

## Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited

Journal Code: POST	Proofreader: Mony
Article No: POST12199	Delivery date: 15 Jan 2015
Page Extent: 21	

POLITICAL STUDIES: 2015

doi: 10.1111/1467-9248.12199

# 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<sup>1</sup> 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



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

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

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

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

18 In more detail, culture forms actors' reality, perceptions and evaluations of issues, their  
19 ideas and preferences (Londoño Lázaro, 2003, p. 325). If actors have a similar culture or  
20 even share the same one, this shared understanding forms a connection between them that  
21 should make mediation and an effective outcome more likely due to two interrelated, but  
22 different reasons: a common identity and fewer costs of coordination (e.g. Inman *et al.*,  
23 2014; Leng and Regan, 2003; Lohmann, 2011). First, a shared understanding and a cultural  
24 bond between actors form a common identity (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Burton,  
25 1969; Hofstede, 1980; Kandogan, 2012; Lohmann, 2011; Sunoo, 1990). In turn, a  
26 common identity may make it more likely that the antagonists agree on a mediator (due  
27 to shared norms, such as the norm of conflict resolution) and can more easily negotiate  
28 with each other (e.g. due to the same negotiation styles, perceptions, ideas, understandings  
29 or interests). Sunoo (1990), for instance, demonstrates that individuals interact and nego-  
30 tiate very differently across cultures, which could prevent successful negotiation outcomes  
31 and lead to conflict instead.

32 Second, cultural dissimilarities make coordination more costly. If the cultural distance  
33 between the actors is high, there might be different norms, different perceptions and more  
34 misunderstandings. Agreeing on some form of third-party intervention or even negotiating  
35 the terms of a peace agreement may not be impossible then, but certainly more difficult.  
36 In fact, Burton (1969) contends that dissimilar cultural characteristics between a fighting  
37 party and a mediator might well hamper mediation due to higher coordination costs.  
38 Effortless coordination between the parties, however, could make it easier to communicate  
39 and agree on some standards (such as how to negotiate, where, with what representatives)  
40 more easily in the first place, and it facilitates the decision-making process due to a lower  
41 likelihood of misunderstanding and, as a result, the resolution of a conflict (e.g. Beardsley,  
42 2008; Beardsley *et al.*, 2006). For example, Augsburg (1992, pp. 73ff) focuses on concepts  
43 like 'face,' 'harmony' or 'honour' and studies their role in Western and traditional

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

8 Somewhat surprisingly, however, the existent *quantitative* work largely focuses on the  
9 cultural relationship between the belligerents, while it neglects cultural ties to the (poten-  
10 tial) mediator and any interactive effects between belligerent's culture and the cultural ties  
11 to the third party. Noteworthy exceptions from diplomatic history do exist (e.g. Iklé,  
12 1964), but these are largely of a qualitative nature, only examine specific cases and may be  
13 limited in their generalisability. For example, Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and Richard  
14 Nixon highlight the role of culture in their memoirs when talking about their mediation  
15 efforts (see Avruch, 1998, p. 41). Moreover, several scholars claim that the cultural  
16 disharmony between Secretary of State James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tarik Aziz  
17 was the major cause of the failure of the US mediation efforts over the course of the  
18 Iraq-Kuwait conflict in 1990–1 (Kimmel, 1994; Payne, 1995, p. 93).

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

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

## 39 **Culture and Mediation: A Theoretical Framework**

### 41 ***Belligerents' Culture and Mediation***

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

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

5 Bercovitch and Elgström (2001) offer the first systematic analysis of how cultural  
6 differences and similarities between the belligerents influence mediation. This study  
7 inspired succeeding work with a similar focus in international relations – e.g. Leng and  
8 Regan (2003), Bercovitch and Foulkes (2012), or Inman *et al.* (2014).<sup>2</sup> The argument for  
9 why the fighting parties' culture might influence mediation is fairly common in these and  
10 related studies: a shared culture leads to a common identity and fewer coordination costs,  
11 which makes it more likely that mediation occurs and is effective. In more detail, first,  
12 culture forms identities, which in turn may fuel in-group and out-group dynamics (Cohen,  
13 1996; LeBaron, 2003; Ting-Toomey and Oetzel, 2001). Culture can thus contain a body  
14 of meaning shared by a group, which then facilitates coordination, or it is a 'barrier that  
15 excludes those who do not belong to the group' (Londoño Lázaro, 2003, p. 340).  
16 However, similar cultures are related to common patterns of interacting and reacting to the  
17 actions of others, as well as shared values and beliefs (Leng and Regan, 2003, p. 432). If  
18 belligerents have cultural similarities, in-group characteristics may weigh substantially,  
19 'fostering an acceptance of mediation or other cooperative conflict resolution methods'  
20 (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 6). In other words, a shared identity is based on common norms,  
21 expectations and values, which form a connection between the parties that makes it more  
22 likely that they agree on a common norm of conflict resolution: mediation. Hopmann  
23 (1996, p. 144) states that there are cultural values and beliefs that affect all aspects of  
24 negotiations. Even the way that nations conceive resolution processes might reflect ~~on~~ their  
25 cultural heritage. For instance, the negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians or the  
26 US and Cuba (with or without third-party mediation), are affected by persuasive cultural  
27 factors.

