Third-Party Intervention in the Mbindia Enthronement Conflict: Containment or Transformation?

*Fonkem Achankeng I**

Abstract

The intervention of a third party in the conflict around the appointing of a local Chief is analysed. Traditions for selecting and installing a successor to a Chief who had passed away were in place and were followed by the local community concerned. The ruler of the Administrative District, however, used all his power to control the selection and enthronement of the new Chief. The Government intervened as a 'neutral' party (under armed protection!) in the ensuing conflict. 'Problem-solving' mediation was used, but the actual objective

---

* Fonkem Achankeng I, a Humphrey Fellow and traditional ruler in Cameroon is a doctoral student in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University. Fonkem received his M.A. in Conflict Resolution from Antioch University, Yellow Springs, Ohio and currently teaches in the Program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, Wisconsin. He was Executive Director of the Association for Nonviolence, a private non-profit organisation in Cameroon engaged in peace building.

was to contain the conflict as soon as possible and restore 'peace' and 'order'. The interests and emotions of the local party were not listened to, and an outcome was imposed that left the people of Mbindia totally dissatisfied. A year after the conflict, the perceptions and feelings of the people on both sides were explored by means of interviews.

The contrast between the paradigms of individualistic containment and relational transformation is discussed. Views on what a successful outcome should be are given. Special emphasis is placed on transformative mediation in which parties are empowered to resolve their conflict themselves, and in which they are guided towards recognising and understanding the concerns of each other. It is such an approach that can lead to an outcome that satisfies all the parties, provides a lasting solution and preserves community relationships.

Introduction

Anthropologist Davidheiser (2004) states pointedly that the full range of outcomes that can be produced by mediation highlights challenges that should be considered by scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers. Using the perspectives of Bush and Folger (1996) as a critical foundation, I analyse the mediation process employed in the Mbindia enthronement conflict,[1] link the process to the outcome, and conclude with some implications for research and practice. I focus on the outcome of the process and argue that the problem-solving ideology used by the mediators may have been the cause of the partial dissatisfaction of the party that continues to consider the conflict as unresolved. The problem-solving approach to mediation is linked, in this paper, to conflict containment ideology especially in social contexts where third-party intervention may have hidden agendas that

---

1   This conflict arose when Fuantem, the ruler of Lebang, a location in Cameroon, arrogated to himself the exclusive right to preside at the public enthronement of a new Chief in Mbindia on March 11, 1999, a right which the people of Mbindia refused on the basis of history and blood relationships.

drive the intervener(s) not to recognise the emotions of one or all the parties in a conflict situation.

The critical questions in this paper are: What should determine an intervention? Whose outcome (disputant or mediator) does the intervener seek to achieve? Should a mediation process have a set agenda on the direction of the mediation? I address these questions in the light of the 1999 Mbindia enthronement conflict that I witnessed evolve and escalate almost to the point of a violent confrontation. Third-party intervention was arranged and the mediation resulted in an outcome that left one party feeling satisfied and the other party feeling dissatisfied. My inspiration comes from Folger's (2004) transformative framework[2] which considers mediation as 'empowering the parties to resolve conflict themselves'. This framework, as Folger (2004) puts it, helps disputing parties experience strengthened awareness of their own self-worth and their own ability to deal with whatever difficulties they face.

This paper also focuses on the outcome of the mediation by Government agents who intervened to contain the crisis that followed the Mbindia enthronement conflict. The paper argues that the outcome of the intervention was less successful because of the intervention approach and containment ideology, which had an influence on the mediation process used by the administrative officers who played the third-party role in the conflict. In critiquing the conflict containment ideological approach of the mediation process, a situation described by Louis Kriesberg (2002) as imposed outcomes, I make a claim for the conflict transformation approach to help the parties address their differences (Folger 2004). To fully appreciate the analysis, it may be useful to understand what a successful outcome means in mediation and what the Mbindia enthronement conflict was about.

---

2   A lecture entitled, 'Mediation: The Transformative Framework' delivered on October 18, 2004 at the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Nova Southeastern University, was based on the framework in Bush and Folger 1994 (*The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict through Empowerment and Recognition*).

