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Barriers to Coordination? Examining the Impact of Culture on International Mediation Occurrence and Effectiveness

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'Culture' features prominently in the literature on international mediation: if belligerents share cultural characteristics, they are likely to have a common understanding and norms. This creates a common identity and makes coordination less costly, which ultimately facilitates mediation occurrence and effectiveness. Surprisingly, existing quantitative research largely neglects any cultural ties the antagonists might share with the mediator. This article addresses this gap by offering one of the first joint analyses of fighting parties' and mediators' culture – and the interaction thereof. Based on existing work, a theoretical framework for mediation occurrence and effectiveness is developed and innovative measures for belligerents' cultural ties and the links to the mediator are used. The results suggest that larger cultural distances between antagonists make mediation more likely, while cultural dissimilarities between them and the mediator have the opposite effect. Evidence is also found for a conditional effect between the two culture variables on mediation occurrence.

Keywords: culture; international mediation; mediation occurrence; mediation effectiveness; quantitative analysis

International mediation – 'a process of conflict management where disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, state or organisation to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law' (Bercovitch *et al.*, 1991, p. 8; see also Touval and Zartman, 1985) – is generally perceived as a crucial and effective instrument for the non-violent resolution of inter- and intra-state disputes. For instance, the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) dataset (Hensel *et al.*, 2008), which we will be using for the empirical analysis of this research, list 244 issue claims[1] between 1816 and 2001, of which 132 (54.10 per cent) have seen at least one mediation attempt according to the definition above. In total, the data identify 532 different mediation attempts, of which 219 (41.17 per cent) were effective to the extent that the belligerents either complied with a mediation agreement or an issue claim was comprehensively settled.

Given the importance of this conflict-resolution tool, it is not surprising that previous research examined international mediation extensively, with a particular focus on the determinants of mediation occurrence and success (for recent literature reviews, see, e.g. Hellman, 2012; Wallensteen and Svensson, 2014). In short, both the belligerents and a (potential) mediator must have an interest in an intervention – i.e. demand and supply-side incentives are a necessary requirement for mediation to occur (e.g. Beardsley, 2008; 2010). Moreover, Touval and Zartman (1985, p. 40) emphasise that 'third parties are only accepted as mediators if they are likely to produce an agreement or help the parties out of a predicament'. In this context, the factors that may influence the occurrence and outcome

of international mediation focus on the characteristics of the antagonists, the characteristics of the dispute, and the mediators or type of mediation.

Particularly with regard to the belligerents' characteristics, the literature identified 'culture' as a prominent influence of mediation occurrence and effectiveness (see Londoño Lázaro, 2003, p. 325). Culture is a 'system of meaning and value shared by a community, informing its way of life, and enabling it to make sense of the world' (Cohen, 1996, p. 109). More formally, we define culture along the lines of Carnevale and Choi (2000, p. 16; see also Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 4):

> Culture specifies what behaviors are desirable or proscribed for members of the culture (norms), for individuals in the social structure (roles), as well as the important goals and principles in one's life (values). Culture also specifies how things are to be evaluated (Carnevale, 1995). This implies that people of different cultures will have greater difficulty in interaction, in understanding, and valuation.

Common cultural bonds or, conversely, cultural distances between the disputants are likely to affect mediation and its outcomes: 'because leaders of countries make the decisions about whether or not to engage in mediation, culture will both shape their perceptions of the utility of the method' (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 5).

In more detail, culture forms actors' reality, perceptions and evaluations of issues, their ideas and preferences (Londoño Lázaro, 2003, p. 325). If actors have a similar culture or even share the same one, this shared understanding forms a connection between them that should make mediation and an effective outcome more likely due to two interrelated, but different reasons: a common identity and fewer costs of coordination (e.g. Inman *et al.*, 2014; Leng and Regan, 2003; Lohmann, 2011). First, a shared understanding and a cultural bond between actors form a common identity (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Burton, 1969; Hofstede, 1980; Kandogan, 2012; Lohmann, 2011; Sunoo, 1990). In turn, a common identity may make it more likely that the antagonists agree on a mediator (due to shared norms, such as the norm of conflict resolution) and can more easily negotiate with each other (e.g. due to the same negotiation styles, perceptions, ideas, understandings or interests). Sunoo (1990), for instance, demonstrates that individuals interact and negotiate very differently across cultures, which could prevent successful negotiation outcomes and lead to conflict instead.

Second, cultural dissimilarities make coordination more costly. If the cultural distance between the actors is high, there might be different norms, different perceptions and more misunderstandings. Agreeing on some form of third-party intervention or even negotiating the terms of a peace agreement may not be impossible then, but certainly more difficult. In fact, Burton (1969) contends that dissimilar cultural characteristics between a fighting party and a mediator might well hamper mediation due to higher coordination costs. Effortless coordination between the parties, however, could make it easier to communicate and agree on some standards (such as how to negotiate, where, with what representatives) more easily in the first place, and it facilitates the decision-making process due to a lower likelihood of misunderstanding and, as a result, the resolution of a conflict (e.g. Beardsley, 2008; Beardsley *et al.*, 2006). For example, Augsburger (1992, pp. 73ff) focuses on concepts like 'face,' 'harmony' or 'honour' and studies their role in Western and traditional

cross-culture negotiations. He notes that Western cultures are more individualistic while the traditional cultures are more collectivistic. While this makes negotiations and conflict resolution between actors from these different cultures more difficult due to the absence of shared norms and common understandings, he also notes that a mediator could be able to circumvent these cultural barriers. Hence, the literature presents convincing arguments for why actors' (i.e. belligerents' and mediators') culture may matter for mediation occurrence and effectiveness.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, the existent *quantitative* work largely focuses on the cultural relationship between the belligerents, while it neglects cultural ties to the (potential) mediator and any interactive effects between belligerent's culture and the cultural ties to the third party. Noteworthy exceptions from diplomatic history do exist (e.g. Iklé, 1964), but these are largely of a qualitative nature, only examine specific cases and may be limited in their generalisability. For example, Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon highlight the role of culture in their memoirs when talking about their mediation efforts (see Avruch, 1998, p. 41). Moreover, several scholars claim that the cultural disharmony between Secretary of State James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tarik Aziz was the major cause of the failure of the US mediation efforts over the course of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict in 1990–1 (Kimmel, 1994; Payne, 1995, p. 93).