28 Second, the coordination between antagonists from different (or distant) cultures will be  
29 more costly, 'based on either inferred or experienced divergences in conflict style, norms,  
30 communication and emotional expression' (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 6; see also Ting-Toomey  
31 and Oetzel, 2001). In the words of Cohen (1996, p. 110), 'culture constructs reality,  
32 different cultures construct reality differently, communication across cultures pits different  
33 constructions of reality against each other'. As a result, the higher the cultural distance  
34 between two parties, the more likely it is that misunderstandings do exist, the difficulty of  
35 communication increases and coordination becomes less straightforward. Leng and Regan  
36 (2003, p. 434) highlight that 'problems may arise from misunderstandings generated by  
37 dissimilar negotiating or bargaining styles, or in the meanings attached to signals' in  
38 mediation contexts involving belligerents from different cultures. Ultimately, the bellig-  
39 erents may perceive that the costs associated with mediation outweigh the benefits of a  
40 peaceful agreement (Inman *et al.*, 2014, p. 6).

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

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

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

### 8 ***Belligerents' Cultural Ties to Mediators***

9 A (potential) mediator must have certain characteristics that make them attractive for the  
10 antagonists to be allowed to intervene. The previous literature has identified credibility as  
11 being one of the most important factors here (e.g. Beardsley, 2008; Beardsley *et al.*, 2006;  
12 Kydd, 2003; 2006; Rauchhaus, 2006; Savun, 2008; Smith and Stam, 2003; Svensson, 2007;  
13 2009; Svensson and Lindgren, 2013; Wallensteen and Svensson, 2014). In fact, a prereq-  
14 uisite for the provision of information leading to efficient and effective coordination is the  
15 credibility of the mediator (Dorussen and Ward, 2008, p. 193): the more credible a  
16 mediator, the more likely it is that he or she is accepted by the disputing actors as an  
17 intervener and the higher the prospects for success (see also Bercovitch and Houston, 2000;  
18 Regan and Aydin, 2006). In light of this, we argue that common cultural characteristics  
19 between the antagonists and the mediator could be credibility assets, which ultimately  
20 influence the prospects for mediation occurrence and effectiveness (Kydd, 2006; see also  
21 Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Carnevale and Choi, 2000; Inman *et al.*, 2014; Leng and  
22 Regan, 2003; Ott, 1972; Young, 1967). For instance, Davis (1981) uses an experimental  
23 design to demonstrate that cultural similarity between conflicting actors and a potential  
24 mediator affects attraction, making the third party more credible and, thus, acceptable to  
25 both sides.

26 First, and similar to the argumentation above, culture forms norms, expectations and  
27 values that, if shared with a potential mediator, form a connection between the belligerents  
28 and the third party (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and Siegel, 2011; Burton, 1969;  
29 Carnevale and Choi, 2000; Hofstede, 1980; Kandogan, 2012; Lohmann, 2011; Sunoo,  
30 1990). This connection leads to a common identity between the mediator and the  
31 antagonists: links between a (potential) mediator and the belligerents generally make the  
32 transmission of information about interests and intentions more credible (Dorussen and  
33 Ward, 2008). In turn, the belligerents perceive the third party as 'one of them', and may  
34 eventually increase the probability of mediation occurrence and effectiveness due to  
35 common norms, similar ideas and preferences (Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block and  
36 Siegel, 2011; Carnevale and Choi, 2000). In the view of Carnevale and Choi (2000, p.  
37 106) and Londoño Lázaro (2003, p. 334), 'cultural ties to a mediator may be a positive  
38 factor in international mediation' as mediators can then bridge intercultural coordination  
39 and communication gaps between disputants (see also Bercovitch and Foulkes, 2012; Block  
40 and Siegel, 2011; Cohen, 1996). Conversely, it is difficult to achieve positive outcomes  
41 without common norms and perceptions – i.e. in an environment with severe cultural  
42 differences and the absence of a common identity between the disputants and the mediator.  
43 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).<sup>4</sup> 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:<sup>5</sup>