Successful Outcomes in Mediation

Many scholars in conflict studies have been interested in intervention outcomes (Brett 1986, Lind & Tyler 1988, Brett, Goldberg & Ury 1990, Moore 2003). According to Brett, Goldberg and Ury, satisfaction with outcomes depends primarily on the degree to which the outcomes of the dispute meet the parties' interests – their needs, desires, concerns – and secondarily on whether the parties believe the dispute resolution process is fair. Similarly, Brett (1986) and Lind and Tyler (1988) consider procedures that allow disputing parties to vent their emotions, voice their concerns, and participate in determining the final decision as providing fairer outcomes than those situations where one or both parties are involved less. Successful outcomes are those outcomes of mediation that Moore (2003:107) describes as compromise outcomes or win-win outcomes. Compromise outcomes occur when parties to a dispute give up some of their goals to obtain others, and win-win outcomes occur when the parties feel that their interests have been satisfied. When one of the parties feels dissatisfied, a future positive relationship is not possible and, consequently, the mediation cannot be considered successful.

In relating intervention procedures to the nature of conflict outcomes, Brett, Goldberg and Ury (1990:164) also discuss two major concerns that should be of interest to practitioners and researchers alike. The first major concern is that 'the outcomes of disputes and the procedures that generate those outcomes may not only affect the parties' ability to resolve future disputes but also their ability to work together day to day'. The second hint is that there is the possibility that unresolved conflicts can recur in any of three forms – 'same dispute, same parties; different dispute, same parties; same dispute, different parties.' It will be interesting for research purposes to monitor developments in the relationship between Mbindia and Azi after the 2003 intervention.

For compromise outcomes to occur, Moore (2003:107) provides a number of conditions. Two of these conditions relevant to the case under study are: (a) neither party has the power necessary to win totally, (b) the parties have some leeway for cooperation, bargaining, and trade-offs (Moore 1982). In the Mbindia enthronement conflict of 1999, one party had the power necessary

to win totally and would not be ready to negotiate. That party's power apparently came from his recognition as ruler of Lebang and member of the Central Committee of the ruling party in the country. In regard to win-win outcomes, Moore (2003) also presents six conditions, two of which are very relevant to this analysis: (1) the fact that both parties are not engaged in a power struggle, (2) the fact that the parties are free to cooperate and to engage in joint problem solving (Moore 1982).

In the case under study, the parties did not appear to be free to cooperate and to engage in joint problem solving. First, the parties to the conflict did not choose the mediators. Second, the mediation did not take place at a neutral location, which may in this case have been the *Prefet's* office. Third, neither party was involved in determining the timing of the process. Fourth, the party with more power, Fuantem of Lebang, did not think it was necessary to cooperate with Fuambindia, the other party in the conflict. The conflict being mainly a struggle over issues of power and control in which Fuantem considered that he had the power to exclusively control all the decisions relating to the enthronement rites at Mbindia probably made him not view the situation as one in which there was the need to negotiate a settlement with the other party. In this circumstance, getting to a collaborative outcome may have needed more than just a problem-solving approach, and definitely needed the avoiding of any approach with a containment ideology. I can even assert that any approach with a containment ideology had to be avoided in any intervention that was aimed at ensuring continued harmony in that community. A skilled mediator would therefore have gone to great lengths to see how far he or she could transform the circumstances around the issues in conflict to enable the parties to gain greater understanding of each other's positions.

The mediators in the Mbindia enthronement conflict were more concerned about containing the situation in order to achieve peace and order in the area rather than trying to get the parties to the conflict to understand each other better and to work toward a collaborative result. After considering successful outcomes in mediation, and their relationship to the conflict under study, this analysis will turn to the Mbindia enthronement conflict, and attempt an evaluation of the success or failure of the process.

The Mbindia Enthronement Conflict

Mbindia is a village in Cameroon, Africa. It is located in *Lebang* in the Lebialem Administrative Division of Cameroon.[3] Lebialem Administrative Division is made up of two ethnic groups, the *Nweh* and *Mundani* peoples. *Lebang* is part of the *Nweh* ethnic community and the people of *Nweh* are mainly an immigrant population from other ethnic groups in Cameroon. As many other African villages, Mbindia is ruled by a Chief. Fuambindia Mbeache, who ruled Mbindia from about 1941, passed away in December 1998. According to the traditions of the people, the death of Chief Fuambindia was not made public until March 2000 when a new Chief would be crowned and enthroned. In March, a major conflict arose over the enthronement ceremony.