This article seeks to address the cultural impact on mediation by offering one of the first joint quantitative analyses of antagonists' and mediators' culture – and the interaction thereof. We first develop a theoretical framework for mediation occurrence and effectiveness that focuses on cultural links between the fighting parties, ties from the antagonists to the mediators and the joint impact of these factors. To this end, we argue that cultural similarities (distances) between the belligerents should make mediation occurrence and effectiveness more (less) likely; that cultural similarities (distances) between the belligerents and the (potential) mediator should make mediation occurrence and effectiveness more (less) likely; and that the interaction of belligerents' culture and the cultural ties with the mediator also matters for explaining mediation occurrence and effectiveness.

In the next section, we review existing and develop new theoretical arguments, which lead to the expectation that cultural distance between the actors involved generally decreases the likelihood of mediation occurrence and effectiveness. Afterwards, we describe the research design and present the results. Our findings show that mediation is more likely to occur when, first, the belligerents are in fact culturally more dissimilar and, second, when (potential) mediators share cultural similarities with the belligerents. At the same time, however, culture is unlikely to affect mediation outcomes. Finally, the analysis of the interactive effects demonstrates that the cultural ties between the antagonists *condition* the impact of the cultural links to the mediator on mediation. We conclude by discussing these results in light of the previous research and by presenting implications for future studies.

Culture and Mediation: A Theoretical Framework

Belligerents' Culture and Mediation

Generally, culture forms norms, expectations and values, which influence state leaders and, thus, states' behaviour (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 2). It seems unlikely that international

mediation is an exception here: states are influenced by norms and values, and therefore by their identity and cultural background when considering mediation, when offering it, and when belligerents actually negotiate with each other in the context of third-party mediation.

Bercovitch and Elgström (2001) offer the first systematic analysis of how cultural differences and similarities between the belligerents influence mediation. This study inspired succeeding work with a similar focus in international relations – e.g. Leng and Regan (2003), Bercovitch and Foulkes (2012), or Inman *et al.* (2014).[2] The argument for why the fighting parties' culture might influence mediation is fairly common in these and related studies: a shared culture leads to a common identity and fewer coordination costs, which makes it more likely that mediation occurs and is effective. In more detail, first, culture forms identities, which in turn may fuel in-group and out-group dynamics (Cohen, 1996; LeBaron, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Oetzel, 2001). Culture can thus contain a body of meaning shared by a group, which then facilitates coordination, or it is a 'barrier that excludes those who do not belong to the group' (Londoño Lázaro, 2003, p. 340). However, similar cultures are related to common patterns of interacting and reacting to the actions of others, as well as shared values and beliefs (Leng and Regan, 2003, p. 432). If belligerents have cultural similarities, in-group characteristics may weigh substantially, 'fostering an acceptance of mediation or other cooperative conflict resolution methods' (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 6). In other words, a shared identity is based on common norms, expectations and values, which form a connection between the parties that makes it more likely that they agree on a common norm of conflict resolution: mediation. Hopmann (1996, p. 144) states that there are cultural values and beliefs that affect all aspects of negotiations. Even the way that nations conceive resolution processes might reflect ~~on~~ their cultural heritage. For instance, the negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians or the US and Cuba (with or without third-party mediation), are affected by persuasive cultural factors.

Second, the coordination between antagonists from different (or distant) cultures will be more costly, 'based on either inferred or experienced divergences in conflict style, norms, communication and emotional expression' (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 6; see also Ting-Toomey and Oetzel, 2001). In the words of Cohen (1996, p. 110), 'culture constructs reality, different cultures construct reality differently, communication across cultures pits different constructions of reality against each other'. As a result, the higher the cultural distance between two parties, the more likely it is that misunderstandings do exist, the difficulty of communication increases and coordination becomes less straightforward. Leng and Regan (2003, p. 434) highlight that 'problems may arise from misunderstandings generated by dissimilar negotiating or bargaining styles, or in the meanings attached to signals' in mediation contexts involving belligerents from different cultures. Ultimately, the belligerents may perceive that the costs associated with mediation outweigh the benefits of a peaceful agreement (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 6).

In light of these two different, yet highly related claims, actors from different cultures react, behave and perceive signals differently (Leng and Regan, 2003, p. 432). This makes it more difficult to find a 'common ground', decreasing the chances of mediation occurrence and effective outcomes. Note that the argumentation we reviewed here essentially

focuses on the belligerents only (see also Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 8; Londoño Lázaro, 2003, p. 330)[3] and we seek to go beyond this in the following. That said, the discussion so far leads to the first hypothesis (see also Bercovitch and Elgström, 2001; Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Inman *et al.*, 2014; Leng and Regan, 2003):

> *H1*: The higher the cultural distance between the belligerents, the less likely it is that they agree on mediation (occurrence) and, if it does occur, that it is successful (outcome).

Belligerents' Cultural Ties to Mediators

A (potential) mediator must have certain characteristics that make them attractive for the antagonists to be allowed to intervene. The previous literature has identified credibility as being one of the most important factors here (e.g. Beardsley, 2008; Beardsley *et al.*, 2006; Kydd, 2003; 2006; Rauchhaus, 2006; Savun, 2008; Smith and Stam, 2003; Svensson, 2007; 2009; Svensson and Lindgren, 2013; Wallensteen and Svensson, 2014). In fact, a prerequisite for the provision of information leading to efficient and effective coordination is the credibility of the mediator (Dorussen and Ward, 2008, p. 193): the more credible a mediator, the more likely it is that he or she is accepted by the disputing actors as an intervener and the higher the prospects for success (see also Bercovitch and Houston, 2000; Regan and Aydin, 2006). In light of this, we argue that common cultural characteristics between the antagonists and the mediator could be credibility assets, which ultimately influence the prospects for mediation occurrence and effectiveness (Kydd, 2006; see also Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Carnevale and Choi, 2000; Inman *et al.*, 2014; Leng and Regan, 2003; Ott, 1972; Young, 1967). For instance, Davis (1981) uses an experimental design to demonstrate that cultural similarity between conflicting actors and a potential mediator affects attraction, making the third party more credible and, thus, acceptable to both sides.

First, and similar to the argumentation above, culture forms norms, expectations and values that, if shared with a potential mediator, form a connection between the belligerents and the third party (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and Siegel, 2011; Burton, 1969; Carnevale and Choi, 2000; Hofstede, 1980; Kandogan, 2012; Lohmann, 2011; Sunoo, 1990). This connection leads to a common identity between the mediator and the antagonists: links between a (potential) mediator and the belligerents generally make the transmission of information about interests and intentions more credible (Dorussen and Ward, 2008). In turn, the belligerents perceive the third party as 'one of them', and may eventually increase the probability of mediation occurrence and effectiveness due to common norms, similar ideas and preferences (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and Siegel, 2011; Carnevale and Choi, 2000). In the view of Carnevale and Choi (2000, p. 106) and Londoño Lázaro (2003, p. 334), 'cultural ties to a mediator may be a positive factor in international mediation' as mediators can then bridge intercultural coordination and communication gaps between disputants (see also Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and Siegel, 2011; Cohen, 1996). Conversely, it is difficult to achieve positive outcomes without common norms and perceptions – i.e. in an environment with severe cultural differences and the absence of a common identity between the disputants and the mediator. As Leng and Regan (2003, p. 436) emphasise, 'there is a greater degree of rapport and trust

[credibility] when the mediator and parties are from the same social or political culture, as opposed to when they are not' (see also Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and Siegel, 2011; Carnevale and Choi, 2000). Kydd (2006, p. 459) similarly states that 'mediation works best when the parties and the mediators share some bonds'. For example, Iran and Iraq only accepted a mediation offer from Algeria, which arguably shares several cultural characteristics with these two belligerents, during the war in 1982 (Princen, 1987, p. 350).