*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

1 *j* are connected through cultural similarities. Our argument outlined above predicts that  
2 this should increase the chances of mediation and facilitate effective outcomes. We should  
3 observe this outcome as well if cultural similarity with a third party is given. In addition,  
4 however, regardless of these independent effects, we argue to consider these effects jointly  
5 as there might be a complementary impact of both factors: coordination among the parties  
6 may be *even more* facilitated as compared to a case where only one of the two similarities  
7 is given. For instance, the cultural similarity of all actors involved in the Beagle Conflict  
8 of 1978 not only made it more likely that mediation occurred, but also was effective  
9 (Garrett, 1985): Argentina and Chile shared the same cultural-religious aspect of Catholi- 2  
10 cism, and they also had this in common with the Vatican as the eventual mediator. In the  
11 absence of only one of these cultural similarity relationships, the prospects for (successful)  
12 mediation might have been lower:

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

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

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

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

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

## 9 **Research Design**

### 10 **Data**

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

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

### 29 **Dependent Variables and Methodology**

30 For capturing the concept of mediation, we rely on Bercovitch *et al.* (1991, p. 8; see also  
31 Touval and Zartman, 1985). Hence, after dropping cases that experienced military inter-  
32 ventions or bilateral conflict management, the final data include information about  
33 attempts to manage or settle each ICOW claim through peaceful third-party mediations.<sup>7</sup>  
34 The first dependent variable, *Mediation Occurrence*, receives the value of 1 if a potential  
35 mediator actually intervened in a specific year for a dyad-claim and 0 otherwise; the second  
36 dependent variable, *Mediation Outcome*, is coded 1 if mediation led at least to an agreement  
37 between the belligerents in a year under study and 0 otherwise (see also Crescenzi *et al.*,  
38 2011, p. 1081).<sup>8</sup>

39 Various studies in the literature on international mediation indicate that there may be  
40 problems of selection bias. The decision to mediate is itself a strategic consideration and,  
41 thus, there are many underlying factors that are likely to influence both the decision to  
42 mediate and mediation effectiveness (Böhmelt, 2010; Crescenzi *et al.*, 2011; Gartner, 2011;  
43 Gartner and Bercovitch, 2006). Ultimately, we face a selection problem that may either 3



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

### 7 ***Explanatory Variables***

8 The theory focuses on the cultural distance between the belligerents, on the one hand, and  
9 their cultural ties to the (potential) mediator, on the other. To this end, we adopt  
10 Kandogan's (2012) revised variable of Kogut and Singh's (1988) standardised measure of  
11 cultural differences. This variable is more accurate than previously used measures of culture  
12 as it moves beyond simple indicators of common religion, similar languages or political  
13 systems. In more detail, while the degree of cultural differences is notably difficult to  
14 conceptualise, Kogut and Singh (1998) offer a simple and standardised measure of cultural  
15 differences that is based on Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of national culture. Hofstede  
16 (1980) provides a powerful framework to classify cultures that circumvents the intricacies  
17 of culture (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson, 2006). Similar to our approach above, Hofstede □  
18 (1980, p. 25) defines culture as 'the collective programming of the mind which distin-  
19 guishes the members of one human group from another'. A 'group' can refer to nations,  
20 regions, ethnicities, religions, occupations, organisations or gender. He then classified  
21 countries along four main anthropological issue areas that societies handle differently: the  
22 ways of coping with inequality, the ways of coping with uncertainty, the relationship of  
23 the individual with his or her primary group, and the implications of having been born  
24 female or male. In turn, Hofstede translated these into four dimensions of national culture:  
25 *power distance* – i.e. the strength of social hierarchy; *uncertainty avoidance* – i.e. the discomfort  
26 with uncertainty and ambiguity; *masculinity versus femininity* – i.e. preferences for achieve-  
27 ment, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success versus cooperation, modesty,  
28 caring for the weak and quality of life; and *individualism versus collectivism* – i.e. preferences  
29 for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only  
30 themselves and their families in contrast to preferences for a society in which individuals  
31 expect members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for loyalty.

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

40 Against this background, Kogut and Singh (1988) developed a composite index based on  
41 the deviation from each of Hofstede's (1980) four dimensions of national culture. Their  
42 measure has been applied to studies on foreign investment expansion, entry mode choices  
43 or the performance of foreign invested affiliates, among others (e.g. Shenkar, 2001).  
44

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

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

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

### 31 **Empirical Findings**

32 Table 3 summarises our results: model 1 is based on the probit-type Heckman selection  
33 model (Heckman, 1979), while models 2–3 are regular probit models. Hence, while model  
34 1 jointly analyses mediation occurrence and effectiveness, models 2–3 only focus on  
35 mediation occurrence. The difference between model 2 and model 3 is the inclusion of the  
36 interaction between *Cultural Distance* and *Belligerents' Cultural Distance* in the latter.<sup>10</sup>