The ruler of Lebang claimed the exclusive right to control every aspect of the enthronement ceremony. Having exclusive control of the enthronement rites meant that the living Will of the deceased Chief had to be given to Fuantem, and that he would also seize[4] the new Chief in public during the enthronement ceremony. The kingmakers of Mbindia refused to concede the control of the entire event to the ruler of Lebang. They argued that though Mbindia is located in a place that became known as Lebang, the Mbindia people and their ruler did not have any blood relationships with the ruling family of Lebang. They also argued that, as had been the tradition, no ruler of Mbindia had been seized in public by any ruler of Lebang. The kingmakers of Mbindia would also not hand the Will of the deceased Chief to the ruler of Lebang because their Chief neither

---

3   Cameroon is divided into ten Provinces, each headed by an appointed Governor. Each Province is divided into Divisions, and each Division is headed by an Administrator known in French as *Prefet*. Lebialem is one of the 58 Divisions of Cameroon and Mbindia, Lebang and Azi are locations in one of the subdivisions of Lebialem Division.

4   This term was first used by Robert Brain in his book *The Bangwa Funerary Sculptor* in which he describes the funeral of a dead Chief and the process of enthroning a new one. All the princes assemble in the main court of the palace and masked kingmakers pick out the next king from among the princes.

handed a copy of his Will to the ruler of Lebang nor asked them to do so. The final argument they advanced in the matter was based on Nweh customs and traditions, where only a father can announce the death of a child, and preside at the child's funeral. In other words, the prerogative to make such an announcement depends mainly on blood relationships.

When the kingmakers of Mbindia made it clear to the ruler of Lebang that he did not have exclusive right to preside at the enthronement of their Chief, the ruler of Lebang decided to use all his power as ruler of Lebang, and his political clout in the area[5] to impose his will on the people of Mbindia. On the strength of his political clout, the first thing he did was to obtain a banning order from the civil administrative authorities to stop the enthronement ceremony. The people of Mbindia defied the banning order and went ahead to organise the enthronement of their Chief, Fuambindia Lekeufua II. After the new Chief of Mbindia was successfully crowned and enthroned by the kingmakers of Mbindia, a number of offensives and counter-offensives began between the people of Mbindia and the people who supported the hegemony of the ruler of Lebang. The latter are mainly resident at or around Azi, the seat of the Lebang ruling dynasty. The dispute brought about so much controversy and bitterness between the parties that there was risk at one point of an atrocious war. The show of power that ensued culminated in a war plan by the ruler of Lebang to exterminate Mbindia.[6]

As the situation began to snowball out of control, the government of Cameroon intervened as a 'neutral' third party, using its administrative officers stationed in Lebialem Division. Government intervention to find a settlement to the conflict took place a number of times. Each time that government officials

---

5   Fuantem of Lebang was also member of the Central Committee of the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM), the ruling party in the country.

6   Muluh Alfred Mulutakwi was the Government-appointed Administrator (*Prefet*) of Lebialem. In the wake of the conflict, this administrator issued a Prefectoral Order to warn Fuantem and the people of Azi of the consequences of their potential action when he received reports that Fuantem was holding a series of meetings to work out plans to invade Mbindia in order to reinforce his hegemony in the area.

intervened in the conflict, the government officials playing mediator roles were always accompanied by armed police officers or *gendarmes*. In the summer of 2003, there was an outcome that was perceived differently by the parties. While the interveners and the ruler of Lebang and his supporters perceived the mediation outcome as fair and 'successful', the people of Mbindia viewed the outcome as unfair and 'unsuccessful'.

