sup>80</sup> and the other is what could be conceptualized as the "patrons-preferred mediator." Stephens defines unavoidable mediation as a situation "when an adversary outweighs accepting the initiative, even if the judgments on negotiation preconditions and mediator acceptability are negative."<sup>81</sup> Touval provides a list of the mediation initiatives that a party may find difficult to reject. One of these is the initiative from a friendly state that a party is attached to by numerous close ties. Another is a variety of initiatives that are based on international legal and humanitarian justifications. These initiatives include an intervention of a regional or international body that has a preauthorized agreement for such an intervention to which a state party is a member. Yet another is the intervention by the same organizations on the pretext of peace and humanitarian concerns.<sup>82</sup>

Patrons-preferred mediation is a phenomenon arising from the tendency for protracted internal conflicts to involve other governments and organizations as patrons of the domestic parties.<sup>83</sup> This patron-client relationship turns the original conflict into a vehicle through which the patrons' interests are played. The original conflict then turns into a proxy war.<sup>84</sup> Acceptability of entry in such a conflict is a function not only of the parties' interests but also, more important, of their patrons. This simply means that the parties do not have a free hand in choosing a particular mediator. They will be forced to accept the intermediary role of either one of the patrons or another mediator sanctioned by the patrons. Patrons become potential mediators when they find their commitment to their clients is becoming increasingly costly. They use their leverage to force their clients not only to accept them as mediators but also to accept outcomes that serve their own interests as well.<sup>85</sup>

### SELF-INTEREST, ASYMMETRY, AND PARTIALITY

The self-interest explanation of the acceptance of mediation and a particular mediator challenges the assumptions that, on the one hand, mediation is more likely to be accepted by the weaker party than the stronger one,<sup>86</sup> and, on the other hand, impartiality is central to the parties' decision of accepting a mediator. Acceptance of mediation is a question of the parties' individual interests more than just a matter of power relationship. Regardless of a conflict's power balance, parties will accept entry of mediators as long as the entry serves their particular interests. The parties' interests need not be the same in order to accept mediation entry; each must expect a better outcome from the mediation.<sup>87</sup>

Despite a conflict's asymmetry, both parties can perceptively and expediently accept entry of mediation. For the stronger party, perceptual acceptance is based, first, on cost considerations (though it is the strongest party, continuing with the military track can still be too costly) and, second, on the advantage of negotiating from the stronger position. Expedient acceptance can be motivated by a quest for international approval for talking instead of fighting. For the weaker party, expedient acceptability avails it not only of recognition but also of legitimization and empowerment. In the meantime, perceptual acceptability guarantees the party's participation in whatever government structure the final outcome of the mediation would be.

On the other hand, the parties' cost-benefit calculations make impartiality not a necessary condition of acceptance. As long as acceptance is related to a mediator's ability to deliver the acceptable outcome, even a biased mediator could be acceptable. The closer a mediator is to one party, the greater the chances of delivering that party to a compromise solution.<sup>88</sup>

### THE HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are drawn from the two sets of the study's propositions and are tested through the case studies:

1. The higher the stakes the parties attach to the issues in conflict, the more likely that mediation attempts will be rejected.
2. When the costs of pursuing the objectives of the issues in conflict increase, then it is likely that mediation will be accepted.

3. A third party is likely to try to intervene or accept an invitation to mediate when the conflict threatens its interests or when playing such a role contributes positively to its interests.
4. The more determined third parties are to intervene, the more likely that they will gain access.
5. The more the parties believe that a potential mediator will help them attain their objectives, the more are the chances that the entry initiative will be accepted.

## THE CASE STUDIES

The investigation is based on six case studies: Rwanda from October 1990 to June 1992; Burundi from October 1993 to June 15, 1998; Congo (Brazzaville) from December 1991 to August 1993, from June to October 1997, and from June to December 1999; Sudan from May 1983 to May 1993; Liberia from December 1989 to August 1996; and Ethiopia from May 1998 to July 1999.

The Rwandan conflict was triggered by the Rwandan Patriotic Front invasion in October 1990. The Great Lakes Region's (GLR) efforts to initiate mediation succeeded in June 1992, when the Arusha Peace Process was launched under the Tanzania's government mediation on behalf of the region.

The Burundi crisis of October 1993 was sparked by the assassination of the first democratically elected and Hutu president during a coup engineered by the extremist elements within the Tutsi-dominated army. In early 1994, the GLR, with the support of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), mandated former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere to mediate the Burundi conflict. Nyerere's mandate had the blessing of the United Nations and the international community at large, and he was thus bestowed the title of an international mediator for Burundi. Until the July 25, 1996, military coup, Nyerere had not yet been successful in bringing the conflicting parties together, despite his prestigious title. However, as a result of the sanctions imposed on Burundi by the leaders of the region, Nyerere was successful in bringing the conflicting parties to the negotiating table on June 15, 1998.