Second, culture affects the costs that are associated with coordination. Cultural dissimilarities restrain coordination, make it more costly and, thus, signal that a mediator might be less suitable and effective if differences do exist (see also Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and Siegel, 2011; Carnevale and Choi, 2000): '[I]f the assumptions of disputants regarding the role of the mediator are different from the mediator's own views, the latter may employ tactics that are ineffective, or even offensive' (Leng and Regan, 2003, p. 434). Effortless coordination between the parties, on the other hand, helps facilitating the decision-making process and, as a result, makes mediation generally less costly (see, e.g. Lohmann, 2011). We argue that shared cultural characteristics can bridge the divide between the mediators and the belligerents, and can smooth both the beginning and the progress of mediation, while dissimilar cultural characteristics might well hamper coordination. Due to cultural ties, a mediator simply has better access to the belligerents, making them more likely to deliver positions and agreements that facilitate mediation effectiveness (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Carnevale and Choi, 2000, p. 108).[4] The third-party intervention in the 1999 Kosovo conflict may illustrate this (Kydd, 2003, p. 597). Russia, a culturally close partner of Serbia, was the only mediator capable of convincing Milosevic to accept a NATO peace proposal. A culturally more distant mediator would have had more problems due to a more difficult access, lack of shared norms and more costly coordination between the actors.

Ultimately, we contend that a shared culture language between the antagonists and a third party raises the likelihood that mediators are accepted in the first place and more effective, as they can guarantee credibility due to a shared identity and lower coordination costs during the negotiations:[5]

> *H2*: The higher the cultural distance between the belligerents and the mediator, the less likely it is that they agree on mediation (occurrence) and, if it does occur, that it is successful (outcome).

The Interaction of Belligerents' and Mediators' Cultural Ties

We finally argue that the two factors – belligerents' cultural similarities and the cultural ties to the (potential) mediator – are likely to interact (see also Leng and Regan, 2003, p. 434). Specifically, we argue for a *joint effect* of both variables that leads to an even stronger impact on mediation, and for a *conditional effect* to the extent that belligerents' cultural similarities condition the impact of the antagonists' cultural ties with the mediator on the prospects for mediation occurrence and effectiveness.

First, while the previous sections focused on the individual effects of our core variables, it is likely that the impact of culture is complementary – i.e. belligerents' cultural similarities should facilitate mediation even more positively when cultural similarities with (potential) mediators do exist as well. To illustrate this, imagine that two belligerents *i* and

j are connected through cultural similarities. Our argument outlined above predicts that this should increase the chances of mediation and facilitate effective outcomes. We should observe this outcome as well if cultural similarity with a third party is given. In addition, however, regardless of these independent effects, we argue to consider these effects jointly as there might be a complementary impact of both factors: coordination among the parties may be *even more* facilitated as compared to a case where only one of the two similarities is given. For instance, the cultural similarity of all actors involved in the Beagle Conflict of 1978 not only made it more likely that mediation occurred, but also was effective (Garrett, 1985): Argentina and Chile shared the same cultural-religious aspect of Catholicism, and they also had this in common with the Vatican as the eventual mediator. In the absence of only one of these cultural similarity relationships, the prospects for (successful) mediation might have been lower:

> *H3*: The joint impact of (1) cultural similarity between the belligerents and (2) between them and the mediator should even more increase the likelihood of mediation (occurrence) and, if it does occur, success (outcome).

Second, we argue for a conditional effect: if a high cultural distance characterises the fighting parties, it is implied that the mediator can be culturally similar to only one of them. Put differently, if *i* and *j* do not have strong cultural links with each other, one of these must have by definition only weak cultural ties to the (potential) mediator. This points directly to the bias literature. Generally, a mediator is seen as biased if he or she has links or shares preferences with one of the antagonists, but not the other one, and unbiased if he or she remains impartial or neutral (Kydd, 2006). Kydd (2003), for instance, argues that a mediator must be biased toward a disputing party if they want the antagonists to perceive them as an honest and credible communicator. Similarly, Savun (2008) finds support for her argument that biased mediators increase the chances of successful mediation as they are the only third party that can credibly provide information about the belligerents. Although she focuses on mediation effectiveness, Savun (2008) claims that the same factors that determine mediation outcomes will influence whether we see mediation in the first place. However, Smith and Stam (2003) contend that biased mediators are not effective and Rauchhaus (2006) obtains evidence that although biased mediators may be effective, impartial mediators are even more so. In a similar vein, Kydd (2006) discovers that if a mediator is to help resolve a conflict caused by mutual mistrust, it must be unbiased.

Ultimately, on the one hand, scholars argue that impartiality makes the mediator more attractive because this raises his or her credibility and the trust between the mediator and the antagonists in the context of coordination; while this makes impartial mediators more likely to attract mediation, a neutral mediator might turn out to be more effective as well (see also Kleiboer, 1996, p. 365; Ott, 1972; Young, 1967, p. 80). Note that this argumentation also points to the joint effect we argued for in our third hypothesis (i.e. since the belligerents are culturally close to each other, a mediator might be either culturally close or distant, but he or she can never be biased towards one of them). On the other hand, studies challenge the concept of an impartial mediator and suggest instead that biased intermediaries are more effective in resolving a conflict since they are more credible when providing information (see also Pruitt, 1981). It is undisputed by this stream in the literature,

however, that a biased mediator may find it more difficult to be mutually accepted by the belligerents in the first place (Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011). In other words, conditional on the cultural ties between the belligerents, it may well be that third parties' culture affects mediation not as expected in our unconditional hypothesis above. We thus seek to test in our last hypothesis:

> *H4*: Belligerents' cultural similarities affect the impact that cultural ties between the antagonist and the potential mediator have on mediation occurrence and effectiveness.