The investigator witnessed the conflict unfold. An original native of Lebialem in Cameroon, the investigator lived through the Mbindia enthronement conflict. The investigator was personally interested in every development because the conflict evolved around issues of authority and control in the traditional society governance in the area. On the other hand, I was also interested in following the developments relating to the issue of 'seizing the successor' to a kingship throne in Lebialem at a public enthronement ceremony which had become a major source of disagreement and conflict in the area. As an issue of power, the problem was mainly about who has control over whom. In the summer of 2004, I got the general information that calm had returned to the area and that the people of Mbindia were moving about freely because the matter had been resolved in August 2003. I was informed of how the administrative officers in the area had mediated a settlement and how everyone was consequently living in peace.

One year after the settlement was said to have taken place, I decided to find out how people in the area felt about the settlement. My intention was to determine the success of the mediation method used by the local administration. I interviewed 17 people selected at random from both sides in the conflict. The responses I got revealed three sets of opinions emanating from three groups of people: (1) people who were knowledgeable about the conflict, but were not directly involved in it; (2) people who appeared to be supporters of the Azi side in the conflict; (3) Mbindia people including their Chief, Fuambindia Lekeufua II.

From the interviews conducted in the summer of 2004, the findings were that the perceptions of the intervention and its outcome were different. Supporters of the ruler of the Azi dynasty were somehow happy to inform the investigator that the conflict had been resolved with the intervention of the administrative officers. Many of the people who were not directly involved in the conflict also thought that the matter had been settled by the administration.

The third group of interviewees, the people of Mbindia including their Chief, told the investigator that the matter had not been resolved. They affirmed that tensions had subsided, but that the conflict was far from resolved. They pointed to the persistent bad state of relations between themselves and the Azi side as an indicator of their dissatisfaction with the mediation process initiated and led by government officials.

Although the people in the third group felt happy that the tension had died down, they also felt dissatisfied with the outcome of the intervention. When I asked the Chief, Fuambindia Lekeufua II, why he felt dissatisfied with the outcome of the mediation, the Chief stated that he had simply been cornered, coerced, and tricked, and that an important sign that the problem was yet to be resolved was that the relationship between his people and the other side was just as bad as it was in 2000.

The different perceptions of the nature of the mediation outcome in the conflict motivated me to want to explore and analyse the mediation process in the Mbindia enthronement conflict from the perspective of mediation ideologies and how they may affect mediation outcomes. My assumption was that when the parties to a settlement leave a mediation process considering the outcome differently, it means the conflict has not been successfully resolved. In the Mbindia enthronement case, it seemed evident that the mediators had an agenda to contain the conflict in order to ensure the return of peace and order in their administrative unit rather than help the parties involved to 'experience a strengthened awareness of their own self-worth and their ability to deal with their differences' (Folger 2004).

Although the issues of power were fundamental in the conflict, the concept of power was not the main focus of my analysis. The focus was rather on the outcome of the mediation process involved. The argument is that the peace-and-order-oriented agenda or containment outcome that was imposed in a problem-solving 'wrapping' used by the mediators may have been the major factor in the dissatisfaction of the party that continued to consider the conflict as unresolved.

As mentioned earlier, the Government of Cameroon, through its administrative officer in the region, intervened in the conflict a number of times to mediate a settlement between Azi and Mbindia. In the summer of 2003, there

was an outcome which was described differently as 'successful' by one party and the mediators, and as 'unsuccessful' by the other party.

Table 1: Issues and considerations in the Mbindia enthronement conflict

Issue	Enthronement of the Chief of Mbindia	Enthronement of the Chief of Mbindia
Disputing Parties	The People of Mbindia	Fuantem of Lebang
Issues in dispute	Party would not hand living Will of Fuambindia Mbeacha I to Fuantem and insisted that Fuantem cannot publicly 'seize' their Chief in public cere-mony because they have no blood relationship with the Fuantem dynasty	Party considered it his exclusive right to be given the living Will and to publicly 'seize' the successor to the throne of Mbindia
Mediator(s)	Government official not chosen by party	Government official *not* chosen by party but worked in collab-oration with party
Mediation location	Considered imposed	Azi Palace of Fuantem
Perception of outcome	Unsuccessful	Successful
Considerations	Mediator(s), mediation and location of mediation not considered neutral	Mediator(s) consid-ered as partner in the effort to instil peace and order

Some Theoretical Considerations

In this section of the paper, I highlight the transformative paradigm of mediation in which Bush and Folger (1996) and Lederach (1995) aim to

empower disputants by allowing them to take charge of the resolution process and focus the discussion on two aspects of mediation theory. These are mediation determinants and the outcome critique of mediation. But first, let us consider the transformative approach to mediation.