37 Beginning with a discussion of our core variables of interest – *Belligerents' Cultural*  
38 *Distance* and *Cultural Distance* – both variables are insignificant in the outcome equation of  
39 the Heckman-type probit model. Therefore, it is unlikely that cultural similarities affect the  
40 prospects of mediation success. Unreported models that include an interactive term  
41 between our core variables in the outcome equation point to the same conclusion: cultural  
42 ties, either between the belligerents or to the mediator, are unlikely to affect mediation  
43 effectiveness. This mirrors previous findings by, e.g. Inman *et al.* (2014) and questions the  
44

Table 1: Control Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
Mediator Polity	Democracy score according to the polity2 variable from the Polity IV dataset.	Marshall and Jagers (2004)
Global Democracy	Average polity2 score for all states in the international system per year.	Marshall and Jagers (2004)
Belligerents' Polity	Weakest-link specification for the belligerents' democracy score according to the polity2 variable from the Polity IV dataset.	Marshall and Jagers (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 <i>et al.</i> (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 <i>et al.</i> (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 <i>et al.</i> (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 Saliency	Importance of an issue claim for one or both of the belligerents measured along six dichotomous dimensions.	Hensel <i>et al.</i> (2008)
Maritime Dispute	Dichotomous variable indicating whether a claim is about a maritime issue (territorial issue constitutes the baseline).	Hensel <i>et al.</i> (2008)
River Dispute	Dichotomous variable indicating whether a claim is about a river issue (territorial issue constitutes the baseline).	Hensel <i>et al.</i> (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 Saliency	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  $\rho$  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.<sup>11</sup> 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 other 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**

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

	<i>First difference estimate</i>	<i>CI lower bound</i>	<i>CI upper bound</i>
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 Saliency	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

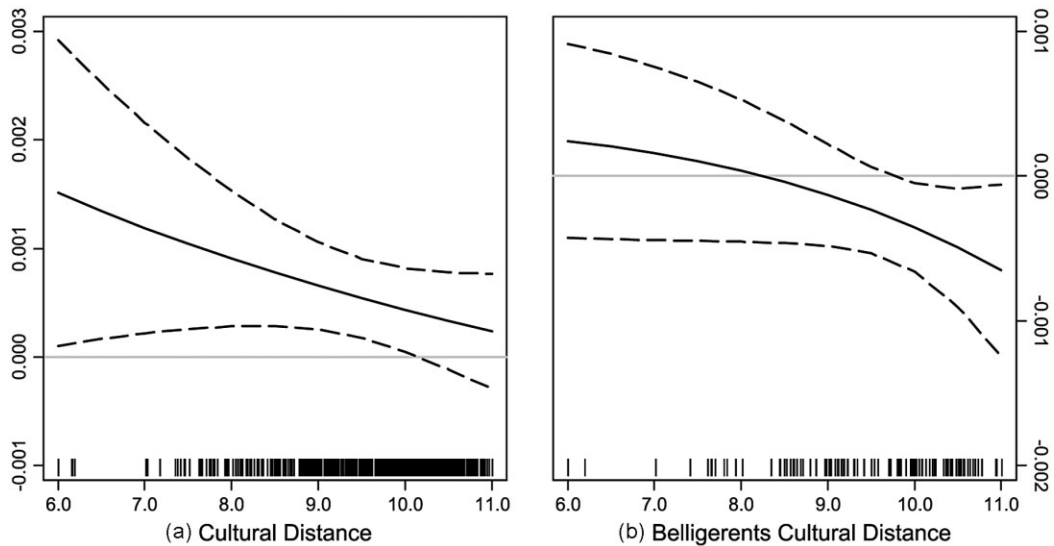
*Notes: Simulated estimates are based on 1,000 draws from a multivariate normal distribution; CI pertains to confidence interval; bounds are based on 90 per cent confidence intervals. To facilitate reading, all table entries have been multiplied by 100.*

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 percent 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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



1 All remaining control variables are used in the selection equation of the probit-type  
2 Heckman or the regular probit models only. In short, there is a negative impact of *River*  
3 *Dispute* (territorial conflicts constitute the baseline): territorial issue claims are likely to  
4 cause the most intense conflicts (Hensel *et al.*, 2008) and, hence, may be most in need to  
5 be mediated – at least more than river claims; the impact of *Maritime Claims* is insignificant.  
6 Finally, the controls for previous mediation efforts all suggest the following: the more  
7 previous mediation efforts over the course of an issue claim, independent from whether  
8 these previous mediations come from any mediator, the same third party, or an interna-  
9 tional organisation, the more likely it is that mediation occurs again (see also Böhmelt,  
10 2013).

## 11 Discussion and Conclusion

12 Which factors influence mediation occurrence? What drives the outcome of third-party  
13 mediation? The previous quantitative literature identified culture as a crucial element for  
14 answering these questions, but mainly focused on the cultural ties between the belligerents.  
15 We sought to contribute to this literature by providing a thorough analysis of the cultural  
16 relationships that form the triangle of two belligerents and the (potential) mediator.  
17

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 (*Accepted:* 17 November 2014)

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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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