Research Design

Data

For the empirical test of our hypotheses, we use cross-sectional data from the ICOW project (Hensel *et al.*, 2008), which cover territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere and Western Europe, river claims in the previous two regions plus the Middle East, and maritime claims in the Western Hemisphere and Europe. The advantages of the ICOW data are twofold: first, we can compare cases across various issues of contention; and second, our analysis is not limited to situations that become militarised at some point, thus addressing to some extent the problem of selection bias.

We use 'the potential mediator for each year of a dyadic claim as the unit of analysis' (Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011, p. 1081). Specifically, after focusing on the ongoing years of a dispute claim between a challenger and a target (i.e. the belligerents), there is a new observation for every potential third-party state that may intervene in a given year. A potential mediator is defined as any state from the same conflict region or a major power as classified by the Correlates of War Project (Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011, p. 1081). As Crescenzi *et al.* (2011) point out, all states could in principle be considered potential mediators, although this choice would bias the dependent variable's values towards 0. Hence, a more parsimonious sample is warranted. With this setup, our data comprise 237,335 observations over the period 1817–2000.[6]

Dependent Variables and Methodology

For capturing the concept of mediation, we rely on Bercovitch *et al.* (1991, p. 8; see also Touval and Zartman, 1985). Hence, after dropping cases that experienced military interventions or bilateral conflict management, the final data include information about attempts to manage or settle each ICOW claim through peaceful third-party mediations.[7] The first dependent variable, *Mediation Occurrence*, receives the value of 1 if a potential mediator actually intervened in a specific year for a dyad-claim and 0 otherwise; the second dependent variable, *Mediation Outcome*, is coded 1 if mediation led at least to an agreement between the belligerents in a year under study and 0 otherwise (see also Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011, p. 1081).[8]

Various studies in the literature on international mediation indicate that there may be problems of selection bias. The decision to mediate is itself a strategic consideration and, thus, there are many underlying factors that are likely to influence both the decision to mediate and mediation effectiveness (Böhmelt, 2010; Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011; Gartner, 2011; Gartner and Bercovitch, 2006). Ultimately, we face a selection problem that may either

under-estimate the impact of our explanatory variables or exaggerate it. Regular probit models, which might be the obvious choice given our dichotomous dependent variables, may yield biased estimates if selection is an issue, though. In order to deal with this problem in more depth, we use a probit-type Heckman selection model (Heckman, 1979). After assessing this model, however, we move to regular probit regression models to examine our expectations on mediation occurrence more thoroughly.

Explanatory Variables

The theory focuses on the cultural distance between the belligerents, on the one hand, and their cultural ties to the (potential) mediator, on the other. To this end, we adopt Kandogan's (2012) revised variable of Kogut and Singh's (1988) standardised measure of cultural differences. This variable is more accurate than previously used measures of culture as it moves beyond simple indicators of common religion, similar languages or political systems. In more detail, while the degree of cultural differences is notably difficult to conceptualise, Kogut and Singh (1998) offer a simple and standardised measure of cultural differences that is based on Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of national culture. Hofstede (1980) provides a powerful framework to classify cultures that circumvents the intricacies of culture (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson, 2006). Similar to our approach above, Hofstede [4] (1980, p. 25) defines culture as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another'. A 'group' can refer to nations, regions, ethnicities, religions, occupations, organisations or gender. He then classified countries along four main anthropological issue areas that societies handle differently: the ways of coping with inequality, the ways of coping with uncertainty, the relationship of the individual with his or her primary group, and the implications of having been born female or male. In turn, Hofstede translated these into four dimensions of national culture: *power distance* – i.e. the strength of social hierarchy; *uncertainty avoidance* – i.e. the discomfort with uncertainty and ambiguity; *masculinity versus femininity* – i.e. preferences for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success versus cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life; and *individualism versus collectivism* – i.e. preferences for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their families in contrast to preferences for a society in which individuals expect members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for loyalty.

These dimensions of national cultures are rooted in people's values, where 'values' are 'broad preferences for one state of affairs over others ... they are opinions on how things are and they also affect our behavior' (Hofstede, 1985, p. 347). As such, by explicitly taking into account the values held by the majority of the population in each of the surveyed countries, these dimensions can effectively capture differences between countries in their norms, perceptions and ways of dealing with conflicting situations. Higher cultural distance pertains to higher divergence in opinions, norms or values. As we argue above, this should, in turn, affect the odds of mediation occurrence and success.

Against this background, Kogut and Singh (1988) developed a composite index based on the deviation from each of Hofstede's (1980) four dimensions of national culture. Their measure has been applied to studies on foreign investment expansion, entry mode choices or the performance of foreign invested affiliates, among others (e.g. Shenkar, 2001).

Kandogan (2012) revised the original variable by moving beyond the assumption in Kogut and Singh (1988) that the covariance between the four different dimensions of culture is 0. In order to take into account the skewed distribution of this time-invariant variable, we calculated the natural log. For the belligerents' cultural distance (*Belligerents' Cultural Distance*), we use this log-transformed variable, while we rely on a 'weakest-link' specification for the cultural ties of the fighting parties to the (potential) mediator (*Cultural Distance*) – i.e. the value of this cultural distance variable is determined by the cultural distance of the culturally closest belligerent-mediator combination: after merging the cultural distance between the challenger belligerent and the potential mediator, and the distance between the target belligerent and the potential mediator, we compared the values and only introduce the value of the lower cultural distance into the models.[9] Note that this operationalisation underlines our claim that there must be a biased mediator when the antagonists are culturally distant from each other. In order to capture the interactive effects between these two variables (as stated in our third and fourth hypothesis), we also consider a multiplicative term between *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* and *Cultural Distance*.

In terms of the control variables, we consider a broad set of demand and supply-side factors. We list these controls and a short description of their operationalisation/source in Table 1. For a more detailed overview, in particular their underlying theoretical mechanisms, we refer the interested reader to the previous literature that discusses these factors in depth – e.g. Beardsley (2008; 2010), Böhmelt (2010; 2013), Crescenzi *et al.* (2011), Hellman (2012), or Wallensteen and Svensson (2014).

Table 2 summarises the descriptive statistics of all variables discussed so far as well as the variation inflation factors (VIFs) of the explanatory factors. Two issues are worth noting. First, according to the VIFs, multicollinearity is unlikely to be a major issue since all VIFs are well below the common threshold value of 5. Second, the occurrence of mediation is a rare event: less than 1 per cent of all observations have actually seen this form of third-party intervention in the full sample, while this frequency does also not change substantially in that sample, which is only covered by our core explanatory variables. While this is driven by the unit of analysis, it follows from this that the effects we will identify are likely to be small in substance.