The Transformative Framework of Mediation

In a lecture entitled, 'The Transformative Framework: Purpose Driving Practice', J.P. Folger (2004) asserts that third-parties co-create conflict interaction with the parties to a dispute, and that the discourse of mediation practice is driven by different ideologies, namely, the individualistic ideology (social separation and containment), organic ideology (social community and conflict containment), and the relational ideology which emphasises social connection and conflict transformation. In this connection, Folger (2004) also contends that the purpose of a third party drives the practice of that third party because, as he argues, the moves and interventions by mediators are never ideologically neutral.

From this standpoint, Folger (2004) views mediation not as a process to solve a problem, nor a relationship to be restored, but rather as helping the parties to 'experience a strengthened awareness of their own self-worth and their own ability to deal with whatever difficulties they face regardless of external constraints'. In explaining the transformative approach to mediation, Bush and Folger (1994:20) state that 'The unique promise of mediation lies in its capacity to transform the character of both individual disputants and society as a whole'. Bush and Folger (1996) envision that this approach to mediation focuses on empowerment and recognition of the parties who have 'value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems'. These authors consider the transformative approach as incorporating the ability to empower the individual disputant with self-respect and confidence. It also allows the disputants to 'humanise' themselves, thus recognising the legitimacy of each other's concerns. For Bush & Folger (1994:201), therefore, 'The value of the transformative approach is that it helps parties change and experience new modes of behavior and interaction; and these changes and new behaviors can occur, and continue, whether or not an agreement is reached in any given session'. The idea is that because the process is informative and educational, inner change within the

individual disputant can be very beneficial to the disputing individuals when they deal with conflict in the long term.

Mediation Determinants

In their discussion of the determinants of mediation, Wall, Stark and Standifer (2001) observe that two processes must mesh for mediation to occur. First, the interacting or disputing parties must request or permit a third party to mediate; second, the third party must agree to mediate. The literature on the practices in different nations and societies indicates that two factors, norms and expected benefits, shape these two interdependent processes. Some of these norms are frequently imbedded in the culture while disputants also seek third-party intervention or assistance because they expect that this assistance will produce various benefits. To evaluate the benefits of third-party assistance, the disputants often compare the outcomes of the mediated interaction with those of the alternative (Wall et al 2001). Silver (1996), for example, states that disputants might realise that the mediator possesses some expertise on the problem and seeks to use his or her expertise.

Other scholars have examined mediation determinants from the perspectives of different cultures. Working particularly with some oriental cultures, these scholars agree that norms serve as a powerful force motivating disputants to seek assistance from third parties, as in China (Chan 1998), Korea (Cho & Park 1996), Japan (Callister & Wall 1997), Malaysia (Mansor 1998), and Turkey (Kozan & Ergin 1998). Tuso (1998) also has the same consideration of many traditional African societies. An explanation for this action is that the disputants in these cultures have repeatedly observed disagreements being handled by third parties, and they know that their societies sanction this approach (Ohbuchi 1998).

In many repressive cultures and situations, mediation can be imposed on the parties and particularly on the weaker party as a means of enhancing the agenda of the powerful. In such situations, the consent and cooperation of the weaker parties are usually not sought, or as Bush and Folger (1996) put it, the 'value and strength and the capacity' of the parties, and particularly the weaker party are not considered and acknowledged. The Anglo-Irish agreement of 1986, the London Conference of 1959 on the independence of Cyprus (Loizos 1976, Ertekun 1981,

Ryan 1990), and the Two Alternatives imposed on Southern Cameroons by the United Nations (Awasom 2000) are some cases in point.

The Mbindia enthronement conflict in Cameroon is one of these situations where mediation may be used to promote the agenda of the powerful. In Cameroon Republic, the situation has arisen where an elite class, known in the governance culture as *Prefets,* intervenes in conflicts for purposes of ensuring what such officials refer to as 'peace and order'. In the governance system inherited from French colonial traditions, a group of civil servants serves the Central Administration as administrators and are placed in all administrative units of the country. Known in the country as *Prefets,* these administrators are graduates of a School of Public Administration known by its French acronym as 'ENAM' (*École National d'Administration et de Magistrature*).