The repeated crises in Congo-Brazzaville (the Republic of Congo) accompanied the sudden democratization of the Afro-Marxist single-party state by means of a Sovereign National Conference (CNS in the French abbreviation) in 1990. When the country's first contested elections of 1991 gave rise to protests and then to the mobilization of party militias, a large number of local and international mediators began to offer their services. In the end, a Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the OAU and the president of a neighboring state, Gabon, restored peace and order in August 1993. But when the next round of elections approached, in 1997, violence again broke out, led by the militias that had not been disarmed as the 1993 agreement had stipulated. Again, numerous mediators stepped forward but the same pair took the lead. Just as they crafted an agreement, reinforcements from neighboring Angola carried the rebels to victory against the elected regime. Yet fighting continued, bringing back mediators from a variety of international sources who finally arranged the surrender and amnesty of a number of militias at the end of 1999. However, after elections under a reimposed single-party system in 2002, violence broke out again.

Civil war began in Liberia on Christmas Eve 1989, when a small band of dissidents entered the country and roused the deep-felt opposition to the regime of Samuel Doe. Local and international NGOs, great powers, and African neighbor states operating as the regional organization all entered the competition as mediators. Over the course of the next six years, thirteen agreements were negotiated until one could be devised in mid-1996 that brought the fighting to an end long enough to hold elections the following year. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its dominant member, Nigeria, were the most active of the mediators.

Sudan's civil war was triggered in May 1983 following the abrogation of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement that ended the first war of nearly two decades. The agreement was instrumental in ending the first civil war in 1972 by granting regional autonomy to the south. Numerous entry initiatives have been attempted in trying to mediate a lasting political settlement, but the mediators have usually exited without obtaining a compromise agreement. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) succeeded in gaining access to the conflict in May 1993. Although the organization has seriously tried to engage the conflicting parties, it has not so far succeeded in moving them toward a compromise settlement. Regardless

of its dismal performance, IGAD has not exited from the conflict. It still remains the only internationally recognized mediator.

War broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998, five years after their separation into two independent states. African states operating alone and under the aegis of the OAU and great powers outside Africa hastened to mediate, as did an array of private groups. The conflict, basically over a contested border but more deeply over the political psychology of separation, continued for a year, alternating with mediation that gained one side's agreement but not the other's, with the agreement changing from side to side. Finally, in mid-1999, a coalition of African and U.S. efforts produced an end to the war and the beginning of an attempt to define the border.

The cases all come from Africa, where internal conflict is a major occurrence. They involve the most important instances of civil war and mediation, so that notions about entry can be tested in a wide variety of circumstances. The focus on more than one case facilitates a comparative analysis that can allow the development of insights and generalizations that would be applicable to a broader spectrum of mediation entry initiatives. The case studies are classic examples of longtime, deep-rooted, and relatively intractable internal conflicts. They also are clear cases of internal conflicts whose intensity and commitment demanded a third-party intervention.

Four cases—Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, and Congo-Brazzaville—are centralist conflicts, where a national rebellion contested the incumbent government. All of these rebellions had an ethnic coloring, although it was the politics of exclusion rather than any innate opposition that led to the conflict. Sudan is a mixed case, combining centralist and regionalist features in an unstable relationship, with religion added to ethnic identity as an underlying element of conflict.

One interstate case, the Eritrean-Ethiopian border war of 1998–2000, is included as a “control” to test intrastate findings in an interstate conflict. But it is also the consummation of a regionalist conflict that turned centralist—into the Ethiopian thirty-year civil war—and, as such, needs to be considered among the most important instances of African conflict. The lessons for mediation in these six case studies are, like the cases themselves, African. Although our observations of the entry phase of mediation in conflicts around the world suggest a valid generalizability, it is only by testing the instant study's conclusions against cases elsewhere that we will know whether their lessons are uniquely African or are more broadly relevant.

The organizational structure of the study consists of three major parts. Chapter 1 constitutes the first part that defines the objectives and the scope of the study. Apart from raising the problematic issues, it also provides a theoretical framework for the study's analysis. Chapters 2 to 7 constitute the second part of the study, presenting the six case studies through which the propositions and the hypotheses emanating from chapter 1 are tested. Chapter 8, the last part, draws out the study's specific theoretical and practical findings and conclusions. This is a historical case research that tries to explain a complex puzzle—the entry phase of mediation.