Empirical Findings

Table 3 summarises our results: model 1 is based on the probit-type Heckman selection model (Heckman, 1979), while models 2–3 are regular probit models. Hence, while model 1 jointly analyses mediation occurrence and effectiveness, models 2–3 only focus on mediation occurrence. The difference between model 2 and model 3 is the inclusion of the interaction between *Cultural Distance* and *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* in the latter.[10]

Beginning with a discussion of our core variables of interest – *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* and *Cultural Distance* – both variables are insignificant in the outcome equation of the Heckman-type probit model. Therefore, it is unlikely that cultural similarities affect the prospects of mediation success. Unreported models that include an interactive term between our core variables in the outcome equation point to the same conclusion: cultural ties, either between the belligerents or to the mediator, are unlikely to affect mediation effectiveness. This mirrors previous findings by, e.g. Inman *et al.* (2014) and questions the

Table 1: Control Variables

Variable	*Description*	*Source*
Mediator Polity	Democracy score according to the polity2 variable from the Polity IV dataset.	Marshall and Jaggers (2004)
Global Democracy	Average polity2 score for all states in the international system per year.	Marshall and Jaggers (2004)
Belligerents' Polity	Weakest-link specification for the belligerents' democracy score according to the polity2 variable from the Polity IV dataset.	Marshall and Jaggers (2004)
Shared IO Membership	Count of belligerents' mutual membership in international treaties and institutions that explicitly call for the peaceful settlement of political disputes among members.	Hensel (2005)
Trade Bias	The absolute value of the difference in total trade that is comprised of the sum of imports and exports (logged) between (1) a potential mediator and the challenger and (2) a potential mediator and the target state.	Barbieri (2002)
Alliance Bias	The absolute value of the difference in alliance portfolio similarities between (1) a potential mediator and the challenger and (2) a potential mediator and the target state.	Signorino and Ritter (1999)
Distance	Geographical distance between a potential mediator and the target state.	Crescenzi *et al.* (2011)
Relative Capabilities	Challenger's score on the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) divided by the sum of the challenger's and target's CINC score.	Singer *et al.* (1972)
Mediator CINC	The (potential) mediator's CINC score. We also include this variable in the outcome equation of the Heckman-type probit model as a proxy for mediator rank/power (Bercovitch and Houston, 2000).	Singer *et al.* (1972)
Previous Mediations	Variable counting the number of previous mediation attempts over the course of an issue claim.	Böhmelt (2013)
Previous Mediations Same Mediator	Variable counting the number of previous mediation attempts by the exact same mediator over the course of an issue claim.	Böhmelt (2013)
Non-State Interventions	Variable counting the number of previous mediation attempts by an international organisation (non-state actor) over the course of an issue claim.	Böhmelt (2013)
Issue Salience	Importance of an issue claim for one or both of the belligerents measured along six dichotomous dimensions.	Hensel *et al.* (2008)
Maritime Dispute	Dichotomous variable indicating whether a claim is about a maritime issue (territorial issue constitutes the baseline).	Hensel *et al.* (2008)
River Dispute	Dichotomous variable indicating whether a claim is about a river issue (territorial issue constitutes the baseline).	Hensel *et al.* (2008)

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Variation Inflation Factors

Variable	*Observations*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*VIF*
Mediation Outcome	237,335	0.002	0.043	0	1	
Mediation Occurrence	237,335	0.003	0.053	0	1	
Mediator Polity	237,335	0.675	6.559	−10	10	1.18
Global Democracy	237,335	3.471	0.946	0.833	5.130	1.46
Belligerents' Polity	222,150	−0.187	6.709	−10	10	1.44
Shared IO Membership	237,335	1.556	1.111	0	4	1.66
Trade Bias	237,335	0.900	1.214	−3.443	5.247	1.36
Alliance Bias	237,335	0.241	0.280	0	1.587	1.25
Distance	237,335	3.080	0.995	0	4.079	1.08
Relative Capabilities	237,335	56.091	485.263	0.000	17,002.110	1.10
Mediator CINC	237,335	0.024	0.051	0.000	0.384	1.06
Previous Mediations	237,335	0.267	1.500	0	23	2.01
Previous Mediations Same Mediator	237,335	0.028	0.294	0	6	1.14
Non-State Interventions	237,335	0.186	0.716	0	7	1.92
Issue Salience	237,335	6.457	2.414	0	12	1.15
Maritime Dispute	237,335	0.403	0.491	0	1	1.54
River Dispute	237,335	0.050	0.219	0	1	1.17
Belligerents' Cultural Distance	164,821	9.473	1.026	6.001	11.010	1.37
Mediator Cultural Distance	153,071	9.357	0.954	6.001	11.378	1.13

effectiveness part of our hypotheses. Note, moreover, that our estimate for the ρ parameter is positive and statistically significant. This suggests that unobserved features that increase the likelihood of selection (i.e. mediation occurrence) also increase the probability of mediation success.

However, because of the insignificant coefficient estimates of *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* and *Cultural Distance* in the selection model's outcome equation, we focus on the regular probit models for the occurrence of mediation.[11] As coefficients in such non-linear models cannot be interpreted as slopes or elasticities (only their signs and standard errors allow for a direct reading), we present substantive quantities of interest – i.e. first difference estimates for *Mediation Occurrence* = 1 as one explanatory variable changes values from its minimum to its maximum, while all others items are held constant at their medians (King *et al.*, 2000). These calculations are presented in Table 4.

When focusing on the results from model 2, contrary to our expectations, *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* actually has a positive first difference that is statistically significant at conventional levels: the chances of mediation occurrence increase by 0.07 percentage points when *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* is raised from its minimum to its maximum. Only *Cultural Distance* has the expected negative sign: the higher the cultural dissimilarity between the belligerents and the mediator, the less likely it is that mediation occurs.