From independence in 1960, Cameroon Republic has mainly been a one-party dictatorship. Public administrators such as Governors and *Prefets* are appointed by Presidential Decree and posted to work in different regions or provinces, administrative divisions and districts. Each administrative official, as representative of the Head of State in the locality of deployment, serves as the echo chamber of the Head of State's policy of peace and order in the locality. Part of the duties of these administrative officials is to intervene in conflicts, not necessarily to help disputants negotiate a settlement to their conflict, but rather to advance the government's policy of peace and order. In other words, such mediation is not always about 'transforming the character of both individual disputants and society as a whole' (Bush & Folger 1994:20) by empowering conflict parties with 'self-respect and confidence' or 'recognizing the legitimacy of each other's concerns'. It is in this context that administrative mediation in Cameroon can be considered as ideology-driven.

In such situations where third parties do not seek to 'co-create conflict interaction with the parties to a dispute', the ideology-driven mediation may tend to impose or direct settlement. It may be recalled that imposed mediation outcomes are generally not durable. In such cases the conflict is merely contained. When a conflict is merely contained, the situation of a seeming peace which results is described by Galtung (1996) generally as 'negative peace', and where peace is negative, the conflict is likely to re-emerge. There are many instances where conflict has persisted or remained intractable after intervention because

third-party interveners tended to decide what the conflict was and to direct settlement terms. Some examples that support this viewpoint are the conflicts between the Greeks and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, the Southern Cameroons Question in Cameroon, and, in this case study, the Mbindia enthronement conflict. Some of these cases that play out in conflicts, both at the international and local levels, reinforce the argument advanced by Bush and Folger (1994:59) that using notional desired outcomes and selective facilitation, mediators can impact the outcome of the process which is supposed to be therapeutic in the problem-solving perspective.

Administrative or ideology-driven mediation in Cameroon has a history in the governance policy of the country. A form of mediation has been used in the country as an administrative tool to enhance government policy of 'peace and order'. In this context, the concepts of peace and order are not premised on the presence of justice, or the freedom for people to seek third-party help in their own interest, or to seek justice through the methods of their choice. Instead, concepts of peace and order are used as weapons to contain the people and maintain a grip on them in such a way that the people do not complain or agitate. Day-Vines et al (1996) and Tabish and Orell (1996) have worked on this type of mediation that is mediator-focused and used to maintain peace and decrease violence in schools. In the cases reported in their research, as in Cameroon, the mediator simply brings some form of pressure to bear on some of the parties. Wall, Stark and Standifer (2001:376) describe the technique of pressing as involving some kind of threat on a party. In my view, this method of third-party intervention is containing a conflict rather than seeking to resolve it. The government of Cameroon has intervened in a number of cases using this method. The succession conflict over the Mokunda throne of the Endeleys in Buea[7] in 1988 and the Mbindia crisis of 1999 are two cases in point.

In other words, motivations for third parties to mediate and disputing parties to seek assistance can be determined not only by norms and law and the

---

7   Buea is a location in Cameroon. There was a succession conflict in Buea in 1982 following the death of Chief Gervasius Endeley. The Government of Cameroon intervened through its administrative officers.

expected payoffs from mediation, but they can also be imposed on the parties. This summary raises the question of mediation outcomes.

The Outcome Perspective in Mediation

In their work on the development of mediation, Wall, Stark and Standifer (2001:383) observe that in previous decades, scholars have focused principally on factors that intervene in mediation's effects on the aggregate outcome, that is, the settlement of the dispute, ignoring somewhat the effects on outcomes accruing to the various parties. The principal focus in this paper is different. The focus is rather on the outcome of mediation for the disputants. This position corresponds to the current work on mediation outcomes to the parties and the mediators (Wall et al 2001:384). For example, Shemberg (1997) reports that external pressure greatly affects disputants' outcomes. When one side is forced to participate in the mediation, its power is reduced, and so are the payoffs. Although forced participation will not reduce the settlement rate (Brett, Barsness & Golberg 1996), it will reduce the forced disputant's satisfaction, especially if the forced disputant is already weaker than the opposing disputant (Grillo 1991).

This scenario presents a picture of the process and the outcome of the mediation that took place in the Mbindia enthronement conflict (1999-2003). From our knowledge of the conflict and its evolution, it was evident that the people of Mbindia and their Chief were under some form of pressure to participate in the mediation. It would also appear that the interveners worked closely with the party with more power to impose a settlement, hence the dissatisfaction of one party.

Of the three mediation outcomes presented in mediation theory, namely the outcomes of mediation accruing to the disputants, the mediator, and other third parties (Wall et al 2001), the concern in this article is mainly on outcomes that accrue to the disputants. This study looks at the outcome of the administrative-driven mediation in the Mbindia enthronement conflict. The argument all along is that the outcome reflected the peace-and-order or containment ideology that determined the intervention process in the Mbindia-Azi conflict. It was, in other words, an imposed outcome in the sense intended by Kriesberg (2002:566) who has observed that some conflict outcomes are unilaterally imposed by one side, as happened after World War II.

When the investigator spoke to people in the area about how they viewed the intervention process, the people of Mbindia, for example, said that 'pressure had been brought to bear on them by the administrative authorities who came to the process not to hear both sides of the issues in conflict but to intimidate them into accepting a settlement'. From this standpoint, we may conclude that the third-party intervention in this conflict sought an outcome accruing mainly to the mediator. This mediation agenda was reinforced in this conflict by the third-party interveners coming to the process with armed *gendarmerie* officers to possibly make the parties, and particularly the weaker party, understand that it was necessary to comply with the outcome.

Conclusion

In this paper, I described the Mbindia enthronement conflict and the outcome of the administrative-driven or enforced mediation process, and focused on the various perceptions of 'success' by the parties and the mediators. Referring to the transformative paradigm of mediation in which Bush and Folger (1996), and Lederach (1995) aim to empower disputants by allowing them to take charge of the resolution process, I examined the mediation process employed in the conflict. I argued that the mediation and its outcome were imposed on the weaker party, and that such an approach is not likely to produce a lasting outcome, given that the satisfaction of the interests of the disputants did not depend on their mutual cooperation in the mediation process. In this context, I promote a claim for transformative mediation, given that the problem-solving approach, and especially one with a containment agenda as in the Mbindia enthronement conflict, may much too often serve the interests of third-party interveners. In repressive situations needing conflict containment, third-party intervention mainly serves the interests of the interveners rather than provide the opportunity for parties to work collaboratively to resolve their conflict.

In this regard, Bush and Folger (1994:59) make the pertinent observation that the experiences of mediators can predispose them to actively look for an outcome by understanding and diagnosing a particular problem rather than

letting it unfold. From the experience of the Mbindia enthronement conflict and the developments in the conflict following the intervention discussed in this paper, there are possibilities that the issues in the conflict will re-appear in future. In this connection, approaches that seek mainly to problem-solve by containing a conflict are not likely to produce durable outcomes in conflict situations.

As a traditional system, a better approach in the Mbindia enthronement conflict would be one which preserves community relationships rather than just an outcome which meets the needs of the party with more power or the concept of peace and order as construed by the government of Cameroon acting through its administrative officers. To achieve the relationship goal, third-party intervention should be animated by a collaborative and relational ideology which supports interaction between the parties and changes the quality of their interaction. If one party remains dissatisfied with the intervention and its outcome, it means the intervener(s) probably saw the conflict as a problem to be contained rather than as an opportunity to help the parties to collaboratively expand their perspective to include an appreciation for the situation of the other party.

A peculiar element in the intervention ideology and process in the Mbindia enthronement conflict in Cameroon was the presence and use of armed *gendarmerie* officers as part of the mediation team. Such a practice of imposed mediations and process outcomes facilitated by government officials backed by armed police and *gendarmerie* officers is common in administrative mediation in Cameroon. It is disconcerting to imagine how far the containment ideology can go in mediation practice.

Sources

Awasom, N.F. 2000. The reunification question in Cameroon: Was the bride an enthusiastic or a reluctant one? *Africa Today* 47(2):91-119.