Table 3: Culture and International Mediation: (Heckman) Probit Models

	Model 1 (Heckman – outcome equation)	*Model 1 (Heckman – selection equation)*	*Model 2 (Probit regression model)*	*Model 3 (Probit regression – interaction)*
Mediator Polity	–0.032	0.006	0.006	0.006
	(0.013)**	(0.003)**	(0.003)**	(0.003)*
Global Democracy	0.224	0.130	0.131	0.133
	(0.098)**	(0.025)***	(0.025)***	(0.024)***
Belligerents' Polity	–0.025	–0.011	–0.011	–0.011
	(0.013)*	(0.003)***	(0.003)***	(0.003)***
Shared IO Membership	–0.013	0.024	0.023	0.023
	(0.095)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Trade Bias	0.066	0.034	0.033	0.032
	(0.065)	(0.014)**	(0.014)**	(0.014)**
Alliance Bias	0.528	0.153	0.153	0.151
	(0.250)**	(0.071)**	(0.071)**	(0.072)**
Distance	–0.081	–0.209	–0.208	–0.210
	(0.062)	(0.014)***	(0.014)***	(0.014)***
Relative Capabilities	–0.008	–0.001	–0.001	–0.001
	(0.003)***	(0.000)**	(0.000)**	(0.000)**
Mediator CINC	3.206	4.616	4.615	4.575
	(0.945)***	(0.217)***	(0.217)***	(0.216)***
Previous Mediations		0.150	0.151	0.151
		(0.021)***	(0.021)***	(0.021)***
Previous Mediations Same Mediator		0.232	0.230	0.229
		(0.024)***	(0.025)***	(0.025)***
Non-State Interventions		–0.378	–0.387	–0.387
		(0.081)***	(0.082)***	(0.082)***
Issue Salience	0.001	0.065	0.065	0.065
	(0.035)	(0.008)***	(0.008)***	(0.008)***
Maritime Dispute		0.010	0.019	0.017
		(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.042)
River Dispute		–0.283	–0.305	–0.303
		(0.136)**	(0.137)**	(0.137)**
Belligerents' Cultural Distance	–0.001	0.063	0.062	0.253
	(0.091)	(0.024)***	(0.024)***	(0.195)
Cultural Distance	0.035	–0.031	–0.031	0.168
	(0.064)	(0.018)*	(0.018)*	(0.200)
Belligerents' Cultural Distance * Cultural Distance				–0.020
				(0.020)
Constant	–1.461	–3.781	–3.770	–5.634
	(1.225)	(0.310)***	(0.309)***	(1.912)***
Observations	111,956		111,956	111,956
Log Pseudolikelihood	–2,431.83		–2,226.31	–2,225.85
Percent Correctly Classified Cases	99.71%	99.62%	99.62%	99.62%
Wald $\chi 2$	48.01***		1,229.58***	1,253.27***
Likelihood Ratio $\chi 2$ (First Stage)		1,211.33***		
Pseudo-R^2 (First Stage/Probit Model)		0.21	0.21	0.21
ρ	0.38***			

*Notes: Table entries are coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses; * significant at 10 per cent level; ** significant at 5 per cent level; *** significant at 1 per cent level (two-tailed).*

Table 4: First Difference Estimates (Model 2)

	First difference estimate	*CI lower bound*	*CI upper bound*
Mediator Polity	0.03	0.00	0.06
Global Democracy	0.17	0.12	0.23
Belligerents' Polity	–0.07	–0.10	–0.04
Shared IO Membership	0.03	–0.01	0.07
Trade Bias	0.09	0.03	0.16
Alliance Bias	0.11	0.02	0.23
Distance	–0.75	–0.94	–0.58
Relative Capabilities	–0.09	–0.11	–0.06
Mediator CINC	8.42	6.82	10.13
Previous Mediations	62.86	33.34	86.77
Previous Mediations Same Mediator	4.08	2.19	6.54
Non-State Interventions	–0.09	–0.11	–0.07
Issue Salience	0.24	0.16	0.33
Maritime Dispute	0.01	–0.02	0.03
River Dispute	–0.06	–0.08	–0.02
Belligerents' Cultural Distance	0.07	0.03	0.12
Cultural Distance	–0.06	–0.12	–0.01

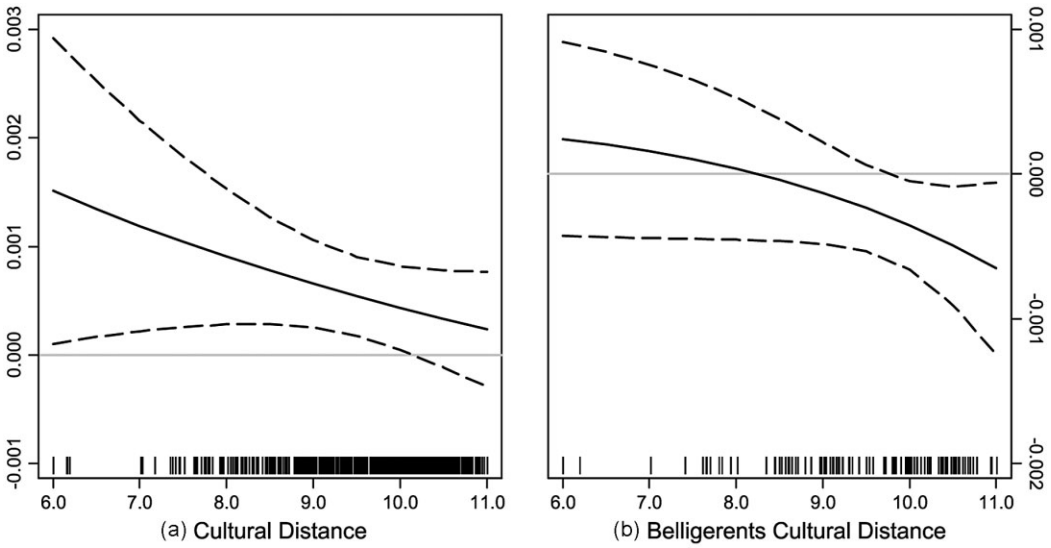
Notes: Simulated estimates are based on 1,000 draws from a multivariate normal distribution; CI pertains to confidence interval; bounds are based on 90 per cent confidence intervals. To facilitate reading, all table entries have been multiplied by 100.

Substantially, the likelihood of mediation occurrence decreases by 0.06 percentage points when *Cultural Distance* is raised from its minimum to its maximum. Both findings are consistent with our estimates of the selection equation in the Heckman-type probit model. In absolute terms, these first-difference estimates appear to be very small, but recall that mediation occurrence is a rare event in our dataset (less than 1 per cent of all observations have seen mediation). This induces that our substantial quantities estimated by any statistical model are automatically very small. Overall, our first hypothesis must be rejected, while we obtain some support for our second one: our expectations regarding occurrence are met, but not in terms of effectiveness. We return to these findings in the last section.

In addition, regarding the third and fourth hypothesis, while we could not obtain support for an interactive effect in terms of mediation effectiveness (see above), there is evidence for an interactive relationship for mediation occurrence (model 3). Since we cannot directly interpret the size, signs and z-statistics of the components of a multiplicative specification, we calculated average marginal effects for *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* according to *Cultural Distance* and vice versa (Braumoeller, 2004, p. 815). Figure 1 depicts our findings.

As this figure shows, the marginal impact of either variable is decreasing with the values of the other measure of cultural distance. Interestingly, however, *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* largely remains at positive values independent from the values of *Cultural Distance*

Figure 1: The Interaction of Cultural Distance (Model 3): (a) Impact of Belligerents' Cultural Distance on Probability of Mediation and (b) Impact of Cultural Distance on Probability of Mediation



Note: Solid line signifies average marginal effect of variable at vertical axis on Mediation Occurrence*; dashed lines pertain to 90 per cent confidence interval; average marginal effect of 0 marked with grey horizontal line; rug plot along* x*-axis illustrates distribution of observations of* Cultural Distance *(left panel) or* Belligerents' Cultural Distance *(right panel).*

(left panel), although there is a negative slope. Hence, the intervening impact of *Cultural Distance* seems actually rather weak, as the positive and unconditional impact of *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* we identified in model 2 remains robust. In other words, we do not find support for our third hypothesis as there is no evidence for a *joint* effect. Moreover, the right panel in Figure 1 models the impact of *Cultural Distance* conditional on *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* – i.e. this constitutes the test for our fourth hypothesis at the mediation occurrence stage. While we observe an insignificant impact for low to moderate cultural distances between the antagonists, the marginal effect of *Cultural Distance* becomes negative and significant when the cultural distance between the fighting parties is large. This confirms our expectation that a *conditional* effect between the two culture variables exists: when the belligerents are dissimilar from each other, but the mediator is quite similar to one of them, the mediator must be dissimilar from the other fighting party. This finding that mediation is more likely to occur when the belligerents are dissimilar but the mediator has low cultural distance with the nearest belligerent mirrors prototypical bias. This might appear counterintuitive at first sight, but it can be explained with the literature on mediator bias: if a mediator is biased toward either side, the non-favoured fighting party does apparently not have many incentives to argue against this mediator, but perceives them – also in the shadow of prospective mediation success – as sufficient to help settling a conflict.

Arguably, this is an *ad hoc* explanation, but it mirrors Kydd (2003) who claims that a biased mediator is more likely to be effective. If this applies, it would virtually preclude the need for a culturally neutral mediator.

Coming to our control variables, when comparing our models with previous work that relies on the same data source, we see that the control covariates' findings largely match previous results both in substance and coefficient signs. First, the more democratic a potential mediator, the more likely it is that he or she is accepted as an intervener, but the less likely it is that they perform mediation effectively. Second, the more democratic the international community, the higher the chances that mediation is effective. We find a similarly positive result in terms of mediation occurrence, which mirrors Mitchell's (2002) argument that the peaceful resolution of disputes is facilitated by global democratic values. Third, democracies are less likely to use mediation for settling issues (e.g. Ellis *et al.*, 2010), while they are also less likely to reach effective outcomes. Fourth, the membership in international institutions with conflict resolution mechanisms is unlikely to influence mediation outcomes or the likelihood of mediation occurrence.

Both *Trade Bias* and *Alliance Bias* seem to increase the chances that we will observe mediation: the two variables are positively signed and statistically significant in the estimations of *Mediation Occurrence*, either in the Heckman setup or the regular probit models. In line with our findings for the fourth hypothesis (Kydd, 2003; Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011, p. 1086), this actually points to the conclusion that belligerents may not necessarily opt for impartial – i.e. neutral interveners. Instead, in light of the better prospects for mediation success, biased mediators are already preferred at the selection stage. Consistently, the alliance and trade bias variables have positively signed coefficients also in the outcome equation on mediation effectiveness, although only the former is significant at conventional levels.

The larger the geographical distance between a potential mediator and the target state, the less likely it is that the former actually intervenes. While this finding is based on the rationale that geographically close states have a more vivid security interest for settling conflicts in their neighbourhood and, thus, may have higher chances of getting involved in the first place, model 1 does not suggest that *Distance* affects mediation outcomes.

Relative Capabilities has the expected negative effect on both mediation occurrence and mediation outcomes. The variable is also significant in either equation. Hence, the more asymmetric the capabilities to the extent that the challenger has more military leverage at his or her disposal, the less likely it is that mediation will be accepted as the challenger can pursue their interests more effectively with military means (Mason and Fett, 1996, p. 550; Young, 1967).

Mediation is more likely to occur and supposedly more effective when the mediator has a higher rank (or is more powerful) and the more important an issue is from the perspective of the belligerents. While *Mediator CINC* is in fact a very strong predictor in both stages of the Heckman-type probit model and in the regular probit estimations, *Issue Salience* is positively signed, but reaches conventional levels of significance only when focusing on the occurrence of mediation. Note, however, that this mirrors Gartner (2011, p. 386), who claims that 'certain types of disputes are less conducive to management, but once conditions change to induce mediation, these conflict characteristics have less influence on agreement durability'.

All remaining control variables are used in the selection equation of the probit-type Heckman or the regular probit models only. In short, there is a negative impact of *River Dispute* (territorial conflicts constitute the baseline): territorial issue claims are likely to cause the most intense conflicts (Hensel *et al.*, 2008) and, hence, may be most in need to be mediated – at least more than river claims; the impact of *Maritime Claims* is insignificant. Finally, the controls for previous mediation efforts all suggest the following: the more previous mediation efforts over the course of an issue claim, independent from whether these previous mediations come from any mediator, the same third party, or an international organisation, the more likely it is that mediation occurs again (see also Böhmelt, 2013).

Discussion and Conclusion

Which factors influence mediation occurrence? What drives the outcome of third-party mediation? The previous quantitative literature identified culture as a crucial element for answering these questions, but mainly focused on the cultural ties between the belligerents. We sought to contribute to this literature by providing a thorough analysis of the cultural relationships that form the triangle of two belligerents and the (potential) mediator.

Our theoretical framework reviewed the existing research on belligerents' culture and developed new arguments: according to our theory, the larger the cultural distance between the belligerents, and between them and the mediator, the less likely it is that mediation occurs. Shared cultural features induce a common identity and fewer coordination costs. This makes it more likely that the actors involved agree on mediation and that it is more effective.

However, we found that the larger the cultural distance between the belligerents, the more likely it is that mediation occurs. Also, cultural similarities between the belligerents and the potential mediator do not necessarily guarantee the effectiveness of the mediation attempt: cultural characteristics may affect the selection level of mediation, but not necessarily the outcome. Finally, although we obtained evidence for an interactive effect between our culture variables (third and fourth hypothesis), only our expectations as summarised in the fourth hypothesis could partly be confirmed: cultural ties between the antagonists *condition* the impact of the cultural links to the mediator on mediation occurrence, but not effectiveness.