Brett, J.M. 1986. Commentary on procedural justice papers. In Lewicki, R., Bazerman, M. & Sheppard, B. (eds.), *Research on Negotiations in Organizations* (Vol.1). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Brett, J.M., Barsness, Z.I., & Golberg, S.B. 1996. The effectiveness of mediation: An independent analysis of cases handled by four major service providers. *Negotiation Journal* 12:259-69.

Brett, J.M., Goldberg, S.B. & Ury, W.L. 1990. Designing systems for resolving disputes in organizations. *American Psychologist* (45) 2.

Bush, R.A.B. & Folger, J.P. 1994. *The promise of mediation: Responding to Conflict through Empowerment and Recognition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bush, R.A.B. & Folger, J.P. 1996. Transformative mediation and third-party intervention: Ten hallmarks of a transformative approach to practice. *Mediation Quarterly* 19:261-278.

Callister, R.R. & Wall, J.A. 1997. Japanese community and organizational mediation. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41:311-328.

Chan, A.C.F. 1998. Business negotiation with the Chinese: Evidence from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In Leung & Tjosvold 1998:73-122.

Cho, Y.H. & Park, H.H. 1996. Conflict management in Korea: A CSFR cycle. Paper presented at the ninth annual meeting of International Association of Conflict Management, Ithaca, NY, June 1996.

Davidheiser, M. 2004. Harmony, Peacemaking, and Power: Controlling Processes and African Mediation. Paper used as supplementary material for the Conflict Analysis and Resolution Doctorate Program course on Culture and Conflict: Cross-cultural Perspectives (CARD 6120), Fall 2004. A revised version of the paper will appear in an upcoming issue of *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*.

Day-Vines et al 1986. Conflict resolution: The value of diversity in the recruitment, selection, and training of peer mediators. *The School Counsel* 43:392-410.

Ertekun, N.M. 1981. *The Cyprus dispute*. Nicosia: Rustem.

Folger, J. 2004. 2004 Fall Residential Institute Guest Lecture, Conflict Analysis & Resolution Program, Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, 18 October 2004.

Galtung, J. 1996. *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Grillo, T. 1991. The mediation alternative: Process dangers for women. *The Yale Law Journal* (100):1545-1610.

Kozan, M.K. & Ergin, C. 1998. Preference for third-party help in conflict management in the United States and Turkey: An experimental study. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (29):525-539.

Kriesberg, L. 2002. The Relevance of Reconciliation Actions in the Breakdown of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations, 2000. *Peace & Change*, Vol. 27, No. 4, October 2002.

Lederach, J.P. 1995. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Leung, K. & Tjosvold, D. (eds.) 1998. *Conflict Management in the Asian Pacific*. New York: John Wiley.

Lind, E.A. & Tyler, T.R. 1988. *The Social Psychology of Procedural Justice*. New York: Plenum Press.

Loizos, P. 1976. *Cyprus*. Part 2. London: Minority Rights Group.

Mansor, N. 1998. Managing conflict in Malaysia: Cultural and economic influences. In Leung & Tjosvold 1998:147-66.

Moore, C.W. 1982. *Natural Resources Conflict Management*. Boulder: ACCORD Associates.

Moore, C. W. 2003. *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*. 3rd Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ohbuchi, K. 1998. Conflict management in Japan: Cultural values and efficacy. In Leung & Tjosvold 1998:49-72.

Ryan, S. 1990. *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*. Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company Ltd.

Shemberg, A. 1997. Mediation as an alternative method of dispute resolution for the individuals with disabilities education act: A just proposal? *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 12:739-757.

Silver, C. 1996. Models of quality for third parties in alternative dispute resolution. *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 12:37-93.

Tabish, K.R. & Orell, L.H. 1998. Respect: Gang mediation at Albuquerque, New Mexico's Washington Middle School. *The School Counselor* 44:65-70.

Tuso, H. 1998. The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution: Perspectives from an Indigenous System. *Women in Leadership: Sharing the Vision*. Columbia College 2(2), Spring.

Wall, J.A., Stark, J.B. & Standifer, R.L. 2001. Mediation: A current review and theory development. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 3. June:370-391.