What explains the discrepancy between mediation occurrence and mediation effectiveness in terms of the impact of our variables? First, a potential explanation is given by Fearon's (1994, p. 240) distinction between general and immediate deterrence. The former pertains to situations in which no threats are immediately issued, but the actors involved generally compete over some issue (or are in an adversarial relationship); the latter pertains to situations in which real threats have been issued or force has been used. Due to a self-selection mechanism into situations of immediate deterrence (see also Fearon, 2002), which involves prior beliefs about adversaries' willingness to use force, the core implication of Fearon's (1994, p. 245) work is that 'hypotheses that are true for general deterrence may be exactly reversed for immediate deterrence'. Consequently, 'if general deterrence does fail, immediate deterrence will then be less likely to succeed' (Fearon, 1994, p. 245). This setup is related to our work in the following way: mediation is a strategic process, driven

by demand and supply, which ultimately points to (self-)selection of mediators into a dispute. Actors' prior beliefs about the likely effectiveness of an actor, which is determined, among other characteristics, by common cultural features, could turn out to be wrong after the occurrence of mediation has taken place. If subscribing to this claim, mediation still involves several stages that are highly interrelated, but some factors such as our culture variables may in fact be unrelated to what happens after we have seen the occurrence of third-party intervention. In essence, this mirrors the argumentation in Inman *et al.* (2014, p. 8).

Moreover, the result that greater cultural distance between antagonists makes mediation more likely deviates from the existent findings on culture, but is actually consistent with other findings on democracy and mediation. Specifically, one of the most important norms of democracies is the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This should make democratic belligerents more likely to agree on mediation (e.g. Raymond, 1994). Other studies come to the opposite conclusion, however: democracies are more likely to use bilateral negotiations for settling issues (e.g. Ellis *et al.*, 2010). The basic argument here states that democracies are able to strike effective bargains without third-party influence on their own (Ellis *et al.*, 2010, p. 376). These patterns may well apply to cultural similarities too: the smaller the cultural distance between belligerents, the less in need are these actors for mediation. In turn, this also decreases the chances that we see this particular form of third-party conflict resolution.

Several avenues for further research do exist. We outline two of them. First, although we provided explanations for those findings that go against our hypotheses and for the discrepancy between mediation occurrence and effectiveness, future research may want to examine these issues more thoroughly. Second, despite the innovative nature of our cultural variables, they are macro measures that capture cultural characteristics at the national level. Several parts of our theoretical framework, however, rely on micro-level arguments that focus on the individual. A more thorough investigation of these claims, also in light of the existent psychology literature, seems necessary.

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Notes

1 Claims are identified according to explicit evidence of contention involving official representatives of two or more nation states over the issue type in question (Hensel *et al.*, 2008).

2 There is also a broad psychology literature on culture and mediation. Inman *et al.* (2014) and Leng and Regan (2003) provide an excellent review of these studies and we refer the interested reader to this work.

3 Leng and Regan (2003), Carnevale and Choi (2000) and Bercovitch and Foulkes (2012) are noteworthy exceptions here. However, while Leng and Regan (2003) only focus on regime type and religion as cultural ties, which somewhat limits the scope of their study, Carnevale and Choi (2000) and Bercovitch and Foulkes (2012) do not provide an empirical analysis for their argument.

4 Inman *et al.* (2014, p. 7) focus primarily on the cultural ties between the belligerents and only refer to cultural links to the mediator indirectly. In essence, these scholars claim that culture affects belligerents' 'perceptions of and reactions to mediator bias' (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 7). Against this background, it is claimed that a biased mediator may be deterrent to mediation, leading to the expectation that only culturally similar belligerents are able to agree on some mediator as this avoids that the third party will be biased towards either side: the farther the belligerents are culturally apart, 'the greater the potential cultural difference between the mediators and parties, thereby increasing the likelihood that at least one of the states will view mediation as potentially biased and reject it' (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 7). Note, however, that even this indirect claim is not tested in their study.

5 This argumentation corresponds to some degree to Svensson and Lindgren's treatment of internal mediators – i.e. third parties that come from inside a conflict (region). In fact, internal mediators benefit from a high degree of trust from the disputants that is predetermined by their connectedness to the conflict (Svensson and Lindgren, 2013, p. 701). Their status as 'insiders' gives them 'intimate knowledge of the conflict and unique entry points for mediation through and accumulated trust of not one, but all sides' (Svensson and Lindgren, 2013, p. 701). Svensson and Lindgren (2013) argue that all these properties that are likely to promote mediation occurrence and effectiveness primarily stem from the 'same social context' of the parties involved.

6 Note that due to missing values for our core explanatory variables, the sample decreases to 111,956 observations over the same period.

7 This basically treats mediation in the broadest possible way by including all kinds of voluntary third-party interventions – i.e. good offices, inquiries, conciliations, classical mediations, arbitrations, adjunctions, multilateral negotiations and international peace conferences. A potential problem with that approach, however, is that it considers both limited forms of mediation and heavy mediations such as arbitration and adjunction, which employ more forceful means (Rauchhaus, 2006, p. 224). We return to this issue in the robustness section of the online appendix. Moreover, the appendix also outlines the results from an analysis on a sample that includes bilateral negotiations.

8 This is the only outcome variable that is offered by the ICOW data and, consequently, we have to rely on this effectiveness measure. That said, Beardsley (2008) argues that any 'agreement variable' essentially captures short to mid-term effectiveness only, while long-term effectiveness would focus on the recurrence of conflict.

9 We also considered a series of alternative specifications. We discuss these in the online appendix.

10 The interaction term is only included in the regular probit model discussed. When including a multiplicative term in the Heckman-type probit model's outcome equation, we find no evidence for a joint or conditional effect. Hence, this questions our claims regarding mediation effectiveness. To save space, we omit this table from the presentation, but the results can be replicated with our data material.

11 Note that *Cultural Distance* may be endogenous to mediation outcomes. The variable *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* is not affected by this as it is truly exogenous, though (i.e. it cannot be 'chosen' as it is predetermined by the conflict). For example, there might be greater supply/demand for certain cultural distances to the mediator depending on the prospects for resolution. The Heckman model controls for this to some extent due to the selection equation, which directly models whether culture matters for the initial choice of mediation, and this information is fed into the outcome equation. However, sample selection may lead to, but is generally different from, endogeneity bias. In general, sample selection refers to problems where the outcome variable of interest is observed only for a restricted, non-random sample. This basically applies to our case – and we control for this with Heckman probit. On the other hand, endogeneity bias refers to situations in which an explanatory variable included in the model may be a choice variable that is correlated with unobservables in the error term. This means for our work that we cannot fully rule out the possibility of *Cultural Distance* being endogenous to mediation outcomes. And this might be the reason why we do not find much of an effect for this variable in the outcome equation. However, replacing the Heckman model with a possibly more suitable estimation strategy (bivariate probit regression; see Beardsley, 2008) leads to the same results as reported in Table 3. We thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this.

Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information can be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Appendix S1: Robustness checks.

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